

March 2023

THE HERALD

Newsletter of the Orrville Grace Brethren Church

My Testimony

By Nancy Graham

I was born on October 10, 1953. I have 3 older sisters and 2 younger brothers. Between the years 1953-1968, life was lived as a typical American lower class family. We didn't have much money. My father worked hard for what we did have. My mother loved the family and worked hard to care for the daily family needs.

My mother and father both considered themselves "Christians." But we hardly ever went to church except for Christmas and Easter. Things changed in 1968. That year my dad started listening to a pastor on the radio as he traveled home from work. Then, one day after my father arrived at home after work, he declared, "We're going to start going to church every Sunday." By this time, my 2 older sisters were married so there were only 4 children at home.

So we started to attend the Grace Brethren Church. It was not long after we started attending that we all were convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit and asked the Lord Jesus to save us. I was amazed at the immediate difference in my dad's life. He had been a quiet man. Now, on a regular

basis, he was telling our neighbors that they needed to have Christ. Now, we not only went to church on Sunday, but we were there every time the doors were opened. And we weren't there "on time." My dad decided that we had to be there at least 30 minutes before the service started so that we could greet everyone who came that day.

One Sunday after church, my dad went out to the car. He picked up the pipe that he usually smoked and said, "God doesn't want me to smoke anymore." He laid it down and never picked it up again. I was just totally amazed at this transformation before my eyes. As the years went on, I was so impressed with how the Lord worked in his life. His love for the Lord was so evident in his life.

Life changed for me in 1972. Ike and I were married that year. Ike was a sophomore at a College in Ohio so I worked while he finished College. Then, in 1975, God moved his heart to go to Seminary so we moved to Warsaw, Indiana. During the next 6 years, we had 4 children: Benjamin, Caleb, Seth and Rachel. It was a rough, trying time. Ike was going to Seminary part time and working full time. We were stretched financially because of school costs, sick children, utility costs, etc. But

God was always faithful in meeting our needs (Philippians 4:19). We never went hungry and our bills got paid. We grew a lot spiritually. We learned experientially that God is always faithful and His grace is sufficient for every trial. We learned to be still and wait on the Lord. During that time, our largest trial was the death of our son, Caleb. He only lived a day and a half after he was born. However, even during that time, we experienced – we felt the peace of God that passes all understanding. The Sunday before Caleb was born, we all sang the hymn, “Like a River Glorious.” Stanza 3 of that hymn goes like this:

*Every joy or trial falleth from above, traced up-
on our dial by the Sun of Love; We may trust
Him fully all for us to do; they who trust Him
wholly find Him wholly true. Stayed upon Jeho-
vah, hearts are fully blessed – finding as He
promised, perfect peace and rest.*

When Caleb died, the Holy Spirit brought those words to our minds. At Caleb’s funeral, we asked our neighbors and Seminary fellow students to sing it. Dr. John Sproul, whose daughter had died when she was 6, gave the message.

FINALLY...in 1981, Ike graduated. We moved back to Wooster, Ohio and rejoiced in being with family again. Very soon, we were in the ministry and at the end of that year, God gave us another son, Joel. During this time, we were preparing to go to Japan as church planting missionaries. Ike made an investigative trip in 1983 and we all left for language school in Japan in August of 1984. We served at church planting missionaries in Japan for 10 years.

During our time in Japan, we were asked to take in an abandoned baby boy. We agreed and ended up adopting this baby boy whom we named Nathan. It was difficult in Japan because the couple who were going to be our team mates decided that they wanted to go in a different direction. In addition, our oldest son, Ben, began falling into the ways of the world. In order to help him, we decided that we needed to move back to the U.S. We arrived back into the U.S. on June 1, 1994.

We lived with Ike’s mom. His dad died in July 1987. However, God gloriously saved him 3 months before his death. It was just a matter of weeks after we arrived back into the U.S. and moved in with Ike’s mom that she was told her cancer had returned. This time, it was bone marrow cancer. So over the next 2 years, we cared for her. During this time, the Lord led us to adopt a 7 year old biracial boy named Jessey. Some months later, we adopted his 14 year old brother, Arthur.

Of course, there is so much more to say. But let me leave with you 3 things that I want you to remember which the Lord has taught me.

1. God will always meet your needs.
2. God will always be with you; He will not abandon you.
3. There is always room for learning what the Lord has to teach you.

Testimony of Mary Yoder

I was sixteen and struggling with depression, addiction and immorality, full of anger and bitterness. In my depression and anger, I searched for love in all the wrong places, and all of these things only drove me deeper into depression and despair. I looked for answers, for peace, but had no idea where to find that. In the Amish community we lived in, I was at the age to take instructions for baptism. While I really didn't want to join the church, I thought that might be a way to find some answers. So I, along with one of my friends, started taking instruction that spring in order to be baptized that fall.

As the summer progressed, I felt like there were continually no answers, and there was nothing that could help me. I considered just not joining the church and leaving, but I knew that would be difficult because I was underage at the time, so when I gave up that option, I started thinking about suicide being what I could do instead. I didn't talk with anyone about these things because there was no one I could really trust with deep feelings. I became more and more suicidal as the summer progressed, and I ended up planning a day, time, and place for this to happen. Sometimes, I was very fearful, and other times I just looked forward to not dealing with the struggles I was having. As I went to bed that last night, I struggled tremendously because I felt like there was something more... something I needed before I died.

I had been taught all my life about heaven and hell; but also that my being good depended on where I would go. I fully knew that I hadn't been good enough to go to heaven, but I didn't know the solution to that problem. I tossed and turned long into the night, but finally I knelt at my window, crying, and I said, "Oh God, I don't know you. I don't know who you are or why you created me, but there must be something, some reason, for me to be alive today." I told God that if he would only show me, give me something to live for, than I would not go through with my plans, and finally I could sleep for the rest of the night.

The next morning at church, there was a preacher visiting from Ohio. As he preached on John 3:16, he quoted the verse in English. This was something unusual for the Amish. I never needed to hear or study the verse again. For some reason, hearing it once wrote it on my heart. The preacher went on to describe Jesus' suffering in a very real and raw way as I had never heard before. He ended his sermon by saying, "We can take what Jesus did very personally because Jesus would have done that if you were the only person on Earth because He did it for you." At that point, I bowed my head while crying, and asked Jesus to save me from my sin. Jesus became so real and so personal to me at that moment. For the first time ever, I knew for sure that there was nothing I could ever do to save myself from my sin. I knew it was Him and only Him. God had heard my prayer, saved my soul, and placed a desire to live within my heart! I knew that nothing could ever change what He did for me.

FUNNIES

A Texas sheriff confiscated a group of slot machines on the basis of a law banning the use of steel traps for catching dumb animals.

On a cold winter day, an old man walked out onto a frozen lake, cut a hole in the ice, dropped in his fishing line, and waited. An hour passed without even a nibble. Then a young boy walked out onto the ice, cut a hole in the ice 3 feet away, and dropped in his fishing line. A minute later, *bam!* A large-mouth bass hit his hook, and the boy pulled in an 18-pounder.

The old man couldn't believe it. He figured it was just luck. But the boy dropped in his line and again within a few minutes, *bam!* Another bass. This went on until finally the old man, who hadn't caught a thing, couldn't take it anymore.

"Son, I've been here for over an hour without even a nibble. You've been here only 15 minutes and have caught about half a dozen fish! What's your secret?"

"Roo raf roo reep ra rums rarm." the boy replied.

"What was that?" the old man asked.

"Roo raf roo reep ra rums rarm."

"Look," said the old man. "I can't understand a word you're saying."

The boy spit into his hand and said, "You have to keep the worms warm!"

A village blacksmith working at his open forge hammering a white-hot horseshoe had just finished the shoe and thrown it to the ground to cool. The local wise guy walked in at that moment. He picked up the horseshoe, but dropped it with a howl of pain.

"Pretty hot, eh?" asked the blacksmith.

"Naw," said the wise guy. "It just doesn't take me long to look at a horseshoe."

At the Christmas Eve service the pastor, quizzing some children about the nativity, asked, "What gifts did the three wise men give the Christ child?" "Gold!" one child yelled. "Frankincense!" shouted another.

After a pause, a third asked, "Gift cards?"

Three guys are fishing when an angel appears. The first guy says, "I've suffered from back pain for years. Can you help me?" The angel touches the man's back, and he feels instant relief. The second guy points to his thick glasses and begs for a cure for his poor eyesight. When the angel tosses the lenses into the lake, the man gains 20/20 vision. As the angel turns to the third fellow, he instantly recoils and screams, "Don't touch me! I'm on disability!"

Sam shows up at a revival meeting, seeking help. "I need you to pray for my hearing," he tells the preacher.

The preacher puts his fingers on Sam's ears and prays and prays. When he's done, he asks, "How's your hearing now?"

"I don't know," says Sam. "I don't go to court till next Tuesday."