

HERALD of HOLINESS

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

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MODERN-DAY MIRACLES



The Transforming
Power of Christ



I FOUND CHRIST

by General Superintendent Jerald D. Johnson

I am a Christian. That is the most important thing in my life. In response to a request from the editor of the *Herald of Holiness*, let me share the story of how it happened.

It was my privilege to be raised in a Nazarene home. I am the first of the 24 general superintendents who have served the Church of the Nazarene to have been born into a Nazarene family. Others had parents who became a part of our fellowship while they were young and still at home, but I am the first whose parents were already in the church at the time of my birth.

Not only was my home a Nazarene one, but I was actually born in one of our church parsonages. This is my heritage, and for it I am very grateful.

From my early days I remember daily family worship; Saturday preparation for Sunday; sitting in the first or second row with a mother who expected her son to be attentive while his father preached; camp meetings; revival meetings; hard times, and good times. There are happy remembrances and poignant ones. In and through it all was the strength of my parent's faith, which could not be easily shrugged off.

I was sheltered from the world and its attractions. I knew the boundaries and was expected to live within them. It came then as somewhat of a shock when, at 12 years of age, I discovered I would have to make a personal choice. Until that time all the major decisions had been made for me. As a child I had made my "trips" to the altar. I can even recall on one occasion trying to think up something bad I might have done to justify my being there. I lied about what I had done, which I guess did

indeed mean I had finally sinned and could with justification seek forgiveness.

But as a junior high school boy I made new friends who came from different backgrounds; I found myself wanting to do what they were doing. Yet with my background and training, and what I now recognize as the beginnings of my own Christian convictions, I was repulsed by the idea. Even here there was no outward sin, but there was mental assent and a willingness to compromise.

Can God speak to the heart of a 12-year-old with such intensity? He did to mine. As I look back I recognize it was the crucial moment in what became the first major step I personally took in my journey of faith.

It is significant, to me at least, that the matter was settled not in a revival service or a camp meeting. It could well have been, but instead it was in a Sunday morning worship service. My father preached and concluded the service with a hymn and an invitation. That morning I had been sitting in the back row, not the front, an indication of my struggle. The aisle seemed long and lonely, for I was the only one to go forward that morning.

Our Sunday School superintendent knelt with me to counsel and guide me. I admired him greatly. I responded to his encouragement and prayed the prayer of faith and repentance. That morning I found Christ. He saved me and I knew it. Furthermore, I know it now. Never have I regretted the personal decision I made that has led me to a lifetime of service and fulfillment, which has been far beyond my greatest expectations. □



HERALD of HOLINESS

W. E. McCUMBER, Editor in Chief
IVAN A. BEALS, Office Editor
MABEL ADAMSON, Editorial Assistant

Contributing Editors: EUGENE L. STOWE • CHARLES H. STRICKLAND
WILLIAM M. GREATHOUSE • JERALD D. JOHNSON
JOHN A. KNIGHT • RAYMOND W. HURN
General Superintendents, Church of the Nazarene

Cover Design: Crandall Vail

Magazine Design: Royce Ratcliff

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Christ Turned Me Around

The pastor's sermon seemed to be pointed right at me. I began to weep.

With my friend Frank Burgess I played golf every Saturday. After our game one Saturday we took our wives to dinner, then came to my house about ten o'clock. There we sat around drinking, and somehow—I don't really recall how—we started talking about the Bible.

Frank had once been a Christian. He served the Lord for 18 years but then drifted away. He had been out of the church for 7 years. Me—I hadn't been in a church for over 7 years, and then only for funerals or weddings. Yet here we were, suddenly discussing the Bible. I was asking questions and Frank, with his background, was giving me answers.

He began telling me how the Lord had once worked in his life. I thought at first, I don't need that! I'm my own boss. I can shave in the morning without cutting my throat. Everything is alright.

But he kept talking and we kept drinking—it was weird. About three o'clock in the morning something he said just knocked me to my knees. I was face down on my living room floor, crying uncontrollably, and pleading with Christ to forgive my sins. I kept saying, "I'm sorry, Jesus. I'm sorry, Jesus." This went on for two hours.

Neither Frank nor our wives could pray for me, so they woke my daughter,

who is a Christian. She prayed with me and rebuked the devil in the name of Jesus, and suddenly a peace came over me.

I didn't know what had happened. I didn't know whether I was saved or not. God and the devil had battled for me and I didn't know who won! What I did know was that I had to find out about this Jesus, so we planned to go to church that morning.

I got to bed at 5:30, but I was wide awake at 8:45, eager for the church service that began at 11. I didn't know what church to attend, but Frank said, "I know one. I helped build it." So we went to the First Church of the Nazarene.

The pastor's sermon seemed to be pointed right at me. I began to weep. They gave an altar call, but I didn't go forward. While I was standing outside, still weeping, a man approached me and asked, "What's wrong?" I told him as best I could, and he said, "We'll see you at six o'clock tonight."

With Frank, and our wives, I went to eat. We sat at the table for over two hours, talking about Jesus. Frank said, "We're on a road going nowhere. We need to turn around. I've been there and I know what it is."

I said, "Well, I haven't been there, so I don't know what it is. But when church opens tonight, I'm going to find out."

That night the pastor's message was right at me again. When they gave the

altar call I nearly ran over people getting to that altar. I must have slid part way, for I was on my knees already when I got there.

I knew that Jesus came into my heart. The April night was cool, but my heart was on fire! We were praising and thanking the Lord until 9:30.

Since that day my life hasn't been the same. The Lord cleaned me up. I used to smoke two packs of cigarettes a day. I drank nearly every day. Every third word was profane. Not anymore! My habits changed immediately, and I had no withdrawal problems. The Lord really did a number on me!

Frank was reclaimed. And six months later my wife, Sharon, was saved. We are witnessing for Christ, and He is blessing and using our lives! Let me share one incident. I was working as a counselor with a telephone ministry. A woman called who was contemplating suicide. Someone needed to visit her, so my daughter and I and another counselor went to her home. We told her about Jesus, and prayed for her. She was full of hurt and really mixed up. When we left we gave her our phone numbers. About eleven o'clock that night she called me, and I was able to lead her to Christ right then and there over the telephone. Praise the Lord!

BY BILL ARMER



Bill Armer is a salesman residing in Modesto, California, and a member of our First Church of the Nazarene there.

On April 18, 1982, his life was powerfully transformed. The editor met him at a laymen's retreat, heard his story, and wanted to share it with all who read this magazine.

Bill writes, "We have especially appreciated the love of our church family and the deep commitment of our pastor and his family to the Lord's will."



A Prisoner's Testimony

by
Marcia Teichman

*Forty-eight
hours later we
were led to
the courthouse,
cuffed together
like circus
animals.*

My name is Marcia. I'm 28 years old and have walked with the Lord for over three years. I was married at the age of 20 to William (Bill) Teichman. I suppose for a very long time the door to Christianity was always in front of me, just waiting for me to knock. Praise God, I finally did. My grandmother, who is a living saint, has always displayed Christian virtues to me.

For many years I lived a wretched life of sin. I tried nearly anything and everything in the search for love and identity. I so desperately wanted a happiness I could share with others in a whole-hearted way. By the age of 24, the devil was using my weaknesses to slowly destroy me.

After climbing the ladder to success, and then falling flat on our backs, my husband and I, seeking an easy way out, resorted to thievery for our support.

One night, my husband and I were

on the run from the police. After eluding them, I fell on my knees and made my first plea to God. My husband and I were separated; he shot off into the darkness in one direction and I in another. I cried out to God, "Please help me!" Clutching a small cross that hung from my neck, again I said, "I NEED YOUR HELP!" It seemed as though I was yelling it out into the night but my lips never even parted. I was so afraid of the consequences I might face if I was heard.

That night I was running, not only from the police, but from myself. Now I was trapped, my mind was clogged with confusion and then it went completely blank. As I lay still in a clump of bushes, I was afraid that the heavy beating of my heart would alert the two officers, whose feet I could now see at the base of my hiding place. I held my breath. They walked right on by. Again, I called out to the Father, "Oh, my God, that was so close."

I stayed there in hiding for nearly an hour. Finally there were no more walkie-talkie sounds. I'd heard them say, "They got away." Now nothing but silence surrounded me and at last I felt I could leave the area without getting caught. I made my way back to where my bicycle was hidden, walked out to the street and started to ride. I found myself at a dead end, so I pulled down between two dark condos and shed some of the layers of clothing I had on. I was still nervous; my glasses kept fogging over, so I stood there a few more minutes, trying to get hold of myself. At last, I was sure I was doing the right thing so I mounted my bicycle and rode on. I made two left turns and blocking the road sat six police cars. I was in a state of panic as they shouted, "STOP!" They held me there a few minutes until another officer pulled up. He said, "Yep, that's her." I was busted!

I was taken to a station in Lompoc, Calif., and booked for receiving stolen property. Tears spilled down my cheeks as the booking sergeant asked if I would like to call someone. Who could I call? I was so full of shame and guilt. I couldn't call my husband, Bill; he was on the run and I didn't even know where he was. My parents were nearly 1,200 miles away, too far to be of any help. No one else would understand my situation, so who could I call? I had called on God, so was this my fate? "No, there's no one," I told him.

After several hours of processing, pictures, and fingerprints, I felt like the lowest of all beasts. I was led to a cell that reeked of smoke and sweat; it was dirty

and I cried as the barred door slammed shut behind me. The hours of the night passed slowly until I finally sobbed myself to sleep.

The next morning the officers brought me breakfast and told me a man had been calling and asking questions about me. "Who is it?" they asked. I knew it was Bill but I didn't answer. I thought, What is he doing? If he's not careful, he'll be caught too. They figured out it was Bill and told me they had asked him to turn himself in so they could let me go. I thought, Will he desert me or save me? By five o'clock that afternoon, Bill was in custody. He'd come to my rescue.

Forty-eight hours later we were led to the courthouse, cuffed together like circus animals. We were arraigned and bail was set at \$80,000. Within three days we were transported to the Santa Barbara, Calif., county jail, nearly 60 miles away. I finally was settled into a cell with three other girls. I was handed a pocket-size New Testament, and as I peered through my tears, I found an index of "Where to find help when . . ." As I turned to the scriptures and read each one, I felt totally condemned to death. I cried even harder.

A few hours later an officer led me to a small room divided by a heavy grill. On the other side of the grill was a stately gentleman. There was something different about this man, something I did not recognize; he seemed to glow. He introduced himself, "I'm Brother Charles."

I said, "Hi, I'm Marcia."

He asked me a few simple questions about my life and all at once I poured my heart out to him, all my hurts, fears, and guilt. He patiently listened to every word for nearly two hours. Before I was returned to my cell, he promised to bring me a Bible, gave me a few scriptures to read, and spoke a prayer.

That night I read those scriptures, wrote my parents, and slept peacefully for the first time in six days. The next day Brother Charles and I talked of the devil and God and how each worked in my life. He asked, "Would you like to be saved? Jesus will forgive you your past sins and turn a new page in the book of life. You'll be clean!"

"Yes, oh yes, Brother Charles," I said.

At precisely 8 p.m., December 18, 1981, I gave my heart to Christ.

Back in my cell, after a couple of hours of reading the Bible, I felt secure enough to write my grandmother the circumstances of my arrest. I felt she could accept the facts without fault finding or

My husband and I received a 10-year sentence to be served in California State Prisons.

judgment. As I began to write, I felt God's new strength in me unfolding the truth that had so long been buried.

My whole attitude began to change and things began to happen. I was able to quit smoking! My whole outlook toward my incarceration grew more positive. I knew I most likely would serve time, but His divine plan for my life was clear. My sister gave her heart to Christ, via a phone call to Brother Charles to thank him for helping me. About 10 days later my husband gave his heart to Christ.

I began to really feel the freeing power of Jesus as the day of sentencing grew nearer. I kept repeating, "I believe in God no matter what happens."

Before sentencing I prayed. The evidence was presented and now the moment of judgment was at hand. My husband and I each received a 10-year sentence to be served in California State Prisons. I sobbed for a few minutes after returning to the substation in Santa Maria. Why? Was our crime that horrible? I pulled my Bible from my pocket and found strength and peace in reading Hebrews 12.

God has given me will power, truth, and strength. He has blessed my life with a good husband and true friends. I've received supportive letters and prayers from all over the West Coast. Meat for my spiritual diet has been provided by magazines and books sent to me by Dr. Benefiel and Rev. Dana Walling. Brother Charles visits me once a month.

I pray daily that on my release I will be able to do three things. I wish to make a return trip to my hometown of Boise, Idaho, to escort my grandmother and family to Nazarene services so that we may all rejoice together in our salvation. I want to fly Brother Charles to Boise to meet my family and remarry my husband and me in the Lord's house, to start a new life together in a richer, cleaner sense. Then I would like to be able to attend Nazarene Theological Seminary and learn how to better serve our gracious Father. □



Marcia Teichman is a prisoner in California. She credits the influence of her grandmother, Myrtle McKenney, and the ministry of Rev. Charles Panoyan, for bringing her to Christ. Others who have been especially helpful are

District Superintendent Paul Benefiel, Rev. Dana Walling, and Dr. and Mrs. Frank Powell. Since her conversion Marcia thinks of herself no longer as "a prisoner of the state," but as "God's prisoner." She has won several other prisoners to the Lord.

A Whole Church Cared

BY GORDON L. BEERS

For the next five or six weeks, every time I turned around, there was that Nazarene preacher!

To know that someone cares for you as a person is great, but to have a whole church care is next to heaven. Because of the love and kindness of the Riceville, Pa., Church of the Nazarene, I am alive today.

On October 13, 1953, God forgave my sins. A short time later I was sanctified wholly and received a definite call to the ministry. I immediately began my ministerial training, and did "fill in" preaching and evangelistic work (in another denomination). The good Lord richly blessed my frail efforts.

In 1958 I was appointed to a small church that was deep in debt and had a large building project underway. I told my district superintendent that I could not handle a responsibility that large. His comment was, "No, you can't, but God can," and God did. The debt was paid off, and the building project was completed, and, best of all, we saw people won to the kingdom of God.

My salary was whatever was left after the bills were paid. On one occasion when I received my pay, which was 10 dollars, a church member remarked that it was a lot more than I was worth. With two children to provide for, and another on the way, her statement was more than I could bear. At that point I set my heart and mind on making money. I soon quit the ministry and concentrated on work.

At first I worked five days a week, then six, then seven. I soon got into management through hard work and much scheming. With money in the bank and our home paid for, at 46 years of age I started to plan my retirement. My son



**Thank God
for those
Nazarenes
who stood
behind me
all the way.**

wanted a dairy farm. What better way to retire? I set plans in motion to achieve that end, using the advice of some of the best minds I could find. With plans that seemed foolproof, with all systems go, I turned in that direction.

About that time a thought came to me: Gordon, you have spent a lot of years filling a bag, and made a big pile of money, and now I am going to blow on the pile and put a hole in your bag. I hadn't thought of anything that foolish in years. The mill of God grinds slowly but sure. First, I lost my job, along with my pension; then the bank account went dry; then I had to sell our home; and in five short years I was forced to declare bankruptcy. I think that my wife and I had more money when we first married than today.

Two years ago I knew I had to do something to stop the financial disaster for my family. I realized that my insurance was all I had left, and it would pay off only if I died by accident. I had to plan a suicide that would appear to be an accidental death. A dairy farm lent itself well to what I had in mind. All I needed were the right opportunity and the right circumstances.

On the very day when everything was right, a visitor walked into the barn. I let him walk the full length of the barn, then I met him head-on, fully intending to give him a piece of my mind. Before I said a word the visitor said, "I am the friendly Nazarene pastor. I see you are busy, so I will just have a word of prayer with you."

For the next five or six weeks, every time I turned around, there was that Nazarene preacher! He spoiled every good opportunity for suicide that came along. All I could think was, "Doesn't he have anything better to do with his time?"

Rev. Robert Roden's prayers finally took root and I began to pray, but heaven seemed like brass. I prayed and prayed day after day. Finally, I decided to stand on the Word of God, and that I did when I would think of some wrong that I had done. I would try to make it right.

Then one day when I was doing farm chores, I heard a still small voice say, "Gordon, I want to see how sincere you are. I want you to testify in church this Sunday morning."

I said, "O Lord, no one testifies in the morning worship service, but if I get a chance I will."

To my surprise, Rev. Roden said that he thought someone should testify that Sunday morning! I stood up, not knowing what I would say. I quoted some Bible

promises I was standing on. Still heaven seemed like brass.

I kept on praying and standing on the Word. Then one morning, about four o'clock, the Lord told me to send \$25.00 to one of the wealthiest families in Erie, Pa., for things that I had stolen when I had been in their employment.

I said, "O Lord, they spend that just on tips at a restaurant, and You know that I don't have it to send." Then God said, "I will give it to you."

About a month later, Rev. Roden asked me to preach for him. I told him I couldn't preach, but I would talk to the people. What a mess I was in! I couldn't talk about the saving or sanctifying grace of Christ because I had no witness to it in my spirit. I could talk on prayer, and the power of prayer, and I did.

Two weeks later Rev. Roden gave me a check. I put it in my Bible and there it stayed for another two weeks. One morning when I was praying, God asked me when I was going to send the money to Erie that He had given to me. I came to the house and looked at the check the pastor had given me, and sure enough it was for \$25.00. So send it I did, along with a letter telling of the saving grace of Christ.

For six months I lived by prayer and faith in the Word of God. Then one day the Holy Spirit witnessed to my spirit that I had been adopted into God's family. Oh, happy day! My soul was set free! Words can't express the joy that I have today.

Thank God for those Nazarenes who stood behind me all the way. One of the good brothers, Ralph DeArmet, sent diesel fuel for last summer's needs. Another sent propane for the house. There were other gifts, but their prayers meant more to me than words could ever say. It is because of their love that I am a child of God and a Nazarene today.

God hasn't made things easy. The farm did go into bankruptcy, and I have no work or prospect for work in sight. But the joy I have is not to be compared with any material gain I might have had. I will look for opportunities anywhere to tell anyone who will listen about the grace and mercy of God. □



Gordon Beers is a member of the Church of the Nazarene, Riceville, Pennsylvania. As this issue went to press he was planning a reentry into full-time ministry, perhaps overseas.

God Watched Over Me

B Y V I C K I L E I R D

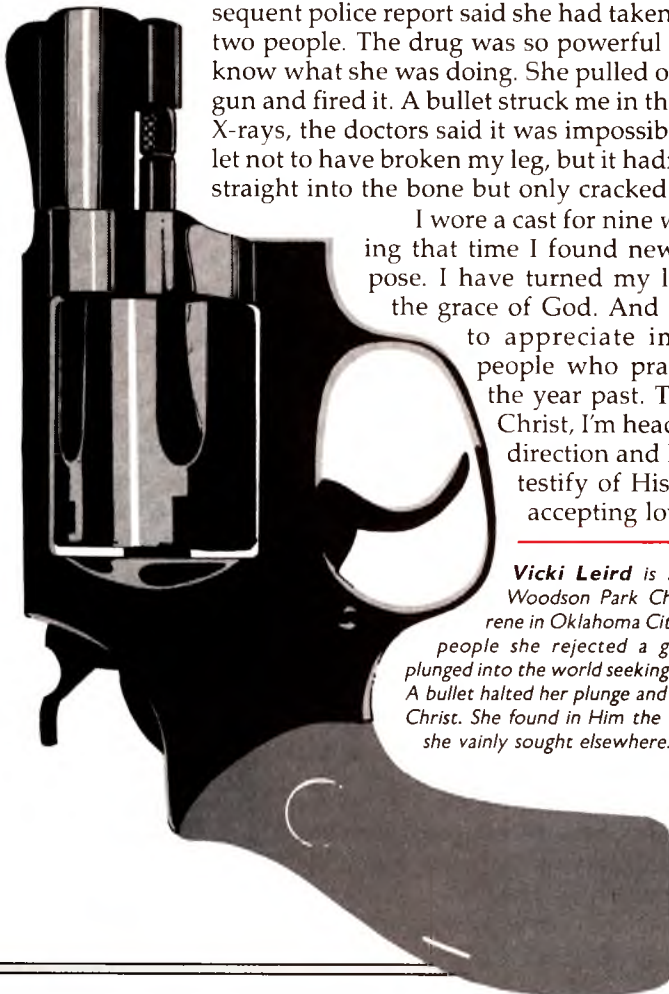
As I lie here thinking back over 1984, and the other terrible years without Christ as my Guide, it brings much sadness and many tears. You see, I was really a privileged person, for I was raised by two wonderful people who always put Christ first. My father is an ordained minister and my mother is a dedicated Sunday School teacher, and a very understanding, forgiving lady. I had often wished I could have the relationship they had with God, and with each other.

I had a good upbringing, but as I got older I resented my parents and God. I turned my back on both. Without God, I learned a marriage can be impossible, and mine ended in disaster. In 1984 I divorced my husband and started out alone. God watched over me somehow, though I had forsaken Him. Through His grace I survived a hospital term in which I should have died of dehydration. I survived a car wreck in which everyone was injured except me. As I drifted further and further from Christ, I began visiting a club to participate in their worldly games. And it was here that God stopped me in my tracks.

I was in this club on September 10, 1984, when a girl walked in under the influence of drugs. She was on amphetamines, and a subsequent police report said she had taken enough to kill two people. The drug was so powerful that she didn't know what she was doing. She pulled out a .32 caliber gun and fired it. A bullet struck me in the left leg. After X-rays, the doctors said it was impossible for that bullet not to have broken my leg, but it hadn't. It had gone straight into the bone but only cracked it.

I wore a cast for nine weeks, but during that time I found new life and purpose. I have turned my life around, by the grace of God. And I have learned to appreciate immensely the people who prayed for me in the year past. Thanks to Jesus Christ, I'm headed in the right direction and I am thrilled to testify of His forgiving and accepting love!

Vicki Leird is a member of the Woodson Park Church of the Nazarene in Oklahoma City. Like many young people she rejected a good heritage and plunged into the world seeking fulfillment and fun. A bullet halted her plunge and turned her to Jesus Christ. She found in Him the freedom and peace she vainly sought elsewhere.



New Friends led me to New Life



I began to realize that God had created me as I am, and surely for a special purpose.

From my early childhood, I have been a determined person. Determination became a strong part of my value system even before I realized what the word “value” meant.

I was born with a birth defect and have been considered “handicapped” by some standards. Knowledge of this always irritated me and made me want to prove to others—and to myself—that I was just different in my own way.

As I struggled with learning to write and speak, I was often tempted to give up, as I had seen others do. When groups of kids used to laugh and jeer, I’d go home crying and imagine ways to cop out.

But my parents’ determination rubbed off on me and gradually began to grow in me.

At some time in my early teens, my peers began to accept me as a real person with feelings and not the laughingstock of the class. At about this age also, I began to realize that God had created me as I am, and surely for a special purpose. Sometimes people would try to encourage me, but I would become frustrated,

thinking that perhaps their words came as a result of pity toward me.

The turning point of my life really came at age 16. Some new friends who were Christians entered my life, and I began to see values in their lives that were very attractive to me. They seemed to have a special love and respect for those around them, which included me. They all seemed to care for others.

At the invitation of one of these friends, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. Since then I have more meaning for my existence and more consideration and love for others.

And since then all of my highest values are based upon what I believe and feel. I feel that I should do my very best for Him, for He did His very best for me. And I believe that He is going to do His very best to continue taking care of me!

BY JOYCE LACKEY



Joyce Lackey is a member of First Church of the Nazarene in Tullahoma, Tennessee, and attends Motlow Community College. In Jesus Christ she has found a beauty and purpose in life that transcend physical handicaps.



Out of the Fire



Chipped and cracked I was,
 with my handle missing,
 discolored,
 discarded,
 useless . . .
 but the Potter found me,
 looked me over
 for possibilities,
 and shook His head . . .
 hammered me into pieces,
 melted me completely,
 shaped me with loving hands
 into something graceful,
 functional, beautiful . . .
 poured me into a new mold,
 and fired me
 in the searing heat
 of the kiln,
 not once, but twice,
 for that final tempering,
 that lustrous shine.
 Now I am a pitcher,
 constantly in use,
 a vessel of honor
 available for the touch
 of His hand.



The Church of the Nazarene in Wichita, Kans., was born on May 1, 1912. Pearl Poslick was one of 13 charter members.

In the September 18, 1984, First Church midweek bulletin, the "Church Mouse" writes:

She was 18, married, with one child and expecting another. She had just found the Lord. She said, "My brother was dying of lockjaw. I got on my knees and prayed, God in heaven, if there is a

Pearl Poslick, Friend of the Lonely

B Y R O B E R T U L R I C H

... she still
taught Sunday School
while in her 70s.
On Saturday she'd go
to that 1st grade
room, stand behind
each empty chair and
pray for the child
who'd sit there on
Sunday.

God, if you can and will heal my brother, the day he's walking I'll give my heart to you!" God did and so did Pearl. Since that day she's touched the lives of lots of people. I'm one of them. Those who rented apartments in her home learned quickly that she was more than a landlady. She pushed, loved, and prayed till most found the Lord. At least one is now a minister. . .

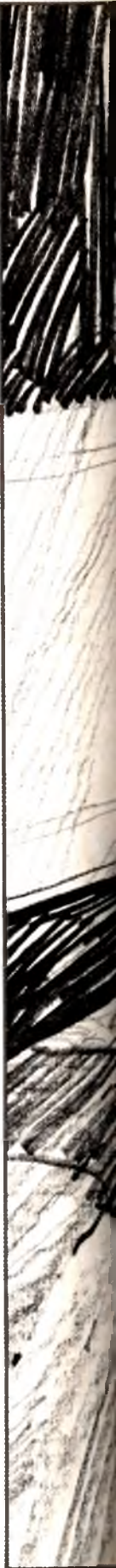
I am that minister. It was late in 1949 when I knocked on Pearl Poslick's door looking for a room to rent. I had all my belongings in a company car, transferring from my home in St. Louis.

Several months earlier, at the age of 24, I had become sick of the life of sin that I was living. In a drunken stupor, on a dark St. Louis county road, I looked up at a full moon and prayed that whoever was in charge up there would get me out of this life and lead me to something better. Not long after that prayer, God arranged my transfer to Wichita.

I can remember very clearly how I was so captivated by Pearl's spirit and her rapid, staccato speech, that for the first and only time in my life I rented a room without asking the cost.

She wasted no time in issuing an invitation to attend Sunday School. When the invitation included bacon and eggs I couldn't resist, even with a weekend hangover. I still suspect that she stood outside my door directing the aroma of cooking bacon into my room.

One Sunday night in February 1950, under the anointed preaching of Dr. Edward Lawlor, I knelt at the altar of First





*I was at the altar
because Mom Poslick
cared enough to
witness to a young
man who was
sick of sin . . .*

Baptism

Church and gave my heart to Jesus. I was at that altar because Mom Poslick cared enough to befriend and witness to a young man who was sick of sin and seeking a God he knew nothing about. I remember the genuine friendliness and support of Irene and Omar Brandt, Mom's daughter and son-in-law, who lived next door and made me feel a part of their family. I remember being greeted at the door of that great church, and people shaking my hand with a firmness and love I knew was genuine.

I remember Mom Poslick taking an enthusiastic, excited, new convert immediately to her unsaved friends so that they could see and hear an up-to-date miracle of God's saving grace. It worked; for others came to Christ as a result of her prayers and faithful, enthusiastic witness.

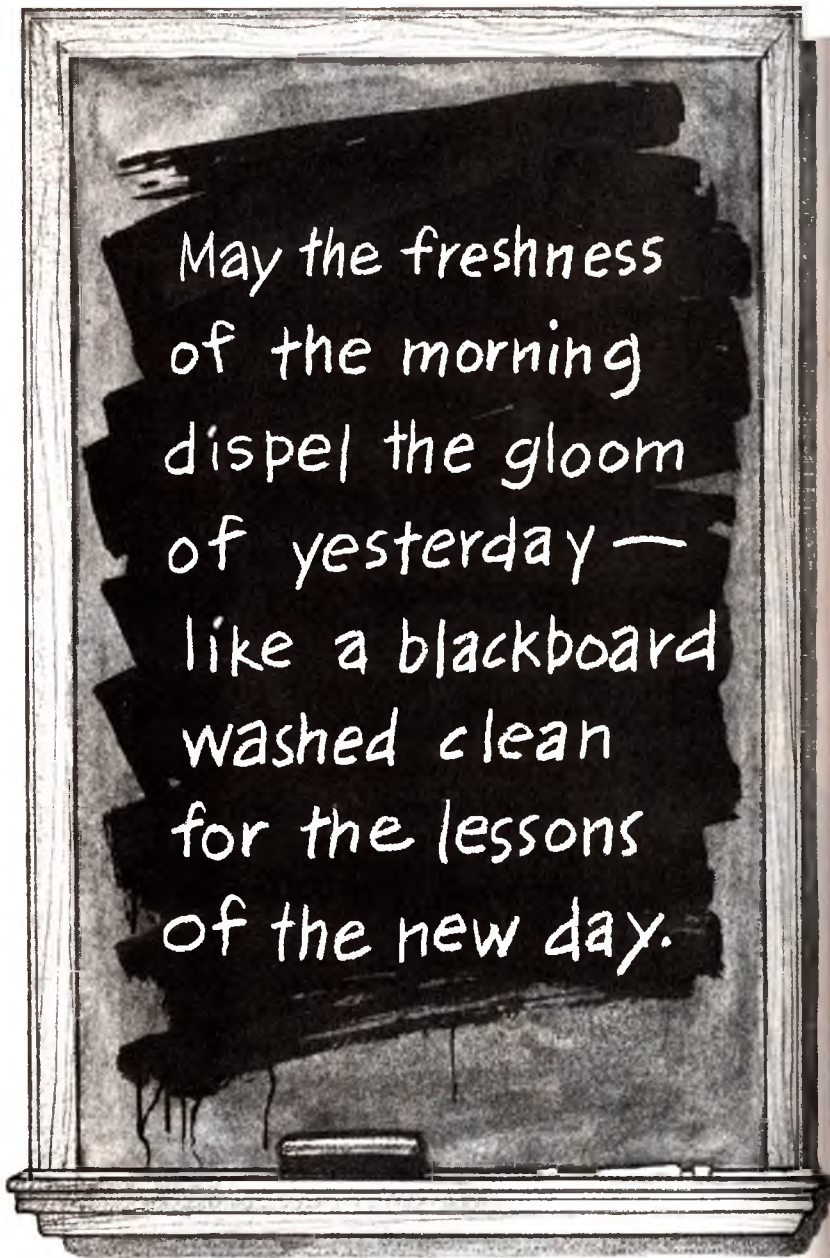
I remember her excitement and pleasure when Jesus Christ called me to preach while I was in a hotel room in Topeka, Kans. Jesus called and I answered, having no idea what it meant or what it would cost. This call to preach came just before I was to return to St. Louis and take over my father's business. Christ had plans for me to become involved instead in my Heavenly Father's business! Thirty-four years later I can truthfully say that I have no regrets concerning God's call and my service as a pastor in the Church of the Nazarene. And it all happened because Mom Poslick and Wichita First Church cared enough to take in a lonely, lost sinner and expose him to a caring, loving Savior.

Let's go back to the "Church Mouse" again . . .

. . . She still taught Sunday School while in her 70s. On Saturday she'd go to that 1st grade room, stand behind each empty chair and pray for the child who'd sit there on Sunday. She was always anxious to introduce me to some new person she'd invite to church. Then she'd give me a big hug, kiss, and a compliment. I've got a hunch when I get to heaven, she'll be waiting at the door with another hug and kiss and a face-to-face introduction with Jesus. First Church won't be the same without Pearl. But then, heaven won't be the same either since she arrived. I'll miss her.—The Mouse.

I'll miss her too—but not for long!

Robert Ulrich is pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Federal Way, Washington. His testimony is a tribute to "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and to a wonderful Christian woman who served as the channel of that grace to his life and the lives of many others.



—JOYCE A. CHANDLER
Long Beach, California



The Pepper Plant Connection

BY GARREL STENEMAN

Having recently moved from a farm, where we had planted a garden large enough to fill our freezer, to a city, where gardening is done in pots, we decided to transplant four pepper plants that had not yet yielded their fruits. To our joy, they not only survived the move, but seemed to thrive in the late summer warmth of the steps. In spite of confinement in plastic pots, we soon had peppers growing quickly to maturity.

After a week of frantic unpacking, trying to settle our small family again, I finally found time to tend to the little plants. They had indeed grown, but to my dismay, they hung limply over the pots, peppers shriveling before my eyes.

I had been so delighted with the idea that soon we could have fresh peppers in our salads, that I had forgotten they needed care to come to maturity. I lovingly picked them up and poured water over them, hoping to revive their bedraggled leaves. An hour later, they had not only perked up, but were stretching proudly to the sun.

So what, you may ask, does watering a pepper plant have to do with being a Christian? I will tell you.

My husband and I were always the life of the party. There was always a party here or there, and we didn't miss many. Then my husband was offered a job in a new city. Within a month, we'd lost our party friends, were terribly homesick, and circumstances only got worse. We had prayed about the move, and I believe God heard those prayers. He had some work to do on us!

We had given up on church. We had tried some, but couldn't find the fulfillment we so desperately needed, so we quit looking. We drove by a



The Pepper Plant Connection

Nazarene church every day, and I felt a gentle nudging every time I looked, and wished we could fit in there.

The following month, just before Christmas, I found a lump in my breast; my son temporarily lost his hearing; and my husband spent two days in intensive care for a possible heart attack. There was no insurance. The family that had rented the home we owned moved out in January, leaving us with rent and house payments, as we faced astronomical medical bills. We watched our savings disappear, and our home. With nothing left, my husband's employer told him that he would have to take a drastic cut in pay to keep his, by now, unstable job. Within six months, our promising future had collapsed around our feet.

I still recall a late night prayer of desperation—"Lord," I prayed, "make me a vessel . . . use me!" And the voice that answered so quietly—"First, let me make you usable." Little did I know the rough path He would have us walk to reach that point. My prayer had been offered when we were well off and secure.

One Sunday morning, tired of spending long days with nothing to do, we decided to give church one more chance, providing it was the Nazarene church. Something kept drawing us, though we expected to be disappointed there, too. But the time was ripe and we were ready to be watered.

I'll never forget the warmth and love that enfolded our aching hearts that day. This was where God had been leading—we only had to give in.

The way is not smooth. There are still many trials. But now there are many prayers to hold us up when we are tempted to give in to our discouragement. Although no one knew our circumstances, these prayers for strength in the Lord were our sustenance.

Today, we look back and see God's hand in all things. We are getting back on our feet, and working for a Christian employer now! We had to be made usable before we could be used.

Do you see the pepper plant connection? The Lord offers us springs of living water, that we may never thirst again. I think He has His people "water us" sometimes, perhaps for their own strength, as well as for ours who thirst. It seemed that just when we were too limp and weak to hold ourselves up, we were watered with Christian love, giving us new life and hope.

We thank those who watered the plants so well!

Garrel Steneman is a free-lance writer who lives in Plainview, Minnesota. She and her husband are dental technicians. The church of which she writes in this article is the Winona, Minnesota, Church of the Nazarene. Garrel says of them, "What a wonderful body in Christ!"



God Walked in Sandals

God's Word called order out of chaos;

His Spirit breathed life into man;

then sin gouged out a chasm

no bridge of man could span.

But God raised the cosmic curtain,

and stepped onto the world stage;

He not only is history's Playwright,

but chief Actor on every page.

So God walked the world in sandals,

a prisoner of His own love, yet free;

He wanted all men to know

what love looked like nailed to a tree.

In scarlet, the final act was written;

forever, the archantagonist was smitten,

and the Tree cast a healing shadow

across the world's gaping wound,

and laid love-strong girders

for all of sin's doomed.

Now, all can cross over, if only they choose

to meekly strap on the Sandal-Wearer's shoes.

—STAN MEEK
Dodge City, Kansas

EVEN BOB WAS CONVERTED!

B Y J . K E N N E T H G R I D E R

Would my brother Bob ever become a Christian? I wondered. I wondered—and prayed—for over 40 years. Some of my brothers, yes. Most of my brothers, yes. Three of them told me encouraging things, such as that they would have to preach if they became Christians. So I knew that they were not very far from the Kingdom, al-

though only one of them became born again.

But with Bob it was different. He was so intellectual and brilliant, as far as that is possible for a person without a formal education, that I think he always felt self-sufficient. He explored strange philosophies. He became for many years a devotee of Dianetics and spoke to me in his quiet, self-assured way of weird ideas—such as that he would never die and that no one needed to. He was almost over-

bearing in his attempt to get me to take up with Dianetics when I would see him, usually during the summer time. He was probably more overt in efforts to get me to accept that kind of psychological theory than I was to secure his conversion to Christ.

I did not detect any readiness in him to accept Christ. I talked freely across the years with most of my brothers about the importance of their turning to Christ, but with this brother such talks did not seem to be appropriate. With him, I would only talk about what he was reading and writing—for he wrote book-length science fiction novels that were never published.

I have prayed for this brother by name each morning for many years. For over 40 years I have prayed for him much of the time; but for many years, earlier, I did not use a prayer list and would pray for people haphazardly, including this brother.

But this brother, around 50 years ago, made the “mistake” of marrying a preacher’s daughter, who has always quietly held on to vestiges of her upbringing.

And of his seven children, he has been particularly close to one daughter who some time ago became an out-and-out, born-again Christian; and she helped her father, my brother, in his 81st year, to accept Christ!

Learning of this, I sat down with Bob in his home recently and talked with him about what had happened to him.

“Yes, Joe,” he told me, “I’ve become a Christian. It happened just recently, and it’s wonderful. I’m a changed man. I’m saved.”

As we talked further, he told me that he prays a great deal, and that he is confident that God can do anything at all.

“I’ve been praying that He will give me a new set of teeth,” he said, as he felt of his toothless gums through the skin over his jaws.

This startled me. I knew that God does not usually cause new teeth to grow into old gums, but I did not want to discourage his faith. “Fine, Bob. Perhaps God will,” I said.

“Actually, Joe, I think the teeth are starting to grow now in my gums,” he said, as he pressed against his gums with his fingers.

Briefing him on our children, including our grandchildren, I told him that our two-year-old grandson has spina bifida and is not expected to learn to walk.

“I’ll pray for him, Joe. God can do anything. God can heal him.”

“We will certainly appreciate your praying for him, Bob,” I said.

A week later, on returning from a gathering I had attended, I stopped by again to see this brother. And right away he asked, “Joe, does your grandson still have spina bifida?” as though he fully expected him to be entirely healed. I told him I had had no contact so that I did not know.

“God can heal that boy,” he said.

As we visited further I looked about his library of some 6,000 books and asked, “What are you reading, Bob?”

“The Bible. I read nothing but the Bible. I’ve got a lot of catching up to do on that.”

I left my brother’s home regretting that I had not done more, earlier, to help get him saved, but astounded, simply astounded, at the transformation through God’s grace that had occurred in the life of this most unlikely 81-year-old, slow-to-believe, convert to Christ. □

J. Kenneth Grider is professor of theology at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, and the author of numerous articles, books, and poems.

20/20 Vision

Once
my vision was limited
to the things of this earth—
fame, fortune, and self.
Then Jesus passed by.
He stopped
and He touched my blinded eyes.
The glory was so bright
it was almost blinding.

I reveled in it.
I wanted to build my own tabernacle
and stay on that mountaintop—
To fix my gaze on Jesus and heaven
for all time.

Then He touched me again.
My blurred vision was cleansed.
I saw hurting humanity all around me,
looking for some mountaintops
in their lives,
not able to lift their vision
from fame, fortune, and self.

Now with the gift of 20/20 vision,
I see their need.
I understand that to live
on the mountain is not the answer.
I must go down,
down to the valleys,
to show them the light of Your love,
that their eyes might be opened
that they too might see You.

Keep my vision clear
and my purpose firm
is my prayer, O Lord.

—MABEL P. ADAMSON
Kansas City, Missouri

Based on a visual angle
of one minute.

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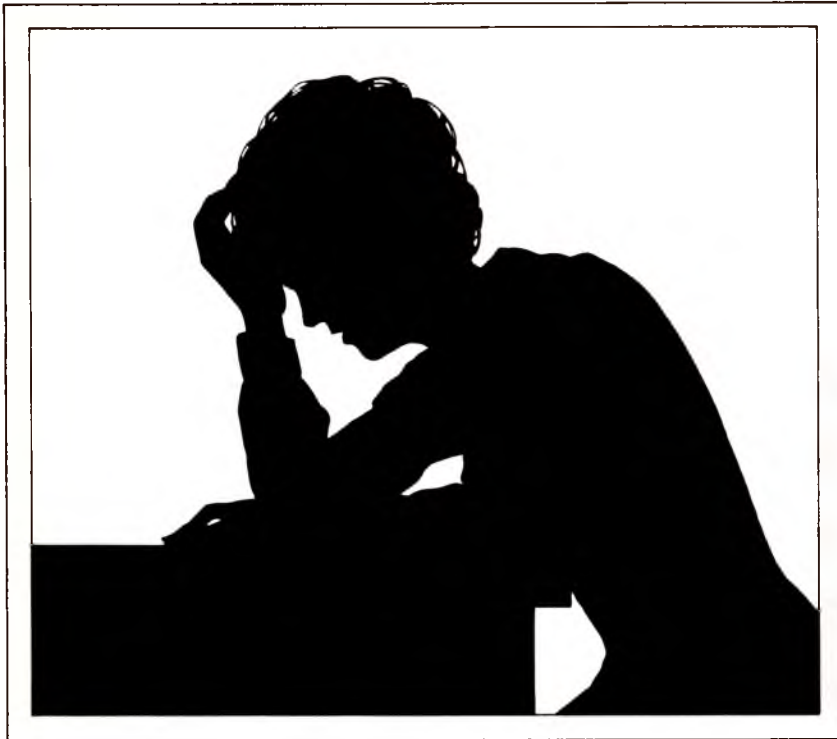
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wasn't happy. One day she talked with Dawn, a fellow Head Start volunteer. "She pointed out that I really needed God." Dawn witnessed to Sue for several months, waiting patiently for her to make her own decision.

One morning they sat and talked for a long time. Then Sue went home. Later, in a phone call, Dawn asked if she was ready to accept the Lord. She "thought so," but felt more comfortable talking with her sister, who was a Christian. So Sue called her sister, and they prayed over the telephone.

Sue had never heard the plan of salvation. As a child, she attended Sunday School. However, her parents were very strict, and she rebelled against them and God. She drifted into early dating and married at 17. Five children came quickly. Soon Sue and her husband found themselves trapped in a cycle of low-paying jobs, debt, and eventually welfare. With her own strength, it was an almost unbearable load. But when she confessed her sins and asked Jesus Christ into her life, He lifted her burden and walked beside her. For the first time in years, she felt free.

But the freedom was painfully brief.

"I didn't grow as much as I should have," Sue remembers. "It felt good at the moment. For a while, I was pretty faithful. Then I decided to take life at my own pace. That's when things started falling apart again."

She had problems with her husband, children, neighbors. Physical problems sapped her energy, and depression descended. Finally she decided she "needed to be more devoted." She had been sending her children to a Nazarene Sunday School. Now she began to go with them. She formed better habits of Bible reading and prayer. She reached for more of the Lord.

Soon her pastor noticed her growing commitment, and got her involved in a series of Basic Bible Studies. "I wasn't sure if I'd be able to do it," Sue recalls. "But the studies clarified my feelings and gave me a need to keep growing."

Around this time, her husband accepted Christ in prison. He began the same Bible studies. A bit of friendly competition resulted!

However, the Lord had even more

Life at God's Pace

What's the popular stereotype of a welfare client? Lazy . . . stupid . . . promiscuous? A young woman named Sue defied these clichés. Lazy? She grew a garden, canning food for herself and her five children. She sewed most of their clothes. She volunteered at Head Start and helped in other community projects. Stupid? She managed her money so well, she could lend to other welfare mothers. Promiscuous? She stayed scrupulously faithful to her husband, who was serving a prison term.

She was a responsible person, but she still felt "something was missing." After her husband went to prison, the prospect of single parenthood plunged her into depression. She faced the task of raising five active children in a house trailer on a very tight budget. She had had a negative self-image for years. "I was at the bottom of everything," she recalls. "Things seemed to be closing in on me. I knew I couldn't handle it."

For a while, she tried to ignore those feelings. She patched up her life, but she

for Sue. In April 1983, she attended a crusade at the invitation of a Christian friend. At the close of the service Sue went forward to pray.

Once again, she'd come to the end of her own strength. "I needed to straighten some things out," Sue said. "I was physically and emotionally drained. I was angry and bitter with Jim, even with the kids. After I prayed at the crusade, the Holy Spirit filled me. Everyone noticed a change."

Sue couldn't wait to share this change. When she talked to her pastor, he told her she had been entirely sanctified. He described the experience to her. She agreed that this was what had happened, and they prayed a prayer of thanksgiving.

Two weeks later, she made her first public testimony. "I almost didn't," she says now. "I was the last one to testify. The devil gave me a hard time. He didn't want me to change. He liked me the way I was!"

But Sue liked her new self. She began to testify in other services. She says, "The testifying made me and other people aware of where I was at with God."

Public testimonies weren't the only change. Sue's sanctification awakened her interest in the Bible. She began a series of 12 Bible studies. "The more I learned about God, the more I wanted to learn," she says.

Jesus was now the first priority in Sue's life. Her new attitude impressed her family and friends. "They knew where I was at before, and they were able to see the changes." As they saw her put God first, they began to ask questions, and she was able to witness to them.

Even the children changed. The two oldest boys accepted Christ. Sue initiated evening devotions with all five. "At bedtime, they're really wound up," Sue says. "I read a couple of chapters from the Bible, then they each pray. Jay, the oldest, usually prays about his temper. Johnny, six, prays that he won't take other people's things. Three-year-old April usually prays for anyone who's sick. Then I close in prayer. It really calms them down."

To an outsider, Sue's life may not seem much better. Her husband is still in prison. She still has five children. She's still on welfare, and she still fights stereo-

types. But she insists that Jesus has changed her life.

"Jesus Christ is the best thing that ever happened to me," she says. "I used to have a bad temper. If I felt like throwing something, I did! Now I just walk away." When there are problems, she says, "I don't dwell on them anymore."

Jesus has helped her stretch for new goals. At 28, she went back to finish high school. When her children are older, she hopes to attend college and study accounting.

Being Spirit filled made a special change in her life. "I never witnessed to anyone before, but now I do," she says. "I find a need to tell other people. I want people to feel as good about God as I do!"

Much of her testifying takes place at her small-town Nazarene church. She has recently begun membership studies. She enjoys the fellowship of God's people. Whenever she counsels a new Christian, she tells the most important lesson she's learned: "Don't take life at your own pace. Take it at God's pace!" □

"Jesus Christ is the best thing that ever happened to me."



by Kathleen D. Bailey

Kathleen D. Bailey is a free-lance writer who resides in Raymond, New Hampshire. She is a licensed deaconess in the Church of the Nazarene, engaged in ministry to the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of troubled people.

A Hole in the Clouds

Payette Lake was under a thick cover of clouds, but there was suddenly a hole in the clouds with rays of sun shining through.

Today after church, my little girl, Kelsey, was singing a new song she had learned—"The Wise Man Built His House upon a Rock." As her little hands went through the motions of building, I found myself overcome at the wonder of God.

There was a time in my life when I didn't think I could ever feel anything again. In high school I had hit bottom. After I had suffered years of abuse in my home, my mother came into my room and told me to pack my things and get out. I was 16. As I began to pack my things, I came across baseball cards, gum wrapper chains, and marbles from elementary school days; dance pictures, cheerleading pins, and dried flowers from junior high; athletic medals; basketball, volleyball, and softball ribbons; and newspaper articles. It was as if I had stepped outside myself and was watching all this happen. I kept hoping this was only temporary—surely she wouldn't make me stay away from my home. But deep down inside I knew this was for good.

From the time I was young, my mother always told me that if I ever left home she would disown me. Sometimes I wonder if she knew it would all come to this. My mother had a lot of problems of her own; I think we children just became the targets of her unhappiness. The physical abuse seemed far more tolerable than the emotional, the continual ups and downs, the confusion of rules that were changed daily. Every day my brother and I walked home listing the things we had done and hoping we hadn't missed any chores. It's hard to imagine we could be so frightened every day.

Things had always been tough but as we got older, it seemed that things got even worse. Finally, when I was in high school, everything reached a boiling point. My mother had sent my brother to live with my grandmother, and one day

she decided it was time for me to leave. I remember sitting on the curb on a gray, cold February day, wondering what I was going to do. Where would I live? Who would pay for my medical bills? Who would be at my wedding some day in the future? All these questions ran through my mind, but I was numb—I didn't feel a thing.

I went to a friend's house. Her family was involved in a church, so I thought they might know someone who could help. They allowed me to live with them. Although it took a lot of adjusting, I stayed with them until I graduated from high school.

My senior year was one of the toughest. It seemed as if my life was on a downward spin. I was defensive and didn't allow myself to feel much for anything or anyone. I felt empty, like a stranger in the company of people I'd known all my life. I felt as if no one cared what happened to me. After all, if my own mother didn't love me, who could?

I had decided to go to college so I could continue playing ball. No one in my family had even graduated from high school—but I was determined to give college a try. Several schools contacted me about scholarship possibilities, and every day my biology lab partner and I compared college notes. One day he came in with a card and picture from Northwest Nazarene College in Idaho. For some reason, he'd received the card in the mail, which he filled out with my name. We didn't think much more about it until I received a letter from the college. Over the next several weeks, I was impressed with the warmth of the correspondence and promises of Idaho living. I began to toy with the idea of heading west. However, as graduation drew nearer, I began to reconsider. When a person doesn't have family support or ties, the familiarity of daily surroundings becomes increasingly important. My chemistry

teacher suggested I go ahead as planned for at least one year. On graduation night they announced that I would be going to Northwest Nazarene College. No federal financial aid, no athletic scholarships, and I'd never been west of Chicago!

Since then I have learned the concept of prevenient grace. Even before I knew what my life needed, I was involved in circumstances that would alter the course of my life.

Following graduation I went to work as a janitor for the school district. Cleaning allowed so much time for thinking—too much time as far as I was concerned. I just wanted to keep busy and be happy. But it seemed it wasn't to be. I was numb and had begun to believe I could never be happy again.

On the way to work one day, I picked up three hitchhikers and discovered they had just robbed a gas station. That really scared me and when they got out of the car, I decided I was leaving for Idaho as soon as possible.

I'll never forget landing at Boise airport; there were only three gates! Some students picked me up, driving me back to the college down the back roads. I was shocked—so much open country! There were cows two blocks from campus! No expressways, no familiar stores, and everyone moved so slowly! To top it off, I arrived a day early to an empty dorm and I was completely broke. When the students began arriving, it was worse. Their life-styles were so different from anything I'd known. My roommate had grown up in the church and came from a close family. We were quite a combination—neither of us could believe the other had actually lived the way she had. I used to borrow money from her alabaster box and she used to try to soften some of my sharp edges. Her family became very instrumental in helping me stay at NNC.

I played on the volleyball team. A

few months into the season, we went to McCall, Idaho, for a retreat. The first night the girls sat around the fire singing songs and the coach led devotions. I'd always taken pride in the fact that I didn't cry and admired others who didn't. But that night the girls I had picked out to be the toughest were reacting emotionally. I left the group and went outside. One of the girls came out and asked if I cared to talk. I declined. My head was swimming—all of the emotions I had locked deep inside seemed to be surfacing. This girl began to talk about God and the difference He could make in my life. We knelt on that beach and I cried enough to make up for the years of hurt and anger. When I went back into the cabin that night, there was a warmth inside of me that I'd never known—a fullness that is hard to describe.

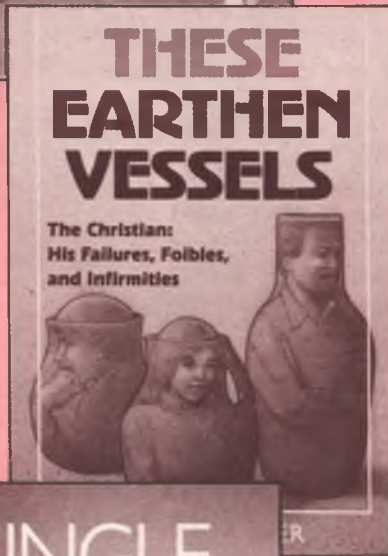
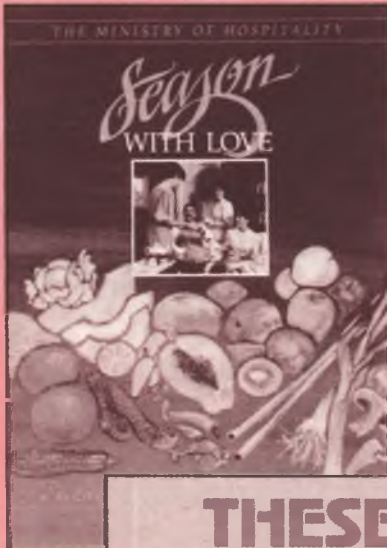
The next morning, I sat in the very same place I'd been the night before, trying to imagine that overnight I was completely different. Payette Lake was under a thick cover of clouds, but there was suddenly a hole in the clouds with rays of sun shining through. It was as if I were being reassured that the same light and warmth were now part of my life.

The rest of my college experience was filled with ups and downs that every Christian grows through. What moves me, as I watch my daughter growing and learning about Jesus, is knowing that it is all tied to my college experience. All the good things in my life are a result of this opportunity. We talk a lot about foreign mission fields—sometimes I think we overlook the more than 10,000 students on our campuses. My professors served as missionaries. They were examples of all that my life could be, and helped me to recognize my call to make a difference in my world.

BY SUSAN BUNKER



Susan Bunker is director of Public Information at Northwest Nazarene College in Nampa, Idaho. The circumstances that led her to this college, and the transformation of her life while a student there, continue to thrill and amaze her as she recounts them to others. She is married to Kyle Bunker, who she met during their student days. They have two children.



SEASON WITH LOVE

Compiled by Kay Wordsworth Wilder. The ministry of hospitality is at the heart of this collection of Audrey Benner recipes. Known for her outstanding midwestern cooking, Mrs. Hugh C. Benner used fellowship around a laden table or after-church refreshments to open the door to the working of the Spirit. In an opening chapter by Gloria Willingham the possibilities of such a ministry are discussed. The recipes, the teaching about ministry, and the book's beautiful design make it ideal to give as a special gift or to keep for mouthwatering cooking and people-influencing ministry. 288 pages. Kivar. **BA083-411-061X \$10.95**

THESE EARTHEN VESSELS

By W. T. Purkiser. Just how does the work of God's Holy Spirit affect those areas of personality that we consider the "human" side? Perhaps the subtitle says it most clearly, "The Christian: His Failures, Foibles, and Infirmities." It's Dr. Purkiser's conviction that holiness has a bearing on our human problems, but it does not solve them. It isn't the end of the war. Sin within may be destroyed, but sin without is still very real. Purkiser is a dean of Nazarene writers. In 1984 he was presented the first "Nazarene Publishing House Award" as one who has made an outstanding contribution to the denomination's literature program. 117 pages. Paper. **BA083-410-9778 \$4.95**

SINGLE AGAIN

Edited by Stephen M. Miller. According to editor Miller, this book is a "survival kit for the divorced and widowed." In 13 chapters and a preface, 10 authors consider topics that run the gamut from suicide, sex, finances, loneliness, forgiveness, divorce, ex-in-laws, and much more. Each chapter is by a recognized authority in the singles ministry field: Jim Smoke, Harold Ivan Smith (Jason Towner), and Ruth C. Bullcock are representative. A leader's guide is available for this Dialog Series book, but it makes for excellent independent reading. **BA083-410-9735 \$2.95**

An excerpt from THESE EARTHEN VESSELS

Holiness does indeed have a bearing on our human problems. But it does not automatically solve them all. Basically and essentially, it solves the greatest: the problem of inner sin—that "law of sin and death" that is "hostile to God" and "does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so," about which Paul writes in Rom. 8:2-7.

This in itself is a tremendous victory. But it isn't the end of the war. Sin within may be destroyed by the stroke of the heavenly Executioner's sword; but sin without is still very real, and the devil does not die when we are sanctified.

To borrow terms from the logic of science, perhaps we should say that the experience of entire sanctification is a necessary condition for the best solution to our human problems, but a sufficient condition only for the sin problem. A necessary condition is one that must be present for the desired result to occur. A sufficient condition is one that always and without fail produces the given result.

It must be admitted that a necessary condition is indeed necessary. You can have all the gas your tank will hold and still be stalled if you have no spark. But you may have all the spark that high-powered plugs will deliver and still not move an inch if the tank is dry.

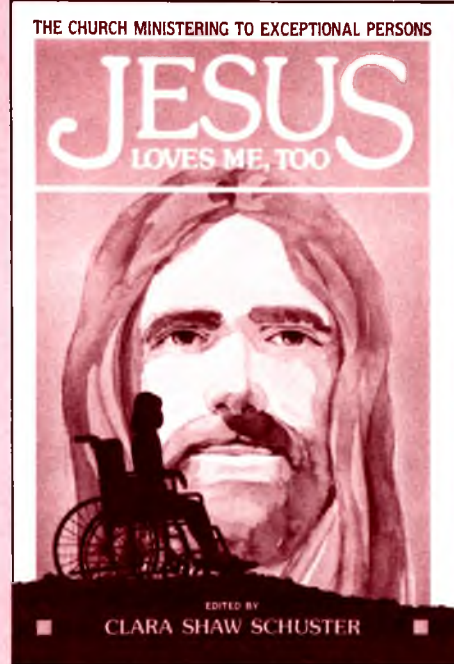
No Christian can win his spiritual warfare if he must fight on two fronts—the enemy on the outside, and the fifth column of a carnal disposition on the inside.

—W. T. Purkiser

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JESUS LOVES ME, TOO

Clara Shaw Schuster, editor. Thirteen articles by various experts in the field of the exceptional child. The book challenges local church leaders to examine what is being done and what could and should be done with children with health, learning, and communications disabilities and what to do in their sometimes unique emergencies. Much of this information will be important to parents and other family members of exceptional children. Clara Shaw Schuster, editor, is co-author of *Process of Human Development*, and is a developmental consultant in Mount Vernon, Ohio.

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An excerpt from JESUS LOVES ME, TOO

What are the needs of exceptional persons in my community? How can the church help? These seemingly simple questions are the starting point for a rewarding ministry to many who may have felt that God had forgotten them. Some of your church's families may have a disabled member who remains underserved or at home. Begin by providing services and equipment that assure the individual and family members maximum participation in the worship, fellowship, and service aspects of the local congregation. As you meet the needs of one or two, the word will spread and others may be drawn to your church.

When a more aggressive program is desired, you can determine the needs in your area by contacting local school systems and social service agencies. They can help you estimate the kinds of exceptionalities prevalent in your community and tell you the programs that are available to help them. (Many of these agencies are listed in Chapter 4, "Finding Resources.") Contact other churches in the area and find out what they are doing. Learn what you can from their experience.

Once you have researched the needs in your community, ask God how He would have you and your church respond. There are more needs in any community than can be addressed by any single congregation. (From Chapter 2 by Mark York.)

EDITORIAL

COURTSHIP TO CHRIST

MINE WAS NOT a Christian background. A little churchgoing in early childhood was soon a dimming memory. Our Sundays were devoted to fishing trips, ball games, and family fights.

My parents had their worst quarrels on Sundays. They would close the door to their room, but sounds of weeping, swearing, and threats of separation penetrated to eavesdropping children. Finally they would make up, and these quarrels were nearly always followed by long drives in the country. When they shut the door and began the fight, we kids would say, "Let's get ready; we'll be going for a ride soon."

For years Dad was addicted to race tracks and bookie joints. Mom despaired of finding the happiness she craved. Spiritual values were almost zero. Both were hardworking and honest, but they were typical Miami pagans. Christ and the church had no part in our lives.

When I was 16, and by then a bilious atheist, I began dating Doris. She was a preacher's daughter, but not a Christian at the time. Before long I was courting in earnest, deeply in love with that blue-eyed, sassy blonde.

Then she betrayed me—not by dumping me for another guy, but by getting converted in a revival meeting. She served quiet but firm notice on me—go to church or stop dating. I was enraged by the ultimatum and cursed the air

blue in vehement protest. She was unmoved by the pyrotechnics of my temper and vocabulary.

I decided that no sacrifice was too great if the courtship could be preserved, so I went to church. It didn't appeal to me at first. I thought the preacher was a wacko and many of the people only slightly better balanced.

I launched an attack on her religion, saying blasphemous things about God, the Bible, the church, the ministry—especially the ministry. She was deeply hurt, of course, but responded with patient, gentle, forgiving love. Soon the patent reality of her faith and the moral quality of her life made me miserably aware of my ugly spirit and cheap behavior.

No one can carry for long the burden of guilt and shame I felt. One Friday night, on a lonely street corner, I yielded my struggling, stubborn heart to the Lord. An assurance of forgiveness and a sense of peace overwhelmed me. From that time, I have doggedly, although imperfectly, followed Jesus Christ.

The trail has taken me through 42 years of ministry—filled with preaching, college teaching, magazine editing, and writing—with Doris at my side. Through smooth and rough paths, light and dark days, happy and sad events, we have found God faithful. And we are convinced that the best is yet ahead! □
