



From the Road of Poverty

*Is the story of a poor boy from the largest nation
of South America managing to survive in the
early 1980s despite extreme poverty,
physical abuse, hunger, disease and countless
childhood traumas.*

Adauto Rezende

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Also, I thank God for My children, Michelle, Rodrigo, Danielle and my grandchildren Gabriel, Ana Clara, and Matheus which are so dear to me.

A special thanks to Gail Seeley for taking her time to edit this work, after reading the book and deeply being touched by it.

Thanks to Jack de Souza and Eduardo Moraes for the photos they provided for this book.

Forward

A Blessed Beginning! I am honored and happy for the opportunity to write the introductory note to this promising book, because I see a friend and servant of God, who is dedicated to his ministry and to the cause of God's kingdom, now launching himself as a writer. Whoever knows Pastor Adauto Rezende, knows that I have strong reasons to make such a statement.

From the first time I met him I saw his real interest in the things of God, also his reputation for having a sacrificial attitude and his friendship. In 1998 in the city of Toronto, where I first met him, the believers respected him as a man of God and admired him for his faithful and true testimony.

My greatest joy is to witness the beginning of his writing career. I am surprised because his first intellectual work demonstrates, without the shadow of a doubt, his gift as a writer. This is good. Better yet, it is very good!

With his clear vision of what to say and perfect coordination of his thought processes, he places himself, with this first literary work, among Brazil's main religious authors. I have the authority to affirm this because I have profound knowledge in this area.

We live in an evangelical society where our critics attack us in this very area of our knowledge, judging and condemning us, and falsely accusing us of not being thinkers. Some critics, sour and ill-mannered, even call us narrow-minded in our opinions, as if we don't know how to think outside of the box.

Pastor Adauto, thanks to God, joins the select group of men and women of God, who besides having been fluent in the pulpit on behalf of the Lord Jesus, now shows with the written word, that they can also glorify the name of our God as writers.

I cannot but congratulate your extraordinary boldness in revealing your personal testimony that only true possessors of rare courage would care to do.

I am proud to be able to contribute, even humbly, to the birth of this publication and its accomplishment, and I give you a hearty welcome to the literary world.

Rev. Paulo Ventura

From the author

I decided to write this book to enlighten and help people experiencing existential crises and distorted personalities, suffering severe and deep emotional disturbances. Such individuals live without motivation, losing their dignity, allowing envy, bitterness, rebellion, and insubordination to dominate their lives, becoming very unsociable and hostile. Even though with all these bad behaviors, many of them are precious stones buried by these sinful vices. All this tragedy is caused by the lack of revelation of their identities and the divine purposes for which they were created.

May God respond to those who have sought a solution to their conflicts through the pages of this book, is my fervent prayer. Maybe you are part of these people experiencing such crises and wondering “Who am I?”; “What am I doing on this planet?”; “What vocation do I have?”; “Does God care about me?”; “Can I be a tool of change for my generation?”; “Is there a cure for my hurting soul?” All of these questions are consistent, and God, in addition to responding to them, can still give you opportunities to fully accomplish all the purposes for which you have been placed in this world. The answers will possibly be obtained through the testimony of a teenager who survived by the grace and love of God, being summarized in the following pages.

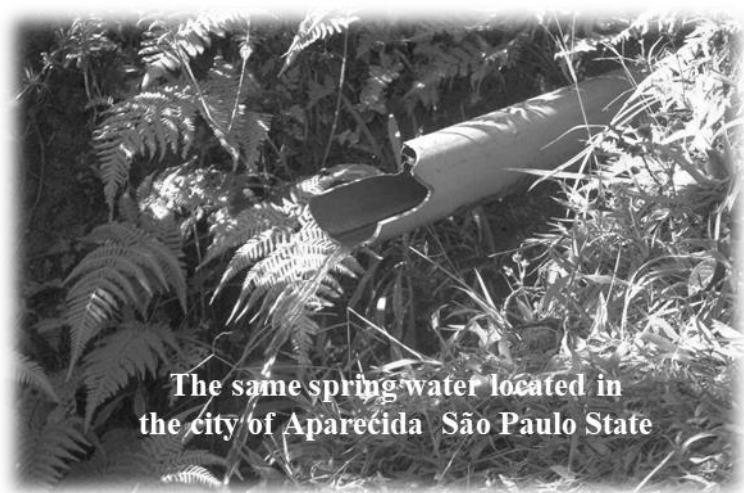
Introduction

I remember a certain time when my Mother received some duck eggs from a neighbour. We only had one mother hen but there were no eggs for her to hatch. Mother would attempt to keep her in the nest by making sure that there was at least one egg for her. But, on one occasion she didn't have any except some duck eggs, which she placed under the hen. After a few days, a few ducklings hatched. I was very young at the time and thought that situation very funny, so I watched this mother hen and her ducklings. Everything seemed normal, even though appearances told a different story — their beaks, feet and the sounds they made, were all differed from chickens. But, despite this fact, there was great motherly love between mother hen and the little ducklings. Some days later, mother hen went out for her first walk with her pseudo-offspring, and problems with identity began to show. When those little birds came upon a pond, they ran helter-skelter in the direction of the water. Mother hen became desperate, running after her flock trying to stop them. Of course, it wasn't her nature to take a 'walk' in the water. The poor mother hen stood by as, one by one, her happy offspring jumped into the water, leaving her flustered on the shore.

In the same way that my mother caused a major identity crisis in the lives of those birds, we also go through similar identity crises, which at times result in catastrophic consequences. It is time we discover our true identity. God created us with a specific purpose, with specific gifts and talents, so that we can accomplish the task He has for us to do. Sin has distorted the identity of thousands of men and women throughout the nations, and they search desperately to find their place in the world.

Chapter I

In search of happiness



When my father was seven years old my grandfather left without warning, leaving my grandmother and six children to fend for themselves. The abandoned young family toiled on a farm with no hope for my father of gaining neither an education nor a promising future. In 1957, at the age of 25, he married. At this time, unemployment and economic social crises were rampant in Brazil. Impoverished and struggling to support his wife and children, my father went in search of my grandfather, hoping for some financial assistance. This was the

beginning of my father's adventures.

In 1960 I was born in the small county of Palmas, State of Minas Gerais. Three years later Father located my grandfather in Valadares City, a city of about 200 thousand, 600 miles from Palmas. But his hopes were diminished when he learned that his father had a new family and there was nothing to spare. Desperately Father began to seek, from city to city, opportunities to provide for us a better life, education, and future which he himself had never had.

In 1965 we moved to the state of Goias, first to Formosa and then to Anapolis, where we lived in deep poverty. With five children, Father again went back to Minas Gerais to my grandfather, hoping for some help. This was once again a fruitless endeavor.

In frustration, my father disappeared, leaving my mother with no information about where he had gone. This sent my mother into depression and memory loss. I remember seeking after her and finding her wandering on the streets with a bag of dirty clothes, saying she wanted to go to see her mother who had died years earlier.

In 1966 my father received an inheritance from my maternal grandmother and used it to open a small coffee and doughnut shop in Valadares. My father, without knowledge of the gospel and the Lord Jesus, made one more mistake: the beginning of an affair with another woman, by whom he would eventually father five more children in addition to my mother's eight. (Two of my sisters, Edna and Maria Jose, died in childhood).

With neither of our parents to care for us, we were sent to be cared for by relatives. I was taken to the house of my uncles Geraldo and Sebastian in the village of my birth, far from Valadares, and there I spent a year living with my mother's relatives. It was a very hard period because of the absence of my parents and siblings; dozens of times, hidden from

everyone, I cried softly so as not to be heard by anyone. Finally, after a year, mother recovered and came to bring me home.

In 1967 my dad closed the failing business and left us, with my mother pregnant, in a small house belonging to one of his sister. In January of 1968 my brother Cristovão was born by now we were six – two sisters and three brothers. I was seven years old at the time.

Mom had no income except a small amount of money sent to us every other month by our grandfather. It was just enough to provide food for one meal each day.

In earlier 1968, Father came back and moved us to São Paulo city, the capital of the state of Sao Paulo to live in with our Aunt Zenith.

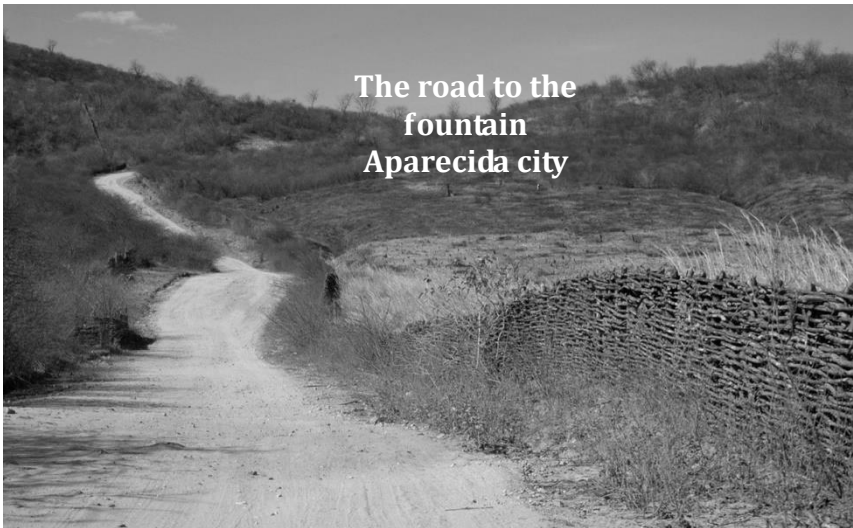
They resided in two rooms at the time, and I think they had five children. For about three months we stayed with them, dwelling like rats in a hole, crowded, for lack of space. Once again we were abandoned by Daddy without explanation of where he was going or when he would return.

Mom, without financial resources, abandoned by her spouse, and away from her relatives who were unaware of our difficulties, had no alternative but to find work to provide for us. With me by her side, she started selling sandwiches in the streets of the neighborhood. The money she earned was used to buy food and to help pay rent and utilities.

Months later, my father returned and took us to the city of Aparecida, in the Paraíba river valley, São Paulo, to live as squatters in an animal shelter in the middle of a hayfield, kilometers away from the city, without electricity and without any form of basic sanitation.

My father's mother, a woman spiritually obsessed by a satanic hatred, came to live with us in this bleak scene. She had fits of rage against my mother and because of her being tormented by demonic spirits, I became the target of her hostility as well. At the age of eight, I was forced by

Grandmother to carry water from a fountain which was a great distance from our house (see picture of it on page 01). I would spend the whole day filling and carrying two paint cans,



pouring them into two hundred liters water drums that lay next to our shelter, until they were filled.

In addition to the first task, I also had to walk a great distance to my father's work (construction site) and bring home wood for the stove. I remember many times walking along the highway shoulder and picking up empty ice cream cones which had been thrown by passengers through the bus window. I would brush off the dozens of ants and eat the cones, attempting to satisfy my hunger. In a short period of time I contracted TB due to a lack of food and the physical effort of the constant trips I made with the water cans and the log pieces.

My father started working night shifts in a bus station as a cleaner and my mother was again pregnant. I vividly remember the moments of my brother Joseph's birth. At about eleven o'clock on a cold night in June, Mama began to feel the contractions and her water broke. I went out, in the darkness with her, dodging the holes on the dusty animal trails, until we

reached a small hospital on the outskirts of the city and soon arrived my brother, who was almost born in the middle of the night in a desert foot path.

A month later, we placed what little we had in flour sacks (clothes and pans), on our backs ready for another adventure. The worsening of my health made my father return to São Paulo. In the capital, I had an x-ray, and a spot was found in my lungs. Money was scarce for medication and only a miracle could save me. I was constantly vomiting and my body had changed – I was like a skeleton; anyone who looked at me saw only skin and bones. Although unaffected by tuberculosis, my siblings were physically debilitated as well due to poor nutrition.

Yet again my mother found herself alone at Aunt Zenith's home, because Dad had disappeared once more. This time, it was a few days of absence, and when he returned he brought the news of having obtained a job and a house for us to live, in the city of Taubaté, in the interior of São Paulo. This was at the end of 1969. We were all happy because, after all, we would go to live in our own place.

Arriving in that city, we landed at the bus station and, to our surprise; we discovered that the house we imagined did not exist. It was one more of his risky adventures. We stayed there, in a public square near the station, without knowing the outcome of that journey or what else to expect. I was increasingly weakened. My father went out looking for a place where we could stay, leaving my mother hopeless with the sacks and looking after us.

In the midst of all these difficulties, the Lord was working. All the time He was in control of the situation, and today I can affirm that God has never abandoned us. While we waited for my father's return, a lady appeared and offered us a room for the night. Dona Tereza was the person used by God to welcome us. When my father came back, we all went to that

lovely lady's simple house. We spent three nights there, until someone informed us of a room for rent and we moved to the place almost immediately. In the first week, the room flooded after a heavy rain. But, as I said, the Lord had a purpose for our lives. The neighbors helped us by donating furniture and food.

Father was not a man to talk to his children. He never told any of us that he loved us, and seldom would speak kindly, either. He could not express his feelings because he had never heard gentle words from his father. There was a curse upon our family from past generations, seeking to destroy it. Dad had no friends, he trusted no one, and most of the time if someone tried to get closer to the family, he would find a way to get that person out of our way.

After some time, I was taken to the city hospital for another radiograph of my lungs. On the designated day to know the results, my father went with me. He carried me in his arms and held me in a different way. At that moment he showed a fatherly affection never felt by me before. When we arrived at the office, the doctor took the X-ray, placed it in front of the light and said: "Your son does not have anything else in his lung. The blemish disappeared". My father's eyes, which were as blue as the sky, gleamed like marbles, and at that moment I saw a great smile on his face. He took my skeletal arms and lifted them up, and hugging me, he kissed me with great hope now that I would survive.

Unmotivated and very depressed, Dad stopped looking for work, except for selling birds which he acquired on his trips to the coast. (The exotic bird trade was legal in Brazil at the time). In a new stage of struggle for survival, my mom began to make coxinhas and pastels (Brazilian savoury snacks) for me to sell on the streets of the city and, at the same time, she washed clothes for some middle class families. I studied in the morning and every afternoon I went out with a basket of snacks to sell.

So we were surviving. Every day I would bring the

money from the sales and give it to my father. Because of his double life, he became aggressive and easily lost his temper, beating me to the point that many times mother had to put me in a washbasin with salty water due to the violence of the beatings. Unfortunately, occasionally my mother acted hostile toward us as well; she did not disclose her problems to us, and was sometimes in distress as a result of father's behavior and infidelity. We were all very afraid of them, yet I loved them so much and to me, they were the best parents in the world.

At this time, my half-brothers also moved to the same city and from time to time, I would see my father walking down the streets holding their hands in the area where they lived. I would hide so as to avoid making contact and also for fear of my father's reaction. He never told us, including my Mom, that he had a second family. Hardly did he know that we already knew about them. Besides the emotional problems and the violence we suffered, there was the financial difficulty, since what we were earning was not only for our house, but for the other family as well. The snack sales helped, but being too young I was fearful of getting lost if I traveled too far from home, so I could not contribute enough income to feed our household. We ate the cheapest rice found in the grocery stores; my mother grew vegetables in the yard, and meat was a rarity. We drew water from a well and there was no sewage system, so we were infested by parasites, adding more problems to our already poor health. Satan, in many ways, tried to destroy me, either by illness, hunger or domestic violence. The kids saw me selling pastries on the streets, and thanks to my different accent from another region of the country, they bullied me. Tormented by them, my life at school became chaos too. I was constantly threatened and beaten several times by a mob of students. I began to sneak out of school and, many times, I had to hide so as to arrive home without been harmed. Despite of all this I was happy, singing

when I could, and glad to have my parents and siblings.

In spite of all these challenges and persecutions I routinely faced, I could see great miracles in my life.

One day I was selling snacks on the roof of a building under renovation, and one of the workers showed me the new premises of a hospital building under construction in the city and said, "If you go there in that building, you'll sell everything in minutes." The place seemed to be far away, and I soon heard a voice saying to me, "Do not go there, it's too far." I listened and with much more fear I obeyed and so I kept up the same pace, trying to sell forty pieces a day, bringing in only part of the money for expenses. I remember how often I saw my mother looking into the basket, counting twenty of the forty she had made in the morning, and her eyes filled with tears for the very low profit of the sales.

Nevertheless she was a fighter, never giving up, and in order to add to her family's earnings, she relentlessly hand washed clothes for mechanics (uniforms) and families in the area, worked as housekeeper some days of the week and found time to make the snacks I sold, plus her home chores. All this she did, amidst her inner struggles caused by her relationship with my father. The hardship of daily work and from withdrawing water from a deep well made mother the victim of several miscarriages. Countless people advised her to leave my father, for they saw the ill-treatment suffered by her and her children, but she did not leave him, but instead took care of Dad with an unusual love.

One Saturday my mother made her usual forty snacks and when I left the house with them, I heard a voice saying to me, "Go to the distant building." I found it a little odd and said to myself, "I cannot go there, it's too far." But the voice insisted that I go. I decided to be courageous and proceed. I walked about one hour, and when I got there, I came across a huge wooden gate. I knocked hard, and after a few minutes someone

opened it. Surprised by my presence, this person shouted to the other workers, "There's a pastry boy here!" Within minutes, the basket was empty and I returned home in a little more than two hours.

My mother was extremely surprised to see me returning so soon (sometimes it took me seven hours walking and trying to sell these snacks). I told the story and asked her to make eighty pieces for the coming Saturday (I would sell from Monday to Saturday, however, in those days, the companies paid the workers on Saturdays, so it was easier to sell them on that day). On the following Saturday I walked right to the new site, carrying the basket with eighty snacks, and on arrival, saw the snacks disappear in minutes. A couple of hours later I returned home, the pockets of my little shorts bulging with money. Unfortunately it did not mean much profit because the high inflation that corroded the Brazilian economy forced us to have many bills or coins exchanged even in small transactions. When I got home with much more money, I saw, on my mother's face, a smile I had not seen for a long time. Proud of the success of my sales, I told my parents: "Next week you can make one hundred and forty snacks; I'm going to sell them all." (Due to the volume of sales, my father also started to help in the kitchen early morning on Saturday). So they had to buy a new basket that would fit over a hundred pastries and also pay for the bus ticket, since the weight was beyond what I could carry. The devil, at that time, did not want me to go far to bless my family, but by divine grace the Lord gave me faith and courage to believe in His protection and as I obeyed His voice we were all blessed.

God had placed in me a sense of responsibility for my family, and even without knowing Him, He knew me, comforted me, and protected me, so I could live.

Therefore, by the provision of the Lord, for two years with that income, we were able to pay two rents, hydro,

groceries, and clothes for everyone. All the money earned I brought home and handed to my parents. Knowing the Scriptures today, I understood how God sustained Elijah during the shortage of bread in Israel, without letting his servant starve to death. The Lord also provided for us miraculously, even though we continued to bow and serve idols through ignorance of the Word of God.

I remember one year-end, when my older sister Carmen and I went out to sell vegetables to raise some money for Christmas gifts. We knocked on the door of a mansion in the city, and a lady came and presented us with chocolates. On another occasion, as we returned home, I found a good sum of money on a sidewalk corner. We then bought several treats for us and our siblings that we had always dreamed of having.

Chapter

II

Surviving by divine grace



I got my first job at the age of eleven at a small bistro in town. It was a great achievement, as I had dreamed of getting a steady job and quitting selling pastries, after two years of facing bullying and other street threats. I worked delivering takeout food and washing dishes. (My schedule was from 11 A.M. To 5 P.M.).

My boss was a member of an Italian family that had immigrated to Brazil, investing their savings in that small business. My mother was a part-time housekeeper in their home, and through her connection I got the job. They were like parents to me and my siblings. Every day after my shift I was allowed to take leftovers from the kitchen and bring them home, helping out our budget and nourishing our weakened

bodies. I talked a lot and liked to sing while washing dishes in the kitchen, and the Lord gave me grace in the eyes of the cooks, who always cared and were patient with me.

When I was fourteen I went to work in a larger restaurant in the city. There I met a tall black handsome cook named Dario, feared because of his criminal reputation. He was a cook during the day and a crook in the nights. He practiced witchcraft, was a dangerous criminal, a drug dealer, and in trouble with the law.