



STORIES OF REDEMPTION

BY NAOMI BYLER

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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

Redeeming Love

There was a time in my life when I wished to find a place where I could go—a place where no one could find me. I didn't want to hurt anymore or hurt anyone, but I just wanted to be done. I would think about finding a "nice" way to be gone. However, I knew I could never do to others what my dad had done to us in ending his own life early. Praise Jesus that this was not the end of my story.

My story started in a conservative Mennonite family. My dad struggled with mental illness. Alongside my dad's struggle with mental health came floods of anger, emotional abuse, and physical abuse. I have many memories as a young child deeply longing for peace and a refuge, away from all of the confusion and pain. My dad's anger prompted me repeatedly to believe that I was shameful, ugly, and guilty. I wasn't good enough to live a joyful life like the people around me.

Amid this childhood of pain, I was able to connect with other believers in our church. I knew the pastors and their wives cared deeply for our family and for me personally. Countless times, it was their encouragement that carried us through the dark times. Along with that, it was my mother's tenacious faith in a loving God that led me to Him. She loved Jesus more than anything and anyone. She was also experiencing pain, yet she taught me about Jesus and showed me unconditional love. I wanted this kind of peace, so I began believing in God. I wanted to follow His way.

As we all know, belief in God does not take all pain away. I struggled intensely to fight fear, shame, and guilt. One day, I was in a session with a Christian counselor and the conviction came so strong. I was building my identity on lies that my earthly father had said to me and about myself. When asked what my Heavenly Father said about me, I had no clue what to say. I knew in my head that He loved me, but what was He saying about *me*?

As I left the counselor's office overcome with tears, I cried out and asked Jesus what He thought of me. Healing seeped into the deepest part of my heart as I sensed Him say to me, "I want you in my Kingdom; you are *wanted*." All my life, I had felt rejection. Jesus knew exactly what my heart needed to hear.

The intensity of my struggles has gotten a lot less intense as I continue to follow Jesus and believe in what He says about me. He reminds me that I belong to Him and that He wants me! My heart rejoices in the goodness of His salvation. Not only does He save us, but He claims us!

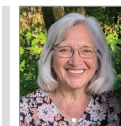
Fast forward to this season of life and I realize now, more than ever, that who we think God is and who we are to Him is what makes all the difference in how we handle life situations. I feel so privileged to walk with Jesus every day and ask Him to show me how to handle each conflict or trial I go through.

Leviticus 26:13 and Matthew 11:29-30 sum it up well:

I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians, I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high" (NIV).

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. 🕊️

Header photo credit: Ben White on Unsplash



Naomi lives in Salisbury, Pennsylvania with her husband, Joe. They have 12 children and 21 grandchildren. After ministering together at Oak Dale Church for 32 years, Naomi currently serves as a spiritual life coach.

Follow Jesus 2024

BY ROSEDALE NETWORK OF CHURCHES



Rosedale Network's Multiply 2024 Conference drew approximately 800 people to Woodbridge High School in Greenwood, Delaware, August 2-4. Plenary and breakout sessions on subjects related to the theme *Follow Jesus* proved to be a big draw as many were standing-room only. The plenary sessions featured the moderator's address, sermons titled "Two Kingdoms," "Joining the Mission of Jesus," and "Jesus to the World, the World to Jesus," Scripture dramatization by Piercing Word, and worship led by a team of Rosedale Bible College alumni. Breakout sessions featured a range of topics such as "Jesus and Politics," "Jesus and Loving Your Enemies," "Jesus and Deliverance," "Jesus and Sexuality," and "Jesus and Generosity." Audio/video links to the sessions can be found at rosedalenetwork.org/media.

Below are some of the comments received on the post-conference survey:

Even though I hadn't met many people from the Delaware area before, it immediately felt like home! Our host family was awesome, and the whole environment at the high school was uplifting.

The Greenwood churches went above and beyond in hosting... the spirit of the people hosting was outstanding.

My kids loved it—I enjoyed seeing all the shirts of the workers and kids with the theme on it.

I appreciated including the youth in the breakout sessions in the afternoon and including them in the deep theological discussion.

They had great youth group activities in the evenings... My youth group age kids are already excited about next year.

I loved the focus to Follow Jesus... Sunday morning was a highlight for me and my church back home who streamed it for the morning service.

We appreciated the depth of the messages and the challenges they presented. We especially appreciated the hymn sing on Saturday morning.


"I loved the structure of hearing a message about the Kingdom and then fleshing it out in breakout sessions.

I appreciated that the breakout sessions were all relevant to where our society is at today.

We really appreciated getting to meet and hear the testimonies of the RI missionaries...

Other special features of the conference included the introduction of five new churches who joined Rosedale Network in 2024. Four of those churches hailed from states not previously included in the network: California, Idaho, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Additionally, representatives from Rosedale Network's International Affiliates in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Cuba, India, Kenya, and Spain were introduced. Following the conference, this group traveled to Rosedale, Ohio where they participated in the International Affiliates Conference, focused on the theme *The Anabaptist Vision: Does it Matter Today?*

Make plans to join us for Multiply 2025 in Montgomery, Indiana, July 25-27! 



Rosedale Network of Churches is an evangelical Anabaptist denomination with headquarters in Irwin, Ohio, and is made up of over 100 located in 28 states. Rosedale Network's mission is to mature and multiply churches, both locally and globally.



Everyone Has a Story

BY RACHEL MAINO



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.

Everything Sad Is Untrue by Daniel Nayeri

During the spring of 2018, I was a student at Rosedale Bible College studying Creative Writing under Vicki Sairs. The previous year, I took Vicki's composition course where she helped me straighten out my misplaced commas and graciously informed me about MLA formatting. Now we were moving from writing as a science to writing as an art.

"Show, don't tell" was the mantra, and I have kept it as my framework for writing and reading. I do not know if I ever succeeded, but Khosrou Nayeri, or "Daniel" as he now goes by, does so beautifully in his memoir *Everything Sad is Untrue*.

Born in Iran, Nayeri, along with his sister and mother, fled to Italy when he was six years old. The flight was due to the threat of persecution. After several years there, his family was sponsored* by a couple from the Midwest, and Nayeri began a new life in the States as an eight-year-old. He tells the stories of his school days, his early childhood, and memories of stories he's been told. Bullying, Persian legends, middle school crushes, and the Iranian version of Mounds candy bars unfold an entertaining retelling of the life of a refugee kid set in metropolitan Oklahoma.

Geared toward adolescents, Nayeri isn't short on mild bathroom humor, the self-consciousness of a changing body, and middle-grade comments like, "she was *totally* a *finigonzon* (beautiful girl)." Yet he never goes overboard, honestly sharing about life as a pre-teen boy.

While I listened to the author read his story on audio, I imagine this book would make a great family read-aloud with middle to high schoolers and likely bring up some talking points along the way!

I found Nayeri's writing style to be relatable, yet not predictable. It reads like a down-to-earth conversation mixed with ancient Persian poetry metaphors. Sometimes his stories were so familiar I could feel them for myself, like the dynamics of a third-grade public school classroom. In other sections, I just had to keep listening to see where we would end up, like his retelling of *A Thousand and One Nights*.

I love a good memoir and have come a long way in learning how to appreciate a novel rather than endure it. At one

time in my life, had Nayeri simply bullet-pointed his autobiographical facts, I would have thought I was just as satisfied with the condensed information. Nonfiction and all of its "telling" is one of my favorite ways to get information.

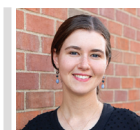
Yet I would have missed how his writing style speaks another layer into his story. I have learned not only the value of *showing* a story but that "story"—or even fiction—isn't somehow less spiritual or a waste of time. Story gives us a different perspective that flat information simply cannot. It stretches our worldview while giving us something tangible to hold onto. *Everything Sad Is Untrue* did this for me.

In the beginning chapters, Nayeri describes his elementary wishes to be seen as more than a refugee kid and it challenged me. "We can know and be known to each other, and then we're not enemies anymore." Knowing each other is necessary if we really believe in an "every tribe and tongue" kind of Kingdom. We can learn to know each other through "story."

While Nayeri's story includes Christian elements such as conversion that might encourage the believer, I see it additionally as a cultural bridge inviting the reader to a more full and perhaps uncomfortable view of God, each other, and ourselves.

Nayeri includes elements of personal doubt and stories of "Christians" who certainly don't live up to the name. Twenty-first-century human migration is unsurprisingly (yet perhaps unfortunately) political with a variety of intentions. While his story might be more palatable to some—his family was fleeing persecution for being Christians—people are migrating all the time, everywhere, to our countries, often with reasons beyond their control. Persecution, war, and famine are major factors influencing migration.

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Rachel lives in Columbus, Ohio, and works with the Riverview International Center, a non-profit supporting immigrant and refugee communities to live empowered in the U.S. She is currently working on an M.A. in Human Migration.



Carpe Diem: What Are You Chasing?

BY MIKE

Carpe diem, or “seize the day,” as it’s often translated in English, is a phrase I first heard as a high school student. I thought it was an exciting motto, but also thought it felt a bit daunting: as if each day was either “seized” by doing something big and amazing, or it was lost—a failure.

It was later in life, as an adult whose walk with Jesus had matured, that I better understood what *carpe diem* could look like if applied to my faith. For a believer, seizing the day looks less like grand acts and more like running a steady race—being faithful in the small things and following the Spirit to bring light and love wherever we are called.

I recently saw “the believer’s definition” of *carpe diem* demonstrated in the five days of Ride for Missions (RFM). Each morning, forty-two cyclists—ranging from ages 13 to 80—rose, went out, and rode their bicycles an average of 75 miles. Their efforts as a group raised over \$110,500 in support of Rosedale International’s (RI) missions around the globe!

But as impressive as that total is, what stood out to me was the way each rider seized on unique moments when the Spirit led. They shared the purpose of RFM with strangers, shared personal testimonies, and prayed with people they’d just met. They seized the day one mile at a time—encouraging each other through the heat and exhaustion, focusing on the truest pursuit of life, and being Jesus to the world around them.

While Rosedale Network’s finest athletes were biking across Maryland and Delaware, a slightly larger athletic event was also taking place. At breakfast and dinner, our RFM group took time to tune in to the Olympics and see how these amazing athletes were doing.

While the athleticism on display was incredible, I was blown away by the Olympians who took their moments in the spotlights to give glory to God. My favorite example of this was Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, an American athlete who broke her own world record in the 400-meter hurdle to win the gold.

In the press interview following her race, she said, “I credit all that I do to God. He’s given me a gift, He’s given me a drive...I have a platform, and I want to use it to glorify Him. Whenever I step on the track, [I pray], *God, let me be the vessel through which you’re glorified whatever what the result*

is—how I conduct myself, how I carry myself, not just how I perform. Regardless of what happens, He’s going to get the praise through me.” A two-time Olympian—the best at what she does—pointed her audience away from herself and toward Jesus. Talk about seizing the day!

In recent months, I too have felt the Spirit prompting me to seize the day. My role at RI gives me the privilege of connecting with Rosedale Network congregations all over the nation. Years have passed since some of your churches have been visited by an RI representative, and I wanted to change that. On September 1st, my family embarks on a month-long journey across the plains and western states, with plans to visit a dozen Rosedale Network congregations along the way.

In addition to this adventure, I set a goal for myself—to run a personal 5k every day, no matter the weather. By doing so, I hope to raise \$20,000 to purchase a much-needed vehicle for RI’s Short-Term Programs.

One day as I was training and preparing to depart for this fall tour, I listened to Crowder’s new song. The lyrics read, “Got me wondering what I’m chasing/...what on earth am I doing?” These lyrics really struck me, reminding me to stay focused on bringing the presence of Jesus to my work, my personal life, and this 5k. I look forward to visiting so many of you and worshipping with the body of Christ in eight different states this month. I look forward to seeing parts of the country I have never been before. And I look forward to faithfully running 5k every day. I want to seize the day in each community we visit and, following the example of my RFM crew, I want to tell those I interact with about my Jesus and how good He is.

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Mike serves as Rosedale International’s Director of Partner Development. He attends London Christian Fellowship and is active in youth ministry. He, his wife Karen, and their five children previously served in West Africa.

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Yet, regardless of our political preferences in the myriads of migration situations, I hope that we as believers will not see that conflict with our desire to learn from each other's stories. Listening and learning are practices we can implement no matter how we feel about "policies." *Everything Sad Is Untrue* is a great introduction to that practice. 📖

***Sponsorship:** Allows individuals, groups of individuals, or organizations to nominate specific refugees to enter and stay in their country. These programs are a tangible way for communities to directly support refugees.

"Private Sponsorship Pathways." UNHCR US. Accessed August 19, 2024.

Carpe Diem: What Are You Chasing?, cont'd from page 4

I encourage you to think about what you are chasing. I pray you will follow the Spirit's lead to seize the day through both big opportunities—like Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone—and small opportunities—like our RFM riders. We never know how our interactions with strangers, the love we show, or the kindness we give to others may point the way to Christ.

As I run my 5k every day, I invite you to join me! You can find daily updates on my Instagram account (@mtbaker79) or on RI's social media channels. If you'd like to join me on my run when I am in your area, shoot me an email at mike@rosedaleinternational.org. To find my schedule or donate toward my goal, visit rosedaleinternational.org/5k/. Let's do this together—carpe diem! 📖

"- [DASH]" words and music by Ben Glover, David Crowder, Jeff Sojka, Louie Giglio, and Toby McKeehan

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