



Small

By Waldo Malan
BEGINNINGS

“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin...” [Zechariah 4:10a NLT]

When we are called to the work of the Lord, in being a part of establishing His Kingdom on earth, we often look to our goal, that ‘final’ picture of accomplishment we have in our mind, and may at times feel discouraged at what we view as ‘small beginnings.’ However, when we persevere in that calling and find ourselves in a place where we are able to look back on years of hard work, we can also see the hand of God in establishing our work. I am always encouraged that God has given us the power to make plans, yet at the same time He establishes those very same plans (Proverbs 16:9). With this in mind I hear the words of Christ, *“Faithful in little, faithful in much”* [Luke 16:10].

So I look back over the years we have been with River Ministries and rejoice in the goodness of God. It has now been a journey close on 18 years, and today, when we have accomplished much by the grace of God, we are under constant attack from those who do not know or recognize the smaller days that have gone before. Allow me to take you on a brief journey of remembrance.

River Ministries started out in 1997 with André and Jenny Roebert and 4 other people filled with a passion to see revival come to the people of God in South Africa. At that time, of course, the ministry was simply known as Revival South Africa. The purpose of that ministry played itself out in weekly road trips to small towns all over our country, where they believed in and practiced the call of Christ to bring good news to people and to set captives free. I joined with my wife and young daughter early in 1998, and for the next 2 and half years we joined the team to travel South Africa. Eventually I put nearly 250 000 kilometres on our car, which at its end was held together with magical silicone and some duct tape! We had some of the most incredible experiences with God during those trips, saw thousands of people turn their hearts to God, and experienced the birth of other ministries.

The meetings were held from Monday to Friday, Saturday was for travelling back home to do washing, Sunday we had meetings in a local theatre, and then back on the road. There were

weeks we spent at home, and these times we used for admin tasks and planning. The Sunday services (really revival meetings) were the start of The River, which today is still doing the same thing. The only difference now is that The River service, if we include a television congregation, serves on average 350 000 people every Sunday. But let me backtrack.

In 1999 God made a way for us to purchase an old warehouse in East London, for the purpose of establishing a Ministry Centre; this place was going to be an HQ of sorts, a base of operations from where we could do what God led us to do. So God gave vision to André and Jenny, and surrounded them with people who could share in that vision, and then God came and established those plans.

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All kinds of things happened once the HQ was established. We hosted our first conference in 1999, the purpose of which was to give a platform to ministers of God who desired to see people set free and set on fire with a love for the Lord! The second conference in 2000 saw the building seat a capacity crowd of nearly 16 000 people as Benny Hinn ministered. Today we still host many conferences, only now they are also broadcast over the entire continent of Africa.

Locally we hosted the first 24-hour Praise & Worship event in 2000; here local teams came together (I think we were about 8 teams from various churches in the city) to present uninterrupted worship to the Lord. We had a capacity crowd of nearly 300 people attend the final service. In retrospect that was a ‘small beginning’ as well, since the attendance grew to a thousand time that with the One Voice Worship Experience in 2014!

Since September 1999 God has added many facets to the Ministry – some leisure establishments that are often used as retreats or venues for camps and conferences, a fully accredited Bible school, a continuing missionary arm (Every Tribe Missions), an adventure gap-year programme, television broadcasts over satellite and terrestrially, a humanitarian aid division, a charter company offering EMS and mercy flights, as well as some other business ventures positioned to fund the ministry.

Through it all I can see the hand of God at work, and I know that He is far from finished. I know that when I die the small part I had to play in God’s Kingdom will simply continue to grow even bigger. There is a USA saying, *“Everything is bigger and better in Texas,”* but I have to change that! Everything is bigger and better in heaven! Whatever we build on earth must ultimately be for the Kingdom because only that will remain. Whatever we build that is not Kingdom focused will simply find no entrance into heaven.

We have been falsely accused, we have been belittled, we have seen personal and ministry attacks, we have been ostracized, and often spiritually ‘beaten.’ We have also been encouraged, supported, loved and been shown grace. Whether in pain or joy, God continues to establish those plans of ours that are fixed on His glory. And here’s the real deal about ‘small beginnings’ – every new day will have its own share of small beginnings, and every day will have its own share of bigger things! So, love the Lord with all you have, and allow Him to change your ‘small’ into His ‘big’!