



MINDING THE LIGHT

Our Collective Journal, Chapter 21

WHEN HAS THE LIGHT COME TO YOU IN A TIME OF DARKNESS?

The Mountain

Even now, over 20 years later, it is hard to tell the story of how my sister Nana and I became estranged. It all began one Christmas when I realized that Nana had been sending Christmas gifts to my sister Clare's little daughters, Jane and Julia, but giving nothing to my son Nick. This made no sense to me! I had always given presents to all my nieces and nephews when they were small, even when I was a poor student. Why would Nana do such a thing?!

I am ashamed to say that I not only put our mother in the middle: I lied to her, telling her that Nick was hurt by this slight (when, in fact, he knew nothing about it). Nana answered my accusation with a legalistic argument, saying that she had picked Clare's name in a family gift drawing that had happened years before these children were even born. She also mailed a

letter addressed to Nick, who was only 5 years old, explaining why she was not giving him Christmas gifts, and enclosed a small plastic cross.

I was outraged! Was I really supposed to read this baffling letter to a little child? I threw the cross in the trash and hoarded my grievances. Nana wasn't sorry, so I could see no way to forgive her. We were both passionately convinced of our positions, so there was no opening for discussion. But the prospect of a lifetime of separation from Nana broke my heart.

Dear Nana, who was 9 years older than me and 11 years older than Clare, was truly our Big Sister. As a child herself, Nana had welcomed little sisters into her life by becoming our second mother. Memories of Nana reading to us under the fluffy quilt we called The Puff, taking us for walks, joining in elaborate games of make-believe, and singing with us

In this Chapter

- The Mountain
- Storms of Life
- Young Friend's Story
- Wrapped in the Light
- The Obstacle is the Way
- Reading the Signs
- Ice Cream at the Mall
- Naming Forms
- The Light Shining in Darkness
- Light Along the Way
- A Crack in the Foundation
- Wild Plum Blossoms
- Hold On, Let Go

in the kitchen flooded my heart. I thought of the mockery that estrangement from my own sister made of my faith.

Heartsick and hopelessly stuck, I went to God in prayer. "Father, help me!" I cried, instinctively turning to God the Father because I needed the help of a parent. I had lied to my mother, but I could not lie to God. I had no doubt that God loved Nana and me equally and knew the whole story.

And then, I heard God's voice answer my prayer! From within, I clearly heard these words: "You can't go through it. You must go over it."

God knows I am a visual problem-solver and had given me an image I could understand. I saw, from above, an obstacle in my way that I could not go around or through.

Minding the Light is a bimonthly collection of stories from the lives of members and attenders of West Hills Friends, a Quaker meeting in Portland, Oregon. Among Quakers, "minding the Light" means noticing, listening for and paying heed to the voice of our Teacher.

Early Quakers kept journals about their relationships with God and shared them with the community. For example, John Woolman's Journal has been continually in print for more than 200 years. By publishing stories from our community, we hope to continue the Quaker tradition of disclosing God's activity in our lives.

Each issue is organized around a specific query about minding the Light. Our writers speak from their own experience, not going beyond the measure of Light they've been given. We hope these stories will transform our way of seeing God and each other and that they will bring comfort to those who seek news of God's presence in the world.

MINDING THE LIGHT

CHAPTER 21: WHEN HAS THE LIGHT COME TO YOU IN A TIME OF DARKNESS?

God was telling me that this conflict could not be resolved head-on. Perhaps it could not be resolved at all. It could only be fixed by hanging on to love. God was showing me that I could rise above my anger and continue on the other side.

I resolved that I would not argue with Nana or hope for an apology. I would just pick up our relationship wherever I could, whenever I could and go over this, like climbing a mountain I could not pass through.

So, gingerly, tentatively, Nana and I began to talk again. Sometime later (but not right away), Nana chose to send presents to all three children. We never worked it out, but we did go over it.

I have always been grateful to God for hearing my prayer giving me an answer. 🔥

—KD Burnett

Storms of Life

A couple of weeks ago, I was flying to the east coast and started thinking about the terrible storms that have engulfed the northeastern part of our country. From there, I began to think about the storms that are an inevitable part of life.

I recently lost my grandson, and the pain goes deep into my soul. I know that different people respond to grief in different ways. Some people seem to be over their grief in six months while others are still grieving after sixty years. You're not going to find me cheering up and saying everything is okay.

What am I to do about my grief? In contemplating this question, I remembered a message my pastor told about these guys out on a ship. Large storm waves came out of nowhere, and they asked the ship's captain, "Don't you care if we drown?" The captain stood on the bridge, made a couple of course corrections, and they were in smooth water again. At that evening mess, the captain asked them, "Why were you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

Stories seem to be good therapy, and it comforts me to remember that the great ship captain Jesus is at the helm, helping calm the storms of life. It also helps to remember that I don't always have it together when I think I do.

I've been holding this query: "Do I know Him well enough to get through the storms of life, particularly this one?" 🔥

— Richard Evans

Need a Story Catcher?

Please let us know if you have a story but don't consider yourself a writer, don't have time, don't feel well, are too young to know how to write stories, or any other reason. We would love to send a story catcher to record your story.

Young Friend's Story

God has helped me when I am scared or frightened, when I am worried about someone or something. When I pray to God, He hears me and He helps me. I know I'm not alone. 🔥

—Molly F, age 7

[Illustration below]



MINDING THE LIGHT

CHAPTER 21: WHEN HAS THE LIGHT COME TO YOU IN A TIME OF DARKNESS?

Wrapped in the Light

As one who's wrestled with depression since early adolescence, there has been a lot of darkness in my life. It's like a dark pit I sometimes fall into, a beast stalking me in the deep jungle, a heavy cloud that obscures the sun and everything that might be illuminated by it.

I've learned what helps: quiet walks, slow breathing, long baths, gentle music. People, often. The tender, trusted ones. The ones whose judgment I don't fear.

Is the Light in those things? Is the Light in the amber sky that spreads over Portland as I drift along the sidewalk? Is it in the jeweled sounds of piano keys filling my old apartment? Maybe. Probably.

There was one season in my life when the darkness went on and on, and it was during that time that I felt the Light most directly. It was the winter and spring of 2008. In February, Matty changed his mind or got honest or whatever it was, and he concluded that he didn't believe the Christ story after all. He'd spent a few months inquiring and then several months trying it on for size, and in the end, he just couldn't swallow it. So he was giving it up. Donezo.

This all unraveled moments after we sat down with burritos at a little place in downtown Eugene. I remember that I couldn't eat. I remember our tears on the drive home. I remember lying in the back of the Vanagon and closing my eyes against all of it as Matty

faced forward, driving us back to Portland.

When we returned to my apartment in Sellwood, we sat at the dining room table and just sobbed. There wasn't much discussion; we'd known for all nine months of our dating that we wouldn't continue as a couple if we weren't like-minded, if we weren't on the same page. The decision was made.

The days that followed were brutal. I cried every morning when I woke, on the drive to work, on the drive home. I stumbled through the spring of my first year as a high school English teacher, and I limped through my hours away from work. What would have been a crushing situation for anyone also served as an open door for the beast of depression to clamp down on my life. It felt like everything was collapsing around me. I was exhausted by the darkness.

One Saturday afternoon, I pivoted my couch so that it was facing the living room wall with the largest window. I pushed it all the way up to the wall, so I had to climb over the arm to get onto it. I stared out the window with my Bible and journal in hand, aiming to try again to make sense of this loss. I never opened either book. Instead, I wilted onto the couch and pulled a blanket over my tired body. As I lay there, depleted and fragile, the light from the window

enveloped me. I closed my eyes and released myself to the moment. Slowly, the sensation of warmth gave way to a feeling of kindness, benevolence. I was wrapped in the tender love of Christ, and I sensed that He longed to comfort me with His Light. I sensed Him conveying that my heart mattered to Him, that He loved me dearly, and that it would be all right.

And, of course, it was. Eventually. Several months of pain and confusion still lay before me, but I found my way, and Matty and I found our way together. It is striking to me that Matty's love so closely resembles the caring Light I experienced in my apartment years ago, and that having been wrapped in it for years now, I experience the darkness of depression almost never.

That afternoon on the couch taught me of the beauty and potency of God's heart for us. I believe that His love is always as illuminating as it was for me that day, but that I notice it most when I am in touch with my need for it. My prayer for my loved ones, and for those who are suffering, is most often that they would be blessed to experience the warmth and light of God's love wrap around them the way it did me. 

—Amanda McDermott

Within our darkest night, You
kindle the fire that never dies
away, never dies away. . . .

—Taizé chant

The Obstacle is the Way

This past year I experienced something of a breakdown. Things that I know should have brought me joy, like family and work, left me empty. I thought I just need to “suck it up” “push through”.

I began to get afraid and negotiate. Okay, I can have this breakdown, but only while the kids are at school or only when it’s private and convenient. I will schedule it, experience it, and move on.

Yeah, right.

After reading tons of books to try to find answers, writing, talking with Scott and trusted friends, I reached out to a therapist.

I showed up for my 1pm appointment in my pajamas.

Me: “I thought about changing, but if you can’t look like s**t in front of your therapist, who can you look like s**t in front of?”

Therapist: “You wear your depression well.”

We were off to a great start.

And we began the unraveling and the most grueling work of my life (so far). I kept asking for assignments, homework, reading, any sort of “3-step process” so we could just bang this out and I could get back to being “me”. She gave me homework like, “Sit with your loneliness.” And “Notice your anger.”

I broke my finger in an attempt to remember how to “have fun” (long story). Couldn’t write, which is often my go-to place for

clarity. My neck stopped working. Made it difficult to sleep and read. When I described it to my therapist, I put my hands to my neck as if I was choking. There was something bigger going on, and I didn’t like it.

And then I lost my hearing. Not suddenly. Very gradually I noticed waking up in the morning feeling like I was under water. I didn’t hate this feeling. I sort of welcomed the respite from a world that seemed really loud lately. It got worse. I ignored it. No time. Too inconvenient. It will go away. Just have to push through. No big deal. Can you talk a little louder please?

Me: “I can’t write. It hurts to turn or read. I can’t hear. My work is all about listening. Who am I if I can’t listen???”

Therapist: “Hmmm. You are not listening.”

And there it was. The Light entered right then and there. I wasn’t listening. My go-to place, my sweet spot, is to listen to others. But I wasn’t listening to myself. I wasn’t listening to the Light. I had pushed through all the emotional signs, all the red flags that were waving because I just didn’t have time. I would get to it later. God had to literally physically stop me to show me The Way.

Now I am on the journey of listening. I’m not as sweet, but I am more honest. There is more disagreement, and less stuffing of feelings. I have things I require now.

I am a “woman who has needs” as my therapist says. And that’s ok (apparently I have “issues with being needy”). I have no patience for “fitting in”. I am in search of belonging. This journey began with a breakdown, but it might just become a breakthrough. 

–Diane F.

Queries for Chapter 22

Our next Query: “When did the Light call you to wait or be still? Tell us a story about a time you were led to pause before proceeding.”

We encourage you to interpret our queries broadly so as to encompass experience of the Light that the query brings to mind. Submit your story in any publishable format: narratives, poetry, songs, art, other.

Query for Young Friends (of any age)

With a nod to Godly Play, we wonder: “When did God ask you to slow down and think some more?”

We encourage young Friends to participate, so please consider asking very young children in your life whether this query (or a related query in your own words) makes them think of a story. If it does, consider helping the child tell their story in words or images, or ask us for a Story Catcher.

Story Deadline:

May 31, 2015

MINDING THE LIGHT

CHAPTER 21: WHEN HAS THE LIGHT COME TO YOU IN A TIME OF DARKNESS?

Reading the Signs

Tryon Creek State Park is a place I go to look for God when I feel disconnected. The big trees, the slant of sun through branches, the startling shades of green on the moss and lichen against dark bark take me back to the relationship that guides me.

What sent me to the park that afternoon was a worry that had been growing for weeks. My daughter was deep in the troubled waters of middle school, and I'd been watching helplessly as the light dimmed behind her eyes and her spark and enthusiasm waned. The school's response to my concern was essentially, "This happens in middle school. She'll pull through." I wondered whether "pull through" would include self-harm and an eating disorder. I had talked with other moms and friends who were therapists. I had read the books, and all their wise counsel made no difference.

It was Friday afternoon, and another bleak weekend stretched ahead, so I went to the big trees before picking up my daughter from school. At Tryon Creek, I walked the trails wondering where God was, hoping the magic would happen and longing for peace, acceptance and faith. As I walked and prayed, I began to harangue God for not carrying my daughter through adolescence in a safe and comforting vessel. For not helping me in

the way I wanted. For not reassuring me that my daughter would be ok and that I was providing what she needed. For not creating a way to grow up that didn't include misery. For not giving me sage counsel that made sense and actually helped.

As the trail looped back around to the parking lot, I was spent but had no sense of communion with God. I turned down one of the small trails where art frequently rises up through the trees in the form of wicker sculptures, reflective panels, or large twig nests. As I started down the trail, I muttered, "Just show me a sign. Please!"

Beneath a rhododendron to my right, I saw a small plaque with a few words. I don't remember the words, except that they didn't speak to my condition. A bit farther down the trail, I saw another little plaque stuck in the fork of a branch. And then another, nestled between the large roots of a cedar. And another, cradled in moss, with a message about softness. Now I was paying attention. I even grew a bit breathless, determined to see every one of these little signs and read their message right into my heart.

All these years later, the only message I remember is the one from the last sign

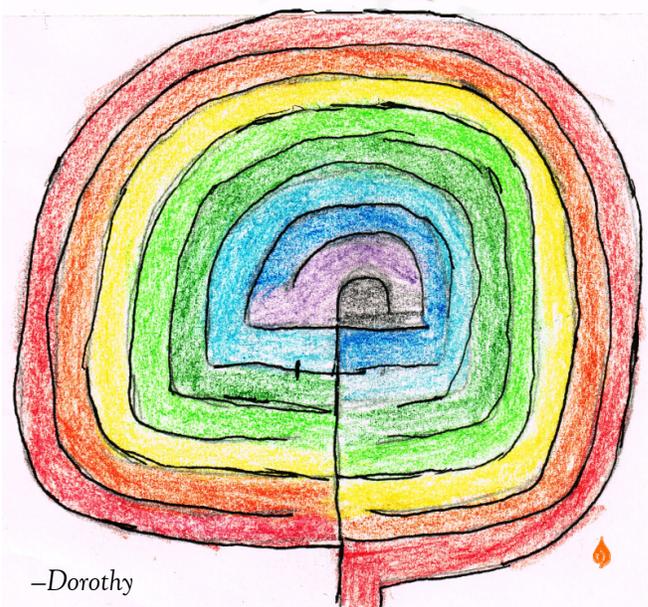
because it was the answer to all those prayers, and I could feel the wisdom in my bones. The sign said, "Patience, patience and deep intuition." These words became my mantra as I accompanied my daughter through the troubled waters until, eventually, her spark returned and her eyes brightened once again. 🔥

Thank you, God.

—Peg Edera

And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

Isaiah 42:16



—Dorothy

MINDING THE LIGHT

CHAPTER 21: WHEN HAS THE LIGHT COME TO YOU IN A TIME OF DARKNESS?

Ice Cream at the Mall

The mall was crowded today—not surprising, considering the chill of the cold January spritz outside. Holding my mom’s hand, we navigate through shoppers clutching large bags while balancing coffee cups and cell phones. Like ants, they march with a sense of purpose.

We do not walk the mall for stuff. We walk for movement, as a meditation and a chance to notice everything. Noticing is important now. All that is left is the moment. As we walk, I long for something different between us, a spark of remembrance, of a past with me in it. But the only memories available are from her childhood, and even those are fading fast. So I cling to the moment and her hand.

The moment represents a spark of possibility, of wonder and personal change. Mom captures a pun, like an elusive butterfly, and reveals it when I am least expecting. Passing Godiva Chocolates, she slows and with a slight grin, quips, “I’d like to Go-diva into THAT chocolate!” Chuckling, I agree and we walk in and order ice cream. I wince at the inflated mall prices until I notice the joy it brings my mom. With a cup of ice cream and a spoon, my mom could conquer the world.

When I was young, mom rarely ate dessert, preferring to watch her weight and stay out of the kitchen. Now she indulges when she can, and as soon as she enjoys the final spoonful, will ask for ice cream as the memory fades.

Content now, we drift through the makeup section at Macy’s and try on perfumes. As I spray her wrist with Chanel No. 5 (her favorite), a smile and a fleeting sigh of recognition flash across her face. We test lotions and sprays and return to the mall traffic trailing a scent of orange blossoms and jasmine. She has no desire to buy anything, so we comment on what we see—the clothes of the shoppers, the bright displays, and the lingering taste of chocolate.

In my 20’s, I didn’t connect with my mom much. She followed a God of the narrow way, on a black and white path of sin and grace. The chasm between us grew as I found an ever-expanding God among the Community of Friends and through my work alongside international students representing a prism of colors, cultures, religions and lifestyles. For many years we have had little to talk about outside of the weather and happenings of the family. After Alzheimer’s, even that was lost.

Who would have guessed that connection and Light would come on this bleak January day, in such an unexpected place? Usually when I walk the mall, I feel overstimulated and wanting. Today, I notice the pure joy in the attention my mom gives to her ice cream, and slowly my fears subside. This is grace revealing itself. The mutual slights, the unmet expectations, the differences that get in the way of pure love and attention melt with the ice cream on my tongue. Today, we bounce from store to store as bees to flowers, sucking the nectar from

an unexpected source, sharing an ice-cream, content in the moment, thankful to be alive. 

—Jill Townley

Naming Forms

I learned everything black or white until I began transcendental meditation. This was strongly influenced by a grandmother, who had a rigid religious personality. My mother’s mantra was Right and Wrong (Freedom and Shame).

When I was 16 years old, I was introduced to Transcendental Meditation that was very popular. As my focus moved toward the inner Light through meditation, my family’s negative influences diminished.

This is one experience that shone the Light upon my narrow mind. One day when I was exhausted after work and had to fix a flat bike tire on the back porch, I closed my eyes to breathe and gain strength. With my eyes closed I saw the profile of a beautiful woman as though she were in my space (both of us kneeling) in front of the window I faced. She wore a pink glimmering silk kimono. Her hair was placed neatly like you see in Japanese movies. Her eyes were brown. With that image in mind I heard a woman’s voice say, “I’m Catholic.” I could believe I was viewing a woman who was Buddhist or Taoist. What I considered foreign was not allowing me to accept the Catholic label. How can a Japanese woman be Catholic, like the way I was raised? 

— Eileen

The Light Shining in Darkness

Despite many positive elements, my family of origin also included elements I later understood to be traumatic, including alcoholism, violence, drugs, incarceration, institutionalization, and, for me personally, shame, neglect, and drugs. In choosing a college 2000 miles from home, I was pursuing a vision of who I wanted to become, but I was also seeking to escape a world I didn't want to be a part of, and to start over again. But such a personal history is not easily left behind ...

As the fifth child in my family, one of my emotional challenges was a sense of insignificance. In the fifteen years after leaving home I set out to remedy this by building a record of accomplishment in academics, professional work, and family life. There were painful stumbles along the way (such as twice failing an oral exam that was critical for my Ph.D.), but I always found a way to move forward (in this case, by changing careers and landing a job with a prestigious consulting firm).

Over time, I built a "successful life," but on the inside I increasingly felt like an imposter. In seeking to enhance my own sense of significance, my behavior grew more destructive, especially toward my wife, fueling (and being fueled by) a growing sense of being irredeemable. This came to a head when it became clear I might lose my marriage, and with it the family I had dreamed of all my life.

One night this came crashing down, and I cried to God out of

raw instinct, saying that I wanted to turn my life around but didn't know how. Expecting my cry to echo in the void, I instead received a clear response: "I am here, and have always been here. I love you, and want you to be healed. If you follow me, I will lead you to a better place."

My inner intellectual agnostic was overwhelmed by this mystical experience and could find no terms to explain it. Indeed, I have never been able to describe my experience any better than this expression in Psalm 40:

*He bent down to me and
listened to my cry.
He raised me out of the miry pit,
out of the mud and clay;
He set my feet on rock and gave me
a firm footing.
On my lips he put a new song,
a song of praise to our God.*

My leading has always been equally clear that the "he" who bent down to me that night was the Spirit of Jesus, the same one who spoke to me through the gospels. As in the story of the Good Shepherd, I recognized his voice that night, and knew then that I am significant and redeemable in God's eyes. Much remains a mystery to me about this experience, but I have tried to follow God's leadings ever since, and he has always kept the promise made to me that night. 🔥

—Greg Morgan

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land
of deep darkness
a light has dawned.
Isaiah 9:2:

Light Along the Way

Several years ago I took my children on a church camp-out. Being new to camping and the Northwest, I decided that—despite the approach of both dusk and a rainstorm—the first thing I should do, after emptying everything from the Suburban into a heap on the ground, was blow up my air mattress. That's when I discovered that I had lost the cap. I piled everyone into the truck and headed for the nearest hardware store, where they managed to rig up a solution using a cork and duct tape.

I returned to the campground in a darkening drizzle and realized that I had no idea how to assemble my equipment. But as members of my community strolled by in small groups to say hello, one group assembled my tent, another the children's tent, another the dining canopy, and another my cook stove.

Things were going impressively well when a pain episode came on. Friends gathered around, held me and prayed, and soon there was pain only when I took a step. Sitting down and resting seemed wise, but it was time to hook up my IV and there was no one with the experience or even, understandably, the willingness to do it for me.

I gathered my supplies and started for a bathroom several hundred yards away. Each step caused such excruciating pain that I often cried out or fell as my

legs buckled beneath me. I finally arrived and went into a stall to use the toilet. I suddenly realized that I had forgotten to bring paper towels. Once I scrubbed for two minutes, I wouldn't be able to operate the paper towel dispenser, and I knew if I went back to the campsite to get paper towels, I wouldn't be able to make another trip back.

I mused that the only possible solution would be Divine, or possibly angelic, intervention. I needed someone to come in and dispense a length of paper towels for me to use. As I left the stall and approached the sink I saw about 18 inches of paper toweling hanging from the dispenser. Two women were standing nearby, quietly talking. They hadn't been in the room when I got there, and I hadn't heard them come in. I hadn't heard water running or the dispenser being activated

"Who are these paper towels for?" I asked.

"They're for you," one of them replied as they continued talking. I scrubbed, hooked up the IV, and returned to my campsite.

For me, these women, and all of the friends on that trip, exemplified Divine help. Were they angels? Perhaps not strictly speaking. But for me the darkest times have often been those when I was trying to have a 'regular' life despite my physical limitations. And it has been 'regular' people, not necessarily angelic but definitely divine, who have been Light for me at those times. 
-Mica Coffin

A Crack in the Foundation

A giant crack had opened up in the core of my foundation and everything was being sucked in...at least that's how it felt to me. Up to that point, my life had been easy. I was married to a professor and we lived what might be called a charmed life, both of us young, athletic, educated, and vibrant. Our home just north of San Diego overlooked a small, tranquil lake and we had an active social life. I was able to devote my time to a cause I believed in: volunteering with a nonprofit that took in unwanted pets and re-homed them. Until the nonprofit hired an Educational Director, I functioned as the education department, and I poured my heart into it. Having been a teacher for many years, much of my time there was spent compiling a teaching manual that incorporated humane animal treatment with middle school language arts. They hired me after I'd completed the manual. I loved my work and my life.

I hadn't pursued a spiritual path, though I'd come to realize a few years before that God, in whatever form that meant, exists. Perhaps I didn't feel an immediate need for anything deeper. But when things changed so dramatically for me, I suddenly felt very vulnerable and alone.

Not knowing how to manage the ups and downs of a marriage relationship, my husband and I decided to separate. He found an apartment, and I couldn't afford to keep our home on the little

lake. When we decided to actually go through with the divorce, I too started looking for another place to stay. Our home went on the market to be sold. Some friends had just remodeled their third floor and said I could rent it, but they decided not go through with it just two days before I was to move in. Where was I to go?

My job at the animal care center collapsed at the same time. A lawyer friend had told me I should get a copyright on the teaching manual I'd put together, and since I'd finished it before I was hired, I could indeed do that. Unfortunately, the director was furious that I'd gotten a copyright before they did and, barely able to contain his anger, he fired me.

So, I had no marriage, no home, and no job . . . all at once. Money was suddenly very tight. I desperately needed a friend to repay \$7 that I'd lent her a few months before. In her comfortable situation, repaying \$7 didn't seem like a big deal, but it certainly would have meant a lot to me.

Desperation was seeping in, but surprisingly so was something else. . . a feeling that eventually everything would be all right. It was as if God were whispering in the back recesses of my mind that this was a learning time, a growing time, and one to remember. This assurance filled my soul, pushing out the desperation, and giving me the confidence to put one foot in front of

MINDING THE LIGHT

CHAPTER 21: WHEN HAS THE LIGHT COME TO YOU IN A TIME OF DARKNESS?

the other without becoming overwhelmed by my situation. I knew that eventually, even though things would be different, I would be okay. Throughout life's twists and turns, even now, that quiet assurance has continued to fill me. 

—Anne A

Wild Plum Blossoms

In January 2009, a few years short of retirement, my husband lost his job. The former boss wrongly accused him of misconduct, and thus, he was ineligible for unemployment. We were depleting savings we'd put away for retirement. On a windy, frigid day, our furnace broke. For the first time ever, we relied on Food Stamps. I hadn't worked full-time for several years due to a degenerative disease. I'd lost my part-time work, too. Things looked very bleak.

Daily, we walked the neighborhood. We'd talk, turning over and over the experience of my husband's job loss, looking for the bright side. The usual stop at that ever-compassionate institution, the Public Library, filled our arms with books, and we enjoyed the free warmth in that cozy space. We were lucky to have each other during this year of unemployment, which was not without some bright spots among the many trials.

Yet, one dark night in February 2009 when I couldn't comfort my husband, and the gray day afterwards will remain in my memory forever.

He woke up in wee hours, groaning he felt his heart breaking, so wounded by the cruel accusations he'd received when he was fired. I prayed aloud for him to rest peacefully, inwardly fearful he might have a heart attack. Close to four in the morning, he finally slept, mumbling fitfully in his dreams.

The next day, he stayed home from our walk to fill out job applications. My hood up to keep out the drizzling rain, I trudged on, feeling despondent. If I'd only kept my job! I would have to find a job, any job that I could do! I didn't want to cry in front of my husband and add to his depression. Now I had a chance, but the tears didn't seem to be releasing endorphins. It was the worst economy since the Great Depression. Other older Americans, like us, had lost their jobs, their homes—everything they'd worked for decades.

I approached a vacant lot where scraggly volunteer plum trees had burst into early blossom. Against the dark mounds of blackberry brush, bracken and twisted trees, the clouds of purplish pink were

astoundingly cheerful. At that moment I remembered that these wild plums produce hard little fruit, which the birds love. Scripture came to mind: "Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matthew 6:26)

On Earth there's abundant wealth created by God for us. We aren't expected to earn it, even! I'm not sure why these plum blossoms had the power to re-illumine Scripture for me, but they did. I imagined all those merry birds, come summer, munching on wild plums to their hearts delight. Couldn't I expect at least a bird's worth of abundance? Darkness cracked, and sunshine fell on me with the rain. 

—Claire Nail

Postscript: A few months later, my husband's innocence was affirmed, his heart eased, and our family's finances improved when he won his appeal for unemployment benefits.

Light Brigade*

Sally Gillette, Clerk
Mike Huber, Recording Clerk
Carol Bosworth
Peg Edera
Pat Matthews
Julie Peyton
Cindy Stadel

Britten Witherspoon
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*Story Committee

I saw, also, that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings.

- George Fox

Hold On Let Go

words and music © 2006 Derek Lamson

12-bar blues in F# minor

I'm gon' to hold on
a little bit longer
waitin for you

hold on
little bit longer
waitin for you

40 long years
in this
wilderness of sin
if Jesus brings you water, children,
jump right in

I'm gon' to hold on
a little bit longer
waitin for you

if you should feel
your soul a-slippin'
just let go

feel
your soul a-slippin'
just let go

go down, down
towards that
cradle of light
Jesus gon' to save you
in His
own sweet time

if you should feel
your soul a-slippin'
just let go

you know my Jesus
oh my Jesus
has sensitive hands

Jesus,
oh my Jesus
has sensitive hands

in this dark and fateful hour
he is reaching
out in power
oh my Jesus
oh my Jesus
has sensitive hands



When light meets darkness. Photo taken in Pinedale, WY, by Sarah Blanchard