

ShALOM!

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Fear Not

FEAR IS AN ugly thing. At various times in my life, my fears have caused me significant anxiety: serious illness, something bad happening to a member of my family, financial concerns, interpersonal and organizational conflict, violence directed at me or someone I love, and so on. I've also feared what people might think of me, especially in the online and social media world where nothing seems to be off-limits to say to or about a person with whom one disagrees. I fear judgment from those who will think I'm wrong, whether ideologically, theologically, biblically, or morally. I fear the nasty comments that could be directed at me or those I care about. I fear being unable to express clearly what I mean and as a consequence being misunderstood. My fears sometimes stop me from speaking up for what is right.

Fear is a powerful motivator, and I confess that it has motivated me far more often than I care to admit to think and act in ways that I wish I hadn't. While I understand the fear, I don't want to be ruled by it. Fear is not emotionally healthy and it's not helpful, especially when it turns me into something other than my best self.

During a particularly stressful time of my life a number of years ago, when I couldn't sleep at night, I would quote Psalm 23 to myself, including these words: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me." More often than not, I would soon fall asleep—not because the psalm was some magic potion, or because the fear was gone, but perhaps because I had focused on something other than the fear and

been reminded of something/someone greater than myself and my fears.

Some fear, of course, is normal and helps us take appropriate precautions to protect ourselves. But the current emphasis on all the things we should fear (economic collapse and financial disaster, crime, loss of freedom and our way of life, the "other," death, terrorism) runs the risk of turning us into people we should not want to be: xenophobic, racist, and sexist; ungenerous and self-centered; angry, mean-spirited, and insulting; violent in our words and actions; unable to live up to the very values we hold dear. I don't like what my fears and anxieties do to me personally, and I am sad and distressed by what I see happening to others who seem to be giving in to their worst fears.

Rather than be afraid of the possibility of terrorism, crime, economic collapse, or something as yet unknown, I want to be able to walk through the dark valleys without fear because I know God is with me whatever happens. I want to be ruled by love, compassion, and generosity, rather than by fear.

The contributors to this edition of *Shalom!* all speak to how as Christians we can handle both normal and extraordinary fears in more productive, healthy, and life-affirming ways. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Harriet S. Bicksler, editor

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Leaving Church

Handling Our Fears

by Jan Engle Lewis

A MISSIONARY COUPLE I came to know while living in Ecuador recently posted a Facebook link to a short clip by pastor/author Francis Chan: “Parents, Don’t Teach Your Kids to Be Safe, Teach Them to Be Dangerous for the Gospel.” The couple’s comment on the link: “Yes! This is why we are going back again even though so many tell us it’s crazy!”

My friends, Australians, are heading toward a door God opened in Thailand—a place that has been recognized in recent years as increasingly inhospitable to outsiders. As when they went to Ecuador, the couple will again leave family and friends, giving up the known for the unknown. And, they will take their three young daughters along.



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The unknown is our most elemental fear, and it looms large, at times, in many aspects of our lives: economics (will I have enough money?); health (will I suffer illness, accident, or attack?); politics (who will win any given election and how might the world then change?). For those of us who are parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles, our deepest fears are often linked to concerns for the young and vulnerable—our children.

The scriptures are full of admonitions not to fear, and many Christians can quote a verse that has been meaningful to them during difficult times. Jesus himself experienced dread as he faced the cross, and we’ll consider this at the end of the article. But now I want to pose a question: How do we handle fear and teach our children to do the same while engaging in the world in which we are called to be salt and light?

Back to Francis Chan for a moment. The title of his message, mentioned in the first paragraph, is a bit misleading. Of course we need to teach our kids safety basics. A more accurate distillation of Chan’s challenge would be: “Parents, Teach Your Children It’s Okay to Take Risks for God Because He Is Always With Us!” We’ll take a brief look at risk-taking for God. But first let’s consider some ways fear has influenced our actions at family, community, and national levels.

Chan is saddened by the trend among some Christian couples, especially after children arrive, to create a protective cocoon in which family security becomes paramount, and no longer is the Kingdom first in their lives. Some retreat to gated communities, avoiding wider community involvement or travel that might involve risks. At the core of taking such protective measures is the fear that someone might do us harm. And those we tend to fear most are those who are different than us: individuals or groups of a different class, color, or culture.

At a community level, we typically seek housing among those who are most like ourselves. This tendency toward neighborhood segregation by class and color has been reinforced through redlining, a discriminatory

practice by which banks, insurance companies, etc. refuse or limit loans, mortgages, and insurance within specific geographical areas, especially inner city neighborhoods. And what of our churches? The Pew Research Center reported in December 2014 that eight in ten American congregants attend services at a place where a single racial or ethnic group comprises at least 80 percent of the congregation. While fear may not be the only driving force behind such realities, I suggest it plays a significant role.

As a nation, we Americans have been moved by fear and its common bedfellow, prejudice, to incarcerate more of our citizens than any other nation in the world. Michelle Alexander, in *The New Jim Crow* (2012), describes how as a consequence of the so-called war on drugs, prison populations jumped in less than thirty years from 300,000 to more than two million. (See Melba Scott’s article in the Winter 2016 edition of *Shalom!* for more on this.) Individuals belonging to racial and ethnic minorities make up a disproportionate number of those incarcerated, in spite of studies showing that people of all colors use and sell illegal drugs at similar rates.

Another national fear that is fueled, according to scholars like Carl Ernst, by a well-funded propaganda effort is fear of Islam. It is not just the media that reinforce this fear. A community activist friend, who is a young Muslim mother, recently shared the experience of another Muslim mother whose daughter faced this situation at school: “...her teacher announced to her class of fourth graders that ‘Muslims are terrorists; look what they did in San Bernardino and Paris.’ The daughter spoke up, insisting that she and her family were not terrorists, to which the teacher responded that they were fine but all other Muslims were suspect.”

As an antidote to fear—one that can be applied to fears about any individual or group—my activist friend poses this challenge: “I ask parents who feel discomfort about American Muslims to confront that feeling and challenge themselves to learn

more about our community. Get to know us because we are part of the same neighborhoods, the same schools, and the same workplaces. I present the same challenge to American Muslim families that take refuge in cultural isolation. Be present in our democracy, be present with your whole community, not just with those from your own cultural background.” You can read my friend’s entire piece at bit.ly/ERsNadiaH.

Be present. That’s what we Christians are called to as we make disciples, welcome strangers, visit prisoners, and respond to the needs of those who lack life’s basics (Matthew 25). Obedience often means leav-

ing the comfort of the known and venturing out to be present in unfamiliar and even scary places—perhaps in a country far from home, or in a prison, school, or shelter nearby. When we feel afraid, we remember that Christ understands fear and can help us handle it. As he faced suffering and death, Jesus cried out to God. An angel came to strengthen him, enabling him to move forward with the great work God had called him to.

The message by Chan that so inspired my Australian friends concludes with a challenge to put ourselves in positions where dependence on God is crucial, “where God has to

come through.” And then, says Chan, “He comes through and the whole family says: ‘Wow, that was amazing; I’m never going to leave that God!’”

Jan Engle Lewis is a semi-retired mental health educator/consultant. She has lived and/or worked in the United States, Zambia, Haiti, Ecuador, and now Mexico, where she writes and volunteers at a women’s shelter (newbeginningsbaja.org). Jan posts regularly on Facebook and blogs periodically at janecuador.blogspot.com

Whom Shall I Fear?

by Kathy Stuebing

A SUDDEN CRASH woke us with a start, as broken glass from our bedroom window sprayed over the bed. Strong hands reached through the window, yanking the curtains and shaking the steel bars we had installed to deter burglars. Rich and I knew immediately what was happening: our house was being attacked, just as we had heard of other houses being attacked by bands of thieves with no fear of the authorities. We were living outside of Ndola, Zambia, because we answered God’s call to teach at the Theological College of Central Africa, preparing pastors and Christian workers for service to the growing churches in Zambia.

The thieves had cut the telephone lines to our area, so even as we turned on our alarm siren, we knew our neighbors could not call for help. We checked the kitchen, and just as we had relocked the kitchen door behind us we heard a loud bang, and men began ramming the door we had just locked. We then heard our children, Beth age 4, and David almost 2, calling us and we brought them with us to the living room while the melee continued in the kitchen and the siren blared on the roof.

I had been praying that the Lord would prevent an attack like this so our children would not be traumatized, but here we were sitting with the children while the unthinkable happened around us. I began praying

aloud, having them very much in mind. My prayer made no sense humanly speaking, since I was asking for impossible things: that Jesus would take care of us and no one would be hurt (the thieves had already shot at us from behind the kitchen door); that Jesus would make the thieves run away (they were clearly unafraid of our siren and considered us helpless); and that Jesus would send our friends to help us (our neighbors lived at a distance, and people don’t generally enter situations like this).

But the Lord answered each part of my prayer. A Christian neighbor came to the noisy attack with a squeazy bottle of ammonia that he kept as a burglar deterrent. He waited until the group of ten or more men gathered around him (after shooting at him but missing), and then he sprayed them with his ammonia. They all fled into the night! Even more amazing to me, our children went back to sleep that night and never had a bad dream or sleep problem over this attack. The Lord preserved them from the trauma I had feared for them, and in later years they would point to this night as evidence of God’s love and care for them.

But I had to deal with my fear! In my youth I had sung Psalm 27: “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?... When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who

will stumble and fall.” I believed the psalm but had never needed to put it to the test. Now the challenge came: did I really believe what I had sung? Would I cut and run because of fear, as a next door neighbor had done after his house was attacked and as some of our friends suggested we should do, especially for the safety of our children?

I had to admit feelings of fear when I considered what might have happened to all of us had the thieves prevailed. But then my scripture memorization as a child came to my rescue. I remembered, in King James English, Isaiah 26:3: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.” The Lord showed me that his peace was available if I did my part. When I kept my mind fixed on the Lord and trusted him, I had his peace. But as soon as I let my mind turn to what might have been, the peace was gone. When we next listened to our record of Mendelssohn’s oratorio, “Elijah,” tears welled up in my eyes as the choir sang, “For he shall give his angels charge over thee: that they shall protect thee in all the ways thou goest; that their hands shall uphold and guide thee lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” The Lord used that beautiful setting of Psalm 91:11 to surround me with an overwhelming sense of his loving care for me and for our family.

The Lord also used that attack to answer

my question to him about how Christians experience his presence when they are being persecuted or killed, as had happened to mis(now Zimbabwe) earlier. The incredible peace Rich and I felt while the attack was happening was my answer. I had none of the terror at the time that I would have expected, and my faith in God's constant presence and love was affirmed. In fact, that experience strengthened my faith and removed my fear permanently. I now rest in the certainty that as I follow God's leading nothing will ever happen to me or to our family by accident or because God is not aware. He is always watching and he is in control.

Our attack therefore helped me affirm my commitment to being a soldier with Christ in his battle against Satan and evil. I

realized more clearly that being a soldier is not a safe or comfortable calling if one is to serve effectively. I have agreed, by enlisting on God's side, that he may use my life and abilities as he sees fit, even if it puts me in harm's way.

God used our attack for his good, primarily through the continuing ministry of our students, but also through neighbors we got to know whose paths would not have crossed ours otherwise. The husband was the British managing director of the largest company in Ndola. They accepted our invitation to discuss neighborhood security, and we became friends. His wife began Bible studies with me and they both came to genuine faith in Christ. She then began theological studies at our college, finishing in England when they

returned, and became the vicar of her home parish. She has had a very effective ministry, and she has told me that her ministry is the result of what I did with her. The Lord, my heavenly general, certainly had good purposes in allowing our attack. Therefore I trust God rather than fearing what might happen in the future.

Kathy Stuebing is retired after more than forty years as a missionary in Zambia. She and her husband now live at Messiah Lifeways, Mechanicsburg, PA, and are active members of the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church.

I Am No Stranger to Fear

By Clay MacTarnaghan

LIVING MY EARLY years in Buffalo, NY, I had to walk several blocks to school, passing where people had been killed. Then there was the girl six years older than me, who mugged me regularly. I also had to walk past her house on the way to school. My classmate and his cousin once kidnapped me, dragged me into his basement, and beat me for an hour before someone figured out where I was. By age eight, I was again mugged by two teenagers. Later, seeing them on a bridge I needed to cross, I walked an additional fifteen blocks to get to another bridge, too afraid to walk past them.

All these experiences led to fear in my life, but these fears were crisis-inspired and short-term. There is another fear I have had to confront, a fear that lingers, a fear that is a result of decades of chronic pain.

As a child, I spent two and a half weeks and my sixth birthday in the hospital. My second surgery was when I was seven. More surgeries would follow. Each involved pain.

When I was nine years old, I began attending my third school. That was when my Tourette's Syndrome developed. Documentaries on Tourette's Syndrome often present extreme and rare cases, which, while true,

aren't the whole story. Tourette's involves nervous tics and verbalizations, but no one talks about the physical and psychological pain the one with the disorder has. I never realized others had the same pain until talking to a radio DJ who also has Tourette's.

When I was a young adult, I was twice struck by a vehicle. The second incident occurred on an interstate highway. The fact I am alive is a miracle, but the accidents have had lingering affects on my body.

First, there is the four inch purple-blue scar on my forehead, where I had been scalped. People regularly tell me I have ink on my forehead, even more than twenty years later. Second, the physical trauma of the accidents caused almost all my joints to be loosened, which gradually led to improper wear. The resulting arthritis led to pain. The pain led to favoring one joint or another, which led to more pain. The herniated discs in my neck and lower back have caused pain in my legs, neck, back, shoulders, arms, and wrists.

Eventually, the doctors decided I had fibromyalgia, because my pain would move from one place to another. My muscles would be sore. I would have acute nerve pain. I became exhausted and I began to

have "fibro fog," a state where the mind becomes foggy and memory becomes faulty. Sleep grew fitful and a constant state of exhaustion set in.

I found I could not do many physical activities and the energy and endurance to work full-time was no longer available, leading to limited employment opportunities. Despite pain medicine, my ongoing pain level would be a six out of ten. Several times I would be at level ten, unable to do anything but curl up in a fetal position and scream.

Fear confronted me on a regular basis. Having the pain, Tourette's, and the purple scar only compounded that fear, adding self-consciousness to it. How will I support my family? How will I be able to take care of everyday tasks? Will my wife give up on me? How will I deal with the pain, considering doctors have said there is nothing they can do to stop it and it only grows worse? Does anyone believe me? I look normal, after all, except for the scar and my nervous tics. What kind of example am I setting for my children? How can I succeed? What right do I have to complain, when others are dealing with cancer, loss of children, severe cognitive impairment? (My

own sister has suffered with Parkinson's since her thirties.) How can I deal with the nagging fears: the fear of failure, pain, lacking legitimacy, having no hope?

While I continue to learn to deal with my maladies, I find, despite what appears to be unanswered prayer, the more I trust God, the more I do not succumb to fear. God understands my situation. Jesus experienced much more pain than I ever will. God is quite able to deliver and heal me, provide for my needs, and use me as I am. If he calls me to do something, it is up to him to enable me to do it. If he needs me to do

more, he can heal me, or at least give temporary respite. If I am unable to work, sleep, or relax, I do not need to feel guilty; I leave it up to God. The more I pray, read the Bible and know God, the more I have peace.

Granted, I still need to take my medicines, listen to my doctors, properly exercise and use wisdom, but I am not responsible for what I have no control over. While I may not have things the way I want, I do not need to fear. I have not suffered to Job's extent and God more than rewarded him in the end. He will do the same for me. I

humbly cast all my cares on him, resisting the devil and his fear, and wait on the Lord, for he cares for me, giving me grace and lifting me up (James 4:5-8; 1 Peter 5:5-10).

Clay MacTarnaghan is provisionally licensed as a Brethren in Christ minister and is serving as interim pastor at the Blairs Mills congregation in Blairs Mills, PA. He is working on several writing projects, including a junior reader series and adult non-fiction designed to help Christians in their walk with Jesus and each other.

I Will Not Fear

By John R. Yeatts

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, I have resolved not to fear. When I was a boy, I went to Memorial Holiness Camp every summer for a week, where there were emotional altar calls every evening. Our congregation had two revival services, spring and fall, every evening, for two weeks. Our congregation actually voted at congregational council on who to bring as evangelists, and we seemed to have a penchant for inviting evangelists with a gift for making us feel sinful and guilty and very aware that Hell was the destiny for such people unless we came forward to confess our sins and receive Jesus's forgiveness. Moreover, my pastor preached hour-long sermons on Sunday morning, which he was often not able to finish and carried over to Sunday evening and the theme was always the same – sin, and the need to repent in order to avoid Hell. And all of these services – worship Sunday mornings and evenings, two weeks of evening evangelistic services spring and fall, and a week of services in the summer – ended with an altar call designed to make us afraid of spending eternity in Hell.

Many of my friends went to the altar regularly, but I resisted. I dealt with the thought of Hell by refusing to be afraid. I honestly only remember going to the altar twice – once to be saved and once to be sanctified (I'll resist explaining that.). It was my way of coping – refusing to be afraid. I preferred

spending time after service with my friends instead of crying over my sins and fearing their consequence in Hell. I said to myself: "I will not fear."

Although Jesus was clear that it is appropriate to fear Hell, he followed that admonition by saying, "Do not be afraid" (Luke 12:4-7). The angel who announced Jesus's birth said to both Mary and Zechariah, "Do not be afraid" (Luke 1:13, 30). And that refrain is repeated by Jesus: to Peter during two separate fishing expeditions (Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50; Luke 5:10; John 6:20) and to Jairus when his daughter died (Mark 5:36; Luke 8:50). When he was transfigured on the high mountain, Jesus said to Peter, James, and John, "Do not be afraid" (Matt. 17:7), and the angel at Jesus's tomb twice said the same thing (Matt. 28:5,10). When Paul was rejected in the synagogue in Corinth, the Lord told him in a vision: "Do not be afraid" (Acts 18:9). When facing shipwreck, an angel repeated that admonition to Paul (Acts 27:24). After John saw the vision of Christ, and fell into a trance, an angel appeared to say: "Do not be afraid" (Rev. 1:17). Throughout the New Testament, we are repeatedly told not to be afraid. Jesus sums this up in his words to his disciples:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27).

So why do we not get the message?

I suppose fear can motivate healthy change, but usually its effect is anything but healthy. Shortly after my parents moved from the residence I grew up in to a retirement house, the man next door died. His wife continued to live in the house. She had jewelry and fur coats in her bedroom. Fear of losing those prized possessions and fear of personal harm from living alone caused her to install locks on the doors, even her bedroom door where valuables were stored. Although she was considerably younger than her husband, she died within a year. Her locks did not bring security. Quite the contrary, they made her feel much less secure and likely shortened her life. When my parents shared this story with me, I resolved not to fear for my health and security.

I am also blessed with a wife who does not fear. For three years, when our children were young, I traveled in my position with the Brethren in Christ Church. Even when I was gone several days, she said I needn't call home, because we did not have much money to pay for the calls and, moreover, she said, "If I wanted to worry I could, but I choose not to."

Amy grew up in a small town like I did where they did not lock the doors. In fact, I never saw a key to their house; I do not believe there was one. We could say that times have changed, but perhaps we have changed.

Maybe we have just gotten more afraid.

This decision not to worry carries over into my political thinking at the present time. Our politicians love to make us worry. Democrats want us to worry about global warming and the nuclear power of Iran and North Korea, and Republicans want us to worry about terrorists, criminals, and panels deciding when we should die. Fear is used to manipulate us to vote for them. I have again resolved not to vote for anyone out of fear.

Psalm 23 is helpful in many ways, but in

the context of thinking about things that have the potential to make me afraid, I take comfort in the words: "I'll fear no evil for you are with me." The politicians are not our saviors; the Democratic party will not bring us salvation from the powers of this world, nor will the Republicans. Ultimately, we have no need to fear for Jesus is with us.

I recognize that I am speaking from privilege. I live in a community with very little violent crime. I have been blessed financially so I do not worry whether or not my family

will be fed, clothed, and housed. I probably have less to fear than most people in the world. Yet, even privileged people like me are compelled to fear about imagined threats. I find a great deal of peace and confidence, in the face of real tribulations and persecutions, from Jesus who told us, "Do not be afraid."

John R. Yeatts is professor emeritus at Messiah College and senior pastor of the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church.

Not Fear But Love

By Jessica Stenz

WHEN I WAS very young, I was afraid of a lot of things. I was afraid of the basement, the dark, the closet, scary movies, thunderstorms, dogs...a LOT of things. So in raising me, my parents often had to address fear and they did all they could to help me learn not to be afraid. We talked about the rationality of my fears and whether or not harm might actually come from them. As Christians, they sought out and shared Bible verses and practices that could be an encouragement and mantras to hold when I became afraid.

The verse that stuck with me was 1 Timothy 2:7 (NKJV), "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Before you criticize the translation, wonder whether I'm proof-texting, or why I'm even writing this article, please read on. I now know my circumstance was not an accurate application of the meaning of this verse in context, but regardless, it was meaningful for me. It reminded me of basic truths: that fear does not come from God. God is all-powerful, all-loving, and God can bring peace to one's heart and mind. This is what I thought "sound mind" meant here. Now I realize the verse is about not being timid in sharing the Good News, but standing in God's power, love and self-discipline.

Where does fear come from? We are often afraid of the unknown holding something bad, whether it's something that may

be hiding in the closet, where our next paycheck will come from, or whether we can trust a stranger. We are also afraid when we know something bad or painful is heading our way, whether it's deserved or not. Jesus repeatedly admonished his disciples not to worry about the things of the future, that which is unknown or yet to come, including probable punishment and death.

To deal with fear as Christians, we must first understand and use scripture appropriately. Translations differ in the use of the word fear. It often replaces Hebrew and Greek words lacking a perfect equivalent, so it makes sense to dig into what's behind the English word "fear" in a verse. The Old Testament reminds us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7, ESV). Here fear means acknowledging and humbling oneself before the greatness of God. This kind of fear is fitting. And, knowing God's "fearful" power, we can also be fearless in facing whatever lies before us, for God is with us. Don't be afraid...because God is strong (Isaiah 44:8, Isaiah 51); God will deliver (Jer. 1:8); God is with you (1 Chron. 28:20). And when Jesus was about to leave his followers, he urged them not to be afraid in his absence, that the Holy Spirit was still with them (John 14: 26-28).

Scripture also addresses how we should approach difficult circumstances where God places us. Like Joshua, be strong and courageous (Joshua 10:25). Don't be afraid to act

on God's (intimidating) calling for you, because God is doing something great (Gen. 46:3). Don't be afraid if you're doing the right thing and others aren't (Ezekiel 2), and don't be afraid of missing out (Luke 12:29-32). Stand strong in the adversity (Acts 18:9, 27:24). And don't be timid speaking for God (1 Tim. 2:7).

Finally, 1 John 4 says that fear has to do with punishment for not living by love, as God has loved us. If we have been "made perfect in love" we have nothing to fear. Fear is the opposite of love. Fear is the opposite of God, for God is love. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love (1 John 4:18, NRSV. See 1 John 4:7-21 for the whole context). Peter W. Marty writes of this circumstance, saying "...the more fear we possess, the less love we have. The more love we have, the less fear we retain."

How then am I, as a Christ-follower, to live? I have the ability to control my internal actions. If I am to live in love, I must first recognize fear. That acknowledgement often requires a pause, reflecting to take an honest inventory of my motivations and emotions. If I am afraid, is that emotion well-founded? Is it rational? This pause is an opportunity to catch myself before acting. Too often, first responses are not the most Christ-like choice. Rather than being reactionary, I am to be thoughtful and self-controlled (Gal. 5:23). I

remind myself not to allow fear to push me into a cocoon, but to continue to reach out and connect with others. I want to talk about the issues and emotions with people who can calmly and rationally engage. As my friend Ann says, we can either Face Everything And Run, or we can Face Everything And Rise while Fully Embracing Authentic Reality.

I also have the ability to control my treatment of others. Sometimes people are afraid of those who are different, those we do not understand. I don't want to allow fear to justify demonizing or disconnecting from others. Like the Good Samaritan reached out to the Jew, I can reach out to the broken Syrian refugee who just might be Muslim, scary as

that may seem to some. My husband and I will stand against fear, traveling to Turkey this spring. I also want to be careful not to unfairly stereotype entire people groups based on limited experiences or stories. You know the saying: If you've seen one person, you've seen one person. I will remember our common humanity, and treat others with dignity. I won't dehumanize or attack others, regardless of our differences.

We are all still human and make mistakes; we all need forgiveness. We can grieve the ills of the world together. Let our common humanity draw us together rather than allow differences to drive us apart. In that way, God will be honored as Jesus shines through us,

and all will know we are Christians by our love.

Jessica Stenz is concluding her thirty-seventh year of living in Wisconsin before moving to Hawaii with her photographer husband, Andy—fellow “intentional adventurer” in living, exploring, and experiencing life fully. Her day job includes work in philanthropy, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors. Jessica’s journey following Jesus has taken her to multiple denominations, including the Brethren in Christ at the New Vision congregation in Milwaukee, where she learned an appreciation for pacifism and simplicity. Follow her and Andy’s journey at the-beautyandbrevity.com and hawaiiiforlovers.com.

Overcoming Anxiety

By Ling Dinse

THE WORDS “FEAR” and “anxiety” are often used interchangeably as they are both human emotions. Our bodies react to the state of fear and anxiety in similar ways: rapid heartbeat, shallow breathing, sweaty hands, and an upset stomach. However, the causes of fear and anxiety are different. Fear is a response to a (perceived) real and immediate existing danger; anxiety is worrying about an unknown threat or an event that may or may not occur. Anxiety occurs when our thoughts turn to what may possibly happen in the future.

Fear, like pain, has a practical function in our lives. Physical pain serves as a signal of danger to our brain and helps prevent us further injuries. A good example of the practical purpose of pain is when I pull my hand away from a hot stove. The pain alerts my brain to send a message to move my hand to avoid a serious burn. A person may experience fear when he or she is held hostage in an active bank robbery. A person is said to be experiencing anxiety if he or she worries of becoming a hostage in a bank robbery. For some people, anxiety can become so intense that it hinders one's daily functioning. In the bank robbery example, a person may become so fixated by the excessive anxiety that he or she stops going to the bank. An individual who is having difficulty functioning due to anxiety

should seek help from a mental health professional.

Fear serves as an indicator of danger and propels us into action. Anxiety may provide a similar insight that there are elements in our emotional and spiritual health that need to be evaluated. I have had the fear that my daughters didn't know how much I loved them despite a great relationship with them both. This fear, or to be exact this anxiety, indicated that there were elements in my emotional life that deserved investigating. Through counseling and quiet reflection, I realized that I was projecting my own childhood experiences onto my children. There was minimal affection expressed in my childhood home but plenty of emotional, physical, and verbal abuse.

God's grace and Jesus' deep love led me to a healing path to receive much needed love. I know firsthand the emotional pain of not feeling loved and the impact it has on one's life. My husband and I are not perfect parents but we certainly find various ways to demonstrate our love to our daughters. The anxiety of this projected “danger” of my children not feeling loved propelled me to act. I hug my daughters often and pray with them regularly. I laugh with them frequently (mostly they laugh at me) and I never let a day go by without uttering “I love you” to

them. I also fear that the noise in this world will drown out the Holy Spirit's voice. I know how lost I would be without God in my life and the anxiety of not having God to guide me propels me to act. I pray often and meditate on his word regularly so I can hear God's truth echoing in my heart and in my thoughts.

I have been a social worker for twenty years and I have witnessed many people living with real fear. Some of the examples include fear of an abusive partner following through with a death threat, fear of an alcoholic parent's drunken rage, and fear of going to school because of bullies. Individuals living in these situations experience real threats each day. It is not uncommon that these individuals experience intense anxiety despite the removal of the immediate threats. Our experiences shape our perceptions of this world and affect our interactions with others. I know my relational and spiritual anxieties are based on my past life experiences. I personally have found that empathy from others is comforting in addressing anxieties. A non-judgmental attitude provides a safe place to evaluate one's narratives of the world and offers freedom to compare them to God's truth.

American culture encourages innovation and boldness as indicators of success. It is

counter-cultural in our society to acknowledge fear and anxiety as it seems to imply weakness, incompetence, and failure. Jesus, in his human form, prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” And then, “an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:22-24).

Jesus verbalized a sense of fear as he was anticipating the suffering of the cross. If

Jesus, God’s own son, expressed his fears, we should not feel shame for acknowledging our fears and anxiety. Pain and troubles are realities in a fallen world but we can hold on to Jesus’ promise that he has overcome this world (John 16:33). As Isaiah proclaimed in 41:10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

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caster, PA. She is active as a speaker in racial reconciliation, marriage enrichment, parenting, social justice, and poverty. Originally from Hong Kong, Ling attended Houghton College and completed her B.A. and M.S.W. degrees at SUNY Buffalo, School of Social Work. She is now a doctoral student in social work at Millersville University. She also serves on the boards of Barnabas Initiatives and the Atlantic Conference. With her husband and two daughters, Ling attends the Elizabethtown (PA) Brethren in Christ Church.

The Risk of Hospitality

By Christopher Freet

JESUS CONSISTENTLY welcomed the “other” – the stranger and the outcast—throughout his earthly ministry. Whether it was sitting at a table sharing a meal with tax collectors and “sinners” (Matt. 9:10-11) or reaching out to a Samaritan woman at a well by asking her for a drink (John 4), Jesus’ ministry embraced the “other.” Jesus’ manner of ministry placed him uniquely in the role of guest and host. Amos Yong expounds on this aspect of Christ’s ministry:

Throughout his public ministry, Jesus as the recipient of hospitality is at the same time the one who heralds and personifies the redemptive hospitality of God. He is the “journeying prophet” of the Spirit who eats at the tables of others but at the same time proclaims and brings to pass the eschatological banquet of God for all those who are willing to receive it (*Hospitality and the Other*, p. 102).

Hospitality carries an inherent risk. When God created the world and placed humanity in the Garden of Eden there was risk. In making humanity free, free to choose and free to accept or reject his divine hospitality, God took a gamble. He took another gamble, it would appear, through the Incarnation. Sending his Son and the Savior of the world in the flesh of a baby was risky. This risk is pointed out by the author of the fourth gospel. John 1:10-12 poignantly displays the dichotomy involved in this risk: “He was in the world, and though the world

was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” This is the risk of hospitality, the risk of rejection. In rejecting the hospitality of God one cuts himself off from the abundant blessings of the Divine Host. As theologian Miroslav Volf expounds, “Without a certain kind of ‘gamble’ – a gamble on account of grace – truly human life would be impossible” (*Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 147).

Volf continues:

The risk [of embrace] follows both from nonsymmetry and systematic underdetermination. I open my arms, make a movement of the self toward the other, the enemy, and do not know whether my action will be misunderstood, despised, even violated or whether my action will be appreciated, supported, and reciprocated. I can become a victim or a savior—possibly both (p. 147).

On the other hand, those who do receive the hospitality of God through Jesus Christ find full identity and purpose. John 1:12 points this out: “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Hospitality is risky because it does not force anything on the “other.” Hospitality is an open invitation to receive freely from the host and thus be transformed in some form or fashion. In this instance, grace, which is a gamble, is witnessed in the character and na-

ture of Jesus Christ. As we saw earlier, this must also be characteristic of Jesus’ disciples.

Jesus as the “Other” and Seeing Ourselves as the “Other”

Jesus not only embraced the strangers and outcasts in his midst, but he also embraced his role as “other.” One way this can be seen is through Jesus’ role as Christ or Messiah. Much of Jewish culture of Jesus’ day envisioned a Messianic deliverer who would act as political savior to the nation of Israel. This, however, was not the way Jesus lived or conducted his ministry. In fact, John 6:15 records that when a crowd attempted to make him king by force, he fled to a place of solitude.

Another aspect of Jesus’ otherness is revealed in his servant attitude. Throughout the Gospel records, Jesus regularly instructs his disciples to be servant-leaders. For example, Jesus tells them that the greatest among them should be as those who serve (see Luke 22:25-27, Matt. 20:26-28). Jesus even points himself out as the example: “But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27b). H. Douglas Buckwalter surmises that this is the overarching theme of Luke’s writings:

To sum up my proposal concerning a primary literary objective of Luke: he writes to show his readers how Jesus’ life stands as the ethical model for Christian living and how the early church has imaged his likeness in their own life and witness. Ac-

ording to Luke, the corollary to the Lord Jesus' servanthood is Christian discipleship (*The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology*, p. 281).

This lines up with what we have seen thus far concerning the role of hospitality in the mission of God. We have seen that hospitality is to be a characteristic of Jesus' disciples and therefore by default a characteristic of the church at large. Welcoming others stands as a biblical hallmark of the faith.

This servanthood aspect of embracing otherness reflects, in Thomas W. Ogletree's words, "reversals in the relational order" (*Hospitality to the Stranger*, p. 4). Elizabeth Newman echoes this point, observing:

The faithful practice of hospitality requires that we see ourselves as both guests, receiving from the other, and hosts, offering ourselves to the other. Such hospitality acknowledges that truth might come from 'strange' quarters (*Untamed Hospitality*, p. 144.).

Again, Ogletree expounds on this idea:

To offer hospitality to a stranger is to welcome something new, unfamiliar, and unknown into our life-world. On the one hand, hospitality requires a recognition

of the stranger's vulnerability in an alien social world. Strangers need shelter and sustenance in their travels, especially when they are moving through a hostile environment. On the other hand, hospitality designates occasions of potential discovery which can open up our narrow, provincial worlds. Strangers have stories to tell which we have never heard before, stories which can direct our seeing and stimulate our imaginations. The stories invite us to view the world from a novel perspective. They display the finitude and relativity of our own orientation and meaning (*Hospitality to the Stranger*, pp. 2-3).

Ogletree's statement is illustrated in the life of Christ. Those who were open to receive him would often discover in the process not only Jesus' true identity but subsequently their own as well (see Luke 8:48). Quite often, after an encounter with Christ, the person transformed through it would go and tell others about Jesus, even inviting them to come and see him for themselves (see John 4:28-30; Mark 5:20). In embracing the other and his own otherness, Jesus gave his followers the litmus test for discipleship. His fol-

lowers must also embrace others and their own sense of otherness (i.e., living according to Jesus' way and not the world's) in this world (see Phil. 2:1-11).

Jesus exhibited throughout his earthly ministry a lifestyle that embraced both the "other" (the stranger) and his own "otherness." For disciples, "otherness" connotes living in the present world as "foreigners" and "exiles" (see 1 Peter 2:10-12). This "relational reversal" that guided Jesus in his ministry must also be evident in the life of his disciples. Hospitality appears as a defining mark or characteristic of discipleship and a vital aspect to the life of the church. However, hospitality is inherently risky, a "gamble." It is risky because the host is not guaranteed a positive response from the guest. Nevertheless, the risky venture of the Incarnation is the highest example of hospitality and servanthood that Christ's followers must emulate.

Christopher Freest is pastor at the Millersville (PA) Brethren in Christ Church. This article is excerpted (and slightly adapted) with his permission from his book, *A New Look at Hospitality as a Key to Missions* (Energion Publications, 2014).

The Fear That Stills All Others

By Zach Spidel

I HAVE HEARD it said, and believe it to be true, that followers of Jesus are to love everyone and fear only One. We fall short of who Jesus calls us to be when our love narrows to become anything less than universal or when our fear broadens to attach itself to anything other than God. We are called to love God first, but in him to love all people—our neighbors as well as our enemies, our kin as well as strangers. Love can never be too broad and more love is always welcome. Fear, however, is different. It is like fire. Carefully controlled and directed it is warming and life-giving—the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—but let the fire of fear move one inch beyond its God-given place, let it attach to anything it shouldn't, and it becomes utterly destructive, leaving nothing

but lifeless ash in its wake.

Fear is a negative force – it is about what can harm us and about the negative outcomes we want to avoid. Fear is (at its best) the force that motivates us to action, helping us to prevent those outcomes, but it is also a force that can become overwhelming when we lack the ability to affect the situations on which our fear is focused. In those cases it paralyzes rather than energizes, and can leave us in despair, impotent anger, or both.

Fear of the Lord, however, is different. It is never overwhelming or paralyzing. It is the simple, but profound realization that the only truly irrevocable harm that can befall us is to be separated from our Heavenly Father and cut off from his love. No other earthly hardship—no disease, no financial distress,

no failure, no embarrassment, nothing—can truly and eternally harm us so long as we are in God, but if we turn our backs on God and forsake him, then there is nothing that can redeem us. Therefore, there is no price too great for us to pay as we follow him.

We are not primarily motivated to follow him, however, by this fear (though it has its supportive role to play in our hearts as described above). Rather, we are motivated by our love for and delight in him who loved and delighted in us first. Because God's love



is perfect in constancy and infinite in its intensity, we know that the one thing we rightly fear—being separated from God—is entirely within our power to avoid, because God has placed it in our power. He came to us, died for us, conquered the grave for us, and offered us, unconditionally, a way to be reconciled with him, so that no matter how fickle we've been and how profound or repeated our failures, he remains forever in a posture of love and acceptance toward us, always open to our return if and when we stray. The fear of the Lord is therefore life-giving and energizing and, ultimately, peace-conferring because the Lord whom we fear is Love.

The fear of the Lord, finally, grants us another gift—it frees us from the tyranny of all other fears: “Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” (Psalm 27:3-4). Only one thing matters—dwelling with the LORD. You can lose anything and everything else—your health, your wealth, yes even your family—and though those losses would be real and worthy of lament, they would also be redeemable. God has, in fact, promised to redeem all such losses for those who love him, be it in time or in eternity.

So we followers of Jesus can stand bravely in this world where others fall. We can speak the truth, even if it costs us, stick up for the downtrodden even if that means being trodden down too, and we can keep our tempers and offer forgiveness when the world, driven by fear, calls for violence and vengeance against the enemies who threaten harm. We can do all this because, fearing the Lord, we

do not fear those enemies, or that pain, or those costs. No, like Paul, we know that such light and momentary afflictions merely prepare us for an eternal weight of glory, beyond all measure, which God has prepared for us in Christ Jesus and guaranteed for us in the Holy Spirit. With that larger goal in view, with the realization that it is the one thing we should fear to lose, all other fears are stilled, and we grow bold in our faith, dogged in our devotion, and single-minded in our dedication to the race which God has set out for us. May the fear of the Lord free us from all others, so that we can love as he has loved us!

Zach Spidel is the pastor of The Shepherd's Table congregation in Dayton, OH.

No Fear in Death

By Terry Rose

GRAYBILL BRUBAKER IS my model for how I want to face my own death. When he was eighty-three, Graybill learned that he had stage 4 esophageal cancer, and it was terminal. At the time of his diagnosis, he already had the next ten to fifteen years of his life and work planned out. He told the Lord that he would like to be able to complete it. However, he reminded us pastors and deacons at Messiah Village when we prayed for his healing that God's own Son prayed, “not my will, but thine be done.”

Graybill and his wife Ethel spent their whole lives serving God by ministering and teaching around the world and here in the U.S. Their life verse had always been: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6). Graybill had been enjoying his eighty-three years of life and ministry, but when the terminal diagnosis came, he said that if God is ready for him, he too was ready. “I'll leave to him the ordering of the days that are left for me,” he said.

When I talked with Ethel in preparation

for this article, she said that when they would go to foreign countries people would ask them if they were ever afraid. Their motto was, “When you live in the center of God's will you don't have to be afraid. Fear can paralyze you, but when you live carefully, he's always there and you can go forward with confidence. Life is not always easy.” She shared numerous stories of the faithfulness of God working in and through their lives over the years. As a result of God's faithfulness, Graybill was able to trust God even in death.

Graybill shared his testimony one morning during devotions over our closed circuit TV channel: “I have been saying for years that going to heaven is a wonderful idea. I often wondered if I would be saying the same thing when the time drew near. It is a wonderful idea and I am a lot closer to getting there than I ever imagined I was.”

On July 1, 2011, six months after his diagnosis, Graybill died. Reflecting back, Ethel says that God answered one of Graybill's main requests. He prayed, “Please don't let my body outlive my mind.” He continued, “Yet, thy will be done.”

Ethel admitted that it was hard to say goodbye to Graybill. “We were a team for so long, but I knew I had to go on. Living a God-fearing life is what's important.” She continued, “Death is inevitable. I can't deny it. I'm not going to sit around and think about death. The human side of me may want to consider the ‘what ifs?’ But I have too much to look forward to, too many opportunities, too many blessings to sit around complaining or contemplating death. I ask God to help me make the most of my opportunities. I am grateful for the many blessings God brings into my life, including living here at Messiah Lifeways.”

Graybill and Ethel's story confirms much of what I have observed during my work as chaplain and pastor at Messiah Lifeways. The act of dying is such a personal experience. Some people fear death and others do not. Everyone knows that one day they will die. Since death is something that only happens to us once, most people don't know what to expect. They have no idea how or when they are going to die. So they just go about living life with no thought of death. It's not until their health changes that they seriously begin

to think about their mortality.

Those with debilitating health issues continue to keep abreast of medicines and procedures that will enhance their lives. When these measures have been exhausted, the person is usually ready to face what's next and some even welcome death as a blessing. Family members are usually the last to accept a debilitating illness of their loved one. They hold on to any glimmer of hope. The person with a debilitating illness intuitively knows their condition far sooner than their loved ones. Family members, however, are often unable to face the reality of life without their loved one.

In my experience, many people of faith welcome the inevitable. They feel confident of their eternal life. They believe the Bible: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Sometimes believers are ready but God isn't! Some people get themselves all worked up and are even angry at God because God didn't take them when they were ready. Sometimes, they are disappointed when they wake up in their beds instead of heaven. I have to remind them that only God knows the hour and the day. God still has a purpose for their life, and they need to seek God and ask for wisdom and guidance.

Most people face death peacefully. Modern medicine, palliative care, and hospice care have taken away much of the pain and suffering that accompany the act of dying. Most of the older adults I minister to each day are living quite active lives regardless of their level of care.

Graybill faced death with courage. He submitted his requests to God and trusted God for the outcome. During the last six months of his life, he was able to review his life and thank God for the many years God used him in his service. Throughout Graybill's illness, he showed all of us what surrendering our will to God's will really looks like. God used Graybill in his life and in his death.

So how can one plan for a "good death?" The first thing is to really believe that it's possible to prepare for a good death. Beyond that, however, here are several practical suggestions:

- Do the practical things like making sure

your will is up-to-date and you have a living will.

- Plan your memorial or funeral service in advance to relieve your family of that stress.
- Prepare yourself and those you love mentally and emotionally. Right the wrongs; ask for forgiveness from loved ones and grant forgiveness to them as well.
- Prepare yourself spiritually. Get right with God. Know without a shadow of a doubt that you're a child of God. Receive the gift of eternal life that Jesus Christ made available to all those who put their trust in him.

Other than these preparations for a "good death," continue to enjoy life to the fullest! Enjoy the things that make you happy and most fulfilled. And never underestimate the importance of eating well, getting the proper rest, and enjoying the exercise of your choice.

Death is not to be feared. It's a natural experience that we know we each will one day experience. If all that we have and hold onto is as precious as we think it is, how much more does God have in store for us when we get to "drink from the springs of the water of life" (Rev. 21:6).

Terry Rose is chaplain and director of pastoral ministries at Messiah Lifeways, Mechanicsburg, PA.

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I appreciated her reflections on the ways God meets us in nature and the "thin places" where heaven spills onto earth in palpable ways. She writes of a refreshing spring on their property saying, "Simply to stand near that spring was to experience living water." Because she is a talented writer, however, I cringed at the intimation that God was more accessible in the rural places, or worse, that her journey was the template or model to follow. Could someone think she was calling people out of urban ministry and into the slower paced more beatific countryside? I would not think this is her intent, yet it may be an outcome nonetheless.

Editor's Notes

Don't forget to renew for 2016!

Thanks to everyone who has renewed your subscription to *Shalom!* for 2016, and/or given an extra contribution. Annual subscriptions are still \$15, and we welcome extra contributions. Checks should be payable to the Brethren in Christ Church U.S. and sent to the editor (address on page 2). You can also contribute online at bic-church.org/connect/publications/Shalom/default.asp.

Upcoming Topics

SUMMER 2016: How to be a Christian and a citizen

FALL 2016: Refugees and displaced people

Contact the editor if you're interested in writing on any of these topics.

I hope the real lessons of the book are about finding God, going deeper with him, and following him wherever he leads. For Taylor that journey was into and out of pastoral roles, into and out of the city, but always daring to follow God.

Lois Saylor serves on the editorial committee for Shalom! She is also an editor for Equipping for Ministry and serves on their board. She and her husband are members of the Harrisburg (PA) Brethren in Christ Church.

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BOOK REVIEW

Leaving Church: Finding New Paths

By Lois Saylor

BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR in her book, *Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith*, recounts her journey of faith in three phases, which includes two significant changes of career and vocation. She served for ten years as an urban pastor on a team at an Episcopal church in Atlanta, then took a lead pastor position in a small Episcopal country church in northern Georgia, and finally stepped down as a pastor and accepted a position as a professor of religion at Piedmont College also in northern Georgia.

Before Taylor could leave church, however, she had to find it. The book recounts events in her childhood that led her to seek out God even though she was not raised in the church or with any particular faith. As a child she felt the presence of God in the outdoors and then sought him in churches to try to explain who and what God was with varying degrees of helpfulness. She graduated from college and went to seminary still searching. Finally finding an Episcopal church, Taylor writes, "For the first time in my life, I had found a church where the Divine Presence felt as strong to me inside as it did outside." She refers to the church as a "sacred cave" where she lost track of time and

herself feeling a "part of a body far larger than myself."

Taylor writes well with spiritual insight and depth. Her spiritual movement and growth throughout her changes draws the reader into the work. Reading about her journey, however, from a long time Anabaptist background with a sense of community (priesthood of all believers) and simple living firmly incorporated into my understanding of a lived-out Christianity, I thought that some of things she pushed against and her new conclusion seemed like givens rather than new territory. This simply highlights the variety of journeys the Christian walk unfolds.

Her professional movement from church clerical roles to academia allows her to see church from both sides of the pulpit. Her reflections point out differences between a high church understanding of the roles and function of the church and pastor and a Brethren in Christ approach. She writes, "The priest serves as the people's representative in worship, who does on their behalf what they are all called to do." One can rightly ask why a priest or anyone else should do for the people what they are called to do

themselves. As she experiences the difference of worship from the pew, one woman describes worship as a play and says, "Welcome to the audience," a rather chilling observation for an Anabaptist idea of worship.

One similar experience to that of some Brethren in Christ women pastors is unfortunate. She finds out how many families left the small county church when they found out a woman pastor was hired. Even though the Episcopal Church is usually on the more liberal side of church understandings, as a woman she still found bias against her pastoral role. Happily, she can also report that the church did well and grew under her leadership.

One area she did not speak about was that of wealth or the use of wealth. As she moves to the country, buys a large plot of land, builds a house, and has horses, she does not seem to have any spiritual search about how to best use her money. She merely mentions that the sale of the small Atlanta house can buy the large county property. This seems more of an endorsement of living in the country and getting a better buy than it has to do with wisdom in wealth.

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