

SERVANT

BART MILLARD

**AN UNIMAGINED
REDEMPTION**

ALUMNI IN ACTION

**JOURNEY TO
THE UNKNOWN**

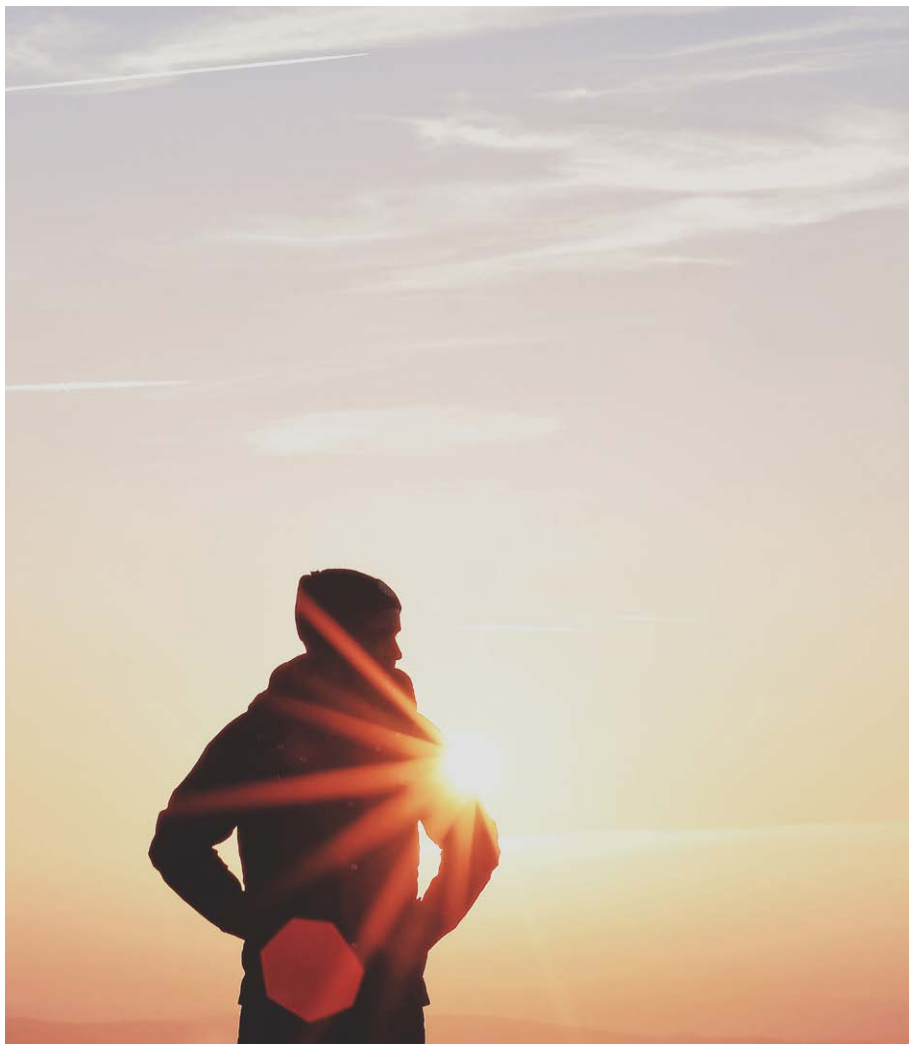
MARK MAXWELL

**ONE IN
THE SON**

**FAITH
AND FAMILY**

Issue 103 | Fall 2018

FINDING OUR WAY



markmaxwell

One in the Son

HE WAS FACING THE WARM SUMMER SUN, STOCK-STILL, EYES CLOSED,

in the square in the centre of campus when we walked by. Fifteen minutes later we crossed back through the square. He was still standing there in the same position. With a small grin, I quietly asked if everything was OK. "Oh yes," he responded. "I'm just absorbing the peace!"

At that moment, I knew that we as a college community were enjoying an answer to prayer: prayer that we would be a healthy community, a place of peace, and that we would enjoy harmony among our staff and faculty that would be noted by students and guests. Let's just say, not all churches, ministries and Christian college campuses enjoy the bounty of living together well.

This has been one of our primary prayer requests since Elaine and I arrived many years ago, and we are grateful to recognize that God has answered this prayer, granting us this long, life-giving miracle, the miracle of people living together in harmony!

You see, the campus-wide objective at Prairie is to be, and invite others to be, lovers of God. Our love for God is best shown to our friends and neighbours (i.e. students)

by loving one another. So our classroom impact is directly correlated with the harmony in our professional community.

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With that approach to our training, we are hoping to prepare people who will care for the greatest needs of the world, including physical care, emotional care, social/cultural care and, most importantly, soul care. The tools of our training include a full study of all 66 books of the Canon, blended with excellent programs and international travel (check out "Globe-TREK" on our website).

Our plan is, with the help of the Great Healer, to turn the entire school into a training centre for healing around the world, beginning right here on this campus. And we thank God for the many stories of both staff and students who have come and found healing from the deep hurts of their lives, so they can move on to bring that same comfort to others around the world.

We, as staff, faculty and students, are joined together to live in healthy community, with joy, expecting that our programs will be among the best in the world... because the needs are great, and our King deserves the best we can give.

Our true desire is to know Christ so that we will impact nations and the world. We do this for Jesus, whom we love with all our lives. We want to know Him and make Him known. What a joy it is to see people turned toward the Son, paralyzed with awe and standing stock-still in worship.



We have no doubt, this is the will of the Father. **SM**

Mark is available to speak to your church or organization. Reach him at mark.maxwell@prairie.edu

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 1-403-443-5511 | www.prairie.edu
 To donate: www.prairie.edu/donate

Servant Subscriptions
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Servant (ISSN 0848-1741) is published two times a year by Prairie Bible Institute, a non-profit educational organization founded in 1922. **Prairie Bible Institute serves the Church by discipling Christians through biblically integrated post-secondary education.** *Servant* is dependent on the gracious gifts of Prairie alumni, donors and friends. Its purpose is to edify, exhort and encourage today's Christian. Third class mail, return postage guaranteed. Change of address notices, undeliverable copies send to *Servant* Magazine, Box 4000, Three Hills, AB, T0M 2N0. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Printed in Canada. Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.



Cover photo: David Molnar

LETTERS

We certainly enjoy the content in the *SERVANT* magazine. The Spring issue had an article called “The Presence” which we found very interesting since my husband was named after Marvin Dunn. We would be interested to know the rest of their story.

Darlene Dunbar, Caronport, SK

I just finished reading the *SERVANT* magazine and was blessed abundantly. I am an alumnus, graduated from PBI in 1953 and went to Laos with OMF in 1958. Marvin Dunn was in charge of our language school in Singapore, and I thoroughly enjoyed the article about him and Miriam.

Rosemary Watson, Tulsa, OK

In the Spring issue of *SERVANT*, Max Lucado is asked, “Do Christians struggle with the myth that they shouldn’t ever feel worried or experience anxiety?” As one who has experienced my fair share of both, I can understand the motive behind the question and Lucado’s answer. The Christian life is not one of endless peace and victory. But when Jesus explicitly forbade his disciples to worry, comparing it to the sinful and unbelieving lifestyle of pagans, it hardly seems right to describe a worry-free life as a myth. Worry and anxiety, according to Jesus, are sins against which we must struggle, even if he does seem to acknowledge that they are inevitable in a fallen world and can be limited to one day at a time (Matthew 6:25-34).

J. Cameron Fraser, Lethbridge, AB





PRAIRIE COLLEGE



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PREVIEW DAYS

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2018
 FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2019
 SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 2019

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FEBRUARY 8-10, 2019

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EMBRACING THE FAITH

PICTURE-PERFECT FAITH OR AN AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE WITH JESUS?

Rebecca Gregoire Lindenbach

Patrick grew up in the perfect Christian family. His dad was on the elders' board, his mom ran all the fundraisers, and their kids volunteered to help with summer camp community programs. They led small groups in their home, sent their children to youth conferences, and did family devotions together at dinner.

When Patrick went off to university, he got involved in drinking, drugs, sex and even vandalism.

Then there's Shiloh. Shiloh's parents were dedicated to making sure their children grew up to be good Christian men and women. They chauffeured them to youth groups, prayed together as a family every day, and all read their Bibles together every morning before breakfast.

really scared about the teenage years, and they wanted to hear from a Millennial's perspective about how in this social media age to raise kids who would still love God. I may not have much experience parenting, but I do understand my generation (those born around the 1980s and 1990s

stories. Shiloh and Patrick were two of those stories. I noticed some trends among families with kids who did or did not rebel. What they demonstrated was that authentic faith and picture-perfect faith are often very different things.

FROM THEN ON, PATRICK KEPT HIS QUESTIONS TO HIMSELF.

And Shiloh, throughout high school, struggled with her faith, resented her parents, and got involved with underage drinking.

Why did these "perfect" Christian families have kids who rebelled?

Three years ago I wrote a blog post about why I didn't rebel as a teenager. It went viral. A quarter of a million people read it in the first three weeks alone. I even landed a book contract. Parents were

who are now in their 20s and 30s). So I stepped into the gap.

Obviously, there's never any guarantee a child will not rebel, even if you do everything right. Just look at the parable of the Prodigal Son—he still turned his back on his loving and gracious father who did everything right.

Recently, I interviewed twenty-five young adults, a mix of kids who rebelled and those who didn't, and studied all their

AUTHENTIC FAITH REQUIRES TRUST. "PERFECT" FAITH ENSURES CONTROL

To raise their children to be good Christians, Shiloh's parents created a plethora of rules. "We had to be downstairs by a certain time every morning to do devotions. We had to read a certain number of chapters from the Bible every day. And we even had rules about who had to pray before each meal," Shiloh remembers. Breaking any of the rules came with consequences. If Shiloh read too few Bible chapters one day, she could lose her phone for an entire week. As Shiloh puts it, "God became part of the rules I hated."

At the same time, Shiloh met a friend



who came from a large non-Christian family that was joyful, loving and warm. “I saw their family and thought, ‘I wish I could have that with my family!’ So when they served wine with dinner, she drank to feel included, beginning a pattern of moderate under-age drinking.

Shiloh’s parents were scared their children wouldn’t grow up to know God, so they cracked down on the rules to try to control the outcome. My parents didn’t do that. Instead of making devotions or prayer into rules, they gave us study Bibles and prayer journals, and let us explore our faiths for ourselves. My mom used to tell me, “You have the same Holy Spirit inside you as I do. So why shouldn’t I believe that God can speak to you just as much as he can speak to your dad or me?”

Authentic faith requires absolute trust in God, even when it would be easier to clamp down with rules to try to control someone’s faith. My family believed God

GOD BECAME PART OF THE RULES I HATED.

could speak to me, a teenager, and gave me room to explore that relationship myself.

AUTHENTIC FAITH REQUIRES SPEAKING TRUTH. A “PERFECT” FAITH CAN BE ABOUT PROVING YOU ARE RIGHT

Perhaps an even greater difference between “perfect” and authentic faith is the emphasis on speaking truth versus being right. In Patrick’s family, disagreeing with his father was seen as disrespectful. When Patrick was in high school, the gay marriage debate was hitting the news. One night he piped up, “I just don’t see why it’s so wrong if two people love each other—why can’t they get married?”

His father shook a finger in his son’s face and insisted, “No son of mine will ever support gay marriage!” Patrick remembers thinking, “But I just asked a question.” He kept questions to himself after that.

My family was the complete opposite. Not only was debate allowed, it was encouraged. Some of my favourite childhood moments revolve around times I finally stumped my dad in a theological debate. If I had a good reason for believing something different than my parents, we talked about it and they never took it as a personal slight.

When I got too cocky about my theological prowess, I remember my dad reminding me, “Becca, people have been debating this for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Let’s not assume we know all the answers.”

AUTHENTIC FAITH IS ABOUT BEING A TEAM, NOT JUST A CLUB

But what about the families whose parents had authentic faith, but their kids still rebelled? While I was studying the stories I collected, I discovered kids who rebelled tended to see church as a club, while kids who remained strong had more of a team mentality.

In a club people feel they belong and share common interests, but it doesn’t go further than that. All your hard work simply helps to improve your club. To teens constantly exposed to the horrors of war or natural disasters on the news, club-type churches don’t seem to have a lot of real-

world significance. So when they grow up and move out, God becomes just a nice thing to believe in.

Seeing the church as a team, however, demands more from us. It offers that same community, but also requires training, focus and the tireless pursuit of a common goal—in this case furthering God’s Kingdom. The club mentality can produce apathy and a shallow faith. The team approach produces endurance.

I loved youth group growing up, but my faith extended beyond the four walls

of the church. Every year at Christmas my sister and I would choose gifts to send from the Harvest of Hope catalogue. When I was eleven we went on our first of three mission trips to Kenya, and my sister and I were heavily involved in organizing and gathering donations for a children’s home throughout our teenage years. Our faith cost us—it demanded some of our time, it meant we didn’t fit in very well with a lot of kids, and it required that our focus not only be on ourselves.

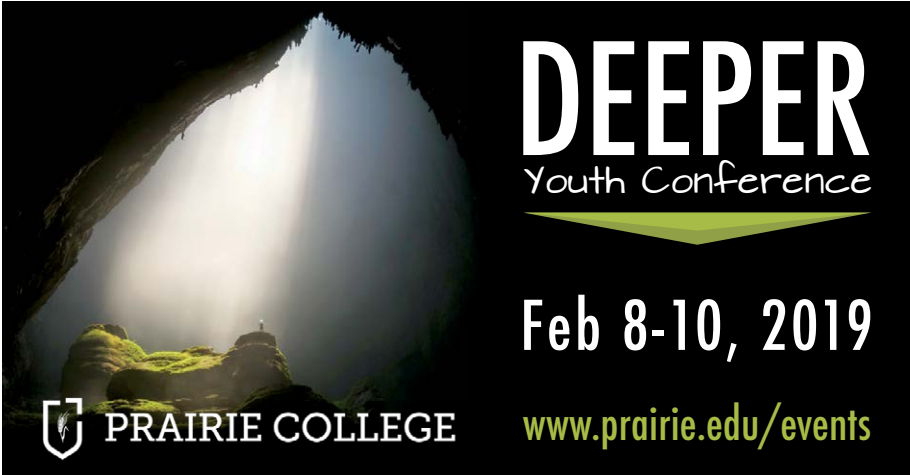
When being part of church or the Christian faith feels like it’s just another fun club, it’s easy to take it lightly. But when faith requires training, discipline and dedication to take on a task greater than yourself the way a team does, it takes on new meaning.

SHIFTING OUR FOCUS BACK ONTO JESUS

It really comes down to focus. In some families the focus is on appearance. Doing the right thing. Checking off all the boxes. In others the focus is on making church a great place to be, inadvertently making it more into a clubhouse than a place to refine faith. For all of these, the focus is off.

In my family, and the families of others I interviewed for my book, the focus was on an authentic relationship with Jesus that should have real-world significance. And in the end, for the Christian Millennials like me, it made all the difference. ❏

Reprinted from Faith Today, May/June 2017. For a free sample issue, contact 1-866-302-3362 or www.faithtoday.ca. Learn more about Rebecca and her book, *Why I Didn’t Rebel*, at whyididntrebel.com.



DEEPER
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Feb 8-10, 2019

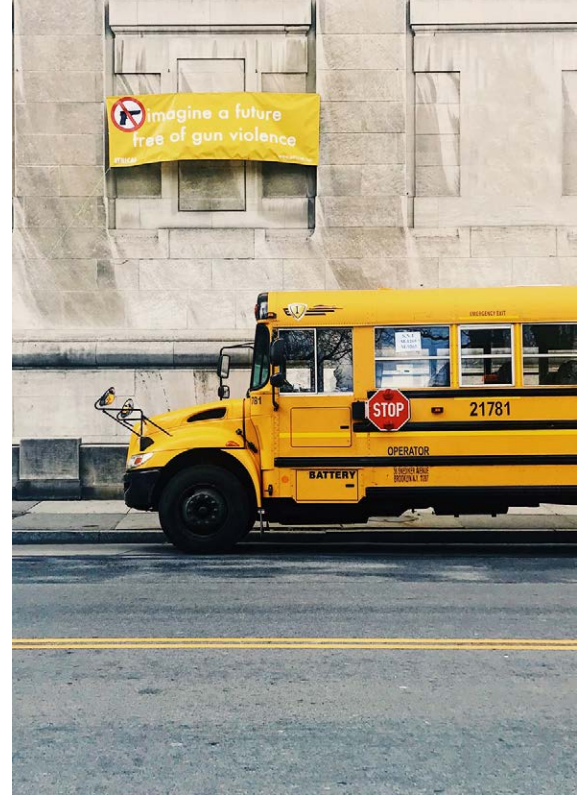
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NEWS & VIEWS

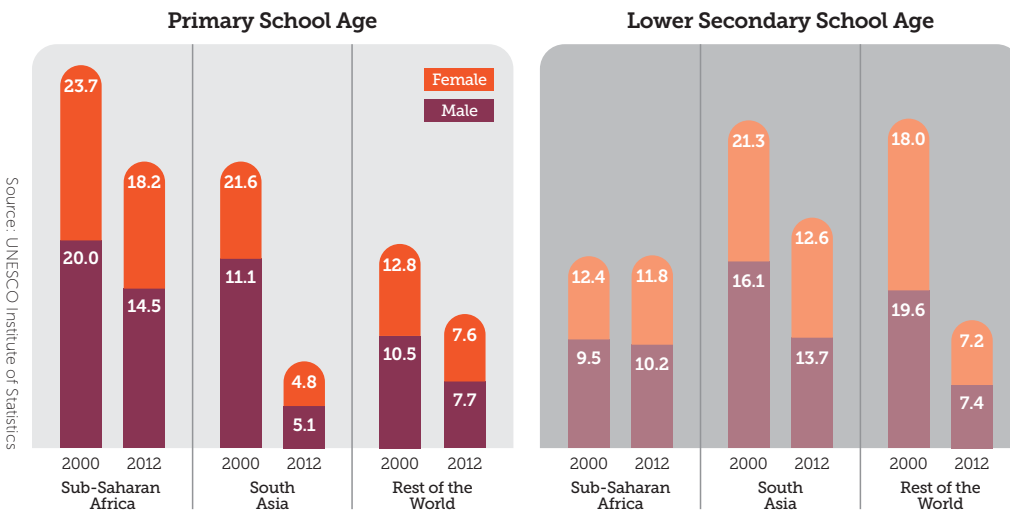
BACK TO SCHOOL

The fall season in our western culture is often synonymous with new seasons of education, but that opportunity is not a universal given. In country after country, children struggle to gain the most basic learning, a privilege often reserved for the few. Many who love Jesus are doing what they can to change those statistics.

- A UN report has found that, worldwide, one child in ten is not in school. Armed conflicts still pose one of the largest barriers to education, with over 22 million out-of-school children living in conflict zones.
- *Operation Mobilization* sponsors projects in different countries to help make education more accessible to underprivileged children. These include a primary school in southeast Asia that includes health education for 150 students, two schools in Malawi that serve orphaned, vulnerable, and Muslim background children, and schools in Bangladesh that offer learning and a pathway out of poverty to those for whom education was previously impossible.
- While the yellow school bus is a familiar sight throughout North America, boys and girls around the globe will make their way to school in hollowed-out canoes, hike over mountains or walk for miles, balance on wooden planks over contaminated water and piles of garbage, cram onto crowded motorcycles, horse-drawn wagons, rickshaws, jeepneys and trucks, and struggle over roads awash in mud.
- *TeachBeyond*, an organization that provides global, Christ-centered education, is initiating schooling for vulnerable refugee children in Greece by offering English, faith-based trauma therapy, and skills training that will open doors for their future. In formerly communist Albania they are partnering with nationals who hope to start Christian schools across the country. A recent conference drew 190 teachers wanting to learn how to incorporate godly values into their roles as educators.



NUMBER OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN WORLDWIDE BY AGE GROUP, REGION AND GENDER (in millions)



Pray for children around the world who strive to learn in difficult circumstances and for those who teach them out of love for Christ.

- While more children are attending school world-wide, many drop out or fail to meet basic standards of learning. Out of 650 million children of primary school age, 120 million do not reach Grade 4; another 130 million reach Grade 4, but fail to achieve a minimum level of learning.
- *Compassion International* understands that not all young people thrive in traditional classrooms and works to provide students with alternative educational opportunities. Learning trades like welding, electronics, carpentry, auto mechanics, sewing and IT skills allows children to not only get an education, but to provide for themselves and their families for life.

QUOTEWORTHY

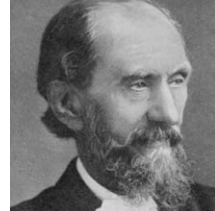


L.E.
MAXWELL

"God must secure our confidence, and...he tries us in order to make us trust where we cannot trace... While, therefore, he has no pleasure in our agony and perplexity, he knows that it is in the trackless and traceless sea of trouble that we come to trust."

KAY
WARREN

"Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be all right, and the determined choice to praise God in all things."



ANDREW
MURRAY

"Beware in your prayers, above all else, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what HE can do."



JEAN
VANIER

"Jesus welcomes everything that is broken. If we give him our weakness, he will transform it into a source of life."

A king penguin in the Edinburgh Zoo is mascot and Colonel-in-Chief of the Norwegian King's Guard. Knighted by King Harold V, Sir Nils Olav was also promoted to Brigadier in 2016.

Edinburgh Zoo



The Hawaiian pizza was actually invented in Ontario, Canada.

Toronto Sun



NOW YOU KNOW

A ten-gallon hat will only hold $\frac{3}{4}$ of a gallon.

Stetson



Twenty-two-year-old Feliks Zemdegs of Australia holds the 2018 World Record for solving the Rubik's Cube in 4.49 seconds.

Guinness World Records

A bag of moon dust collected by Neil Armstrong in 1969 was auctioned in New York for \$1.8 million.

U.S. News



Strong winds can create "upside-down waterfalls," sending the water back up to where it came from.

Huffington Post

MEDITATION



No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than thoughts about God. But while the subject *humbles* the mind, it also *expands* it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of Deity.



CHARLES H.
SPURGEON



Who am I?

Standing in front of the auditorium filled with peers and friends, he hesitated momentarily, pondering which edition of his story would be revealed: one filled with excruciating vulnerability; or one resisting full disclosure. A quick prayer for courage emboldened him and the story of pain and struggle ensued.

This was a graduation of sorts, the culmination of a year's worth of trust and transparency as eighteen upper-classmen worked through their fears and struggles to find freedom in their Savior and dependency on each other.

Each year, students are invited to participate in Freedom Session, an intensive healing-discipleship journey that uncovers the roots of pain in their lives and invites Jesus Christ to heal those areas of hurt. They deal with real issues: pornography, sexual woundedness, abuse, depression, anger, fear, and addiction. The guilt and shame slowly begin to lose their grip on lives, to be replaced by God's truth and a new story.

As a faculty sponsor of these students over a number of years, I have noted that the crux of many struggles lies in the shaping of identity—how one perceives who they are, how you think about yourself, the way you believe you are viewed by those around you, and the characteristics that define you. Psychology posits that having a mature sense of identity requires a thorough understanding of oneself including one's thought patterns, strengths, and weaknesses.

Our individuality is shaped by how we perceive other people perceive us. Thus, experiences, as mediated through the relationships of our lives, result in an achieved awareness of self-worth. Contrarily, modern secularism teaches us that we can be all we want to be by looking inward and detaching ourselves from community and orthodoxy. Be all you want to be, not caring what others think. Elsa, one of

the main characters in the Disney movie *Frozen*¹ sings, "It's time to see what I can do, to test the limits and break through. No right, no wrong, no rules for me, I'm free!" Strikingly, this is a disjointed way to realize one's identity.

Ironically, Sigmund Freud, a self-labelled atheist, believed that our inner "id" was filled with desires for power, control, and love which battled each other for dominance--innately selfish and cruel. How then does it make sense to attain our uniqueness from such inward strong desires and feelings when they are so conflicting? Rather, we receive our identity from a set of values or beliefs—from our

If the community we have trusted betrays us, what imprints are branded on our self-worth?

community and those we trust. But if the community or trusting persons have harmed, betrayed, abandoned or confused us, what imprints have been indelibly branded on our self-worth?

Timothy Keller² quoting from Isak Dinesen's "Out of Africa" identifies three paths to attaining identity. First are those who look outward to attain selfhood through their role and responsibilities. Next, those who look inward pressing self-accomplishment and self-justification to inflate self-esteem. Neither of these enjoy freedom as their cues for contentment rely on the fancies of the day. Finally, there



are those who look upward. It's not what I think about myself or what others think about me, but how God thinks about me. "I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...and being found in Him...(Phil 3:8,9 NIV). As God's child, forgiven, redeemed, adopted, I am who I am before Him.

The story was told. No one gasped in astonishment. Tears of joy and relief formed the silent expression of many thoughts. The warmth of fellowship and a renewed sense of hope—to keep on keeping on in the walk of freedom—permeated the room. Deep personal

resolve coupled with quiet humility acknowledged that there would be ongoing temptations and rejections. In a reclaimed identity, he would assert, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God..." (Gal 2:20, NIV). This is true identity formation! |S

Kevin Peters is Associate Professor of Arts & Science and Global Social Justice at Prairie College.

¹ Walt Disney Pictures, *Frozen* (2013)

² Timothy Keller, "Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World" (2016)

Never say never

“What are you doing next year?”

It’s the question everyone asks when you are finishing high school. At the time, I wasn’t certain, but there were three things that I definitely *didn’t* want to do: I would never learn English, go to Bible college, or live outside of Quebec. Five years later I was in Alberta, improving my English at Prairie Bible College. That seemed like a big enough leap for me, but apparently God wasn’t finished.

I had already studied science, international business and physiotherapy so I enrolled in the Sport Ministry Management program, thinking I might someday work with a professional sports team. But it soon became clear that athletics was not where I wanted to spend the rest of my life. Prairie had a new course of studies in Global Social Justice and that really got my attention. It seemed like God was leading that way, so I changed programs.

One of the requirements was a one-year internship called GlobeTREK that would take me around the world to learn about different cultures and global ministries. For the first month and a half the team spends time in multiple locations, followed by individual six-month assignments. I told my advisor that I would go anywhere in the world—except Africa. But time passed and we could not find a placement for me. The one place that *was* open was Cameroon in Central Africa. I wasn’t interested, plus I hate snakes, but finally I had to accept that this might be where God was calling me. Why, I couldn’t imagine.

Arriving on the compound that was to be my home for the next six months, I still had no idea what I would be doing. It sent me to my knees to ponder the verse: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and



supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Phil. 4:6).” I was to discover the depths of this verse and experience a life of prayer like I never had before. The consequences of letting God act instead of trying to control everything by myself were going to be eye-opening!

Our mission was reaching out to the Baka Pygmies and I was put in charge of

to the Lord in their own language and I experienced the closest moment with God that I had ever known. It changed me completely and gave me a passion for world missions.

God’s plan was so much better than mine. I didn’t want to come and yet I was exactly where he wanted me to be. The fact that I could use my mother tongue of French was an asset as well, but nothing

“ **I didn’t want to come, and yet I was exactly where God wanted me to be.** ”

building an agricultural training center. I hated construction, but there was no choice. We moved forward by faith and to my amazement, the building went up. Since I also had training in finance, it became my job to pay the workers and record all our expenses—another challenge, but one that God had prepared me for.

He had not forgotten my passion for sports either, and I discovered that the Baka people loved soccer. We formed local teams and were soon invited to play an exhibition game against another village. As we headed down the road with seventeen people in a car, these men sang praises

would have been accomplished without the help of God. He had prepared me perfectly for the task he had in mind and was just waiting for the right moment to bring everything together.

God is still challenging me this year as President of the Student Union. I would never have believed it three years ago because I had failed as a leader in the past. It is when we are weak, however, that we realize God’s strength. When people ask me what’s next, I still don’t have a definite answer. But my Father knows and I have learned “never to say never” because he is the God of the impossible. ❏



Photo: Hayley Ryan

IMAGINE THAT BART MILLARD

In 1999 Bart Millard, front man of the band MercyMe, penned the words to the song “I Can Only Imagine” as he reflected on the death of his father eight years before. It sat quietly in the group’s possession for months before a live performance with Amy Grant helped it explode onto the music scene. The song is now the bestselling Christian single of all time. It jump-started the multiple award-winning band on a journey they never dreamed possible, and became the title of a hit film based on the story of Millard’s life—a story of abuse, forgiveness and hope.

SERVANT: WHAT’S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A MUSICIAN?

BART: Music was my dream and I feel like I haven’t worked a day in my life because I love what I do so much. The band has been together now for twenty-four years.

WHAT’S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING A FATHER AND A HUSBAND?

Coming home from being on the road. The hardest thing is leaving. My wife Shannon and I met when we were kids and we’ve been married twenty years. She’s seen me at my worst and somehow still loves me; she’s the joy of my life.

YOU WANTED TO BE A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE; WHAT SPORT?

My dad was an all-American football player and I wanted to follow in his footsteps,

but it didn’t happen. I lacked the mindset. I was genuinely a sweet little kid; I could take a hit but I hated hitting people back. The size and coordination were there, but I was just too nice to be a professional athlete. I played as long as I could until I got injured.

HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN MUSIC?

I liked music but really didn’t think I had a talent myself—until my amazing choir teacher in high school convinced me that I had a gift.

WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND THE MOVIE?

I grew up with a severely abusive father. He had been a beloved high school football hero, a great big teddy bear of a guy. Then he got hit by a semi-truck on a highway job and was in a coma for eight weeks. When he regained consciousness,

he was a different man, combative, crude, fits of rage. When my mother finally left, he began to take out his anger on me. I can’t remember a time when I wasn’t beaten several times a week. The man had become a monster and I lived in fear of the physical and verbal abuse. The youth group practically raised me and I was always at church, afraid to go home. My dad was jealous of that relationship and he mocked my faith and my dreams and finally told me that he didn’t care about me at all. That hurt worse than the whippings. Then he got terminal pancreatic cancer when I was a freshman in high school and passed away in 1991 when I was in college. Unbelievably, by that time, the man I feared the most had not only become my best friend, he was the godliest man I knew and I wanted to be like him.

The Millard family: "I want to pass on this amazing redemption story to my kids."

HOW WAS THAT POSSIBLE?

When my dad got sick, he began going to church, reading his Bible, searching for answers, and praying for his family. He was being transformed from the inside out, but I didn't trust him. When I'd hear him praying for me and my brother and my mother, I was angry at first. I should have been glad, but I was somewhat arrogant like the elder brother in the Prodigal Son. He'd heard me sing and told me I was instrumental in his salvation, but I avoided him. The biggest healing of our relationship was in the last two years of his life. His day nurse was a friend and taught me how to take care of him at home. So for my junior and senior years I would sit for two hours every night pushing medicine into his IV. That's when things really changed. Most kids might have a few meaningful conversations with their dad in their lifetime, but we talked about everything you could possibly think of and he would continually tell me how sorry he was for the things he had done to me. That's when I fell in love with this man. I got to watch this guy go from being a monster to falling desperately in love with Jesus. The gospel became incredibly real to me because when the worst person you know changes before your eyes, you can't walk away from that.

When the worst person you know changes before your eyes, you can't walk away from that.

DID THE RECONCILIATION HAPPEN QUICKLY?

In the movie it seems like one defining moment, but it was a process. There was a time when I genuinely wanted to forgive, but even to this day I'm still finding out what I'm forgiving him for. I'm learning how much of an impact my childhood has on the way I'm a parent and a husband. I understand that a lot more now because I've seen parts of him in me.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE WHO HAS SUFFERED SIMILAR ABUSE?

Most of us have people that we've written off; we believe that there's no help for them or they're beyond saving. But as long as our heart's beating and there's

As long as there's breath in our lungs, our story is still being written.

breath in our lungs, our story is still being written. If you had asked me who was the one person that God can't reach, I would have said my dad a hundred times out of a hundred. Yet here we are talking about his redemption story. No one is out of the reach of God's grace.

WERE YOU MAD AT GOD FOR A DIFFICULT LIFE?

The first time I really got mad at God was when my father died. I thought, "I've finally got the perfect dad and he leaves me."

WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR THE SONG COME FROM?

After my dad's funeral, my grandmother said, "I can only imagine what he's seeing now." I became obsessed with that phrase and for years I scribbled it everywhere. In 1999 we needed a song to complete our first album and I finally realized that it was right there in front of me. It only took a few minutes to write, but the song had actually been taking shape in my heart for a long time.

WHEN DID YOU REALIZE THAT IT WOULD BE A RUN-AWAY HIT?

It was our first No. 1 song so we didn't have anything to gauge it by. We knew it was special but had no idea what was in store.

HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT TURNING YOUR LIFE STORY INTO A MOVIE?

It was a difficult decision. The idea of digging up stuff I've been trying to bury most of my life and putting it up on a big screen—I wasn't sure I was ready. Fortunately,

it took nearly eight years for the movie to develop and I had time to prepare myself.


DID YOU WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO SEE IT?

Yes, because I think this redemption story is an amazing message to pass on to them.

HAVE WE PUSHED AWAY THE THOUGHT OF HEAVEN BECAUSE WE'VE BECOME SO COMFORTABLE HERE?

Maybe. Talking about heaven feels almost like writing out your will and we don't want to think about it. Never mind what heaven might be—it means leaving everything I love here. But we're missing the truth that it's going to be the greatest, most euphoric thing we've ever experienced. As great as things might be here, I can't imagine what we'll "miss" when we're in the presence of Jesus. But I do think we treat it like it's the end of something we're comfortable with and that scares us. My kids read amazing descriptions of heaven and tell me it's like the Wizard of Oz or something and doesn't really appeal to them. But maybe the writers are trying to describe something indescribable in the most precious terms they can think of. What if there are new colors and things my brain just cannot fathom and it's so much better? It's going to be everything I've ever hoped for and more. I've had some of the greatest conversations with people asking those questions. The song doesn't give any answers and maybe that's what draws people. I'm just asking like anybody else.

DO YOU HAVE SOME LIFE GOALS?

Every day I want to be more like what Jesus intended for me. It's that weird "and" and "both"—I'm a finished work in Christ, but every day I'm also getting closer to what he desires me to be. Some days I get it wrong and some days I get it right. We've always felt that when the band comes to an end we want to be able to say that we tried to live with integrity. Hopefully it will be said of me personally that I died with the best comprehension of grace that I've ever had in my life. 

I can Only Imagine astonished Hollywood by grossing more than \$70 million. To request your copy of the DVD please see the enclosed envelope.



THE JOURNEY

BY MIKE AND BECKY SCOTT
WITH PAT MASSEY

Something was wrong—terribly wrong, even though outward appearances said otherwise. As missionary linguists Mike and Becky Scott talked quietly on the porch of their home, they recalled how their family had been accepted by the Oroko people of Cameroon and came to love them in return. Life was good and translation of the Scriptures was moving full-speed ahead. But something sinister had invaded their home and could no longer be ignored. Surely it wasn't God's plan that their lives be turned upside down and vital work brought to a halt. And yet...there seemed to be no choice.

After being raised by missionary parents in Indonesia and attending high school in the Philippines, Mike was no stranger to foreign cultures. On the campus of Prairie Bible College in Three Hills, AB, he met a fellow MK who had spent her early years in South Africa and Botswana. Rebecca Beam was a quiet, cheerful girl who loved music and made friends easily. Their friendship grew and by his senior year, Mike knew he had found the girl he wanted to marry.

There was one problem, however. She was interested in missions, and, while Mike definitely wanted to live outside of North America, he had no plans for ministry. Then, at Prairie's spring mission conference that year, God clearly directed his attention to the booth of Wycliffe Bible Translators and a role he had never even considered. Could it be meant for him?

The two graduated in 1989 and went their separate ways for the next year and a half. They were officially dating by then and letters flew back and forth like clockwork. A summer session of linguistic studies at the University of North Dakota was coming up and Mike decided that would be his "fleece." Becky was already there when her boyfriend, who had been delayed by car trouble,

pulled in broke and days late. He realized very quickly that there was no hope of catching up. The linguistic terminology and techniques made no sense and he was going to fail the course. Had he completely misread God?

Pride had to take a back seat as the discouraged young man laid it all out before the Lord. "If you want me here, God," he prayed, "you'll have to do something. I'm finished." To his amazement, concepts started falling into place and he actually began to enjoy his studies. God was able after all!

Following their wedding, the couple took further training and joined World Team (RBMU Int'l) as linguists and translators. In 1997 they arrived in Cameroon, West Central Africa, and Mike and his partner made survey trips into the countryside to find a village among the Oroko people where they would be welcomed.

It took time to learn the language and culture, but by 2006 translations of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Genesis were making encouraging progress and the people were delighted to hear the Scriptures in their own language. The national translators themselves grew spiritually as they worked and were eager to share their knowledge. The Scott family, including

Christy, Jenny, Kenneth and Laura, was busy and happy, never dreaming that change was just around the corner.

When eleven-year-old Jenny began to have difficulty concentrating on her home-

WHEN THE BIZARRE SYMPTOMS INCREASED, THEY KNEW SOMETHING WAS TERRIBLY WRONG.

work and household chores, her parents assumed it was simply a discipline issue. Then other bizarre symptoms began to appear—repetitive behaviors, difficulty walking and talking, and not able to feed herself.

Living in Africa, Mike and Becky were used to being on the alert for signs of tropical illness. But by May of 2008, when their daughter began experiencing irrational fears and erratic behaviors and could no longer walk, they knew something was terribly wrong. What they *didn't* know was that they were about to embark on a two-year journey into the darkness of the unknown.

Jenny clearly needed treatment outside of the village so the Scotts made a day's journey to consult with a mission doctor. Suspecting a psychiatric condition, he

started Jenny on anti-psychotic medication. The family was advised to leave for Canada immediately and told that, in all likelihood, they would never return to Cameroon. The news came as a complete shock and made them realize how serious the situation was.

Back in Canada, Mike and Becky were told there was nothing physically wrong with their daughter and explored the possibility of a spiritual component. But through months of no solid answers, the downward spiral continued, and they began to fear that Jenny could be permanently handicapped or even die from this unknown condition. Psychiatrists could only suggest that there were possible components of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or PTSD.

Setting up a household in Three Hills and helping their other children adjust to Canadian culture while trying to care for Jenny who was barely functioning was exhausting for the couple and left them in an emotional fog. Was their time in Cameroon finished? Was their ministry now to care for Jenny?

“That year was probably the hardest that either of us had ever known,” says Becky. “We could now empathize with people who struggle with depression because we ourselves were experiencing it.”

In August, the day before her twelfth birthday, Jenny entered the Alberta Children’s Hospital in Calgary, but was discharged after a week of extensive testing with no clear diagnosis. She was admitted again in January, this time to the mental health ward for a much longer period of time. Once more she was released by a puzzled staff with no explanation for her continued compulsive behaviors, involuntary tics, paralyzing fears, and inability to function normally.

Meanwhile, people around the world were praying and a friend in Oklahoma

suggested that Mike and Becky look into Lyme’s disease. They did some research and presented it to the doctor at Children’s, not realizing how difficult it would be to have their findings taken seriously. They persisted, however, and consent was finally given to test Jenny for Lyme and start her on a trial dose of antibiotics. Within days, there were noticeable improvements. The initial report had been negative but the Scotts were so impressed with the encouraging results from the antibiotics that they pursued more in-depth testing. The results: a definite positive for Lyme. At last the enemy had a name!

AT LAST, THE ENEMY HAD A NAME.

Even though doctors finally agreed to a long-term course of antibiotics, there would be many ups and downs requiring adjustments in medication and dealing with other co-infections. Eventually, however, the symptoms became less pronounced and then ceased altogether. After two years, treatment was stopped. Jenny was able to graduate from high school and went on to Millar College of the Bible where she met her husband-to-be. They married in September of 2017.

In the midst of the lostness and frustration, Mike and Becky were overwhelmed by the support they received from friends and supporters. Above all, God was there, through the low times wondering if Jenny would die, waiting for answers, feeling like they were neglecting their other children. Once seen as the “experts,” now they were helpless and at the end of themselves. But God’s love was constant. They didn’t need to perform; they just needed to be real and

trust that he was at work, even in the midst of difficult times.

As Jenny’s health improved, Mike and Becky found they could still contribute to the translation project. Thanks to technology, they were able to give input, proofread the Oroko Scriptures, and add data to the dictionary. Looking back, they realized that the timing of their sudden departure from Cameroon had been a needed wake-up call for the Oroko translators. The translation team had been repeatedly warned that they should be prepared to work on their own in case their mentors could not always be there. Suddenly that became a reality and the team saw the urgency of the task and began to take more leadership, something the missionaries had always hoped for.

Jenny’s struggle also became a turning point in her own spiritual life. “While we would never want anyone to go through this,” says Becky, “we would much rather have a spiritually whole daughter who struggled physically than a whole daughter who didn’t take God seriously.”

In 2013 the Scotts returned to Cameroon to find the translation nearing completion. They and their teammates worked together with national co-workers to finish the last books and check for accuracy, and typesetting was done for the New Testament and Genesis. The finished project went to South Korea for printing, with anticipated distribution in early 2019.

“God taught me very forcibly,” says Mike, “that ministry is his work. When I chose to let him direct my life and became a Bible translator, I was offering myself for his use. Over time though, I became comfortable with the work he gave me to do and started to derive my identity from that. But God used this episode in our lives to remind me that sacrifices do not crawl off of the altar! My identity cannot be bound up in my work and my ministry, because none of it is mine. It is all his. Even when he removes something I’ve claimed as my own, I’m learning to trust him and continue to bless his name.”

The Scotts live in Alberta where they continue serving with World Team and Mike teaches in the Intercultural Studies program at Prairie College. “God has broadened our ministry,” says Mike, “not only with our mission, but by allowing us to encourage other families traveling the journey of Lyme disease.” The Scotts can be reached at mike.scott@worldteam.org

The Scotts celebrate with a happy, healthy Jenny on her wedding day.



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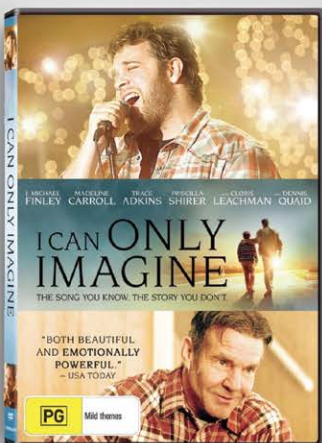
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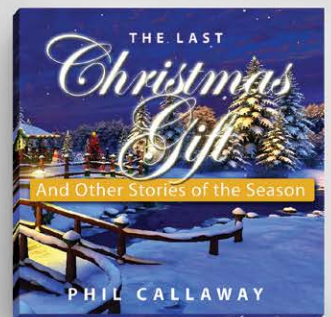
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Phil and Ramona enjoy their full quiver of grandchildren. Two more have since arrived.

Snuggle in

ONE SUMMER NIGHT DURING A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM A MOTHER TUCKED HER SON INTO BED.

As she turned off the light he asked in a trembling voice, “Mommy, will you stay with me all night?” She gave him a warm, reassuring hug and said, “I can’t. I have to sleep in Daddy’s room.” A long silence followed. Then the little guy said in a shaky voice, “The big baby!”

Fear. Do you have some?

We just spent the weekend with five grandbabies all under the age of four, thanks to kids who entrust them to us and who have been prolific in the having-of-children department. Two hours with this many tykes and you are energized. Two days with them and you are exhausted. You think to yourself, *It is a very good thing God didn’t allow us to have babies of our own*

at this stage. Not just because we might forget where we placed them, but because by Monday morning I could not bend over and touch my toes. You see older people wearing flip flops and you just know they have grandchildren who say, “Pick me up. Carry me. Throw me. Again, again.” Be nice to these people. They can’t tie their own shoes. They are on painkillers.

Of course we enjoy the grandchildren. They have taught me what true love means. It means watching *Peppa Pig* while baseball is on another channel.

Love means watching *Peppa Pig* while baseball is on another channel.

Claira calls me Bubba. She is two and cute and has the attention span of a gnat. Claira likes to move quickly to new areas to find new items and shake the stuffing out of them. Dismantling things is her special gift. She may be a mechanic one day, if at some point she learns how to find the parts and reassemble them. She does

all this while flinging blonde curls from her eyes. The girl seems fearless too. But as we ate breakfast in a restaurant Saturday, I noticed Claira leaning to one side and looking past me. I turned to look. A very large and dark closet was staring at us.

Now Claira is hard to understand with a soother in her mouth. She said, “Mooheee.” I removed the soother. She repeated herself. “Monkey.” She kept ogling the closet, wide-eyed. I made monkey sounds. Her eyes grew wider. She couldn’t eat. She reached toward me.

I picked her up and walked to the closet. She wriggled and fought me all the way. The child in me wanted to say, “There are no monkeys. The tiger ate them.” The grandpa in me said, “Monkeys are fun, Claira. What’s his name?” I knelt down on the floor beside her and kept up the game: “His name is E.E. He’s a nice monkey.” She liked that more than I thought she would. She smiled. She laughed. We said goodbye to E.E. and went back to our breakfast.

About 11 AM I put her down for a nap. I’ve never been comfortable with the term “put her down,” but that’s what I did, I suppose. She rubbed tired eyes and said in a tiny voice, “Nuffamababa.” Once more, I gently removed her soother and she said it again: “Nuggamebubba.”

“Pardon me?”

“*Nuggamebubba.*” And then it hit me. She likes to snuggle. “Snuggle me, Bubba.” And that’s what I did while this precious child drifted off to sleep.

Fear. Do you have some?

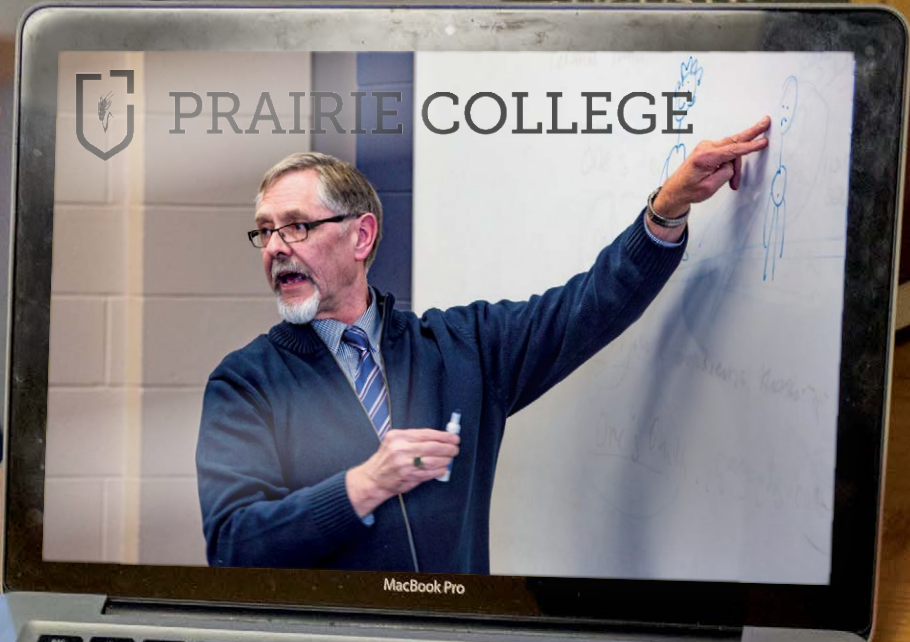
This is what God says to you today: “I’ve got this. Nothing will get to you that didn’t get past me first. Fear not. I am with you. Be not dismayed. I am your God. Replace that fear with a confident gratitude that you are my precious child. And snuggle in.”

That night we somehow managed to return the children to their rightful owners and we couldn’t stop smiling. Each time after the grandchildren leave I have a warm feeling. I think it means the Extra Strength Tiger Balm is working. **✎**

Phil is a Prairie alumnus, an author, radio host and speaker. Visit him at philcallaway.com




ANY TIME



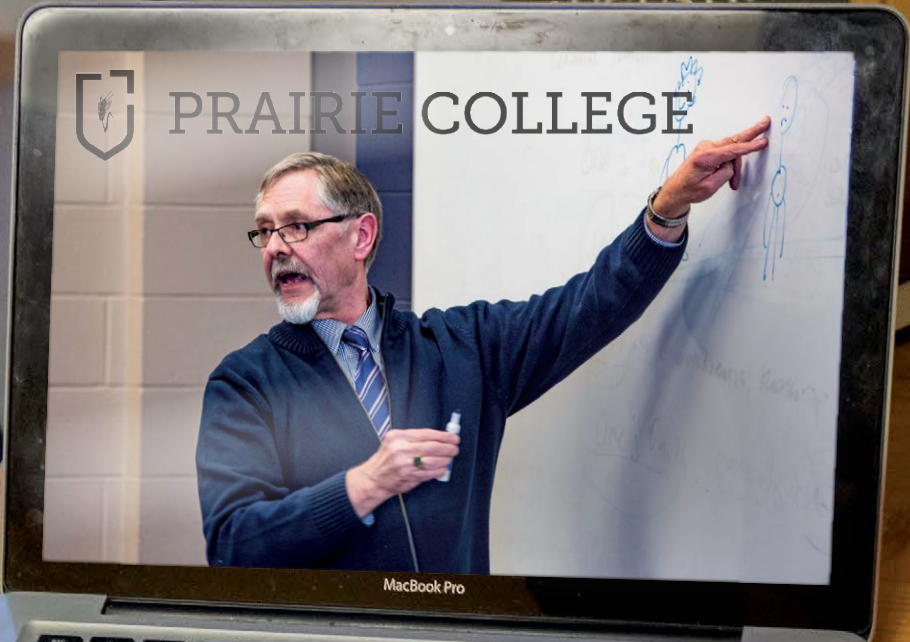
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