



STORIES OF REDEMPTION

BY STEVE JAYNE

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Throughout 2024, the feature articles are devoted to hearing stories of God's redemption within our Rosedale Network churches. We pray these stories fuel your love for the Lord and lead you to greater service in His Church.

~Kelsey Jurkovich, Publication & Literature Committee

Hearing the Message of God

Growing up in a small town in northeastern Ohio as a non-believer, I never understood what it was like to have God in my life. Sure, I had friends who were believers and they always invited me to join them in their youth group activities. While attending these events, I was exposed to learning about God in a non-church environment. This provided an insight for me as to who God was, though I never heard or grasped the meaning of having a personal relationship with Him.

As I grew up, I realized that going to college right out of high school was not for me. I decided early on that I would go into the US Navy as soon as I graduated to mature a little while saving the incentives offered to help pay for my college once I was finished.


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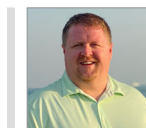
While in basic training, we had two options on Sundays: we were allowed to either attend the church services or stay in the barracks and clean. Knowing the church was air-conditioned, I figured that was all for me. Again, this was another example of hearing the message while never really *hearing the message*.

While deployed, I worked with and became good friends with an enthusiastic believer. As we were preparing to pull into Israel, I had a conversation with him about his excitement to be re-baptized in the Jordan River. He told me that whether you are a believer or not, God is always with you—you just need to accept Him. He encouraged me to take the trip to Jerusalem since we were there. This is when the seed was initially planted.

After leaving the Navy, I still did not have an understanding or desire to have a personal relationship with God. I knew a higher

power existed, but I was not ready to acknowledge it as God. I had met a wonderful woman whom I was convinced was the one for me. At one point in our relationship, we had a conversation about my faith, and she had mentioned her friend's husband was preaching on Sunday at Agape Community Fellowship and that we were going. I was amazed by the overwhelming feeling of acceptance from people that I had never met before. I remember the sermon still to this day; the message was from Matthew 13, the Parable of the Sower. While listening to the message, I felt like I actually *listened*, and that God was speaking to me directly about who I currently was, who I needed to become, and that He had been with me the whole time. What I initially believed as being in the wrong place at the wrong time, occurred when leaving church one Sunday—we were approached to help with VBS as group leaders. We agreed, and while volunteering and listening to everything that was presented that week, I decided that while the children in my group were acknowledging Jesus in their lives, I was going to as well.

Being a part of Agape and a member of a home group, and later being asked to lead one, has immensely helped me with my personal walk. Being surrounded by people who accept me for who I am, and whom I can count on to assist in my daily struggles, as well as being there to serve and help them when needed, has helped propel my spiritual growth. Throughout my journey, I always come back to Jeremiah 29:11: "For 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" (NIV). 



Steve is an IT Director and an elder at Agape Community Fellowship. Steve has been married to his best friend, Jennifer, since 2012 and they live in Delaware, Ohio, along with their dog, Chestnut.



A Short Theology of Art

BY HUNTER TICE

The idea of *created* beings *creating* things is something that has both perplexed and intrigued me over the past year. As I write this, I'm sitting in a coffee shop, sipping an americano while one of my favorite records plays in the background. While they all serve different purposes, the shop, the drink, and the record are all byproducts of the human tendency to create.

God created and values the human ability to create. Exodus 28 speaks to God's placement of skill and ability within the Israelites as they built the tabernacle. Of course, I'm not saying that God resides in the Louvre in the same way that He did the tabernacle, but I do believe that He's bestowed similar gifts in humans throughout all of time.

I find it quite beautiful that within His design for inerrant inspiration of scripture, He allows for the flavors of human individuality to peek through. We're able to see the stylistic differences of writers in various epistles, read the poetry of different writers, and even get different perspectives on the life of Jesus. To me, these differences create a sense of multi-noted wholeness, that holds a perfectly artistic nature. This idea hit home for me when I studied the Book of Revelation at Rosedale Bible College. The level of depth, inter-textual references, and beautiful imagery stirred my affection for God in a way that hadn't been before. There was a profound beauty in the poetic nature of the text that I hadn't previously understood.

We're all familiar with the command to serve God in all that we do (Col. 3:23) and that God has prepared works for us (Eph. 2:10). I believe that the arts are a part of these works and that God has used and will use them to draw people near Him. *The Chronicles of Narnia* series is an example of a Christian work that has pushed itself out into the secular mainstream, despite its well-known and clear Christian themes (any possible disagreements with atonement theory allegories aside). I'm sure that there's been a non-Christian reader who, through the stories of Aslan, has had their mind opened and heart softened to the belief of Christianity.

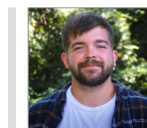
I don't believe that the arts are to be purely "evangelical" though. There's discourse around the purpose of art, but I would hold to a framework that simply views it as an expression of the human condition. That could be a praise to God, a lament of loss, a reflection of the past; almost anything that relates

to being human. I believe that an authentic approach to art allows humans to create art in a variety of mediums that serve as extensions of oneself. These extensions give us the space to examine the nooks and crannies of the human condition, and through those examinations, we can better understand ourselves and those around us.

There's a rhetorical nature to art, and that's why I believe that Jesus used parables throughout His ministry. Stories serve as examples and cause us to reflect on principles in our own lives. In the same way that I can be challenged through a conversation with a friend, I believe that I can be challenged through the themes of a book or a film. Referencing C.S. Lewis again, *The Screwtape Letters* was a book that helped me to see ways that "smaller" sins had slowly crept into my life, and I was able to bring these realizations to God in repentance.

Music is a staple of God's people, and throughout scripture, they are to use it in their praise of God (Rev. 14:3, 1 Chron. 16:6). Christians are the children of the Creator and have been given the gift to create. This takes many different forms but is rooted in the image that we are modeled after. May we create works that allow us to better serve each other, but most of all, serve our wonderful Father and Creator! 🙏

Artwork citation: *The Adoration of the Lamb, from the Apocalypse series* by Albrecht Dürer



Hunter lives in Columbus, Ohio, and works at Rosedale International. He is a 2021 alumnus of Rosedale Bible College and recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in marketing.



Need More Empathy?

BY JOYE MILLER

This year, RBC is running a series of articles in the Beacon examining books that might be especially helpful to the life of the Church. We hope you will benefit from these book descriptions and suggestions.

The Gift of Empathy: Helping Others Feel Valued, Cared For, and Understood by Joel P. Bretscher and Kenneth C. Haugk

Finding ways to respond more effectively to the hurts and losses of others has long been important to me. Recently, my home church, Plainview Mennonite Church, implemented the Stephen Ministry program. It is through this well-developed program of walking alongside people in difficult times that I came across *The Gift of Empathy*.

This practical book filled with stories and illustrations is written to spur on believers who desire to become more empathetic.

Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what others feel, to see things from their point of view, and to imagine oneself in their place. Empathy is different from sympathy. Sympathy is a feeling of sincere concern for someone who is experiencing something difficult or painful. Empathy goes beyond the feeling of concern and involves actively sharing in the emotional experience of the other person.

Practicing empathy for any reason allows us to reach into the souls of others.

The authors begin the book by breaking down the components of empathy and how each part works. Experiencing and expressing are the two sides of the coin of empathy. To be empathetic is to experience another's feelings. The goal is to put yourself into the other person's frame of reference as best as you can. It's working to understand what others are going through; it's allowing yourself to feel what others are feeling.

The second part of empathy is expression. Once you have experienced another person's feelings you then express your understanding of those feelings back to the person. This allows the person to know that you have connected with them and the situation they find themselves in. Despite our best efforts, it is impossible to understand another's situation fully. That's why I think it's best not to use the phrase, "I understand what you are going through," because we can't!


By combining experience and expression, we are more able to become truly empathetic to others.

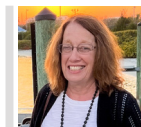
In their thorough and carefully compiled research, the authors share guidelines for showing empathy to children, parents, friends, and coworkers.

The benefits of empathy include deeper connections with others, improved effectiveness in teaching, guiding, and mentoring, as well as aid in resolving misunderstandings and finding healing for old wounds.

Empathy is also very beneficial in times of great joy and success. It becomes a beautiful and powerful connector. Indeed, the scriptures encourage us to "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Rom. 12:15a NIV)!

Practicing empathy for any reason allows us to reach into the souls of others. Empathy is a learned skill. All of us have room for improvement and will most likely grow as we implement the principles of this book.

The Gift of Empathy is an easy read and will be one I refer back to again and again. The thoroughness with which the subject matter is addressed and carefully laid out makes this a practical tool for the broader Church. 



Joye and her husband, Ellis, live on a farm near Hutchinson, Kansas. They have four grown children and 14 grandchildren. Joye and Ellis are members of Plainview Mennonite Church.



Stepping Out: Chloe and Nila

BY MADALYN

Chloe

She didn't know it at the time, but a short mission trip to Panama would land Chloe in East Africa within the year. "It's an interesting story," she explains. "It was a five-week trip to help the refugees coming in from Venezuela. We prepared food, prayed for them, and served with a local church."

During this trip, Chloe, a third-generation Mexican citizen, became close with a group from Pennsylvania. Soon after returning home, Chloe received a text from one of these friends. "[RI workers] Luke and Gloria came to her church to talk about [their work in East Africa], and mentioned that they were looking for a nanny. She knew that I desire to one day serve on the mission field, and asked if she could give them my contact information." From there, the dominoes fell. "After the trip in Panama, I had felt God tell me, *there's something I want you to do*. I felt at peace about going with them."

Now, Chloe is the first from her church to follow Jesus overseas. She will depart for the field this month, and plans to spend a year serving as a support system for Luke and Gloria. She will take on much of the care for the couple's young daughters, allowing them to direct more time and energy toward their team and ministry, language learning, and relationships with their neighbors.

Moving over nine thousand miles away from home to live among strangers is no small step, but Chloe says she doesn't feel like a brave adventurer—she's just answering God's call. "Stepping out of what I'm used to is nerve wracking and exciting at the same time. I'm excited to see what God will do—for whatever growth may come out of it."

Nila

Even as a young child, Nila felt the call to serve Jesus overseas. "I heard God say, *tell my people about me*," she remembers. "I said, 'okay God—but where?'"

Around her twelfth birthday, Nila began having dreams about South Asia, and friends began recommending books and movies set in the region. When she thought about where she might serve, "South Asia always came to mind. I never wanted to live in a city—but the longer this went on, the more I wanted

to go. It didn't make sense, so I knew it had to be from God. I began asking Him to open doors for me."

In the fall of 2022, Nila was offered the opportunity to move to South Asia for nine months. She taught English as a second language and served alongside a family of long-term workers, who demonstrated what long-term work in South Asia could look like. By the end of her nine months overseas, Nila knew that South Asia was truly where God had called her. "I very quickly fell in love with the culture and the people of my community."

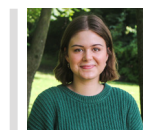
In May of 2023, Nila returned to the United States—but her heart remained with the people of South Asia. Within the year, she began exploring what it would look like to return. She recently committed to a three-year term with Rosedale International (RI) and is preparing to serve the people she grew to love, with a tentative departure date set for this fall.

During her first term, Nila will resume her work as an ESL teacher. She will dedicate herself to further learning the local language and investing in a new church plant. She hopes to build intentional relationships with the community's youth and young adults, working to raise up future Kingdom workers. "I want to see my students seek Christ."

When Nila talks about South Asia, her love for its people shines from her face. "South Asia is *it*—it's *home*. I am beyond excited to return and serve the people I have come to love!"

Rosedale International is excited to see God call young women to bear the gospel to the world. Will you join us in lifting Chloe and Nila as they answer His call and step through the doors He has opened? 🙏

Names and locations have been changed or omitted for security.



Madalyn serves as media coordinator for Rosedale International. She lives in Columbus, Ohio, and attends Shiloh Mennonite Church.