JOURNEY TO GOD'S HEART

TRUST IS BUILT, EYES ARE OPENED,
AND LIFE BECOMES A . . .

JOURNEY TO GOD'S HEART

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ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-628-7 Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2011961014 To the two most important men in my life: Jesus, my Savior and the lover of my soul, and

Jim, my loving husband and fellow traveler on this journey, without whom this never could have been written.



CONTENTS

A Note to the Reader	ix
Prologue: Prepare Ye The Way	X111
1. Christian, Love Me More Than These	1
2. Walking On Water	13
3. Moment By Moment	25
4. Bicycles, Buckets Of Plums, Angels With Ironing	Boards,
and Sonic Booms	39
5. Whale Spouts and Shooting Stars	55
6. Music In Our Hearts	67
7. As The Steeple Turns	79
8. In The Diamond Mine	95
9. Green Pastures	107
10. "Anywhere" Is Twelve Miles	125
11. Missions and Miracles	141
12 Healing Hearts	161

13. Flunking Retirement	179
14. Turning The Tapestry	193
15. Straight To The Heart Of God	205
Afterword	211
Endnotes	213



A NOTE TO THE READER

I love to tell the story, 'Twill be my theme in glory, To tell the old, old story Of Jesus and His love.

> —A. Catherine Hankey, "I Love to Tell the Story"

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.

—Deuteronomy 32:7

IT IS BEYOND doubt that I really do love to tell our story. And I always have had a propensity for asking the questions that others always wanted to ask but were hesitant, like "Where do you go when you follow Jesus?" This little epistle is the answer that unfolded as our family followed Jesus, and that journey is the story I love so much to tell.

I guess my greatest fear is that, when I enter the mansion which Jesus has prepared for me, this story will be forgotten. Like

the apostle John, I suppose the world would not have room for all the books that could be written about all the things Jesus did. Nevertheless, I am adding to the great number which already exists, so our particular "days of old" might be remembered.

At a time when we were putting our children through college and paying for two weddings, my husband and I were asked by an investment salesman what our assets were. We had two used cars and no savings. I remember walking over to the china cabinet, where the pictures of our five children rested, and handing him their pictures. "These are our assets," I said.

He left shortly thereafter.

Since that time, I have come to realize that we have accrued another wonderful asset that our children will inherit, along with whatever amount of earthly goods we will leave. It is our story of where Jesus has taken us and how he managed to do it despite our misgivings, lack of faith at times, and serious doubts that we would always be able to follow.

So while I share this journey with all my readers, wherever you might be and whoever you are, this book is written especially with our children in mind. So now I address them, and the rest of you are invited to listen.



Dear Kathy, Bill, Sue, Nancy, and Dave,

This book is meant to be part of your inheritance, to be passed on to future generations. The other part of your inheritance is taken care of in our wills and most likely will vanish in a short time. This, however, is the part that will endure forever, for there is no undoing what is beyond explanation. Although it begs to be challenged, we have experienced it together and can say that it is truly so.

You'll recall that hymns have been a constant inspiration to Dad and me, so it shouldn't surprise you that every chapter begins with a portion of a hymn. You will also remember that Dad has been not only a Presbyterian pastor, but also a registered professional engineer. He long ago stopped trying to calculate the probabilities

for circumstance when it came to how Jesus answered our prayers and provided at every turn of the road.

These experiences have left us with an unshakeable faith in God's care and provision. Our faith cannot be yours; neither can it be inherited. It can, however, be remembered and leaned upon so that the present seems not as scary and the future more sure.

No doubt there will be times in your lives when you wonder where God is, if he is even listening, or why things are happening that you cannot explain or do not want to happen. With the way situations are developing in the world today, there may even arise a time when the very core of your faith is challenged. In times like those, it will be good to consider what happened as we walked, questioned, struggled, and loved together. The care, the provision, the amazing obstacles that were overturned, and the fun and laughs we shared make up the wonderful story of how Jesus led our family straight to the heart of God—which is, after all, where you end up when you follow Jesus.

So, dear ones, enjoy reliving the good times we had together, the journey we were all part of, and the amazing love our Savior has for each of you. It is your inheritance for your children and their children, and it is for you to tell to anyone else who will listen.

All my love,





PROLOGUE PREPARE YE THE WAY

How blessed are the children
Who in their parents see
The tender Father love of God,
And find their way to Thee.

—Lois S. Johnson

Hold onto instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.

—Proverbs 4:13

I CERTAINLY WAS no accident that Jim and I landed where we did. God must have put a lot of forethought into how he laid his firm foundation, for there were a multitude of stones that were involved. The most noticeable were our parents.

Having a godly home is of no small consequence. Our home and family dinner table often were the site for entertaining visitors. In an era when discussing religion or politics with friends and acquaintances was viewed as just plain rude, it would seem that piece of etiquette left mighty little room for God to work. Yet the Christian instruction my siblings and I received practically leapt at

us. The everyday example before us seeped into the very marrow of our souls and flowed through our beings.

My mother and father had come through the Depression. They had started married life and opened Dad's dental office when people were paying dental bills with smiles that had just been corrected, rather than with money. Just as they were beginning to "make it," Mom had a series of three miscarriages and Dad's loans, for dental school and his office equipment, began to come due.



Three children later, while they were still behind the eight ball financially, Mom was told she would have to abort the baby she was then carrying, because her life was in grave danger if she carried to full term. Of course, there was no health insurance in those days. Doctors and hospitals balked at getting paid in smiles, and Dad and Mom had to make a hard decision: leave three children motherless and incur outlandish medical bills, or abort the baby.

I was only eight years old at the time, but I remember being taken to see the operetta, *The Student Prince*. Dad thought it would get Mom's mind off the next day's dreaded abortion—to which they had reluctantly agreed, under great medical persuasion.

Mom had been left without a mother at the age of six, and she dreaded the possibility of us going through life without the love and wisdom that a mother can provide. She knew how lonely and lacking her own life had been. There was not much choice in light of what the doctors had predicted, but oh!—how she hated the whole prospect, which went against her deep love for children and everything she and Dad believed.

The musical production absolutely transported me to another world. Even so, I couldn't help wondering why my mother was weeping through what should have been, to my eight-year-old thinking, the premier event in life.

The next day arrived, and off Mom went to the hospital, not sure she would ever return to her family. She simply left the outcome in the Lord's hands, and she surrendered herself and the unborn baby into his capable care. What actually transpired could have been conceived only by God. Just as surgery was to begin, Mom, who had been in no danger of heart problems, had a heart attack on the operating room table! Surgery was cancelled immediately, and Mom was sent home to recover and face her demise when the baby would be born. She was overwhelmingly thankful for the way God had taken things into his own hands.

However, there were dark days ahead, so she spent those remaining months preparing us to face a motherless future. There was no extended family to care for us, and Dad would have to spend his days and evenings in the office. It seems strange to reflect upon now, but in those days dentists had both day and evening hours, and their work week was six days.

Every night, Mom sang to us while she rocked my little brother, Allen, to sleep. Trying to prepare us for life without her, she would remind us that we would always have each other and that Jesus would always be with us. Of course, I didn't take it too seriously. After all, life without a mother didn't compute.

What *did* compute were the words of the songs I heard over and over: "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, / And He tells me I am His own" and "Let the lower lights be burning! / Send a gleam across the wave! / Some poor fainting, struggling seaman / You may rescue, you may save." I didn't question their meaning. After all, if my mother said so, and kept repeating it night after night in her soft mezzo soprano voice, who was I to question? Jesus could and would walk and talk with me. I trusted that, and it was settled. I talked with Jesus and he talked right back. (So much for the idea that one has to pray "the sinner's prayer" to come to Jesus!)

In my candid conversations with Jesus, when I'd been put to bed and the lights were out, he somehow reminded me of my many misdemeanors and prevarications. With a smile I never saw but knew was there, he would accept my "sorry" and forgive me yet again, and I'd start the next day with a clean slate and no lingering shame.

As for hearing about the poor fainting and struggling ones who needed saving, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see the influence on my elder sister and me and the resulting interests we share today. Carol was a founder of the Northwest Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network, an outreach to the homeless, and I have shared my husband's ministry and work for foreign missions for the last thirty-five years. Jim and I now serve on the staff of World Mission Initiative, helping churches all over the USA to vitalize their mission programs, using what we learned by leading mission teams to fourteen countries around the world (but that comes later).

Mom survived, and I have a very wonderful brother, Bob, who would not have been born but for the grace of God through a heart attack at the right time.



With four children and debts they still had not been able to pay off, but with their faith in God, Mom and Dad went marching into the future. We had the delightful experience of never knowing we were not wealthy, for somehow we never wanted for the basics, and life was always an exciting adventure.

When we outgrew our house, moving to a new home meant a hefty mortgage and setting up a new office and patient base. Mom dubbed the new edifice "Mortgage Mansion," and the hours we spent painting and repairing would teach us that hard work was a part of doing what both Mom and the Lord required.

Of course, as we hung out the windows, painting and calling back and forth to one another, we furnished unexpected free entertainment for our rather starched neighbors. But truly we learned the value of a merry heart, for even in those teenage years we could see the humor in our antics and learned early to laugh at ourselves—another way of seeing the value in God's instruction to not think too highly of ourselves.

Dad, in his quiet, steady way, was another foundation stone on which we were being built. We were rather young when we realized that there was more to life than what one can accumulate. It was Dad's policy not to raise his fees when he knew times were lean for his patients; neither would he push for payment from people who could not afford dental care. This, it seemed, was just another opportunity to trust the Lord and a challenge for how to meet our own pressing needs. More than once, as he entered his office on the side of our home, it was with a prayer that the patients would be able to pay this time.

Surprisingly, I don't remember a single time that patients' payments did not meet our needs. There were never lectures about cause and effect, just the picture of faith and prayer at work. Integrity, faithfulness, and compassion seemed to have something to do with fatherhood, both Dad's and the Father whom he obviously served.

Mom, who had returned to teaching to help with the needs of a growing family and future college educations, had the curious habit of every once in a while bringing home for dinner a needy person she had met. We were never quite sure who the extra person was at our table and quickly learned not to ask, but just to adjust the portions so there was enough for all. Oh, we watched Mom's concern when the bills stacked up, even when she once pawned her engagement ring, but somehow that never translated into worry. By the end of her life, we better understood her and a little more about walking with her Savior.

Her bout with breast cancer was Mom's final legacy to us, for both her girls have faced the same challenge. Three weeks before she died, she smilingly told me, "Oh, don't worry about me. I really can't wait to get rid of this body." Then she added, "And don't you girls dare wear black to my funeral!" When we saw each other at the funeral, Carol and I both laughed. We were both wearing white! The foundation had been laid: we knew whom to trust, to whom we all belonged, and where we were all going.



God quarries his foundation blocks in different places and brings them together in quite unorthodox ways. Jim and I met in first grade. He was not exactly enamored about a girl a head taller than he was and even less so when her father became his family's dentist. Not only were those strikes against any future together, but I could easily level him, and he knew it.

The feeling of distaste was quite mutual, because the academic competition between us was fierce. However, our mothers became friends, and that resulted in my being invited to all of Jim's birthday parties. Imagine having to give presents to someone whose every party resulted in coming away with the fear that your behavior would be the topic of conversation between your mother and his—and the consequences!

Yet the eyes of God see far into the future. After fifth grade, my family moved away to our "Mortgage Mansion," and Jim and I would not see each other until my senior year in college—except once, when his mother dragged him along on a visit, and my hasty retreat upstairs saved me from having to be sociable toward him.

What my eyes did not see was the training that was going on in the Caldwell household. As in my home, there was not overt teaching, but always an example being set. Attendance at church and giving for the work of the kingdom of God were not options, swearing was frowned upon, and dishonest and unkind behaviors were not tolerated. Money was appreciated as a means of support rather than something to be used for luxuries, and drinking anything alcoholic was out of the question, as in our home.

Dad Caldwell was a model gentleman and taught his sons the value of manners, patience, faithfulness, and dependability. His was a graphic illustration of how a father provides for those in his care, a lesson not difficult to translate into understanding how our heavenly Father meets our every need.

Mother Caldwell had overcome the hardships of being sent away from her mother at six years old. Her father had died before she was born, leaving an immigrant mother alone in a strange country with a young child needing to be cared for and supported. Mother Caldwell had longed for a higher education, and she saw to it that her two sons would not only go to college but excel. Both graduated as engineers, one going on to his master's degree in that field and the other eventually to seminary.

Education, however, was not the only priority. Attendance at Sunday school began for the boys at age three, and it was she who took thirteen-year-old Jim off to revival meetings and encouraged him to go forward and give his life to the Lord. While all of this was being carefully orchestrated by the Lord, there were the usual tiffs and struggles that can result when two boys of different temperaments grow up in a household together, yet the moral character of the Caldwell boys was being molded and shaped for use in God's kingdom.

When Jim and I reconnected ten years later, at a Drexel University dance, it was no wonder we stood gaping at each other. Jim was now six feet tall and a handsome knight—or so he appeared to a short, petite girl who was sure that Miracle-Gro had been included in his diet. Jim was equally nonplussed, wondering what had happened to the Amazon with long red curls. God must have had a good chuckle!



With the bottom tier of the foundation in place, there were layers of education and church that followed. Both of us attended public school and heard Bible reading and prayer every morning during the opening exercises that began every school day. While great spiritual insights did not occur because of this, I am repeatedly amazed at how, while wishing to "get it over with," much was absorbed. At least that atmosphere was a comfortable and reliably sure place to grow. Twelve years of hearing a psalm or other Old Testament reading every morning of your school career surely gives some direction for behavior and morality, a resting place of comfort, and some familiarization with what God might require of your life.

It was in Beaver College, a Presbyterian college where Bible courses and chapel attendance were required in those years, that I came head-on with questions that would set me looking for something more. The Lord had created me with an insatiable curiosity and courage to ask questions. Ask I did; unfortunately,

I didn't get answers. Maybe it was a case of "he who has ears, let him hear" (Matt. 13:43), but I think not, for I distinctly remember being told that my faith was too simplistic.

Fortunately, the library and I were good friends, and we were about to become better acquainted. I began to read the Christian classics, including *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. The more I read, the simpler it appeared to me: believe and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and God will direct your paths. That fact actually had been settled long before, but there was one question which still bothered me: if I were faced with the choice between torture—or even death—and acknowledging my Savior, as were the people I was reading about, how long would it be before I betrayed him?

There would be more to the search before everything fell into place.



After graduation, and then a year of teaching while Jim finished his five-year engineering course, the knight and the petite redhead were married. The knight looked even more handsome in his uniform, and the Army's claim on Jim took us to Germany.

Four thousand miles from home, before e-mail, the nine-dollar-per-minute rate for an overseas phone call rather restricted the influences of family and the warm connections that had been so familiar. We grew to depend on each other in an atmosphere that did not exactly endorse the moral code we both had inherited and now firmly believed in. God's shaping for the way we would walk later was starting to be apparent. We would see divorce and decide it was not in our vocabulary. Integrity and honesty were non-negotiable and unfaithfulness not acceptable. Being true to what we had been taught made us very aware that our parents' examples had taken root.

Discouraged with what I was seeing as "church," I announced that perhaps God and I would continue our relationship without my leading the chapel choir and my attendance at services. The chapel had once been the war room of a German SS regiment, and walking down the aisle over the large inlaid tile swastikas did not exactly help my sagging attitude.

Enter the knight in his Army uniform, backed up by his strong sense of discipline and obedience to what God requires. Jim insisted that we continue to go to church. Maybe it was not the ultimate example of submitting to one's husband, but I shudder to think about where our relationship with God would be today if we had not walked together.

This difference of opinion opened up lively and sometimes heated discussions between us, often extending into the wee hours of the morning. Jim insisted that only obedience mattered. I thought he was too rooted in Old Testament law, insisting that one's obedience grew as a result of love. He thought I had spent too much time reading the gospel of John. It would be awhile before we could put it all together.



The Berlin Wall went up, we marveled that something did not set off a nuclear disaster, and our three-year tour in Germany was extended for six additional months. It was our first time to face the serious possibility that there might be a time when Jim would be in danger, and I might have to leave all of our possessions and flee. Those thoughts did not sit at all comfortably with me. Not seeing into the future, it never occurred to me that this was preparation for future mission work—where *things* would take a back seat to sharing the gospel, and going would be where the Lord led.

Kathy, our eldest, put in her appearance, which ended my teaching career at the American Military School in Nürnberg. Now responsible for someone other than ourselves, we became aware that we really did not want a life of danger, separation, and sending children off to boarding school in a foreign country. It seemed that our feet were being directed to follow a different fork in the road.

Jim resigned his Regular Army commission and resumed his engineering career, although both of us regretted leaving a career that had given such a sense of purpose and high calling, as well as the tight and supportive community life to which we had become accustomed. In future years, it was the latter we would hunger for in the Christian community, but very rarely have we found it to the extent we experienced it in military life.

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As four more children were added to the family, life took on a certain predictability. Church life ballooned into leading the children's choir, writing a new Sunday school program, and Jim taking on Sunday school superintendent and deacon responsibilities. Although we heard the Word clearly preached at the Presbyterian church we attended, there was always a feeling that something was missing, some spark of life that we could not find.

Our friends were less than receptive to hearing anything that would have caused them to ponder thoughts about God being the maker of the universe, let alone the master of their lives. Being the more detailed, factual person, Jim decided to use archeology to prove the truth of the Bible to them, and in the process discovered that he was trying to prove it to himself! Providentially, no sooner did he find something convincing, than something else would be published that was counter to it. It was a good lesson in the need to believe, without man-made proof, in the God who transcends logic.

Jim settled the issue for himself; the only means for believing the veracity of God's Word, he decided, was simply to just believe! So, in his straightforward way, he made the choice to believe, then and forever. And that was that; no ifs, buts, or struggling with questions. It was a matter of faith—choosing to be sure of what he hoped for and certain of what he could not see.

No wonder, when someone asked the question, "What are you doing with your Christianity?" that we began to wonder exactly what we were doing with our Christianity. Our uneasiness increased as we followed our pastor's suggestion that the congregation not fast for Lent, but instead feast on the Word of God by reading through the entire New Testament in those forty days. Being tired

after chasing five little children around all day, and Jim being sleepy after hours of design and desk work, we hit on a plan to read through the New Testament together: he would wash the dishes after the children were in bed, while I sat on a stool in the kitchen and read it aloud.

When we reached the early chapters of Acts, one of us observed, "If *that* is living the Christian faith, then we are hardly scratching the surface—sort of like skating and hardly making a mark on the ice." This did nothing for relieving our discomfort level. It seemed that we were bumping into the same challenge wherever we turned!



To help the coffers, I had started to tutor. One day, when my student had to stay past his hour, his mother waited in the car in front of our house. I went to ask her if it would be all right to take a few more minutes to finish and, just as I reached her, a cloudburst sent me scurrying out of the rain into the shelter of her car. Just as I started to apologize for intruding, this woman—whom I hardly knew—threw down the book she had been reading onto the seat next to me, exclaiming, "I am *sick* of my Christian life!"

Now that is enough to startle anyone so, rain or not, I carefully edged toward the door, but not without glancing at the cover of the book that had produced such an outburst. The title seemed harmless enough, so without much delay, I bought a copy of the book and began to read of the recent revival in East Timor. I didn't immediately see the connection between what I was reading and the questions we were asking, but God knew the effect it would have in our lives. If God actually was doing the outlandish things I was reading about, even if they were happening halfway around the world, then perhaps there really was something we were missing. I began a serious search.



Some of the greatest events in life receive the least or worst reactions, and my search was about to be met by both. I went back to the library and began reading all of the church fathers' writings I could get my hands on. I read until my eyes crossed—and acquired quite a theological education. *Jonathan Edward's Collected Writings* still stands out as one of the driest tomes I have ever read, but along with Luther's, Augustine's, St. John of the Cross's, and a myriad of others' writings, something was beginning to emerge.

To make things more complicated, this was in the early 1970s, during the charismatic revival! I also was reading about present-day healings and about speaking in tongues and then finding references to such happenings in early church history. The result was profound: I was greatly confused! The pastor was no help, for he firmly believed that these out-of-the-ordinary things were not of God. That, I later realized, is exactly where God does his most amazing works—in out-of-the-ordinary places, in out-of-the-ordinary ways, with ordinary people.

I decided to get unconfused. I had read enough of man's works, so I decided to go back to reading what God had said. As I sat in bed one evening, with a concordance and my Bible, looking for I-didn't-know-what, I realized that I had put my trust in Scripture to supply the answers. Heartbroken at seeming to be no nearer to finding what I was seeking, I put down the Bible. As I did, it fell open, and through tears I read, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4, KJV). With utter despair, I turned out the light and pleaded, "Then show me the truth!"

I cannot promise that anyone else will receive the answer I did, but God was waiting for me to ask at just that moment, in just that way, in just the state I was in. I had asked him to show me the truth, and he showed me himself! I saw Jesus, the living Lord! He actually appeared in the room, surrounded by light, and stood at the foot of my bed. Confusion fled out the window and awesome wonder replaced it.

On his command, after he disappeared, I cautiously woke Jim—expecting that if I related what had just happened, my husband would think me addled, if not downright deranged. I should have known that what God begins, he finishes with flourish.

Jim listened to my tale, believing every word as unquestionably true. (But then, this was the man who took things at face value and didn't question the Lord.) Now there was one more thing to discern: what did this mean for us, and why had it happened? The years ahead would answer those questions. God was uniquely preparing the way.

Very carefully, Jesus had created a sure path on which we could begin our journey to places we could never imagine—and ultimately to the destination God desires for all his children: his heart.

CHAPTER 1

CHRISTIAN, LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE

Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild, restless sea,
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, "Christian, follow me."
—Cecil F. Alexander

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

-Jeremiah 29:11

I had known where we were going. We had five others to think about, rather than just ourselves, and wherever we were headed, we were committed to going there as a family. I was fast acquiring a deep appreciation for Sarah packing her household belongings to go who-knows-where, to do who-knows-what, for who-knows-how-long! But at least she had known she was on the move. We didn't even know we actually had started.

We were seven in number and we were taking on the likeness of a parade. However, Jesus was well aware of that and, as master of ceremonies, was lining us up for the marching order. Now, if there is to be a parade, everyone involved needs to be in agreement and going in the same direction. Jesus had been working quietly behind the scenes so that we would all be of one accord, as we struck out on what would be a more amazing journey than any of us could have imagined.



All five children had come to know the Lord and had asked Jesus into their hearts. Bill, at seven years old, had prayed with me after settling some knotty questions. The year before, just as I had put him to bed one evening, he announced that he had finally figured out what sin was all about. I paused at the door, wondering what I was about to hear. Bill hurried to explain, before another "Go to sleep" could come his way. "It's just like you fell into a big black hole and you're hanging on to the edge. There's a big, ferocious lion at the bottom waiting to eat you up if you fall in" (this latter being said with accompanying growling and baring of teeth). "And just when you get tired and start to slip, there's a big hand that comes down and lifts you out. Isn't that right, Mommy?"

His explanation might never grace the pages of theological books, but it certainly captured the idea with amazing clarity. I wished that some other explanations I had heard were as insightful. Bill had settled the issue of sin and salvation, and it was not long until he reached for the Hand that would lift him up and carry him through life.

Now on a mission, Bill became our in-house evangelist. Shortly thereafter, Sue came to know her Healer. Nancy, who listened to Sue and Bill talk about the Lord and light up like light bulbs when they did, also decided that having the Lord in her life was a good idea. Being only fifteen months younger than Sue, Nancy thought anything Sue did was a good idea. But it was no wonder that accepting the Lord was appealing; when Sue was asked how she knew Jesus was in her heart, she smiled, her eyes danced, and

in awed tones she answered, "Oh, Mommy, the glory!" That's a pretty good recommendation for anyone!

While Bill enjoyed his status as the only male surrounded by all of his sisters, and willingly was the "daddy" when they played house and had their tea parties, he truly wanted a brother. After the arrival of his third sister, Bill had started to pray for a brother and, out of compassion, Jim and I soon found ourselves asking the Lord, just as fervently, that Bill would have his desire. When we announced that another child was on the way, he began praying with such determination and persistence that Jim and I began to wonder what would happen to his fledgling faith if another girl were to be added to our family!

As we approached the baby's birth, with some trepidation I asked Bill what would happen if the baby turned out to be another sister. Bill just smiled and said, "Oh, that's OK, Mom. I'll just pray for another one to be a boy." Jim and I doubled our prayers—after all, five children would be more than enough! So it was that Dave entered the world. Bill was delighted, and we had learned a lesson in persistent faith, much like Jesus' parable of the woman who unfailingly kept petitioning the judge (Luke 18:1–8).

As soon as he perceived that Dave was old enough to understand the need for Jesus to be in one's life, Bill went right to work. In his eyes, age three was plenty old enough. It was not long until he had a big-brother talk with Dave about the Lord.

I never would have known what had transpired except I asked Dave one day, as mommies occasionally do, who loved him best of all. His immediate reply was "Jesus does!" After a few pangs of jealousy and readjusting my ego, I inquired how he knew that to be true. "Bill prayed with me in my crib," he answered matter-of-factly, as if making such momentous decisions was just part of the landscape. But then, maybe it is that simple when one comes as a little child. In fact, life really would be a lot less complicated if we all approached it with such trust and certainty. Surely, inauspicious beginnings don't seem to detract, for Dave's faith grew steadily from that acorn beginning to the oak-solid faith that sustains him today.

Kathy remained the only one outside the fold. As the eldest, she was not about to have her kid brother tell her what to do. After all, directing her siblings was the role of the big sister. She was listening, however, when we tuned into a TV broadcast of a Billy Graham Crusade some months later. As he always does, Reverend Graham left no doubt of the need for a Savior and of what happens to those who choose to reject him. Kathy, somewhat frightened at the proposition of spending a Christless eternity, asked us to pray with her as she asked Jesus to be her Savior and Lord. Right then, as we prayed together on the sofa, Kathy's future was secured.

While Kathy has always taken her relationship with the Lord very seriously, she also sees the fun in things. When asked to give her testimony, she has often confounded sober souls by declaring that, at the age of eleven, she had the hell scared out of her!

We were all marching in the same direction now. The parade could begin, although there was not much fanfare or accompanying music playing, unless the rejoicing in heaven counted. The Parade Master was out in front. Our task was to keep up with him—and that would be no small adventure!



Jim's career had embraced being the executive officer of a US Army armored engineer company in Germany, which entailed working with defense obstacle plans for protecting the border. After leaving the military, he had been responsible for high pressure equipment production. Both jobs had required the awareness that big things matter.

By now, though, Jim was designing punched card machines for computers, and the minutia of it all was getting to him. He was becoming more and more dissatisfied with his everyday existence, and his dissatisfaction was fast becoming mine. Curiously, there was no real reason for such discomfort. Jim's salary was sufficient to meet all of our needs, his commute was minimal, he was considered one of the top engineers in the company, and he was

highly respected by all those who worked with him. But there he was, one unhappy man.

In frustration one evening, I asked Jim what he really desired to do, only to be told that he wanted to do whatever God directed. We were getting nowhere, so I blurted out, "Well, if God weren't in it, what would you want to do?" The further the conversation went, the more comical it became. Jim responded, "I'd really like to be a minister and do something that would affect people's lives, but you don't do that unless God calls you." I had to admit that he had me stumped there, for no sane person would venture down that path without God being in it!

To settle the issue once and for all, Jim decided to call a friend who had graduated with him from college, served in the Army, gone on to seminary and the ministry, had soon left the pastorate, and was again employed doing engineering. When Jim asked him how he had discerned God's call, our friend replied that it really was just a matter of making up your mind and pursuing what you wanted to do. Jim put down the phone and pronounced with finality, "That settles it. You don't go into the ministry unless you have a definite call. He wasn't called, and that's the reason he's no longer in the ministry. God's call is a must."

Jim wouldn't be leaving the engineering field anytime soon.



We had been urged by several friends to visit a large Presbyterian church nearby to hear the dynamic interim pastor there. As their requests became more frequent, we decided to pacify them one Sunday. We packed the troops into the car and took off to see what was so exciting. Frankly, we were sure there would not be much to stir our souls there, as this was *the* church in our area where the doctors, lawyers, and bankers attended and, in our thinking, God most likely did not.

Our family entered with the stir that accompanies trying to find seats for seven people together. As usual, we wound up sitting near the front of the church because we required an entire pew, and those were always available close to the chancel. We settled in and waited, somewhat skeptically, to see what God had in store.

It wasn't long until we realized that something very unexpected was happening. Somehow, the entire atmosphere had changed. Souls were being stirred, not the least of which were our own. The pastor finished his sermon, the last hymn was sung, and the benediction was given:

Send us anywhere, O God, only go with us. Lay any burden upon us, only sustain us. Deprive us of anything, save thy Son, Jesus Christ.

It was an unusual benediction, and Jim was deep in prayer as it was spoken. I know because I peeked over at him, just at the moment I knew with absolute certainty that he would be entering the ministry. Of course he would be praying, if he had any inkling of what I had been made aware of! I wondered about his reticence to leave, for all five children were on a collision course with him as they made their hasty exit from the pew. Jim seemed strangely quiet and contemplative as we drove home.

At Sunday dinner, it was our custom to discuss the sermon we had just heard. Sometimes Jim would observe, "If I were a pastor, I would have said it like this ..." On this particular day, it was not lost on me that Jim's remark was, "When I'm a pastor, I would say it like ..." There was no guesswork involved about the subject to be discussed after dinner, when Jim asked to speak with me about something important.

God had heard the yearning of Jim's heart and, as any good father, delighted in giving his child that desire. Jim had been called.

It is one thing to receive a call on Sunday and quite another to wake up on Monday wondering—how would we support a family of seven, where would the money for tuition come from, how would our children respond to such a change of direction in their lives, and had we even heard correctly? God had been wonderfully good about letting us both know at the same moment, and considering that we had been a pew length apart, separated

by our five children, we figured that we both could not have been mistaken. It was truly staggering in scope. Talk about shock and awe!

6

A few miles from our home was the USA headquarters of WEC International, a mission organization that had 1,900 missionaries in countries all over the world. We had discovered the agency several months prior and had made friends with many missionaries on the home staff. We often availed ourselves of the monthly meetings and dinners that they held and, during one such evening a few weeks later, those in attendance were asked to share what God was doing in their lives. Jim rather cautiously shared his new call and, much to our amazement, those who knew us well responded that they had been aware for some time that we would be in full-time Christian service. They had been waiting for us to hear the Lord's call.

About the same time, while talking with a retired pastor whom we knew, I was interrupted by a question which seemed born out of frustration and impatience: "Lois, when are you and Jim going to serve the Lord full time?" It seemed as though everyone except us was aware of what God had planned for our lives. It was comforting, however, to know that our call had been perceived by so many others. That reinforcement would be even more valuable to us in the days to come, as we shared with those who meant most to us.

My mother, who had died some years before, would not have posed any opposition. In fact, we were sure that she was in the heavenly cheering squad and would have been one of our staunchest supporters. Dad, in his classic understated way, smiled, nodded his approval, and simply asked how we were going to manage the whole scenario.

It was the reaction of Mother and Dad Caldwell which surprised us. Quite disturbed at thinking we would not be able to support our family and Jim's engineering degree would be wasted, they asked for a special meeting with us. It was difficult to be regarded as deranged, irresponsible, and even arrogant in our determination to do what God had confirmed through so many others. We realized that there would be no support from that quarter. Eventually they did accept the fact that we were going to proceed, with or without their blessing, but there always remained skepticism that we would succeed.

We could somewhat understand their concerns, however, for we had some of the same doubts. Had it just been Jim and me, we might have made it "somehow." We never expected manna to fall from heaven, but we had no idea how this whole project was going to play out. For Jim to quit his job and enroll in seminary was more than even we could envision. God had gotten us into this and, as far as we could see, he was going to have a big job completing the task.

Still smarting, we went off to visit with our pastor. We were sure that he would understand, for we knew that one of his greatest desires was to see some in his flock seek seminary training for the pastorate. However, his idea of those qualified for such service was not those in their late thirties with five children, a mortgage, no savings account, and equipped with little else except a great deal of zeal and determination to go where they were being led. His response to our announcement was enough to pour water on any attempt. "Who do you think you are?" he asked. His wife followed with the observation, "You're not missionaries who someone will support. No one is going to hand you money." No one had to tell us that, for we knew no one who was even remotely a candidate for that role!

Looking back, it was quite clear that God had taken away all our supports, for he wanted us to be completely dependent on him. He would supply it all and would furnish the material for the pages of this tale himself. But at that point those pages were in the future, and it soon became crystal-clear that we were going to have to make choices that would entail leaving a great deal to follow him. I suspect that Jim read and reread the stories of Jesus asking the rich young ruler to go and sell all and the disciples having to choose between being obedient or remaining in their

professions. Those stories in Scripture were certainly my constant reading material at the time.

The question was clear: would we love him more than people's approval, our security, the things we had acquired, and a safe existence for our family? It seemed that lessons in surrender were being met at every turn.



Collectibles were never high on our list of priorities, and we certainly never intended to have a collection. However, in our time overseas we had acquired a number of darling Hummel figurines. They had been inexpensive then, and I cherished them as memories of where we had been and delighted that I owned such nice and now valuable things. There were the five cute little orchestra men and one of a teacher with her little pupil, but my favorite was a triple figurine of a girl and her little brother, peering into a cradle at a newborn baby.

We had acquired the many utilitarian possessions that were necessary to support the rearing of five children, but my Hummels were some of the little niceties that took me into a special world of fancy and elegant things. They were carefully guarded and, of course, they were protected by house rules: no one was to touch them or lay anything next to them, and certainly no balls were to ever come into their presence—which was all well and good in theory, but not so adhered to in practice.

Jim's arms were full of a stack of hymnals as he entered the house one evening and, being in a hurry, he stacked them on the record player next to the orchestra people. The hymn book slide that followed was most remarkable. Jim, not one to be sloppy, had stacked the books with precision, tall and straight. I turned around just in time to see them tilt and fall, as if an invisible hand had carefully pushed them. The result was the shambles of three of the figurines and my equanimity.

Later, after a great deal of not-so-loving comment directed Jim's way, and some glue and skillful repair by him, the five little men sat playing their instruments again—but only for a short tour! It was only a few days later that the boys were testing the properties of a newly-purchased soft cloth ball. They determined that, being soft, it didn't qualify as a truly legitimate ball, and tossing was not technically throwing. So with one swift toss, the two tiny men who had been untouched met their demise. Oh my! Could a mother be more upset? Out came the glue bottle again. Jim patiently fixed the Hummels, but nothing much was piecing back together my disgruntled soul.

Didn't God care about my things? Were all my lovely possessions to be taken away from me?

Actually, I was asking those questions the next week, as I was dusting the much-valued triple Hummel. As the dust cloth caught on the braid of the little figurine in my hand, it started on the same disastrous downward path. Resignedly, I let go completely and exclaimed to the Lord, "You can have them *all*, if you want them." I watched as the precious piece hit the floor and simply rolled across it, unscathed. No, God was not taking away all my lovely possessions. He was merely waiting for me to give them all into his care and keeping. As I finished my dusting, I pondered what other things I was clinging to so fiercely.



God was truly gracious to teach me with something so insignificant as china figurines for, in looking over my list of treasures, many were more valuable: my children, my marriage, my wonderful husband, my reputation, health, and a host of other things. It was not a matter of the Lord not wanting me to have them, but rather, would I give them to him and acknowledge that they had all had their origin in him? I recalled verses near the end of the well-known poem, "The Hound of Heaven," where God said to Francis Thompson,

All which I took from thee, I did but take, Not for thy harms, But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms. This was a matter of loving him more than these, of loving him more than our reputations and whether we were thought irresponsible, foolhardy, or stubborn, of loving him even more than our possessions and acquiring wealth. Would we trust him for everything, even our family's security?

A little-known book, A Boy's War, tells of Hudson Taylor III being interned in a concentration camp in China during World War II.¹ He was just a little boy at Cheefoo School, where missionary children attended as boarding students, when most of the country was overrun by the Japanese. His parents were in another part of China, and the book recounts the agony of his mother not knowing what would befall her son. Being totally incapable of doing anything, every day she released her son to the Lord with the faith that "if you take care of the things that are dear to God, He will take care of the things dear to you." Four years later, young Hudson was released unharmed, having continued his education under the instruction of their teachers, who had been interred with the children. Among those teachers was Eric Liddell, the Olympic gold-medal runner whose story was so well told in the movie Chariots of Fire.

It all began to make sense. It is well said that there is no place in which rests more security than in the Lord's will. We had given God all that we knew how, so he was now able to give it back to us in his timing, having been touched by his redemptive hand. It was not long until the returns started pouring in—but not before we got our feet wet by getting out of the boat.