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200 Fairbrook Drive

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703 438 8223 PH

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The Word of the Lord Will Last Forever

The last time I saw our Teaching Director (TD), Don Peterson, was on September 10, 2001. At the end of Leaders Council meeting, he said, "See you at Christmas," and we all laughed. Our Manasquan, New Jersey Evening CBS Class would be studying the Nativity narrative in Luke when Don and his wife, Jean, returned from their trip to California. Jean, too, served in CBS as Coordinator of the Day Class.

While at Don and Jean's home for an August fellowship, Jean told one of the women attending, "I don't know why, but I feel so ready to meet the Lord!" Class Coordinator, Dave Withers, also shared that Don had said to him, "Our Christian walk is supposed to be a journey, but I feel so ready."

The Petersons ended their journey on September 11, 2001 as passengers aboard Flight 93, which crashed in an empty field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. They arrived at Newark Airport early. Although they were scheduled for a later flight, they took Flight 93 when the airline offered them seats. They were the only married couple on the flight and left behind six grown children and one grandchild. Don was the retired president of an electric company and Jean, a retired nurse. They had moved to Spring Lake, New Jersey a few years earlier and were both active in many charitable ministries. At one time Don told me that when he became a CBS

TD he finally knew why they retired to the Jersey Shore. He served for a little over two years.

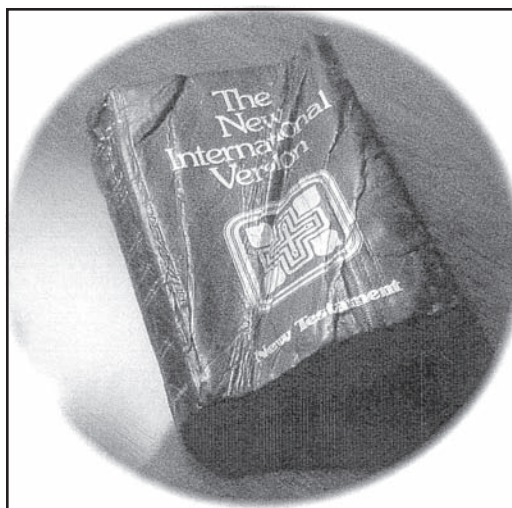
Jean Trimble, who was our Children's Director at the time, shared a special memory: "In 1999, we were on a flight to Birmingham, Alabama where we were to attend the Community Bible Study training session. I was very nervous. The group of us, who were to be the

new Evening Class Servants Team in Manasquan, sat together. When the flight attendant announced that we could spread out, the other two team members moved to new seats. Don must have seen the panic in my eyes, and he stayed seated next to me. I have imagined him giving comfort on Flight 93 as he gave it to me when needed."

In a Discovery Channel movie, *The Flight that Fought Back*, a scene that

takes place shortly before the plane crashed shows Don next to his wife, his Bible between them, reading to the other passengers from Psalm 57:1-2: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me." We who knew them have always imagined Don and Jean giving comfort from the Word of God to their fellow passengers.

Peter Perl, writing for the *Washington Post* magazine, mentions two Bibles found at the crash site, one of which belonged to Don



Don Peterson's Bible found at the entrance to the crash site

New CBS Classes Trained in 2005

Peterson. In it was his CBS lesson. In the book, *Among the Heroes*, Jere Longman states: "...a dog-eared Bible was found near the crater caused by the crash of *Flight 93*, its cover damaged but its pages still readable." At a Washington, DC ceremony, Don's son David was presented with that Bible. Jim McCombs, a local Assistant Pastor, has a picture of Don's recovered Bible with its creased cover (pictured on the previous page), on his desk.

Don's CBS lesson was sent to our Leaders Council meeting a few weeks later. Holding the fuel-stained lesson from Luke, I was so touched as I read the answers in Don's handwriting.

In 2001, I was a Junior CBS teacher. When I told the class that Don's Bible had survived the crash of Flight 93, Robert, one of the 11-year-olds, paraphrased Isaiah 40:8, "Heaven and earth will pass away but the Word of the Lord will last forever!" My fellow teacher, Jo Joseph, and I will never forget those words.

Following the devastating events of 9/11, Bill Dallas, the Associate Teaching Director (ATD) and a close friend of Don's, stepped in as TD. Dave Withers, also Don's close friend, became the ATD and remained as Coordinator. Four years later, our CBS class is still somewhat traumatized by our loss, but we also have peace that passes understanding. The Manasquan classes continue to grow, which I know was the desire of Don's and Jean's hearts.

Kevin Kennedy, our present ATD, reminded me that many times Don told people his mother's favorite Bible verse had been "*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty*" Psalm 91:1 (911)!

Don and Jean lived their lives in the shelter of the Most High God, and they served Him all the days of their lives. Therefore, we know that as soon as their plane crashed, they were transported into the very presence of the Almighty, and now they abide in His shadow.



Don and Jean's picture
from the newspaper

Maura Kennedy
Coordinator

Manasquan, NJ Eve CBS

Alabama

Prattville Teen, AL

Arkansas

Crittenden County, AR
Van Buren Teen, AR

California

Carlsbad Teen, CA
Fullerton Teen, CA
Palm Desert Teen, CA
Point Loma, CA
Riverside, CA
Sacramento 18-2-24, CA
Santa Clarita (W) Eve, CA
Santa Cruz Men, CA

Colorado

Pueblo, CO

Florida

East Polk County, FL
Fort Myers Men, FL
Nature Coast, FL
Vero Beach, FL

Georgia

Glynn County, GA
Gwinnett County (W) Eve, GA
Statesboro, GA

Michigan

Grand Traverse Teen, MI
Traverse City Eve, MI
Whitelake/Waterford, MI

Mississippi

Southaven Teen, MS

North Carolina

Burlington Eve, NC

New Hampshire

Seacoast Eve, NH

New Jersey

Mercer County, NJ

New Mexico

Roswell 18-2-24, NM

Pennsylvania

Beaver Valley Teen, PA

South Carolina

Greenwood, SC
Oconee Men, SC

South Dakota

Milbank (W) Eve, SD

Texas

Houston Northwest Teen, TX
Lake Travis Teen, TX
Wimberley eTeen, TX

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Western Fairfax, VA
Williamsburg Eve, VA

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The Brooch

A Story of Redemption

There it was! The silver brooch lay on a faded piece of purple velvet in the pawn shop window. Like the velvet, its beauty was faded, hidden by years of neglect, and the once beautiful onyx stone was discolored with dirt and grime. I couldn't leave it there where it might fall into hands that could not see its value or appreciate the heart of its creator. I quickly entered the shop and purchased the brooch.

I drove home with the precious purchase wrapped and lying safely beside me. I couldn't wait to hold it in my hands and run my fingers over the intricate silver threads so lovingly woven together many years ago. Why had it been created, I wondered? Was it a present for a lovely bride, or could it have been an anniversary gift from a loving husband? Did its creator ever dream that his beautiful work of art would fall into such disrepair?

Inside my kitchen, I placed the brooch carefully on the table and looked closer at it. There were nicks in its surface and the silver was dull from tarnish. The onyx stone was slightly cracked and its brilliance darkened with grime from the lack of care.

I rummaged through the cabinet and found a bottle of silver polish. Armed with the polish and a soft rag, I returned to the table and began to clean the intricate, lacy design of silver. As I rubbed my cloth over the silver threads, brightness returned, and the filth of the years began to fall away. The small nicks could be seen more clearly now, but they only added to its charm and intrigue. The stone, clean from a washing with soap and water, glimmered in the sunlight coming from the window in the kitchen.

In my quiet reflection, I could imagine the gentle voice of the Master telling me that I was like this brooch, which had been created by a master silversmith. He had created me with intricately woven threads that would become my life. He loved me, and His very breath had given me life. Before I was born, He knew me and His thoughts are never far from me.

I knew the Lord was reminding me that I was made in His image, and His plans for me were perfect to give me a future and a hope. He gave me wings and freedom, but instead of choosing His best, I chose the way of the world. Like the brooch, my heart had become tarnished and nicked with faded and broken dreams. My life, that held such promise, had begun to crack and break as unhappiness and emptiness took its toll.

Tears were flowing down my face as I thought about what the Lord was saying to me. My heart was dark with stain, the crooks and crannies cold and crusted with sin just like the lacy strands of silver. I looked at the brooch, a convicting symbol of who I was—a life that had chosen the world and all it could offer. I had fled from the truth I knew in my head and had not allowed inside my heart.

I knew it was not a coincidence that I had passed that pawn shop. God had chosen this piece of jewelry to show me how much He loved me and to make me realize the price He paid for my redemption. I looked at the rag I held in my hand. I saw the black stain on what was once a white cloth. Like the silver polish that cleaned the tarnish from the twists and turns of silver lace, God's own Son came to take the darkness of my sin upon Himself. He willingly gave Himself as a sacrifice so that I might have eternal life.

Heart pounding, I fell to my knees, tears of repentance running down my face. As I opened my heart to Jesus, years of anger, pride, and unbelief poured out before Him. The filth and grime of my life was laid at His feet. "Thank You, Lord, for never giving up on me. Make me clean," I prayed. "Fill me with Your presence and Your peace. Thank You for the sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus, who paid the penalty for my sin. I desire to live for You and not for myself. I love and praise You for the gift of eternal life."

Years have passed since that day. I still wear the brooch as a symbol of how God chose an unwanted piece of jewelry to change my life. I will never know the heart of its creator or the purpose for which it was created, but now I know the Master of all creation. He still polishes the nicks in my life, but they are harder to see these days as I yield to Him. The crack in the onyx stone reminds me of the disappointments and hardships that come to all of us, yet these cracks of adversity shine brightly with the light of His Spirit. I am safe and secure in His everlasting arms because He redeemed me from a life that was empty and filled with the filth of sin. The world and its false promises have been left behind, and now I am content to do what He sets before me. No matter what happens, my Father in heaven is in control, and I can trust Him.

If we hear His voice, we must listen. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" He waits for us, longs for us, and desires a personal relationship with us. He is our hope for tomorrow, our peace and joy for the present. He holds our future in the palm of His hand, but the choice is ours.

Mary Willis
Corpus Christ, TX CBS

I wrote this story as the answer to a question in Lesson 1 of the CBS study on Colossians. It is not a true story, but it describes my life because as a child I knew the truth in my head, but not in my heart. After I went my own way for many years and sought fulfillment in other things, God convicted me, and I received Christ at the age of 35.

~Mary

Older Little Children

“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’” (Matthew 19:14). When reading this Scripture, we usually picture Jesus surrounded by little children, but in my mind’s eye, I often see another scene as well. This one depicts Jesus surrounded by those who have lived long lives, many of whom are no longer physically and/or mentally capable. Time and age have taken away most everything, but their hearts are still full of treasures stored over a lifetime of loving and following the Lord.

I witnessed this process as my grandparents aged. All four lived into their 90’s, and throughout each one’s lifetime taught me many lessons. But the lessons they taught me in the latter part of their lives were the most important. I was now their caretaker, but they were still my teachers.

My dad’s mom continually shared her faith, by the words she spoke and, more importantly, by the life she lived. Grandmother read and studied her Bible every day, even after she started to slip away. One day I found this tiny, precious lady, who rarely left the house without a hat and gloves, sitting on her front porch in her slip and belt. She had forgotten to put on her dress that day, but on the kitchen table—as always—was her open, well-worn Bible. She may not have understood the words as well as she once did, but this Book continued to bring her comfort and peace. Her Christian walk continued until the end.

My grandfathers lived out the principle of loving others as Jesus loved us by caring for others—their own family and God’s—in every conceivable way. As they advanced in years, these wonderful men became confused and unable to remember how to handle routine activities. They may have experienced confusion about some things, but never their faith or priorities, such as tithing to their church, supporting the Methodist Children’s Home, and helping less fortunate extended family members. “*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart*” (Luke 6:45a).

My maternal grandmother lived the longest, and it was her leaving that taught me the most. She reluctantly went into an assisted living facility at the age of 92. Her piano and organ were moved with her and set up in the facility’s lobby. Grandmother was an incredibly talented musician who played for her Sunday school class for 60 years. After she had settled into the facility, she held afternoon concerts and encouraged requests from residents. They loved to request favorite hymns, the words of which they knew, though they had forgotten most everything else.

It was remarkable to hear them sing those beloved songs from memory. I still remember many of the people, particularly Miss Jane. She was terribly unhappy about her situation. Constantly trying to catch a ride out of there, to anywhere, she was always dressed for travel in her red sweater, head scarf, and handbag with an old name tag stuck to it. But when those old hymns would start, her normal frown was replaced by a countenance of peace and joy. She was either transported back in time to memories of church and fellowship, or perhaps forward to all that awaited her in Heaven. She loved chocolate candy, but even that didn’t make her as happy as the old hymns.

Grandmother’s final Christmas Day concert was especially meaningful. Many families were visiting residents in the lobby. Although her focus and concentration were waning, Grandmother’s desire to perform was not. She played, from memory, old standards like *Silent Night* and *O Come All Ye Faithful*. Periodically, she would lose her way, but rather than stop, she would do an interlude of *The Yellow Rose of Texas* to buy time and get back on track.

Those of us who had our “full faculties” were flipping through the songbooks, trying to find our place while the residents were quietly and contentedly waiting for the carols to resume. As if rehearsed and planned, Grandmother and her vintage chorus would seamlessly reconnect and finish each song together. While we “youngsters” were more concerned about the details of the sing-along, the seniors were spending time with their Lord and Savior. Somehow they knew, with their childlike minds, that *how* they got there wasn’t nearly as important as *being* there.

From those sweet, tender times with my grandparents, I learned that life eventually comes full circle. We start out as children—innocent, simple, full of wonder and trust. And at the end of our journey, we return to those same qualities—released from life’s complications, distractions, and busyness.

I am so thankful to the Lord for His Word and the wisdom we can gain from it. And I am grateful for the life experiences He sends to further teach us these lessons. I also give thanks for my grandparents, that the Lord allowed me to have them as long as I did, and for the powerful legacy they left. We all need to be grateful for the “little children” in our lives today—both those who are fresh from Him and those who will soon return to Him.

Melanie Watts
Core Leader
Austin/Greater Lake Travis, TX CBS

Idols in Our Lives

Even though we may not build altars or temples to pagan gods, we are just as susceptible to falling into idolatry, which is the worship of someone or something other than Almighty God.

One of the Home Study Questions in the new CBS course *The Divided Kingdom and the Minor Prophets* asked, “What forms of idolatry do you see in your life or in the lives of people around you?”

One form I have struggled with, and perhaps others have as well, is related to forgiveness.

When I focus on, or worse, tenaciously hold on to the hurts in my heart rather than appropriating the grace God gives me to forgive, I am turning my back on the One who died to forgive me, and in essence making an idol of my wounds.

Jesus loved me enough to die for my sins, including all the ways I have hurt Him, others, and myself. He commands me to love others enough to die to myself by setting them free from their sins against me. In so doing, I myself am set free from the sin of idolizing my wounds.

The cross of Christ is the central symbol of our faith. It soars above our churches, and hangs from our walls, necks, and even ears. It implies our devotion to the One who set us free, a freedom that required Christ’s death. It requires my death to self. The process requires getting very real about my hurts and identifying the feelings that accompany those hurts. In asking Jesus to walk into those feelings with me, miracles begin to take place. That is the point at which I experience the transforming Presence of His very real healing power. That is the point at which He liberates me to be and do all that He plans for me—without operating out of wounds that have colored my perspective, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships.

In experiencing the liberation of forgiveness, I find myself trying to identify what others might be struggling to forgive me for, and praying that they (especially those who have hurt me) would experience the freedom of forgiving me. I must ask and trust Him then, to reveal to me how and when it may be appropriate for me to help them out by asking for their forgiveness. My mentor in this process is Joe Mavsar, who witnessed the Nazi extermination of his parents and five siblings. Years later he returned to Germany, located the Nazis who killed his family, and asked for their forgiveness for all the resentment he had harbored in his heart against them.

*Nancy Schulze
Bethesda, MD CBS*

Prayer Corner



Learning to Love Through Prayer

Most of us are aware of the Scripture that tells us we are not to judge one another: “*Do not judge, or you too will be judged*” (Matthew 7:1). Yet, at some point in our lives most, if not all of us, have judged another individual—both believers and nonbelievers alike. Recognizing that we are not to judge, we may then engage in prayer for the individual, hoping perhaps that this will make up for our judgmental attitude. But we must be careful because we can be judgmental even in our prayers, asking God to change the unacceptable behavior or characteristics of the one toward whom we feel critical.

In my personal experience, if my prayers are sincere and persistent, *I am the one most likely to be changed*. Not infrequently, the difference in me results in a new perception of the individual and at times genuine friendship follows.

I have found one of the great blessings of long-term, persistent, and specific prayer for another person is that I begin to feel as if I know the individual for whom I have been praying, even if we have not met. The person may be a relative of a believing friend, an unbelieving son, daughter, or spouse, or someone facing a catastrophic problem. An important part of persistent prayer is follow-up with concern and a genuine desire to learn more about the person prayed for, often allowing a deep friendship to develop.

When you have invested months and years in prayer for someone, loving them becomes easier and makes prayer more effective. Love that results from persistent prayer demonstrates learning to love through prayer. Prayer becomes a real blessing both for the one who is being prayed for and the one praying. If you have not had this experience, please determine to do so. It will bring a double blessing.

*John Woods
Teaching Director
Rochester Eve, MN CBS*

Called to Serve Others

My husband's parents, Larry and Jean Elliott, served the Lord through humanitarian aid, devoting their lives to helping and loving others as missionaries to Honduras for 25 years, and in their last days, helping the people of Iraq to have clean drinking water.



Larry and Jean Elliott
in Honduras

Both Larry and Jean were from small towns in North Carolina. They met and married while Larry attended North Carolina State University. After graduation Larry served in Vietnam and then worked as a textile engineer in Reidsville, North Carolina. My husband, Todd, was eight years old when his parents felt God's call to become full-time missionaries. Following seminary, the Elliott family accepted a position with the International Mission Board and moved to Honduras, a beautiful, but poor country.



Larry and Jean with our sons,
Blake and Clark, in Honduras

The Elliott family lived in a typical Honduran home in a modest neighborhood. Larry helped start churches, train pastors, and build church buildings and schools. He developed an inexpensive, portable water purification system. His work enabled him to travel throughout Honduras.



Left to Right: Larry, Todd,
Jean, Clark, Blake, and Carol
have dinner in Honduras

Jean coordinated the volunteer "work crews" made up of people from churches in the United States. Jean would arrange travel accommodations, food, transportation, sight seeing, and translating for the short-term missionaries. She also worked with Honduran women and chil-

dren teaching English as a second language, homemaking classes, and Bible study, as well as equipping others to take over these responsibilities.

When their son, Todd, was ready to attend college, he did so in the states. After earning a degree from Baylor University, he took a job in Dallas, which is where we met while attending the same church. We eventually moved to Arlington, Virginia where Todd worked on several government related projects.

After Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras in 1999, Larry was instrumental in coordinating disaster relief efforts, including water purification, creating job opportunities, rebuilding and coordinating volunteer crews that came to help, as well as obtaining and distributing food and housing. He received recognition for his work and was given responsibilities in a larger geographic area. He traveled to Guatemala and Mexico after other natural disasters, and helped local pastors and community agencies better prepare for future needs.



Jean, here with an Iraqi woman,
demonstrates God's love with a smile

Larry and Jean knew that in meeting the physical needs of people, they were demonstrating God's love. Their efforts to provide purified drinking water to communities filled a basic human need, and gave them a chance to share the "Living Water" of the gospel with those thirsty for hope, forgiveness, and love.

The churches in Honduras were now sending out their own missionaries. As they approached retirement, Larry and Jean knew God wanted them to continue to use their experience. They sought the Lord's direction, and the doors opened for them to go to Iraq, where Larry's expertise in water purification was badly needed. In December 2003 they received confirmation that they would be moving to Baghdad. The entire Elliott family gathered at our home in Virginia. Afterward, Larry left for a brief trip to Iraq to begin meeting the people with whom he would be working. Jean returned to Honduras to prepare for a move from their home of 25 years.

Larry returned to Honduras three weeks later to help Jean. In February, they went to Baghdad for a six-week trip to get some projects underway. They

Larry returned to Honduras three weeks later to help Jean. In February, they went to Baghdad for a six-week trip to get some projects underway. They

planned to return to Honduras a final time before moving to Iraq.

The messages we received from them after their arrival in Iraq expressed love for the people and confirmed that this was where they were supposed to be.

Larry and Jean
enjoy dinner
with Karen Watson and
Carrie and David McDonnell.
Carrie was the only
survivor of the drive-by
shooting.



But, their work was cut short on March 15, 2004 when they were killed in a drive-by shooting in Mosul, Iraq. Only one person survived the attack on their car. Jean and Larry were finally Home—not their home in Iraq, North Carolina, or even Honduras—they were home in heaven. *“In my Father’s house are many rooms...I am going there to prepare a place for you...I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am”* (John 14:2-3).

People saw the love of Christ through their lives, yet many in Honduras and Iraq are still without hope. Even in our own neighborhoods, there are people who have no hope.

However difficult Larry and Jean’s deaths have been for us, we have peace. We certainly grieve, but not as those who have no hope. Our peace and hope come from the Lord and faith in His love and plan for each of us. We know that one day we will be reunited in heaven.

God tells us in Scripture that if we love Him, we will show it by our actions. Larry and Jean were role models for all of us, but we do not have to enter full time missionary service to show our love for God. We can serve Him by loving our spouses, our families, and our neighbors.

Carol Elliott
Associate Teaching Director
Arlington, VA CBS

*“Only one life, t’will soon be
passed, only what is done for
Christ will last.”*

~ Jim Elliott ~

God Remains Our Source of Courage

God remains our source of courage when we’re traumatized by terror, when we’re haunted by the headlines and the violence everywhere.

Hear God whisper in the silence,
“Don’t despair, I’m in control.
Hurting hearts and broken cities
will at last one day be whole.”

God can feel the pain of suffering when grenades and bombs explode, when a son is robbed of living at a checkpoint on the road.

Then God whispers in the silence,
“Justice will in time be done.
I will stand with those who need Me
‘til my Kingdom fully comes.”

God can see disasters coming when we try to get away, when the twisting wind and flooding turn our world a greenish gray.

Yet God whispers in the silence,
“In the tumult of the storm,
I won’t ever leave you orphaned
if by faith you’ve been twice-born.”

God knows when our own tsunamis wash away our inner peace, when a doctor’s diagnosis triggers worries that won’t cease.

But God whispers in the silence,
“You can make it. You’ll survive.
Even if you’re taken under,
by My grace you’ll be alive.

God invites us to be trusting when we find that faith is hard, when we’re fearful for our safety and our nerves are frayed or jarred.

Still God whispers in the silence,
“Even when your faith is weak,
I will keep your feet from stumbling
when your way is dark and bleak.”

Greg Asimakopoulos

The Legacy of God's Word

A Personal Word...



...from Camilla

Camilla Seabolt
Executive Director

My Dear Children,

I am giving you this Bible wishing that you may start on your road through life in the right way. Love is the most wonderful thing in the world, but it will not bring happiness unless you have the love of Christ in your hearts. The home is not complete without Christ. I want you to read this book regularly, let it be your daily guide, read it earnestly and prayerfully, and you will have a peace that passeth all understanding, and it will comfort you in your sorrows and add to your pleasures. My most earnest prayers for you have been that you may seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. May God bless you and lead you into paths of righteousness, and you will be happy.

*Lovingly,
Mother*

These words were written by my grandmother, Lottie Honea Leathers. I never met her because she went to be with her Lord on June 14, 1937. She gave this letter and a Bible to her newlywed son and daughter-in-law. It was the pattern of her life to give a letter and a copy of God's Word to each of her children when they married. Her daughter (my Daddy's sister), my dear Aunt Thelma Leathers Cooley, gave Bill and me a Bible the day we married. Inside was written, "May this book be your guide for life."

I was not a Christ follower (Christian) on the day of our wedding. However, five years later (after trying unsuccessfully to run my own life), I would surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. My Aunt Thelma's prayer would be answered. Truly, God's Word is absolutely my guide for life. Since 1992, Bill and I have given a Bible and a copy of my Grandmother Leathers' handwritten letter to each of our children when they married. In September, my oldest nephew married, and we did the same for the newlywed couple.

Don and Jean Peterson and Larry and Jean Elliott left their children—and all of us—a legacy of love for God's Word. The Lord Jesus Christ declared, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Luke 21:33, NAS). Amen! The legacy goes on!



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