

## **Some Great Books have Simple Covers**

By Ed Landry

In my senior year in Bible school, they needed an additional speaker to travel for three weeks around the country with a promotional team to represent to school. I was asked to be a speaker with a trumpet trio traveling group. I felt it was a privilege to do it. So for three weeks I traveled with a small team of musicians and singers, and I gave a message at 17 different churches across Saskatchewan.

One night toward the end of the trip we were all tired and this particular drive to our next meeting was a long one. We pulled up on a small, insignificant country church building near a wheat field. When we entered the church as was my custom, I went to the missionary map to see if the church was very active in supporting missionaries and to see if I knew anyone. I saw only three names on the map, I concluded that this church was not very missions-minded, and so I decided to use my well-honed missionary message that night to drive them to deep repentance and to mend their ways. It was a small crowd that night, and I had barely met the pastor before the service since we had arrived with very little set up time. The students sang. I spoke. We met folks and the pastor asked me to come into his office. He was very cordial and asked about my wife and family and my future plans. I told him I was going to the mission field and he was happy about that. I told him I noticed that there were three missionaries his church helped support (what I was really thinking was that there was ONLY three that they gave help to) He said yes, they were a small country church but that they fully supported the three and that the three came from his church. I was speechless for the first time that night. Those that know me might believe it was a first, period. I was amazed. I had never seen such a generous and missions-minded church, and I had judged them so wrong. They must have wondered why I had challenged them so hard to be faithful in missions. Most churches give small amounts to many missionaries but this one fully supported them and they all came from that church.

I didn't have a clue what was really going on there. Then I said, "So, tell me about your family." I was trying to change the subject. I was not prepared for what I was going to hear that night. He told me he and his wife had been missionaries in Africa for many years and had come home for a study furlough. They enrolled at seminary in the northern part of the United States.

The rural environment near the seminary was just what their weary souls and their two sons needed. But the unthinkable happened.

Bad things do happen to good people. One day while dad was studying and mom was singing at home the boys went riding on their bikes down the lazy country road near their house. A stranger stopped his car and started talking to them. The boys were 10 and 12. The stranger abducted both boys and tied one up while he molested the other and then he molested the other. He then beat one to death with a tire iron, and then he brutally assaulted the other child and left him for dead. The parents watched out the window all night while police combed the area. It was a long night

The police searched for two agonizing days and finally the one child who lived managed to drag his mangled body a few hundred yards to the road where he was discovered. The father sat there and told me that the only thing recognizable on the son was the shirt. The head was so beaten and misshaped, he had a hard time imagining it was his son. Even though he was going in and out of consciousness and had one eye left and it was dislodged from the socket, he was able to see the license of the car and give it to police. The man was captured. The boy went through numerous surgeries, and the parents were told that brain damage was so severe that he would never be able to speak, walk or be anything but a vegetable.

I have to interrupt the story at this point. Remember, I was just casually asking this man to tell me about his family. Now, I sat stunned as he unveiled what has to be the most horrific experience a parent could imagine. I have five children. Two were the ages of his children when this happened. I could only stare in disbelief as he continued.

The man was convicted and went to prison. The living son began to show signs of recovery and after years of struggle and rehab was actually able to go back to school. In his senior year he wrote an essay on forgiveness about how he had actually come to the point in his life that he forgave the man who had committed the atrocity. He had actually sent the man a Bible while incarcerated. He did have one request of God that he later confided with his parents. He wanted God to make sure the man was in a different part of Heaven if he got saved, the memories were just too strong.

The man himself apparently could not forgive himself because he hung himself in prison. The teacher read his essay and later shared the story with

his wife. The story resulted in one of them trusting Christ. The story was then submitted to a national publication where it went out to very wide readership. The pastor then told me that at his house was a small trunk of letters he had received from people from all over the country who had trusted the Lord after reading that essay.

At this point I was no longer staring at the pastor. I was looking down and watching tear drops landing on the floor and my shoes. Just a little country church. Just a regular bunch of local farmers milking cows. Just a simple pastor who lived in the country because he was not cut out for the big city. I didn't know anything. I wonder if I still know anything at times. He kept going.

It seems that our traveling minstrel group had arrived at a very important time. The boy who should have died had just graduated from seminary and was now married and he was about to be appointed to his first pastorate. I think I know what he will talk about in his first sermon. I knew that if he gave an altar call to repent that I would be the first to run down. Oh, God, forgive me. I was undone, disarmed. I haven't earned the right to speak. I couldn't hide my tears any longer. I thought I had come to teach but I had come to learn. My words were hollow, his were strong and clear from a man who had faced a great mountain and could shout from the summit to us in the valley, "The God of Heaven is enough." I have always kept that in my heart.

That humble pastor will probably never know how much he helped me that night. I walked out of that church crying. I walked out into an ugly world that kills innocent children but no longer represented any threat to me. You see, I know the same God can take the absolute worst circumstance imaginable and do great things with it. God knew there would come a time when I would need that message. I think I know why God had to take me to that man. My receiver is sometimes shut off, and I don't get the message he wants for me. This was one broadcast I couldn't miss. When Leukemia hit me many years later, there was one lesson that was tattooed on my heart and stays with me today, "The God of Heaven is enough!"