

Volume
XIV
Number 2
Winter
2013

Inside:
2 ➤ Forgiveness cont'd
3 ➤ Writer's Toolbox
4 ➤ Discipling Journal

A Newsletter of The Amy Foundation



Finding Forgiveness

By: Christina Ryan Claypool

Christina Ryan Claypool is a Christian speaker, freelance journalist, and the author of several books including *Seeds of Hope for Survivors*. Christina has a B. A. in Business Administration from Bluffton University, and an M.A. in Ministry from Mount Vernon Nazarene University, where she served as an adjunct instructor in the Communications department. She has been featured on national television on CBN's 700 Club and on Joyce Meyer Ministries. Contact her through her website at www.christinaryan-claypool.com.

How could a father forgive someone who took the life of his daughter? For 72-year-old Dale Henderson, the issue of forgiving the unforgivable became personal last August.

"We never dreamed of having such a thing happen to our family ... but it did," said the Lima, Ohio resident.

Henderson's family has attended Lima Community Church for most of his life. His 49-year-old daughter, Debra Ann Henderson, was a member of the church, too, until she

After reading more Scriptures about forgiveness, the senior Henderson simply said, "Hager Church, I forgive you."

was beaten to death inside her home in 2010.

The victim's daughter, Maranda Henderson, and friend, Carrie Cox, were living there. At about 3 a.m., the 17-year-old girls were sleeping upstairs when an intruder broke in. The man, later identified as Hager Church, hit Debra in the head

with a hammer and killed her. With the door closed and air conditioner running loudly, the sleeping girls didn't hear the attack.

The following morning, Maranda and Carrie found Debra's body. By the next day, Church was being held on suspicion of murder. The Lima man, who was 25 at the time, had grown up with Debra's son, Maxwell. "I knew this boy. Our whole family knew this boy," said Dale Henderson.

For years, Debra Henderson had reached out to help Hager Church, who had been in and out of prison. Sometimes, she clothed and fed him. On occasion, she even took him to church.

The kindness she showed Church was also shown to others. Her sister, Jane Glassey of Vincennes, Ind., said she "knew no strangers. Once she met you, you were her friend."

The extroverted blonde worked at The Pharm, the Mary Ann Brown Residential Facility, Western Sizzlin and Golden Corral.

Dale Henderson believes di-

vine intervention prepared him for his daughter's death. For almost seven months prior to the murder, he was impressed to recite The Lord's Prayer nightly.

At Church's sentencing hearing, Dale read the famous prayer to the man convicted of bludgeoning his daughter, then said, "I would always ponder when I prayed, 'and forgive us our debts (sins), as we forgive...those who sin against us.'" The grieving father added to his prepared statement: "Wow, I did not know what all this meant. Even murder, even murder."

After reading more Scriptures about forgiveness, the senior Henderson simply said, "Hager Church, I forgive you. I can't explain how God can forgive me of my sins ... or how God makes it possible for me to forgive you, but, He did."

According to Dr. Thomas Holmes, executive director of Lima's Covenant Ministry Services, forgiveness is healing, a form of "resolution." Christian believers "are called to be a light to the world. We are called to do the unthinkable, to provide grace when there is no grace," Holmes said.

Continued on page 2 ➤

Spread the Word!

The Pen & Sword is now published online only. If you or someone you know would like to receive a notice when the next issue is posted, along with a link to the online edition, send your e-mail address to amyfoundtn@aol.com

Pen & Sword

Editor:

Mary Jackson

Published quarterly by The Amy Foundation, a non-profit foundation promoting biblical truth in the secular media. For subscription or information about The Amy Foundation mission or ministries, email: amyfoundtn@aol.com

► Forgiveness, cont'd from p.1

He knows firsthand what it's like to extend forgiveness: He was robbed at his West Market Street counseling center years ago, and twice went into the prison to visit the perpetrator.

But 18-year-old Maranda Henderson admits that she is not able to forgive her mother's killer.

"I'm actually very angry. I'm not sympathetic," she said. "It's kind of hard to trust God again and follow that faith." Maranda used to attend church with her mother but has not been able to since the murder.

This is not the first time the young woman has grappled with trusting God. Her father died suddenly from a heart attack when she was six years old. And her mother had to endure an earlier attack: In 2004, Debra was beaten and raped in a home invasion by a neighborhood teen, who remains in prison.

The family struggled to put the pieces together after Debra's first attack, never realizing that a second unrelated assault would take her life. Through her tears, Maranda expressed her desire to be able to forgive one day but believes that forgiveness is a process.

Pastor Mike Huckins at Lima Community Church says, "It's helpful to not try and provide pat answers. They don't need theological answers like, 'It's God's will.' There is no easy answer. We need to give people permission to express their anger and their pain, and doubts toward God," he said.

As for learning to trust God again, Huckins encourages folks he counsels, to "trust what you know is true about God, not what you don't know. God is good. The reason I know He is good, He sent His

son to die on the cross."

Debra's sister, Sally Henderson, 47, has sought recovery by attending a grieving course at the church. Sally and her adult daughter, Ashley, still live in the other half of the duplex where her sister was murdered, although both women were away the night of the crime. The side where Debra once lived remains vacant.

For Sally, forgiveness has been a necessity. She enjoys sewing: Along with Debra, Sally made hundreds of doll blankets for needy children. Hager Church had even helped with the project. After the murder, she felt impressed to make her sister's killer a blanket.

Yet Sally never trusted Church. Neither did Maranda Henderson: he "would do a lot of drugs and alcohol," she said.

Debra's 26-year-old son Maxwell is frustrated with a system that allowed Hager Church to remain a free man despite his past history of crime. The father of three wonders, "How many other times did he need to rob, breaking and entering, drug charges...when is enough, enough?"

Prosecutors originally sought the death penalty, but Church will serve the rest of his life in prison without the possibility of parole, which the Henderson family agreed to. It "seemed for the whole family the best option," Maxwell said.

"I can't say I have truly forgiven," Maxwell said. His own son, Conner, was born just months after his mother's death. His mother, feeling his wife's abdomen, felt Conner kick for the first time just two days before she was killed. His mother enjoyed being a grandmother to his children, Ethan, 5, and Alivia, 3. "I struggle

with the whole aspect with God of why it had to be murder," Maxwell said.

Debra's mother, 72-year-old Nancy Henderson, sat quietly during this interview. She listened intently as her family shared. Finally, she said, "The only way I've gotten through this is my verse, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, (Proverbs 3:5) because there's nobody that can really understand. God has a reason.'"

At a recent Sunday service at their church, Nancy was surprised to learn that the story of her husband's courtroom forgiveness has traveled around the world, since missionaries have told the inspiring account overseas. Still, Debra's father qualifies, "there is a vast difference between... hatred and someone paying for their crime."

However, hatred is what Maranda Henderson is struggling to overcome. "I can't live with this hate in my heart," said the brokenhearted teen. Despite Church's cruelty, Maranda said she knows her mother would tell her to forgive, "So, one day, I know I will have to."

Hager Church himself expressed confusion at his heinous actions at his hearing.

"I don't understand what I did. I don't understand why I did it," he said. "She was probably one of the best friends I ever had in my life. I never had a friend."

Debra's brother, 54-year-old Rex Henderson of Lima, and sister, Jane Glassey, have both gone through their own process of finding peace in the face of brutality. When the Indiana woman visits Lima, Jane often takes time to decorate

Continued on page 4 ►

Empowering Others to Heal

The Amy Writing Award's 2011 winner Christina Claypool shares how God has brought healing through her writing.

Q: When did you begin writing?

A: I began writing in the early 1970s as a troubled teen. After surviving a near fatal suicide attempt, I was committed to Ohio's Toledo State Mental Hospital. During those long months, I wrote about my feelings of loneliness, abandonment, and depression. God used writing to enable me to survive.

Q: What inspired you to write your Amy Award winning article?

A: As a journalist, I have witnessed Christians who experience traumatic events who share their stories in the light of God's sustaining grace. It has empowered them to heal. Therefore, I was prompted by God's Spirit, to approach the Henderson family, who are precious friends. I asked them if they would like me to write about their daughter's brutal murder. It was Dale Henderson's amazing story of a father's forgiveness that emerged.

Q: How did you market your story?

A: As a freelance journalist, I have written many articles for Ohio's *The Lima News*. I simply approached my editor, and she approved of the story idea.

Q: How did you hear about the Amy Awards?

A: I originally heard about the Amy Awards through last year's Northwest Ohio Christian Writers' newsletter. It's important for writers to network with others in their field, and to learn about writing possibilities like the Amy Awards.

Q: Do you have any encouragement for Christian writers as to how to use media resources to publish their work?

A: As time-consuming and seemingly narcissistic as social media can be, it is important for a writer to have a presence on the Internet for marketing purposes. Through mediums like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, one can create that presence in conjunction with maintaining a personal website or blog. Just make sure the information is current, or else these tools can actually work against you in a marketing sense.

Q: How do you fit in time to write?

A: At this point of my life, I am free to concentrate solely on my writing and speaking career. For many years as a single Mom, I worked a full-time job. Pursuing writing always requires sacrifice and great discipline, but if you believe it is a calling, you will pay the price.

Q: How do you get your ideas for articles or books?

A: Often I pray and ask God to guide me in what He would like written. Also, since I have been a storyteller for many years, people occasionally share ideas. A knowledge of what has been well-received in the past helps, too. Other times, the Holy Spirit will nudge me to pursue a topic I might otherwise overlook. Abortion, sexual abuse, domestic violence, suicide, and depression are all subjects I have written about extensively because I sensed God wanted to use my writing—and my own broken past—to reach those still struggling to heal.

Q: What reading recommendations do you have for writers?

A: Writers need to read constantly. I always keep a book, newspaper, or magazine with me wherever I go. I tend to like to read Christian recovery books, biographies, well-known columnists, inspirational pieces, and specific authors. But I try to be careful not to get stuck in reading only genres that I like. Having struggled with clinical depression myself, when it comes to reading, I try to concentrate on the advice found in Phil. 4:8: "Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse," (The Message). ◀

Amy Foundation Announcements:

- Remember to turn in submissions for the 2012 Amy Writing Awards by **January 31, 2013**. See our website for details on how to qualify.
- Stay tuned to our next issue that will outline some exciting changes for the Amy Writing Awards.
- To view last year's winning entries, go to our website at www.amy-found.org
- **Happy New Year** on behalf of our board and staff!

Writing Tips on the Web

World Magazine has three excellent books on biblical journalism and the history of American journalism by editor-in-chief Marvin Olasky at: www.worldmag.com/world/olasky/.

Bartleby.com offers one of the most classic writing guides, *William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White's Elements of Style*, for free at: www.bartleby.com/141/

Pen & Sword's previous editor and English teacher **Shaunna Howat** published a series of amusing blog posts on grammar pet peeves at: www.writingrhetorically.com

Quadriplegic Finds Meaning in Life

By: Jan White

Jan White is the author of the 2006 Amy Writing Awards \$10,000 first prize. She has worked for three newspapers and written a weekly religion column for her local newspaper, The Andalusia Star-News, for over eleven years. Early in her writing career, she worked as a ghostwriter on the publication staff of a national ministry. She has also co-authored two books.

Forty-five years ago, a teenager named Joni Eareckson dove into the shallow water of Chesapeake Bay. In seconds, her life changed from athletic to quadriplegic. She was paralyzed from her shoulders down, due to a broken neck.

There's no way 17-year-old Joni could have known that going swimming on that hot July day in 1967 would mean she'd spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair. But in spite of her tragic circumstances, she has overcome bitterness, endured suffering, and still found meaning in life.

In 1976, Joni wrote about her life-changing experience in an autobiography that was retold in a movie called "Joni," released in 1980. Words like "inspiring" and "exceptional" have been used to describe Joni. She became a talented artist, painting beautiful drawings by holding a small brush in her mouth.

Joni Eareckson Tada now lives in California and leads a ministry for the handicapped and their families. Through her ministry, Joni & Friends, some 10,000 wheelchairs are collected every year and dis-

tributed in over 86 countries. Week-long Family Retreats are held for those who live with disability.

On her radio broadcast heard on stations across the nation, Joni recently told about a 21-year-old woman named Esther from Ghana, West Africa whose family carried her in a blanket to wait in line for a wheelchair. When she was seated in her own wheelchair, Esther smiled and kept repeating, "Thank you, thank you."

Esther was given a copy of Joni's book and told that it was about a lady in America like her who had broken her neck and couldn't use her arms and legs. Esther learned how Joni came to trust in Jesus and how she could trust in Jesus too.

Another aspect of Joni and Friends is the Christian Institute on Disability whose mission is to establish a firm Biblical worldview on disability-related issues. Joni appeared on Larry King Live several years ago to speak against creating and destroying human embryos for stem cell research. She believes that respect for human life is paramount to securing a cure, and she pointed out the successes with adult stem

cells, which she supports.

Joni was personally interested in efforts to save Terri Schaivo's life, traveling to Florida to speak up for people with disabilities. She, among many others, spoke out against Schiavo's dehydration and starvation, "The removal of Terri's feeding tube by court order has now set a dangerous precedent which will affect the lives of disabled people for generations to come."

She went on to say that Terri was a disabled person, like tens of millions of other Americans. And, though Terri's injuries were more massive than most, she wasn't any less a human being.

Joni notes that in Jeremiah 32:14 God says, "I will rejoice in doing them good ... with all my heart and soul." Then she goes on to say, "There's no inherent goodness in my spinal cord injury; it is an awful thing, but a wonderful, miracle-making God can take something awful in a life and pronounce it good through the application of His grace." ◀

► Forgiveness, cont'd from p.1

her sister's grave with brightly colored flowers, not wanting Debra to be forgotten. Glassey recently wrote, "Where once she lit up a room with her presence and brought joy, laughter, fun, and happiness, there is silence."

But like many in her family, Glassey has chosen to cling to her Christian tradition by walking a pathway of forgiveness.

"We're following the Lord Je-

sus Christ to the end. Debra's made her goal. I want to make sure I make the goal that includes forgiving the one who took her from us — and that's what I have to do." ◀

© 2011. *The Lima News*. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Printed August 12, 2011; *The Lima News*; Lima, OH.

The Amy Writing Awards

Submit Today!

15 writers will receive \$34,000 in cash prizes, including a \$10,000 first prize.

Entries must be post-marked on or before January 31, 2013 to qualify for the 2012 awards.