



STORIES OF REDEMPTION

BY LYN MCCULLOUGH

A ROSEDALE NETWORK PUBLICATION
VOL. 54 | NO. 11

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

Average but Redeemed

I feel intimidated writing this article after reading the testimonies of previous *Beacon* contributors. I am over sixty years old and was raised in a godly home. I have not studied theology or had formal education after high school. I married right out of high school—a small-town girl with a lifetime of blue-collar jobs. I was born average.

But God redeemed me.

It was an old-fashioned revival message on Hell that pulled me out of my chair and down the aisle to bow at the front of the church, declaring my choice to accept the gift God was offering to forgive the sins of my immature 14-year-old heart. God sealed that decision as the Holy Spirit entered my life and the lifetime redemption process of a very “average” girl began!

Like many girls of the '70s era in the Midwest, my goal was to find a guy, fall in love, and get married. My guy, Harold, a new Christian at 31 years of age, married me, a 19-year-old unrealistic dreamer, and my redemption process kicked into full throttle. Harold came to Christ with the misconception that God would bless, or at the very least sustain, our financial lives as he worked hard and did his best to live a godly life. I entered our marriage believing that Harold was so in love with me that he would seek to please me all the days of my life.

It is said that opposites attract—we would be a textbook example of that statement. Harold saw the glass half empty and I viewed the glass half full, but we both carried a Holy Spirit desire for a marriage that would thrive. When life was good, we soared on a euphoric high; when life brought struggles, Harold would plunge into a deep pit of depression as he determined that God did not care. Our time together was *exceedingly* good or *devastatingly* bad; there was no level ground. There were many nights I sat outside and cried out to God, desperate for help when our relationship would hit a wall. God reminded me every time that I did not have

the power to change anyone but myself, and that's what needed to happen. While the truth flashed in neon colors every time God spoke to me, I continued to try to make life better with my own positive efforts.

After several years of trying to fix the highs and lows, I hit a wall and the truth that God was trying to show me was my only option. What a great redeemer! I experienced a total transformation. Life took on color as I truly trusted and followed my redeemer. Joy does not depend on life circumstances; joy is a river that flows right through the hard places.

Truth alternately shouted and whispered to us through our pastor's Sunday messages as well as the transparency of the lives of our church friends and families we loved. We grew to appreciate the front pews of the church as we had a thirst to hear God. I often squirmed on those benches as God shined His light on the stony ground of my heart.

Revival efforts during those years often brought practical teaching on God's plan and purpose for marriage. Christian radio programs became part of our daily life. I am most challenged and fascinated by the stories of God at work in the lives of those He redeemed.

Having a great marriage is extremely important to me. God continues to use the challenges of marriage to grow me into His image. I am very average, but Christ living in me takes me to heights beyond anything this dreamer ever imagined. All glory to my redeemer. 🙏

Header photo credit: AI-generated



Lyn and her husband, Harold, live in Milford, Nebraska, near their four married children and grandchildren. Lyn works part-time at a local market and Harold works full-time in trucking.



Gratitude and Others

BY DARREN PEACHEY

Serving as conference pastor of Rosedale Network of Churches, I am frequently asked the question “What are you seeing and hearing across our network of churches?” I often respond, “It’s a good season, there seems to be a commitment to the *mature and multiply* mission and a desire to grow in our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.” I am grateful for that reality in our churches in this season of celebrating the harvest and Thanksgiving.

I also have a growing awareness across Rosedale Network in this season of cultural and political polarization—and at times, even divisiveness in the church—that our thoughts and conversations can reveal different fountains that indicate the true source from where our gratitude flows.

Jesus told a little story in Luke 18 to some people gathered around Him who seemed to be quite confident of their own righteousness, good standing, and deservingness of blessing. Jesus told this story to those who looked down on and distanced themselves from the people around them—the “others”:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:10-14 NIV).

This story is not primarily about thankfulness and gratitude, but it is telling. One person, in his pride, is thankful that he is not like all the other people around him. In fact, Jesus says the man “prayed about himself,” which literally means “to himself.” The Lord is not the recipient of this person’s thanks and gratitude.

The second person understood that to even approach God, he was completely dependent on His mercy. Jesus essentially says, “Because this man was aware of his needy condition and

relied on the deliverance that only God could provide, he was justified, declared righteous, and deserving of blessing through the mercy of God.”

Two thankful people, two different hearts, two differing fountains of gratitude; one self-dependent and thankful for self, the other thankful for the mercies and kindness of God.

What is the fountain of your gratitude this Thanksgiving season?

As the people of Rosedale Network, I find myself asking, *Are we at times confident in our own righteousness? Are there “others” we are thankful we are not like?* “Others” include people or groups we have decided are not as righteous as we are, people we should be suspicious of, or those we talk about, but not with.

The “others” we may be thankful we are not like could be from different church denominations or theological streams. They could be people from the other political party, or, just like in the story Jesus told, those other groups of people whose sins we consider to be worse than our own.

What is the fountain of your gratitude this Thanksgiving season? A heart of gratitude and thanksgiving is stirred by remembering the faithfulness and mercy of the Lord, our neediness, and the joy of our salvation when Jesus rescued us.

A heart that forgets that we were once sinners, had no relationship with God, and were once needy tends towards ungratefulness and pride.

Gratitude is the fruit of remembering and honoring God’s faithful mercies and provision. Gratitude will move us to engage with the “others” and give testimony of the transforming work of Jesus to make us new and the mercies of the Lord. 🙏

Header photo credit: AI-generated



Darren travels extensively with his wife, Caryn, visiting churches in his role as conference pastor of Rosedale Network of Churches. They live in Belleville, Pennsylvania, and attend Locust Grove Mennonite Church.



What's Your "Glass Castle?"

BY KATARINA 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 Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls*

I found *The Glass Castle* to be a meaningful and thought-provoking memoir. The book details the life of the author, Jeannette Walls, from the carefree perspective of her childhood to the more complex viewpoint of an adult. She had an unconventional childhood filled with frequent moves, scarcity, and financial instability, yet managed to describe it endearingly. She experienced freedom through exploration, a chance to be independent, and opportunities to hold her possessions loosely. Through it all, she sees the positives and the growth mindset her parents encouraged.

The following quote epitomizes her life:

"One time I saw a tiny Joshua tree sapling growing not too far from the old tree. I wanted to dig it up and replant it near our house. I told Mom that I would protect it from the wind and water it every day so that it could grow nice and tall and straight. Mom frowned at me. 'You'd be destroying what makes it special,' she said. 'It's the Joshua tree's struggle that gives it its beauty.'"

Like the Joshua tree, the author experienced many hardships, yet grew to become strong and resilient. "I lived in a world that at any moment could erupt into fire. It was the sort of knowledge that kept you on your toes," she writes.

After burning many bridges in the western US, Walls' family eventually settled back into their Appalachian home community. Through all the traumatic ups and downs, the father kept referring to "the glass castle"—a plan he had for their eventual living quarters. He drew up plans and spent hours dreaming of what this dream house would eventually be, but because of poor life choices, alcoholism, and other extenuating circumstances, he never completed or even started the "castle."

As I pondered this "glass castle" thread throughout the book, I was reminded of the amount of time and energy I have spent on fruitless endeavors. I realize it's easy for me to criticize this father's obviously impossible dream, but at the same time know I'm also guilty of spending lots of mental energy on things that are equally unproductive and not Christ-focused.

The relationships in Walls' family were also quite complicated, especially between the children and their parents. Jeannette's

artist mother showed a never-ending positive outlook and was able to make excuses or justify her actions, even when it meant the family struggled to eat or have a safe place to live. Walls was her father's favorite child, and he used the power in that relationship to manipulate her.

Parents have a huge impact on their children in both healthy and unhealthy ways. This book reminded me that having Christ at the center of our homes goes a long way toward helping us create healthy family relationships.

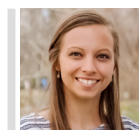
In the final chapters of the book, the author describes her life as a stable adult with a job, a spouse, and an actual house (not a glass castle). Meanwhile, her parents were now homeless, uninterested in receiving support, and misused the support they did receive.

The Glass Castle also made me think about our responsibility as Christians to care for the poor and needy in our communities, sharing in both physical and spiritual ways. How do we really help those in need, especially when we see unhealthy patterns of life and decision-making? Do we too easily assume we know what is in people's best interests instead of taking time to build relationships and hear their stories? What does sharing the gospel and caring for people living in poverty look like practically?

While *The Glass Castle* is not "Christian," it certainly helps us consider situations unlike our own and use that knowledge to help grow the Kingdom in our world today. 🙏

**While this book contains some language and content RBC doesn't condone, it's a valuable description of one family's real-life experiences and valuable lessons learned.*

Header photo credit: Circe Denyer: "Joshua Tree Closeup"



Katarina lives in Rosedale, Ohio with her husband, Aaron, and son, Jude. She is currently a stay-at-home mom and enjoys going on walks, reading, crafting, and camping.



REACH: For the Sake of the Kingdom

BY MADALYN

On August 31, the Rosedale International Center (RIC) in Columbus, Ohio, sprang to life as twelve young adults poured into the building with their families in tow. These young people—representing six states and three countries, with different backgrounds, life experiences, and hopes for the future—had arrived at the RIC to pursue their common goal: to follow the call of Jesus in their lives. They were here to begin REACH 2024-25.

While the “flashier” aspect of RI’s REACH program is six months spent overseas, the transformative work begins much sooner with discipleship training school. Known as DTS, the first three months of REACH are a time to invest in study and spiritual growth, bond as teammates, and prepare for overseas outreach.

The past nine weeks have been “full of life and joy” as each REACHER has dedicated themselves to this task with purpose and intensity. “Our afternoons usually consist of teambuilding exercises, outreach programs, preparation for cross-cultural outreach, and language class for those who need to learn a language,” Becca (Team Zambia) shared in a recent blog post. “We’re never bored, that’s for sure!”

Each morning, the REACHERs’ focus is spiritual growth. In sessions, they have studied the spiritual gifts, the authority of Scripture, and intimacy with God. They’ve learned how to run Discovery Bible Studies, and shared vulnerably with each other during ministry week.

In their spiritual reflection, a common theme has emerged—God as a steady Father. “I’ve recently been able to focus on and experience the gentle sides of God’s love,” Madelyn (Team Mediterranean) shared. “The major lesson I took from our first few sessions was that our Father is sending us an invitation... We do not have to chase after Him, trying to catch up as He sprints in the opposite direction. He is standing right beside us, waiting for us to turn and look at Him.”

“We’re never bored, that’s for sure!”

In three short weeks, the class of REACH 2024-25 will graduate from discipleship training school and launch into cross-cultural outreach. This year, RI’s Short-Term Programs is sending four teams overseas—the program’s

most post-COVID-19. **Team Himalayas** will work alongside a local believer, trekking through the mountains to visit local churches and believers. In each location, they’ll minister through service projects, teaching English, and sharing the gospel.

Team Zambia will join the rhythms of life in a rural village. In partnership with a local ministry, they will aid the work of planting churches, caring for orphans, and discipling new believers.

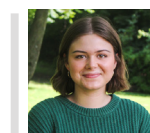
RI’s long-term workers in Thailand and the Mediterranean will each welcome a team as well. **Team Thailand** will serve in Bangkok through prayer walks, ministry to children and refugee families, English teaching, and support of the long-term team; **Team Mediterranean’s** ministry will focus on long-term support, joining the team in hospitality, teaching English, and childcare.

Although the months ahead may seem daunting, the REACHERs are ready and excited for what will come. “[In her session], Kara [Personnel Facilitator], called us to remember that when we decided to follow Jesus, we decided to join in His suffering,” Melanie (Team Zambia). “There will be many tough things ahead of us these next several months, but I’m willing to face whatever comes for the sake of the Kingdom. And I’m confident there will be so much growth through those hard times.”

Please lift up each REACHER in prayer as they complete DTS, say goodbye to their families and friends over the Thanksgiving holiday, and jump into life in very different cultures. Pray for team unity and harmony, for energy and perseverance, and for the ability to depend on Jesus. Pray that as they serve God overseas, they will continually turn to face Him. 🙏

The names of some people and places in this article have been omitted for security. To follow along with the REACHERs as they embark on outreach, visit their team blogs, updated weekly.

Header photo credit: Matt Heaton: “Four Person Standing While Looking on Mountain View with Body of Water at Daytime”



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