

GOD'S HAND

IN THE LIFE
OF AN ELECTRICIAN

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Jimmy Yamada, Jr.



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**God's Hand
in the Life of an Electrician**

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*This book is dedicated to Mom and Dad.
I would not be here without them.
Their love, devotion to family, work ethic,
and undying sacrifice for me
(without criticism or complaint!),
built a solid foundation for all that I am today.*

*I know God was involved in our lives, but still I say:
Thank you Mom! Thank you Dad!
(I know you're in heaven today helping Jesus
build the Yamada house.)*

I love you both more than I can express.

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Foreword

Someone once said, “God’s man following God’s plan will also see God’s hand.”

There is a Bible verse that helps to explain:

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 CHRONICLES 7:14)

God’s man: “If my people, who are called by my name...” God specifically tells us whom He is talking about – you and I – as we are called by His name.

God’s plan: “...will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways...” God’s plan is that we will humble ourselves, pray always, seek Him, and turn from our wicked ways, which we all have due to our sinful nature.

For me the key to humbling myself was realizing what Isaiah discovered long ago: “Lord... all that we have accomplished, you have done for us” (ISAIAH 26:12). Anything that I have accomplished with any lasting, eternal value was thanks to the hand of God. All of the supernatural events in my life were of *His* glory: my wife, Diana; my kids, Jason, Daven, and Lisa; my new daughters Donna and Charity; my business; friends and ministry. He had His hand on every aspect of these miracles, whether it was His upraised or His loving hand.

How many Christians can honestly say they sincerely seek the face of God?

My prayer life: What worked for me was prayer scattered throughout the day. I focused less on asking for things as I recognized God's blessings. This is not to imply that I'm so holy that I didn't pray for my needs; I did and He answered. Prayer was simply a way to get me to change from the way I was to the way He wanted me to be. My prayers: *What do you want me to do, Lord? How do you want me to do it? And when?*

As I read the Bible, one of the most intriguing passages was also one of the most confusing: "*If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may **know you** and continue to find favor with you*" (EXODUS 33:13, emphasis added). Then I found another one that helped to clear it up: "*He made known **his ways** to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel*" (PSALM 103:7, emphasis added). What God meant by "*his ways*," was reading and understanding the Bible. I began reading it daily and thought about how I could please Him more by living what I read.

The words of Geoff Moore's song "Erase" says it all:

"Erase all that's different between us
Until nothing ever separates us
And we love like You love
And we ache when You ache
And our heart is undone
By what makes Your heart break."

Once we become God's man following God's plan, then He will hear us, forgive us, and ultimately heal our land. God will show up supernaturally in our physical realm. We will hear His voice and see His hand active in our lives – guiding, encouraging, disciplining,

and loving us. As God heals our land, we'll see signs and wonders become all too real and very obvious.

Allow me to stress that we should *not* be seeking after miracles and the supernatural. Instead, they should be a natural outcome of drawing closer to Him. Only *then* will we have joy in hearing His voice, just as John the Baptist heard it at Jesus' baptism (MATTHEW 3:13-17). We will have joy in seeing Him involved in simple things – like providing parking, helping us quit drinking or smoking, bringing us a mate – to list a few.

This book is about how I have seen God's hand and His impact on my life. My purpose in writing this book is to glorify God. I give Him credit for all of my successes and I alone take credit for all of my failures. He prospered me in more ways than I can list. I am involved in a variety of ministries and He has used me to help many. I have deliberately refrained from recounting those circumstances where money was involved except for a few instances where I felt that the details were directly relevant.

I apologize for anything written that even remotely draws attention away from Him and towards me. It is not my purpose and although I have been very careful, I'm sure it's there.

Growing Up

My earliest recollection of God is of someone who bails you out if you are in trouble.

I never really believed in a God who created the universe. Why should I? I had seen the movie “Fantasia” with its splendid evolutionary sequence. Essentially I was brainwashed into believing that we had evolved from nothing. What impacted me as a young child stayed with me. I didn’t know why I believed what I believed. Like osmosis, my soul absorbed all kinds of things. I later realized I had preconceived ideas about race, religion, education, culture, sex... all of it good *and* bad.

Although I didn’t believe in a God who interacted with us, I remember praying regularly to Him in two situations. In the fourth grade, I took a pack of cigarettes under our house and smoked one. It was terrible. However, it was heaven compared to what followed.

When I got home, my dad immediately knew I had done something. He called me over to where he was sitting, grabbed my hand, and said, “Blow out.” That was it. He then lit a cigarette and gave me a “*yaito*.” In English, he put his cigarette out on my left hand.

When I look at my hand now, it doesn’t bear a scar, so he didn’t put it out completely on my hand. However, when you’re nine years

old, this creates a very memorable moment. Thereafter, whenever I did anything wrong, I would pray that my dad wouldn't find out.

My "Good Luck" Prayer

The second situation involved old propeller airplanes. When I was about four years old, my younger brother Ronnie and I would visit our Aunty Helene and Uncle Take and their family on Kaua'i. We spent the next six summers in Kaua'i, and I remember the swimming, camping, fishing, hiking, and *furo* baths (Japanese hot tub) for which we made our own fire. This was heaven for a firebug: making a fire without parental supervision.

The only thing I disliked about those summer visits was the airplane takeoff and landing. Prayer kept me sane. I would rest my right index finger on the bridge of my nose. Then I would pray a "good luck" prayer. Even though I didn't know to whom I was praying, it never let me down and my plane never crashed.

A True Atheist

By the time I entered high school, the media had done its trick. I was a solid atheist – except during airplane rides.

Despite everything, I was a pretty good guy. I was part of two clubs at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA): the Impalas (Intermediate) and the Safaris (High School). There were about 14 guys in our gang and we would have died for each other.

Our leader, Mike "Mikel" K. would call and say: "Game on Saturday, 10:30 am, Kawananakoa Field," and everyone showed up: Lloyd "Fuj" F., Paul "Tomo" T., Lorrin "Kuni" K., Ben F., Larry "Moe" U., Myles K., Carl "Mac" M., Melvin "Taka" T., Gary "Grapes" K., Keith "Toejams" O., Dexter "Dex" Tom, and Alvin "DoonGie" Y.

Although we were a Christian club, we weren't there for God. We were there for the sports and the girls! The girls loved us... or so we dreamed! We played football, basketball, and baseball. Most of us were Asian, so we weren't big, but we were quick and talented. In high school, I had a girlfriend, Diana, and my love for her kept me in good standing with the law. While some of our gang cut school and got involved in various degrees of mischief like dabbling in alcohol and marijuana, I stayed straight. They needed a driver and I was happy to accommodate.

My Lifelong Love ~ Diana

No story about my life would be complete without the love of my life, Diana Enokawa. I first remember seeing her picture in the Central Intermediate School newspaper. They had a "Hoss Election," which included categories like "Most Likely to Succeed," "Best Athlete," "Most Outstanding," "Best Looking," and Diana was "Most Cutest."

I thought she was the best-looking girl I had ever seen. Her smile reached down into my soul and imprinted itself in my mind. Usually, those crushes don't count for much as you move on with reality, plus there was no way a guy like me stood a chance with "Miss Cutest."

However, my most immediate problem was that Diana was literally out of my reach: a different school district!

Can God Move the School District Line?

I believe we can only see God's invisible hand upon our lives when He gives us revelation. He has to help us to see clearly. Which is why what He gives to one person may not be clear to another. My favorite example of this is how he brought Diana to Roosevelt High School so I could claim her.

Diana's family, the Enokawas, was a large family. The oldest is Doris, followed by Janice, Marvin, Diana, Wilfred, Elaine, and Sterling ("Junki"), the baby. They grew up in a slum of Honolulu called Buckle Lane. Eventually they moved to School Street just north of the Nu'uaniu YMCA. Since Doris was the eldest child she was the mother figure of the family as Ma and Pa Enokawa were never home.

The three oldest Enokawa kids went to McKinley High School, but just when Diana finished middle school, the district was realigned. Off she went to Roosevelt High. (Oddly enough, the next year, when her younger brother Wilfred was set to go to high school, the district realigned again. In fact, Elaine and Junki also went to McKinley High, which meant only Diana attended Roosevelt.)

*When I look back, I
can see God's hand.*

back, I can see God's hand. He moved the district line twice: Once to get Diana into Roosevelt and then a second time to help me realize that He can move the school district line at will.

Back to Diana

At Central Intermediate School, Diana was part of a group of girls that were called the "Les Charmaines." They were, as their name indicates, the "Best of the Best." They were beautiful, outspoken, class leaders, and brainy. They were just too popular. All the boys were after them.

But when Diana was sent to Roosevelt High School without the "Charmaines," she was like a duck out of water. She had virtually no friends and was, therefore, vulnerable to my "attack." I believe God orchestrated the whole scenario.

Eventually she became “my girl” and I was the happiest guy at Roosevelt High. We were together all through college. I would pick her up for school in my hot rod, a '57 Chevy, and life was great. One of the neatest things about Diana was she liked what I liked. I liked football (San Francisco 49ers and University of Hawai'i), bridge (she became a great partner), poker with the gang (she was the cook, the host, and the clean-up), and surfing (she would come and wait on the beach). There was nothing better than coming in from a three-hour surf session to see your girlfriend waving from the beach.

Life Gets Better...in College

I did well all through college at the University of Hawai'i (UH), except for playing pool in Hemenway Hall and bridge in Keller Hall. We also surfed a lot. I was sure life couldn't get any better. Little did I know how close I was to being right.

In the beginning of my senior year (1968), Mikel (who was attending the University of Washington) was home and took a bunch of us to a Waikiki bar. I had my first Seven-Seven: a mix of Seven-Up and Seagram's Seven. I got bombed and it was a blast.

Life changed that night. And so began the second phase of my life: alcohol and drugs, nightclubs and loose living. Of course, at the time, it all seemed normal.

High Society & Fast Times

Once I had a taste of the life I had been “missing,” I made up for lost time in a hurry. Prior to the summer of '68, I thought I would graduate with a degree in electrical engineering from UH, get a job, and marry Diana. But alcohol changed me.

One night we were out at a pizza parlor and I met another woman. Within four months, I was dating both girls. “Your ultimate

test,” said Diana, “will be who you take out on Christmas Eve.” Well, it wasn't her.

We broke up and I started dating yet another girl. After three years, we eventually broke up. My partying was in high gear and my drinking menu featured Primo beer, Crown Royal, Galliano, Southern Comfort, Courvoisier, to name a few. We also tried different kinds of wines, envisioning ourselves as high society.

I was also smoking *pakalolo* (marijuana) and hashish (marijuana sap). The *pakalolo* was so good that after we rolled our cigarette joints our fingers were sticky from the resin. One hit and you reached your destination. Of course, we kept traveling.

We convinced ourselves that we were only doing the “safe” stuff because we didn't do heroin, acid, or LSD. I purchased a house in Moanalua Valley and we called it “Moanalua Gang's Palace.” We were the kings of the valley.

Though I didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus, I knew God was watching over me. Each weekend was “party time,” We

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would go to the clubs or different house parties and I was always looking for a girl. One day, I was sitting at home pondering my life and trying to figure out what I was looking for and I had a revelation: I was looking for a girl that looked and acted like Diana. She was a remarkable woman.

Although Diana was hurt for being abandoned, she never showed it and never spoke badly about me.

We had stayed on friendly terms, so I gathered the courage to call her up. Despite of her engagement to another guy (with the wedding just a few short months away!), I told her I wanted her back. She agreed, broke off her engagement, and moved in with me. (Remember, we were not Christians.)

About a year later, on October 27, 1973, we were married. However, my drinking and partying habits were solidly entrenched. On my wedding night, my gang came over to “Moanalua Gang’s Palace” to continue the party. However, I was so drunk, I crashed as soon as I got home. Diana, being the angel she was (and still is), never said a thing the next day. I know most wives today would have been ready to ring hell’s bells.

Brush with Bankruptcy

After I got married, I went to work for my dad, James Takushi Yamada. He was an astute businessman and spent 20 years building his company, A-1 A-Lectrician (A-1).

A-1 went through a disastrous period from 1976 through 1978. I almost single-handedly bankrupted us. We had taken on two large projects – Century Center and Makiki Park Place. I had negotiated and managed both projects, and in two years lost most of the net worth of A-1. My dad had accumulated a nice sum of cash outside of the business. He was forced to sell all of his assets and invest the money back into the business.

At the same time, I sold Moanalua Gang’s Palace and invested the proceeds into our business. It was to be the single best financial investment I have ever made. And to this day, I’ve kept the name “Junior” so people remember that A-1 had a founder, my father.

Back on Top

Our business recovered by 1981 as we did many of the high rises in downtown Honolulu. Our projects included Honolulu Tower, Nu’uanu Craigsides, Hale Kaheka, and Century Square. The one thing that didn’t change was my addiction. I was an alcoholic. Of

course, at that time I was sure I was *not* an alcoholic. In 1980, I even set out to prove it...I had to for my peace of mind: I quit drinking for one whole year. At the end of the year I was so proud of myself. I had proven that I wasn't an alcoholic. What did I do the next day? I got bombed. Wine was my new drink. Red, white, rose and champagne – I didn't discriminate. Oh, how I had reached greater heights of class!

Angel in a Car Crash

In August of 1981, I was out with a good contractor friend. We had gone to Horatio's and ended up at a famous bar, Club Rose (infamous for its decadence). I headed home after possibly 10 drinks (only God knows), and as I was driving around Kamehameha Highway near Makalapa Gate – I had missed the H1 on-ramp – the mountain attacked me and gave me a judo throw for an *ippon* (knockout).

When I came to my car was upside-down. Its roof was completely flattened. I should have died or at the very least broken my neck or my back. Instead Diana came to pick me up while I waited in the guard station. While sitting there, I remember her walking up the highway, five months pregnant, holding our oldest son Jason's hand.

The next day, she took me to look at my car, which was totaled. I don't recall asking her how she felt; I didn't want to know. As I looked at the car, I remember thinking how lucky I was. As I look back today, I believe an angel from God saved me that night.

A Wake-Up Call

Our business recovered from another tough period in the mid-'80s when I had to lay off half of our workforce. Things turned around

in 1987 and it was a good year. By this time, I was sure God was not real, at least not in the way that the “crazy Christians” portrayed Him. In September, I had an epiphany.

Our kids were involved in various sports. Our boys were in judo and soccer. Judo was Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 5 pm to 8 pm. Tuesdays and Thursdays were for soccer practices. They did their homework on the fly and we ate dinner on the run. On Saturday, judo was from 8 am to noon... unless they had soccer, in which case we left judo to go to the soccer game.

When Jason and Daven got into soccer, I volunteered to be a referee. You are either a soccer ref that everyone respects and loves to see in the game, or one that everyone hates on game day, in which case “boos” and complaints greet your calls. My first year was tough; I received many snide sideline remarks. I vowed that my second year would be better. I went to referee classes, read the soccer manual, and watched games. I kept my vow and became a good referee; at least my family didn’t have to cover their heads with a paper bag after the game.

All was fine until Jason reached the 12-13 age bracket. I arrived on the first day of practice and fear struck. *There is no way I will be able to keep up with these kids!*

We changed from a system of having just one referee and two linesmen to a two-referee system. I needed more speed to keep up and I just didn’t have it. I adjusted reasonably well until “Black Saturday.” It followed a Friday night party when I had had eight beers. The game was early the next morning. It was horrible.

Normally you referee the game *after* the game your kids play in. Or, if their team plays the last game, then you referee the first game of the day. I don’t recall the reason, but I was refereeing our kids’ own game.

On the worst call of the game, the coach's son purposely attacked and tripped his opponent who was racing for the goal on a breakaway. I was 20 yards behind and had a bad angle, so I couldn't see the play to make the call. However, the foul was so blatant that the coach stopped the play and pulled his son out of the game. He saved my life, but not my pride: I deserved to be crucified for not being in position to make the call. If I didn't have that hangover, I would have made it. And it wasn't the only bad call. I hung my head as I walked my family to the car.

"Freedom Day": Quit or Die!

The following Monday, my 20-month old daughter Lisa was trying to play with me. I had just come home from work and was lying on our living room floor, trying to rest from a hard day's work and a hard night before. Lisa was crawling on my back, saying, "Daddy, play with me!" I was too tired to move. Although my body was dead, I had an epiphany: *You're a jerk and a bum! You can't even play with your daughter, much less keep up with adolescent kids.*

The next day was "Freedom Day." As I drove to work, I thought of the soccer game and how I embarrassed myself and my family. To make it worse, I kept hearing Lisa's little voice saying, "Daddy, play with me!" Something rose up in my soul.

So many times when I awoke with a hangover, I would say to myself, *One day I'm going to quit drinking.* This was the day. I shouted at the top of my lungs, with passion (as if my beloved 49ers had just won a playoff game), "I quit drinking!"

A few weeks later I celebrated my *yakudoshi* (fortieth birthday) clean and sober. I have never taken a drink since.

Is There a God?

In the late '80s, I met regularly with a very good contractor friend who shared with me evidence for the existence of God. We would get together for lunch two or three times a year, and each time he would present something new. After five years of this, I went from a 99 percent atheist to an 80 percent atheist.

In late '93, Kevin Asano (1988 Olympics silver medalist in judo) gave me a book by Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. After reading it, I moved from an 80 percent atheist to a believer. I remember coming to that place of sweet revelation: "THERE IS A GOD!"

In late May I had lunch with another friend, Sam Nonaka, and talked about the importance of leaving our kids with good values and a strong character. It was something I was proud of doing with my own children...or so I thought. He made a statement that stuck with me: "If you leave your kids with the knowledge of God, He will always be there to guide them and to help them."

*"If you leave your kids
with the knowledge of
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to help them"*

Later that week, I asked Diana what she thought about going to church, expecting a negative response. But as my precious Diana has done over the years, she surprised me. "I think that would be good for the kids!" she sweetly said.

So Diana, Lisa, and I went to First Assembly of God on June 6, 1993. At the end, Pastor Sapp asked if anyone wanted to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. After his prayer, when everyone's eyes were closed and heads were bowed, Diana looked up to the front of the sanctuary. "Look," she told Lisa, "Dad's up there!"

My life changed forever.