

a ministry of prairie bible institute

SERVANT

PHIL CALLAWAY
DON'T LET GO

DOMINIC DONE
IN THE SHADOW OF DOUBT

ALUMNI IN ACTION
GOD'S FIX-IT PROJECT

Issue 106 | Spring 2020

WHEN
FAITH
STUMBLES
FACING THE QUESTIONS

Never meant to be!

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, ELAINE WAS ON HER WAY TO VISIT A FRIEND WHOSE HUSBAND HAD PASSED AWAY SUDDENLY AND AT FAR TOO YOUNG AN AGE.

As she was heading out the door, she asked me, “What do you say to a young mother who has just lost her husband?” I had only one answer: “It was never meant to be.”

This is true of death and disease. Here we are in the midst of a global pandemic and the only thing I can say is: this was never part of God’s creation plan. His plan was for a brilliantly balanced world of beauty in which every component served its created purpose and contributed to the concert of creation. That concert was playing in perfect harmony when, at the end of creation, we are told, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was *very good!*”

We hold on to the hope of Easter redemption while still living in a Good Friday world.

However, we hold on to the hope of Easter redemption (marked by peace and healing) while still living in a Good Friday world (marked by disease and death). The good news of the Kingdom of God is that, with the resurrection, the pieces are in place and the Almighty is at work bringing about His plan for a new creation. The day is coming when death and disease will



be no more. So how does this pandemic fit into the plan of redemption? I’m not sure, but here are a few thoughts:

- The pandemic that has been escalating for many years because of hyper-connectivity is *anxiety*. The catalyst to anxiety right now is COVID-19, a serious accelerant. The potential damage this virus might bring on the world is economic chaos and communal isolation.
- COVID-19 is travelling at the speed of flight, but *anxiety* is travelling at the speed of light.
- From my perspective, the world has been put on an enforced *Sabbath*, which is the spiritual solution for anxiety and a reset of our global priorities. This will have the collateral benefit of bringing economic order, a healthier/greener globe, and re-established value to our local community and family.

Let me invite you to embrace this period of global rest, savour it, and make it part of your routine for the rest of your life. I see much good at the end of this chapter of history.

At the same time, we live in a world that is still marked by death and disease. Ralph Enlow, the President of ABHE (our accrediting association), in the face

of both global and personal pain, pointed us to the death of Lazarus in John 11, an event that brought Jesus to tears.


Why did Jesus weep? For the loss of his friend, Lazarus? For the pain this caused Mary and Martha and their family? For the future of Jerusalem? Or was it for the state of the world and how far this was from the plan of creation?

To quote Ralph, “It is right...IT IS RIGHT...to be offended, even outraged, at the pain and chaos that is brought by disease and death!” This was never intended to be, and the pain that we feel has been felt by the Almighty, both in the loss of his original plan and personally through the crucifixion, which was how he defeated death in the resurrection.

So we are the torch bearers of the gospel, bringing the good news of this Kingdom of peace and health that has been established, and we live in anticipation of

the Return of the King and the full realization of this eternal Kingdom.

Amen.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 



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A man and a child are walking away from the viewer down a path in a forest. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, likely from a low sun, creating a hazy and atmospheric effect. The trees are tall and thin, with some bare branches and some with sparse autumn leaves. The ground is covered in fallen leaves. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Don't let go

PHIL CALLAWAY

"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Deut. 33:27

Have you ever wondered, *Where is God? What is he up to?* My granddaughter Sophie has. She is five now and fiercely brave, but already she wonders about these things. Just yesterday a huge hardcover book jumped off a shelf and landed on her tiny foot. On the way to the ER she watched it turn three shades of blue. Her mother took pictures and sent them to me. It was a nasty gash.

"Mom," said Sophie as they sat in the waiting room, "I wish Jesus wasn't invisible so he could come and hold my hand."

Me too, little girl.

David Flood knew the feeling. In 1921 he and his wife Svea left Sweden to take the good news of Jesus to a remote area of Africa. The local chief refused them entry to the village, so they built a mud hut nearby and prayed for a breakthrough. None came.

Refused entry to the village, they built a mud hut nearby and prayed for a breakthrough. None came.

Twice a week a young boy was allowed to come and sell them chickens and eggs. Svea patiently told him about Jesus, the God who would rather die than live without him, and eventually she led him to Christ. He was their only contact.

Pregnant, the young woman gave birth to a little girl but died only days later. Her grieving husband dug a rough grave and buried his 27-year-old wife, then handed his daughter to another missionary couple and announced, "I'm going back to Sweden. I've lost my wife. I can't take care of this baby. God has ruined my life."

The little girl was adopted and renamed Aggie. She grew up in South Dakota and in time, married and gave birth to two children. One day a Swedish Christian magazine showed up in Aggie's mailbox. She had no idea where it came from but a photo caught her eye. A grave. And a white cross that bore the words *Svea Flood*.

The story was from long ago. It was about missionaries, the birth of a baby, the death of a young mother, and the one little African boy she had led to Jesus. That boy had grown up and built a school. Gradually, he won all the students to faith in Christ. Then their parents. The chief, too.

And now there were six hundred Christians in the village, all because of what God had done through Aggie's parents, David and Svea Flood.

For their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, Aggie and her husband were given a vacation to Sweden. There she learned that David Flood had remarried, fathered four additional children, and given his life over to alcohol.

"Don't mention God," she was told. "He hears God's name and he...well, don't."

In a rundown building, Aggie found her father—the one-time missionary. Now seventy-three, he suffered from diabetes and a stroke. Cataracts covered both eyes. Aggie fell to his side, crying, "Papa, I'm your little girl, the one you left in Africa."

"I never meant to give you away," whispered the broken man. "I just couldn't handle things."

"It's all right, Papa. God took care of me."

He stiffened. "God forgot us all."

"Papa," Aggie continued gently, "you didn't go to Africa in vain. Mama didn't die in vain. The little boy you brought to the Lord grew up to lead his whole village to Jesus. The one seed you planted kept growing and growing. Today there are hundreds of African Christians because

"I'm going home," David announced after burying his wife and giving away his baby daughter. "God has ruined my life."

you were faithful. Papa, Jesus loves you. He never hated you."

Tears of sorrow and repentance flowed down David's face and that day he put his life back into the loving hands of Jesus. Within a few weeks, he was gone.

Years later, Aggie and her husband attended a conference in London and listened to a report from the area of Congo where she had been born. The speaker was the superintendent of the national church, representing 110,000 African believers. Afterward Aggie approached him. She had to know. "Have you ever heard of David and Svea Flood?" she asked.

His eyes grew wide. "Yes, Madam. Svea Flood led me to Jesus when I was a young boy. She had a little girl, but I don't know what happened to her. Do you?"

In time, Aggie and her husband visited her birthplace where they were welcomed by throngs of villagers. She was escorted to her mother's grave and there Aggie knelt before that white cross and gave thanks.

I don't pretend to understand the ways of God. That would be like an aardvark understanding the Internet. But when I heard that story for the first time, I needed it so badly. Needed to know that in the midst of my hurt, anxiety and mess, an all-powerful, sovereign God was working things together for good. I needed the reminder that he is active, that he cares.

Do you feel abandoned? Do your prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling? Please don't give up. Seeds you are sowing now will bear fruit one day. Maybe not this week or even next year. But through it all you have a God who entered our world and suffered. A God who weeps with you. He will not waste this hurt. He is in the midst of whatever you're up against. Even in this, God is sovereign.

"No human wisdom or understanding or plan can stand against the Lord," Proverbs 21:30 tells us.

"My counsel shall stand," God declares in Isaiah 46:10, *"and I will accomplish all my purpose."*

I cannot run the world, but God can. I don't understand it all, but he does. I cannot quite see it from here, but

it's true—heaven's throne is occupied and all is well.

With Sophie's foot finally bandaged, her mother drove her home. Suddenly, my granddaughter started to laugh. "Jesus is making it not hurt so much," she said. "Jesus gave me you, Mommy. You held my hand."

Jesus holds your hand, too. Never forget. He won't let go. ❧

To order your copy of *Laugh like a Kid Again*, please see **Page 8**.



A safe place

We are born with inquisitive minds. The endless “Why’s” of toddlers turn to wonder and quest for meaning as we grow older, especially regarding issues of faith. Even when we are raised in a culture that holds to Christian values and principles, we are not immune to questions. The only thing that changes is who we turn to for answers.



Agnostics, skeptics, atheists, those who identify themselves as “nones” (spiritual but not religious), and even Christian young people look for answers about the meaning of life in a world that often seems so chaotic. Competing worldviews fueled by ideologies and informed by the media vie for attention. Where can they turn?

Today’s culture has eroded many Christian principles to such an extent that it is now dubbed post-Christian. It is not merely that the prevailing mindset is agnostic or atheistic, but we live in a culture that, although rooted in the history, culture and practices of Christianity, has rejected or even forgotten where it came from. Pushed out of the public sphere, it is now regarded more and more as a dangerous minority. There is an alarming trend, even among evangelicals, that more and more young people are leaving the church and believe faith in Jesus to be hopelessly irrelevant.

A quarter century ago, I turned to the discipline of apologetics to better understand objections to the Christian faith. Ever since, I have noticed that the questions I had as a teen are the same ones that young people are struggling with today. As teacher of apologetics at Prairie College, I have the privilege of helping address those questions. It is imperative for young believers to find a safe place where they can wrestle with the issues of faith; a place where they find answers that

satisfy them intellectually, but above all where they find out what difference these answers make in their lives.

Education is now regarded as a pragmatic means to an end. Young people go to colleges and universities to earn a degree to find a career that is satisfying and lands them a job that pays well. Bible colleges don’t neatly fit that bill. After high school, a Christian student may pursue higher education in hopes of entering a successful occupation. More often than not, however, the most valuable thing they possess, their faith, is left battered and shredded. They have gained a degree at the cost of something far more precious.

“
More often than not, the most valuable thing they possess is left battered and shredded.
”

I truly believe it is more urgent than ever for us to provide an environment where young people can wrestle with their

faith and learn to live out the Christian life in a tangible way before they embark upon their educational journey. Fay Goddard, an alumna from the 50s, in her autobiography *All the Way* had this to say about Bible colleges and Prairie in particular: “Somehow I had the idea that Bible colleges were inferior to colleges and universities. At Prairie I found myself up to my eyes in serious study, and the instructors’ dedication to God intensified their desire to communicate effectively with their students.” Although this was written over sixty years ago, I believe it is still very much the case.

Our goal here is to help students see that Christ makes a difference and that life with him is deeply fulfilling. After digging into the Scriptures and gaining a strong foundation for their faith, they can then move into their careers able to address with intelligence and compassion the objections they will undoubtedly encounter.

I know I would have benefited greatly from being able to voice the questions that I struggled with as a teenager. I’m so grateful that I can come alongside those who are courageous enough to come to a place like Prairie College seeking to make their faith their own. ❏

Dr. Bill Nyman is Reference Librarian and instructor of Writing and Apologetics at Prairie College.

PRISON PROGRAM REACHES HISTORIC MILESTONE

In September of 2016 Prairie began introducing the college-level Prison Bible Encounter Program into a growing number of federal institutions. We are now nearing a historic milestone as seven inmates are about to *graduate with a Certificate in Bible from Prairie College!*

Word is spreading and seventy-two additional students are either enrolled or on a waiting list. Doors continue to open, but that means more staff, more materials and more travel. Lives are being changed as the Word of God reaches behind prison bars.

Will you join us in this on-going opportunity?



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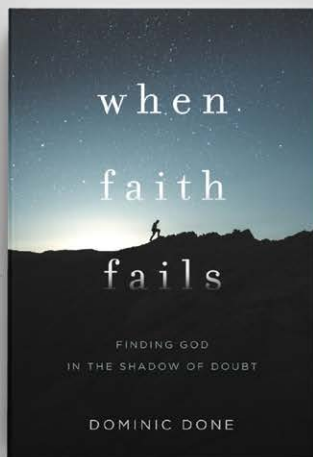
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WHEN FAITH FAILS:
FINDING GOD
IN THE SHADOW
OF DOUBT
By Dominic Done

If you have ever struggled with doubt, you are not alone. Writing candidly out of his own experiences, Dominic Done argues that questioning is normal. Whether your

struggle is with tragedy, the difficult parts of the Bible, the intersection of science and faith, or even God's silence, you can move through doubt into an authentic and vibrant faith that doesn't run from questions and the hard work of honest wrestling.



LAUGH LIKE A KID AGAIN:
LIVE WITHOUT
REGRET AND LEAVE
FOOTSTEPS WORTH
FOLLOWING
Phil Callaway

Laughter may be the best medicine, but when reality hits, it can be difficult to muster joy. Best-selling author Phil Callaway knows well the downward spiral that can follow hardship and the long road back to happiness. This newest collection of short stories brings a dose of humour to life's toughest moments. Drawn from real life, these inspiring and heartwarming accounts rooted in God's truth deliver real and lasting hope.

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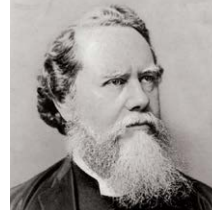


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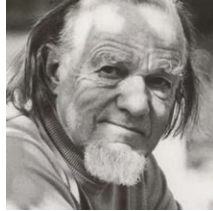
"Sometimes when you're in a dark place you think you've been buried, but you've actually been planted."



J. HUDSON TAYLOR

"God is not looking for men of great faith; he is looking for common men to trust his great faithfulness."

QUOTEWORTHY



LOREN CUNNINGHAM

YWAM FOUNDER

"Put your dreams on the altar. They will be resurrected into something even grander."

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER

"Tell me what the world is saying today, and I'll tell you what the church will be saying in seven years."



MEDITATION

JUSTIN EARLEY

AUTHOR OF *THE COMMON RULE*



True understanding of the world's brokenness and real compassion for the oppressed will not come from the fire hose of online anger...We must resist becoming people who talk of justice out of rage and work on becoming people who talk of justice out of love. The endless stream of

media will drown out the quiet cries of the vulnerable unless we curate specifically to hear them, and then at some point, to close our screens and walk out our doors to where they are.



NOW YOU KNOW

The heart of a shrimp is located on its head.

Frontier Gap



A 1963 Ferrari GTO recently sold for \$70 million, making it the most expensive car in the world.

CNN Style

The unicorn is the national animal of Scotland.

BBC



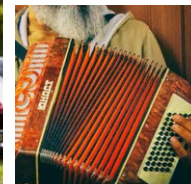
Pringles are not actually potato chips.

Wall Street Journal



The accordion is a very popular instrument in North Korea.

The Telegraph



FINDING GOD IN THE SHADOW OF DOUBT

DOMINIC DONE

*Pastor and author Dominic Done knows from personal experience the pain that comes when certainty crumbles, when old ways of doing things no longer sustain us, and easy explanations don't work anymore. The pain is compounded because any hint of questioning is so often demonized. Family, friends and church leaders may misunderstand or criticize and we find ourselves marginalized. In his new book *When Faith Fails* Done offers a safe place to question and points out the amazing potential for doubt to lead us to a deeper, more genuine pursuit of God.*

SERVANT: YOU'VE TITLED YOUR BOOK *WHEN FAITH FAILS*. THE BIBLE SAYS THAT FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE REMAIN, SO FAITH CAN'T FAIL—CAN IT?

DOMINIC: There are times when we wrestle with unanswered questions and the Bible really doesn't seem to make sense to us. Or we go through seasons of suffering that really shake us and we have that sense that our faith is fragmenting or falling apart. I believe that it's in those very times that we can actually encounter God in a new way and discover a faith that is more gritty and alive.

ARE YOU SAYING THAT DOUBT IS NOT ALWAYS A SIGN OF SPIRITUAL COLLAPSE?

I'm saying what we do with our doubt can actually make or break our faith. Doubt in and of itself is essentially neutral and it's not the same as unbelief. It's being in that middle space where you have unanswered questions or tension in your faith, where you're torn between two points of view, or something shakes the credibility of what

you grew up believing. It can be incredibly painful but also incredibly redemptive. Doubt can lead us toward deeper faith; it all depends on what we do with it.

WHEN DID YOU START SERIOUSLY QUESTIONING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH?

There were different seasons of doubt and I think it can take on different forms. Emotional doubt was prompted by a lot of brokenness in my family during the first half of my childhood and the suffering I witnessed while in the ministry. Later on I wrestled with intellectual doubt as I pursued a degree in theology at the University of Oxford. There my faith was

pressed suddenly had space to flourish and the weaknesses in how I thought about God were uncovered. I still loved him but something was fractured in my soul. My wife encouraged me to open up to people who would understand and to balance my studies with books that would nourish my mind with truth and hope. As I did, I was reminded of how rational, sophisticated and beautiful the Christian faith is compared to the implications of atheism that wound us at the deepest level. I became more honest with God than I had ever been in my life as I shared my doubts with him, but he accepted me as I was and I fell in love with Jesus again.

ALL THE DOUBTS I HAD SUPPRESSED SUDDENLY HAD SPACE TO FLOURISH AND THE WEAKNESSES IN HOW I THOUGHT ABOUT GOD WERE UNCOVERED.

challenged in new and painful ways as I plunged into the world of philosophy and atheist writers. All the doubts I had sup-

CAN WE HAVE A VIBRANT FAITH AND SERIOUS QUESTIONS AT THE SAME TIME? Absolutely. I think a vibrant faith lives

in the place of questions and discovery. Mystery is the lifeblood of intimacy. I'm still learning things about my wife that I didn't know before and that's what makes the relationship feel alive and vibrant. Knowing absolutely everything about her would be rather boring, but because it's continually growing, our relationship is more beautiful and multi-dimensional. There are intimate aspects of God to discover and I think that's what leads us to worship. When we allow our questions to push us to the pursuit of answers, deep faith is born. The place of uncertainty, wrestling, and angst is where God meets us and that's where we truly grow.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT CAN CAUSE US TO QUESTION OUR FAITH?

A significant one is the Bible itself. There is no question that this is the most influential, life-changing book in the world. It's the bedrock for our faith, but it's also complex, mysterious, beautiful and often bewildering. The Bible is brutally honest about real people with real flaws, but that doesn't mean that God endorses what they did. If we are willing to do the heavy lifting of peeling back the layers of history and culture, we discover a unified story that shows us the "big picture" and ultimately leads us to Jesus. Perhaps the Bible's primary objective isn't intellectual certainty, but to bring us into a flourishing relationship with God. Another stumbling block is the assumption that science and faith are at odds, even though belief in God has actually been the main inspiration for science. Where there is apparent conflict, we can consider what we know is true about nature and then come back to Scripture with humility, looking closer, investigating more, open to the idea that our analysis of either science or Scripture is wrong. It's okay to embrace the wonder of unknowing.

IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT IS THE BIGGEST REASON PEOPLE TURN AWAY FROM GOD?

The problem of evil and the apparent silence of God in the face of suffering and injustice. We want to know why a good God would create a world that is so broken..

HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO PEOPLE WHO ARE SUFFERING?

Whenever we're confronted with someone going through a season like this, an immediate response would never be to come

up with a 3-point sermon. The first step is always empathy, listening, just being a faithful presence. There are no pat answers. But there are *some* answers. Starting in Genesis we see a God who designed a world that was flourishing, full of delight and wonder, not broken with heartache and pain. So I think we start there with a God who is good and who loves us. Secondly, we see that God's heart ultimately is the renewal of all things. To me this is probably the most important answer—the hope that someday all our pain and our sickness will be healed and questions will be answered. At the end of the day it's not so much why would God allow it but it's about the God who walks with us through it and promises never to leave us. We may not understand suffering, but we can fight against it and try to put a broken world back together. We can be the voice of healing and advance the way of love. We cry out for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven and then we link arms with him to help make that hope a reality.

THIS GLOBAL PANDEMIC THAT WE'RE EXPERIENCING IS CERTAINLY A TIME OF CRISIS. DO YOU THINK IT HAS MADE PEOPLE MORE SKEPTICAL AND DOUBTING GOD OR HAS IT PUSHED THEM TOWARD QUESTIONS ABOUT SPIRITUAL THINGS?

There will be varied reactions, for sure, but a recent study showed that online searches for prayer go up whenever statistics on the virus rise. Maybe this is one illustration of how a time of crisis can cause us to look up and ask questions that we've been too busy to even slow down enough to ask.

ONE OF THE WORST THINGS WE CAN DO IS BECOME INDIFFERENT BECAUSE THEN WE STOP ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO MAKE DOUBT A CATALYST FOR AN AUTHENTIC AND VIBRANT FAITH?

We can begin at a place of honesty and vulnerability. One of the worst things we can do with our questions is to suppress them. Secrecy is what makes doubt destructive. When we bring it into the light and are

honest with our struggle, that's when we discover God's incredible grace and mercy. One of my favorite verses is Jude 24: "Be merciful to those who doubt." No-one showed more mercy than Jesus. The Bible tells us that even when his followers saw the resurrected King standing before them, "some doubted." But Jesus sent out both the worshipper and the doubter and they turned the world upside down.

WHAT ELSE?

When we have doubts and are willing to bring them honestly to the surface, then we can commit ourselves to a season of exploration. We take the trouble to look deeper into the issue, read about it and ask questions of knowledgeable people. When we seek clarity for the things that trouble us, we may actually find that some of them are not the issues we once thought they were. Often there actually are answers and our uncertainty can be resolved. It's a very practical way to deal with doubt.

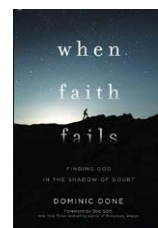
CAN WE DO THIS BY OURSELVES?

I'd say that community plays a big part in this. Asking others to walk with us through this season in our lives is so important. Find a mentor, someone who's mature in their spiritual journey. Having that kind of a person in your life makes such a difference because we weren't meant to walk alone.

YOU'VE SAID THE GREATEST DANGER IS NOT THAT WE LOSE OUR FAITH BUT THAT WE SETTLE FOR A MEDIOCRE VERSION OF IT. WHAT DOES THAT LOOK LIKE?

A mediocre version of faith would be a faith that is complacent and lukewarm. One of the worst things we can do is become indifferent because then we stop asking the hard questions. We're not willing to explore or go deeper. If we actually care and want our faith to become richer and more alive, that necessitates climbing challenging mountains and facing hard issues head on. It means having the courage to continue taking one step after another instead of giving up. Doubt may become the very instrument that refines your faith so that only Jesus remains. ❏

To order your copy of
When Faith Fails,
please see [Page 8](#).



THE fix-it GUY

NATHAN HORSTEMEIER
WITH PAT MASSEY

It's quiet in the morning when I unlock the door of the shop and greet my crew. As we go over our tasks for the day, it strikes me again what a miracle it is that I'm actually responsible for the upkeep of Prairie's entire campus. There was a time when no-one would ever have seen that coming. When I look back on so many wasted years as a young adult, my destructive attitudes and habits, and the way I ran from God, I see a grace at work in my life that is more than amazing.

Years ago my parents moved from Cleveland, Ohio, to the small First Nations village of Chipewyan Lake, AB, as LAMP missionaries with the Lutheran church. There they operated a general store and bought and sold furs while running programs for the children of the community. I was only six when Dad died, leaving my mother to raise me and my older siblings alone. Her faith was strong and she shared it freely with her children, taking me to Sunday school and encouraging my con-

firmation at the age of twelve. But after my father was gone and I hit my teens, faith was replaced by a party lifestyle and all that went with it. A heavy metal rock band consumed my interest and alcohol became a way of life. As a child, I had loved building and fixing things but in spite of that early passion to create and repair, my personal life was falling apart.

Respecting authority never sat well with me, whether toward my mother or teachers or eventually my bosses and the police. It had also been a long-standing joke that our family was never on time

and I took it to the extreme, even failing classes in school for chronic lateness. At my job in a steel shop later on, the habit continued. After two and a half years I was still in the lowest position, a direct result of my attitude and poor work ethic.

One day the boss called me in and laid down the law: "Show up late one more time and you're gone!" Then he assigned me the 6:00 AM shift. That threw me because I was sometimes barely finished partying by then!

About this time Jesus slowly began making his way back into my life. With the help of a friend, my behavior at work was changing for the better, and as my mother and sister challenged me, I started reading my Bible and went back to church. Prairie College was hosting a booth at a festival in Edmonton and it intrigued me to discover that they had an aviation program. School had never been my favorite place but now I *wanted* to learn, so after a visit to the campus I decided to enroll. My life was being made new, but not because of my own decision to become a better person. If God hadn't been at work, it never would have happened.

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It soon became evident, however, that the battle for my heart was far from over. Shame about my past and the lure of old friends soon had me drinking again, not yet convinced of the truth that Jesus had made me a new creation. When I arrived at school, I was sure someone would spot me as a phony and ask me to leave. But that never happened. Even though being part of a Christian community was totally new to me, peace came to my heart and I soon felt at home.

Registering for general studies allowed me to transfer to aviation in my second year. Eventually, though, the money ran out and I had to leave school and find serious work. My construction experience, knack for fixing things, and automotive background landed me a job with Prairie's maintenance department where I was soon doing everything from fixing doors and windows to repairing vehicles and driving equipment. I loved the variety and learned so much from the other men on my crew. It was the perfect job for me.

There were other benefits too. Every day we took our break in the campus coffee shop and it didn't take me long to notice the cute server behind the counter. I began going to her church and as we got to know each other, I finally got the courage to tell Kristy how I felt. In 2011 we were married and began building a family together. Our home was lively but happy with two little ones and I never suspected that this ideal life was about to be shattered.

Son number three, whom we planned to name Luther, was almost due when my wife began to feel sick. I came home for lunch one May day in 2017 to find her going into labour, so I called her sister for help and took the boys to their grandparents. When Kristy collapsed trying to get to the car, we sent for an ambulance and followed them to the local hospital. I was scared, yet excited to meet our baby, and couldn't understand why the delivery room doctor seemed to linger over the ultrasound machine for such a long time. Finally she turned to us and delivered the blow: there was no heartbeat. Tears began to flow as I begged God to change what was happening and spare the life of my son. I had never felt so helpless.

We were rushed to a city hospital, unaware that Kristy was experiencing severe internal blood loss. The placenta had detached prematurely and our baby's supply

line had been severed. He would be delivered, but not alive.

Labour was an excruciating process for my wife and I will never forget the stark contrast of Luther's birth with that of our other boys. The room went silent as his tiny body finally appeared, limp and lifeless. As the nurses quickly began setting up blood transfusions for Kristy, it finally dawned on me that her life was in danger as well. I was in shock over the loss of our son, but this stunned me all over again.

Once things were stabilized, we were joined by family and our pastor and his wife. We bathed Luther, dressed him, held him and wept over him. Every cry from a healthy newborn elsewhere in the hospital that night broke our hearts. A few days later, with the loving support of family and friends, we gave him back to God.

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There were so many gifts of kindness and encouragement during that time, but we were devastated, and for once in my life I was faced with something I simply could not fix. We learned that mourning can take many forms. You can be crying one day and laughing the next. Or you waver from utter disbelief to thanking God for his mercies because he is the only one you have to hold onto. There have been some very dark periods, but we've realized that it really is ok to be angry and to let God know how you feel. Lament is in the Bible for a reason. God weeps with us when this broken world brings pain, but because of Jesus, death does not have the final word. Our little boy is in his presence and that brings me joy, even if it was born out of great sorrow.



The Horstemeier family: "We look forward to the day when we'll all be together."

God had not forgotten us and on September 24, 2018, we welcomed the gift of another son, Shepherd, to our family. In spite of what we went through, I will always be glad that Luther came into our lives and look forward to the day when we will all be together.

Another thing I've learned is that relationships are more important than a job. It's not about pipes and wires, tunnels and roofs, but about learning how to face issues and challenges, about serving faithfully in all things the way Christ would. The mission field is people, not places, and we can view our interactions, even with contractors and suppliers, not just as business but as open doors for God to impact their lives. Our focus needs to be on the people he brings our way and how we represent him.

In 2016 I became Prairie's Physical Plant Manager. On any given day we can be setting up for an event, repairing a broken water main, working on a vehicle, or starting a painting job. You name it, I've probably done it. One of my favourite parts of the job is that we get to participate in the spiritual life of the school through things like chapels and conferences. As I share my life with the students and staff community, it helps me to keep growing and walking closer to Jesus.

God took an irresponsible renegade and is making him over into a trustworthy servant. Ephesians 2:10 tells me that God actually has good work that he's prepared for me to do and I know this is where I belong. He has taken my passion for fixing things and turned that gift into something I can offer up to him with a thankful heart.

I guess God understands this "fix-it" guy pretty well because he keeps on "re-making" me and he hasn't given up yet. ❧

Simply serving

Born an only child in Taipei, Taiwan, I was raised with my grandmother and my parents. My mother, who was a nurse, was the only other Christian in the family, but thankfully no-one opposed my attending the Presbyterian church.

I was twelve when my parents decided to move to North America. It was hard to leave behind all that was familiar to me, but I will always be grateful to my mother and father for having the courage to make the journey that changed the course of my life.

We settled in Calgary, Alberta, in 2007 and in time the spiritual life I had known as a child began to grow dull and boring. It seemed like God was at work in other people, but not in me. I moved to Edmonton to study psychology and biological science at the University of Alberta, but avoided going to church and became fully engaged in a godless lifestyle. Frustrated and conflicted with the ideas of science and Christianity, I ended up on academic probation and was forced to withdraw from the school for a full year.

Somehow the timing worked out because I had already decided to do my military service back in Taiwan.

been walking with my Saviour for almost five years now.

In my last semester at U of A it seemed I was at a crossroads with no idea what to do with my life. I was studying mental health and psychiatry because the human brain had always fascinated me, but I also considered computer science and business or education. However, one question was always in the back of my mind: how do I live out my faith, not just at home but also at work? As I studied the life of Jesus I saw how he humbled himself to serve the sick and help the poor and became motivated to do the same. My mother also showed me how rewarding and important a career in health care could be, so I decided to pursue nursing.

A friend from university told me about Prairie but it sounded far too

“ I can see now how God’s footprints were all over my life. ”

Those were tough and lonely months as I faced my parents’ divorce, but it was also during that year that God brought me back to himself. I can see now how his footprints were all over my life. Our relationship was reignited and I have

remote. But no one can outrun God’s meticulous plan. It was around April during finals and I was in a panic because not one nursing school had accepted me. There was no choice but to apply to Prairie. Almost two years later I am still



adjusting to small-town life but I have never looked back or regretted my decision to come here.

It was my first experience at living in a Christian community and I will forever be grateful for the way Prairie welcomed and accepted me. I love how my friends and I can just talk about our faith and build each other up anywhere, even in the dining hall or the gym. The simple lifestyle of this quiet place has shaped my habit of daily devotions and I can pursue God and grow in a way that pleases him. His peace and joy are allowing me to experience freedom in many areas of my life.

I believe God brought me here to thicken the root of my Christian faith, solidify a godly lifestyle, and prepare me to touch other people in the field of health care. I know now that being a witness for Christ is not purely based on spreading the gospel verbally. Living out my faith through actions and serving others from the heart are also critical ways to share the love of God.

One day I would like to combine my knowledge of psychology and neuroscience with my practical nursing skills. I don’t have a clear picture of the future, but if a big-city boy from Taiwan could survive in rural Alberta, I know God can use me anywhere. **ISI**

Golf and other worlds

THIS SUMMER WE SAW SOME CLEVER BUMPER STICKERS.

“Honk if parts fall off.” “I was an honor student. I don’t know what happened,” and “I Fish, Therefore I Lie.” Another one caught my eye: “If there’s no golf in heaven, then I’m not going!”

What comes to mind when you think of heaven?

I was golfing with a pastor one day, and the subject shifted to the next world. “So,” he asked somewhat reluctantly, “do you think there will be golf in heaven?” I was lining up a putt at the time, and the question did little to aid my concentration. After sinking my fourth putt, which is the easiest shot in golf, I told him about the angel who suddenly appeared to a man golfing at Pebble Beach.

“I can answer any question you want,” announced the angel. “Go ahead and ask.”

The man thought a moment. “Are there golf courses in heaven?”

The angel replied, “Do you want the good news or the bad news first?”

The man asked for the good news.

“The courses in heaven are so beautiful,” said the angel, “I can scarcely describe them. There is no cost to play, you have your choice of golf clubs. Beverages and electric carts are provided free of charge. All the balls miraculously float on water so you’ll never lose them, and all your shots go straight.”

The golfer smiled and asked, “What’s the bad news?”

“Well,” the angel said, “you’re scheduled to play in five minutes.”

The pastor laughed a little louder than I anticipated, then backed away from his ball and made an honest admission:



“You know, I don’t really want to go to heaven...all that worship...it seems boring to me.” For one of the few times in my life, I was speechless.

eternity in the human heart.” We have within us hopes, needs, and longings that the very best marriage, the best worship time, the best golf courses cannot completely

We earthlings cling to this life. We try desperately to preserve and prolong it.

We earthlings cling to this life. We try desperately to preserve and prolong it. We spend billions each year trying to look younger, trying to stall chronic baldness, trying to halt the inevitable onslaught of old age.

When I was 21, I hoped Jesus wouldn’t return until I was married. A few times after marriage I prayed he would. When my daughter was twelve she said, “If our dog isn’t going to heaven, I don’t want to either.”

I’m saving some questions for heaven, too.

But think about it. Would we really choose a place that reeks of suffering and death, bankruptcies and divorce, school shootings and brutality—over the paradise God is preparing?

If so, the devil has done well at blinding us to the realities of heaven.

The apostle Paul said that to depart and be with Christ was “far better” than staying on earth (Philippians 1:23). Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us that God “has planted

fulfill. C.S. Lewis wrote, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

I wonder how God feels when he sees us hanging on so tightly to this world, dreading the home he has been creating. It’s a little like trying to explain the pleasures of driving a Ferrari to a two-year-old who would rather play with a cardboard box.

Life in this world is really just the preparation for the life to come.

Is there golf in heaven? I do not know. I hope so. And I hope there’s hockey, too. (I’ll have my teeth back!) I hope there’s chocolate and dogs like our Mojo and colors we haven’t seen yet. But this I know. These things won’t matter when we arrive. You see, the one who loves us most and knows our every longing will be there.

Life with him will be out of this world. ✎

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Sandra is an experienced educator and administrative instructional technology expert with over 20 years experience teaching in classrooms around the world and has served administrative teams in strategic implementation of technology and instructional design.

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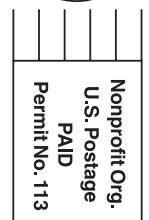
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