

There was another part of me that was searching.

On the one hand I loved life, my family and my friends, but on the other hand I was incredibly frustrated not knowing what I was doing here. One day I was sorting the wooden crates and started smashing them out of sheer frustration.

I remember explaining to my mother that if I ever have kids, I'd want them to be free, I'd want them to climb mountains, ride horses, travel the world, I'd want them to have complete freedom, not be a caged bird like me. Dear mother took it all in stride and that evening we finished our bottle of wine together. Mum loved me no matter what.

I loved doing sculpture.

At times I would stay up till two or three in the night cutting and carving. My mind would wonder, "I have this piece of wood and no matter what I make of it, it is already in there. I just need to discover the form and bring it to the fore, whether ugly or beautiful."

Then I would think about my life. "Whatever I make of it; it is already there and it is for me to discover. I can make it beautiful or ugly or do nothing and leave it as a lump of wood that can be used as firewood."

I would get such highs and inspiration from carving wood, but there was always that feeling that I was missing the bull's-eye in my life.

After this came the army as I was drafted. I was looking forward to it and liked the idea of being away from home. After some days I had a sincere question about my placement and so I asked the sergeant. However, he could not give me a decent answer and instead barked with an authoritarian voice, "Now that you are in the army, you do what you are told." I was surprised and did not appreciate to be talked down to in that way as I had a legitimate question. I remember praying one time asking if the Lord could get me out of there, then I would go to Africa to dig a well for people. After five or six weeks of causing difficulties, I got



discharged. When I was finally free, I was needed in the business and never made it to Africa.

Although things went well in the business I became more and more restless.

We had 'Action Committee Brazil' and my idols like Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. I realised more and more the amount of injustice there was in the world. I was wondering, 'Why does God allow all this?' I became frustrated with established religion. Such big buildings when there are so many poor? What was religion anyway? What was God all about? Did he even exist?

I had about four or five great friends. But then I had those moments that I would step aside. I'd look at them thinking, "Why can't I be like them? They are happy with life, with their job, their salary and are thinking about marriage. Why am I not like that?"

I would slip out and go for a walk on the beach.

I was drawn to the beach as previously I had this [experience with Jesus](#) there. Now I had questions; why was I born in Holland with food and needs supplied and not in India, Bangladesh or Biafra where children with swollen tummies were starving to death?



Possible marriage? I started dating this beautiful girl who all the boys in the surrounding area were eyeing. My parents adored her as she was stable, polite and 'came from a good nest'. She would be a good balance in my restless life. My parents were even thinking about marriage etc., and I think that Dad already had bought us a house.

Off to the beach again to gather my thoughts.

"Is this going to be my life? No, I can't get locked in." I decided to break off the relationship to everyone's dismay and to her and my heartbreak.

Meeting Ome Dirk... On Mondays, we had very busy market and served fruit and vegetables with about six or seven people manning the booth.

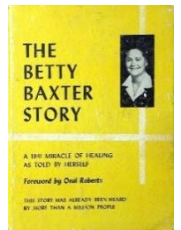


The booth next to us was 'Ome Piet', who sold foam rubber for mattresses and couch-cushions; he also enjoyed a drink, often sleeping on his mattresses. One particular Monday morning Ome Piet was not there and his booth was assigned to another older gentleman 'Ome Dirk'. He arrived on a bicycle in the snow and put up a big sign "Jesus is Alive". At first, we cracked some stupid jokes. Yet something made me respect this man. He reminded me of the early apostles. When it was time to close up, I spoke with him. I was impressed with his gentle manners.

He gave me a little 30-to-40-page booklet to read.

It was called "The Healing of Betty Baxter". I did not like reading as I felt it was a waste of time. But that night when work was done and dinner finished, I went early to my room, closed the door and started reading. She describes how Jesus touched her and healed her spine. Incredible! This was not possible! Then those tears came. The following week 'Ome Dirk' gave me another book called "Cross and the Switchblade", about a preacher who worked in New York among the street gangs. It was fascinating for me to read about these amazing people who had a complete life change. But where did this leave me?

Ome Dirk had this amazing life story from a drunk and even abusing his wife 'tante Agie' to seeing Jesus with arms spread out to him. He gave his life to the Lord when he was around 60 years. He felt he had wasted his whole life and wanted to use these last few years of his life tell others about Jesus. Ome Dirk came 20 kms on his bicycle through the snow to the market to tell me. **A beast turned hero.** He told to me that I should read the Bible. Now for me the Bible was only read in church by the priests. Mother had told to me, that many people had gone crazy while reading the Bible and that it was a guide book, 'How not to enjoy life'.



That had cured me to want to go near it, as I desired to enjoy life. **We had one Bible in the house with those super drawings of Gustave Dore.** I had looked at the drawings but never read it. One day, in spite of possibly going crazy, I decided to take it off the shelf and started reading. To my total surprise I was getting answers on how to live my life and what I should do, besides making money and living for weekends? The “Why’s and Wherefore’s” were getting answers. Even Saturday night when my friends would come to pick me up I would at times prefer to stay home. “I’ll stay home.” - “But why, what’s wrong?” - “Nothing, I’m reading.” - “You never read. What are you reading that is so important?” - “I am reading the Bible.” “You, what? No, come on man, that’s not where it is at.”



It dawned on me that I had eternal life and I could never lose that again. Never again did I have to worry about whether I would end up in heaven or hell. This was bliss; this was heaven on earth. I knew where I came from and where I was going. I felt solid ground under my feet and was no longer trying to stay afloat, treading muck in the bog of humanity.

I thought Jesus was amazing and totally fearless; his first miracle was about 600 litres of the very best wine. Then he whacked all the hawkers and money grabbers single-handedly out of the temple, he was really cool. But wait a minute, my heart is to be the temple of God. Would I allow him to whack all the money and business out of my heart so I could be free to follow him?

I spoke with ‘born again’ business people. They told me that these feelings of serving the Lord wear off once I’m more mature. I was not impressed.

Actually, I thought that ‘I was quite special’, because I was understanding the meaning of life. I thought that God must also think that I am special

and that he must be very happy with me. By now I was smoking less and less; instead of many cigarettes, to only two pipes a day. **Rather smug and pleased with myself** I sat down in a comfortable chair on the 11th of November in 1971, 1.15 in the afternoon. I had lit my pipe and told God that what I’d read first, that was his message to me... I had a booklet in my hand and cracked it open in the middle to see what the Lord wanted to tell me. A verse screamed at me, “You are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father you’ll do.” (Jn.8:44)

For a moment I went into a state of shock. I threw my pipe in the coal bin and said, **“That never, ever, never, ever, never will I be of the devil. The devil is not my father, God is. I belong to him and to prove it; I’m gonna serve him.”** I stopped smoking and decided there and then that I would serve the Lord. Next were 2½ months were tests to see how serious and determined I was about serving him, before the Lord made a way to join some beautiful people in Amsterdam who were serving the Lord. They knew their Bible, and taught me. This was the start of my now 53-year journey with Jesus. Paul said (1Cor.15:19) “If in this life we only have hope in Christ we are of

all men most miserable.” Here I disagree with Paul; although my life had ups and downs; **I am of all men most richly blessed and the happiest man alive.**

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Why did I decide to Serve the Lord?



I am apprehensive of writing this as the last thing that I want is the focus on me, as it should be on the one that I love, serve and who has given me so much joy in my life. He has honestly made the happiest person alive on this earth.

I wasn’t always... as a teen I would many times be utterly frustrated. I remember secretly hoping that if a bomb falls anywhere in this world let it fall on my house so my life would be finished.

My parents were wonderful people and it seemed like I had everything going for me. We were a closeknit family and we all participated in the family business. At weekends we lived it up. Life seemed great, nothing could stop us and the girls liked us. This was also due to the fact that as friends we would not gossip or talk behind their backs. What else could I want?