

Trusting God in the Darkness

Five short testimonies from readers who endured tragedy

On the morning of , 2007, fire broke out in our home. My wife, Shirley, my daughter Cecile (C-C) and I got out. But C-C's husband, Alan Hege, was trapped inside and died in the fire.

Alan's death was the most significant loss, of course. He and C-C were high school sweethearts and had been married nearly 30 years.

But the fire also destroyed my computer. Two of my neighbors rescued the hard drive. I bought a new laptop, and we downloaded all the essential files.

My library was totally destroyed as well, along with copies of the more than 100 books I've written. Thankfully, members of my Sunday school class and a few friends were quickly able to find copies of nearly all of them.

We saved almost nothing from the house, but neighbors and our church family gave us some essentials. And ultramarathon runner, Stan Cottrell, whose autobiography I had ghostwritten in 1984, insisted that we stay with him and his wife, Carol, until the insurance company rented a house for us.

My literary agent, Deidre Knight, and my then-assistant, Jan Coates, took over getting out information and notifying friends. That left us free to pull ourselves together emotionally. Money poured in, mostly in small amounts.

I look back now with immense gratitude and realize I've learned at least one significant lesson: to receive from others.

Cecil Murphey: author, speaker, teacher; Atlanta ().

Overcoming Grief

By Joe Smith

My wife, Katie, and I experienced an unexpected crisis in February 2006. It had been raining off and on all day that Friday and into the night. On his way home, our 45-year-old son and father of five hit a water puddle. His car hydroplaned and rotated 180 degrees, hitting a tree on the driver's side. He was killed instantly.

My emotional pain was real, but I knew joy, praise and thanksgiving were powerful spiritual forces to anchor the soul in such times. I had the assurance our son had finished his earthly journey and was now embarking on a new and better way of living. So I continually countered my emotional pain with thanksgiving for the time we had with him, for the five grandchildren and for other legacies he left.

Knowing that death is the means God uses to translate us from the natural world into His eternal kingdom, I rejoiced that Jeff had won the victory. Realizing I also would make this transition one day and would be reunited with him forever gave me reason to praise God for His goodness in sending Jesus to make it all possible. The resurrection of Jesus is absolute proof that death is no longer our enemy and that there is life after death.

Joe Smith: retired minister; Tampa, Fla.

Break Forth Into Joy

By Lyrica Joy Smith

"Be fruitful and multiply!" "Barrenness is a curse." As a young girl raised in church, I had heard many stories from the

Bible about women who were called blessed because they had many children. But when I was a teenager, I learned that I had several female issues, including pelvic inflammatory disease, adhesions, cysts and endometriosis, that might one day interfere with my conceiving a child.

At the age of 29, I had a hysterectomy. Even though I knew it was medically necessary, I was devastated. I had hoped to have a family after I was married.

One night I cried out to the Lord. In response, He led me to Isaiah 54:1-6, a passage in which God encourages the barren woman. He tells her, in part: “‘For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused’” (vv. 5-6, NKJV).

I cried with joy. God wanted me! He had a future for me—as *His* wife.

How is the “marriage” going? The Lord and I have planted 29 churches on four continents, created a Bible Institute for the Arts and Theology, and finished our first book on mentoring. My tents were enlarged to more than 40 countries, and now 15 years into our “union,” we have more than 4,000 spiritual children worldwide.

Lyrice Joy Smith: minister and author, Cincinnati ().

Facing the Storm

By Germaine Copeland

In the final weeks of his junior year of high school, our son

David withdrew from the family and lost interest in all the things that had been important to him. During the next 28 years, he married and had two boys and two girls. But we no longer knew him. His addictions had changed him.

There were nights I walked the floor with my Bible opened to Psalm 91 praying for David. The Holy Spirit taught me to overcome worry, cast all my cares on the Lord and wage spiritual warfare. God's Word and praise were my weapons of choice.

One night late the phone rang. When I answered, an automated voice asked, "Will you accept a collect call from David?"

He was calling from jail. The last judge had told him that if he got one more driving under the influence offense, he would go to prison.

In the midst of my turmoil I heard a familiar voice saying, "I had him arrested." Suddenly, the peace of God washed over my soul and spirit, and I knew this was a divine setup.

I can confidently say that I did not have doubt or fear while David was in prison. I rejoiced because I knew that his resurrection day was imminent.

After 28 years David was delivered from his addictions. In 2009 he celebrated 10 years of sobriety. Today he is active in his support group, Victorious Living, and is employed by two ministries.

Germaine Copeland: author; Good Hope, Ga.

Healed of a Broken Heart

By Leonie Chandersingh

"What shall separate us from the love of God ... not death or

life." I have heard this verse all my life, and yet my mind could not wrap itself around the fact that my only son, whom I loved with all my heart, had been shot to death.

I remember waking up to screams and thinking, *Are those my children outside?* I heard my daughter Jessica yelling, "Just pray, Jamaal! Just pray!" I ran outside, and my son, her twin, was lying on the ground with his head in her arms. A robbery in our driveway had gone bad.

Another verse came to mind. "He will keep you in perfect peace if you keep your mind on Him." Finding peace was not easy. I tormented myself trying to remember if I had hugged my son that day.

I cried a lot. But in my time alone, I sought the Lord. Every waking moment I had, I focused on the Word of God. I also asked God why. "Why did You take my son?" He replied, "I gave up my only begotten Son, too." I told God, "Yes, but you are going to see Him again." God answered, "How do you know you are not?"

After that day, I had perfect peace. I gave all the grief, hurt and tears to God. I had to fight to keep my mind on Jesus. But God is a real God, and He can heal a broken heart.

Leonie Chandersingh: high school teacher; Orlando, Fla.