

The Miracle  
*of the*  
HERMIT  
CRAB

The miracle given by Jesus to  
a young boy stricken with  
cerebral palsy

**Dwight G. Alexander**



# **The Miracle of the Hermit Crab**

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## Table of Contents

Dedication_____	v
Foreword_____	vi
Shriners Children’s Hospital_____	1
Anzic’s Operation Throws a Curve Ball_____	15
God Gives Anzic a Better Treatment_____	27
The Surgery Is Postponed Yet Again_____	34
Anzic’s Early Years_____	43
The Year after the First Hip Surgery_____	52
Anzic’s Sister Dilbi_____	58
Anzic’s Favorite Activities_____	64
Back to the Drawing Board_____	76
The Second Miracle_____	87
God’s Purpose and Will_____	96
About This Book’s Title_____	106

# 1

## Shriners Children's Hospital

As I stood in the hallway with my wife and Mr. Uchel Naito (a worker in the Palau Referral Coordinating Office in Honolulu, as well as a deacon in his church), we watched my son Anzic being pushed on his bed toward the operating room of the Shriners Children's Hospital in Honolulu. I had a tremendous feeling of helplessness. As much as my wife and I love Anzic, there's a line where we stop, and Anzic goes forward into the hands and care of others. The realization that I could be helpless at critical moments of my children's lives was unnerving, to say the least. As parents, we want to be in control, and we want very much to know for certain the outcome of activities and events surrounding our children.

Mr. Naito, understanding our dilemma, spoke quietly: "Let us go to the cafeteria and eat while we wait." It was obvious there was nothing we could do but wait, as Anzic was in the hands of the doctors. This was a moment when all we could do was to trust the Lord that Anzic was in better hands than our own. As we walked down the hall toward the elevator, I quietly asked God to take care of Anzic for us and to help the doctors do a good job so that he would be able to enjoy life without constant pain.

We spoke little on that short journey to the hospital's cafeteria, as all three of us searched for words and stories to comfort each other as well as convince each other that Anzic would be all right. I figured we were going to need stories and perhaps a few devotional thoughts to pass the time while we awaited the outcome of the surgery.

I was reminded of the song taken from Psalm 46:10, "Be

still and know that I am God." Looking up this verse, I ran across the first verse of that psalm, which says, "God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in time of trouble." And later it says, "The LORD Almighty is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress" (46:7). I was calmed by reading the entire chapter. Meanwhile, Deacon Naito affirmed God's continual presence in our lowest moments. I looked to him as a leading authority in this area.

Several years before, Mr. Naito was a known authority in Palau – my homeland – with his education and achievements. He led the work in planning for Palau's water use and wastewater management—a critical work in small island states, ensuring that wastewater is managed properly to avoid sanitary issues. Back then, he was simply a church attendee, one of those guys who would sit in the pew throughout the service and leave just before the service ends. We wouldn't see him until the next Sunday, as he was engrossed in his work and community projects. Life changed for him and his wife, Ms. Allyn Takada, when he collapsed during a basketball game.

The constraints of the local hospital in Palau prevented the doctors from discovering Mr. Naito's ailment, and he was referred to Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu. When his illness was diagnosed and made known, he had to change many of his plans. The cost of medicine for his illness was too expensive for the Belau National Hospital as well as the local clinics and pharmacies in Palau to carry, and they were not able to support a steady supply of his medicine. Mr. Naito had to stay in Honolulu to ensure that the medicine he needed was available. He relocated to Hawaii with his wife and son.

Since then, Mr. Naito has almost fully recovered from this disease. We can say that this is a miracle and an act of grace from God. He has transitioned from a productive community life to a fruitful and meaningful church life, in which he serves as a deacon and performs pastoral work for

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a Palauan congregation called the Ungil Chais Fellowship (*ungil chais* means "good news"), under the Good Shepherd Church in Honolulu. He most certainly is a leading authority in understanding God's grace and mercy. Thus, his words of comfort and advice were comforting and brought understanding that God was indeed in control.

His wife, Allyn, serves as the medical coordinator for the Palau Referral Office in Honolulu. Many of the Palau patients traveling to Hawaii (as arranged through the medical coordinator's office) have terminal illnesses. The Lord has used Mr. Naito to shed His light and to comfort patients with His holy Word.

So, it was a great comfort just having Mr. Naito near us at this time. When he spoke, I could almost sense that the Lord was speaking to us through him. It was reassuring and comforting.

I thought back to the day Anzic was born, when the nurse who delivered him shouted with joy, "It's a boy!" That was April 8, 2007, and my wife had carried him to full term. I remembered thinking, "Certainly, things will be fine with this one." Anzic's older sister wasn't so fortunate, having been born six months into my wife's pregnancy. Right from the start, there had been problems due to her premature birth, and we are still dealing with some of the limitations and challenges in her growth and development.

However, Anzic was just as healthy as a baby can be. His eyes were bright and responsive to movements. His head would turn in response to sounds, showing that he heard and had a good sense of direction as to the origin of the sounds. His limbs and movements all indicated a healthy and strong baby.

My first gut reaction to the nurse's shouts of joy was ecstatic. Here was a child I could call *son*. A child I could take fishing and farming and do all the manly things with. Someone who would carry on my name and not have it changed when he gets married, and who would have children to car-

ry on the family name even further.

My head was jumping far ahead of me. Would my son be a good basketball player? Would he like baseball? Volleyball? Would he like sports at all? Many things came through my head as to what my son would be like.

As the days went by, Anzic continued to have clear eyes, his hearing was sharp, and his responses and movements were all normal. My wife and I couldn't be happier. Finally, a son has been given to us, and he would carry on our name. We were so proud.

We closely watched him every day and had great joy in taking care of him. We didn't ignore our other children, but certainly, Anzic was the center of attention for everyone, including the older sisters. We gave him toys. We looked forward to his first words and his first step. We debated which word he would say first—*Mom* or *Dad*.

His mother was already planning where he would go to preschool and kindergarten. She was already envisioning him in Sunday school and church programs. She was already talking about him going on field trips. There were so many plans for him, even before he could eat or walk by himself.

As the months went by, we continued to observe each new development closely. We were assured in every hospital appointment that he would be a strong and healthy boy. Everything looked good, and we were anxious for him to grow up.

As we watched him grow, there were times when I had concerns I couldn't shake. I would look at him closely to see if there was something wrong with him. For example, I noticed that his mouth was always open, and he continued to drool. All my other children never had this problem. He appeared to be a little slow in his motions, with somewhat lazy movements. At times he seemed slow to respond and looked somewhat confused. While we prepared food, didn't bother us but chose to be by himself. This surprised us, be-

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cause when our other children were this young, we had to constantly tell them to stay out of the kitchen; they were intrigued by food and wanted to get involved in the cooking, which caused big messes and made food preparation very difficult. But Anzic preferred just to be alone and watch TV.

I thought certainly that his appearance of weakness or laziness would raise red flags with the medical providers, but no caution came, and no alarm was raised. The continued assurances from the doctors erased my fears, and I looked past those challenges and what appeared to be abnormal behavior. I kept telling myself, "He's still young, and when he gets older, he'll be just like me."

The first real alarm came when Anzic was six months old. In Palau, when a child reaches the time to receive more than milk – to eat baby food and other soft foods – we bring the best food on the island for them. Often, it's the wild pigeon, a pricey delicacy that only rich and high-ranking community leaders enjoy during festivities. Although hunting pigeons is strictly prohibited by law, there are ways we can get them for the children when they have their first meal. The meat is a little tough, so they cannot chew it, since most children have few teeth at that time. But just sucking the juice out of the meat is fine. It's a source of pride that one's child, for their first meal, would eat the most sought-after food on the island, even though it's not the most pleasant sight, and maybe not very appetizing for a small child. The bird's feathers are plucked, and the bird is cleaned, but the head remains. Wild pigeons have this black round thing right above their beak which makes them look odd and different.

All my daughters had enjoyed wild pigeon for their first meal, so when it came time for Anzic's first meal, a wild pigeon was prepared for him. When we presented him his meal and the small pot was opened for him, he looked at the bird and showed disgust. He wanted nothing to do with it. He almost ran away from it.



This, as well as other events of that first year, were special times that we cherished, but they also raised questions about his condition and health.

By his second birthday, he still wasn't able to speak, eat solid food, or walk. We felt that maybe he needed medical intervention, but every time we brought this to the attention of the doctors, they would tell us that Anzic was growing normally and would eventually speak and walk. They said some children are quick to develop these skills while others are slower. "He's just one of the slow ones," they would say.

But to us as his parents, the fact that Anzic was two years old already and still unable to walk or speak was an alarming sign that he might not be as normal a child as we had hoped. Both my wife and I did some soul-searching as we tried to figure out what had happened. Many questions came rushing through our minds, which we sometimes discussed with friends and family. We asked questions: What brought this on Anzic? Was there any action on our part that might have caused it? Did we commit a serious sin that God was punishing us for? And most importantly, what exactly was wrong with our son?

From one doctor to another, we were given the same answer: Anzic was normal, and everything would be fine once he started to get these things in sync. So, we continued to hope, we continued to pray, and we continued to observe and watch.

In 2010, a team of doctors from the Shriners Children's Hospital in Honolulu came to Palau to treat children with bone problems. The Belau National Hospital, the government-run hospital in Palau and Anzic's hospital, called and informed us that they had made an appointment for Anzic with this team of visiting doctors.

The doctors examined Anzic and asked for x-rays and ultrasound tests and blood tests to be done. After these were completed and analyzed, we were called in to discuss the results. The doctors—politely and in the friendliest way

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possible—explained to us that Anzic's hip joints were growing outward and not inward. This meant that the ball of the thighbone (femur) was not in the hip socket where it was supposed to be, but rather outside it, and growing further out. As a result, it was painful for Anzic to cross his legs and even harder for him to walk. Each time he stood, his thigh bones were pushing against flesh near the hip area, causing great discomfort.

The doctors recommended that we try having Anzic sit cross-legged to try and push the thigh bone into the hip socket. But Anzic did not like sitting cross-legged. He often sat in the "W" position, where he bent his legs at the knees and sat on top of his legs, with his feet extending to each side. The doctors said this would push the bones out even more, and he needed to sit cross-legged.

Since Anzic always sat in the "W" position and had grown used to it, and was uncomfortable sitting cross-legged, we had a huge challenge on our hands—especially since we also realized that at times we weren't really communicating with him. It appeared that either he didn't really understand us, or he simply chose not to listen to us.

But the good news was that we finally knew why our son wasn't able to use his legs and why he wasn't able to walk. Our greater hope was that once the thigh bone ball went into the hip socket, he would be able to walk. Or would he?

I sensed that there were other medical problems surrounding Anzic's case—that even if the hip bones were fixed, he still might not be able to walk. There were so many uncertainties surrounding Anzic's condition that nothing was guaranteed at this point. There were other problems which we felt were not clearly explained to us—like his slowness to learn to speak and to respond properly to what we said. Our biggest concern was why he didn't like to eat solid foods, except for junk food. I even started to blame myself for giving him that wild pigeon that first time we tried to get him to eat.

I realized that Anzic must have an even more serious medical problem, but I didn't know what it was. Was this a curable illness? Was it a birth defect, and incurable? Was it a punishment from God? Could I or my wife be to blame?

During this time, I thought about the baby son of King David and Bathsheba, whom God decided to inflict with a disease because of David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). I sort of felt like David, and I sensed that I was getting a glimpse of David's agony over his son's illness. I placed myself in the same situation as David. Was it my sin that brought this on Anzic? If so, what kind of sin did I commit? I'd committed many terrible sins in my life – was it all of those, or a particular one? Did God not forgive me when I asked for forgiveness and turned my life to serve him?

I was confused. I wanted desperately to fall on my knees and scream so that God would reveal which sin was the real problem that brought this terrible condition on poor Anzic. I cried and begged God to heal Anzic.

I looked further at the events of David's story for clues, and to see if there was a way to appeal to God's mercy and grace to cure my son.

David and Bathsheba's son had become very sick and was about to die. David put on sackcloth and mourned over his son. The entire palace, seeing their king's agony, mourned with him. Everyone pleaded and begged God to grant their king his prayer for his son's healing. But God allowed this child to die (2 Samuel 12:13-23).

From the story, we can sense that Bathsheba was a beautiful woman who could immediately capture one's heart. She did exactly that with King David. Once Bathsheba informed David that she was pregnant, David began thinking of ways to cover their sin. He decided to have Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, sent home from the frontlines. David hoped that when Uriah spent time with his wife, everyone would think Uriah fathered the child his wife carried. David must have hoped that even Uriah would think this, and it

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would hide the king's adulterous act with Bathsheba.

However, Uriah stayed outside the door of the king's house and slept there, refusing to go home to his wife; he felt guilty about going to lie with her while his men were still out fighting and enduring deprivations. Uriah was a man of honor and integrity, a man most worthy of respect, and one of King David's thirty most trusted valiant men.

Uriah's honorable behavior ruined David's plan. Now David's sin with Bathsheba would be revealed. They had committed adultery, which in Israel was punishable by death for both persons involved. It would not be good if the king of Israel were found to be guilty of adultery.

When the time came for Uriah's return to the battleground, David decided he must come up with a plan to get rid of Uriah. David wrote out his plan in a message to Joab, his battle strategist and general. He sent the message by Uriah.

David instructed Joab to put Uriah on the front edge of battle; then, once the battle heated up, Joab was to withdraw his men, leaving Uriah without backup so that he would get killed. This plan worked.

As soon as David received word that Uriah was dead, he sent for Bathsheba to move into his palace and become his wife. This looked like a gracious thing to do for a friend, but God knew the real motive. This was a sin in the eyes of God, and He was displeased with David.

God immediately sent the prophet Nathan to confront David about his sin. Nathan told David the story of a wealthy man with many sheep and a poor man with one ewe lamb. When the rich man had guests to feed, he decided to take the one ewe lamb from the poor man while sparing his own sheep. David realized the great injustice in the story. Not knowing that the story was directed at him, he angrily proclaimed that the rich man should be punished. David was stunned when Nathan told him that the evil man was none other than David himself. Nathan told the king how dis-

pleased God was with him for murdering Uriah and taking Bathsheba his wife. He said that as a result of this sin, David's newborn child with Bathsheba would die. This made David realize how grievous his sin really was.

I knew that I hadn't done anything like King David, but still, David was willing to repent and obey God and became a man after God's own heart. I knew that I was a sinner. Had I not confessed and repented? I couldn't help but feel that perhaps there was something in my life that displeased God, and as a result, my son Anzic was struck with these medical problems. This was causing me a lot of pain and anguish. Many nights I struggled with myself and examined my life from early on to the present, trying to understand how God would be so displeased with me that he would strike my son with such illness.

I realized I had countless sins and shortcomings, and I'd committed many errors in the choices I had made. I liked beautiful women just like David did, and I enjoyed looking at beautiful women wherever I went. Because of that, I'd had countless relationships and failed marriages. In those broken relationships, I had hurt many people—especially the women I became involved with, the men whom I stole the women from, and even their families. I know my wife also had many sleepless nights because of my fleshly desires, and she suspected my infidelity. Could this be God's punishment for all the broken relationships I was involved with before? Was it God's punishment for the pains I caused my wife? I knew I never cheated on my wife once we took our wedding vows. I'd been faithful, and I'd served our church with integrity and honor, making sure my life reflected what I preach. I was confused. Was there something I had overlooked?

I also examined my life for other possible causes for Anzic's condition. I looked at many events in my life where I might have displeased God. Some of these were small matters, but some were indeed life choices and paths that I took.

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Was God punishing me for not choosing to become a pastor, as many had expected of me from my high school years? I remember in my elementary school years having a strong desire to attend Emmaus High School, a high school run by the Palau Evangelical Church and the only Christian high school for boys in the entire island. I had prepared myself by going to Sunday school and attending vacation Bible school each summer. I was familiar with most Sunday school teachers and Emmaus High School teachers. I was also familiar with most Bible stories by the time I entered high school. Since my knowledge of the Bible was apparent, and I served as unofficial spokesman for our class when it came to Bible or church-related activities, people often mentioned that I was destined to be a pastor. Most of my teachers and the pastors of our church spoke to me about becoming a pastor and serving God. I must admit that I really enjoy studying the Bible and discussing the Bible and church-related programs with fellow church workers. Even today, I have great joy and peace discussing biblical issues, perspectives, and their applications to everyday life.

So, did I disappoint God by choosing a different career path after college? To this day, I haven't been ordained a pastor. I feel that I should not be ordained unless I get a degree in some Bible-related field, which I believe to be a prerequisite for competent service that would inspire a church to follow the Lord truly and honestly. I felt that I failed that endeavor by not getting such a degree when I was young and living in the United States. Instead, I decided to go to law school, which I failed to complete.

Was God now punishing me for all this?

In my junior and senior years at Emmaus High School, we were privileged to carry out mission trips as part of our study of the book of Acts and Paul's missionary journeys. We went to outlying communities and visited people in their homes and shared God's Word with them. We also invited them to our services, which were held on Saturday

evening and Sunday morning. Often, I was asked to share my testimony during the Saturday evening services, and on Sundays, I would run the service with the deacon or missionary assigned to that church. This gave me a lot of visibility in churches all over Palau at an early age. During these services, we were also encouraged by church leaders to consider entering into the ministry and work for God.

Perhaps many of the church members who saw me sharing my testimony and running programs felt that I'd already chosen to become a pastor. I was often told to be strong and to trust God and serve Him well. I was told that all these old folks would be gone someday, and I would be the only one left to run the church, since there appeared to be none more visible than I was.

Was God unhappy because my path did not follow what my high school teachers and church leaders predicted? Was God unhappy because I knew His Word but failed to make a commitment to full-time ministry? Was it all the women I'd been dating and sleeping around with? Was it my pride, since the Bible says pride comes before destruction? Did God want to use a disabled child to bring me to my knees?

Tears came to my eyes as I realized I'd taken too many wrong turns in my life, and especially my Christian journey.

I was still far from finding the answers I needed: the answer to my life and the answer to Anzic's illness. I felt so isolated, confused, and lost. Could God have abandoned me because of my sins, and now Anzic was paying the price for me? This was so painful, and I started to doubt if I would ever overcome such punishment.

King David later had several sons. But I expected that Anzic would be my only son, because of my age and also because my wife and I knew that having another child would not be a good idea.

Many questions came to my head. What we would do if Anzic turned out to be permanently disabled? What would become of him? What would become of this one brother to

all my daughters?

My child's illness was draining my hope of having a normal son who would go fishing with me, go farming with me, and help me run errands. It was killing the hope of having a son who would be the strength and sole male heir to inherit the little resources I had and to provide brotherly help to his sisters. Instead, he might become a burden and a liability to them.

Did I really cause all this — because of my sins?

With all these things flowing through my mind that day in Shriner's Hospital, we reached the cafeteria and went on to order our food. As we sat down, Deacon Naito offered to pray. Before praying, he said, "Anzic is in better hands. Not only the hands of the doctors, but also in the hands of God." That reality struck me as I realized how helpless we are, and entrusting our children to God provides far more security than any other protection we offer. Deacon Naito prayed, and a sense of peace came over me. I knew that Anzic was in God's care at that time.



## Anzic Kochi Alexander's early years photos

Anzic in his early years appeared as normal as any child. He started to show signs of disability at age two. Still, those very early years were very precious and wonderful memories. Now, we enjoy him for what he brings to us in his personality and spirit.

