



## STORIES OF REDEMPTION

BY RACHEL RISNER

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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

### ***Saved Through Childbearing***

*"But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty" (1 Tim. 2:15 NLT).*

My redemption story is the story of motherhood.

For the last nineteen years, motherhood and redemption have been so interwoven in my life, that it's hard to think of one without the other. Really, it's ironic that something so many think of as restrictive and burdensome—childbearing—is really what has set me free. But isn't that how God works in His upside-down kingdom, just the opposite of how we expect?

While the world thinks of motherhood as a prison, for me it has meant life.

Bible scholars have been a bit stumped about what 1 Timothy 2:15 means when it talks about being "saved through childbearing," but any way you slice it, it describes my story of redemption perfectly.

There's the Jesus interpretation: the faithful childbearing of women of the past—Eve, Sarah, Leah, Ruth, and ultimately Mary, the mother of Christ—have brought about the redemption of all mankind through their role in the family tree of Jesus. His blood spilled means salvation for me and you. Freedom from sin and death and hell. And for that, I am eternally grateful.

But there are other ways this verse rings true for me.

I am "saved through childbearing" daily. The crucible of motherhood has refining power. As I follow God's lead, He makes me holy. Weak and sinful as I am, motherhood forces me to draw strength from God. I need Him desperately to help me work out my salvation with fear and trembling.

In this way, I am saved from selfishness, greed, laziness, and wasting my time on less important endeavors. After all, children have a way of urgently demanding our time and attention, whether we feel like offering them or not.

But I haven't just been saved from some of my own mistakes and selfish inclinations. My redemption story of motherhood has saved me from the negative consequences that a life lived for myself would have brought about.

I would have missed the blessings.

I have been saved from loneliness, from purposelessness; saved from missing out on the joy and richness of living my days on earth God's way. I have been saved from seeking something less worthy: earthly accolades, climbing the career ladder, a growing bank account, a squeaky-clean home, a body that's perfectly toned. I can think of a thousand things I could strive for that would be a distraction from God's plan for me. But motherhood has crowded those things out.

Childbearing is my redemption.

Some scholars interpret the "saved through childbearing" as meaning that God sustains women through the challenges of motherhood. While Eve's sin brought the curse of pain in mothering, the Lord brings strength to endure. God's strength redeems.

I have been able to experience the incredible opportunity of offering my body as a living sacrifice nine times, partnering with God to bring eternal souls into the world, echoing Eve's words from Genesis 4:1, "...With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man" (NIV). This was not by my own logical choice but by a call from God.



Rachel is an author, mother of nine, and the wife of John Risner, lead pastor at Mennonite Christian Assembly in Fredericksburg, Ohio. She writes women's Bible studies and can be found online at [rachelrisner.com](http://rachelrisner.com).



# Food for the Hungry Soul

BY IVAN YODER

In a world of turmoil—where hope seems scarce and there seems to be no moral compass—what should the Church do? Each new day appears to bring news of another wave of tension, polarization, and disunity in the culture around us. At times, it feels like there is more bad news than good, more darkness than light.

One response for us within the church is to turn inward, where there is light to illuminate the good things that are so easily obscured by the darkness in the world. Before we became believers, the devil had us under siege in darkness much like in the story of four lepers found in 2 Kings 7.

The city of Samaria was besieged by King Ben-Hadad of Aram and his army. The siege had lasted long enough that the people of the city were beginning to starve. In 2 Kings 7:3, we are introduced to four lepers who, by law, couldn't enter the city. Just imagine how desperate they would have been. They most likely survived on scraps thrown out of the city, but now nothing was thrown away because of the famine. In their complete hopelessness, they decided to throw themselves at the mercy of the Arameans by going to their camp to ask for food. When they arrived at the camp, they found it deserted.

I invite you to look closely at their response. The first thing they did was satisfy their hunger, a completely understandable response. Their second response was also comprehensible for someone who had nothing—they took some things and went and hid them. After they returned, they took some more things and hid them again. Finally, something stirred in their hearts, and they spoke these words:

*“Then they said to each other, ‘What we’re doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves’ (2 Kings 7:9a NIV).*

Occasionally, the Church can forget the power of the good news we have and that the world is desperate to hear it—the good news that will bring hope into a world that seems hopeless. Jesus paid the price for the judgment of God. We have that hope, so why do we sometimes cover it? The world around us often doesn't recognize they need this hope. Our culture has turned from need to want and prioritized not only daily bread but daily comfort and pleasure. Have we, as Christians, also prioritized comfort and pleasure? Is that why we do not sense the urgency of sharing the good news with the world?

Have we, like the four lepers, hoarded away the hope that we have in Jesus?

The people of Samaria didn't know the Arameans had fled until the lepers looked away from themselves and out to the people around them, still desperate for food. Then, the revelation of the availability of food changed their outlook. We have access to that food and are called to share it freely with the world.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John that He is the bread of life. This teaching was difficult for many to accept, and some responded by leaving. Jesus asked the disciples if they wanted to leave also and Peter's response helps us understand the foundation of our mission to the world: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68 NIV). What more motivation do we need to reveal this good news to an ever-darkening world?

Our world needs words of life and hope, and the Church is positioned to offer what no other entity can. God has placed each of us individually to take the good news to that “one” individual who needs the hope and light of Jesus. Each of our churches are in a unique position to speak life and hope into our communities who are starving for good news.

Let's challenge each other as the lepers did to not keep this good news to ourselves but to keep looking for who else needs the bread of life. The final piece of good news for us within the church is that we don't need to do this on our own, as we read in Hebrews 13:20-21. God Himself gives us what we need to accomplish His purpose:

*“Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (NIV). 🙏*



Ivan is moderator-elect of Rosedale Network of Churches and lead pastor at Locust Grove Mennonite Church. He and his wife, Pam (who serves part-time in women's ministry), are the parents of two adult children.



# Hospitality and the Gospel

BY DOROTHY PLANK



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 Gospel Comes with a House Key*** by Rosaria Butterfield

Google defines hospitality as “the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.” Chick-fil-A, where I work, strives to be “the world’s most caring company” by exercising hospitality to all guests who visit, whether it be via drive-thru, dine-in, or DoorDash.

For most of my life, a rough version of the Google definition formed my understanding of hospitality. By Google’s standard, I am a pretty decent hostess. Living in Columbus, I periodically invite friends and acquaintances from church or work for a meal or a game/movie night. To top it off, I work at evangelical Christianity’s favorite fast-food place. I felt like I had hospitality in the bag.

I should know by now that Google’s and corporate America’s standards tend to be a bit short of God’s standards.

I had heard about Rosaria Butterfield’s *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* off and on for about a year, and figured it was about time I got my hands on a copy. Butterfield is an engaging writer, and this book, which is more a memoir than a manual on hospitality, is a relatively light and low-effort read. However, I hesitate to say that it’s an easy read, as it left me feeling convicted and humbled.

Far more than just Google or Chick-fil-A hospitality, Butterfield states that Christian hospitality is “radically ordinary hospitality.” “Radical,” because it’s fueled by the “Jesus paradox” (30), living intentionally in the world to draw people in, but not participating in the world’s ways. Radical hospitality opens its doors to everyone: neighbors, strangers, the needy, and even those with different beliefs and values.

Radical hospitality makes heads turn, because befriending those who are wildly different from yourself is preposterous. Christian hospitality is also “ordinary.” It is a daily, constant discipline that is worked into the rhythms of one’s day-to-day life. It is time-consuming, expensive, and self-sacrificial. This kind of hospitality, much more than receiving and entertaining guests or serving chicken sandwiches, “seeks to make strangers neighbors, and neighbors family of God” (31).

Butterfield argues that radical, ordinary hospitality should be the primary way we interact with and draw outsiders into the family of God, because Jesus exemplifies this model. He habitually ate with sinners, seeking opportunities to know and

care for them. When humanity was lonely and isolated, He created a space of belonging and security.

However, Butterfield continues, forming a safe haven is not the end goal of hospitality. If that were so, Christian hospitality would be no different than humanitarian aid. Christian hospitality reflects the way of Jesus: “Jesus comes to change us, to transform us, so that after we have dined with Jesus, we want Jesus more than the sin that beckons our fidelity” (85). It accepts the sins of outsiders but does not approve. It seeks to gently draw outsiders out of the lies of sin and into the covenant family in the church. Yet this process requires great humility and wisdom. Multiple times in the book, Butterfield emphasizes that when confronting sin, your relationship *must* be no weaker than the strength of your words. Transformation occurs more frequently upon the foundations of trust and care than upon apprehension and carelessness.

One minor frustration I had with this book was the lack of practical application examples in different contexts. Most of the examples in the book take place in a suburban neighborhood, where neighbors live walking distance away. What does radical, ordinary hospitality look like when your closest neighbor is a five-minute drive away? What does it look like in a downtown apartment complex where you have little space to host? Perhaps the lack of too many concrete examples is a blessing in disguise, stimulating Christians to seek creative solutions together for their individual contexts.

*The Gospel Comes with a House Key* is a necessary and powerful reminder for the church. In a world growing increasingly polarized and separated, the Christian home is one place that all should feel welcome and loved. Do I welcome people into my home who hold different values? Different religious beliefs? Different political views? I, for one, tend to selfishly stick with people who think and live like me. I pray the LORD helps me



Dorothy lives in Columbus, Ohio, and graduated from RBC in 2021 and from the Ohio State University with a BA in Hebrew and Jewish Studies in 2023. She plans to pursue a ThM at Dallas Theological Seminary this fall.



# Joining with Others

BY RALEIGH & OPAL

*Life in the Mediterranean provides many chances for RI workers Raleigh and Opal to join their Muslim friends and neighbors in religious and cultural tradition. Using the example of a recent experience, Raleigh and Opal share how the gospel transforms these traditions for Mediterranean believers—and how these traditions inform their own understanding and practice of the gospel.*

When a baby is born here, the family hosts a special celebration called a “se-boo-wa”: a time to celebrate the baby’s life and to dedicate the child to God. Recently, our family was invited to two seboowas on the same day! Because one seboowa was an hour and a half southwest of our home and the other an hour southeast, we had to make a hard choice. Instead of choosing between them, we split up—Opal took our car, filled it with neighbors, and drove southwest into the foothills, while Raleigh rented a car and drove our children southeast into the mountains.

On this particular day, the seboowa that Opal attended was very traditional. In a parallel to the story of Abraham and Isaac—when God provided a ram in place of the child’s life—our friends sacrificed a sheep. As they cut the sheep’s neck, they spoke the name of their son and blessed him.

The reader may wonder—how do we, as believers, navigate participation in Muslim religious traditions? Some local believers, ourselves included, choose to appreciate the joy of cultural and religious traditions even if we are at odds with their underlying theology; in many of these events, we see elements of good and truth that we can learn from. We enter these times prayerfully, willing to share the hope that is in us—while also not raising unassailable barriers between ourselves and our Muslim friends. We desire always to embody 1 Peter 3:15-16 in this, sharing the gospel with gentleness and respect, and keeping a clear conscience.

As believers participating in a traditional seboowa, we can view the sacrificed sheep as a representation of Jesus, giving Himself for this child. This is also a powerful entry point for our Muslim friends to step into the story of God and to remember His provision of a sacrificial lamb for each human life.

The second seboowa, which Raleigh attended, was a beautiful example of this. The baby girl whose life we celebrated is the

daughter of family friends who are followers of Jesus. Because our friends believe that Jesus once and for all satisfied all the requirements of sacrifice when He gave us His life, they chose not to kill a sacrificial lamb. Instead, we rejoiced together over the blessing of new life with feasting. Our friends thanked God for His great love and for their great community of friends—both Christian and Muslim—who had joined together to help raise this wonderful new little girl.

These religious celebrations provide opportunities for us to share the gospel in context with our Muslim friends; they also challenge us to learn and grow in our own understanding of our faith. For example, we are deeply inspired by the communal aspects of life here, which are demonstrated in traditional celebrations. After the seboowa celebration, the meat from the sacrificed lamb is divided into three parts: one for the family, one for neighbors and friends, and one for the poor. Thus sharing and compassion become a natural part of life, lived out ritually.

Related to this, we are constantly reminded through life in the Mediterranean that the Christian life is not a matter of individualistically following God, but of joining with others in faithful community living. In contrast to our Western upbringing, our cultural context here in the Mediterranean is much closer to that of Jesus, Paul, and the other authors of the New Testament. Because of this, our Muslim friends—without meaning to—are always reminding us how to live out the gospel communally. 🌍

*Names and locations have been changed or omitted for security.*



*Raleigh and Opal partner with RI to serve the unreached in the Mediterranean. They teach English, run a guest house, and provide leadership to RI’s workers in their country.*

***Stories of Redemption***, cont'd from page 1

Sitting under (and being married to) a pastor who, week in and week out, teaches faithfully from scripture is a huge part of my motherhood redemption story. My resolve to pursue radical motherhood is reinforced by hearing regularly from the pulpit that the life of a believer means being sold out for Jesus. It is clear that God's call on my life was to throw out my own plans and open myself up to what God had for me. And sure enough, my plans went out the window!

Praise the Lord, I've been set free.

I am redeemed. 🙏

***Hospitality and the Gospel***, cont'd from page 3

change. Belonging to and sticking with your clique is a powerful survival instinct, but Jesus breaks down the walls of hostility between the "us" and "them," inviting all peoples to dine together. He's not asking us to do something He wasn't willing to do Himself. 🙏