

'I highly recommend David's book as inspiration for our times, where the reader is pointed time and again to the limitless and faithful work of God despite apparent obstacles. Mud, Bullets and Open Roads serves as a strong reminder that nothing is impossible for the great God we serve, whether we find ourselves up against spiritual opposition, lack of resources, tight deadlines, or even huge personal loss. God is still on the throne and His power is at work across the globe through His people. Read it and be encouraged!'

Liz Parker, missionary with Mission Aviation Fellowship and author of *Immeasurably More*

'What a page turner! David Robinson's account of his years as a missionary makes exciting and inspiring reading. Definitely a missionary autobiography not to be missed.'

Tony Lane, Professor of Historical Theology at the London School of Theology

'A fascinating insight into a missionary's life and how God worked through him.'

John Butterworth, award-winning journalist, editor and author of *God's Secret Listener* and *God's Needle*

'In our world of competing choices, this book could be challengingly subtitled "This one thing I do" (Phil 3:13). David's life as a church planter in rural Thailand, and Team Leader in Cambodia exemplifies this singular commitment to obey God. Through sufferings and loss, joys and triumphs the book illustrates powerfully the Lord's faithfulness and

sovereignty in all circumstances. This is authentic David, as I have known him, through his 50 years in mission, pursuing his goal: “one thing I do” in following Christ. Read the book and follow David’s example.’

David Pickard, former General Director of OMF International

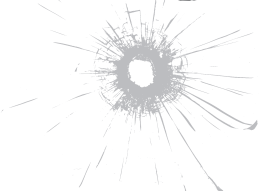
MUD

BULLETS

AND

OPEN

ROADS



DAVID ROBINSON

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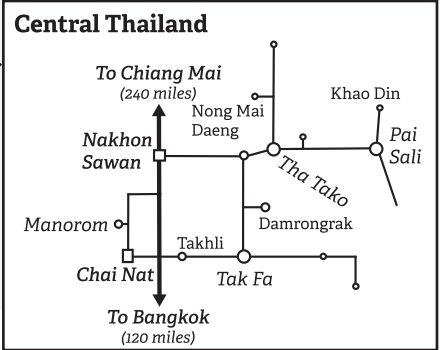
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PROLOGUE

It's not every day you foil an assassination plot.

On Sunday 8 August 1982, I was bouncing along the dirt road in the local bus – a converted truck – while sweating in 40-degree heat. I got chatting about spiritual things to the small, wiry man sitting next to me. After a while, he told me about a dream in which he had leprosy but had been cured through a Western man who looked a little like me.

‘What do you think of the dream?’ he asked.

‘Could it be you're about to experience something special?’ I ventured.

I learned his name was Mr Gram and he lived in a nearby village. Clearly he didn't have leprosy, so I wondered if God was preparing him for something deeper than physical healing.

As we journeyed on, I told him I was here to share the good news that God had provided new life for those who trust in Jesus, his Son. He was keen to learn more despite the loud engine noise and swirling dust. So before I got off the bus, I promised to visit him in his village and share more of the good news.

A few weeks later I visited Gram and received a warm welcome. Over the next few weeks I shared the gospel message with him and his family, and was delighted when he and some family members prayed to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

I was curious to know more about Mr Gram's life and work. 'I assemble a group of workmen, and we go and build houses,' he told me. 'But,' he continued, 'I also have another job: I'm an assassin! On the day you met me on the bus, I was going on a job to kill someone! After meeting you, though, I changed my mind. Something must have spoken inside me. So I got off the bus, crossed the road, and took the next bus home.'

I was astonished at how the Lord had used my presence on the bus that day to prevent a murder and change the direction of Mr Gram's life. I was reminded that we who are led by the Lord truly are the 'fragrance' of life or death to those we meet day by day (2 Corinthians 2:15, NLT).

Having given up his sideline in assassinations, Mr Gram became a key figure in the small Christian group that began meeting in his village. Later, when the Christians in the nearby town of Tha Tako wanted to construct a church building, they naturally turned to Mr Gram to arrange the work. What fruit from a chance meeting on a bus and what a difference from my work as an electrical engineer in Manchester!

THREE CROWDS

‘This is mass hysteria,’ I thought. ‘I am not going to go forward!’ I was sitting in the stands of Manchester City football ground, watching a stream of people responding to American evangelist Billy Graham’s appeal to come to Christ.

The picture he painted of the exalted Christ returning in glory massively impacted me. Billy Graham preached from Mark 8:38, which says that on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, he will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of him now. I realised that included me. But I did not go forward. I needed to know first what this all meant.

At the time I was an apprentice at Associated Electrical Industries. I had gone to hear Billy Graham because my supervisor, Fred, who was a committed Christian, had urged me to go. Even though I had grown up going to church, I didn’t have much of a faith of my own. So the next day I was full of questions.

‘What am I missing?’ I asked Fred. ‘What does it mean to become a real Christian?’ We began to talk, and

walked the length and breadth of the factory until all my questions were answered!

The following day I returned to the stadium, where Billy Graham was speaking once again. This time, when the invitation came to make a commitment to Christ, I walked forward to receive him as my Lord and Saviour. The date is written in my Bible: 17 June 1961. I was 18 years old.



I walked out of the stadium knowing I had become a new person, now with my own relationship with God. Immediately I began telling my friends and family about how I had met Jesus and what he had done for me. My family didn't appreciate being preached to but recognised a big change in my life. However, I still understood very little about my newfound faith.

Surprisingly, it was in the next stage of my apprenticeship with Associated Electrical Industries that God provided the help I needed to grow in my faith. In September 1961 I began a degree course in engineering at Bristol University. Here members of the Christian Union spotted this very 'worldly' new Christian and helped me begin to put my faith into practice.

One of the first lessons I learned was the importance of obeying the Lord in my personal life. I loved ballroom dancing and took strong objection to the fact that the main meetings of the Christian Union were held on

Saturday evenings, clashing with the weekly dances at the Students' Union. 'If you want to grow as a Christian,' my new Christian friends told me, 'you need to come and hear our regular Bible teaching.'

For several months I 'held out'. I enjoyed the excitement of the dances. Then one night, after buying tickets for the Saturday dance, I felt God prompting me about whether there was something better for me. So I ripped up the tickets and went to the CU meeting instead. From then on I committed myself to the Christian group and my faith began to grow. After three years of weekly Bible expositions from gifted teachers and the influence of godly friends, I was given a good foundation in the Christian faith. From my attitude to the opposite sex to prayer and reading the Bible and even to cleaning up my speech, my whole life was being changed. Over 60 years later I am still in touch with godly mentors from those days in Bristol and still have some of the Christian books they gave me.



With university behind me, I was settling down to the happy prospect of a career in engineering, beginning with five years working with my firm as 'pay back' for the apprenticeship and university tuition. But a new shock awaited me. At the final meeting of the 1965 Keswick Convention, three thousand of us were gathered in the big tent to hear the missionaries' stories of the amazing

things they had seen on the other side of the world. ‘Why are they speaking with such earnestness?’ I wondered.

I guessed that they would challenge us to become missionaries too. ‘Happily that doesn’t apply to me,’ I thought. ‘I can’t become a missionary. I still have five more years on my contract.’

But then an inner voice said, ‘That’s not your problem; that’s my problem.’

Somewhat surprised, I continued to reason, ‘But I don’t have the ability to be a missionary. I haven’t led anyone to Christ.’ The inner voice gave me the same answer as before.

‘What about the danger and the struggles of language learning? I only just scraped my French exams.’ Same answer!

All my objections were dealt with in the same way. It was much like how the Lord had answered Moses’ objections in Exodus 3, when the Lord met him in the burning bush. Perhaps God was calling me to be a missionary?

As I had guessed, the meeting closed with a challenge for people to stand up if they would commit their lives to God for full-time Christian service.

I stood.

Once again my life had been redirected. I walked out of the tent dazed by the decision I had just made, and with little idea where I would be heading.