

Anne Graham Lotz: 'What Do You Believe?'

In these days of chaos and confusion, division and distrust, turmoil and trouble, anger and apathy, we need to know what we believe.

When political correctness and polarization, flash mobs and social media create a climate that increasingly ridicules and marginalizes people of faith, we need to know what we believe.

When active shooters target worshippers in a Baptist church, or worshippers in a synagogue, we need to know what we believe.

What do you believe? This is what I believe:

–I believe in one God who is three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I believe in God the Father of Jesus Christ, Creator of everything, who loved the world He created and sent His only Son to be our Savior, that whoever believes in Him would not perish in eternal separation from God but would have everlasting life.

–I believe that God the Son is Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior sent by God, Israel's Messiah, born of a virgin, fully man and fully God.

–I believe that God the Holy Spirit quickens us from death to life, indwells all those who receive Jesus Christ by faith as Lord and Savior and continuously conforms believers to the image of Jesus Christ.

–I believe the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is sufficient in itself to make atonement for the sin of the world, an atonement available to all who repent of their sin and believe in Him alone for forgiveness and salvation.

-I believe Jesus Christ dies on the cross, was buried, and the third day, He bodily rose from the dead, guaranteeing the bodily resurrection of all those who have received eternal life through faith in Him.

-I believe salvation from judgment, forgiveness of sin and eternal life are free gifts of God's grace and cannot be earned, deserved, inherited or bought.

-I believe only those who believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him into their inner being will escape eternal judgment and receive entrance into heaven.

-I believe in the imminent, visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ to this earth, to reign in righteousness and justice.

-I believe the true church is not an organization, but the body of Christ, made up of those who have personally trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, publicly confessed Him as Lord and remember Him through holy Communion.

-I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, inspired by the Spirit of God, without error and thus the supreme and final authority for faith and practice. I believe that daily Bible reading and prayer are as necessary for the sustenance of spiritual life as food and water are necessary for physical life.

-I believe that all believers are commanded to be witnesses for Christ, sharing the gospel to the whole world.

This is what I believe. {eoa}

Anne Graham Lotz, *second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her latest, The Daniel Prayer.*

This is a transcription of an mp.3 file posted at .

These Christians May Not Be as Different From You as You Think

Note: This is Part 2 of a two-part interview with author Darla Weaver about her new book, A Gathering of Sisters (Herald Press). To read Part 1, [click here](#).

Q: What does daily life look like for a Mennonite?

In some ways being a Mennonite is not so different from being anyone else. We have one life to live, we work to make a living, take care of our families, make time for the things we enjoy, eat, sleep, pay our bills and taxes. Some days are better than others as for anyone else.

In other ways, it's vastly different from the culture around us. Partly in the conservative way we live, perhaps even more in the way we look at life.

The most important goals for most of us are: Faith in God and in His Son who died on the cross for sinners; growing into a closer walk with him; learning to love, serve and obey His commandments. These beliefs help shape our lives as we grow older.

Old Order Mennonite life is family-oriented. It centers around our church, our families, our schools and neighborhoods. It has been said, "Destroy the home and you destroy the nation," which has been proven true in various eras of history. God's plan for one husband and one wife, working together to care for their children, is a most important foundation for our lifestyle.

But, of course, we are far from perfect. Although the majority of us strive to live lives that demonstrate a faith and love and steadfastness rooted deep in God and his word—the Bible—we make plenty of mistakes too. Stumbling and falling and getting up to try again, praying that God will help us do better tomorrow, is a part of life, too.

Q: Do Old Order Mennonites believe in the new birth?

Of course. We believe the Bible truth: “Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

It is when one believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God that God’s Spirit comes into one’s heart. It is by repenting of and turning away from our sins that they can be forgiven. It is by faith in God’s power, and asking in prayer, help us break away from sin’s strongholds. And it is because of that new birth that we desire to live a life that God can bless and sanctify.

But those who grow up in Christian homes may not always be able to pinpoint a certain day or year when their new birth occurred. To say, “When were you born again?” is a little like asking, “When did you grow up?” Sometimes there is a specific date to remember. Just as often there isn’t, because we grew so gradually into the awareness of our need for a personal Savior.

Was there ever a time I didn’t know and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to die for my sins? If so, I can’t remember it. I did have to come to the place where I was willing to accept that for myself, acknowledge all the sin in my life and turn to God for help and forgiveness. That day came, gradually. When I asked Christ into my heart to be ruler there, it led to more years of growing up, and into what it means to be one of his disciples.

When I was born physically, I still had much to learn. When I was born again spiritually, I had just as much to learn about

living a Christ-centered life. I'm still learning about it. I imagine I'll be learning more for as long as I live.

Q: What could a visitor expect at one of your church services?

Church services last around 2 to 2 ½ hours and are in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect, although the Bible reading is done in German. They begin with everyone singing together. One of the ministers then has a short sermon, which is followed by silent prayer. Then a second minister explains a chapter from the New Testament, or part of a chapter that he had selected and studied previously. Services are closed with an audible prayer, more singing and the benediction.

It's a special time of singing, praying and worshipping God together with our congregation, and is full of encouragement and inspiration.

Q: Throughout most of the country, we would find most businesses open at least part of the day on Sunday. Would we find any businesses in your community open on Sunday?

"Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work" (Ex. 20:8-9).

When Sunday comes around, those of us who own businesses do close them, and most of our work is put aside. Sunday is kept as a day to go to church to worship God, then spend it socializing with family and friends. It is a day to get together for meals, visit families who have a new baby or just relax at home.

Sometimes when it's warm, we go fishing or hiking at nearby state parks or in our own woods. Sometimes we go on picnics or visit the neighbors. In the evening, the youth group gathers at one of their homes to play volleyball, sing and eat.

Sunday is set aside for worship, rest and family time. It's refreshing, both spiritually and physically, to have one day

each week reserved for that. Work almost always waits. Worshiping God is first priority, then being with family.

Q: What kind of activities are your youth groups involved in?

Most of the young people are part of a structured youth group that gathers each Sunday evening in one of their homes. If it's warm, they play volleyball before singing hymns. A snack is served, unless everyone is invited for supper, when an entire meal is served. This can be quite an undertaking for the hostess, depending on the size of the group.

While Sunday evening gatherings are a regular thing, there are sometimes "work bees" during the week, when the young people get together to help someone who needs it. They might go to sing at a nursing home, go skating in winter, fishing in summer or other upbuilding activities.

The majority of the young people are a part of this group and are dedicated to serving God. However, the upper teen years can be hard whether you're Mennonite or not, and there are always some who drift away and choose not to live as part of our culture.

Q: Can you tell us about your private schools?

Parochial schools are a vital part of our neighborhoods. Three men serve as the school board for each one, and they are in charge of hiring teachers, handling the financial part of running a school, upkeep of the building and any other need that comes up. They serve in three-year terms and are up for one re-election at the regular yearly community meeting where all directors and trustees for various things are selected.

Most schoolhouses have two classrooms and two teachers. The number of children attending each one varies greatly. Parents pay a yearly tuition which covers the teachers' pay, books and supplies, and building repairs.

Most children start first grade in September after their sixth birthday. They graduate after completing eighth grade.

Each school day starts with a Bible story, reciting the Lord's prayer together and singing. Lessons include, but are not limited to, reading, writing, math, spelling, English, vocabulary, history, geography, some science and nature study. Curriculum varies a little from school to school and from one area to the next, but these are the basics.

Religion is not taught as a subject. Rather, faith in God and Christian living as based on the Bible, is woven into almost every textbook and lesson. It's a way of life for us and can't be separated into a single subject. {eoa}

Darla Weaver is a homemaker, gardener, writer and Old Order Mennonite living in the hills of southern Ohio. She is the author of Water My Soul, Many Lighted Windows and Gathering of Sisters. Weaver has written for Family Life, Ladies Journal, Young Companion and other magazines for Amish and Old Order Mennonite groups. Before her three children were born she also taught school. Her hobbies are gardening and writing.

In Seasons of Change, How Will You Choose?

Fall ... the time when (in places other than Florida!) nature dons flamboyant garb as God paints His world with vibrant colors. Lush, supple leaves in shades of green gradually change color until the green is just a memory, replaced by vivid red, yellow and orange.

But where do the fall colors come from? What causes the bright

transformation each year?

Actually, those other colors were there the whole time.

Remember middle school science class? Chlorophyll in the leaves creates the green color. Other chemicals, such as carotene, create orange, yellow and red pigments. The other colors are always there. But the work of the chlorophyll overpowers those chemicals and conceals the additional hues.

Shorter days and cooler temperatures cause the chlorophyll in the leaves to break down. Since the chlorophyll is responsible for the green color, as it breaks down, the other pigments are free to strut their stuff.

Of course, you know there's a spiritual application in all this, don't you?

Life can be moving along, fresh and lush. Good things are happening, and you're growing in the warmth of the sun. And then suddenly, there's a chill in the air as tragedy strikes.

You lose your job.

The bank is about to foreclose.

Your husband wants a divorce.

The prognosis is terminal.

And you and I have a choice.

- We can curl up in a corner and surrender to defeat. Or we can allow the cold circumstances to reveal strength we never knew was there as we depend on God for His upholding.
- Instead of being overpowered by a situation that would conquer most people, we can stand firm in the power of our heavenly Father.
- We can become bitter because life didn't turn out the

way we wanted. Or we can grow in the grace of the Holy Spirit as we follow His leading.

- We can resent our losses. Or we can trust the Lord for what He will give us in their place.

Our choice will determine the colors that shine through our life.

Will you and I allow disappointment to be His appointment?

Will we allow God to turn our messes into messages?

Our tests into a testimony?

And our trials into triumphs?

Sometimes green is just for a season. But there's a season for reds, oranges and yellows, too. And even when those vibrant colors turn brown and it feels like there's no coming back...

Fall follows summer.

Winter follows fall.

And spring follows winter.

And with spring comes tender shoots with lush green leaves—again.

What season are you in?

Which colors are you displaying? {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

This article originally appeared at .

4 Christ-Focused Ways to Cultivate a Thankful Heart

Have you ever noticed that we don't naturally live thankfully?

Sure, there are the "glass-half-full" people who tend to be more sanguine, and therefore think more positively. But that's not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about the fact that we don't naturally live in a way where we are continually aware of the little things in life for which we should be grateful.

What I've found is that those who do live that way most often point back to a specific event in their life that caused them to become keenly aware of their own mortality and the profound need to use what time they have left in life to be an example to others.

Thankfulness is something that must be developed, cultivated.

Like godly character, thankfulness isn't a gift or personality trait we're born with. It is a spiritual discipline that must be developed, exercised and grown in our lives.

I believe this is why Scripture instructs us over and over to be thankful, to give thanks always and continually.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live with someone who gave thanks continually?

I find it odd that as a society we denigrate people who live this way. We call them "Pollyanna," say they wear rose-colored glasses and insinuate that they don't live in reality.

As if reality demands that we are cynical, negative and critical.

When bad things happen to good people, good people have two choices:

- Allow the negative circumstance to make them bitter, cynical and angry.
- Allow God to do a work of grace in their hearts so He can bring good out of the negative circumstance and thus glorify Himself through it.

Imagine what life would be like if we continually responded by allowing God to do a work of grace in our hearts.

This response isn't natural, but it can be cultivated through discipline and renewing our minds.

Here are four ways we can cultivate a thankful heart so we live life giving thanks continually.

1. Memorize and meditate on Scripture.

If we want to renew our mind, we must make it a daily discipline to memorize and meditate on Scripture. Scripture memorization and biblical meditation retrain the mind so it comes into agreement with God's thoughts.

It replaces the negative thought patterns with God's Word, so that in difficult circumstances, our thoughts cease to default to negativity, self-doubt, criticism and cynicism but rather to biblical declarations and principles.

2. Pray the Scriptures.

This is different from memorizing and meditation. Certainly, it will help you do both, but it is a different practice entirely.

By praying Scripture, you are taking your present circumstance

and coming into agreement with God about it.

Let's say you begin experiencing discrimination on the job because you are a Christian. Your boss cuts your hours, purposely schedules you on Sundays so you can't go to church, or makes degrading remarks around you to others. But you can pray Scripture to bring your heart back into right alignment and guard against bitterness and anger.

"God, Your Word says that no weapon formed against me shall prosper and every tongue that rises against me in judgement, I will condemn. You said this is my heritage from You and my righteousness comes from You. Now I pray that the weapon the enemy has formed against me at my job will not prosper! Not only that, may that weapon be for his destruction. I pray that you will condemn and silence the tongue of the enemy against me and win the victory for me at my job. I pray that this will be a testimony of your greatness and power and will bring You glory. Amen."

Learn to take Scripture, personalize it and apply it to your present circumstance so you can see your life through God's perspective and through the lens of Scripture.

3. Keep a journal.

This is a habit every Christian should learn to develop, and I believe this for a couple of reasons.

First, the act of writing is extremely powerful. By slowing down to write our thoughts out by hand, our thinking processes deepen, and we are more aware of our emotions.

I strongly believe that by slowing down and becoming more mindful of what is in our heart, we would see God's hand at work in areas of our lives where we have previously been unaware.

Second, by keeping a written record of those things for which

we are thankful, we are able to go back and remind ourselves of the goodness of the Lord. We see this example throughout Scripture.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we read repeated accounts of how God freed His people, won battles for them on their behalf and delivered them from their enemies. One could argue that at times the Bible is repetitive, yet at closer examination, we see that by repeating the works of God over and over, God's people were encouraging their hearts in the Lord.

They were reminding their hearts that what God did in the past, He will do again!

This is an important practice for us today.

Victories that God won 20 years ago are perhaps forgotten today, but having a written reminder will keep them in the forefront of our mind as we rehearse the goodness and greatness of God.

4. Practice authentic worship.

Worship is powerful tool in the arsenal of the believer.

True, authentic worship shifts our focus off of ourselves and our circumstances onto God, His greatness and His sovereignty.

God's worth is not determined by what value He has to us:

- What He has done for us.
- What He means to us.
- How we feel about Him.

His worth actually has nothing at all to do with us at all! His worth is determined by who He is.

By taking ourselves entirely out of the picture and making who He is our focus: His name, His character, His power and His

sovereignty the focus of our worship, we gain eternal perspective.

Suddenly, our circumstances are no longer so overwhelming in comparison to eternity.

For this reason we do not lose heart: Even though our outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day. Our light affliction, which lasts but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

{eoa}

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together, they live with their two active boys in the country, where she enjoys fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an associate degree in practical theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of "A Little R & R," where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You may follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

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The Supernatural Power of Your Spoken Words

“I stand in awe many times over as I witness the prophetic healing power of the Spirit change and rearrange the lives of God’s people forever. A simple command of faith, ‘In Jesus’ name, I command this cancerous tumor to shrivel up and die,’ and by morning, the large tumor is gone, and a woman’s life is dramatically altered.” –*The Prophetic and Healing Power of Your Words*

I believe the Word of God when it says, “as [Jesus] is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17b). Jesus was a man filled with faith when He walked this earth in human form. And everything He did while here, He did as we would do. He did not cheat. He did not call upon His God-powers in heaven. He left them there and came to show us how to live by faith according to the Father’s ways.

Take time to ponder upon this thought for a moment, “As Jesus is, so are we in this world.” What an amazing word from God! We are to emulate Him, act like Him, love like Him and even speak like Him. And just how does He speak? With authority. He was not passive with His words. He always spoke with a purpose. His words cut to the heart of the matter. He rebuked the religious, was compassionate with the hurting, put Satan and his demons in their place every time and since His childhood on this earth, spoke in the realm of the prophetic.

He has a way with His words that dramatically alters the lives of those He comes into contact with, and so should we. We are to be like Him, and use this gift, the power of the spoken word, and prophesy healing to all those in need in our arena of influence. Romans 4:17b teaches us to “call those things that do not exist as though they did.” This is prophesying. And it is not as mysterious as one might think. We do it all

the time; every time we open our mouths, we prophesy either life or death (see Prov. 18:21).

With all of this in mind, perhaps we should learn to use this supernatural power, the gift of spoken language, in such a way that we create a change, alter the destiny of the lives of those around us for the glory of God. We must learn how to surrender our words to Him and allow Holy Spirit to play a vibrant melody on the strings of our vocal chords.

I can teach you how to use your words to dramatically alter the lives of those around you for the glory of the Lord, especially in these last days, in my new book, *The Prophetic and Healing Power of Your Words*. I even give you the opportunity to **check out a free chapter** for yourself. Or **click here to purchase your copies now.** {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .

Anne Graham Lotz: How You Can Bear Fruit for the Kingdom

Note: This is an edited transcript of a recent devotional message Anne gave to her staff at AnGeL Ministries after her breast cancer surgery and one week before her first chemo infusion.

My aim in ministry is not ministry. My aim is to bring God glory and to bear much fruit. In John 15, verse eight says,

“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

So if my purpose is to glorify God, then I can do that. If I'm traveling, I can do that from on a platform, I can do that if I'm in the pulpit, I can do that if I'm doing an interview, I can do that if I'm on a chemo bed. My purpose is to bring Him glory, but in order to bear much fruit, to bring him even more glory, then it requires several things.

[My husband] Danny had apple trees and pear trees and fig trees. He didn't have any grapevines, but if he did—well, none of those things try hard to bear fruit. But fruit bearing, you just have to be whatever kind of tree it is, or what kind of vine it is, and then meet certain conditions and the fruit comes. The vine or the tree doesn't try hard, and it's not trying to pop the fruit out. It is who it is, and then it meets the conditions, and the fruit comes.

So the same thing is true with us. You don't have to try hard to bear fruit. You don't have to try to push it out, you pop it out, you just meet the conditions.

You Must Have a Connection to the Vine

The first condition is that you have a connection to the vine. And in chapter 15, verses four and five, He says, “remain in me, as I also remain in you.” And “remain” is to abide or stick around. “As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing.”

In the storm—we're going to lose some branches. The branch can lie there; it's just going to die—there'll be no fruit at all. But the branch has to be connected to the vine, and it's an organic connection; it's not organizational. So it's not belonging to church; it's not belonging to a ministry. It's

not doing Christian activities; it's not having devotions. The connection has to be organic, which is why Jesus said, "You must be born again."

And that's the only way you can get connected to the vine, where you come by faith, which I did when I was 8 or 9 years of age—told Jesus I was sorry for my sin, asked Him to forgive me, come into my heart. and I was born again, received His Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is the sap in the vine. Once I had that connection, then I'm organically attached, and the sap has access directly into my life. So to bear fruit, you must be connected to the vine.

You Must Be Cultivated

Second, you have to be cultivated, and cultivation requires pruning. Not long after my surgery, I decided we had to cut down my rosebushes, so my daughter and I went out, and I would clip and she would pull, I would clip and she would pull, and we cut them down. But the purpose of pruning, as I understand it, is when you do that, you're forcing the connection between the branch and the vine to be enlarged so that more sap can get through. And when more sap comes through in the branch, that's when you have more roses, you have more grapes, you have more apples, because the strength is focused in that part of the branch.

So pruning is necessary if you want more fruit than what you're getting. Last year, in February, I had the landscapers prune my rose bushes down to the nub. Now they just sawed it right down. And those rose bushes that went from one foot. They were probably six feet tall, and they were covered with blooms all spring, all summer. And so sometimes, God has to prune you back to what I call the nub, in order to produce much fruit.

And so pruning can be a hospital bed; pruning can be a loss of a job; pruning can be anything that's a cutaway. Pruning can

be breast cancer, and the chemo treatments and the radiation that follows. And I feel like this is what God is showing me, that he's pruning me, and the gardener knows what he's doing. He knows exactly how to prune your plant. He knows exactly what to cut out, what to clip back, in order to make you as productive as your life can be, which is what you want because that's what brings Him glory. So you need to be cultivated.

You Must Be Cleansed

And the third thing is that you need to be cleansed. Plants as you know, get blight and disease. And sometimes they have to be cut back and cut out for that reason. For you and me, I think this has to do with confession of sin, and keeping short accounts and making sure that the sap of the Holy Spirit flow is unhindered through the branch. I give the illustration when we're growing up, there's a big bend in the driveway going up to the house, and the spring was beside the road. And that spring just flowed across the road. But in the wintertime, that water across the road would freeze and create a hazard. So Mother put a pipe in the spring, and a bucket under the pipe so that the water flowed through the pipe into the bucket and then down beside the road. And so it didn't go across the road, and the ice hazard was removed.

Once in a while, the water would start flowing across the road again, and we would see that the pipe had gotten clogged up. So the spring, once again, was running across the road. And Mother would take a stick, and she'd run it through the pipe, and out would come a little pebble or a salamander or rotted leaf, and it would clear it, but then the water would start to flow again. It would fill up the bucket and go down beside the road.

If our lives are like the pipe, and the Holy Spirit is like the water that comes through, the living water, then sometimes there can be a blockage. And it can be a little hard pebble of unforgiveness or bitterness. It can be a slippery salamander

of something that is nasty that we shouldn't be involved in, but we sort of indulge ourselves in. It can be a rotted leaf, something from the past, a memory, but you take the stick of the cross, you run it through, you bring that to the Lord, and you confess it and ask Him to remove it and to cleanse you. Because whatever it is is not worth the blockage of the Holy Spirit, because the blockage of the Holy Spirit is going to cost you the fruit and diminish the glory of God that you're seeking to give Him.

So just make sure that you are cleansed, and I know you're forgiven if you've been to the cross, but that's different than being cleansed every day so that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Be filled with the Spirit," that's a command, and the Holy Spirit is there, but we block His filling through those sins in our lives that we need to confess and remove. And then when we do that coupled with the cultivation, then the sap is full and free and available to bear much fruit.

There Must Be Communication

The fourth condition is communication. And this is one that isn't quite obvious; it should be, but so obvious that we miss it. But in John 15:7, he says, "If you remain in me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

So I think, Well, Lord, ask what I wish? A new car: a new house, a new spouse. Or God, how about just delivering me from the situation I'm in? You know, if You say I could ask for anything and You'll give it to me, then I want You to take this away.

But that's not what He's saying. I think He's saying, "if you remain in me and my words, if you ask me for more fruit, I'll give it to you." So once we're connected to the vine, once we're being cultivated, once we've made sure we're cleansed,

then ask for much fruit, and He will give it to us.

And so that's what I'm doing. I can tell you: I know I'm connected to the vine. I know I'm being cultivated. I know he's pruning back, and I know I'll do my best to be cleansed and filled with the Spirit. And then I'm going to ask. And I have asked, I'm asking you all to ask with me that not only I will bear much fruit, but this ministry, in a way that we don't know right now.

I will tell you this. This is so interesting, the timing. You know, my book, *Just Give Me Jesus* came out when we started the revivals. I did not plan that; people thought it was such a clever marketing trick. I never planned that, I wrote that book, and then we started the revivals and named them the same. It helped the revivals, and it helped launch the book. It was No. 1 on the best-seller list for how many weeks. So now I'm writing a book on the Holy Spirit, and that should come out in October, which is when I finish all these treatments.

I'm just wondering if the Lord is just going to set me aside for a year. I have a lot of people interested in praying. I have a book launch, where I come out for the first time publicly and share some of this, but put the focus on who the Holy Spirit is. He's Jesus in us, and He can give you peace in the middle of the storm; He can give you much eternal fruit when you're all pruned back.

I believe God's timing is just perfect. When you look at things from His perspective, I think we have much fruit to come; and in the meantime, He'll give us things, whether it's the blogs that we write or the videos that we do, or other things that God gives us a privilege doing. There will be opportunities to serve Him in such a way that brings Him glory. And that's our aim. ... the aim is to bring Him glory, and we do it through those avenues. ... Our main purpose is to bring Him glory, and in order for that to be possible, we have

to be connected to the vine; we have to be cultivated; we have to be cleansed; and we have to communicate with Him that our heart's desire is that He will be glorified in our lives and in our ministry.

So let me just pray and seal that. *So Lord Jesus, we thank You so much that the Father is the gardener, and we thank You for that. We thank You that You are the vine, and we are attached to You. We thank you for the dear Holy Spirit, the sap that flows in and through us because of all that you've done, and thank you that we're connected. Thank you for the cultivation, Lord, and I can honestly say it hurts to be pruned back, but Lord, we want it. It feels good to hurt in that way because we are very expectant that we're going to have much to come from this and You're going to be even more glorified so we look forward to seeing what You're doing.*

So we thank You for the promise that when we abide in You and Your words abide in us that we can ask whatever we want, Lord, in your name, and you'll grant it. So we're asking that you would give us much fruit that we might bring you more glory, and we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen. {eoa}

Anne Graham Lotz, second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her latest, *The Daniel Prayer*.

Listen to Anne's message at .

A 'Gathering of Sisters' You

Won't Want to Miss

*Note: This is Part 1 of a two-part interview with author Darla Weaver about her new book, *A Gathering of Sisters* (Herald Press). To read Part 2, [click here](#).*

***Gathering of Sisters* tells about getting together weekly with your mother and sisters. Tell us a little bit about your family.**

There were five of us sisters, growing up together with our four little brothers in the white farmhouse our parents built. The nine of us kept this five-bedroom house brimming with life, and crowded with both happiness and some inevitable sadness. We did a lot of living and a lot of learning in that house.

And then we all grew up.

I was the first to leave. On a warm and sunshiny day in September 2000, after the leaves on the lofty silver maples had faded from summer-green and before they wore brightly flaming autumn shades, I was married to Laverne Weaver. It was the first wedding in that mellowing white house we all called home. Four more were to follow in the next several years. Except for my youngest brother, we've all left home. Most of us live close, but one brother lives in Alaska.

Q: Why did you decide to make an effort to get together once a week?

Our Tuesday happened more by accident than by conscious planning. We never sat down and planned for Tuesdays. But after I moved six miles away to my own home, I gradually acquired the habit of going back to the old home place and spending a day each week with my family. On Monday I always had laundry to do, and scores of other jobs to tackle after the weekend. And before we had children, I worked part time in a bakery at the end of the week.

That left Tuesdays. Tuesday really was the perfect in-between sort of day to spend with Mom and my sisters. On Tuesday, the five us sisters still come home. We pack up the children—all 18 of them during summer vacation—and head to the farm.

We go early. I drive my spirited little mare, Charlotte, and she trots briskly along the six miles of winding country roads. Regina and Ida Mae live much closer. They married brothers, and their homes are directly across the fields from Dad and Mom's farm. They usually bike, with children's noses pressed against the bright mesh of the carts they tow behind their bicycles. Or they walk, pushing strollers over the back fields and up the lane. And Emily and Amanda, who also married brothers and live in neighboring houses about five miles away, come together with everyone crammed into one carriage.

Q: Do all the kids enjoy Tuesdays as well?

The children love Tuesdays. On warm days, they play on the slide and the swings in the cool shade of the silver maples, jump on the trampoline, run through their grandpa's three greenhouses, ride along on the wagon going to the fields where produce by the bushels and bins is hauled to the packing shed. They build hay houses in the barn and explore the creek. The boys take poles and hooks and bait and spend hours fishing and playing in the small creek that flows beneath the lane and through the thickets beside the pasture fence. They catch dozens of tiny blue gills and northern creek chubs, most of which they release back into the water hole, a deep pool that yawns at the mouth of a large culvert, to be caught again next week. They work too, at mowing lawn, raking, lugging flower pots around or anything else Grandma needs them to do, but most often Tuesdays on Grandpa's farm are play days.

Q: What do you do when you are all gathered together?

We don't exactly play, yet Tuesdays for us are also about relaxing. Of course, there is always work to do—just making

dinner for such a group is a big job—but the day is more about relaxing, reconnecting, visiting and sharing. We talk a lot; we laugh a lot; sometimes we cry. Tuesday is about being sisters, daughters, moms. It's about learning what is happening in each other's lives.

Every day is different, yet every Tuesday follows a predictable pattern that varies with the seasons. Winter finds us inside, close to the warmth humming from the woodstove, absorbed in wintertime pursuits which include card-making, crocheting, sewing, puzzles—jigsaw, crossword, sudoku—and reading books and magazines. But as soon as spring colors the buds of the maples with a reddish tinge, we spend more time outside. The greenhouses are loaded with plants, the flowerbeds full of unfurling perennials, and the grass is greening in the yard again.

In summer, while the garden and fields burst with produce, the breezy shade of the front porch calls. It wraps around two sides of the house and is full of Mom's potted plants and porch furniture. We sit there to shell peas, husk corn or just sip a cold drink and cool off after a warm stroll through the flowers.

Then autumn echoes through the country, the leaves flame and fall, and we rake them up—millions of leaves. Where we rake one Tuesday is covered again by the next, until at last the towering maples stand disrobed of leaves, their amazing 70-foot branches a wavering fretwork against a sky that is sullen with winter once more.

Q: How did your sisters react to the news about you writing this book?

The initial reactions varied.

“I suppose you would change all our names,” Mom said after a while.

That was a new thought for me, and one I didn't want to consider. "Oh, no, that would be much too hard. We would just use everyone's real name." Merely the thought of renaming 18 children exhausted me.

"Maybe you'll have to Sunday us up a bit," Emily suggested with a laugh. "Make sure we all use our best manners when you write about us."

"Oh, yes, I won't write anything you wouldn't like," I promised.

"She will still have to claim us as sisters," Regina points out, as usual finding a positive angle to the topic. "She won't make us sound too odd or ornery or anything."

I promised not to.

Regina's oldest daughter, Jerelyn, who at 14 has graduated from eighth grade and is again spending Tuesdays with us, considered staying home for the entire next year to keep her name out of the book. But on a whole, no one really objected. Like Laverne and our children, Mom and my sisters are almost used to my compulsive scribbling. Almost. {eoa}

Darla Weaver is a homemaker, gardener, writer and Old Order Mennonite living in the hills of southern Ohio. She is the author of *Water My Soul*, *Many Lighted Windows* and *Gathering of Sisters*. Weaver has written for *Family Life*, *Ladies Journal*, *Young Companion* and other magazines for Amish and Old Order Mennonite groups. Before her three children were born, she also taught school. Her hobbies are gardening and writing.

The Amazing Power of Your Words

Have you ever stopped to think about the power of your speech? According to Proverbs 18:21 you have the power of life and death in your tongue. That's amazing strength, and not to be taken lightly. Consider the possibilities your miracle-working words possess. With all this power in your tongue, perhaps it would be worthwhile to choose words with care.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Prov. 18:21).

Every day, we are given opportunities to release the power of life and death with our words. According to God's Word, what we say really matters. What are we saying? What should we say? And what should we not say?

“He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise; and he who shuts his lips is esteemed a man of understanding” (Prov. 17:27-28).

If we will learn how to hold our tongues, we will keep ourselves from a heap of unnecessary troubles.

“Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23).

The power of our speech runs deep into the affairs of life and our words can be life-giving. Are we using them in a godly and mature manner? Are we producing what God desires us to produce—life?

“The words of a man's mouth are like deep waters [copious and difficult to fathom]; the fountain of [mature, godly] wisdom is like a bubbling stream [sparkling, fresh, pure, and life-

giving]” (Prov. 18:4, AMP).

I say it this way in my new book, *The Prophetic and Healing Power of Your Words*, “God creates the power of the tongue to release healing, to create miracles and to build one another up in the faith—not to tear down and discourage one another.” If you want to learn more about the prophetic and healing power of your words, check out the free preview of chapter 1. {eoa}

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9 Essentials to Become Part of God’s Answer to the Present Darkness

(This address was first given at the 2018 International House of Prayer University commencement. It has been modified slightly for publication.)

I am both excited and sober about this generation’s future. I am excited because of the many who are responding to the Lord, but I am sober because I am aware of the difficulties of the context and culture that you will engage with for the sake of the kingdom.

This is, objectively, one of the most difficult hours in history to engage a generation with the gospel. Never before has a generation been more desperate for truth yet suspicious

of anyone who possesses it. The layers of defensiveness and armor around the unsaved heart, filled with pain, hurt, disappointment and fear, is unlike any time in history. I believe that we are on the verge of facing one of the greatest evangelistic crises ever. Methods and strategies will not be sufficient to face the threat and the challenge that is before us.

The only way forward is the plan of God to raise up burning and shining lamps in the context of historic breakthrough and revival.

Raising Up Burning Ones

Therefore, we want to build on the flame that the Lord has ignited within our hearts. We must continue to take the flame within and press on to fight for a bonfire that will blaze within us under even the greatest of pressures. We want to press on from ones transformed by the love of Jesus unto becoming “burning and shining lamps”; becoming true friends of the Bridegroom in an hour where the greatest threat to the future is not political or moral confusion, nor liberalism or capitalism, nor social or racial conflicts, but a man-centered, sentiment-driven, thankless and self-absorbed form of Christianity that denies its power and exalts our comfort and our feelings above His sacrifice and His passion.

How do we engage this generation in crisis? How do we run the race to win? How do we become the burning and shining ones that the Lord wants to use as light for a generation that loves darkness? Here are some key truths that we must cling to that the enemy will seek to steal, this culture will seek to quench and diminish, and our own flesh will war against in the face of the pressures and trials that are before us.

Roadmap to Success:

- **Jesus is the source and starting point of all things** and is leading this movement. “One thing” must never become

cliche or trite to us.

- **The Beatitudes of Jesus are the core expression of first-commandment love.** This is who we want to become by grace because we love Him.
- **The rest of the Sermon on the Mount is our road map to second-commandment love.** This is how we'll become who God made us to be because we love Him.
- **The "good eye" is the key to everything.** We must live before His eye in a singular, focused way. The fear of the Lord is the continual resolve to remember that He sees, He remembers and He rewards because He is moved and filled with indescribable jealousy and commitment to His desired end for our hearts and our lives.
- **Wisdom is prioritizing a flowing heart alive in the love of Jesus.** We want to fight to be aware of His presence, responsive to His leadership and oriented toward delight and gratitude regarding His mercy and kindness towards us. We want to despise entitlement and the disease of "I deserve."
- **Build your life on the rock of the commands of Jesus.** "'Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock. And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. And it did not fall, for it was founded a rock"' (Matt. 7:24-25).
- **Fight to see the bigger picture regarding yourself and the people that trouble you.** You are more than your issues and your victories. So are they. Love the person in front of you; honor them with the dignity that was bestowed on them according to Jesus' costly sacrifice. Let His blood, shed for them, speak louder than their behavior, their weakness or their brokenness. Let it do the same for you. Avoid cynicism and bitterness at all costs. Despise arrogance and haughtiness in all its forms.
- **Keep your heart and your life simple.** Prioritize a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life. Crave genuine fellowship

with the Holy Spirit. Long for the increased activity of the Holy Spirit on your heart and on your life. Revival matters—what you believe about man, his need for God, the depth of the problems and the issues of injustice and how they are resolved is all wrapped into what you believe about revival.

- **Make the knowledge of God, deeply understood and authentically expressed, your genuine goal of that fellowship.** Eschatology matters—what you believe about where things are going, what life is about, who Jesus is, and what He will do, all are wrapped into what you believe about the end times. We cannot afford to be an eschatological agnostic, disconnected from the necessary truths that surround the return of Jesus.

This is Jesus' answer to the complexity of wickedness, rebellion, arrogance and unprecedented pressure. His answer to this present darkness and all of its foolishness is a spotless, beautiful bride, mature in love and glorious in holiness. She will pray for Israel. She will long for His return, and she will lay down her life for the nations that despise her. The Father's delight is to answer the mounting ugliness of the human condition with unprecedented beauty. We long for Him to come, but until then, we long for Him to receive the reward of His suffering—in our lives and the lives of all who were made to bring Him the highest and deepest pleasure and joy.

This is the kind of church the Lord wants to thrust in the midst of a generation like brands plucked from the fire. The heart of God for the days to come is to see His burning and shining lamps, His friends of the Bridegroom, fight for the glory and the beauty of Jesus to be known through a clear demonstration of passionate love in Spirit and in truth. Amen.

What is your role in answering the present darkness?

In Times of Trouble, Are You Learning to Lean?

Ever hear someone refer to God as a crutch? Something only weak people need to lean on to get through life?

I've always found that argument irrational, all the more so when promoted by people who practically worship rationality.

It implies that weakness is the exception. But aren't we all weak in one area or another?

Superman is a fantasy figure, and even he had a weakness: kryptonite (or Lois Lane, depending on your point of view). Show me one person who won't admit to any kind of weakness, and I'll show you a person who is delusional.

And even if we agree that everyone has some type of weakness, it's still not easy to personally admit it. Our culture reveres strength. An admission of weakness carries the stigma of being "less than."

Less than adequate.

Less than acceptable.

Less than whole.

Admitting weakness requires admitting we need help. That's usually OK physically. If you break your leg, it's foolish to try walking without the aid of a crutch or other tool to help you get around until your bone heals.

So why is it many of us find it next to impossible to admit we need help mentally, emotionally or spiritually?

If the Bible is true—and nothing has yet proven that it isn't—then we are weak in every area, not just physically. Jesus Christ became human to bring the healing and wholeness we need, first spiritually, and in other areas of life, too.

To reject the wholeness He came to restore to us would be as foolish as a person with a broken leg rejecting crutches or a wheelchair.

We all lean into something or someone when we're weak, whether we admit it or not.

When life doesn't make sense, which way do you lean?

When tragedy strikes, which way do you lean?

When your energy is sapped, which way do you lean?

Do you lean *into* God or *away* from Him?

- The atheist denies God's existence and leans into humanity's wisdom.
- An agnostic leans into the certainty that it's impossible to be certain about God.
- The Christian admits his or her need and leans into God through the cross of Christ and dependence on His Holy Spirit.

Real foolishness is denying our weakness in the face of the overwhelming evidence of our need.

Do you really think people are born good? Then why is it we never have to teach a toddler to say "no" or "mine"? Or why do we have to teach a child to share, but we never have to teach a child to be selfish?

Adults are no better. We just learn to hide our sin under a veneer of civility (although these days, even civility has suffered a black eye).

Take a long look around. Then take a long look in the mirror. There are no exceptions. No, not even one.

That's the reason Christ came to earth as a human and died for us. He did what we could not do for ourselves. He met our greatest need: the need to be restored to the divine relationship for which we were created.

If Jesus Christ is not who He said He is, then in the words of the apostle Paul, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

The older I get, the more I realize that often the worst thing I can do is try to make sense of life with my limited perspective and understanding. For if this world really is all there is, then life is, indeed, a cruel joke.

I recently experienced a severe loss. It has left me feeling weak. But when I lean into God during my times of need, I gain:

- Strength in my weakness.
- Peace as I face unexpected circumstances.
- Equipping to accomplish the tasks before me.
- And hope as I face uncertainty.

Corrie ten Boom said it best: "You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have."

Whatever you're facing today in your weakness, will you lean into Jesus Christ?

It's the strongest thing you'll ever do. {eoa}

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