

live

A BAPTIST RESOURCE FOR WOMEN ON A MISSION

MAY/JUNE 2023

LIVING LEGACY

An interview with Brenda Lambkin

THE 4% REMINDER

How God provides for Lilian Yang

GOD USES OUR STORIES

Healed. Connected. Empowered.

MAY I HAVE A WITNESS?

The power of sharing
your testimony



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live

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Missional Living

THIS ISSUE'S THEME of bearing witness leads us to consider hope.

Hope, because bearing witness to God's work in your life means you live and move through your life – however hard or soft that life is or becomes – knowing full well that Jesus, by the Spirit, has taken up residence in you and therefore, lives and moves with you. Jesus is our hope.

It follows then that our lives *themselves* become testimonies to our Father's grace and mercy. Helena Bergen made the theme so clear to me in a conversation one day: When we share our stories we do what Joshua had asked leaders of the Hebrew tribes to do after they'd crossed the Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant. We place a stone as a reminder to those listening, or reading, or viewing, sharing a meal or a cup of tea with us, that God has done something miraculous. The Israelite leaders built an altar with those 12 stones – to remember God's parting of the Jordan so that the Ark could cross on dry land.

When we think of the numerous acts that make up our days, what would change if we began to think of *each act* as the placing of a stone; a remembrance of God's way with us in this world? This is missional living at its core isn't it? Sharing the miracles that God has done and continues to do in our lives. Living in a way that's markedly different than before because now we know – God is not dead, we are not God and Jesus will return. We now live attentively to what God is doing in our lives and around us. (Spiritual disciplines help us to pay attention.)

One final thought: We testify, bear witness and remember as much or as little as we give thanks. Thanksgiving fuels missional living. Let us give thanks.

Renée James
Editor

Sharing Your Story in 2 Minutes

Here's an idea that could help you shape and share your testimony – in two minutes or less. Maybe we could all try this when we share what God's been up to in our lives. It goes like this:

1. When did it happen?
2. Where did it happen?
3. Who was involved?
4. What happened?
5. What was the action you took with God?
6. What was the spiritual benefit you received from God?

Several years ago, staff had to answer these questions in order then share their answers at a staff meeting. The exercise lit a fire under me. It recharged my capacity to pay attention; to note and remember, and be thankful for God's work and movement in my life. And, it became so much easier to share my testimony with my neighbours.



Warning and Reminder

The meaning in the stone

“There is nothing new except what has been forgotten.”

– Marie Antoinette (attributed)

BY **MORGAN WOLF**

THIS SPRING I visited some friends in Europe. Germany was already bursting out with nature’s first gold – that nearly neon green of new life budding on every branch; a place where the weight of history is felt and seen everywhere. Castles built in the twelfth century loom over the switch-backing turns in the Rhine. Cities with cobbled streets and historic architecture retrofitted to the needs of the present bustle with the lives of its people. The new and the old; the present and the past mingled together everywhere. It’s impossible to wander through a park without encountering a moss-covered monument to what has gone before. Some

We deliberately forget; moving on to our next moment; often only remembering what has hurt us, and not what has saved us.

good events, some certainly bad – many of which I didn’t recognize or understand.

“When your children ask their fathers in time to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ Then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground. For the Lord

your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you had passed over, so that all the people of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.” (Joshua 4:21b–24)

Perhaps one of the most powerful and perplexing abilities of the human mind is our penchant to forget. In purely material terms, we process inordinate amounts of information constantly. Paying attention, for example, to the height of a step just long enough to walk without tripping, yet forgetting almost immediately the small sign of warning about the existence of a step once our need for that information has passed. If we had fallen down and bruised a knee or twisted an ankle we would certainly remember. We remember pain in order to avoid more of it in the future. And yet we forget the information that prevented a potential injury in the first place. We deliberately forget; moving on to our next moment; often only remembering what has hurt us, and not what has saved us. We are contradictory creatures, ruminating on that of which we ought to let go, and abandoning what we ought not to forget. And so, knowing our failing, we erect memorials for the future in order to remember the past.

Yet time weathers stone and monuments get hidden in lichen as new generations of life erode the words that would remind us what the stones mean. Always of twin purposes—a warning and a reminder. Don’t forget what you knew at this moment. Don’t forget God’s miraculous provision. Don’t forget what He spoke. Don’t forget what was revealed here. Take it with you. Witness it for a generation yet to come.

“Not so much my own words, but rather, looking for His.”

Even without monuments of stone, we each have our little ways of remembering. We write lists. We set reminders. We keep mementos as witnesses. Souvenirs – to remember. We write down events and thoughts and prayers in journals or at least I do. Filling notebooks with the good and the bad, the warnings and the signs, the desperate needs and the miraculous provisions. I’ll write it all down and then abandon it in a box in a closet; forgetting what I need to remember as I move on to the next moment. What good is a memorial if I forget what it showed me? What good is any of it, if I don’t take it with me?

It is a choice for forgetfulness – to dismiss the miraculous signs and denigrate God’s wonders as close calls and lucky coincidences. Why should only our bruises be honoured with remembrance while the acts of God are treated as so commonplace as to be unworthy of recall? Questions worth asking, whether I can bear the answers or not. What have I etched in the stone of my remembrance? What do I speak when I’m not trying to be good? What do I write when I’m writing for me? Do I record God’s voice speaking to me; His miraculous provision or even our inside jokes? Or, is it only my complaining sighs as I count up my scars?

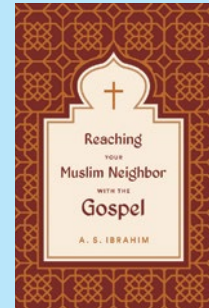
“How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have done among them?” (Numbers 14:11)

Undoubtedly, the most powerful monument is the story that I repeat to myself. The perspective from my past that informs what I believe for the future – especially about God and others and myself. And so, I’ve gone back – examined old notebooks and journals – not so much for my own words, but rather, looking for His. Tilting the pages this way and that for the holographic appearance of Jesus to be revealed in the midst of circumstances that were clouded with pain. He’s there. I just have to remember. ❶

Morgan lives in Calgary, Alberta and has just published her fourth book.



Bernice’s Picks



Reaching Your Muslim Neighbor With The Gospel
A. S. Ibrahim

\$17



Finding Phoebe: What New Testament Women Were Really Like

Susan E. Hyles

\$29

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Strange Obedience

Realigning my loyalties

BY **VICTORIA MOK**

IT HAD COME TO THIS: I found myself joining a line of peers leaving my home church for an indefinite season. I called my departure a yearlong “ministry sabbatical.” But truth be told, I had no idea if I was coming back.

The local church I was leaving was a second home to me. It was a deeply formative place where I developed a diverse set of life skills, like leading groups, playing guitar, and speaking Cantonese. The people at my home church – many of whom I still affectionately call aunties and uncles – really feel like family.

Just like families do, I got into the routine of church life as I grew up there. Serving was highly encouraged because the needs were many, so I tried my hand at teaching Sunday school, leading small groups, and heading a ministry department. Spending time at church at least three days a week, it was clear I had strong loyalties there.

But the years spent in the grind of ministry eroded my joy. Not long ago, I found myself in a scary place of resentment and feeling critical about many aspects of church life – from the hectic pace of activity down to the choice of communion elements. I was scraping the bottom of my barrel just to squeeze out energy to fulfil my commitments. I also knew I couldn’t sustain it

His obedience to the call to die can only be the fruit of having stayed joined to the Father, trusting that His ways are perfect.

any longer, not without causing hurt to others and myself.

God is infinitely kind to us in seasons like this. During my many desperate prayers for more energy to get by, I heard His strange call to join a different church while I was still committed to a key role at my church. Mulling God’s call, I chose to double-time at an online evening church while still serving at my home church. Finally, my role finished and I simply faded away from my home church.

Ministry can be hard on us. It was only through this period of rest where I truly realized the toll it had taken. I spent the first few months sleeping a lot, recovering from an exhaustion I didn’t know ran so deep. A friend also introduced me to a course called *Soul Care* by Dr. Rob Reimer which has been very helpful in understanding my identity in Christ and learning to receive His healing.

In the last few months of my sabbatical, I heard God’s call to return to my home church. Several people close to me questioned whether this was wise, and I also wondered how I could keep serving God in a place where I had run dry completely. God directed me to meditate on John 15, and the words “you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me” (John 15:4 CEV) became the Lord’s answer to my worries. By choosing to stay connected to Him, there is hope I can once again produce fruit in a dry land.

Reflecting on Jesus’ submission to die on the cross also helped me understand how staying joined to the Father plays out in real life. His obedience to the call to die can only be the fruit of having stayed joined to the Father, trusting that His ways are perfect. Imagine Jesus choosing instead to stay busy with the many needs at his local synagogue. He would have no doubt run a successful local ministry, but would have left humanity hanging. Jesus’ trust in his Father is breathtaking and paramount to our salvation. I want to trust my Heavenly Father like Jesus did.

Now that I’m back at my home church, I’m practicing staying joined to God and His ways rather than simply meeting the church’s constant needs. It feels awkward not to re-enter the church’s usual rhythms, but I’m so done with serving out of my own brittle strength. Let God’s unlimited supply power me on for whatever He calls me to do ahead. **1**

Victoria is learning to slow down and rest in the Father’s pleasure. She attends Mississauga Chinese Baptist Church.





Letter to a Spiritual Director

A spiritual director on bearing witness

BY **JAN EVANS**

AS I SIT across from you listening deeply to your stories, I witness the many movements of Spirit at work in you, in me, and in our magnificent world. As I witness your sorrows and joys, your hopes and despairs, your confusions and conundrums and sparking insights, I witness the incarnate Christ actively speaking in and through your life. As your stories meet my stories, I witness how all stories form an essential part of the Great Story – Love is calling us home.

As I sit across from you and witness your broken heart, as I witness you weeping, I hold you tenderly in my heart and I hold you before Christ who weeps with you and with all who hurt and suffer in our world. As I sit across from you and witness your broken heart, my heart quivers. I recall being in your seat, having my weeping witnessed and held in a compassionate embrace and through this I know, to sit with another holding their pain together with Christ, is a most sacred offering.

As I sit across from you and witness your stories of encounter with the One your heart loves, my heart sings. Here together we witness Love coming to meet us in the ordinariness of life, and here together we stand on holy ground. Savour these moments and memories and plant them deeply in your heart so you may discover them there when life is hard and dark and scary.

As I sit across from you and witness your sense of disconnection from God, from self, from others, I hold you in a holy entrustment. I recall my many stories of disconnection and recall Jesus patiently waiting and whispering “Come

home, dear one, come home.” With these memories my heart settles into trusting that Jesus is calling you too.

As I sit across from you and witness your many spiritual questions and confusions, as I witness you reframing your sense of God and self and life in these complex days, I stand with you in this place of unknowing. Over time I have witnessed your peace growing as your feet stand on the solid ground of your heart’s knowing beyond all unknowing. And I celebrate this newfound peace and invite you to carry this out into our hungry, hurting world.

As I sit across from you and witness your trembling spirit, your fear of all that threatens, your anxieties of tomorrow, I hold you in my heart knowing that Christ longs to meet you here, right where your shaky, fearful, doubting self dwells. No need to run, no need to hide, no need to dress yourself up, no need to fear your fears – just be.

As I sit across from you, beneath your stories I witness your desires. In these desires, mostly unspoken, I hear a desire to open more fully to Love’s presence, a desire to live attuned to the Spirit, a desire to know Love’s voice more deeply. I witness your vulnerability, your courage to speak of your inmost movements, your courage to open yourself in this space to co-discern in love all that lies in your heart – both light and shadow. Your desires spark my desires, your desires remind me of all that is most important in this human journey – knowing our belovedness and belonging so that we may meet and welcome others in *their* belovedness and belonging. Here I witness Christ in you, the hope of glory. **1**

Jan is a certified spiritual director. She lives in London, Ontario.

THE POWER OF STORY

BY **LINDA ELLSWORTH**

Stories born out of experience are a large part of being. Life-stories bring history, humour, joy, sorrow, lessons learned and wisdom to light for the next generations. But as a Christian, life-stories also emphasize the hand of God in every situation.

Nehemiah, born to Jewish parents in Persia during the last Babylonian exile, had likely never travelled the 850 miles from Susa to Jerusalem. Yet when Nehemiah got word from his fellow Jews who had been freed to return, regarding the state of the Temple and the walls surrounding the city, his heart became heavy with vision.

But let Nehemiah tell you the story in his own words...

Read Nehemiah 1–7

(and don't skip the genealogies)

NEHEMIAH 1

The fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much

How does Nehemiah begin the story in chapter one? What was the state of Nehemiah's heart? Why is this important to the rest of the story?

Verse 7–10 Nehemiah, in his prayer, relates a story back to God. Explain the importance of this story.

Verse 11 reveals Nehemiah's status in Persia under King Artaxerxes. What does this part of the story reveal about Nehemiah's character?

NEHEMIAH 2

The faithfulness of a righteous man is noticed

After several months of prayerful waiting, the moment comes! Artaxerxes knows his trusted cupbearer and addresses his solemn mood.

Verse 2 Why do you think Nehemiah is so fearful?

Notice the progression of Nehemiah's plea when asked to say what he wanted: *"So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said to the King..."* Stop and think of your own life story. Is this the order in which you have approached trials and issues in your life?

We begin to see the centrality of prayer in Nehemiah's life. Prayer was as natural as breathing. Being faithful to the King in a very dangerous job was his calling and his joy. Do I breathe prayer as I serve my King with joy?

Verse 5–8 What does Nehemiah ask of the king? Why does Nehemiah believe the king complied?

Verse 17–18 How does Nehemiah convince the remnant in Jerusalem to rebuild?

NEHEMIAH 3**The faithfulness of God's people working together for God's glory**

Nehemiah recounts the involvement of every family in the rebuilding of the wall and includes their gifts – used by God to rebuild. What is the significance of recounting “family history?” (See also 2 Timothy 1:1–7)

NEHEMIAH 4**The faithfulness of God in the midst of distress**

Verse 4–6 Once again Sanballat and crew try to destroy the work of rebuilding the wall. What is Nehemiah's immediate response upon hearing this?

Verse 6–9 Sanballat was not a quitter. He again threatened the people, but Nehemiah's response was consistent. He first _____ and then he _____.

Verse 12–23 Under the threat of attack, and beaten by the rubble and exhaustion, the people complain. What is Nehemiah's response? Note especially how Nehemiah phrases verse 14 and verse 20. Over and over, his story reflects his faith in the faithfulness of his God.

NEHEMIAH 5**The faithfulness and wisdom of a seasoned leader**

As you read this part of Nehemiah's story and learn of the crooked dealings of the rich against those who had given up farms and crops to work on the wall, jot down all the wise things done by Nehemiah to correct the situation.

Verse 14–19 Nehemiah's story demonstrates his integrity as a leader. How was his integrity both displayed and maintained? In verse 19, Nehemiah makes a special plea to the Lord. Looking back over your own life story, could you make the same plea?

NEHEMIAH 6**The faithfulness of a visionary**

If anything can be said for Sanballat, it is that he was persistent! Sending messengers four times to coax Nehemiah away from the work in order to kill him before the defensive gates were hung, Nehemiah responded with the same words (verse 3). Those words are: _____

Verse 8–9 When Sanballat finally resorted to political threats, what was Nehemiah's response?

Verse 10–14 Discuss how Nehemiah, when threatened with conspiracy, again responded with faith and integrity.

Verse 15–16 Nehemiah finally saw the rewards of his faithful response to the vision God had given him.

Verse 16 List four positive aspects arising from the completion of wall?

NEHEMIAH 7**The wisdom in succession...the richness of history**

Verse 1–3 demonstrate the wisdom of leadership displayed by Nehemiah in appointing a successor. Note the qualifications of succession listed in verse 2. Who is succeeding you in your family? Your church? Your ministry? How have you prepared them?

Verse 4–73 tell of Nehemiah's charge from God to take a census of all the people who had returned from exile, including their families, all their possessions, and all their giving! Why do you think this was so important to God? (See also Matthew 1 and Luke 3.)

Nehemiah's autobiography is simple, straightforward, and profound. He was a visionary who never strayed from the calling God had placed on his life, never waived in his integrity, had only the best in mind for his people, and lived what he believed.

Think about doing your own family tree, tracing God's faithfulness through past generations. What would it look like? Who is succeeding you? What will be remembered? What a story that would tell! ❶

Linda is the member care coordinator for CCI, Canada.



God Uses Our Stories

**HEALED.
CONNECTED.
EMPOWERED.**

BY ASHLEY KARUGU

There's a part of my story that I kept to myself for many years because the pain and shame were overwhelming. I had never spoken about something that had happened to me as a 15-year-old, but it followed me around like a voice in the back of my head repeatedly shouting, "You are not worthy!" Over the next ten years I learned to cope with my past by masking feelings of self-hate with outward perfection. Over-exercising and under-eating numbed me from the painful story I held inside. It was a never-ending chase to earn back the worth I felt had been taken from me.

At 20, I came to know Christ and committed my life to following Him. I followed imperfectly, yet I was always

"I BEGAN TO CONNECT THE DOTS BETWEEN MY MENTAL HEALTH AND THE STORY I'D KEPT SECRET"

drawn back to Him when I fumbled or wandered away. Despite my ongoing struggle with my mental health and poor self-esteem, my faith became an anchor of hope that carried me forward and became stronger over time.

By 25, I seemingly had my life together. I was engaged to a wonderful man, now my husband, and I had started a great job. Everything looked good on paper, but the grief I still carried inside controlled me and continued to manifest in the form of an all-consuming eating disorder and mental lows. I felt powerless in my struggle, but thankfully, my fiancé and our pastor arranged for me to begin therapy.

Through many sessions, my therapist helped me understand how our behaviours and beliefs are often tied to trauma. I began to connect the dots between my mental health struggles and the story I had kept secret for so long. With time and gentle encouragement from my therapist, I told my story for the first time, and for the first time I heard someone tell me, "It wasn't your fault." I wept, for at that moment, shame was broken.

"I am worthy in Christ" became my new narrative and naturally my relationship with my body began to heal too. I started an Instagram account to document my recovery from the eating disorder because I recognized the work God had done in my life and I desperately wanted others to find the same hope and freedom I was experiencing. The old me would have never had the boldness to do this, but I felt God working in me through my vulnerability.

I used the Instagram account as a blog and grew a small

following of women, many from the church I was now attending with my husband. I don't know how much my blog actually impacted people, but sharing a part of my story in that space did a work in me that has had a ripple effect in the rest of my life. It was a big step *away from* trying to protect myself, and a step *towards* God's purpose for my life. He wants me to live vulnerably, imperfectly, and humbly in community with others; to find my healing in Him; to use my pain as a source of empathy so I can walk alongside others and lift them up; to live in the hope of Christ that is free from all shame; to tell the world what He has done in my life so others can see how good He is.

It feels like my life only began when I first told my story to my therapist that day. God began my deep healing at that point. Even so, I now see that every bit of my story has value because God is using it all for His good.



These days, my home has become a place of welcome for other women to sit on my couch with a cup of tea, open up about life, cry, laugh, and pray with one another. In retrospect, I can see God's hand in my story all along. I don't use that Instagram account anymore, but it still exists to remind me how God took what was broken, filled in the cracks, and used it for something beautiful. The evidence will always be in my story. ①



Ashley lives in London, Ontario, with her husband Charles. She works as an account manager and e-mail marketer for a digital marketing agency.

A scenic view of a rocky coastline with a small cove and two women sitting on a cliff overlooking it. The text is overlaid on the image in white boxes.

WHAT'S

YOUR

STORY

?

BY **REV. ELAINE PROPOSKI**

PHOTO TIM MOSSHOLDER (UNSPASH.COM)

YOUR STORY HAS POWER.

I ONCE HEARD an artist say that the best art doesn't tell you what it means; it draws you in, but only so far. And then it's up to you to discover what it means for you. How does it make you feel? What memories does it evoke? What dreams does it inspire? Ultimately, the meaning of the art is defined by the one experiencing the art. I like that. I like that it assumes that those who experience the art have within them the capacity to think and feel deeply. I like that it envisages art as a conversation with the artist rather than a monologue by the artist. I like that it can mean something different each time the same person experiences it.

Good stories have the same kind of power as good art. Good stories

HERS IS A GOOD STORY. HERS IS A STORY OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE HUMDRUM NORMALCY OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

leave room for the listener to become part of the story. They leave room for the listener to uncover meaning for themselves – meaning that may not be the same each time the story is heard. Good stories shift and dance and change with each telling, reflecting the shifting, dancing, changing worlds of both the storyteller and listener. Good stories are more than entertainment; they're more than an illustration. Good stories invite us to see ourselves, the world, other people, and God through new eyes; they challenge our assumptions; they widen our perspective.

We all have stories to tell. And our stories are good stories, especially when they're stories of God's presence and work in our lives. I remember standing at the door of the church one Sunday morning after the worship service. A man I'd known for some time bounded up to me. His joy was impossible to contain. "Elaine," he said, "I had the best day yesterday!" "Tell me about it," I said. I don't remember the conversation verbatim, but I remember that after listing a sequence of wonderful things he'd experienced that day, he ended the story by saying, "... and if that wasn't enough, I got a free sandwich!" I remember listening to his list of wonderful things and being struck by how perfectly ordinary and not wonderful they all seemed to me. And in that moment I was profoundly convicted of my own lack of joy and gratitude for all the perfectly normal wonderful things I experience daily in my life. That man's story was a good story. It's still a good story, all these years later.

We all have stories to tell. Some of our stories are big and dramatic.

They beg to be told. These are the stories like that of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, intent on arresting as many Christians as possible, until he was literally knocked off his horse and blinded by Jesus. That's the kind of story we love to hear in church, isn't it? It's the kind of story we expect people to be moved by. It's the kind of story we expect people to be changed by. It's a good story.

But so is the story of the woman in her 80s who has faithfully followed Jesus, growing consistently in her understanding of the gospel, serving as best she is able for most of her life.

She might think, "I don't have a good story to share; I didn't have a dramatic conversion; I've never experienced a great tragedy from which I needed healing or rescue; my life has been pretty good. I don't have a story anyone needs to hear." She'd be wrong. Hers is a good story. Hers is a story of God's presence and faithfulness in the humdrum normalcy of everyday life. Hers is a story many of us identify with. Hers is a story we need to hear.

WHEN WE SHARE OUR STORIES WE JOIN THE PREACHER IN A SACRED TASK.

One of my favourite things about being a pastor is that I get to hear people's stories. Their stories challenge me, change me, bless me, and inspire me. Their stories remind me that God is living and active and building His kingdom among us and through us. And I want everyone in the church to hear those stories. I want to be part of a church that values all the stories, the big and dramatic ones and the tiny humdrum ones. I believe that when we share our stories we join the preacher in the sacred task of shining a light on the gospel, illuminating the path to and with Jesus, making it a little bit easier for other people to follow Jesus.

What story is God inviting you to tell? Can you think of a moment of God's goodness in your life? Can you remember an experience of God's faithfulness? Your story might not be long, it might not be dramatic, but it's a story worth telling. ①



Elaine is the senior pastor at Walmer Road Baptist Church in Toronto.

God's Big Story

A way of life that anchors your stories.

BY REV. TANYA YUEN

During a summer camp one year, one of the teenage leaders shared with me how he dealt with a fight that had emerged between two of his campers. “Tanya!” he proudly exclaimed, “I used the wisdom of Solomon today to settle the argument!” He went on to share how two kids had been fighting over an elastic that they each claimed was theirs. So he simply told them he would cut it in half and they could each have a piece. One kid got upset, yelled, “No!” and said the other kid could have it. Determining who was actually the rightful owner of the elastic, this leader went on to tell them the story in 1 Kings 3 of the two mothers! After my initial shock, I had to commend this young leader for his quick thinking in solving this situation by framing it within Scripture. I am certain this situation made an impact both for him and also the kids!

The overall theme that drives CBOQ Kids is *In God's Story: We belong. We believe. We become.* I chose this as the theme to communicate clearly that our focus is to resource churches and ministry leaders to equip families in discovering a way of life that anchors their (family) stories or testimonies within God's big Story. We know that there is transformational power in the Word of God. I imagine if I asked you to share favourite Scripture passages I would begin to hear stories of ways God used those passages and encouraged you, challenged you, changed your thinking and reminded you of your calling. I think I would hear powerful stories that communicate truth about who God is, that bear witness to the gospel and the ways God has guided you,



PHOTO NIKOLINE ARNS (UNSPLASH.COM)

informed your decisions, restored relationships and given you vision for serving Him. Do the kids and youth in your lives know these stories?

Acts 1:8 is one Scripture that I learned early on in my faith journey that inspired me to share this new life in Jesus that I was living. In this verse, Jesus promises the power of the Holy Spirit to be his witness. A witness is someone that shares openly what she has seen and heard. A witness tells her experience. Shares her testimony. As parents, grandparents, caregivers, teachers, mentors to children and youth we are called to share our story of how God brought us to a place of repentance and faith in Jesus. We are called to share our stories of how God works in mighty ways in our lives. We are called to share our stories of how God has answered prayers, how God has guided and led us. We are called to share our stories of how God carried us through difficult times. And we are called to guide our children in discovering how their stories are also woven within God's big Story.

As we share our stories, our testimonies, our witness of the gospel, we help our kids learn to reframe what they are seeing, hearing, experiencing in ways that allow the Holy Spirit to communicate truth. They learn that their stories are not just about them, but about God. God's power. God's grace. God's wisdom. God's comfort. They can begin to frame the confusion, the struggle, the disappointments along with the joys, the victories and the blessings they experience, in ways that glorify God and bear witness to His story of redemption.

Jesus promises the power of the Holy Spirit to be his witness.

Dr. Marshall Duke and Dr. Robyn Fivush created the Do You Know Scale (DYK) in 2001. Essentially, these are 20 questions that test family knowledge in children that they could not have learned firsthand, either because it happened before they were born or to lesser-known family members. The children would only have learned this family knowledge through stories, writings or other indirect sources. As they compared their results to other tests they were doing they discovered that: "The more children knew about their family's history, the stronger their sense of control over their lives, the higher their self esteem and the more successfully they believed their families functioned. The DYK scale turned out to be the best single predictor of children's emotional health and happiness.

I wonder what a DYK scale for our stories of God would mean for our kids. ❶

Tanya works with CBOQ as their children's and family ministries associate. Reach Tanya at tyuen@baptist.ca



Here are a few conversation prompts I developed as my attempt at a 'Stories of God' DYK scale:

Do you know how your parents came to saving faith in Jesus?

Have you ever shared your testimony of coming to faith in Jesus with your children? When we share how God gave us new life we give them a personal example of the power of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul would often recount his old life, his encounter with Jesus and the transformation that encounter brought. Consider reading some of Paul's testimonies with your children (Acts 22:3-16; Acts 26:4-23, Galatians 1:13-23) and then share your own story of how Jesus made you a new creation.

Do you know how God works in mighty ways in the lives of your parents?

When God led Joshua and His people across the Jordan, God instructed them to set up twelve memorial stones as a reminder of God's mighty works. They were to share these stories with their children. What are the "memorial stones" you could share with your children?

Do you know how God carries your parents through difficult times?

We know our kids will face difficulties. We know they will grieve. And we know that God can carry them through it all. One way we can teach our kids to seek God, even in the darkest of days is to share our own stories of how God has carried us. How did you seek God during a time of loss? How do you pray when you are experiencing grief or anxiety?

.....

Find these questions and more, including a downloadable bookmark at cboqkids.ca/dyk
Find Duke and Fivush's DYK Scale at seattlefoundation.org/the-do-you-know-scale/

*An interview with
BRENDA LAMBKIN
on the importance of
writing and sharing
the history of God's
work in your life.*



LIVING

BRENDA LAMBKIN was the first Black president of Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec. Her parents were founders of the church she grew up in that belonged to the Amherstburg Regular Missionary Baptist Association, one of the first Black Associations in Ontario.



Brenda and her husband Albert

What made you begin to write your stories, your history?

My dad was a great storyteller and the older I got, the more I came to realize that telling stories about the past, our ancestors, was a great way of keeping our heritage alive.

Why did it matter so much to you?

I was born and raised in Canada but I trace my heritage on my father's side back to his grandfather who was an enslaved man in Kentucky. He came to Canada by way of the Underground Railroad. He eventually settled on a farm near Dresden. That makes me the fourth generation from a former slave. Despite the obstacles my great-grandfather had to overcome, he did not let his past life define him. He was a firm believer who put Christ first in his life. He served the Lord and served others.

We need to know about our ancestors. We all need to hear about some of the things that have happened in our families' lives so that we can remember.

My ancestors were survivors and hard workers who loved the Lord, loved their family's gatherings and were not ashamed of talking about the goodness of the Lord. There was a deep rooted spiritual connection and God was talked about and respected in my grandmother's home.

LEGACY

Take us through the process of writing a story from start to finish.

I started journaling about 40 years ago when I was given a book and I would journal in my spare time. I didn't do it on a regular basis, but certain times over the years I wrote more than others.

As years went by and some of my friends and family would pass away, it became a way of closure for me to write about the journey I had had with them and in doing this, I wove in their life with God, their family and their friends. It was a way for me to keep their memories alive and these journals would also serve as a tool for my children to learn about me, my friends and the relationships I had had.

I felt writing would be another way of passing those memories along, and besides, I soon start to forget!

My stories (except one) are two to three pages long. I do bullet points for a period of days then in my quiet time I compile them. Most of my stories are about my family and my walk with the Lord; the many people and situations God has placed in my life.

The only story I've written that became a book is *Travels with Brenda Lambkin*. My grandson Quentin Lambkin edited. I wrote it to give my children and grandchildren a glimpse into my life. They know a lot about me especially when it involves family activities, but not so much on what I do outside my home. I wanted them to know I could do more than fry chicken and make the best mac and cheese.

In my heart I wanted them to have some laughs about mom and Grandma, but my greatest desire was for them

to really realize just how much I loved them and that my husband Albert and I, even with loving them, had enough love left over to serve and worship our ever-loving, faithful God. The biggest plus in writing this book was simply being able to share with them just how much God had loved and cared for me down through the years and had carried our family through the hard times and the good times, never ever leaving us. Perhaps this book is my testimony that will speak loud and clear to them, calling them to worship and praise God and depend upon His love and mercy.

Do you imagine writing a story and saying, "This is my final story?"

I believe my writing of my stories will soon end because of age. But as long as God gives me breath to talk and people to listen, I'll always have a story to tell about my love for Him. I think it's in my bones.

Really – this is about leaving a legacy for your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

My mother's story was never told by her. She played a major part in her family's life and passed at a very young age. She never got to tell it so that's why I find it important to tell her story, for example, so that her children and grandchildren can learn about what she accomplished, how God worked in her life, and how we still exhibit some of her traits today.

How has this sharing of your family stories, over time, changed you?

What dimension has it brought to your relationship with the Lord?

My journals are a reminder of how far God has brought us. I never would have believed I'd be the one to be a witness for our family and friends to draw to Christ. **1**

Strategic Giving 2023 – Youth in Bolivia

Giving Children a Future

BY **ELEANOR CHUN**

IN BOLIVIA, child exploitation is rampant. Persistent issues such as poverty, the vulnerability of indigenous populations, and the disparagement of women and girls further exacerbate the problem.

*Maribel was on the road towards becoming another statistic like many of the youth in the southern region of Cochabamba, Bolivia. Children and teenagers in this area often live in poverty. Many do not receive an education or support in daily life, and as a result they tend to fall into unhealthy generational cycles, including prostitution and living on the streets.

Maribel is the second oldest child of four children. At one point, none of the children were able to go to school.

Because of Maribel's darker complexion, she suffered frequent rejection and discrimination from many in the community which adversely affected her sense of self-worth.

Maribel and her family discovered the *Emmanuel Foundation Children with a Future* program during this difficult time in her childhood. CBM's partner in Bolivia administers this program which focuses specifically on young people at risk of living on the streets and in danger of sexual exploitation. Through the program, children and their families are given the opportunity to discover their God-given talents and understand that they each have value. With proper education and support, the youth are encouraged to study, take care of their own health, and make positive choices for their future.

Your generosity ensures that each child has access to nutritious meals, medical and dental care, as well as vocational training for future employment prospects. The parent(s) are encouraged to learn how to sew as an alternate means of income. They learn how to sustainably grow their own food as a family, which helps to develop productive inter-relationships and improve family dynamics.

The staff of the *Children with a Future* program who welcomed Maribel and her siblings when they first arrived noticed her incredible shyness. She was in second grade when she started the program, and it was apparent that her time out of school and the relentless discrimination she endured had greatly eroded her self-esteem. With patience, kindness, and love, the staff ministered to her spiritually and helped her in practical ways. Maribel soon emerged as a much more confident and focused teenager today, one who knows she is capable of great things. The dream of attending university was never a thought for her, but today, she has made it her goal as well as helping others in need.



Children at the Foundation, enjoying the books purchased with the help of CBM



CBWOQ Strategic Giving 2023

CBWOQ has committed to raising \$15,000 to this Emmanuel Foundation Children With A Future program.

Learn more on how to give at baptistwomen.com/causes

Maribel loves to read, particularly books related to faith. She learned about God through this process and credits the change in her life to His work through all the people who have supported her saying, “I like coming to the program because I learn a lot here and I have books within my reach. I thank the Lord for the program because I met the Lord here. Also, I have people who inspire me to get ahead. The staff help us see that if we study, we can achieve many things.”

Mirabel remains grateful for the choices in front of her that this program has made possible. “I want to study and be a person who bears fruit. I want to stay in the faith and in the church and I want to travel abroad and see a little of the places that the staff told us about...I thank you for supporting me and supporting the children of the program. I want to tell you that your support and donations are not in vain, we are striving to do things right. I know we can make life better. May the Lord bless you and your families.”

Eleanor Chun, CBM

*Names changed to protect privacy.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CBM

Celebrating 55 years !

Baptist Women at Elim
September 15 – 17, 2023
At Beautiful Elim Lodge on Pigeon Lake, Buckhorn ON

Waiting with Hope

But if we look forward to something we don't yet have,
we must wait patiently and confidently.

Romans 8:25

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I Signed Up

Ruth Currie's testimony on being an activist against sex trafficking



Ruth Currie (far left) with friends

BY **RUTH CURRIE**

IT WAS 2015, the year that Canada hosted the Pan Am Games. As the then president of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Toronto, I invited Brenda Mann and Renée James from Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec (CBWOQ) to speak to our membership. Under their leadership, Baptist Women had partnered with Defend Dignity, RAHAB and the Reformed Church in America to plan and roll out a protest campaign called *Buying Sex Is Not A Sport*. Baptist Women had received a World Day of Prayer grant in 2014 for the campaign.

The purpose of the *Buying Sex Is Not A Sport* campaign was to challenge the demand for paid sex and raise awareness of the corresponding heightened risk of people being trafficked for sex around large sporting events like the Pan Am Games.

In fact, according to the Human Trafficking National Coordinating Centre of the RCMP, the Greater Toronto Area and Golden Horseshoe regions all lie within the hub for human trafficking in Ontario. Most of the Games venues were located in these regions.

I had already learned a bit about the issue of human trafficking as World Day of Prayer grant money often goes to support those who work at reclaiming lives of young women from trafficking. But as I listened to Renée and

Brenda that day, and heard their invitation to join in a silent protest at one of the Games events in the summer, the Holy Spirit prompted me: "You can do that one event. You understand the awful effects of human trafficking on the lives of young women."

I was compelled to take part in this protest against what, to me, so closely resembled an incurable cancer. I had never done anything such as this in my life! But in my retirement, I was free to try something new. So I signed up. I participated in the stand-in strategically located on the Canadian National Exhibition grounds. Women's beach volleyball would be played that afternoon and we knew that a higher number of male spectators could be expected.

I sent out a prayer request to a number of people: "I am going to be participating in a silent stand-in at the PanAm Games to protest sex trafficking at the Games. I would like to ask for prayer support – that the volunteers who participate in this stand-in will be an effective presence and that God will be present to reveal awareness to those who witness the stand-in – and prayers for protection for the volunteers."

After participating in the stand-in, I shared this with my supporters: "At first we were allowed to walk in and stand at the entrance to the game venue. A police officer asked us to leave and we walked through the grounds single file. In this process we were noticed by people, some giving us

"looks" and some who asked us what our T-shirts meant. Our T-shirts said "Buying Sex Is Not A Sport" on the front. Only the leaders were allowed to speak. We returned to the entrance and stood on other side of the walkway into the grounds. There were stares or glares but our protest

was peaceful. The police were kind to us and appreciated our nonviolence and cooperation.

I really appreciated your prayers. I felt an incredible covering of prayer during the whole evening. It was a worthwhile experience. I felt very good about participating in the stand-in. After all our standing up, and all our prayers, the rest is in God's hands."

Before and after the protest, I had researched to learn more. I learned that I wanted to make a difference. It's really important to look out into the world to find a mission. Outside our Christian contemplative space is a world that needs to "see" Christ, perhaps only silently. The Church really exists for the people who don't belong to it. During the pandemic I thought about whether human trafficking, especially for the purposes of sexual exploitation, was still happening. How sad I was to learn that nothing had changed even though much of the world was locked down. **1**

Ruth attends Markham Baptist Church. She took part in the silent stand-in when she was 80 years old.

Outside our Christian contemplative space is a world that needs to "see" Christ,

The 4% Reminder

How God provides for Lilian Yang,
CBM National Field Staff

BY KYLAH LOHNES

LILIAN YANG serves as a CBM National Field Staff in the Golden Triangle Region (Burma, Thailand and Laos) working with partners and churches to train pastors, share the gospel, and expand community outreach through support for vulnerable children, recovering addicts and those living in remote villages with no access to social services. Lilian also studies theology, teaches at Thailand Bethel Theological Institute and raises her teenage daughter Sophia alongside her husband Joseph Lee. In all the hustle and bustle of life and ministry, Lilian has experienced God's provision in personal and profound ways.

When Sophia was just four years old, Lilian began experiencing some issues with the nerves in her face. Medical tests revealed that she had abnormal blood vessels in her brain that were pressing on some nerves and an expensive surgery would be required to correct the problem. However, as a full-time student and mother, Lilian could not afford the surgery. After praying and worrying about what to do, Lilian met a Christian doctor who helped her to apply for government support. This support ended up covering 90 per cent of her medical fees. Lilian was blown away by this support and thanked God for providing for her in such an incredible way. Later she found out that the seminary she was attending had also collected funds to support her during this time. When Lilian received the funds, she was amazed to find that there was enough to cover the remaining 10 per cent

of her medical fees. "God is ready to provide for the needs that you have," she says. "When God calls me to serve Him, he also gives me the strength and everything that I need."

While the issues in her brain presented an increased risk of stroke,

"God is ready to provide for the needs that you have,"

after the surgery, the doctors told Lilian that this risk had decreased to four per cent. For Lilian, this four per cent is a reminder that her life is not in her own hands but is in God's hands. Each annual check up becomes a moment to reflect on God's provision in the past and a reminder to continue trusting God in the future. Lilian says that these appointments remind her that she needs to keep her life, her family and her ministry in God's hands.

Sometimes, though, the busyness of life and ministry gets in the way of remembering God's provision and it can become all too easy to take the burden of provision onto our own shoulders. When faced with the overwhelming needs around us we can become tired and anxious as we try to meet these needs through our own strength and resources. Lilian is not exempt from this temptation to self-sufficiency, but she uses daily and weekly rhythms in her life as reminders to let go and trust God's provision once again.



Lilian with her husband Joseph

Lilian sets aside daily time for prayer and reading Scripture to remind herself of God's work in and around her. She reflects on passages such as Psalm 23, Jesus feeding the 5,000, and raising Lazarus from the dead. These passages remind Lilian that even though her need is big, "God's provision and his shepherding is always comforting and providing for my needs."

Lilian also participates in CBM's weekly online chapel service. This service often comes for her at the end of a long workday when she's tired and sometimes hasn't had the opportunity to finish her work for the day. Yet, by setting aside that time to shift her focus from her work to fellowship with colleagues and to God's work, Lilian is reminded again of God's provision. During these times of being with God, Lilian sometimes wants to laugh at herself saying "What am I thinking? Do I think it's my work that makes things happen? I am reminded that I'm not the one who changes the world."

By setting aside time for reflection and being with God, whether in chapel or on the way to the doctor, Lilian reminds herself that God has always been faithful and will continue to meet every need for herself, her family and her ministry. ①

Kylah works as a program officer with Canadian Baptist Ministries. She's an Uptick Baptist Women alumni.

One Woman's Witness

Win Fisher lays a stone

BY **JUNE ROBERTS AND JEANNINE MARTINEZ**

WIN FISHER was the eldest and most beloved volunteer at Stonegate Ministry's outreach store in Etobicoke called *Great Finds*. For over seven years she always had a friendly greeting for each customer as they came through the door. As she says: "I loved helping and meeting the people." Once a week she was committed to her shift and many would choose to come in during that time just to speak to Win. Her dedication comes from her devotion to encouraging others. She indicated that it made her feel as though she was contributing to the ministry.

Throughout her life Win had a passion for reading, encouraging the children especially, to visit the book section in the store. Her energy, kindness, generosity and love for people inspired us all. She was present at the store until COVID-19 shut things down in 2020. Win now resides in North Bay to be close to her family.

A long time member at Kingsway Baptist Church in Toronto, Win celebrated her 100th birthday on February 23. She went home to be with her Lord in April. ❶



PHOTO COURTESY OF JUNE ROBERTS AND JEANNINE MARTINEZ

A HISTORY MOMENT

Revealing Christ

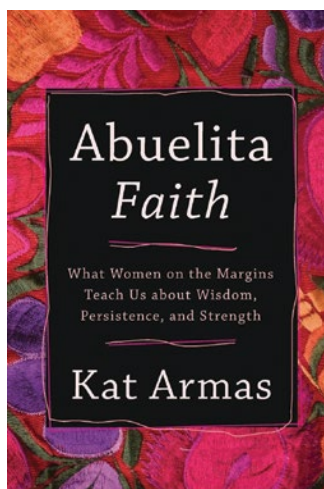
THE CLOUDS OVER OUR WORLD are heavy. If they broke, there might be an end of that civilization which is at heart, Christian. But there is no cause for fear or despair. We know that, through Christ, there is hope and healing for our broken world. But if we cannot reveal him in all his tenderness, compassion, love, and majesty to the world now, then we shall have failed him. Failed in our stewardship and our responsibility....Let us live in what the New Testament calls "patient endurance" – every thought and deed informed and undergirded with prayer. So, and only so, will we speed the work of sending the Good News of God to every nation – now – giving the answer to "Why Christianity?" ❶

— Excerpt from Marion Bates' message to the 1966 Baptist Women's Convention (*Our Heritage Becomes our Challenge*, p.256)

BOOK CLUB REVIEW

Choosing to See

The power of sharing stories



BY RENÉE JAMES

‘OFTENTIMES the most overlooked and untold stories are those that teach us the greatest lessons and offer the truest examples of faith rooted in survival, strength and resistance.’ (p.122)

This quote comes from our book club title for May and June: *Abuelita Faith – What Women on the Margins Teach Us about Wisdom, Persistence and Strength*. Written by Cuban American Bible scholar Kat Armas, this book anchors readers in Bible stories, her own story and personal stories of her *abuelitas* – her aunts, mother, grandmothers – who embody what she calls abuelita theology.

I read *Abuelita Faith* at a time when I’d begun exploring what it means to lead as a woman of colour in fairly homogenized male-dominated spaces. I resonated with this book because Armas delves into the many stories of women like the Hebrew midwives, Esther, Tamar, Hannah, Rizpah and others, mining them to display what we’ve all probably missed (I know I have): these women, overlooked, often on the margins, forced to make difficult choices within the patriarchal culture of their day, or indeed muted because of that culture, still impacted thousands of lives. These women embodied justice and mercy. These women moved God to act.

While I found her use of Cuban-Spanish words distracting, you will love the stories she shares about her abuelitas; stories she places, along with the Bible stories, in the larger context of culture and society in which women of God are called to embody and proclaim the gospel.

Don’t read this book if you want an uncomplicated exegesis of women-of-the-Bible stories that keeps you removed from the reality -the real pain, suffering and hard choices to be made – within which these women survived. Do read it if you want a beautifully written, soundly reasoned and unflinching call to both see and hear those women on the margins in our churches, women’s groups, neighbourhoods and families who have much to teach us about God and how Micah 6:8 beats at the core of His heart.

This is a great book to discuss with younger women leaders in your church – they will appreciate the urgency with which Armas invites readers to begin to share their collective cultural memory. ❶

Order your copy from Read On Bookstore and receive free shipping.

We Remember

Each generation has the opportunity to fuel mission for the next. We are thankful for the following gift:

IN MEMORY OF
Ada Gale, Ottawa

“

**There is no greater agony than bearing
an untold story inside you.”**

Maya Angelou

live

How we connect with each other has had to change, but *Live* magazine keeps our bonds lively and strong. Let a woman in your community know about *Live* magazine. A subscription costs just \$20. Pay at ***baptistwomen.com*** or call the editor, Renée James. Choose from three formats: print, audio (CD) or online.

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