



a **passion** for life

Real life
stories
about faith

D.J.Carswell

A Passion for Life

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Introduction

Passion for Life is a collection of biographies of people who have a passion not only for this life but also for the one to come, because of something that has happened to them. These people have allowed us a glimpse of their personal lives, often at things they are ashamed of, or personal grief or suffering, as well as their triumphs, accomplishments and happiness. Their backgrounds, race, age and education are completely different from each other. Sometimes questions of faith are asked in their lives:

Am I too bad for God?

Am I good enough?


Why is there suffering?

Do all roads lead to God?

Is there a God anyway?

Maybe you and I have also thought along these lines.

In each mini biography, though, you will discover hope and a passion for life now, and a certainty of abundant life ahead. You don't have to start at the



beginning of the book – just dip in to whichever chapter you want and in any order.

In the last chapter we discover the ‘nuts and bolts’ of faith – this is not a list of dos and don’ts but an explanation of how much God loves us and what it cost Him in order for us to know a different life that will never end.

So settle back and turn the page ...



Vijay Menon

THE ENGINEER

.....

It was the early morning of 21 August 1930. In one of the bedrooms of Kundavalappil House there was an air of barely suppressed excitement. One of a small group of women held a motionless body suspended from her arm. A couple of vigorous slaps to its rear galvanised the silent form into uttering protesting cries, which were answered by the loud squawking of a crow in a jackfruit tree outside the window. Yet one more human statistic had been added to India's teeming millions; Vijay Menon had arrived on planet earth.

If Vijay had been given the choice, he could hardly have chosen a more delightful spot in which to be born. Tourists and inhabitants alike describe Kerala as paradise. The coast consists of beautiful sandy beaches that are backed by blue lagoons interspersed with dunes, which in turn are dotted with coconut palms. His birthplace was about 15 miles inland. This idyllic rural locality was to be his home for only ten months. After this, unusually, he was brought


up in his father's home in a nearby town while his mother remained at Puzhakkal. (The Indian tradition is that after a wedding the bride usually returns to her mother's home and the husband likewise to his mother's home, but he will visit his wife at night if his work is in that locality.)

Vijay was looked after by one of his father's sisters. The household consisted of his father, his sisters and nieces, several women servants and himself. Almost


Almost the entire family depended for their existence on his father's earnings.

the entire family depended for their existence on his father's earnings. This was due to a brother-in-law dying and, as was the custom, his family taking his money, thereby leaving nothing for the wife and children. In consequence, Vijay's father had to work extremely hard, rising at 5 a.m. to go to work as a clerk, coming home later to catch a hasty meal and then going to another job until nine thirty at night. Although he was so busy, he always had time for morning and evening devotions in a special room that was kept as a shrine.


This was a Hindu family. The intensity of his father's beliefs and conduct undoubtedly had a great effect on Vijay's impressionable mind. Hinduism is really a compound of religion, philosophy and a highly




specialised social system. Within it there is a tremendous variety of belief and conduct. Everything is continually evolving; even gods disappear only to be replaced by others. There is a constant state of flux. Westerners are often taken aback by just how many gods Hindus have – over 33,000, although there are three principle gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. People may worship any god at all, and as many gods as they want.




Hinduism tends to be fatalistic: 'What will be, will be.' Their idea of salvation is vastly different from Christian beliefs. Salvation for the Hindu comes from contemplation and right thinking, and is achieved when the pinnacle of the mystic state is reached and the human soul is united with Brahman. Hindus believe that they can go a long way towards earning their salvation by strict performance of their religious duties. There is very little consciousness of personal sin against a holy god. As Vijay explains, 'The sweet reality of forgiveness forms no part of Hinduism. Its faith originates from within and depends on the devotees' ability to believe.' This is quite a contrast with Christianity!




Christianity teaches that it is totally impossible to earn salvation. There is nothing that unaided humanity can do about their sin. Men and women first have to



realise the hopelessness of their position. Then God can do something for them. God, in Christ, entered the world in order to save the world. On the cross, where He was crucified, Jesus died in order to pay the penalty that was required for our sin. If we trust in the risen, living Jesus, we will be forgiven and brought to know God. While Krishna is said to come to destroy sinners, Jesus says, 'I come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.' Vijay knew nothing of this Christian teaching as yet, but an awareness of the Creator God was to be awakened gradually within his innermost being.



His father was anxious that he should start school as soon as possible. Vijay recalls that for the first four years he was an average pupil and that he did not learn as much as he ought, not because the subjects were beyond him but simply because he was lazy. Aged eight, he moved up to a Roman Catholic school whose headmaster ran a very strict establishment and was very free with corporal punishment.



This school was three miles away so Vijay had to walk, barefoot. He never wore any kind of shoes until he was 16 years old. Sometimes he used to wear a shirt and shorts, but often he wore the traditional 'lungi', which is a cloth-like towel some three yards long wrapped around the body.