

**A True life experience of a man who lived
with a chronically mentally ill wife**

**My Life in the
STORMY SEAS**

Written By

JAMES VINCENT
with
Dr. Thomas V. Thomas

HOPE PUBLICATIONS

A case study on stigma, ignorance,
stereotypes of mental illness and how it affected several lives.

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HOPE PUBLICATIONS are involved in creating awareness about mental illness. Stigma, ignorance and stereotype beliefs are preventing people from understanding mental illness and help the sufferers. People who are sick and people around them suffer lot of pain.

If you are interested to join us in educating people about mental illness, please contact us:

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[Any income from this book will be used to educate people about mental illness and help people to overcome the stigma, ignorance and stereotypes about mental illness]

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The author James Vincent has a Ph.D degree in Computer Science. He has a very deep faith in God and has been through very tough life situations. His wife died at a very early age. He got cheated in marriages. His two daughters are married and one is studying. He has one grandchild, Anna to which this book is dedicated. **James Vincent** is a pseudonym used to protect the privacy of those involved. Most names are fictitious but the story is true. We had to avoid/change a few details for privacy reasons.

Dr Thomas V. Thomas is a social scientist, behavioral specialist and a Chaplin. He has these degrees: M.A. (Psychology), M.A. (Philosophy), M. Div, M. Th. (pastoral care) Ph.D. He guides in several charity activities & ministries in different countries. He helps Vincent to teach others that mentally ill people are like anyone of us who need help.

Other books by Dr. Thomas V. Thomas:

- Death to Life
- Harness Your Crises
- Let's Say No to Suicide
- Living – Not dying [on suicide]
- Are You Concerned about Your Child

Dedication

Dear Anna,

I want you to know that I wish to be there always for you in your hardest, most difficult and most lonely times. I want to be there to pick you up when you fall, wipe your knees and hands and clean your feet. I wish to wipe your tears and give you a shoulder to cry on, give you a hug and a kiss. It is my wish, but obstacles in life do not allow me to fulfill this wish.

Anna, you are too young to understand about me, your grandfather, but because of certain circumstances, I was not there with you when you celebrated many important dates in your life. People are ashamed to tell you that I am your grandfather because they do not understand that I am the victim of another person's mental condition. Science has not grown enough to understand causes or cures of many mental illnesses which we see today in society. As long as this ignorance continues, many grandparents may suffer like me. I have no hatred or anger towards anyone responsible for these misunderstandings. I cried and prayed for you on your baptism day. You are my first grandchild. The last time that I saw you was when you were about two months old. I tried to see you afterwards but excuses were made to me so that I couldn't see you. I know you have grown to walk and talk. You may have lot of friends in your nursery school. I still have three different dresses which I purchased for you, when you were only few months old, but I could not give them to you as I wished. I may give them to some other children or keep them in my house as a token to remind me and others how mental illness can create problems in our lives.

I always cry as I pass-through airports in New York. I know you live around that area. I look at children and am overwhelmed by emotions and cry too. A few times I have asked parents their children's ages to understand how much you may have grown by now. I look at all small children of your age. I avoided touching them or holding them fearing that I may cry publicly. I look at their dresses. Recently a child of your age came to me in church smiling and I took the courage to hold her and make her sit on my lap. She smiled and stayed with me for quite some time smiling at me

always, before she went back to her parents. I still have your picture of when you were a few days old in my cell phone. When my friends ask to see your new pictures, I make up some stories to hide the realities of life.

Recently I had a dream. I saw you walking to me very fast smiling and full of joy waving hands. You came raising your hand, touching my legs asking me to take you in my arms. Someone close to us was sitting on floor looking at floor. I wanted to lift you up but feared that I may be shouted at. I wanted to ask you to go and get permission or I want ask permission from that person sitting on floor. I sat there with mixed feelings. You kept doing all you can to make me carry you smiling always. Suddenly I woke up.

I am dedicating this book “My Life in the Stormy Seas” to you and hope to see you before I die. I am unable to see you because people have misunderstood me and refused to understand the manipulations and lies of others. This only proves the seriousness of the mental illness of some people who can lie and spread totally false stories. Because of the ignorance, stigma, prejudice and stereotypes about mental illness, people believe it to be true .They want to protect you from such a horrible, bad grandfather. They do not want “such a bad grandfather” near you. They are ashamed to tell others and you that I am your grandfather. I have no hatred for them because they do not know what they are doing. Like Jesus I am praying: “Father please forgive them, because they do not know what they are saying and doing”. Our Life is not what we planned or expected. The stormy winds toss our lives and uproot us.

I hope and pray that you will have the courage to fight against this stigma, ignorance and discrimination against mental illness so that no grandfather will face a situation like me where they cannot see their first grandchild. I am doing all I can to fight against the ignorance which made me suffer. Many times as I was getting physically and mentally tortured, abusers used your name saying: “if I ever discuss this with anyone, I won’t see you”. They intended to mean that they will spread lies about me. Since I knew how manipulative they are, I suffered all these cruelties silently. People would not have believed me. Once my supervisor told me about his

experience with a few others. They called him all names except Son of God. My accusers also spread rumors about me. They made up stories which even your parents believed. Someone in our family was influenced by this mentally sick woman to come and testify about me, who had no idea about what was happening. God in His mercy did not allow it to happen. This person owes a lot to me but wants to betray me. This person had no courage to face me and looked at the floor to avoid eye contact with me. I spend sleepless nights thinking of it.

Recently I saw your picture on Face Book being carried by your mother and father, dressed in a red frock and a hat. I wanted to see the picture enlarged but could not do so.

When you grow up, please study the life of the famous man Galileo Galilei. There are plenty of books and information available in the internet about this great man. He was born in Pisa, Italy on Feb. 15; 1564. His father wanted him to be a mathematician. He became a monk in the Church. Then he left that and studied. He was an astronomy rebel with a cause. He challenged the known theories of the day. Around 1632, he taught that earth moves around sun and sun doesn't move. This new theory was different than the beliefs of that day and of the Church. The Church condemned him to imprisonment, and, after some negotiations, he was confined to his villa until his death in 1642. In 1992, Pope John Paul 11 declared that the ruling against Galileo was an error resulting from "tragic mutual incomprehension". Some people said, "It is not enough". Now nearly after 400 years, the message of the church to Galileo was that, "All is forgiven". Unfortunately Galileo was not there to hear this message. The Church moved him from a heretic to a hero of faith and science. Anyone who challenges stereotypes are usually called a rebel and bad person. Necessity is the Mother of Invention. He knew that he was right in his theories about earth and sun. As science grows and people become aware of mental illnesses, I will be vindicated fully. Unfortunately I may not live to see and hear because I am getting old in age. Science is making progress but it may take 50-200 years or more before man understands the brain more clearly.

May God bless you as you grow up in this world full of troubles and trials, stigma and ignorance, pain and agony. I am already vindicated to a great extent and accusations against me were proved as big lies from chronically mentally ill people. It will take more time before people realize that they were wrong. God has a reason for me to go through many stormy seas. I don't know why but I know who has held my hand and will hold tomorrow. I am at peace because God has given me the peace which passes all understandings. This does not mean that I took all pain courageously at all times. I am human as anybody else. I cry, get depressed and ask questions like all others. Most of the time I kept my silence, as they abused me. I engrossed myself in doing research on mental illness. I begged people to help me to survive the storm. People enjoyed my sinking in deep waters by clapping hands. I pleaded for help but they ignored my pleas. Instead of giving me shelter from stormy seas, they joined my abuser to hit me hard with their words and actions. The abusers rejoiced as they gathered ignorant people as their supporters. They all enjoyed the "fun" as I was looking for an escape from the roaring seas.

Anna, when you realize that people prevented me from seeing you out of their ignorance, please do not hate anyone. By this time, I may have gone from this earth to my eternal home. My health is failing but I try my best not let people know about it. I used to cook nice food but I cannot do it now anymore because of health reasons. I am hoping that you will hear that some good has come out from my book titled "My life in the Stormy Seas."

May the Lord of comfort give you all blessings as you grow up in this world. I apologize to you for not writing your name with the correct spelling and using a different name to keep your privacy. Out of their ignorance people don't want to talk about mental illness or anything connected to it. They may not want me to write this book either. I'll try my best to send you a copy so you can read when you grow up if people allow you to read this book – "My Life in the Stormy Seas".

*James Vincent
(Grandfather)*

Foreword

The story of Vincent; chronicled with the help of Dr. Thomas is a lighthouse in the stormy sea of confusion and illiteracy that surrounds the illnesses and abnormal functions of the mind and the brain.

There are many sincere people who want to help someone who is hurting in his/her mind but let me say to these people that your sincerity is not enough.

Discernment is the missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle of our many attempts at counseling. This book makes this point very clear. And as a Psychiatrist in active practice I want to whole-heartedly throw my voice behind this idea! So friends; I will not be tired to repeat to you that if you do not have discernment; your sincerity is only a liability because you will get emotional" instead of "clinical" in solving psychological problems.

Around us are many like Vincent who are surrounded by two kinds of people. The first category is sincere and unwise. The second category is insincere and unwise. We need people who are BOTH sincere and wise. Especially when it comes to disorders of thinking like Paranoid Schizophrenia or personality disorders of the Cluster B Type like Borderline Personality; we need to get smart.

As you read this personal account of Vincent; you will also notice the presence of two great organizations which often miss the mark on the issue of mental health when they are low on awareness. The first one is the Church and other Religious/Social organizations. It simply needs mental health to be discussed more openly. The second organization is the Government. It needs to go beyond the politics of human rights and have a grasp of clinical realities.

I want to congratulate Dr. Thomas for helping people like Vincent by sharing their burden. You need discernment to do that. Sincerity is not enough!

Regards
Dr. Atul Aswani

[Dr. Aswani of Mumbai, India is a Counselor and Psychiatrist. He is an expert on the matters of the mind and its function in health & disease. He coach and counsel on relationships, productivity and stress besides the medical treatment of Psychiatric Disorders and Alcohol/Tobacco and Drug addiction.]

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Response to My Life in the Stormy Seas

Here is a very readable book on the ups and downs of dealing with a loved one who has mental illness. This intimate story will surely be a big help to those who minister to people who undergo similar struggles. It's best to read it with a longing to serve those who have psychological challenges in our fast-paced societies today!"

Hope this book sells well!

David S. Lim, A.B. (magna cum laude), M.Div., Th.M., Ph.D.
*President, Asian School of Development &
Cross-cultural Studies (ASDECS)*

"For the past 30 years I have dedicated my life to human rights education, but was neglect until now in seriously looking at it from a mental health perspective. *My Life in the Stormy Seas* reminded me that we must be much more aware of what mental illness is and help ensure that the mentally ill people also have universal human rights and all that it means."

Wayne R. Jacoby

President, GEM, Philadelphia.

[Wayne is co-founder and President of Global Education Motivators (GEM), an Educational 501(C) 3 public foundation. He works closely with the United Nations to present global perspective programs to young people around the world. Wayne has been a global educator, emphasizing real world perspectives.]

"I give thanks for people who are willing to share their life story, to reflect upon its meaning, to look for lessons learned. This story is full of sadness and anger and the resilience of faith in the face of brokenness and pain. Mental illness is not something a people can wish away or treat with love. The important of educating religious professionals in the art and necessity of referral is clearly demonstrated. Faithfulness lives and breathes in these words. Listen and learn."

The Rev. Dr. Martha Rutland

My Life in the Stormy Seas speaks deeply to a man's struggle to continue after his relationship with the woman he thought to be his soul mate comes to an end. The breakdown is the result of mental illness. The author is faced with questions on who he was to his "soul mate," and if he could have done anything to change the outcome. The breakdown sets him on a path of redefining himself. In the wake of the loss of relationship through the nebulous effects of mental illness – he sets forth on a journey that he only could have done through faith. The book is a call for mental health education and research, also for clergy, as Dr. Thomas and Vincent emphasizes.

Chaplain Jacobus Greyling

Mr. Vincent has been a friend of me for many years. I verified the facts of this life story. I learned that unless and until we have personal experience or necessary training in mental health field, it is very hard to believe this or similar stories. I talked to few people who refused to help Mr. Vincent. A few threatened to call police, if he asked for their help. They were manipulated by Sylvia, Annie and Rev. Dr. Sam. They planned his ouster from home for a long time. Sam betrayed Vincent. This book reveals the struggles of a husband who wanted to help a mentally ill person but found himself helpless as Sam wanted to "catch fish in troubled waters" using his religious position to fool others. I feared for his life. He has shown the "will" he made in the early stages of his marriage to Sylvia, in case he was killed. He told me Sylvia wanted to make his life miserable, when he refused to yield to her pressure to change the "will" in her favor, which deals with properties and how, where he must be buried etc.

I understand that storm blocked all his attempts to get back to shore, where his beloved house stood. Vincent feared disappearing under the raging swells in to the black, dark depths of the seas as torrent of waves was beyond human capacity to overcome, surmount and survive. For a long time I suggested to Vincent to go away from his troubled life to a quiet place for inner healing because of the stress, and trauma he experienced. I admire his courage and stamina to fight the battle with God's help. I am glad that I could put his story in words and publish as a book.

May the Loving Lord bless Mr. Vincent as he swims against the high waves to the island far away. I am hoping this book will help us to understand the struggles we face in dealing with mental illness and ignorance of others who try to help the victims of this illness. As we are writing this book, Vincent received information that Annie is asking Sylvia's family to stay with them at least some time as she is tired of Sylvia's lies and manipulations. Annie calling them for help is surprising as she always accused them of wrong doing and had no contact with them. Vincent hopes that Annie get help before it is too late. Let God be merciful to them and Sam.

Dr. Thomas V.Thomas

I hope that people read this book with open mind. This book shows how people who claim to "know it all" can destroy lives. We must not judge others as Rev. Dr. Sam did. I verified facts and admire the strong will power of Vincent to write this book. This is a true life story.

Dr. Stephen Raj

Resident, Clinical Pastoral Education.

Congratulations for the wonderful work!

'My Life in the Stormy seas'' is an excellent work that throws plenty of light on the consequence of ignorance and stigma on mental health. The author has really succeeded in taking the reader through the storm that had shattered and smashed the ship and in making him understand how sometimes so charming and attractive personalities would become destructive in other's life. I wish that this book be an inspiration to our society to become more aware of mental illness especially certain personality disorders that are hidden in individuals who appear to be normal and smart to the common folk and sometimes even to professionals, who though with extreme good will to help others but lack clinical eye and to have the knowledge and courage to take the necessary corrective steps.

Dr. Sr. Shalu Koikara

Child clinical Psychologist& Alternative medicine consultant

“Most in the society are unaware and ill-equipped to handle mental illness cases properly, often resulting in the stigmatization of individuals suffering from this disorder. Prejudice and preconceived notions can only be countered with facts and better awareness. My hope and prayer is that this book would be a blessing to many, especially to those who deal with such issues daily.”

Bro. Viju Mathai

“Biblical message that ‘you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (John 8:32) is very true in the area of mental health. There is so much ignorance in this crucial area among the trained professionals as well as the general public. There are so many well meaning people in trouble today because of ignorance in this critical area of behavioral science. I pray that this book will give some insights into the various challenges faced by people dealing with issues of mental health at home.”

Pastor Freddy Thomas

Senior Pastor, Philadelphia House of Worship Community Church

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to seek professional help, but instead of helping her he joined hands with her in destroying me and her. He, out of his ignorance, believed that he was rescuing her from a bad husband knowing fully well that she accused so many men this way in her life. In that process he destroyed many lives and escaped being caught, because he covered himself behind the name of religion and acted as a very holy person. This is the story of compassion, but of limitations too. This is the story of failures and successes. The full extents of the successes are yet to be seen.

I owe my gratitude to many people and would like to thank them through this book.

First of all I want to thank God, for keeping me alive in the stormy seas so that I could tell this story. I could have drowned in the violent, stormy seas and swimming was very hard, and at times impossible to swim against the strong currents in the seas. I could have been killed by the creatures in the seas, but God prevented it so that my story can be told. I cannot say that I learned to dance in the rain but I am learning to take the steps necessary for the dance.

I am grateful to my good friend Rev. Dr. Rajan who always checked on me to see whether I was fine, alive or not. He encouraged me to eat and dress well. He was there to lift me up when I was down. When at times depression took over me, he extended his hand to lift me up; his words and deeds were always a blessing to me. His family too was good to me. His 15 year old son Joshi understood my problems much more than older, educated people. My computer password was similar to my wife's name and once he asked me "uncle do you want to keep it or change it? Why cannot you change it?"

I am grateful to so many others who did not understand the depth of the problems. You may wonder why I am grateful to them. If they had understood me, this book may not have been written. Their ignorance and hurtful words made me strong and hence I took the initiative to write this book.

I am grateful to Paul, Terry and others who were nice to me as I stayed with them moving from one house to another in my journey to the unknown. Both of them were very caring and helpful to me during my journey to the “future”.

Several of my friends read the manuscripts and helped in editing it as it was not an easy task to write this book. I want to keep their names private with their permission. May the loving Lord bless them.

A few special friends and families stood by me to make me strong. Pastor and the elder of church which I attend now, with their families, cared for me. The children of the elder brought joy to me as I always missed out on my own children and my grandchild. They cooked food for me very often. They prayed and encouraged me always.

My silence and calmness in the midst of raging storms was the result of support of few men and women who understood the problem and stood with me. This doesn't mean I was at peace all the time. Unfortunately, I cannot reveal their names due to privacy reasons. They and their children gave me the encouragement to move on while the storms were raging and the winds were blowing, and at times the waves were ready to swallow and engulf me. If I was able to dance with a few wavering steps, it is only because of God's grace and support of a few honest men and women who stood with me. As I write and finish this book my hope is that it may open the eyes of many people about mental illness.

I am grateful to the few who knew my innocence and prayed for me. I also thank God for one self-styled Christian leader who is still seeking God's direction, if he should help my wife. He also prayed whether he should help me as I moved from one house to another. He used to fast and pray daily but now seeks God's will only occasionally. He taught me that many people use God's name in vain to fool others. I returned the little money he gave me, as his wife was saying publicly “We helped Vincent”.

I cannot forget the words of a physician who asked me this question: “If she is mentally sick, how can she work”? This shows the depth of ignorance about mental illness. I have seen psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, teachers, nurses, priests, pastors, businessmen and businesswomen, politicians and others working while having mental health problems. Some were taking medicines, others not. Unfortunately, most people believe that mentally ill people don’t wear proper clothes, that they always act “crazy”, and throw sticks and stones at others to hurt them. This may be the scene in a few movies and stories that we have come across in regard to mental illness. This physician’s husband, another Christian leader, and the preacher believe that unless people are diagnosed with mental illness, they are not sick. He acted as though he knows “everything” with a Bachelors degree in mechanical engineering for almost 40 years. He has “answers” to all problems because he was dealing with real estate and knows peoples “mind” and he claims because he is “close” to God. He must not have known that the majority of mentally ill people never see a psychiatrist or psychologist ever in their lifetime. They are still sick but we cannot say what sickness they may have for legal purposes.

One of his close friends, another businessman, “all knowing person”, believes that there are only few people, if any that have mental health issues. He firmly believes that mental illness is not an issue at all as all behavioral problems can be changed for better by counseling.

In the end, it is my sincere hope that the field of psychology and psychiatry will advance to know the causes of many mental illnesses and find cures or ways to control the bad effects of it, so that many individuals and families can find happiness. I also hope that people come out of their ignorance and stigma so they accept mental illness as a disease which can be treated with success at least in some cases.

Even though the story is true, the names and some details have to be changed to protect the identity and privacy of the individuals involved. I am grateful for all who reached out to me in love, who