MUSIC Moment

I AM NOT ALONE

By Kari Jobe

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

October 2026 | Issue 60

BRANCHES

A Mill Lake Church magazine

Blessed are the Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

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Falling in Love With God's Word

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What's In A Name?
Part 1 of a 3-Part Series

Pg 20

Inspiring Connections:
A Path Not Chosen

Give Thanks

to the LORD, for He is GOOD, for His steadfast love endures forever! ***Psalm 107:1***

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends –

As I sit to write this, I realize that Thanksgiving is right around the corner, which makes me think about how much I have to be thankful for. And that reminds me of the thoughtful comments we receive from you, expressing how much you look forward to each monthly issue of *Branches*. It's especially encouraging when someone points out a specific article that spoke to them, or when I bump into someone at House of James who just had to buy the book highlighted in our latest Book Review section.

Each month, *Branches* becomes a reality through the work of a small team of people who are committed to using the gifts God has given them to serve. I'm grateful for each one of them and for the joy of working together to bring you stories, insights, and encouragement. I'm also thankful for the opportunity to invite both Mill Lakers and individuals from our local community to share their experiences and the ways God is working in their lives and ministries. Their contributions enable us to bring you the variety of content that makes *Branches* what it is.

This month, you'll find a pictorial collage of the fun we had at our Fall Festival, opportunities for you to serve and be served, and articles to challenge and inspire you. We're also introducing a new three-part series, What's in a Name? Our regular features are also here to round out another issue of *Branches* for you to enjoy.

The Fall season can be a busy time for all of us. My prayer is that, in the midst of the busyness, you'll find time to relax, reflect, and rest in the goodness of God. And as Thanksgiving approaches, may we remember that every good gift—including the people and experiences God places in our lives—is reason to give thanks.

"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His steadfast love endures forever" (Psalm 107:1).

Know you are loved,



Ann Griffiths
Editor



BRANCHES

Issue 60

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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

MILL LAKE CHURCH

To Make the Hope of Jesus Known

Join us on Facebook & Instagram
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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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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: October 21.

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.

MEN

Contact Dwayne Mitchell at dwaynemit@gmail.com.
Breakfast Fellowship: Meets on the second Tuesday of every month. This month: October 13, 10 a.m. at Jo-Jo's.

WOMEN

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

KIDS & TOTS

Every Sunday: During worship, newborn tots to age 5 are welcome in our nursery. Kindergarten to Grade 5 kids are dismissed part way through the service to go downstairs with their teachers. Sign in by the nursery in the lobby, for either program.
Family Sundays: On the 1st Sunday of each month, when our kids stay with us through the service, Grace Activity Bags are available 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 salad. Main dishes, desserts, & beverages are provided
This month: October 4.

The Blessed Life

Let's Stand Firm in the Face of Persecution

By Randy Lemke

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10–12).

We've come to the last Beatitude, and it's the one most of us hope we can skip. Persecution feels like something that happens somewhere else—to Christians in prison cells overseas, not to us. But Jesus doesn't tuck this Beatitude away as a footnote for extreme cases. He gives it more words than any other; two verses instead of one. That should tell us it isn't a rare exception to the Christian life. It's part of the normal way of following Jesus.

Saying the Same Thing Twice

We notice right away that Jesus says almost the same thing twice. Verse 10 talks about being persecuted "for righteousness' sake." Verse 11 talks about being persecuted "on my account." That's not repetition for effect. It's Jesus making a claim that He and righteousness are the same thing. To live rightly is to live faithful to Him. So when the world pushes back against a godly life, it's really pushing back against Him. We just happen to be standing there.



And notice He doesn't tell us to grit our teeth or to endure quietly. He tells us to rejoice and be glad. The word for rejoice in Greek carries the idea of leaping. It is the reaction you'd have to genuinely good news. Jesus is asking us to respond to opposition the way we'd respond to a promotion. That can only make sense if what He says next is true—that our reward is great in heaven, and we're in good company. The prophets, apostles, and many believers went through this before us. We're not the first ones asked to pay a price for telling the truth about God.

The Look of Persecution

We should be careful here, because this Beatitude gets misused in both directions. Some people shrink from it and pretend it doesn't apply to comfortable Western Christians. Others reach for it too fast, treating every disagreement as persecution and every inconvenience as a badge of honour. Neither one is right.

Real persecution for righteousness is suffering because you did the right thing in God's eyes, not because you were rude about it. This Beatitude is: Getting mocked online for holding to what Scripture says about marriage or human dignity, even when you said it kindly. Losing out on a promotion because you wouldn't cut corners or wouldn't go along with something you couldn't in good conscience support. Or a student getting quietly frozen out of a friend group because she wouldn't laugh at the joke everyone else was laughing at.

Persecution for righteousness' sake might also look like a co-worker who used to be friendly, turning cold once they find out you actually believe what your church teaches. It might look like a family member who treats your faith as an embarrassment to be managed at holidays. None of that makes headlines. All of it costs you something.

And we should hold all of this with humility because, for many believers around the world right now, like North Korea, Iran, Nigeria, and parts of India, persecution means prison, violence, or worse, simply for owning a Bible or gathering to worship. Our discomfort here is real, but it doesn't carry the same weight. Remembering that keeps us from self-pity and reminds us we belong to a global family, most of whom pay a far higher price than we might.

Peter Has a Few Words to Say on the Matter

Peter wrote his first letter to Christians scattered across the Roman Empire who were facing exactly this—social pressure, slander, and, in some cases, outright hostility, simply for following Jesus. His counsel is worth taking to heart.

"Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:12–13). Peter uses the word surprised. He assumes opposition is coming. He's trying to keep us from being blindsided by it, and from thinking something has gone wrong with our faith when it shows up.

He also gives us the posture to take. "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God" (1 Peter 2:12). Later, he adds, "but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). That last phrase matters.

Gentleness and respect. Not outrage. Not a martyr's complex. Not matching insult for insult on social media. Peter's whole point is that our own bad behaviour should never cause our suffering. Verse 15 of chapter 4 makes that explicit when he says we're not to suffer as a murderer, thief, or meddler. Make sure that if you suffer, it's for the name of Christ, not because you were simply difficult to be around.

How We Live This, Really

So, practically, what do we do with this? We don't go looking for a fight. Manufacturing offense isn't the same as faithfulness, and picking unnecessary battles isn't courage. We stay kind, even if others don't show us kindness in return. We keep doing good work, being good neighbours, and telling the truth gently. And we let the opposition be about Christ rather than about our own attitude.

We strengthen our faith in Christ and prepare. We ready ourselves to stand firm, so we're not surprised and shrink back when the moment actually comes. When staying silent would be easier than telling the truth, we speak anyway. We speak with respect,

Continued on next page

Continued from last page

but we speak. When going along with the crowd would cost us nothing and standing apart would cost us something real, we stand anyway.

And we remember why. Not because suffering is good in itself, but because it's evidence that we belong to someone greater than the approval of the people around us. Jesus doesn't promise this Beatitude will feel good in the moment. He promises something better waits on the other side of it, and that God is watching closely enough to call it blessed.

That's the whole arc of this series, Mill Lake. From poverty of spirit to persecution, the Beatitudes describe a life that looks nothing like the world's version of success and everything like Jesus. Next month we will close off the series by looking at how the Beatitudes shape the mission of our church.

For now, remember: blessed are the persecuted, not because the suffering is easy, but because it means the world has recognized whose you are and God has already secured your reward.



***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 OCTOBER

ANNIVERSARIES

Jeff & Lavinia Rusu - Oct 1, 2011

Dwayne & Joanne Mitchell - Oct 10, 1981

Travis & Naomi Kragh - October 10, 2013

Rod & Dianne Neufeld - Oct 11, 1975

BIRTHDAYS

Ruth Olson - Oct 1

Deb Fehr - Oct 5

Jonah Cobb - Oct 5

Joanne Mitchell - Oct 12

Dexter Kragh - Oct 14

Ben Moorhouse - Oct 15

Clayton Williscroft - Oct 16

Angela Williscroft - Oct 16

Lary Sawatzky - Oct 22

Deborah-Lee Coombes - Oct 24

Lilly Williscroft - Oct 24

Johanna Campbell - Oct 26



Denise's thoughts on:

STRONG IN THE LORD

By Winfree Brisley



Full disclosure. This past month held some intense moments that left me little time for reading. While preparing this month's review, I didn't feel overly enthralled with the titles I looked at. In all fairness, it was probably more me than the books, but it left me wondering what book I would land on for this issue. I'll give the others another chance at a later date.

As I battled the circumstances of the month, I kept reminding myself to grab my shield of faith. And then it hit me. Strong in the Lord, a fantastic devotional from The Gospel Coalition, edited by Winfree Brisley and full of contributions from trusted female voices. The book offers reflections and prayers that readers can process alone or with friends. I had previously read some of it, but quickly picked it up again. It reminded me that Scripture is where we gain the strength God gives us so freely—even when life has a way of exposing our weakness. What a blessing.



It's so easy to default to the idea that when life is hard, we must be doing something wrong. Truth is, everyone has something in their lives that makes us aware of their weaknesses and the need for help. Perhaps it's financial, a broken relationship, or illness. Maybe it's simply trying to get it all done while being the support to those around us. Thankfully, 2 Corinthians 12:9 says His "power is perfect in weakness."

This book is beautiful, both inside and out, and packed with a balance of biblical teaching and everyday application. And it's easy to read. Each day's reading feels approachable, all while providing an opportunity to spend more time in Scripture and dig deeper.

Every devotion follows the same simple rhythm: Read. Reflect. Respond. Request. This makes it easy to build into a daily routine. Although rooted in Paul's teaching from Ephesians 6:10–18, the authors use a variety of Scripture to reflect upon. I found it nice to have my Bible close by so I could look up the many references. I also slowed down to think about prayer, faith, truth, righteousness, and the other pieces of God's armor, and how they fit into my situation. And I intentionally took time to breathe and allow God's strength to wash over me.

I challenge you to pick up this book and explore each piece of the armor, equip yourself to stand firm in faith, and draw near to the Lord—no matter your current circumstances.



*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.

BOOK REVIEW



Q "CAN FAITH AND REASON CO-EXIST?"

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*.

A I assume some of you carry this question quietly, maybe even with guilt. You may feel that doubting means you've failed at faith. You haven't. And it might help to know that some of the sharpest minds in Christian history have wrestled with exactly this question and didn't come away thinking faith and reason were enemies.

Augustine gave us a phrase that's shaped the whole Christian intellectual tradition: *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding. Notice the order. Faith isn't the conclusion that reason eventually reaches when enough proof accumulates. It's the starting posture from which a Christian mind goes looking for understanding. You trust first, the way a child trusts a parent before it can articulate why. Then you spend a lifetime growing into the reasons. That's not anti-intellectual. It's being honest about how trust actually works, in relationship and in faith.

Centuries later, Thomas Aquinas pushed this further. He believed reason alone, careful observation and logic, no Bible required, could get you partway to God. Looking at cause and effect, order and design in creation, a thinking person could reasonably conclude that something like God exists. But Aquinas said some truths, like the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the specific shape of God's redemptive plan, were beyond what unaided reason could discover on its own. Not against reason. Beyond it. Revelation completes what reason, on its own, can only gesture toward. I think that distinction still helps us today: your mind can get you a long way toward God, and Scripture takes you the rest of the way home.

Søren Kierkegaard, a real giant of Christian philosophy, actually pushed back on the thoughts of people like Aquinas. He argued that faith requires a 'leap,' explaining that if you could fully prove Christianity with logic as you prove a math equation, it wouldn't be faith anymore but just knowledge, and that something essential about trusting God would be lost. There's real wisdom here as well. Some things about walking with God you don't reason your way into. You commit your way to them, and understanding follows. Hebrews 11:1 calls faith "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." This conviction goes further than sight alone can carry a person, but not against what reason has shown to be true and trustworthy.

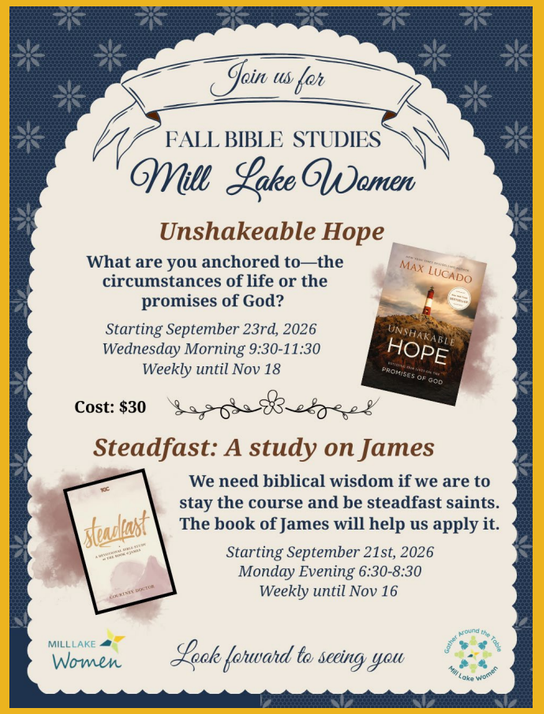
On the other side of this, writers and atheists like Richard Dawkins have argued that faith and reason are at odds. Dawkins argues that faith just means believing without evidence, full stop, and that's incompatible with a reasoning mind. I don't think that definition is actually what Scripture means by faith, and it's worth saying, instead of just feeling vaguely threatened by it. Biblical faith has never been 'believe with zero evidence.' Paul doesn't say, "Just believe Jesus rose," in 1 Corinthians 15; he says over five hundred people saw the risen Christ, most of them still alive, and he urged his readers to go ask them. That's an appeal to evidence and reasoning in service of faith, not away from it. Even Jesus, with Thomas, didn't rebuke his mind for wanting proof; He showed him His hands and His side. Then He blessed those who trust with no need to see it every time. Not as those who reason badly, but those whose trust has matured beyond requiring constant new proof.

This is where I hope we land. Reason and faith aren't rivals fighting for the same territory. They're more like two instruments in the same orchestra. Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord." God himself invites your mind into this. Romans 12:2 says we're transformed by the renewing of our mind, not the abandoning of it.

I think it's great when we bring our questions to church. 1 Peter 3:15 urges us always to be ready to give a defense, with gentleness and respect, meaning we should foster a community that welcomes hard questions, rather than managing or shaming them into silence.

Let's guard ourselves from either extreme and remember that some of the most solid faith in the Church belongs to people who wrestle hard, read widely, and come out the other side, not people who never wrestle at all.

Faith and reason exist together. The Bible never puts them at odds. Faith and reason are meant to hold hands and walk together in the life God is building in you. Augustine, Aquinas, even Kierkegaard's honest objections all point us toward the same truth from different angles.



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www.gatheringmarket.com



FUN & LEARNING AT MLC

MILL LAKE Kids

God's story is the most beautiful story ever told, full of wonder and scandalous grace. There's nothing more important for the younger generation than imparting to them a rich vision of the gospel. ***The Biggest Story*** curriculum we're 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.



OUR MLKIDS GOAL

To celebrate all the memorization [up to 15 verses] with a **MLKids Games Night & Pizza Party on Sunday, February 7th at 5 p.m. in the gym.**

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.

NEXT RECITING DATE

Students, come find **Mrs. Allana** after the Family Day service on **November 1st** to recite the verses you memorized in October! [Romans 5:12, Genesis 7:12 + 11:9].

K to Grade 2 memorize Romans 5:12 only; Grades 3 to 5 memorize all three verses.



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 October:

4

FAMILY SUNDAY

Worship with our church family. Student activity packs available at the Connect desk. **Recite September memory verses** (Genesis 1:1 + 3:15) to Mrs. Allana to get your reward.

11

"FROM BAD TO WORSE"
Genesis 3 + 4
Sin was everywhere and in everyone.

Romans 5:12
"Just as sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned."

18

"RAIN, RAIN GO AWAY"
Genesis 6-9
God sent a flood to judge all the wickedness on earth.

Genesis 7:12
"Rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights."

25

"A TABLE AND A TOWER"
Genesis 10-11
People wanted to be great, but only God is great.

Genesis 11:9
"Its name is called Babel, because there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth."

TOTS

Help Wanted!

It's a joy to serve the sweet little ones God has blessed our Mill Lake Church family with. If you're interested in serving with us in this area, please contact Allana Lemke. We could use your help.

YOUTH

Come to our youth meeting! Mondays @ 7 p.m. for grades 6-12. Take part in some glorious games in the gym, followed by fantastic Bible teaching in our Youth Room.

@mlcyouth



Falling in Love With God's Word

By Carolyn Prins

Women's Bible studies have been a constant in my life for many years. They've continually drawn me closer to who God is through His Word. My favourite studies have always been a full book of the Bible. As a young mom, I did a lot of studying, yet I didn't feel I had a full understanding of the Scriptures. I didn't know how it all fit together.

I encountered Precept studies about fifteen years ago. At first, they seemed to have an enormous amount of homework each week. But as I worked through each day's assignment, I quickly recognized the depth of learning that I had longed for. The cross-references brought more clarity to how each piece of Scripture fits into the whole. Discussions within the groups were rich as we learned from each other. The Scriptures made more sense as I learned the full gospel story that starts in Genesis and weaves its way throughout the entire Bible. I truly fell in love with God's Word.

The narrative of Genesis came alive as I went through creation, the flood, Abraham, and God's covenant with him. My heart hurt for Joseph as he endured all the injustices that occurred, starting with his brothers selling him into slavery. Yet through it all, we were told that God was with Joseph. By the end of his story, it was so encouraging to hear Joseph say, "What you meant for harm, God meant for good." Joseph could see the bigger picture and know that God was with him and in control.

Hebrews was another of my favourite studies. It helped me better understand the Old Testament. I have a greater appreciation for what it was like to perform all the sacrifices and rituals that never truly brought forgiveness of sin, and how they all pointed to Jesus the Messiah, the sacrificial Lamb of God. How grateful I am to live on this side of the cross and to have the full forgiveness we now have through Christ.

My life, like many others, has come with ups and downs. I've learned, through examples in Scripture, how many people lived through very hard and uncertain times. Yet through it all, they kept their faith strong in our faithful God and, like Paul, were content in any and every circumstance. As I studied the life of Jesus, I was humbled and appreciative of all He did for me, and continues to do.

It's a privilege to study and teach the Bible. It's become easier to see how a book fits into the whole of Scripture. I'm confident that as I continue, I will fall more deeply in love with God's Word. What a blessing to be a child of God.



Carolyn Prins *loves Jesus and is passionate about helping others fall in love with Him through His Word. She is a Bible study teacher, writer, wife to her high-school sweetheart, Mom, and Nana. Carolyn lives in Abbotsford and has a heart for encouraging others to live with unwavering hope and confidence in God.*



MLC *Library News*

By Christal Peters

Reading a good book has been something I've enjoyed for a long time. Whether it's a work of fiction, or a book on prayer, or an inspiring biography, books have so often encouraged me in my faith.

We're blessed at Mill Lake Church to have a library for everyone to use and enjoy, and where there are books for children, teens, and adults. We have wonderful fiction, as well as biographies and non-fiction to challenge and help you grow closer to the Lord.

We desire to see more people enjoying the library. With this in mind, you may have noticed some changes happening this summer. We've worked hard to sort through the books and offer them to the congregation for a donation. This has increased interest in the library and encouraged us to see more people using the library. Thank you to everyone who donated to our library fund so we're able to buy more books for you to enjoy.



Our Church Library

Some ideas we've come up with to increase interest in the library is to invite readers to write a short review of a book that was meaningful to them. Sometimes it's hard to know what to read, but a helpful review can inspire and spark interest in a new author.

We want to improve our communication with you, especially when new books arrive. We also plan to provide a suggestion box so you can let us know the kinds of books you'd like to see in the library.

We've worked hard over the past few weeks to reorganize our shelves so books are easier to see and simpler to find.

Whether you love to read or it's something you only do occasionally, I encourage you to check out our MLC library. We look forward to helping you find a book to encourage you in your walk with Christ.



Christal Peters *and her husband, Dave, met in the Mill Lake Church basement when they were college students, and they've attended ever since. Christal has filled many roles at MLC and continues to serve. A retired educational assistant, she enjoys hanging out with her four grandsons, gardening, baking, and reading.*

FALL FEST FUN!

We had a blast at our Annual Fall Festival on September 13! A huge thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who kept the event running so smoothly.



PART ONE

HIS NAME SAYS IT ALL

Parents search baby name books for the meaning of names of persons whom they hope their offspring will emulate. Christian parents often give their children biblical names such as Nathaniel, meaning 'gift of God,' or Ruth, whose name suggests 'friendship,' or Micah, meaning 'Who is like the Lord?' The first name for God we encounter in Scripture is Elohim, the Creator God.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). *El* means 'God' in Hebrew; *Elohim* is the plural word for God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit created the world. How do we know that?

The second verse of Genesis 1 tells us that the Spirit of God moved upon the waters. God spoke the world into being when He said, "Let there be light" and there was light. God Himself is light, and He created light first. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. Jesus' name is the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). When God made Adam and Eve, He said, "Let us make man in our own image." He used the royal 'we.' The triune God made the world.

In Proverbs 8:22–31, we discover Jesus was the craftsman at God's side. He is Wisdom personified, "filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his [God's] presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind" (vv. 30–31). The psalmist sings, "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6).

Psalm 104 is a creation psalm. The psalmist describes Elohim as dressed in His creation. "The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment…He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind" (vv. 2–3). Beautiful poetry describing the majesty, splendor, and luminosity of God. The next stanza in this psalm paints a picture of how God placed the earth on its foundations, how He set the boundaries for the seas, and how He made rivers pour water into the ravines for man and beast to quench their thirst.

God marks the seasons. The sun knows when to go down, and the moon traces its orbit exactly in the path God set for it. If the sun were a millimeter to the left, we would burn to a crisp. If God set it a millimeter in the opposite direction, we would freeze. Elohim sustains mankind and beasts alike. The lion lurks for its prey, the birds build their nests, and the fish swim in the paths of the sea. Men and women go out to their work and return in the evening. These all look to their Creator for food and sustenance. The psalmist exclaims, "How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (Psalm 104:24).

Elohim did not make one or two plants, a few fish, or one flock of birds. His creation is full of diversity. He created millions of species of various kinds. The seas teem with fish; the air is filled with birds of every feather. Think of humanity. Each embryo contains billions of possibilities for each newborn child. There are billions of galaxies with billions and billions of stars in them. Who could imagine a universe like ours? Only God. The psalmist encourages us to "Praise the name of the LORD" for all His mighty deeds and wonderful works in creating and sustaining the universe.

Elohim created the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Mankind has tried to create life, but has not succeeded. As we look at the immensity, beauty, and diversity of creation, how can we believe in the theory of evolution or even 'Christianize' it by saying God made the first cell? How can we say that all this glorious creation started from a single, simple cell, when each tiny cell is irreducibly complex, a little factory so intricate it boggles the mind?

A human embryo alone contains such a delicate, infinitely small combination of gene and chromosome chains that the naked eye can't possibly see. We know a computer needs a designer; what about the universe? Surely an Intelligent Designer fashioned the earth and all the surrounding planets. Elohim spoke this vast array into existence by the breath of His mouth. His invisible qualities, almighty power, and Godhead are clearly seen in His creation.

Elohim is unfathomable. We cannot comprehend His power and greatness. The wise Teacher of Ecclesiastes said, "No one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (3:11). A tiny picture of trying to comprehend God would be to ask an ant to explain an elephant. God is God. He is beyond our understanding. God's name, Elohim, contains all His essence, attributes, and character.

What's in His name? Everything. If this God is our God, who can be against us? No one. Trust Him, put your faith in Him, surrender your life to Him. He will enfold you, protect you, and provide for all your needs. His name says it all.



Johanna Campbell, DTh is a member of Mill Lake's Prayer and Care Team and has served at Mill Lake Church in varied capacities for forty years. If you wish to discuss any issues about life and how you can live to God's glory, you may call her at 604 853-6963. Sometimes one call and a few sessions of biblical counsel can change the trajectory of your life.





A PATH NOT CHOSEN

By Shelley Picard

Fifteen years ago, Pierre and I moved from Mill Lake Church to support and participate in a church plant here in Abbotsford.

We were certain God was leading us into a time of growth. We quickly saw that when God is at the centre, growth comes easily. Together, we trusted Him and enjoyed watching the Holy Spirit move us forward.

Then, on July 30, 2016, while escorting clients on a tour of Spain and France, our world exploded.

On day 3 of a 20-day tour, I stood on a 20-inch-high platform, talking to someone after dinner. As the conversation ebbed, I took a step to leave and tumbled backward onto a marble floor. Head first.

Pierre says he heard the crack of my head as it struck the marble. Then silence. Until the room exploded with cries and hubbub, as people called out for him.

Running into the dining room, he saw me lying on the floor, out cold with traces of blood pooling like a crimson halo around my head.

One of my clients on the tour was a retired ER nurse who quickly shouted orders to call for an ambulance. She checked for a pulse and told me later that she was relieved to find one.

The EMTs arrived and, language challenges notwithstanding, my nurse in charge conveyed her findings to them while they loaded me into an ambulance and off to the hospital.

The CT scan and examination determined that the skull had cracked, most of the blood had been expelled, and I had a handful of small brain bleeds. I would not be leaving the hospital that night.

The next day, I had a decision to make. My clients had paid for a tour, not to sit and wait for me to recover from my calamity. I instructed the Spanish guide to continue the tour and that Pierre and I would catch up to them in Barcelona. With arrangements made, they set off.

Three days later, doctors told me they were releasing me with one caveat: I could not fly for 14 days. That made me happy because 15 days remained on the tour. I was good to go and thanked God for His benevolence.

On August 14, we flew home. But on August 17, I experienced multiple seizures over a few hours. Pressurization on my flight home triggered more brain bleeds. An ambulance rushed me to Abbotsford Hospital, where they had difficulty stabilizing me.

That night, I believe God's hand saved me thanks to the prayers of my friends, Kirk & Crystal Hicks and Kewal & Grace Uppal, who came into the ER after a call from my daughter and stood around my bed inviting the Holy Spirit into the room.

Three days later, my daughter drove me home from the hospital. Yet, I felt a niggling in my spirit that my life—no, our life—would never be the same.

I was right. August 20, 2016, was the first day of the new me. Unprepared. Unwilling. Uncertain. That afternoon I stood on our deck, alone, and cried out to God, "Why?!"

I didn't hear an answer. I knew things—physically—were not good. I didn't know how or if I would ever be the woman that I had been. "Why?!"

Pierre and our daughter, Chloe, had no idea what to do or how to do it. We were all treading water in a tumultuous sea and sinking fast. I couldn't stand without help. I could barely walk. No focus. And the list goes on.

Then, a few important doors opened. WCB accepted my claim because I had been working at the time of the accident. This allowed for physical and occupational therapy.

God began speaking to my soul. Pushing me out of comfort and into challenge. Reminding me of His presence. Then He showed me the why. That He had a purpose in what happened. I began to understand that living a life with Him, the way I thought it should be, was not living a life with Him the way He wanted me to live.

This glorious revelation for me and Pierre pushed us forward as we stepped further into trusting God. But, He did more than restore; He rebuilt us stronger and more resilient. In my weakness, I discovered the joy of God, and I live in that joy each day—even with the outcome of a traumatic brain injury.

We've come full circle and are now back in the arms of Mill Lake Church. We're here with conviction, knowing God has directed us and we're honouring His will. A will made clear one Sunday as I struggled with the decision to return. Sitting in church, He spoke to me clearly. "Shelley, stop putting words in my mouth and start listening to what I'm saying."

That's all I needed.

Putting words in His mouth led me to that fall in Spain. It had become easy to convince myself that God had led my decisions, especially if it was good for the Kingdom. But if I wasn't listening to His direction, how would I know what was good for His Kingdom?

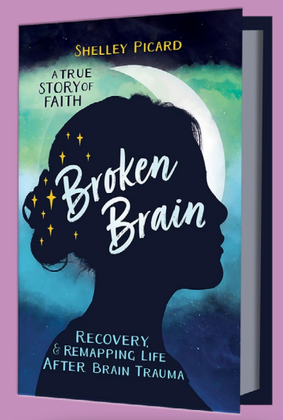
God was relentless during my recovery, ensuring I listened more than I spoke. And that Sunday morning reminder proved I was still learning to listen and obey.



***Shelley Picard** is a writer and speaker, and enjoys assisting clients with their travel plans. She and her husband, Pierre, who loves gardening and building models, have one daughter. They attend Mill Lake Church, where Shelley serves on the Women's Leadership Team.*

AVAILABLE NOW

You can learn more about Shelley's journey following her traumatic brain injury in her new book, "Broken Brain." To buy a copy, connect with Shelley directly or pick one up at House of James.



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PASTOR RANDY'S RECOMMENDED READING

THE INSANITY OF GOD

By Nik Ripken

I must say straight away, I have not read this book. I've only grazed through it. In fact, I hadn't heard of it until someone recommended it to me. But I thought I'd put it in your hands as we close our study on the Beatitudes with what it means to be blessed under persecution.

Ripken traveled to some of the most dangerous places in the world for Christians, asking believers who'd survived imprisonment and violence one honest question: How did your faith survive this? Their answers will challenge you. These aren't distant, sanitized stories; they're ordinary believers choosing Christ at extraordinary cost and finding joy on the other side.

This book makes Matthew 5:10–12 real. Reading "blessed are the persecuted" is one thing; sitting with someone who lived it is another. Pick up a copy of The Insanity of God this month and let's talk about it together.



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.

1. ☐ **1 Kgs 3; Eph 1; Ezk 34; Ps 83–84**
2. ☐ **1 Kgs 4–5; Eph 2; Ezk 35; Ps 85**
3. ☐ **1 Kgs 6; Eph 3; Ezk 36; Ps 86**
4. ☐ **1 Kgs 7; Eph 4; Ezk 37; Ps 87–88**
5. ☐ **1 Kgs 8; Eph 5; Ezk 38; Ps 89**
6. ☐ **1 Kgs 9; Eph 6; Ezk 39; Ps 90**
7. ☐ **1 Kgs 10; Phil 1; Ezk 40; Ps 91**
8. ☐ **1 Kgs 11; Phil 2; Ezk 41; Ps 92–93**
9. ☐ **1 Kgs 12; Phil 3; Ezk 42; Ps 94**
10. ☐ **1 Kgs 13; Phil 4; Ezk 43; Ps 95–96**
11. ☐ **1 Kgs 14; Col 1; Ezk 44; Ps 97–98**
12. ☐ **1 Kgs 15; Col 2; Ezk 45; Ps 99–101**
13. ☐ **1 Kgs 16; Col 3; Ezk 46; Ps 102**
14. ☐ **1 Kgs 17; Col 4; Ezk 47; Ps 103**
15. ☐ **1 Kgs 18; 1 Thes 1; Ezk 48; Ps 104**
16. ☐ **1 Kgs 19; 1 Thes 2; Dan 1; Ps 105**
17. ☐ **1 Kgs 20; 1 Thes 3; Dan 2; Ps 106**
18. ☐ **1 Kgs 21; 1 Thes 4; Dan 3; Ps 107**
19. ☐ **1 Kgs 22; 1 Thes 5; Dan 4; Ps 108–109**
20. ☐ **2 Kgs 1; 2 Thes 1; Dan 5; Ps 110–111**
21. ☐ **2 Kgs 2; 2 Thes 2; Dan 6; Ps 112–113**
22. ☐ **2 Kgs 3; 2 Thes 3; Dan 7; Ps 114–115**
23. ☐ **2 Kgs 4; 1 Tim 1; Dan 8; Ps 116**
24. ☐ **2 Kgs 5; 1 Tim 2; Dan 9; Ps 117–118**
25. ☐ **2 Kgs 6; 1 Tim 3; Dan 10; Ps 119:1–24**
26. ☐ **2 Kgs 7; 1 Tim 4; Dan 11; Ps 119:25–48**
27. ☐ **2 Kgs 8; 1 Tim 5; Dan 12; Ps 119:49–72**
28. ☐ **2 Kgs 9; 1 Tim 6; Hos 1; Ps 119:73–96**
29. ☐ **2 Kgs 10; 2 Tim 1; Hos 2; Ps 119:97–120**
30. ☐ **2 Kgs 11–12; 2 Tim 2; Hos 3–4; Ps 119:121–144**
31. ☐ **2 Kgs 13; 2 Tim 3; Hos 5–6; Ps 119:145–176**