

I have been nursing all my life (since 1956) and obtained a diploma in operating theatre technique. I decided to stay in theatre, as I was too emotional at bedside nursing – How well God knew this and incorporated my weaknesses in His plan for my life. First, he sent me ‘repping’ and I learned how to approach and make contact with clients, selling techniques, how to display etc. Most importantly, my business acumen improved and I learned effective business management, improvising (when you have nothing), public speaking etc. Somehow, during these times I did not feel completely fulfilled; sometimes I did not even think that I was in God's Will anymore. Looking back, it was so integrally part of God's training for His plan of my life.

I needed something more in my life, and at the tender age of 50 something I attended Bible school for two years. On completion, I waited for 3 months to see what opportunities would arise and how my new life would take shape. My plan was to be some great evangelist or something, His Plan – Nursing.

A friend had a small home that she wanted me to take care of as her previous tenants left her in the lurch. I had no intention of being burdened this way so I tongue in the cheek said, ‘this will make a good AIDS home’ as it had a tranquil lake on the doorstep. She immediately said ‘yes’. O’ No! said I. However, I suggested that we pray about it. Secretly I did not want it at all, but I asked God to please show me without a shadow of a doubt what He wanted me to do with my life as I was prepared to devote all my time, my life, everything I had to Him. As I had just completed Bible College, I figured that I was ready for anything. I felt that because of my age I had, like Moses, already done my 40 years ‘apprenticeship’. Besides, I did not want to wait until I was 80! I certainly wouldn’t last another 40 years after that.

I decided to fast and pray for three days and pleaded that He show me exactly what to do with my life. The first day of the fast I woke at 4 a.m., played my favorite devotional tape and opened my Bible randomly. I opened the pages to Isaiah 58. Did I wake up fast! The words hit me like a cold shower. “I don’t want you to fast – I want you to take into your home those who are cast out/ feed and clothe them. Then will your light go out to the nation and you will want for nothing (paraphrase). Well, it has been 8 years and we want for nothing! We have survived on ‘charity’. As we need, He supplies our needs. Wow!

Let me tell you of two miracles, not coincidence, but miracles. I call it flowers along the path and miracles along the way.

Our first miracle

(Aside from the obvious, that I am able to write to you about our Hospice.)When we still had the first small home on the lake, I was still employed in a large hospital, so I worked during the day and nursed the patients at night. With Sparrow Ministries only one month old, we received our first municipal water account. It was R152.67. Of course, I had overlooked this as I had been living

with my sister and was unaccustomed to 'water and lights'. I told our first 'guest' not to worry, as I would use my insurance money to pay the account. The next month I would double up in paying my personal insurances. Later that day, a church group visited bearing many gifts for our Hospice and as they left, a couple came to me and said, ' We always tithe to the church, but have an offering bowl as well, which we give to someone special, this time we decided to give it to Sparrow. We made out a cheque for the amount'. They presented the cheque to me, when I looked at the amount I jumped for joy and ran to show my little 'guest'. His 'hallelujah' filled the air – the amount was R152.67 exactly.

The Second Miracle

After we moved to the bigger house (very soon we were inundated with calls for beds) we applied to the bank for a bond to buy – have you ever applied for a bond with a) no credibility other than a name 'Sparrow Ministries' b) Had only R10 in the bank? We did. Within two months the bond was granted but did not have the transfer fees. By October we received R10 000 from AIDSLINK and were able to pay lawyers and transfer costs.

If you had to ask when I really learned to walk on water and not be a dry boat sitter – it was in June 1993, when we 'owned the house' and suddenly lights and water plus rates and taxes appeared on our bill.

The Third Miracle

As I was still working at the time, the prospect of more bills made me angry – I shook my fist heavenward and said –'Lord, this is Your idea, and Your problem. I'm off to work, it's winter and we need heat so I'll pay the electricity bill, you see to the food because I have only got R400' and off I went. That evening when I returned from work, I went inside the house - and fell over bags. The entire kitchen floor was covered in bags with mealies(corn), bread, tomatoes, carrots and other greens brought to us via Woolworth's and the Lions Club. I bypassed the kitchen and went to the dining room where six large boxes filled the floor space – a gift from the Mayor of Roodepoort to all the charities. He decided to have Christmas in June and gave us tea, coffee, sugar, rice etc. Wow! 'Well, Lord, I thought, now we only need meat" Hardly had I thought it, when a friend walked in and said, "My butcher sent you this meat".

Since then, I have never climbed into the boat again. I'm still running on the water – water-skiing behind the Lord – the supplier of all our needs.

Fourth Miracle

Is there more – but of course! Eight years have passed and like the Israelites we want for nothing and trust in the Lord with all our might and lean not on our own understanding.

You will have to invite me over to hear the rest, and the miracles. I hope and pray that what I said thus far and with the guidance of His Holy Spirit will open your hearts to His work through this Ministry.

How we got our Name

The name: Sparrow Ministries was impressed on my heart by the Lord. The world is full of little sparrows, insignificant but plentiful little birds. We are very like them in many aspects. I believe that God wanted to show us that this was not a racial, intellectual or select community – but just ordinary people needing help. And so, we chose the unbiased name of Sparrow. Singular, because we are all single in God's Sight. This was confirmed when one patient confided in me one day, and mentioned that nobody would ever remember him, once he had gone. He said that he had done such terrible things in his life that he felt worthless and equal to rubbish. With joy, and emotion, I recited Matthew 10:29 "Not one sparrow falls to the ground, and God is aware of it, you are worth more than many sparrows". Thus Sparrow Ministry began and our remembrance tree was born. The tree bears the names of all our precious patients who have passed on to the Lord, and once a year we hold a remembrance service and invite relatives and friends, who on that day, bury all their regrets, hurts and guilt and start to live again.

Our New Sparrow Rainbow Village

We have a 6.4 ha piece of ground (that is another miracle story) eight years of God's faithfulness, and money to build the first stage of our three stage plan.

Just a final story to lift your heart even higher. A lady offered her help at Sparrow but I realized eventually that she was distracting me from my work. When I confronted her, she finally said, 'you will never get that land from the council, I will rather buy it for you'. So, for six months, I ran around looking for the 'Promised Land'. Exhausted, I said 'Lord, how will I know the land You have chosen for us?' Simply in my heart, He replied 'taste the grass – it will be sweet'. Each time after that (and I must have viewed at least 20 properties) I bent down to pull a piece of grass out, and taste it – it was tasteless. After three years the Council granted us our present piece of ground and I went with a pastor-friend to view the ground. Pastor Harold turned to me, smiled and asked 'have you tasted the grass?' I bent down, took a piece of grass and pulled it between my teeth, Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, it was sweet!"

God Bless, Hope to hear from you, In His Love
Corine

