

Difficulties and Blessings

On the Upward Way

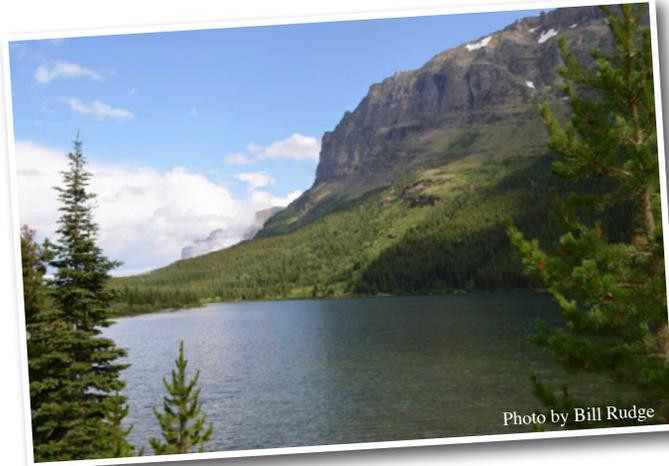
by Bill Rudge

A few years ago some of my family members and friends decided to "rough it" on a two week journey through the western United States. All the inconveniences were worth it because of the breathtaking landscapes, incredible experiences, bountiful blessings and unique witnessing opportunities.

This is a reminder to me that, although we face many challenges and difficult times, our lives are also interspersed with beauty and blessings. It is a picture of the hope that we will someday inherit all that God has prepared for us, making all suffering and difficulties in this life pale in comparison.

As the Apostle Paul stated:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).



Through the Eyes of a Child

by Darlinda McDonald

Two days before kindergarten started, Bill and Karen's granddaughter, Reghan, broke her collarbone. As painful as that was, it also meant she could not take the horse riding lessons she longed for, having even given up dance lessons to fulfill this dream of hers.

The fourth day of kindergarten Bill had the opportunity to take Reghan to school. As he held her backpack, she struggled to pull out her lunch and papers to put into her cubbyhole. Being right-handed, this was quite a task. With her right arm in a sling, Reghan had to use her left hand. Bill gave her a kiss on the forehead and told her to try to have a wonderful day. Despite her physical injury and the disappointment of not being able to take horse riding lessons, she responded, "Papa, I always have a wonderful day!"

Oh, what a lesson we can learn from her words! The Bible clearly instructs us to have this attitude: "This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24). In Philippians (4:4), we are told to "Rejoice in the Lord always." As we make the choice to rejoice, we will learn that "the joy of the LORD is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Pressing On in the Storm

by Darlinda McDonald

On a Sunday evening a few years ago, Bill and Karen were returning to Pennsylvania from Michigan. As they reached Toledo, a fast-moving thunderstorm overtook their vehicle and did not subside for the remaining four hours of the trip. Torrential rain, high winds, thunder and lightning made driving

very difficult. In addition, their visibility was impaired by the darkness and fog. Commercial trucks on either side of their small rental car splashed huge amounts of water on their windshield. In several cities they traveled through, the radio warned of tornadoes and flash flooding. Karen wanted to stop, but Bill felt it safer and best to drive on and chose to look at it as another adventure

God was taking them through.

The decision to keep pressing on despite the weather and treacherous driving conditions can be compared to our Christian walk. Sometimes life throws us unexpected situations that can either stop us in our tracks or make us determined to press on towards the goal. Our choice to walk by faith and not by sight will strengthen our trust in the One Who watches over us and takes care of us.

Just as the Lord brought Karen and Bill home safely through the storm, He will bring you safely to your Heavenly home despite the difficulties and challenges this life holds for you. Jesus promises:

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation [trouble, pressure, affliction, difficulty], but take courage; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

A Journey

Life – like any journey – involves stops along the way. Sometimes there are detours, sometimes dead ends. And sometimes, beautiful and unexpected things happen.... God told me to follow Him. I haven't always known where He's taking me but I know I can trust Him to take me where I need to go.

Cerita Dini, Indonesian Christian convert from Islam

Q & A How can we have hope in the midst of pain and suffering? by BJ Rudge, Ph.D.

Question

Life is often full of pain, suffering and disappointment. So how can we have hope in this miserable existence?

Answer

To some extent I understand your disillusionment with life. We all experience two contrasting realities: the *ideal* and the *real*. The Ideal are those moments of glory that touch our deepest longings (the birth of a baby, falling in love, watching a beautiful sunset, etc.). However, these moments do not fully satisfy because they do not last and are overshadowed by the other reality in life – the *real*.

The Real are those moments in life (pain, suffering, death of a loved one, loss of a job, health crisis, etc.) that make us desire something better than this world.

The Bible tells us that we all will experience both moments of joy and pain in life (Ideal and Real):

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die ... A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time

to mourn, and a time to dance (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4).

Obviously, this raises the question, if God is all-powerful and all-loving then why do we have to experience these contrasting realities? The short answer is we are not always given full clarity on the WHY, but we can know the WHO.

The Who for me is the person of Jesus Christ. Through my own questions and experiences of brokenness in this life, I have found in Him a HOPE and JOY that transcends this world.

The power of the Christian faith is seen in God's response to our pain where HE gave up his very life to redeem us. Through His death comes life and a hope of living in a world where the Ideal will no longer be overshadowed by the Real.

So, my simple answer to the Whys of your life is the Who... Because you will find in Him not only your value and purpose, but your ultimate destiny!

Like you, I yearn for a world without pain and suffering. While this will become a future actuality, there is still an ongoing need of finding rest in Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30).

Hope Even in Sorrow

by BJ Rudge, Ph.D.

On September 14, 2015 our family awoke to the sad reality that our grandmother was nearing the end of her life – the last living member of a whole generation. In a few days my mother would lose her mother; my sister and I would not have a grandmother; my children, nieces and nephew would be without a great grandmother.

My wife and I took our five oldest children to see her in the nursing home. We knew this would be our last time to say, "I love you," to the woman we affectionately called Grandma B. Although in extreme pain, she made every effort to open her eyes for each of my children and even tried to kiss one of my daughter's hands. As each of us said our final goodbye, tears rolled down our faces. I wished I could take away the pain and hurt my children were experiencing.

As much as I want to shelter my children, the realities of living confront us with pain, suffering and death. While my grandmother's circumstance reminded me of this, it was a reminder that I could help my children face this with HOPE, explaining that although physical death is a consequence of sin, it is not the final destiny for those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Indeed, beyond the pain and suffering and coming death of Grandma B, God has prepared a place; not just for her, but for all who have asked Jesus to forgive their sins. So, while it was natural for us to feel sad and cry, we were not without HOPE.

Paul told the believers in Thessalonica:

Dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14).

While we mourned as Grandma B approached her final breath, we rejoiced that our children were blessed to know their great grandma and that we had many wonderful memories with her, knowing that one day we will be with her again – without the pain and suffering.

I held her hand and reminded my grandmother of this promise. I told her of what awaited those who have placed their faith in Jesus (Revelation 21-22) and reminded her this was not the final goodbye but that one day she would be reunited with her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Despite the pain she was in, I can still see the smile on her face as I spoke those words. That is the facial expression I look forward to one day seeing when I also enter into the presence of my Lord and Savior.

My prayer is that when death closes in, you, too, can have a smile on your face because you know that this life is not your final goodbye. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).



Kid's Corner

Bill had applied a little too much essential oil when he walked into BJ's office holding his granddaughter. BJ's response was, "Dad, you stink!" Delaney, age four, immediately put her face even closer to Bill's and said, "That's OK papa, I'll get used to it."

Now I Understand

by Bill Rudge

The day of Moriah Rudge's third ankle surgery (a three hour operation) Karen and I were praying and fasting. I said to Karen, "BJ now understands what we went through with all his soccer injuries and surgeries." Later that night BJ was on his way home from the hospital to be with his other five children before heading back to Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh the next day. He called on his cell phone to say, "Now I understand what it was like for you and mom with all my surgeries."

Second Corinthians 1:4 promises, "God comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." Let us encourage and pray for one another as we face life's burdens.

Moriah had her fifth surgery last month. Pray God heals and uses her for His glory!

Broken Vessels: Come As You Are

A Devotional by Caeleana Dawn Smith
(Bill and Karen's granddaughter)

Bible Verse:

"But I, through the abundance of Your steadfast love, will enter Your house. I will bow down toward Your holy temple in the fear of You. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before me". – Psalm 5:7-8

Devotional:

Growing up, I thought that in order for God to accept my worship I needed to come to Him with a pure, intact heart. And, every Sunday, I fell short and felt unworthy. Abraham was one of the people in the Bible that would be least likely to be used by God; however, despite his brokenness and imperfections, God chose Abraham to be the Father of Nations (Genesis 12). God chooses broken people because He can shape their brokenness into a vessel He can use to bring glory to His name. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). God wants us to come to Him with our brokenness and problems because it is during that time He shapes us into who He created us to be. During our times of brokenness, we are vulnerable and humbled before the Lord.

Application:

Remember that no one is more perfect than Jesus. Do not compare yourselves to the standards of the world because God's standards are different; His are all that matter. During worship, bring your brokenness to Him and lay it at His feet, so He can shape you into the person He created you to be and use you to bring glory to His name.

Prayer:

Dear God, I come to You with a humble and broken heart in need of healing, Lord. Help me not to forget that I am Your child and created in Your image. Lord, I bring my brokenness to You and lay it at Your feet; I surrender it to You, Lord. Heal and shape me into the person You created me to be, Jesus. You are a merciful and loving God. I love You and thank You for loving me. Amen

My Source and Strength

The following words have profound meaning in my relationship and experience with the Lord. They are part of my weekly prayer and fasting list:

Lord, You are my Source and Strength, my God and King, my Savior and Messiah, my Lord and Master, my Creator and Sustainer, my Rock and Fortress, my Shield and Sword, my Protector and Provider, my Helper and Healer ...

Now read the above again as you ponder what each descriptive word about God means in your heart and life.

Bill Rudge

Just As I Am

by Karen Rudge

There may be times you feel the Lord has failed you or is not listening to your cries. Maybe you feel like Charlotte Elliott. She had just turned 30 and her health began to deteriorate. She was in severe pain and became an invalid. She'd always had a sweet disposition but now was getting irritable with people.

One day a minister visited her. She asked him, "Why has God treated me like this? Doesn't He love me?" He replied, "... You are holding on to hate and anger towards God because you have nothing else to hold on to. You need to come to Christ just as you are and find salvation in Him."

That night Charlotte pondered his words about coming to Christ just as she was, and gave her life to Him. Years later on the anniversary of accepting Christ she pondered again the words the minister spoke to her the day he visited and she penned the words to the hymn, *Just As I Am*.

Are you holding on to anger, hate or hurt because of difficult circumstances and wondering why God is allowing this to happen? Consider if you have sincerely given your life to Christ and made Him your Lord. Then come, *just as you are*. Jesus is waiting.

Think About It ...

If God be our God, He will give us peace in trouble. When there is a storm without, He will make peace within. The world can create trouble in peace, but God can create peace in trouble.

– Thomas Watson

Seniors!

by Bill Rudge

Don't look at yourself as growing older,
consider yourself growing wiser.

Don't look at yourself as becoming weaker,
look at yourself as becoming stronger in faith.

Don't look at yourself as having less money,
focus on your riches in Heaven.

Don't look at yourself as getting more forgetful,
**rejoice that your mind is overflowing with a
lifetime of memories.**

Don't look at yourself as being home bound,
**be glad that you can enter the heavenlies through
prayer.**

Don't limit aging to diminishing youthfulness, health,
talents, memory, and independence,
**be thankful it increases knowledge, wisdom, love,
peace, and hope.**

Don't be discouraged because more and more of your
loved ones and friends are passing away,
**be encouraged by the "great cloud of witnesses"
awaiting you in Heaven.**

Don't look at life being too short and death looming
on the horizon,
**reflect on the fact that through Christ you will
inherit an endless Eternity in a perfect body.**

Do Not Despair

by Jim Weikal

The psalmist David declares:

You formed my inward parts; You wove me
in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to
You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows
it very well (Psalm 139:13-14).

As we get older and our bodies begin their inevitable
physical decline, the idea of being "fearfully and
wonderfully made" is not much of a consolation for
our human desire to remain physically viable and
competent. Even the strongest believer is vulnerable
to occasional despair at the loss of former youthful
capabilities. However, allow the apostle John to
encourage you with these thoughts:

1. You are a child of God.
2. Jesus will come again.
3. You will be like Him.
4. You "will see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

As a believer in Jesus Christ, you will be fearfully
and wonderfully made *again* because you will receive
a redeemed, glorified body that will be like Jesus as He
is now (cf. Romans 8:23, 30).

PRAYER FOCUS

Africa

Nigeria's population is projected to become the third-largest nation in the world (surpassing the United States). Bill Rudge Ministries has been reaching out to Nigeria, and many other African countries for decades. Bill has appeared on national television in Nigeria and spoken at conferences. We have responded to requests for Bill and BJ's books from thousands of pastors, missionaries, and spiritually hungry people – some facing intense persecution from extreme Islamists. We have sent tens of thousands of our books and audio messages to Nigeria and several other African nations. Please pray that God continues to touch the lives of these people who are so hungry for God's Word and so appreciative for our biblical resources that help them grow in their faith. Many to whom we have supplied our resources for many years, are now boldly proclaiming the Gospel in their cities and villages.



This amazing group volunteered time and skills to reshingle BJ Rudge's house – Mercer County Chapter, Men With Vision: Bill Anthony, Tom Anthony, Dave Campbell, Randy Carnino, Chris Crastina, Rollie Fenton, Mike Godinich, Bob Ramp, Norm Simons, and Jerry Zahniser.

The Best and Most Faithful

While touring the ministry center recently a successful businessman from out of state said to Bill, "I support a lot of ministries but I have never seen a ministry like yours that is so effective in maximizing its resources and has so many volunteers willing to help in any way possible!" Bill replied, "We may not have an abundance of funds but God has faithfully supplied everything we need!" BRM supporters and volunteers are truly some of the best and most faithful people in the world. Thanks for standing with us!

In Memory Of

Julie Carnino

by Mom & Dad
Randy Carnino & Family

William B. Gibb
by Audrey Colombo

Glenn F. Morris
by Marilyn Morris

Phillip Scardinia Jr.
by Judy Reaney (Sister)

Give Us Your Bible

Norm and Sue Simons will be taking more truck loads of BRM books and audio messages to various missions who distribute them to spiritually hungry people and Christian leaders around the world.

Drop off any new (or like new) Bibles, Christian books, CDs, DVDs and devotionals at Bill Rudge Ministries any Tuesday between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Please, no cassettes, videos or materials that are not in good condition.

Also, thanks to everyone who has given to help sponsor World Outreach packages and the translation of Bill and BJ's books and audio messages into other languages.