



PERFECT PEACE

By Laura Story

Scan the QR code with your phone camera and savour some time with God through music. Alternatively, you can find this song by searching on youtube.com.

LISTEN HERE



September 2026 | Issue 59

BRANCHES

A Mill Lake Church
magazine

Blessed
are the
Peacemakers

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*How Do I Forgive Someone
Who Has Deeply Hurt Me?*

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Treasure More Than
Jesus?*

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*Church in Action:
It Started With A
Closet*





ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL SEPTEMBER 13

**CARNIVAL
GAMES**

**YUMMY
FOOD**

**PRIZES
& MORE!**



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@MILLLAKECHURCH**



Dear Friends –

Summer 2026 is now a memory, and fall has arrived. For some, it brings the excitement of a new school year or fresh opportunities before the year ends. For others, it's a reminder that shorter days and winter are just around the corner.

For me, fall arrives when the leaves outside our bedroom window begin to change colour, children head back to school with backpacks nearly as big as they are, and my daughter pulls out her comfy scarves. However it announces itself to you, we can be sure a new season has begun. And with it comes the launch of many activities at Mill Lake Church for every age and stage of life.

To kick off the fall, we hope you'll join us for fun, food, and more at our Fall Festival, Sunday, September 13 (details on the left). And remember, it's also Grandparents' Day.

This month's issue of *Branches* reflects a spirit of new beginnings and growing together. One feature article comes from Matthew St. John, who agreed to write an article especially for *Branches*, summarizing the three keynote messages he delivered at the Evangelical Free Church of Canada National Conference in Winnipeg this past June. He titled it: "Who or What Do We Treasure More Than Jesus?"

Along with other inspiring articles and our regular columns, you'll discover exciting updates from Mill Lake Kids (see page 12) and read how God faithfully walked with one of our young adults through the challenges of architecture school (see page 14).

This month, our "Church in Action" section reaches beyond the activities within our own walls to bring a story from a small church on Vancouver Island. Nanoose Community Church is one of our Lower Pacific District sister churches we've prayed for in our Sunday services. In future issues, we'll periodically introduce you to more sister churches and the ways God is working through them.

Changing seasons remind us that God is always at work, inviting us to grow, to serve, and to encourage one another in fresh ways. Whatever this fall season brings for you, my prayer is that you'll find joy, encouragement, and fresh reminders of God's faithfulness within these pages. May He meet you as you learn, grow, serve, and walk with Him in the days ahead.

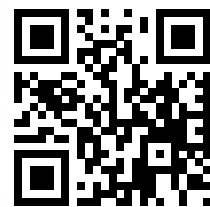
Know you are loved,



Ann Griffiths

Editor





milllakechurch.ca

BRANCHES

Issue 59

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Submit articles, comments & ideas to Ann Griffiths at ann@milllakechurch.ca

Submit photos and media to Leah Cobb at hello@milllakechurch.ca



To Make the Hope of Jesus Known

Join us on Facebook & Instagram
[@MillLakeChurch](https://www.facebook.com/MillLakeChurch)

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WORSHIP EVERY SUNDAY AT 10 A.M.

You can also stream the service at
www.youtube.com/@milllakechurch4620

Mill Lake Church is affiliated with the
Evangelical Free Church of Canada

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● Regular Features ● Special Features

LET'S CONNECT!

ADULTS TOGETHER

Bible Study: Every Sunday, 9-9:45 a.m. at the church.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Contact office@milllakechurch.ca.
Interested in joining a small group? Various groups meet throughout Abbotsford.

PRAYER

Afternoon Prayer: Every Thursday, 1 p.m. with the Prayer & Care team in the church lower lounge.
Evening Prayer: Meets monthly on Wednesdays, 7 p.m. This month: September 16.

YOUTH—GRADES 6-12

Contact Jeff Rusu at jeffrusu4@gmail.com.
Follow the Instagram youth page @MLCYouth.
Mondays, 7 p.m. in the church gym.
Fall season begins September 8.

MEN

Contact Dwayne Mitchell at dwaynemit@gmail.com.
Breakfast Fellowship: Meets on the second Tuesday of every month. This month: September 8, 10:30 a.m. at Jo-Jo's.
Galatians Bible Study: Meets on the second and fourth Saturday of each month. This month: September 12 & 26, 9-10:30 a.m.

WOMEN

Contact: Ann Griffiths at women@milllakechurch.ca.
Morning Bible Study: Begins Monday, September 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the church lower auditorium.
Evening Bible Study: Begins Wednesday, September 23, 9:30-11:30 a.m. in the church lower auditorium.
Table Games Night: Friday, October 2, 7-9 p.m. in the church lower auditorium.

KIDS & TOTS

Kids: On September 6 & 13, our kids will stay with us throughout the services. Activity Bags will be available at Connect in the Lobby for kids Kindergarten to Grade 5. Beginning, September 20, Kindergarten to Grade 5 kids will be dismissed part way through the service to go downstairs with their teachers. Sign in at the lobby table by the nursery.
Tots: The Nursery is open every Sunday during worship, and is supervised for Babes n' Tots from Newborn to Age 4. Sign in at the table in the Lobby.

FELLOWSHIP

Potluck Lunch: Come together for a potluck lunch the first Sunday of each month following the Worship Service. All are welcome. Bring a main dish and salad. Desserts & beverages are provided.
This month: September 6.
Fall Festival: Fun for the whole family! Games. Food. Prizes. Join the fun following the Sunday service on September 13.

Called To Be A Peacemaker

By Randy Lemke

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Of all the Beatitudes we're looking at together in *Branches*, this one might be the most misread. We hear the word peacemaker and picture someone who speaks softly and avoids conflict—the person at the family dinner who changes the subject when things get tense. But that person isn't a peacemaker. That person is a peacekeeper—someone who manages the appearance of peace by avoiding the work that peace actually requires. Jesus isn't

blessing those who avoid conflict. He's blessing something far more costly.

The Presence of Reconciliation

Scripture never speaks of peace (shalom) as merely the absence of hostility. Shalom is wholeness. It's a right relationship with God, with others, and within ourselves. Shalom is what exists in the Garden (Genesis 1–2) before sin fractures everything, and it's what Isaiah promises the Messiah will restore (Isaiah 9:6). When Jesus calls us to be peacemakers,

He's inviting us into the work of restoration. Working to mend what sin has broken.

Peacemaking is proactive work. It's more like a contractor fixing a crack in the wall than hanging a picture to hide it. Practically, that means having the honest conversation we'd rather avoid. It's the hard work of naming what actually went wrong, absorbing a cost we didn't create, and staying at the table when leaving would be easier.

Reflecting Christ, the True Peacemaker

As with all the Beatitudes, Jesus attaches a reward to being a peacemaker. He says peacemakers “shall be called sons of God.” Peacemakers aren't merely blessed; they're recognized as part of the family. Their family resemblance becomes visible because peacemaking is the defining work of God the Father, accomplished through the Son.

Paul makes this explicit in Colossians 1:19–20: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” The cross is the ultimate act of peacemaking—not a negotiated truce between equals, but God Himself absorbing the full cost of our rebellion so that adoption replaces hostility. Ephesians 2:14 says Christ, “himself is our peace,” the one who tears down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, insider and outsider, and every line we draw to keep ourselves divided.

Jesus makes an amazing claim: When we do the work of reconciliation as peacemakers, we're doing what our Father does. We're not just behaving well, but we're bearing a family resemblance. Peacemaking isn't a personality trait for the naturally gentle. It's a Christlike calling for anyone willing to pay the price reconciliation demands.

Peacemaking Includes Justice, Not Just Comfort

Real peace cannot be built on unaddressed injustice, and this is where the Beatitude gets uncomfortable for those of us who'd rather keep things tidy. Biblical shalom holds together both mercy and justice—we cannot have one without the other for long. A peace that silences the wronged to protect the comfort of the powerful isn't peace at all. Jeremiah calls that “healing the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14).

This matters because people can twist peacemaking into a demand for silence. “Just let it go.” “Don't make waves.” But let's remember that Jesus, our model peacemaker, overturns tables in the temple, confronts religious hypocrisy publicly, and tells hard truths to people who don't want to hear them—all in the service of a deeper reconciliation. True peacemakers pursue justice not despite their love of peace, but because of it. They understand that lasting peace requires truth-telling, repentance, and sometimes confrontation before it can produce unity.

This is why peacemaking is exhausting and rare. It's much easier to pick a side and fight, or to avoid the conflict entirely and call our silence “keeping the peace.” Genuine peacemaking asks us to love both truth and people enough to stay engaged with both.

The Cost of Being a Peacemaker

Peacemakers rarely get thanked by both sides. More often, they get criticized by both. The one who tries to understand the other party is accused of divided loyalty. People accuse the person who names an uncomfortable truth to protect a relationship of stirring up trouble. The religious establishment rejected Jesus and crucified Him between two thieves because He befriended sinners. The crowds rejected Him for refusing to lead a political revolt.

Peacemakers occupy the middle space—not a mushy middle with no conviction, but a costly middle where love for one party and love for another both have to be held without letting either go. That posture will cost us the comfort of being fully understood. Paul knew this tension well; he describes himself as “given over to death for Jesus' sake” (2 Corinthians 4:11) even as he labours for the reconciliation of quarreling churches. If we pursue peace faithfully, we should expect misunderstanding along the way. We should also expect it to be worth it.

Everyday Peacemaking

Most of us won't be called to broker peace between nations. But we are called into smaller, no less real, works of reconciliation. Maybe it's the relationship with a co-worker that's gone cold since a misunderstanding last spring. The sibling

Continued on next page



Continued from last page

you haven't spoken to since the argument at Christmas. The friend group quietly splintered over political ideology. The tension in our own home that everyone's pretending not to notice.

Peacemaking in these ordinary places might mean being the one who initiates the hard conversation instead of waiting for an apology. It might mean listening long enough to understand a perspective we'd rather dismiss. It might mean naming our own contribution to the conflict before pointing to someone else's. None of this is comfortable for us. All of it, though, is Christlike.

Your Personal Invitation

The Beatitudes aren't a checklist of virtues we muster up through willpower. They describe the shape of a life transformed by the gospel. We cannot manufacture peacemaking as a technique. It flows from having received peace ourselves. Romans 5:1 says that having been justified by faith, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Only those who have experienced reconciliation with God have the resources to extend it to others. Peacemakers give away what they themselves have received.

You're not alone if this Beatitude feels impossibly demanding. It is demanding! But we have the confidence that the same Christ who reconciled us to the Father goes with us into every relationship we're trying to mend. Blessed are the peacemakers, not because peacemaking is easy, but because it is true Christian work. Doing it means the world catches a glimpse of whose family we belong to.



***Pastor Randy** is Lead Pastor at Mill Lake Church, where he and his wife, Allana, and their five children have served for the past 24 years. Randy enjoys movies, books, music, and hanging out with his family. You may also want to ask him about his interest in fountain pens.*

**MLC
CELEBRATIONS
IN SEPTEMBER**

ANNIVERSARIES

Dick & Cindy Sather – September 8, 1973

BIRTHDAYS

- Hannah Neufeld – September 6
- Micah Lemke – September 11
- Lavinia Rusu – September 12
- Kurt Fischer – September 13
- Matt Cobb – September 15
- Ariel Ntare – September 18
- Jesse Peters – September 19
- Bill Withers – September 19
- Brian Higgs – September 20
- Abby Dyck – September 23
- Shirley Allert – September 25
- Leanna Mitchell – September 29

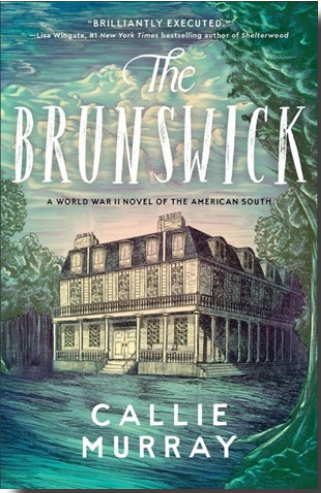


WEDDINGS

Congratulations to Jesse & Noël Peters (Lemke) on their wedding, July 24! May God bless you in your life together.

**FROM THE
DESK OF
DENISE
RAMSAY**

THE BRUNSWICK
By Callie Murray



Get the book!



It's hard to believe we're already into September. Some of you will be disappointed to see summer leave, but I find fall a most wonderful time. It's perfect for books, snuggly blankets, and steaming cups of coffee or tea—a true booklover's dream. That said, I'm surprised at the amount of reading I managed this summer and the variety of books that allowed me to enter the world of gladiators, wander the Appalachian Mountains, and visit the Canadian wilderness. But one of the most memorable books enabled me to visit The Brunswick in Georgia, 1939.

The Brunswick is Callie Murray's debut novel that grabbed me from the very beginning. When I first picked it up, I was hesitant that it might be a southern belle kind of story, but quickly found that wasn't the case.

Inspired by true events, this story beautifully captures the coming of age, the anxiety of war, the race to find safety for children, and the desperate search for hope and love amid chaos.

Set in a small town during WWII, we meet Cora Cain, who is struggling to keep her father's dream of a grand hotel alive after her mother abandoned them. Built next to the Air Line Belle Train Station, she dreams of freedom, but the responsibilities hold her close as she runs a small store out of the hotel to keep the creditors at bay.

When presented with an opportunity to provide a haven for orphaned Jewish children fleeing war-torn Vienna, Cora is unsure what she thinks or if she can accomplish it. But with the help of a few friends, she takes a chance. What ensues is heartbreak, love, tragedy, and redemption all rolled into one beautiful story that has stayed with me. The litany of characters is well-developed, as they learn to use their strengths and the town comes together delightfully.

The author appears to have a heart for foster care and adoption, elements that are wonderfully intertwined throughout a story written around a piece of history long forgotten.

I've read many WWII stories, but this one found a unique twist and breathed a new perspective into an era that's often written about. It's a unique account that made me wonder, *what can I say "yes" to, even when it seems impossible?*



*Review by **Denise Ramsay**. Denise is an avid reader with a busy family life. She serves on our MLC Women's Leadership Team and works as Book Manager at House of James.*



“HOW DO I FORGIVE SOMEONE WHO HAS DEEPLY HURT ME?”

Got questions?

If you have questions about the Bible, the church, theology, or faith in general, please send them to our Editor at ann@milllakechurch.ca. Pastor Randy or one of our elders will give a biblical answer in *Branches*.



Forgiving someone who has deeply hurt you is one of the hardest commands in the Bible. I believe that's true because it cuts against our sense of fairness. We need to start with the biblical conviction that it is not just helpful for us here, but it's sufficient (2 Peter 1:3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The goal isn't to only manage our emotions until they settle down. It's letting God's Word diagnose what's happening in our heart and reshape it.

Before anything else, we need to be clear on what biblical forgiveness actually is. It is not saying the offense didn't happen, minimizing its weight, or pretending you no longer feel its effects. It's a decision to release someone from the debt they owe you, to stop demanding payment, even though they genuinely owe it, based on how God has dealt with you (Ephesians 4:32). It's a promise, made before God, not to bring the offense back up to remind or punish the person with it, not to dwell on it privately feeding resentment, and not to let it stand between you relationally where reconciliation is possible.

Biblical forgiveness is also not the same as trust, which must be rebuilt separately through demonstrated change. It is also not removing or ignoring the consequences. A person can be forgiven and still face the natural fruit of what they did. Fundamentally, it's handing the debt to God, who alone judges justly (Romans 12:19), instead of carrying it yourself.

With that in place, let's look at practical ways to forgive.

Start by naming the hurt you have experienced. Unforgiveness rarely stays neutral. If left alone, it tends to grow into bitterness (Hebrews 12:15). Your heart holds a quiet vow that the person will pay, one way or another. That might look like rehearsing the offense, withholding kindness, or wanting them to suffer. Scripture treats it as a heart issue worth naming honestly before God, tied directly to your own standing with Him (Matthew 6:14-15).

Ground forgiveness in the cross, not in emotional relief. Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) is fairly blunt: a man forgiven an impossible debt, turns around and assaults a coworker over mere pocket change, in comparison. Colossians 3:13 lays out a pattern directly, "forgiving each other, as the Lord forgave you." The command isn't "forgive because it's healthy for you," though it often is; it's "forgive because you've already been forgiven infinitely more." The gospel itself is the power source, not willpower, or time, or distance from the offender.

Put off bitterness and put on kindness. Ephesians 4:31-32 says we're to put off all wrath, anger, slander, and malice, and put on kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness. Stopping the bitterness isn't enough. We need something to replace it or the same anger regrows. In a very practical way, we can pray for the person

by name (Matthew 5:44), refuse to rehearse the offense to others in ways that just re-wound you, and look for concrete ways to show kindness even when we don't feel like it.

Forgiveness is a decision of the will and is worked out over time. There's a difference between releasing the debt before God, which is an act of obedience you can do today regardless of your feelings, and the daily releasing of it as memories resurface. Both matter. The first keeps you from waiting until you 'feel ready,' which may never happen on its own. The second keeps you from thinking one prayer permanently ends your struggle. Peter asked Jesus if seven times was enough times to forgive someone. Jesus answered, "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22). Jesus wasn't giving Peter a math problem to solve, but He was rejecting the idea of keeping a ledger. Expect to keep choosing to let it go.

Forgiveness is best in community. Forgiveness happens within the body of Christ, not only writing in a journal. Galatians 6:1-2 pictures restoration as something the church does together, bearing one another's burdens. If the wound is deep, that's a sign you need more biblical input, not less. You can reach out to a pastor, elder, or mature believer in your Community Group to help apply Scripture to your specific situation, to pray with you, and to hold you accountable to actually forgive rather than just talk about it.

Forgiveness isn't reconciliation and it isn't naivety. Releasing someone before God doesn't obligate you to trust someone who hasn't repented, and it doesn't mean pretending sin wasn't sin. You can forgive fully and still create and maintain firm boundaries. Proverbs is full of wisdom about guarding yourself from those who continue to do harm.

Forgiveness is very practical. Name the offense specifically before God. Confess any bitterness that's grown from it as sin that needs repentance. Choose today, as an act of will rather than waiting for a feeling, to release the person before the Lord. Ask a mature believer to walk with you as the pain resurfaces. And keep returning to the cross as the reason any of this is possible. Jesus forgave from that cross while the wrong was still being done to him (Luke 23:34).

I trust this will help us forgive those who wrong us and free us from ongoing pain or hurt. Biblically, forgiveness isn't a therapeutic act, it's really a posture of worship. 🌟

TOTS

Supervised MLTots begins on Sunday, September 20th. We are always looking for volunteers to serve His littlest ones. If you are interested, please contact Allana Lemke.

YOUTH

Our first MLYouth night begins on Monday, September 14th. Come on out @ 7 p.m. for some glorious games in the gym, followed by fantastic Bible teaching in our Youth Room.

@mlcouth



HEY PARENTS!

God's story is the most beautiful story ever told, full of wonder and scandalous grace. There is nothing more important for the younger generation than imparting to them a rich vision of the gospel. **The Biggest Story** curriculum we are about to embark on is designed to teach our children key Bible stories from Genesis to Revelation. Featuring 104 Old and New Testament Scripture lessons for Kindergarten through Grade 5, this curriculum provides two-plus years of teaching material that will help children understand God's plan to redeem the world through His Son, Jesus. [thebiggeststory.com]

In MLKids we desire to pair this rich learning with our monthly **Memory Verse Challenge**, where children will recite their learned verses to a listening and encouraging ear each Family Sunday following the service. There will be a tangible and intrinsic reward for each verse successfully memorized.

THIS MONTH IN MILL LAKE KIDS

Kids (Kindergarten through grade 5) are invited downstairs during our worship service time to have their own special Bible lesson! We are always learning. Here's what we're up to for the month of September:

6

FAMILY SUNDAY

Worship with our church family. Student activity packs available at the Connect desk.

13

FAMILY SUNDAY

Worship with our church family. Student activity packs available at the Connect desk.

September 13 is our Annual Fall Festival!

Stick around after the service for food, prizes and lots of family fun!

20

"AND SO IT BEGINS"

A very good God makes a very good world, with humans as His very good image bearers.

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

27

"A VERY BAD DAY"

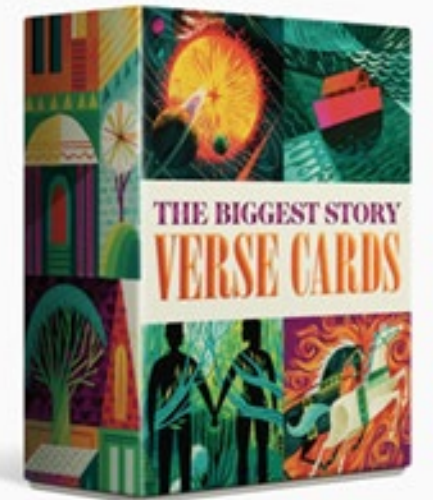
Sin, suffering, and death came into the world because Adam disobeyed God.

Genesis 3:15

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."



STUDENTS, SEE MRS. ALLANA AFTER THE FAMILY DAY SERVICE ON OCTOBER 4TH TO RECITE THE VERSES YOU MEMORIZED (GENESIS 1:1 + 3:15) IN SEPTEMBER AND GET YOUR REWARD.



MLKids will bless each family with one pack of **The Biggest Story Verse Cards**, to assist memory work at home. Each verse is beautifully illustrated, and each child will have them to learn new verses and review ones already memorized.

SURVIVING ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL

By Abbie Charlton

Six years ago, fresh out of high school and in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, I started my first year of architecture studies at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. While I thought I knew what I was getting myself into, some things you simply cannot prepare for until you experience them for yourself.

Two years of an intensive diploma program, two years working full-time in an architectural office, and two more years completing a Bachelor of Architectural Science. Through it all, I've learned a lot about buildings, but also about not losing sight of God amidst all the other challenges of life.

The architecture degree is often considered one of the most demanding and time-consuming university degrees. On average, I spent 20-25 hours in class per week, with another 30 hours of homework. Success requires good time management and self-discipline. Every week you need to develop new design ideas, produce drawings, present your work to your professors, receive feedback, and then start the entire process over again for the next week. Not to mention all the other courses you are trying to stay on top of at the same time.

Surviving architecture school demands intense passion and commitment. It means showing up every day, working through weekends, sacrificing sleep, and relying on more coffee and energy drinks than I will admit. The mental, physical, and emotional effort can easily consume your life, leaving little room for much else.

For me, the more hours I spent in my studio at school, the less time I made for God.

My never-ending to-do list often meant substituting time with Jesus for an extra hour of studying in the morning before class. When my plate was overflowing, I tried to rely on my own strength to get through it, instead of turning to the One I can lean on and find peace in. Even as I recognized my need for God, the thought of any moment not spent on homework felt like a waste, and something I would end up paying for later.

Eventually, this led to skipping my Bible reading, and time with God slipped further from my mind. Each time I let that happen, my anxiety and stress spiked, and I became worse at facing the challenges in front of me.

When spending time in the Word felt overwhelming, I tried starting small. Instead of fitting in an hour of Bible study, I tried spending just ten minutes each morning praying through Scripture, often while getting ready for the day. The more consistent I became with this practice, the more grounded I felt. I started my days with more peace and more confidence to face the challenges ahead. Beginning my mornings with God also helped me invite Him into more of the little moments throughout the day—during stressful deadlines, in the minutes before writing an exam, or before a critique.

The more moments I shared with God throughout the day, the more it reminded me that while my

studies are important, they are not where I find my worth. An awful presentation or critique with a professor does not define me; my identity is always found in Christ. In a degree that can be so all-consuming, this was one of the most important reminders for me.

I realized that even just ten intentional minutes with God, whether reading His Word, praying, or worshipping while getting ready in the morning, could help change the course of my day. Those few minutes filled my cup more than any amount of studying could.

One of the biggest lessons I have been learning through all of this is that our relationship with Jesus can look different during different seasons of life. There are some seasons when we have the capacity to participate in weekly Bible studies and small groups or spend hours in our own personal devotions. There are other seasons where faithfulness simply looks like ten minutes in the morning and ongoing conversations with God throughout the day.

The busyness of a degree like architecture has taught me that no matter what it is in life that is demanding your attention, the only way to endure it is by clinging to God. When life feels overwhelming, running back to Jesus is what restores my peace.

My journey through architecture school is not over yet. As I prepare to begin my master's degree in the fall of 2027, I hope to carry these lessons with me. I know there will continue to be seasons when life competes for my attention, even after finishing my degree, but my prayer is that I will keep remembering to put God first, trusting that He is more faithful than my own efforts ever could be.



Abbie Charlton is an architectural technologist working in Abbotsford. She has attended Mill Lake Church her whole life and has recently moved to Burnaby where she started attending Forest City Church. Abbie has served on worship teams for many years, and when she is not working, she enjoys all things music, art, and nature.

Join us for
FALL BIBLE STUDIES
Mill Lake Women

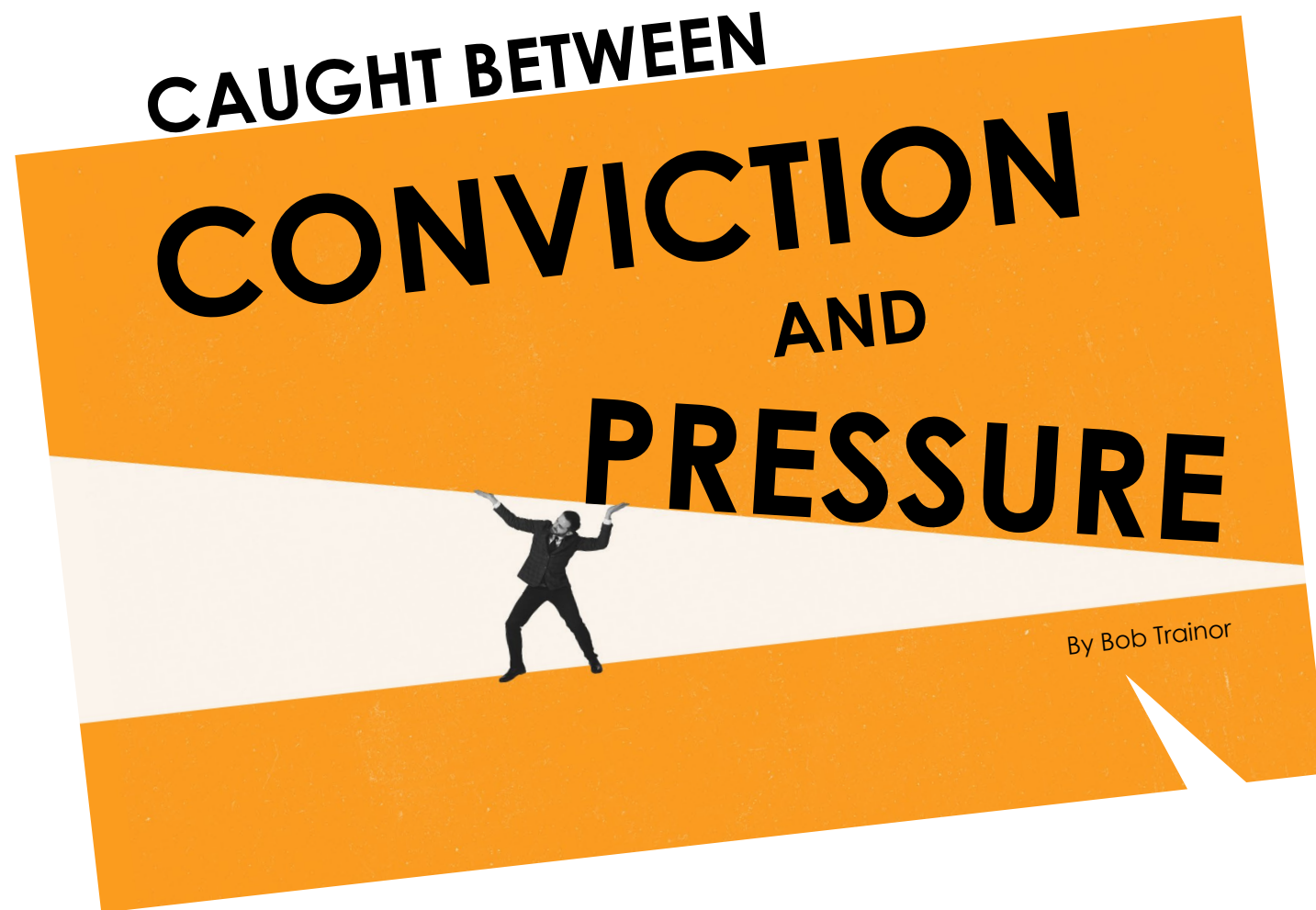
Unshakeable Hope
What are you anchored to—the circumstances of life or the promises of God?
Starting September 23rd, 2026
Wednesday Morning 9:30-11:30
Weekly until Nov 18

Cost: \$30

Steadfast: A study on James
We need biblical wisdom if we are to stay the course and be steadfast saints. The book of James will help us apply it.
Starting September 21st, 2026
Monday Evening 6:30-8:30
Weekly until Nov 16

Look forward to seeing you

SHARE your STORIES
TALENTS + PHOTOS + THOUGHTS
Send them to: ann@milllakechurch.ca



A Prayer for Anyone Caught Between Conviction and Pressure

Father, today I stand, not as a defeated person trying to survive but as a son or daughter of God who has been called to endure, to remain faithful, and to hold firmly to what You have placed in my hands.

Lord, You know the pressures that surround me. You see the voices that try to weaken my conviction, blur my vision, and wear down my perseverance. You see the moments when discouragement whispers that it would be easier to surrender than to stand. But today, in the name of Jesus Christ, I choose to hold fast.

I hold fast to Your Word when culture tells me to compromise.

I hold fast to truth when confusion increases around me.

I hold fast to my calling even when others misunderstand it, resist it, or attempt to redirect it.

I hold fast to the vision You planted in my heart, because what You spoke is greater than the pressure surrounding me.

Lord, thank You that victory is not found in human strength but in Your presence. Thank You that I do not fight *for* victory—I fight *from* victory, because Jesus Christ has already overcome the world.

When fatigue tries to settle into my mind, remind me that the Holy Spirit still gives strength.

When disappointment tries to cloud my vision, remind me that Your promises are still alive.

When I feel pressured to surrender what You showed me clearly, give me courage to stand with humility, wisdom, grace, and unwavering conviction.

Father, teach me to guard what is sacred. Guard my prayer life. Guard my integrity. Guard my love for people. Guard my calling. Guard the assignments You have entrusted to me. Guard the fire You placed inside me when You first called me.

Lord Jesus, You said, “Behold, I am coming quickly. Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”

Today I receive those words not as a warning of fear, but as a call to endurance and confidence. You are coming. You see everything. You reward faithfulness. Nothing surrendered to You is wasted. So today I refuse to release what Heaven has entrusted to me.

I refuse to abandon vision because of pressure.

I refuse to exchange eternal purpose for temporary peace.

I refuse to let weariness make decisions for me.

Instead, I rise again in faith. I stand again in confidence. I pray again with expectation. I worship again with sincerity. I trust again with courage.

Father, when I feel like I'm being robbed spiritually—robbed of peace, robbed of confidence, robbed of joy, robbed of calling, and robbed of strength—I pray that the Holy Spirit would breathe fresh endurance into me. Lift my head again. Steady my feet again. Clarify my vision again. Strengthen my heart again. May I remember You are still faithful, still speaking, still leading, and still finishing what You started in me.

Lord, I declare today that I will finish my race. I will remain faithful. I will hold fast. And when You come, may You find me standing—still believing, still loving, still serving, still trusting, and still carrying what You placed in my hands.

In the mighty and victorious name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



Bob Trainor is an author, international speaker, and certified professional coach with over 25 years of experience in relationships, leadership, and personal growth. He equips men at home and abroad to overcome challenges, build strong relationships, and live with clarity, purpose, and spiritual strength. Bob and his wife live in Burnaby, BC.

You sense God has entrusted you with a clear calling, vision, or responsibility. Yet you feel surrounded by resistance, misunderstanding, competing voices, and emotional exhaustion. The real tension isn't simply stress—it's the quiet, daily battle between staying faithful to what God has spoken and feeling the powerful pull to compromise, delay, surrender, or let go.

I know this place well because I've been there. You're weary, but you're not weak. Even with disappointment, discouragement, and spiritual opposition pressing in, you continue to show up. You keep serving, praying, loving people, and protecting the vision God gave you. You're striving to remain humble without becoming passive, and strong without becoming controlling.

My hope is that the following prayer will gently lead you (and me) from a place of desperation that says, “I am losing everything,” into a place of anchored trust that says, “God is still faithful. He is

still present. And He is still able to guide me through this season without losing me spiritually.”

At its heart, this is a prayer about faithful stewardship. It speaks to the deep fear of losing the clarity, courage, peace, endurance, and spiritual authority you've carried. What we need most right now is not hype, revenge, or tighter control—but something far more sustaining:

- Reassurance that God still sees us
- Clarity without panic
- Strength without hardness
- Wisdom beyond emotional reaction
- Courage without defensiveness
- Rest for our spirits
- Renewed confidence that faithfulness still matters.

Most importantly, this prayer reminds us of a crucial truth: we cannot anchor our identity solely in the success of the assignment. True stewardship means holding tightly to God while holding every assignment with surrendered hands.

WHO or WHAT Do We Treasure MORE Than Jesus?



By Matthew R. St. John

There are two questions I want to invite you to sit with for a moment. Not quickly, not casually, but deeply and prayerfully, with an openness to the Holy Spirit.

Who or what do you treasure most?

And then this: How big is your God?

Those questions have a way of exposing something within us. They reveal what captures our imagination, what commands our attention, what shapes our priorities, and what we ultimately believe is most worthy. Because the truth is, we all treasure something. The question is not whether we treasure—the question is what we treasure.

The disciples discovered this one night on the Sea of Galilee.

A Storm on Galilee

The sun was disappearing into the western sky when Jesus and His disciples pushed a rugged fishing boat away from the shore. It was a beautiful evening. The water was calm; the stars were emerging, and many of these men had grown up on that lake—

they knew its rhythms, they knew its moods. It was familiar. It was safe.

And then everything changed. The wind shifted, the atmosphere changed, and clouds rolled in and covered the stars. Experienced fishermen sensed something was coming, but even they were unprepared for what followed. A storm descended on the Sea of Galilee with terrifying force—the wind screamed, the waves rose, and the rain came down so violently that it stung their faces. The boat began to fill with water. These were not inexperienced sailors; these were men who knew the lake. Yet even they were afraid.

Meanwhile, Jesus was asleep. That detail has always captured me. The storm did not wake Him. The wind did not wake Him. The waves did not wake Him. But the cry of His beloved disciples did.

"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Four simple words: do you not care? If we are honest, many of us have prayed that prayer—do you not care about this betrayal, about my suffering, about my child, about my marriage, about the uncertainty, about my exhaustion?

The disciples cried out, and Jesus responded. He stood up in the boat and spoke: "Peace! Be still!" And immediately the wind stopped, the waves settled, and the storm obeyed. The One sleeping in the stern of the boat was revealed to be the One who had authority over the storm itself (Matthew 8:23–27).

Order Out of Chaos

Perhaps we should not be surprised. The very first words of Scripture tell us: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:1–2). Chaos, darkness, disorder—and then God spoke. Creation came into existence. Order emerged from chaos. Life came from emptiness.

The same Jesus who calmed the storm on Galilee is the Jesus through whom all things were created. This is exactly what the writer of Hebrews declares: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). That is not simply a statement about Jesus being

powerful—it is a declaration about who Jesus is. He is God in the flesh.

The One who created the universe entered the world He created. The One who commands the wind and waves became the One who slept in a boat. The One who holds all things together allowed Himself to be held by human arms. The One who rules over creation came near to rescue His creation.

The Treasure That Has No Rival

This brings us back to the question: who or what do we treasure more than Jesus? Because when we really see Jesus, the answer becomes increasingly difficult. What could possibly compete with Him? What could possibly be more valuable, more worthy?

This Jesus created all things. This Jesus holds all things together. This Jesus cleanses us from sin. This Jesus defeated death. This Jesus rose from the grave. This Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for His people. And this same Jesus will return in glory.

He is not merely a helpful addition to our lives. He is not one treasure among many. He is the treasure. The Apostle Paul says of Jesus: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created... And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15–17). Then Paul says something that deserves our attention: "that in everything he might be preeminent" (v. 18). Everything. Not most things, not religious things, not the things we consider important. Everything.

The Footnote We Quietly Add

Jesus is preeminent. And yet I must ask myself: do I live as though this is true? Because sometimes there is an invisible footnote beside the word "preeminent." Jesus is preeminent in everything... except my politics. Except my preferences. Except my fears. Except my desire to be right. Except my need to control. Except my reputation. Except my wounds. Except my rage. Except the things I've made central to my identity.

But there is no footnote. "All" means all. And that means Jesus must become greater than every competing treasure.

The challenge for the church today is that we can become deeply committed to things that are not Jesus. We can treasure political identities more than Christ. We can treasure cultural arguments more than Christ. We can treasure our theological preferences more than Christ. We can treasure being right more than Christ. We can even treasure our pain and disappointments because they have become part of how we understand ourselves. And slowly, subtly, we can place something else on the throne.

The Towel and the Basin

But Jesus does not simply call us to treasure Him—He shows us what that looks like. The same Jesus who calmed the storm is the Jesus who knelt with a towel and washed His disciples' feet.

Think about that. The Lord of glory. The Creator of heaven and earth. The One worshiped by angels. On His knees. Serving.

John tells us that Jesus "loved His own who were in the world, and He loved them to the end" (John 13:1). And then He washed their feet—even Judas's feet, the feet of the man who would betray Him. Jesus did not merely teach humility; He embodied it. He did not perform service; He became a servant. The Kingdom of God exploded into that room, because in God's Kingdom, everything is turned upside down. The greatest becomes the servant. The first becomes the last. Power expresses itself through humility. Leadership expresses itself through sacrifice. Authority expresses itself through love.

Paul says: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). In other words: be like Him.

Jesus is the One we celebrate. Jesus is the One we imitate. Jesus is the One we proclaim.

A World Still Searching

This matters because our world is full of spiritually hungry people. People searching. People longing. People asking questions. The question is: when they encounter us, will they encounter Jesus? Will they find a community marked by humility? Will they find people who love their neighbors? Will they find grace? Will they find a place where they can come close enough to see Christ? Or will they encounter our arguments before they encounter our Saviour?

Continued on next page

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The calling of the church is to reveal Jesus. That is why Jesus called those fishermen beside the Sea of Galilee and said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). The invitation was not simply, "Believe certain things." It was, "Come with me. Walk the road I walk. Become like Me. Join My mission. Move toward Jesus and take others with you."

Two Questions to Return To

That is the invitation before us: to treasure Jesus above everything else, to become like Jesus in humility and love, and to proclaim Jesus to a world searching for hope.

So, we return once more to those two questions. Who or what do you treasure most? And how big is your God? Because when we truly see Jesus—when we see the One who calms storms, forgives sins, washes feet, defeats death, and reigns forever—the only appropriate response is worship.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (Revelation 5:12).

Jesus is worthy. And all creation will one day declare what has always been true: He is preeminent, He is Lord, He is our greatest treasure.

Him we celebrate. Him we imitate. Him we proclaim.



Dr. Matthew R. St. John and his wife, Christa, live in Minneapolis, where he is the senior pastor of New Hope Church. A pastor for more than thirty years, Dr. St. John nurtures a deep passion for sharing God's Word so spiritually hungry people may experience the life-changing power of Jesus. A graduate of King University and Dallas Theological Seminary, he chairs the Trinity Western University Board of Governors, including the world-renowned Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

gathering markit

If you or someone you know is struggling with temporary food insecurity, check out the Gathering Markit

www.gatheringmarket.com

Help fill the COMMUNITY CUPBOARD

BRING DONATIONS TO BOX IN LOBBY

It Started With a Closet

In each of our Sunday services, we pray for one of our churches within the Evangelical Free Church, Lower Pacific District (LPD), of which we are a part. To help get to know who we're praying for, select issues of Branches will feature what God is doing in and through our sister churches.

Thank you to Josephine Papp, LPD Director of Church Support, for providing us with the stories.

When a couple of volunteers decided to clean out cupboards and closets, which hadn't been properly sorted in 40 years, they had no idea how much God would use that simple act to bless their small community of Nanoose Bay. Located 42 kilometers north of Nanaimo, Nanoose Community Church serves a community of approximately 7,000 people.

By the end of the day, the women had accumulated a sizable pile of items that now needed to be removed. Rather than simply drop everything off at a donation box, they held a garage and bake sale to raise money for their local food bank.

The congregation enthusiastically joined in, donating items they no longer wanted and baking treats to sell. After two successful sales days, only one pie and two or three items remained—and they had raised \$3,000.

When one volunteer called the food bank to arrange delivery of the donation, there was a moment of silence on the other end of the line. The representative explained that the board had just met and agreed to close the food bank for the next three months

until it received more funding. The unexpected gift of \$3,000 meant they could remain open and continue serving approximately 100 of their regular clients during that time.

This story is a beautiful reminder that God can use a small church in a small community to make an extraordinary difference when His people listen to His prompting and care for those around them.

And the story doesn't end there.

What began with two volunteers cleaning church cupboards grew into meaningful relationships within the community and between the food bank and Nanoose Community Church. The food bank now recommends the church's Moms and Tots group to young parents looking for connection and support.

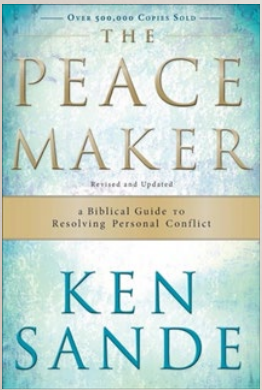
Sometimes God's greatest work begins with something as ordinary as cleaning out a closet. ✨



PASTOR RANDY'S RECOMMENDED READING

THE PEACEMAKER

By Ken Sande



The Peacemaker, by Ken Sande, is a practical resource for our Mill Lake family. Drawing on decades in church conflict resolution, Sande offers a clear, biblical framework for handling everyday disputes. He gives the Four G's and a helpful negotiation tool called PAUSE. I believe its practicality sets it apart. Rather than vague calls to 'just forgive and move on,' the book gives concrete language, checklists, and steps people can actually use in the middle of a real conflict with a spouse, a co-worker, or a fellow church member.

STREAM TODAY

Have you checked out RightNow Media? Stream Christian content for FREE with our personalized MLC QR access code! Ask the office if you have questions.



We trust you're learning and growing as you read through the Bible in 2026. This M'Cheyne Bible Reading Plan will enable you to read through the OT once and NT twice in the year.

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|-----|--------------------------|--|
| 1. | ☐ | 1 Sam 25; 1 Cor 6; Ezk 4; Ps 40-41 |
| 2. | ☐ | 1 Sam 26; 1 Cor 7; Ezk 5; Ps 42-43 |
| 3. | ☐ | 1 Sam 27; 1 Cor 8; Ezk 6; Ps 44 |
| 4. | ☐ | 1 Sam 28; 1 Cor 9; Ezk 7; Ps 45 |
| 5. | ☐ | 1 Sam 29-30; 1 Cor 10; Ezk 8; Ps 46-47 |
| 6. | ☐ | 1 Sam 31; 1 Cor 11; Ezk 9; Ps 48 |
| 7. | ☐ | 2 Sam 1; 1 Cor 12; Ezk 10; Ps 49 |
| 8. | ☐ | 2 Sam 2; 1 Cor 13; Ezk 11; Ps 50 |
| 9. | ☐ | 2 Sam 3; 1 Cor 14; Ezk 12; Ps 51 |
| 10. | ☐ | 2 Sam 4-5; 1 Cor 15; Ezk 13; Ps 52-54 |
| 11. | ☐ | 2 Sam 6; 1 Cor 16; Ezk 14; Ps 55 |
| 12. | ☐ | 2 Sam 7; 2 Cor 1; Ezk 15; Ps 56-57 |
| 13. | ☐ | 2 Sam 8-9; 2 Cor 2; Ezk 16; Ps 58-59 |
| 14. | ☐ | 2 Sam 10; 2 Cor 3; Ezk 17; Ps 60-61 |
| 15. | ☐ | 2 Sam 11; 2 Cor 4; Ezk 18; Ps 62-63 |
| 16. | ☐ | 2 Sam 12; 2 Cor 5; Ezk 19; Ps 64-65 |
| 17. | ☐ | 2 Sam 13; 2 Cor 6; Ezk 20; Ps 66-67 |
| 18. | ☐ | 2 Sam 14; 2 Cor 7; Ezk 21; Ps 68 |
| 19. | ☐ | 2 Sam 15; 2 Cor 8; Ezk 22; Ps 69 |
| 20. | ☐ | 2 Sam 16; 2 Cor 9; Ezk 23; Ps 70-71 |
| 21. | ☐ | 2 Sam 17; 2 Cor 10; Ezk 24; Ps 72 |
| 22. | ☐ | 2 Sam 18; 2 Cor 11; Ezk 25; Ps 73 |
| 23. | ☐ | 2 Sam 19; 2 Cor 12; Ezk 26; Ps 74 |
| 24. | ☐ | 2 Sam 20; 2 Cor 13; Ezk 27; Ps 75-76 |
| 25. | ☐ | 2 Sam 21; Gal 1; Ezk 28; Ps 77 |
| 26. | ☐ | 2 Sam 22; Gal 2; Ezk 29; Ps 78:1-37 |
| 27. | ☐ | 2 Sam 23; Gal 3; Ezk 30; Ps 78:38-72 |
| 28. | ☐ | 2 Sam 24; Gal 4; Ezk 31; Ps 79 |
| 29. | ☐ | 1 Kgs 1; Gal 5; Ezk 32; Ps 80 |
| 30. | ☐ | 1 Kgs 2; Gal 6; Ezk 33; Ps 81-82 |



THANK YOU!

Your donations to our library's "Clear the Shelves" campaign raised \$310. Watch for new books coming to our library shelves soon.

HAPPY GRANDPARENTS' DAY!

September 13 is Grandparents' Day! It's a great opportunity to show your grandparents some extra love and appreciation.

