

## **Preface – Clay in The Potter’s Hands**

**As Chris’ wife, I felt it might be helpful if I wrote something to give you a glimpse of the person he used to be, the man he now is by the grace of God, and how this book came to be written.**

In 2006 I married Chris. At that time, he was a self-made businessman, with the flashy car and expensive clothes! He was a man driven by success and a need to impress others. In his own mind he ‘knew it all’ and had a tendency to make insensitive jokes at others to bolster up his own ego.

His ability to listen to other people and validate their views and feelings was almost non-existent. He was ‘right’ and everyone else was ‘wrong’! This is how our marriage started, and most people openly told us that we had no chance of getting past the first two years.

Twelve years later, we are still married, and Chris is a very different man. He is thoughtful, sensitive, and willing to listen, empathise and understand; he confesses his faults, apologizes for his failings, asks for forgiveness and offers to put right the things he has done wrong and the hurts he has caused to others. Gone are the flashy cars and the expensive clothes. Gone is his need to impress others – now, whatever he does is done with one sole motive... to do God’s will and to bring glory to Him.

So, how did Chris change from a man full of his own self-importance to ‘a man after God’s own heart’; a man who truly wants to demonstrate to others what God can do to us when we have spent our life making idols of ourselves? The answer to that question is through God’s determined pursuit of him since 2008, relentlessly revealing to him the true state of the condition of his soul before a Holy God; exposing the sins and hypocrisy that lay hidden in the deepest recesses of his heart, and bringing upon him great conviction and godly sorrow, leading him into a place of genuine repentance with a holy desire to change from a follower of Christ who is living his life in ‘the flesh’, to a follower of Christ whose whole desire is to now live his life ‘in Christ’ and for Christ.

Over these past ten years God has spoken deep into his soul and revealed to him from His Word what it means to be a man of God, in every aspect of a man’s life; as husband, father, son, brother, businessman and colleague, friend and neighbour.

God has had to spiritually batter Chris into the shape of the vision that He has been revealing to him, throwing him onto The Potter’s Wheel and spinning him round and round, reshaping him time and time again into a vessel that He could use. Chris has not found this process easy and has often rebelled against the methods that God has used to instruct, discipline and correct him.

Many times Chris has closed off his ears and retreated into his ‘cave’ of self-pity, arguing against God and wishing that God had never given him a vision concerning the hearts and the lives of men who profess to be followers of Christ. But by God’s grace, even whilst carrying on with his day to day paid employment, Chris has risen to the challenge of completing this book for God’s glory.

For ten years, I have watched Chris fight the battle to put into practice the things God has revealed to him. I have witnessed the blood, the sweat and the tears that have accompanied his lonely, heart-breaking, soul searching journey of deliverance from a man of the flesh to a man after God's own heart. I have joined him in shedding many tears as he struggled against the world, the flesh and the devil in order to complete this book.

What you are now holding in your hands is a work that has been forged in the fiery-furnace of an immense burden to raise up men of God from the world's dust-heap of insignificance and irrelevance; to raise men up from the tsunami of worldly opinion that has sucked the very life and soul out of them.

God has a holy purpose for His men in every aspect of their lives, and this book, which Chris has written out of painful experience and obedience to God, is his gift, given in brotherly love, to every man who yearns to be raised from a life that seems meaningless, to a life that shines with the glory of God, in their every thought, word and deed.

This book is not a work of 'self-righteousness. It has been born in the crucible of much suffering – emotionally, physically and spiritually. I pray that every man who lays hold of this book will be challenged, convicted and changed by what is written within these pages, so that God receives all the glory for the transformation of their lives.

I would like to encourage every woman to read this book too, so that you may learn how to help your man become all that God wants him to be, and all that God **expects** of those He has called His sons.

***“My son, do not reject or take lightly the discipline of the LORD [learn from your mistakes and the testing that comes from His correction through discipline]; Nor despise His rebuke, for those whom the LORD loves He corrects, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”*** Proverbs 3:11-12.

***“... you have forgotten the divine word of encouragement which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord, and do not lose heart and give up when you are corrected by Him.”*** Hebrews 12:5.

***“You must submit to [correction for the purpose of] discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?”*** Hebrews 12:7.

***“For our earthly fathers disciplined us for only a short time as seemed best to them; but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems sad and painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness [right standing with God and a lifestyle and attitude that seeks conformity to God's will and purpose].”*** Hebrews 12:10-11.

***“Those whom I [dearly and tenderly] love, I rebuke and discipline [showing them their faults and instructing them]; so be enthusiastic and repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, your sinful behavior—seek God's will].”*** Revelation 3:19.

**Michele Neal**