

*Wayne Hills
Baptist Church
Poetry Journal*



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Introduction

Hello! I am Danny Campbell, and I have the privilege of being the Pastor of Wayne Hills Baptist Church in beautiful Augusta County, Virginia. In March of 2005 we relocated from 222 Edward Avenue in Waynesboro to 877 Ladd Road. Our theme for this year has been “the Year of Jubilee-celebrating our freedom in Christ.”

All year long God has been working in the lives of our people, and the result for some has been inspiration to write, to paint, to draw. I was so blessed by some of the work I received that I thought it was time to let all of our people have access to this inspirational work. I have added in some work from other Christians that has proved a blessing to myself or that other members have shared with me.

A few notes. I chose to limit the number of entries from any one source to 3. My hope is that this initial poetry journal will be followed by others. I hope for broad participation from our members. I also decided to add creative writing and rounded out the journal with some quotes from around the world. It is my prayer that this journal will bless you and inspire you to creatively put your thoughts in writing to bless others!

A heart made glad,

Danny Campbell <><

The Butterflies and the Firelight

I feel my heart dancing.

Dancing like the flame atop a candle, that's been caught in a sweet, summer night's breeze. It's dance is playful, yet slow- happy that the gently moving air has come to help it dance yet moving delicately, so as not to lose its firelight.

I feel my heart dancing.

Like the dance of a thousand butterflies that have just broken free from their cocoons. Excited for their long awaited transformation, yet cautiously fluttering by in their new world, with new things.

I feel my heart dancing.

Just as the warmth of spring has freed the butterflies from their cocoon, so has the love of God freed my soul from darkness, and filled my heart with peace.

I feel my heart dancing.

And so I will move delicately through my new world, with my new wings, so as not to lose my firelight.

I feel my heart dancing because my soul is now free. Free from hate, anger, sadness, and despair. Free to love, joy, happiness and peace.

I feel my heart dancing because I am Free.

The year of Jubilee- Freedom in Christ.

Anonymous member, WHBC

Our Sovereign Lord

Long ago God spoke to the fathers
He spoke through the prophets back then
These days God speaks in His Son
Jesus Christ, our Atonement for sin

He's the Word made flesh Who dwelt among us
He's God's only begotten Son
Full of grace and truth from the Father
He and the Father are one

He's the radiance of all of God's glory
He sits at the Father's right hand
God made Him higher than angels
And His throne forever will stand

He's the firstborn of every creature
He's the image of invisible God
By Him were all things created
And to see Jesus is to see God

Creator of the world's foundations
The heavens the works of His hands
The world will grow old and perish
But the name of Jesus will stand

We thank God on high for His wonderful Son
We praise His most excellent name
Our Sovereign Lord- Emmanuel
God with us- we're glad He's come!

Betty Haines 10/17/2000
Based on the Book of Hebrews

Journey of a Soul

The toil of our body
 The weight of our flesh
 Out weighed by the joy of being alive
 But still tempered with pain more or less

The exasperation near the end
 A body finally winding down
 A death for some but not for others
 If a light can be found

The journey of the soul moves on
 Beyond the boundaries of earth
 Rising to heavenly sky
 Uplifted beyond this girth

Neither near nor far
 But close to your heart with no need
 The journey of a loved ones soul
 Is beyond our grasp
 Though they are in your heart
 From our pain they are freed

Jeremy McGlothlin 11/12/2001
In memory of my grandfather Raymond Shope

“So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom.”
 –Jesus Christ in Luke 16:22

“Before we ever have a funeral procession on earth to lay a body in the ground, there has already been an
 angelic procession escorting Christian souls to glory!” –D.C.

Let Me Get Home Before Dark

It's sundown, Lord.

The shadows of my life stretch back into the dimness of the years long spent. I fear not death, for that grim foe betrays himself at last, thrusting me forever into life: life with You, unsoiled and free.

But I do fear.

I fear the dark specter may come too soon—or do I mean too late?

I fear that before I finish I might stain Your honor, shame Your name, grieve Your loving heart. Few, they tell me, finish well.

Lord, let me get home before dark.

Will my life show the darkness of a spirit grown mean and small, fruit shriveled on the vine, bitter to the taste of my companions, a burden to be borne by those brave few who love me still?

No, Lord, let the fruit grow lush and sweet, a joy to all who taste, a Spirit-sign of God at work, stronger, fuller. Brighter at the end.

Lord, let me get home before dark.

Will be the darkness of tattered gifts, rust-locked, half-spent, or ill-spent, a life that once was used of God now set aside? Grief for glories gone or fretting for a task God never gave? Mourning in the hollow chambers of memory, gazing on the faded banners of victories long gone? Cannot I run well until the end?

Lord, let me get home before dark.

The outer me decays—I do not fret or ask reprieve. The ebbing strength but weans me from mother earth and grows me up for heaven. I do not cling to shadows cast by mortality. I do not patch the scaffold lent to build the real, eternal me. I do not clutch about me my cocoon, vainly struggling to hold hostage a free spirit pressing to be born.

But will I reach the gate in lingering pain—body distorted, grotesque? Or will it be a mind wandering untethered among light phantasies or grim terrors?

Of Your grace, Father, I humbly ask...let me get home before dark.

Robertson McQuilkin, President Emeritus, Columbia International University

The Church Was Built and Now it Moves

In 1956 they came with just a few
Folks who had a heart for God and built the church anew
At that time people looked, and said it wouldn't stay,
But now they see it moving out, simply out of space

But as the new church opens up
At new and bigger grounds at Ladd
They'll not ignore the building left behind
But continue to use it as it had.

You see, they've had Pastors come and go,
As they've been led by God
But the church continues to reach the lost
And send those led abroad.

They've reached out to Moldova, Bolivia and more,
While continuing to reach out here at home
Not just looking for numbers to add
But looking for hearts afire, spirits made glad

So now is the last day in this building of preaching here in town,
And though many are excited, some others will still frown.
So next Sunday, March the 20th we'll start off new in Ladd,
There'll be times of rejoicing, while some lingering feelings of sad.

Just remember it's never been the building that sat upon the sod,
But about reaching out to others, showing the love of God.
So, if we look back next year and aren't continuing to grow
We'll have reasons of frustration and know there's more to go.

But you see we have to remember it's not about the numbers
And the masses gathered which we must count.
But at our hearts as before God,
We each must give account.

So as we go to Ladd and leave this building behind,
It's each one's relationship we must keep in mind.
And as we go throughout the week while going thru each day,

We must keep our fellow members in prayer and lift them along the way.

So, if I think of you or you happen to think of me
As we go throughout each day,
Just remember one of us may need a call
Or lifted to God if we should pray.

Tony Wright

IT'S MAY

I feel the cool
I smell the sweet
I see the blue
I hear the birds so sweet...IT'S MAY!

I touch the grass
I sense Him near
The world bursts forth
Without any fear...IT'S MAY!

God's rest is thru
Spring has finished
With sunshine new
The earth is replenished...IT'S MAY!

Shirley Sours

To My Granddaughter

Each time I hold you in my arms
And look upon your face,
I'm filled with such sweet memories
The years cannot erase.

You are so like the little girl
I held so long ago,
Who filled my life with happiness
And set my heart aglow.

You look and feel and seem so like
That little girl to me
That I could vow time has reversed
a quarter century.

If I could have one wish for you,
I'd need not ask another-
That when you grow to womanhood
You'll still be like your mother.

Mary Harper Sowell
A favorite of Tom Galenis, as well as...

“Unthanked, unnoticed, and unknown, blamed sometimes and misunderstood;
Yet if our Lord but see our work, And by His grace shall own it good
It will not matter what men say, Since God is judge of all, not they.”

“Man is never so tall as when he kneels before God;
never so great as when he humbles himself before God.
The man who kneels to God can stand up to everything.”

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, ‘Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’ Jesus Christ in Matthew 25:40

Just Say Hi

There is someone I have met that has become my best friend.

He has really taught me a lot.

He has always pointed me in the right direction when things got tough, and I was not.

Me and my friend, we do everything together.

We walk, talk, and exercise when there is good weather.

The both of us like to read the Bible. I know he understands it better than I do!

I really would like to introduce you to my good friend.

Don't worry, it's alright to be shy.

My friend is Jesus Christ the Lord.

Raise your hands, look up, and just say "hi!"

Rick Brown

Run John Run

"Run, John, Run" the law demands
But gives him neither feet nor hands

Far better news the gospel brings
It bids him "fly" and gives him wings!

John Bunyan
Author of Pilgrim's Progress

Awaited Prayer

Where have you been, where have you gone?
Are you too busy, hearing the angels song?

I am down here, in this worldly view
Watching, listening, waiting for you.

To whom may I go, where can I turn?
I know to have faith, but it's so hard to learn.

There's reason and purpose, for trials you say,
Why is it so hard to just wait and obey?

I read in wonder, of the lives you conform,
When is it mine, that will be transformed?

To overlook the suffering, hurting and pain,
See the beauty, worth and gain.

Help me to see, that your angels are near,
Let me feel your presence, so I will not fear.

Send a peace to my heart today;
Let me know, your love I pray.

Your love through me, so I may show,
That love to others, who want to know.

Give me faith, and hope to endure;
Let me be kind, loving and pure.

Through the time's that I have doubt,
Don't let me whine or pout.

I want to have trust in the one,
Who gave His only beloved Son.

Kristen Dillow

Blessed Be

Warm hearts in union
A comfort to bestow
Upon one so ill
One with spirits low

Destitute and illgotten
Wretched body cracks and creaks
A loneliness in illness
Fleeting happiness that reeks

A soft thought to the heavens
To ease this life of pain
Or to ebb the death within
Or to give comfort just the same

To rise from these ashes
To feel refreshed and new
Not one of you are forgotten
Because there is love for each one of you

Jeremy McGlothlin

HAND OVER

Hand over all your worries, these you should not keep
Hand over all your fears, and lay down your head to sleep

Hand over all your sins, don't harbor a grudge
Hand over all your anger, Jesus is sure to judge

Hand over your love, without selfish pride
Hand over your time, in these things abide

Hand over yourself, for others to share
Jesus has promised, your trials He will bear

Shirley Sours

Do The Next Thing

"At an old English parsonage down by the sea,
there came in the twilight a message to me.
Its quaint Saxon legend deeply engraven
Hath, as it seems to me, teaching from Heaven.
And all through the hours the quiet words ring,
like a low inspiration, 'Do the next thing.

Many a questioning, many a fear,
many a doubt hath its quieting here.
Moment by moment, let down from heaven,
time, opportunity, guidance are given.
Fear not tomorrow, child of the King,
trust that with Jesus, do the next thing.

Do it immediately, do it with prayer,
do it reliantly, casting all care.
Do it with reverence, tracing His hand,
who placed it before thee with earnest command.
Stayed on omnipotence, safe 'neath His wing,
leave all resultings, do the next thing.

Looking to Jesus, ever serener,
working or suffering be thy demeanor,
in His dear presence, the rest of His calm,
the light of His countenance, be thy psalm.
Strong in his faithfulness, praise and sing!
Then as he beckons thee, Do the next thing."

Author unknown, a favorite of Mike Beverly

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever...you can!"

-Rule for Christian Living: John Wesley (1703-1791)

How Strong He Is

He will always greet you with a smile,
And without question he will go that extra mile
The love he gives many can't understand,
He will tell you it's from the Lord,
And that is why he can love the way he can.

Eyes light up when he enters the room,
And we hope he comes over to talk with us soon.
We can't wait to hear what he has to say,
Because his words are from the Lord-He always makes us feel okay.
We can be sad and at the end of our rope.
But just a word from this beautiful man gives hope.

He has done more than most could only dream,
But he says its not enough for God's big scheme.
To save everyone he meets is what he wants.
I would say he has started with one huge punch.
God's spirit flows through him like a river,
Enduring all that he has without once feeling bitter.

Some of us say we don't understand,
But he will tell you to walk with the Lord, then you can.
The Lord provides all you will ever need.
Come with me on this beautiful walk, I beg and I plead.
You will never ache or hurt in your heart,
When you find out you and the Lord aren't so far apart.

All of this we have learned from this beautiful man,
The one who has endured more than any of us think we can.
I love you Dave with all my heart!
Thank you for being my friend,
Showing me that God is truly the One to be sought.

**Terry Argenbright, Doug's brother
In tribute to David Branch before his death**

TAKE TIME

Take time to enjoy living
 Enjoy life as it comes
 Take time to feel His closeness
 Before the day is done

For if you run thru every day
 And skip over every row
 God's love and what you could've done
 You'll never really know

God will give you avenues, adventures
 And wonders to behold
 But you have to slow down, enjoy each day
 Don't let His love grow cold

Shirley Sours

Comfort

May you find your comfort
 In the love and dreams you've yet to make
 May you find this solitude
 In the roads or paths you've yet to take

May your heart guide you
 To fields for you to roam
 May your soul speak to you
 To guide you to your home

May your arms grasp tightly
 The ones you love to keep them near
 May you see the love you have for yourself
 May you find some comfort here

Jeremy McGlothlin, 5/11/2000

True Love Waits

My Darling, There has never been a time since we came together
 That I have not been delighted with you
 Your beautiful face, lovely form, godly spirit and commitment to excellence
 have been my delight
 How blessed am I among men to have won your love
 And seen my desire for you granted today.
 Consider our Lord and Savior Jesus,
 Who so loved us that He died for our sins,
 redeeming his bride with His own blood,
 that we the faithful might ever be captivated with His love
 Our delight has been in Him,
 And He has graciously given us the desires of our hearts this hour,
 my friend, my delight
 We have waited all of our lives for the purity of the moment
 we will enjoy tonight,
 and waiting has been worth it, for I will always be
 exhilarated with your love

Danny Campbell, Wedding Day 8/1/1992

Ode to Ray Beatty

You're a light in our church (I'd dare say a beacon)
 You've ministered to seniors and served as a deacon
 We've counted on you and you've done your share
 And for visitation you'll always be there
 We respect and admire and appreciate too
 And we know God is keeping His hand upon you
 You're our "Fun Bunch" leader, you keep us in line
 An awesome task...but you're doing just fine!
 We love you and Marge and are grateful for you
 And the nursing home residents are thankful too
 For the visits on Mondays and the scriptures you share
 And for all that you do to show them you care
 This poem is short but it's sincere
 Written for a brother whom we hold dear

Betty Haines

Abraham's Sacrifice

You may ask me to serve You with my hands
Or go for you to far and distant land.
But what You ask of me today will stretch my life
Beyond the boundaries of my soul, my will, my might.

Here's the wood...here is the fire
Now help me Lord to sacrifice my heart's desire,
I long to give you everything
So the offering I bring is to worship...just to worship

So I will go towards the mountain you shall name
And all my dreams and plans and visions I will lay
Upon the altar of Your love to sacrifice
I give my all, my soul, my life

Here's the wood...here is the fire
Now help me Lord to sacrifice my heart's desire,
I long to give you everything
So the offering I bring is to worship...just to worship

Here I am...Oh heart's desire
To place you on the flames of holy fire
But I know that I will hold you once again
For I trust the faithful God of Abraham

Sonny Thompson, friend of WHBC

"It is lack of holiness, not lack of numbers,
Which hinders the advance of the church."

Jonathan Edwards

"Disturbers are to be rebuked, The low spirited to be encouraged,
The infirm to be supported, objectors confuted,
The treacherous guarded against, the unskilled taught,
The lazy aroused, the contentious restrained,
The haughty repressed, litigants pacified,
The poor relieved, the oppressed liberated,
The good approved, the evil borne with,
And all are to be loved!"

Saint Augustine, speaking of what a Pastor does, around 400 A.D.

An Easter Poem!

I went to the grave this morning
 I went there my Savior to see,
 But He was no where to be found
 Because this was day number three!

I found the stone was rolled away
 And I was still a bit confused,
 I had seen Him crucified
 And His body was beaten, bloody, and bruised?

Then someone said, "who are you looking for,
 He's not here but was raised!
 Then I remembered what He had told us
 I could only lift my voice in Praise!

So, if you go there Easter morning,
 you'll find an empty grave ,
 Because that first Easter morning He was resurrected
 And now only wants our obedience and Praise!

It's been 2000 years since He was crucified
 And soon He'll be coming again,
 Not riding a donkey to be led by men
 But to conquer, to rule, and to Reign!

Tony Wright

“The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.”

“There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy.”

G.K. Chesterton

“Oh Lord, help me to enter the pulpit as though it were the first time,
 as though it could be the best time, and as though it might be the last time.”

From the Dempsey Carwile collection

Quotes from Around the World

If your vision is for a year...plant wheat.
If your vision is for ten years...plant trees.
If your vision is for a lifetime...plant people.
-An Old Chinese Proverb

He who cannot dance will say: "the drum is bad."
-From the Ashanti tribe

"If you do not step on the dog's tail, he will not bite you."
-From Cameroon

"To love someone who does not love you,
is like shaking a tree to make the dew drops fall."
-From the Congo

"Confiding a secret to an unworthy person is like
carrying grain in a bag with a hole."
-From Ethiopia

"It is the duty of children to wait on elders, and not the elders on children."
-From Kenya

"When the mouse laughs at the cat, there is a hole nearby."
-From Nigeria

"Only a monkey understands a monkey."
-From Sierra Leone

"One does not cross a river without getting wet."
-Zululand

A Hike on the Trail Leads Home

On Tuesday, April 19, 2005, I took my first hike on the Appalachian Trail along with my brother Russell, sister Shirley, and friend Shirley Cox. We left the Humpback parking lot around 9 o'clock on a beautiful morning and hiked to the shelter where we stopped briefly for lunch and a chance to take some pictures. We detoured off the trail briefly to observe a magnificent waterfall at Mill Creek and in the process startled two deer drinking from the cold mountain stream. The occasion of this hike was my first chance to observe the wildflowers growing in the mountains – the jack in the pulpit, bloodroot, purple AND yellow violets and the flower that was called some kind of “pink” which actually was a brilliant red. There were other plants with small lavender colored flowers, as well as white ones. We also observed a brownish, finely textured mushroom and something called a cancer plant. Shirley Cox was familiar with most of the plant life we came upon and through it all we received quite an education.

Two days later my body reminds me that I went on this 7 ½ mile, six-hour, hike. My mind is racing to know more about my family history now that I have seen where my mother was born and where she and her family spent so many years of their lives.

After what seemed to me a torturous climb, we came upon the Lowe family cemetery on the right side of the Trail. Though I had been excited about visiting this location where my mother's grandparents are buried, by the time we arrived there my body was telling me it needed to just sit down on a log and have a drink of something cool. The log that I happened to sit on was decayed and crumbled under the weight of my body, sending me in a backward direction. I was too worn out to examine the cemetery as I wished I had done. Only one tombstone was marked – that of Minnie Lowe, my great-grandmother. It was a homemade headstone with initials reading “M. C. Lowe” and the dates. Her maiden name was McQuarry. The marriage license lists her name as Minnie E. McCrary. All the other stones were just plain field stones. We couldn't tell how many graves are there – perhaps a dozen or so. I have asked several people who else might be buried there and no one knows for sure but speculate that since several of their children died, these are more than likely their graves. It's evident that someone has cared for the cemetery off and on over the years and it is in need of care right now. Since we had finished our bottled water, Shirley Cox shared with my sister and me her “high caffeine” orange drink and after a brief rest we trudged on.

A little further along Shirley Cox pointed out the ruins of the Lowes' barn. Only a few timbers lie on the ground. Some distance below the barn site we could see the top of what is left of the Lowe home. I was not up to walking that far down knowing that I would have to walk back up, so I took Shirley Cox's word for it that the building is falling down. We heard the rumble of thunder about this time and I asked her if we could take shelter there if a storm came up but she didn't think so. I have a picture taken in 1971 of what I was told was the Lowe home which had been made into a one-story hunting cabin. Someone told me that there used to be an upstairs.

Continuing along the trail toward the Afton Overlook on the left side of the path, we came upon a fireplace and chimney built of stacked rocks. My brother said that this was the remains of the house where Mama was born in 1910. I learned yesterday in talking with Mama's two sisters, Margaret (Cash) and Mae (Truslow), that all of the children were born here except Margaret, the youngest one, so this tells me that Grandma and Granddaddy Mayo lived here probably from 1908 (or earlier) until the 1920s. Margaret was born in 1927 and they had moved off the mountain by this time. I wonder if my grandparents went there to live right after they were married in 1906.

I remember Mama telling of a doll she received as a Christmas gift. Such gifts were extremely rare and this doll with a China head meant so much to her. Rena was younger and did not get a doll so, of course, she wanted the one Mama had. She threw such a fit that finally Grandma Mayo gave in and told Mama to let Rena play with the doll. Rena took the doll and slammed it into the hearth of the very fireplace where I was sitting the day of our hike. That is amazing! Mama was devastated by the loss of her doll.

Life on the mountain must have been very hard. God must have given them the strength and ability they needed to live in the mountains under these conditions. You would have to be in tip-top shape to deal with just the topography alone, not to mention the conditions of poverty that must have prevailed with so many children to feed and almost non-existent job opportunities. Margaret told me that Granddaddy Mayo (William Joseph Mayo) would get up at 4 a.m. and walk to the saw mill at Sherando, work all day, then walk back home. Sometimes it would get dark before he got home and Grandma (Mary Elizabeth Lowe Mayo) would take a lantern and walk to meet him. Sometimes she said she could hear wildcats in the mountains and they sounded like babies crying.

Aunt Mae says she is still traumatized from being lost when she was three years old. Grandma sent Mama to find the cows and Mae tried to follow but got on the wrong side of the fence and got lost. Somehow Mama found her and carried her home on her back.

Grandma and Granddaddy were married when she was only 16. Eleven children were born to them. Life demanded that everyone work hard from the time they were old enough to pitch in. Aunt Rena told me once that she didn't get to be a child because she had to watch the younger ones while Grandma worked with Granddaddy in the fields. Mama was in the mountains herself, barefoot, dragging logs with a horse when she was only eight years old. I used to wonder why anyone would go barefoot in the mountains but now I know – there wasn't any money to buy shoes.

Margaret said that Granddaddy Lowe (John William Lowe) rode a white horse named Ol' Tom. She remembers that one of his sayings was "Hello, by God, throw in another chunk." What that means exactly I can't say. Maybe it was a better way of expressing frustration than by cursing. Maybe it was an expression he had picked up from someone in his family.

Margaret and Mae told me that most of the mountain property back then was owned by Edgar Miller, including the house Mama's family lived in where only the chimney

remains. She said that Mama's sister Rena (Pannell) always wanted to go back and see the place where she was born but it never happened.

Aunt Mae told me that Mama's cousin, Sammy (daughter of Willie Mae Lowe "Sissy" Dudley) always said she could hear spirits and ghosts upstairs and didn't like to go up there. This is where Mama, Rena and Mae slept with "all we could cram into the bed" Aunt Mae said. They always had a lantern above the bed. This is where they were sleeping the night Mama said she saw an old man sitting on the foot of their bed. She was afraid and asked Rena to turn up the lantern so she could get a better look. After Rena turned up the lantern, she also said she could see the old man. They didn't wake Mae. Mae says she believes that Mama just had a dream and that Rena's "imagination just ran wild" but Mama told us that story over and over again and to her it was real. They ducked under the covers from fright but when they were brave enough to look a while later, he was no longer there.

Granddaddy Lowe died on March 5, 1937, the night before I was born. Since Mama was in Schuyler at the time giving birth to me, I'm certain that she did not get to attend the funeral. She would have been in no condition to travel to the top of the Blue Ridge Mountain. She told us that when she got married and left home in May of 1936, her granddaddy said to her, "Baby, I'll never see you again" and his prophecy came true.

Margaret told me that William Lowe came home just in time for the funeral. Margaret was ten years old at that time and remembers being at home with her mama and Lena, her mama's sister. Lena was crying. There came a knock at the door and there stood William asking, "Where is Daddy?" Margaret said she doesn't remember seeing him after that but she will always remember his handsome features – his dark hair and white teeth. We have always been told that Granddaddy Lowe had Cherokee Indian blood in him and many of his descendants have his brown eyes.

Getting back to the hike, we journeyed a bit further and came upon what Russell said was the remains of an old homestead on the left side of the trail. Aunt Mae described where Aunt Sissy (Dudley) lived as "below the cemetery, coming down the mountain, above granddaddy's barn." Could this site be where Aunt Sissy lived?

This hike has renewed my interest in my family history on my mother's side. I want to learn all I can about these people who survived such isolation. Hiking the trail and becoming familiar with the layout of the land has helped me so much and makes the stories Mama used to tell all the more precious.

Betty Haines

After The Fall

Life was different before the fall. People and animals lived in the Garden of Eden, and they were not afraid of each other. It was wonderful! But then Adam and Eve sinned against God. They did what they wanted to do instead of what God wanted. They “fell” from the perfect relationship they and the animals had enjoyed with God and with each other. After this fall, people and animals were afraid of each other. The stronger animals began to look at the weaker animals and see lunch! Most of the animals were very afraid.

Without telling the stronger animals what they were doing the weaker animals called a meeting where they brought a complaint to an angel of God. “This is not fair,” they said, “The stronger animals are going to eat us up.”

Then the angel spoke saying, “My dear animals, God is not unfair. He knew that the humans could choose to sin and do what they wanted instead of what He wanted. Everything that is happening is the result of sin.” “But God also wants you to know that he created everyone of you uniquely to live as He planned. At that point all the animals said, “How can we survive when the other animals are stronger?” Then the angel said, “I’ll have to tell each of you how you have been created to survive.” Then he looked at the parrots, parakeets, bats, nightingales, sparrows, and other birds and spoke; “You have all been given your wings to fly from danger; so do so!” The birds were very grateful and flew away.

“But what about me,” said an orangutan. “I have no wings and I cannot fly, I only have these long arms,” As he spoke a chimpanzee scratched his head and a gorilla “aped” him. The angel patiently responded that their arms were for climbing trees, something their enemies could not do. “Awesome” said the monkeys, and they began to climb the trees, swinging from branch to branch. As they went a baboon got his backside caught on a tree limb, and that’s why baboon’s backsides look funny to this day!

Then a rabbit said, “this is not right.” “I certainly can’t fly with these big ears and I can’t climb with these big feet. What good are these to me?” When he mentioned his big ears, many of the other animals laughed, because he really did have big ears! At this the angel said, “Mr. Rabbit, you need to accept the way you are. With your big ears you will be able to hear the stronger animals coming from far away. And with your big feet you will be able to hop faster than the others can run. Go ahead, try it.” At this point the rabbit began to hop. He was so excited that he hopped here, he hopped there, and he hopped everywhere. Many of the other animals now wished they had big ears and big feet also! One of them, a kangaroo, started hopping too, and soon all the hopping animals were gone. At once the angel looked at the elk, deer, gazelle, horses and zebras. “You are fast also, but so are the stronger animals. You will need to stick together in herds for protection. You need each other.” With that in mind, off went those animals.

Then the angel looked at the animals still around and thanked them for waiting. “Mr. Camel, you can travel so long on so little water that you can live in the desert, where

fewer of the stronger animals are. On longer trips you may want to take a second hump!" "Mr. Elephant, you're far too large to worry about any animal mistreating you. They won't bother you-now don't forget that!" "Ms. Chameleon, where are you Ms. Chameleon? Oh, I see you've discovered your defense!" "Mrs. Mouse, yours will simply have to be a small world- After all, the other animals will mostly overlook you!" "Mr. Pig, when you get in a squeeze, don't be a ham, but let out a squeal and your enemy will run away before everyone turns to the commotion." "Miss Porcupine, I think you'll be able to discover your defense easily enough, and Mr.' Skunk, well, what can I say except the Lord works in mysterious ways!"

At this point there was only one animal left- a lamb. A little spotless white lamb. "Oh dear," said the angel. "I don't have any instructions for you. I will go back to God and get them." "Oh no, you mustn't," said the lamb. "The Lord has already told me what my defense is. What on earth could a frail lamb like yourself have as a defense?" said the angel. "Love," replied the lamb, "sacrificial love." As the lamb walked away the angel said, "I don't understand."

A few thousand years later that same angel was sent to minister to Jesus Christ before his death on the cross. "Lord Jesus, may I ask you a question?" the angel said. "Why are you about to die?" Jesus looked at the angel and said, "Love. Sacrificial love." At that the angel saw Jesus taken to the cross where he died for the sin of the world. Just then the angel heard a voice saying, "behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." "Now I understand," said the angel.

Danny Campbell

When Bible Plants Brag

Not too long ago a lot of the plants that are in the Bible gathered together for an important meeting. “Once and for all,” said the Barley, “we are going to decide which of us is the most important plant in the Bible.” All the plants agreed that the time had come to decide.

The grass spoke first. “I think we all know that I am the most important plant spoken of in the scriptures. I am the first one mentioned in the book of Genesis.¹ I am plentifully abundant on the earth, and when I am not around the beautiful deer have to search and find me.² And when the Lord Jesus fed 5,000 peoples he had them all sit down on top of me in the field.³”

“Give us a break!” said the thorns! “The Bible also says that you wither away- it’s the word of God that stands forever.⁴ Besides, not only deer eat you- so do wild donkeys!⁵”

“That’s a cheap shot,” said the grass. “Especially coming from thorns- do I have to remind you guys that after the fall of man he was promised that you’d be what came up out of the ground when he worked⁶- not to mention that incident on the Cross.⁷” At that the thorns went silent, because they really were ashamed of what had happened at the cross.

At that the bulrushes and the reeds spoke. “We think it’s fairly obvious that our role was the most important. After all, we bulrushes made a little boat for baby Moses and the reeds saluted him as he passed by.⁸ He grew up and received the 10 commandments from God that tell people what God expects of them.” “Don’t forget that Heaven will be measured with a reed a thousand furloughs long,⁹” said an excited reed.

Their argument seemed compelling, when the grass, which tends to have been everywhere all these things took place said: “Yeah, but the mean soldiers also hit Jesus with a reed after they spat on him.¹⁰”

“I hate grass,” said one of the bulrushes!

“Let’s talk about love for a minute,” said the pomegranate! Don’t forget that in the Song of Solomon when he was flattering his woman he compared her temples behind her veil to a beautiful piece of pomegranate!¹¹”

¹ Genesis 1:11

² Jeremiah 14:5

³ Matthew 14:19

⁴ Isaiah 40:8

⁵ Jeremiah 14:6

⁶ Genesis 3:18

⁷ John 19:5

⁸ Exodus 2:3

⁹ Rev. 21:16

¹⁰ Matthew 27:30

“Yeah, and everyone west of Jerusalem is still trying to figure out what that means,” said the grass.

“I hate grass,” said the pomegranate.

“Hey,” said the mandrakes, “if you’re gonna talk about love, ask Leah what a few of us can do!”¹²

“You want effectiveness in getting your way? Try some lentil stew! It’ll get you the birthright every time- Just ask Jacob,¹³ said a very proud lentil.

“What good’s a lentil?” said the grass.

“Be gentle with the lentil” said the barley.

“I hate grass,” said the lentil.

“Pomegranates! Mandrakes! Lentil stew! Let’s talk about beauty!” said the Lilies.
 “When Israel was being described in the Song, she was compared to the beauty of a lily in the valley, a lily among thorns!”¹⁴

“I hate lilies,” said the thorns.

“And of course,” continued the lily, “Our Lord instructed disciples everywhere to consider the lilies, how even Solomon’s splendor did not compare to that of a lily.”¹⁵

“Ahem...don’t forget the Rose of Sharon” said the Rose.¹⁶

“But you can’t have a rose without a thorn,” said the grass!

“Would you stop it with the thorn comments?” said the Barley!

“The most important plants are not the most beautiful ones at all” protested the myrrh!
 “The most important plants are the ones with the most value.” “It was I who Israel tried to impress the Egyptian governor with,¹⁷ it was I whom the princesses had to wash in in Esther’s day,¹⁸ and need I remind you that it was I who was brought as a gift for the baby

¹¹ Song 6:7

¹² Genesis 30:16

¹³ Genesis 25:34

¹⁴ Song 2:1-2

¹⁵ Luke 12:27

¹⁶ Song 2:1

¹⁷ Genesis 43:11

¹⁸ Esther 2:12

Jesus,¹⁹ and I who along with a mixture of aloe that Nicodemus used to prepare Jesus' body for burial.²⁰

With that everyone assembled said, "I hate myrrh."

"Beauty and value are nothing in the Bible without usefulness," said the hyssop! It is I who was dipped in the blood of the Passover lamb,²¹ It was I who was used to sanctify unclean houses,²² and King David said it was I who would purge him and he'd be clean.²³

"Yeah, but it was also sour wine on a hyssop that Jesus refused to drink from on the cross," said, you guessed it, grass.

Everyone but hyssop thought grass had a pretty good point there.

On and on they went! Mustard talked about how important he was because Jesus used him to illustrate the Kingdom of Heaven.²⁴ The others just laughed because his name was Mustard! Barley even gave his own reasons, but the others gave him flax for speaking while he was moderating.²⁵ Scarlet argued that since she was used to die things red, the color of Jesus' blood, that she was the most important. Then grass reminder her that Isaiah had said that sin was like the color scarlet.²⁶ She pouted while the others cheered!

Wheat made a compelling argument, but it was pointed out that wherever he was tares showed up also.²⁷

Just as it looked like the arguing would never end, the wise old vine spoke. "Listen, plant friends," said the vine, "this arguing could go on all day. We could each make an argument for ourselves. Jesus himself said "I am the vine."²⁸ I've got my case, and you have yours."

"We are sounding too much like people, who often fail to realize that the Bible is not the story of great people but of a great God. We are the creation, He is the Creator! We are all a special part of the story, but Jesus is the story! Everything about us will fade away, but God will receive glory from angels and people 10 billion years from now when earth and all it contains has vanished."

¹⁹ Matthew 2:11

²⁰ John 19:39

²¹ Exodus 12:22

²² Leviticus 14:49

²³ Psalm 51:7

²⁴ Matthew 13:31

²⁵ Exodus 9:31

²⁶ Isaiah 1:18

²⁷ Matthew 13:25

²⁸ John 15:5

After the vine was done speaking, all of the plants realized that Jesus was the reason they were all there, and they recommitted themselves to worshipping and glorifying him forever, and being content to let Him get the glory for their little part in the story. They even decided that grass wasn't so bad after all!

Danny Campbell

From the Quarries to the Temple

“The temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or iron chisel or any other tool was heard in the temple when it was being built.” I Kings 6:7

“In Jerusalem all had to be perfect: But surely, it was not so in the marble quarries, or in Lebanon, where the cedars were cut; or in the glowing furnaces between Succoth and Zarthan (I Kings 7:46) where they melted the brass for sacred vessels.

Thus in Heaven, this majestic sanctuary is erected without noise, without labor, every material is brought thither pure and perfect. The bride of the Lamb has neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing.

But in this impure and dark world, this obscure quarry, whence the Great Builder is pleased to take some stones for his edifice, what shall we find, but work-yards for a season, where everything appears to be in a movement and disorder? What unshapen stones, what rubbish, what fragments!

How many things fit only for temporary service! How many arrangements merely provisional! How many mercenaries and foreigners are occupied in these quarries, just as the servants of Hiram were, and who, like them, will never enter the sanctuary!

How many dissensions among the laborers, how many conjectures and disputes about the final purposes of the Great Architect, and the several parts of the plan, which are known only to Himself!

Shall we search in this chaos for the true church, the spiritual temple? Shall we endeavor to arrange, in one exact and uniform order, all those stones that we find in the various quarries opened in a thousand places in the world?

Oh, how much wiser is the Master! While some are disputing about the excellence of this or the other department of the work; and while others are spending their strength in endeavoring to introduce perfect order, the wise Master-builder surveys, in silence, the vast scene of operations, chooses and marks the materials which he sees to be prepared amidst all this confusion, and causes them to be removed and placed in his heavenly edifice; assigning to every piece the place most proper for it, and for which he has designed it.

Such, my beloved brethren, is the sublime idea which we ought to form of this universal church. Oh! How contemptible now will appear, in our eyes, those endless disputes which have at all times divided the believers, and continue to do so to the present day.

Let us rather labor in the quarry where our work is assigned, to prepare as great a quantity of materials as possible; and especially, let us entreat the Lord to make us all lively stones fit for his building. Amen!

Swiss Pastor Felix Neff, 1826