

## NOTE TO STUDENTS:

In our efforts to keep the lectures as focused and concise as possible, some portions of John's life story were not included in the audio lectures. The following two scripts will give you the unabridged story of Dr. Worgul's life. You are invited to read them in full if you wish, or to focus on the three sections which were not included in the lectures and are entitled

- *Years 1973-1979*
- *College Years*
- *Years 1992-1999 and*
- *Years 2009 to Present*

## Lectures Three and Four Full Script

### Lecture Three

Grace in Brokenness: My Life Map from Birth to College (1955-1977)

#### Introduction and Years 1955 through 1967 "Getting Started"

Welcome to Lecture 3 on life mapping. In this lecture we will present a model on how to write up your life map. The model is my own life map, and I present it not because my life is in any way deserving of attention, or uncommon. Indeed, I am as one of those nameless faces in the apostle Paul's audience in Corinth to whom the apostle writes "For you see your calling, brethren, 'that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called'" (1 Corinthians 1:26 NKJV). My name, like yours, will gently drift away into oblivion upon my death, only to be recovered, by God's grace, in the kingdom to come.

Yet on the other hand, my life is uncommon and holy to the degree that we see Jesus and His grace in it. This is true of all of us Christians, and that is why the Bible calls us all "saints." And so I can say with all boldness with Paul, "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians 3:17 NKJV). In this lecture you will experience my brokenness, failures, and struggles, but also the light of God's grace in the middle of it all. Jesus makes the most "common" lives an extraordinary read.

I begin my map with an incident that happened long before I was born. My grandfather on my mother's side, John Papin, told of a most remarkable encounter with God. He was a worldly man and had no time for God. Two Russian evangelists witnessed to him, but he would have none of it. But, as he recounts it, one night Jesus appeared to him in a vision coming toward him in his bed. He experienced a powerful conversion and from that moment on, he became an evangelist. My mother's best and brightest memories were of traveling from small church to small church, playing the old gospel songs on the piano as her father preached. Their vivacious faith permeates my family story.

My father came from rough German coal-mining stock in western Pennsylvania. The oldest of twelve during the depression, he learned to work hard to help feed the family. His parents were Nazarenes, and their simple Christianity surely tempered what was a difficult early life. His father never once told him that he loved him and was abusive. My father carried these wounds till his dying days. His great success in life was that he chose the good rather than the bad, improving what was handed to him. I never doubted that my father loved me.

My mother named me John not because it was her father's name, nor because she particularly liked it; she thought it was plain. Rather, she chose it for what it meant, "God is gracious." This name fits me well, for both plainness and God's graciousness are characteristic of my life. Born into a blue collar family (my father was a welder), we were socially unsophisticated. My father never graduated from high school. He wanted me to be educated, but neither he nor my mother knew how to guide me and create opportunities. My mother, though deeply spiritual, was a social hermit; never once do I remember anyone over for supper that wasn't immediate family. I struggled to break out from my social backwardness for much of my life.

Somehow, my oldest sister Joyce, who was 15 years my senior, broke free early on. When my other sister Karen and I were born, Joyce became very active in Youth for Christ. She was beautiful and popular. One of my earliest memories was when she became the beauty queen at college. She married Dave, a dashing football player and Marine. They were the quintessential 50s "fun" couple. I idolized Dave and wanted to be cool like him. I also wanted a beautiful girl, a beauty queen, like he had. The "beautiful woman" motif would come back to haunt me.

On a positive note, I had strong male role models. I already mentioned my grandfather on my mother's side who seemed "bigger than life" to all of us. Also, my father taught me love and respect for people, stability, and basic goodness. Although uneducated, he had a deep sensitivity to beauty in nature and classical music. Dave exemplified practical Christianity, and that a "cool guy" can be a Christian. Finally, my pastor, Howard Sugden, an eloquent orator, preached the grandeur of God and that He can do great things through ordinary people. For me, a little boy who felt extremely ordinary, this burned deep into the soul. Strong male role models are important for boys and men, and I am thankful that God filled my life with them.

Grade school was, for the most part, a hard place for me. I grew up with the same kids from kindergarten to sixth grade, and it became a familiar place to me. I had an "identity," although not popular. I was often in trouble, not because I was bad hearted, but because I lacked self-control. I was "demoted" in the second grade to the less gifted class and from then on felt less intelligent than others. My parents took me to travelogues at MSU, and this sparked an interest in history and geography, but I never followed up on this in school. I remember my sister Karen telling me that in Junior High School redheads, of which I was one, were popular. I longed to go to Junior High and be somebody. Little did I know what was waiting for me!

#### *Years 1967-1970 Junior High Years: Depression*

What could have prepared me for the shock of entering a large middle school in the year 1967? The late 60s was a time of great upheaval and culture shift. I passed from a familiar school environment into an ocean of chaos. A wave of drugs, alcohol, revolutionary music, and sexual promiscuity rushed at me down the dark halls. I was just a number in a flood of faces. Kids at

that age are mean. I avoided fights but was fearful and felt cowardly. My pride was wounded and my spirit crushed, filled with anger and confusion. Upon reflection, I now believe that the anger turned inward into depression.

I had a serious accident in the spring of 1967 that left my right hand deformed, and so at this time I had to shift certain functions over to my left hand. This did not prevent me from working a paper route, and playing “pick-up” basketball. For the most part, however, I was aimless, wasting many hours with a few non-Christian friends of my neighborhood, especially my neighbor Tom. I did not apply myself to school work, was socially awkward, (“uncool,”) and did not excel in anything. I was forced to take a remedial math course one summer in an inner city school along with kids from the whole school district in town who struggled academically. It was during the race riots, and I remember being terrorized and bullied by angry Afro-Americans. It was easy for me to hate.

Looking back, I would say that spiritually I was in some sort of incubation period. I never really had a “conversion” experience because as long as I could remember, being raised in an evangelical home, I genuinely prayed and called on Jesus to save my soul. Moreover, I made profession of faith with sincerity in baptism on April 10, 1968. I never did the evil things my friends were into. I hated church activities, but respected Pastor Sugden’s preaching. In all the chaos, my home was a safe place to be thanks to the stability of my parents. My father, though he loved and provided for his family, was not an easy man to live with, and I had a difficult relationship with him till the time I left home for college.

I would have to say that God protected me in this vulnerable time of life. My parents did not have the ability to discern the drastic cultural changes taking place at this time, letting me loose with little guidance as if it were the 1920s and 30s when they were young. I was formed in the caldron of the 60s; I understand its culture intuitively. Though I am its child, I never embraced the pop culture, never really trusting its music and its message. Though I wasted the years away with my best friend Tom, God used even this time to prepare me to minister in the postmodern world.

### *Years 1970-1973 High School*

I had no illusions going into high school. I knew that it was even larger and expected a corresponding greater alienation. Although kids settle down in high school, the pressures become more sophisticated. What I remember most were the popular kids. It was if they needed us “less than cool” kids so as to have an audience. This played on my longing to be cool like my sister Joyce and brother-in-law Dave. I was missing out. I resented the popular kids because they disdained me, and I let their proud faces haunt my mind years after. I did not know it then, but anger and envy were settling deep into my soul, just beneath my consciousness.

Academically, the school was a joke. I can remember only two teachers, holdovers from the 1940s who had a reputation for being tough, who inspired me to work and take their classes seriously. I was totally lost in algebra and chemistry. In my senior year I was in danger of failing physics and not graduating. The teacher asked me to stay after class a few times, and by merely showing up, passed me with a good grade. I had no respect for him. I liked to read novels, but my reading was scattered and without direction. In short, I continued to waste time.

For decades, even after completing graduate school, I was afflicted with “inadequacy” dreams where I was failing math and would not graduate from high school.

In the middle of this muddled haze something happened to me, taking me completely by surprise. I had an encounter with God. It happened on a youth wilderness trip in Colorado organized by my youth pastor Jim Emery. One evening I was alone in a rocky gully and out of the blue one of my mother’s old gospel songs rang in my inner ear and my soul melted. I was in tears. There were no audible words, but the gist of the divine message went something like this: “John, you have been trying to live the Christian life up to now in your own strength and failed. I want you to live for Me from now on.” The promise was that God would empower me to do this.

When I came back to the camp, I was a changed person. Before, I would never sing; it wasn’t cool and I wore a tough exterior. That night I sang the songs around the campfire with feeling and everyone was shocked at this. When I came back from the trip, my first thought was to tell my mother. Before I could tell her she told me with shining eyes that she saw me singing in her spirit.

This happened in the summer of 1972. My fog began to lift. In my senior year, I began to witness boldly to Tom and another friend Terry. Within two years both of them and two more of their friends became believers. I attribute their salvation, humanly speaking, to the prayers of my mother. Though sequestered in her home, she prayed into the kingdom the friends of my sisters Joyce and Karen, as well as mine. These neighborhood children and their children continued faithfully in the faith, many going into the ministry. The world was dramatically changed by this obscure and private woman. Where the divine fire burns, there is no such thing as a small Christian.

### Years 1973-1979 College Years

I chose Bethel College in St. Paul Minn. because it was far enough from Lansing to start a new life, yet close to my sister Joyce who lived in the Twin Cities. I harbored some hopes that things would be different for me in a small Christian college than at the public schools. In some significant ways it was kinder and gentler. However, the problem of my social awkwardness and immaturity were things I could not leave behind and I carried them with me to college.

I wanted to establish an identity and to feel included, so I tried out for the basketball team. I remember not making the cut, and, walking back to my room in heavy disappointment, asking God what I could do in life, for I excelled in nothing. Immediately the answer came to me: I love God’s Word! I will give myself over to the study of the Bible. That same fall I had a second encounter. I went out at night in a field and was overwhelmed with the idea of God’s “favor.” I went to my room and looked the word up in a concordance. To this day I’m not sure what it means for me to be favored by God. All I know is that I went out again that night and the stars seemed to shine and sparkle to me supernaturally, and my soul filled with joy and hope.

I did have a couple of good friends in these early days of college, but for the most part I was a loner, preferring solitude along the lake and wooded areas of the campus, pouring my heart out to God. Academically, I was completely unmotivated, getting by with mediocre grades. I did,

however, begin to memorize Scripture motivated by a seminar I went to during my senior year of high school. Memorization was something I thought I could never do, but I decided to memorize thoroughly one verse per week with much review, and found that over time I memorized large sections of Scripture, even short books like James and Philippians.

My sophomore year was a low point. I fell for a girl who, I found out through a mutual friend, would never even dream of dating me. This compounded my feelings of inadequacy for it revealed to me how girls thought of me, at least the ones I would care about. However, two positive things happened this year. First, I joined the male chorus and learned some basics of voice and music reading. Next, in the early spring I had another encounter. I remember being deeply struck by the fickleness of my soul towards God, and I feared that I could easily forsake Him. One evening I felt as if the Spirit of God compelled me outside to the hill over the lake. Looking up at the moon through the bare oak branches, I prayed the prayer in that old hymn by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *O Sacred Head now Wounded*, “Lord, let me never never outlive my love for Thee.” I knew without a doubt that this was a divine promise.

Things began to brighten up for me. That summer I went to France on a mission trip. In a monastic graveyard I asked God that he would be for me like He was for the patriarchs in the Old Testament. I was never sure if this was a true encounter or one induced by the unusual circumstances, but I was deeply aware that the stories of their lives were not written as mere history. They were written for anyone who read them with faith.

I was chosen to be a Resident Assistant my junior year for the freshmen, and this was the first responsible position I ever remember having. Be this as it may, what stood out that year to me were two things. First, I had another encounter that spring. I came in from my usual time with the Lord outside, and grabbed a philosophy book with desire to read and understand it. I noticed that immediately my spirit deflated. God’s Spirit drove me back outside, and felt like I wrestled a promise from Him like Jacob did at the Brook of Jabbok. The promise was that God would always be more to me than knowledge. Given the fact that I went into academics with all of its temptations, I have always cherished this promise.

Then I met Dr. John Piper. A young New Testament professor at the time, he combined a passionate love for God and the Bible with rigorous intellectual activity. His doctrines of grace and the sovereignty of God meshed with my experience of encounters with God, and I became “reformed.” I decided that I wanted to be a teacher like him, and do with the Old Testament what he did with the New. I began to study hard and with purpose for the first time in my life. Looking back, however, my motives were mixed. I knew since my first encounter in high school that I was called to the ministry, but I feared getting up in front of people especially performing ceremonial functions all pastors were required to do. Now, with the professorial model before me, I could do what Dr. Piper did in an academic setting. What slipped in with this was contempt for the local church and an exultation of the academy.

From the spring of 1976 to the spring of 1977 I was on a spiritual “high.” The encounters I had over the past four years had the cumulative effect of bonding me deeply to God. He was my single passion and desire, and I spent hours outside by the lake and woods alone with Him. This time was foundational to my subsequent life and ministry. However, there was a dark side to it

all. With this intense spiritual high came spiritual pride. I looked around and saw nobody else with my experience and truly felt that I was more spiritual than all my peers. I loved God, but was more attached to the idea that He could make me “great” in the eyes of the church and the world.

#### **Lecture Four:**

##### **The Dark Night, Becoming a Man, Living in Community (1977-present)**

It was all sparked by a “reflections” talk I was asked to give at the senior banquet. Why I was asked in the first place was a mystery to me, for I was relatively unknown in my class. I had to face my fear of getting up in front of people, but this would be my great opportunity to tell everyone about how real God had become to me throughout my years at Bethel. Unfortunately, I wanted to be entertaining as well, and started off with a string of jokes that were not funny. By the time I got to what I really wanted to say, I lost my audience, and failed utterly. Humiliated, I went out to God that night, but He was no longer there. I began journaling that night to try to make sense out of it all. Little did I know that before me lay seven years of spiritual famine.

Being Reformed I settled on Westminster Seminary. I entered the M.A.R. program in Biblical Studies so that I could avoid all pastoral courses. I wanted to become a scholar. However, I am not, by temperament, a scholar, at least of the academic research type. I was lost among a crowd of peers who were far smarter with far more solid academic backgrounds. This made me anxious. I still went out outside and prayed, but it was if the heavens were made of steel. I pathetically cried out like a forlorn and wounded animal in the wilderness; my soul was in a wretched state.

There was nobody at the seminary that I felt I could connect with, and as far as I knew, there was no one to help me in my spiritual crisis. The best thing about my experience there was that, by browsing the bookstore, I discovered for the first time Puritan theology. Here was a body of literature that focused on the spiritual life; writers who were doctors of the soul. What was even more significant for me was a book on the shelf titled *The Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross. As soon as my eyes fell on it, it was in my hands. Here was someone who knew exactly what I was experiencing. This, along with reading Thomas Merton’s *Seven Storey Mountain*, was my introduction of monastic spirituality, which led me to the church fathers.

Those experiencing the “dark night” are vulnerable and need spiritual guidance. I did not know this and was on my own. One thing one must not do is to make critical life decisions in such a state without spiritual mentors. After a couple of disappointing years at seminary and becoming spiritually jaded, all I wanted now was a girl and to settle down in a normal life of marriage. I met a girl at church. She was cute and of a prominent family in the church. She had no interest in theology, but by this time I didn’t care; my old spiritual fire was burning low and my sensual fire was alive. I married her for the wrong reasons, something I think she intuitively knew, but I did not realize. My relational naiveté and social immaturity blinded me to the realities of my situation.

I began my doctoral studies in the fall of 1980. At my first interview with my advisor, Dr. Stephen Geller, he looked me square in the eye and told me that I did not know how to think. This was true; study for me up to this point was mere memorization of lecture notes. Generously Dr. Geller spent years with me, much of it in private tutorials, teaching me how to think through the Hebrew text. One lecture in particular opened up to me the way the ancient Hebrews thought in concrete “images” of the natural world, and I left thinking that one could write a whole theology based on this insight.

Although I was still in a dry spiritual state, my interaction with secular thought in my doctoral program forced me to sift through my beliefs, and I grew in confidence of my faith. I began to teach a small group Bible study at my church with enthusiasm, and grew in my teaching skills. Reading opened up new horizons. I tried to read some of St. Augustine every day for a number of years, and interest in classical antiquity was aroused as well as comparative religions.

#### *Years 1984-1991 Becoming a Man*

It may sound strange to title this section of life “becoming a man” when I was 29-36 years of age. My sisters always felt, as they told me later, that I was rather favored and protected being the youngest and the only boy. On top of this, I have observed that it often takes more time for a child of the 60s to grow up. It usually takes a crisis, a “drawing of blood,” so to speak. So it was for me.

The winter of 1984 I fell down with the flu, ill in bed for a week. I was reading Spurgeon’s autobiography, and as I lay in bed, the heavens, so to speak, opened up to me for the first time in seven years. The God I knew so well in college days came back, as it were, although I knew in the depths of my soul that He never did abandon me. This encounter gave me no new revelation, but it affirmed the reality of the former ones, and it energized me to serve God with greater intensity. I began teaching Sunday school at church along with the small group. My wife seemed to resent this new turn of events and, in hindsight, this is where we began to drift apart.

I finished my Ph.D. program in 1987 and began teaching at Seminary of the East (SOE), a radically new type of seminary that was based on mentoring and taught out of the local church. There I was mentored by George Renner, the New Testament professor, who seemed to understand me and “took me under his wing.” Our faculty was small, but we were close-knit, and felt free to think “outside of the box.” This was the very first social setting in my life where I felt accepted for who I was. It was a truly safe place to grow and flourish. Looking back, the decade of 1987-1997 were formative years where I grew in high Christian ideals, especially in my doctrine of the Church.

This did not happen, however, without pain. My wife, whom I was not able to nurture along with me, left me in 1990, and the divorce came quickly. Although I retained my position at the seminary because of the biblical grounds in my favor, I was racked with guilt for my failure in the marriage. I was not innocent; in fact, I lost my innocence. I had to become a man and own up to this.

What compounded the pain of this time was that soon after I fell for a young woman. This was the most dangerous moment of my life up to this point. She was beautiful and fit the “archetype” buried in my soul since I was young and adored my “college queen” sister. I remember at one point that I was willing to sacrifice my calling for her. What was truly poor judgment on my part was that she was one of my seminary students. Fortunately, I placed myself under the authority of my mentors who forbade me to see her for six months. This saved me, for after this time, she cooled toward me. I was brokenhearted, but in this time of despair I asked God one day while reading Deuteronomy 6:4-5 whether I could love Him as I did her. The answer came fast and clear - yes! From this moment on, my teaching became like fire.

#### Years 1992-1999 Starting a Family

I never did know what to look for in a woman; it seemed to me that I was left to myself on this and needed help. God knew this and arranged a marriage for me. Kathy and I met on a blind date set up by mutual friends and married in December 1992. God blessed us with two redheads, Abigail and Jeremy. Moreover, Kathy’s father, Col. Ray Strawser, who had been a Methodist chaplain in the Army, and I became fast friends. We found that we both had been on a journey toward a sacramental world view through our experience and reading of Scripture and the church fathers. Now we would travel this path together.

Especially critical for me at this time was my reading of the *Ascent to Mount Carmel* by St. John of the Cross. This Spanish mystic has become my spiritual guide in life. My reading of Evelyn Underhill’s book *Mysticism* gave me vocabulary and concepts to describe my experience of God. By reading Aquinas, I began to put together a Christian cosmology that wedded together both the spiritual and physical realms, and John of Rysbrueck’s *Spiritual Espousals* introduced to me the ethical dimension of virtue in spiritual development. I discovered the Jesus Prayer by reading *The Way of the Pilgrim*, which in turn introduced me to the *Philokalia* and the spiritual theology of the Eastern Church.

We began to attend an Episcopal church but I did not become a member because the denomination was not where I was theologically or morally. My father-in-law joined a denomination that brought together the evangelical, charismatic, and liturgical streams of Christian experience. His ordination was held at a religious community in Maryland. We were so moved by this service and what we saw there that Kathy and I decided to sell our house and test a call to see if this was the place to which God had called us to minister.

#### Years 2000-2008 Life in Community

I never thought of myself as being an idealist and certainly not a radical. However, my experience at Seminary of the East opened up my heart to the church. I went into academics with the purpose of avoiding the church and its ministry. Now I found myself longing for authentic church experience such as we see in Acts 2:40-47. This community seemed to be such a place. We did not want church to be something we did on Sundays and an evening or two during the week. We wanted our whole lives to be centered on the church to live it out, so to speak, in the warp and woof of our lives.

The worship was incredible, combining the best of 2000 years of liturgy and music. Prayer was central to each day; we observed the ancient monastic offices of prayer beginning with *Lauds* in



the morning and *Compline* in the evening. We were to make three vows if we felt God was calling us there; obedience, stability, and *conversatio*. The first, obedience, was to the abbot of the community, though there were structures in place to protect the members from abuse of power. Stability meant that we would be there for life. *Conversatio* is a Latin word for the dedication of oneself to grow in the Lord and to work through relational difficulties that inevitably arose. The sisters made the additional vow of chastity. There were no brothers.

In 2002 we became “professed” which means that we took these vows and became full members. Before this I was ordained as priest in the denomination with the intention to serve in the community. It was no longer practical for me to teach at Seminary of the East, so I became a full-time minister serving as the Dean of the denomination’s seminary that operated there at the community. Moreover, the community functioned somewhat like a “hospital” for the spiritually wounded. People from all over came for retreats or even to live there for extended periods of time for spiritual healing. It was here that I learned to minister to the broken.

I was responsible for the education of the students who came from our diocese. Since we were short on professors, I had to teach outside of my field of Old Testament, reaching even beyond the New Testament and hermeneutics into theology, church history, and even homiletics. This forced me to become a generalist, opening up new dimensions of thought. My thinking was challenged further by von Balthasar’s *Cosmic Liturgy*, a continued reading of Aquinas, and the *Philokalia*, a compendium of Eastern theologians and mystics, especially St. Maximus the Confessor. In many ways I thrived at the community.

Community living is very intense and is not easy. It was hardest on Kathy. She had given up her home to live in a household where we lived in a basement apartment where she could not set out her things and had to share the kitchen with the family upstairs. A professional woman all her life, she now had to adjust to this new and rigid environment. We all lived by Jesus’ promise that those who lose their lives for Christ’s sake shall gain it, but this was especially so for her. It was hard for her beyond words. However, through working out this call in the day-to-day grind, she grew in spirit to levels where she could not go on her own and to which I could not take her. Moreover, she was blessed with the challenge and joys of homeschooling the kids.

The community was founded back in 1982 and seemed to be fairly well-established. However, in 2006 cracks began to show in the foundation. The denomination experience upheaval and we felt compelled to leave it. The abbot who founded the community was aging and less able to function, but was unable to transfer leadership into the second generation. I found myself taking on more and more pastoral responsibility with no real authority. Finally, there was scandal in the abbot’s family, the sisters began to leave, and the community fell apart. I was helpless to do anything about it.

#### Years 2009 to Present

We did not know where to go or what to do. For the first time I felt the terror of being destitute and my children exposed to the dangers that arise from poverty. If Kathy’s parents had not been willing to leave their retirement community and buy a house for us all to live in together, for all I know we would have been in the streets. The three- generation household has worked well for us all, but I know that Kathy’s parents have sacrificed for my family.

These last few years have been both a time of great trial and blessing for us. The trials had to do with working through the loss of the life we had at community, the sadness of ideals not realized, and disappointment with hypocrisy in those whom we trusted. I had to deal with the humiliation of having to live on food stamps for over a year because I could not feed my family. The amazing thing, however, is to see how God provides in so many ways. Just at the right time God comes through, and we are learning to wait on God. Personally, I have discovered the wonder of Lord's Prayer for the first time in my life; each phrase is rich beyond words.

Let me share one last thing to illustrate how life mapping reveals the way God works grace into us over the long haul. I told you earlier how angry and envious I was as a boy. Well, in the fall of 2009 in the height of my distress, as I drove with my wife down the highway, out of nowhere God opened my eyes to see the truth about myself. I saw for the first time that I was an envious man. I was envious of others I deemed more successful than me in ministry and financially. The roots of this reached all the way back to middle school where I was envious of all those popular kids. It was something that lurked just under my radar; if someone told this to me before this, I would have pushed it off in disbelief. But at that moment in the car, I saw it all as clear as day. My envy was subtle; it showed itself when I felt sadness at other men's success. Upon this revelation, I owned it with my heart, confessed it, and was filled with joy and freedom. Self revelation, even when it is a painful, is wonderful. Sin, when it is seen for what it is and confessed, no longer has power over you. So I thank God for my trials, for in them I have gained self knowledge, and knowledge is power.

### Conclusion

As you can see, my life is not a success story as the world defines success. Even in light of my own Christian ideals, my life has been messy. You have seen the struggles, sin, and brokenness of it all. Nevertheless, my life is holy because God's fingerprints are all over it. Where would I be now without those encounters I had when I was a young man? I would have sunk ever deeper into mediocrity of spirit and soul, fumbling around in my own misery. As for the future, however short or long, I have utmost confidence in God and that He will be faithful to His promises. How they will ultimately be fulfilled is a mystery to me; our interpretations of them are always hazy. In the meantime, I must press on for the prize of the upward call of Christ.