

GATHER

WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER FROM  IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH





ALL THROUGH THE BLOOD

Cover illustration/collage by Alice Long

Article illustrations by Stephen Procopio

This summer, I had the privilege to go on a mission trip with other women and men from Immanuel to partner with Africa New Life (ANL) in Rwanda. This was my fourth mission trip to Rwanda, and each trip is a blessing. However, this one was particularly meaningful and bittersweet at the same time.

One of my fellow mission trip team members, Jenn Elzea, will share some of the meaningful ministry moments from the trip later in this newsletter. It was truly a joy to serve alongside ANL sisters and brothers in Christ. We were able to encourage and equip women there, and they certainly encouraged us. But the trip was also bittersweet for me, as my mom went home to be with the Lord while I was in Rwanda.

My mom had a stroke on Palm Sunday, and it weakened her body more than I even realized at the time. She has had significant health challenges since then and God finally stopped her breathing and called her home. We lost my dad at the end of 2020 after he had battled Parkinson's disease for many years. My

parents certainly knew the suffering and hardships of disease and physical brokenness, but they also knew and trusted their loving Savior through it all.

Death has a way of bringing up many memories, and one memory has kept coming to my mind in the past few weeks from a visit with my parents a few years before my dad's death.

Each morning after breakfast, my parents had devotions together. Since I was there with them, they asked me to join in. Because my dad had such difficulty speaking, my mom read the devotional and Scripture. Hearing her read the devotional with my dad was a privilege, but the best part was yet to come.

I noticed my mom had two well-worn pamphlets on her placemat. As I looked closer, I saw that they contained old hymns and choruses from the 1960s and before. Each morning after they read the devotional, they sat and sang a few of these old songs. There was one in particular that my

mom referred to as “daddy’s favorite,” and he asked to sing it.

The refrain of the song goes like this:

*Some through the waters,
some through the flood.*

*Some through the fire,
but all through the blood.*

*Some through great sorrow,
but God gives a song,*

*In the night season and
all the day long.*

As my dad sang these words I watched his face literally light up. Then he got to the line, “but all through the blood,” and he raised his fist in triumph. The image will be forever etched in my memory—in the midst of a lifetime of challenges, my dad (and mom) knew the blood of Jesus Christ as God’s means of sustaining grace. The blood comforted, sustained, and assured my dad that his Lord had both he and his wife in God’s strong right hand. The blood also saved them so now we can be sure they are

spending eternity in the presence of their Savior. All through the blood.

Oswald Chambers said, “Faith is absolute trust in God—trust that could never imagine that He would forsake us.” That faith sustained my parents all their days. It is trust that depends entirely on the object: The finished work of Christ on the cross, raised from the dead as sufficient proof that God keeps all his promises. All through the blood.

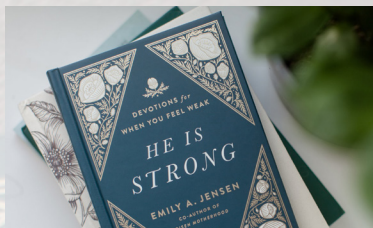
I have been blessed beyond all measure to know the joy and deep trust in God that comes through redemption in Christ. I have also been blessed beyond measure to be part of the Immanuel church family and to be built up, encouraged, and supported through both sweet and bittersweet times by my church family. Sisters, as we begin a new year of ministry at Immanuel, I pray we will trust wholly in the blood of Christ and we will serve and build up one another in love.

Serving with love,

—Bethany

*“Faith is absolute
trust in God—trust
that could never
imagine that He
would forsake us.”*

- OSWALD CHAMBERS



BOOK REVIEW

HE IS STRONG BY EMILY A. JENSEN

Written by Lindsey El-Khatib

Something I've been struggling to understand lately in my study of some the Bible's big tragedies—like God letting Israel be captured by Babylon or even the beginning of creation with the fall of Adam and Eve—is why God allows horrible, hard, life changing things to happen to His people.

If He is in control, why doesn't He helicopter parent us and prevent every bad thing from happening to us? He definitely has the power and sovereignty to do so.

When I asked this question in my Bible study group one night, a very wise response came back to me, "God allows hard things, because without them He wouldn't be able to reveal certain parts of His character to us like how He is a Redeemer and a Savior." And it makes sense—if Batman had no villain to avenge, that would make for a boring movie where we would have no need to see the Batmobile and all his cool tricks for defeating evil bad guys in Gotham City. We wouldn't see justice displayed. There would be no contrast.

When you think about contrast in photography, it is an essential part of making a picture clear and showing more depth and focus—the light vs the dark, the good vs the bad. In a similar way, God uses hardships to reveal Himself to us and show us our need for dependency on Him alone.

That, of course, does not mean being in the midst of struggle is fun by any means. If you think about Paul and the joy he radiated in his letters from prison, it makes you wonder how he was able to have joy during what most people would say is a nightmare. He had a joy that was not dependent on his circumstances and a joy no one could strip from him. He could have that joy because he had his mind set on things above, not on earthly things. What an effective way to display

God's blessing of true joy to the rest of the world! It wouldn't be jaw dropping or astounding for Paul to be joyful in a carefree life, but boy is it amazing to hear him singing praises to his creator while bonded in shackles! It simply doesn't make sense if you take the hope of Christ out of the explanation.

In the devotional book "He Is Strong," author Emily Jensen, the cofounder of the Risen Motherhood ministry, gives us 30 quick reads on different topics of weakness—whether it be actual physical weakness and exhaustion, feeling insignificant, or feeling like a failure at life.

Emily reminds us that humans are weak and how God reminds us of our weaknesses daily. Having to eat food and drink water and sleep are prime examples of how we are not God, but rather dependent creatures. We are mere humans with limitations and points where we just can't hold ourselves together for one more minute. And that is exactly the way God designed us, too!

We're not meant to be perfect because only He is perfect. We aren't meant to be strong on our own through all the trials that come our way, because He is supposed to be our strength.

"He Is Strong" is a perfect book for anyone to read, because even if you aren't currently going through something in life that makes you feel weak or beaten down, I'm sure you have a friend going through something difficult, or a parent or family member whose world is being shaken by something outside of their control, and I can guarantee you will go through something hard in your life at some point. You can be that someone who shares an encouraging and refreshing word with them from this book to remind them that God is their strength, and it's okay to need help.



Trusting His Goodness

By Sarah Fite

Over the summer, my husband and I embarked on the necessary but somewhat stressful journey of selling the condo we've owned for 3 1/2 years and looking for a new home to buy.

It wasn't what we'd planned. We knew we would eventually outgrow our condo, but that day seemed at least a year and an additional child away. But after some things happened with our association and board near the end of 2023, a conversation with our real estate agent confirmed what we were beginning to suspect—it would be wise to sell sooner rather than later.

After a few months, we began the process of final updates, and on a Thursday in May, our home went on the market. Nine days later, we were under contract to close at the end of June with rent back until the beginning of August, which meant we had about two months to find a new home.

When we first decided to sell, my biggest concern was the timing of everything.

We needed to sell before we bought because, as is often the case, the profit from our condo would serve as the down payment for our new home. Logically and financially, it made sense, but I was still nervous. What if we didn't find a house in time? What if everything was too expensive or a major fixer upper? I heard stories of other people putting in offers for homes selling \$50k and \$100k over asking price, and I panicked.

I knew we wouldn't be homeless, even if we didn't find something before August, thanks to the blessing of a wonderfully generous biological family and church family, but that did little to assuage my anxiety. Our condo had been above and beyond what we could've ever imagined, and I hated the idea of leaving it. I looked at the housing market and seriously doubted God would be able to give us something even remotely as good as our condo has been. It seemed like there was no way.

This past spring, as we mentally prepared for the buying and selling process, I was going through a study with some other women from Immanuel about salvation stories in the Old Testament. Each week, we looked at some familiar stories with fresh eyes, asking how these stories ultimately pointed to and reminded us of our great salvation in Christ. Two of the salvation stories we looked at were “Water from the Rock” and “The Serpent on the Pole.”

If you’ve read through the Old Testament, you’ve likely encountered both of these stories at least once. In the first, recorded in Exodus 17:1-7, the Israelites are in the desert, having just witnessed the Lord’s miraculous provision through the plagues in Egypt and deliverance through the Red Sea. Fresh off complaints about Moses leading them into the wilderness to die from hunger, which led to the miracle and daily provision of manna and quail, the Israelites are once again bemoaning their plight, convinced Moses has brought them into the wilderness to die, now from thirst. And again, the Lord provides by having Moses strike a rock so water would come out of it.

The second story, recorded in Numbers 21:4-9, takes place during the 40 years of wandering, with Israel banned from entering the Promised Land because they once



again questioned God’s ability to take care of them. As has become their pattern, they grumble and complain about leaving Egypt and provision of food and water. But this time, the Lord doesn’t give them new food from the sky or water from a rock. He sends fiery serpents among the people, “and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.” When this happens, it finally clicks for the Israelites—their constant grumbling and complaining was sin against God. Over and over, they were questioning His goodness, sovereignty, and provision.

As we studied these two passages, I was forced to come face to face with my own tendency to grumble and complain about the circumstances of my life. In particular, the housing market in Northern Virginia.

Even before we began to plan to buy and sell this year, when we were comfortably living in a beautiful home in a beautiful location that was far more than we’d even considered asking for, I had a tendency to slip into conversations with friends about the insane housing prices, bemoaning the fact that both of my and my husband’s families

had landed in the Northern Virginia area, and how much more we could get for so much less if we moved somewhere else.

Despite the Lord's repeated provision throughout more than 20 moves in my life, there I was, just like the Israelites, grumbling and complaining about the circumstances of my own life. It was a humbling moment for me, as I admitted my own tendency to sin against God in this particular way, questioning His goodness, sovereignty, and provision in my life. Whether it was what I wanted or not, I knew He would provide exactly what I needed, just like He always does. And I had to remind myself what I need is whatever leads to my growth, sanctification, and greater trust in the Lord, not whatever makes me happiest... and that just might look like a "less than ideal" house or a few months accepting the generosity of family.



As the summer continued on, houses in our price range and location had seemed to dry up. July came to a close, the POD arrived, and we began packing out the condo with no clear answer as to where we'd be going next or when. Daily, I had to remind myself the Lord's timing and plan is perfect and infinitely better than mine.

Then on July 31, our final night in the condo, we got the call—after multiple days of back and forth, we'd finally come to an agreement with a seller and were officially under contract for a home that was exactly what we'd hoped for. When I told Bethany Drum, she said, "God is always good, but sometimes He is especially kind."

In our deepest hearts, we are all like the Israelites—tempted to complain and question God's goodness in the world and in our lives. As we step into a new ministry year, whatever circumstances come our way this season, be they filled with joy or grief, may we remember the sovereignty and provision of our God who is always, always good.

SERVING IN RWANDA WITH TWO HANDS OF THE GOSPEL

By Jenn Elzea



This July I joined a team of 15 other women from IBC who traveled to Rwanda to serve alongside Africa New Life Ministries. Our team visited three of the 11 communities where Africa New Life is actively working: the Rwandan capital, Kigali; a medium-sized city, Huye; and a village in the south of the country called Nyamagabe. As we traveled around Rwanda, I was struck by the tangible

impact Africa New Life's ministry and the resulting spread of the gospel has had in each community they serve and on the country as a whole.

Africa New Life practices serving with two hands of the gospel: the hand of compassion and the hand of evangelism. The ministry's stated goal is to see lives transformed through meeting basic needs, to give hope for the future for

those living in poverty in Rwanda, and to share the freedom and hope found in Christ.

We saw the two hands of the gospel so clearly at work through our visit to the New Life Women's Development Program in Kigali. This program, which teaches young women a trade like sewing or aesthetics for nails and hair, meets young women where they are, addressing their physical and emotional needs, and points them to Christ.

Some of the young women in the development program walk as many as

two hours each way to attend the training each weekday for a year. The program leaders learned that many of these women were leaving small children back at their homes without guaranteed childcare, creating a potentially unsafe environment for those kids. As a result, Africa New Life started a daycare across the street from the training center where the children of the women with the most profound needs



can spend the weekdays while their moms complete their training. The kids learn their letters and numbers, have nutritious meals, sing songs about Jesus, and take naps on their very own little beds—which they view as a treat! Within the structure of the daycare program, these children are thriving and the staff report that they can see a significant difference in the children's physical health and emotional stability within just weeks of joining the program.

Knowing their children are in a safe and structured environment allows the women in the development program to



focus on their training and to receive the gospel messages that are shared with them through regular devotions and worship services. As a result of these combined efforts, the majority of the young women in this year's development class have prayed for salvation and many of their young children have also called on the name of the Lord. The goal of the women's development program is for 96% of the women each year to leave knowing Jesus personally!

Africa New Life is in the process of expanding the women's development program to other sites with a pilot already underway in Nyamagabe. The leader of Africa New Life women's development programs explained to us how they carefully assess the needs of each community where they serve to ensure their efforts meet the practical needs of the people there so they can receive the gospel with fewer barriers caused by hunger, illness, housing instability, lack of childcare, and the like. These types of tailored programs, coupled with the education provided through child sponsorships—the heart of Africa New Life's ministry model—are transforming communities across the country.

Child sponsorship is how I first encountered Africa New Life. I sponsored

**YOU CAME NEAR
WHEN I CALLED ON
YOU; YOU SAID,
'DO NOT FEAR!'
YOU HAVE TAKEN
UP MY CAUSE,
O LORD; YOU
HAVE REDEEMED
MY LIFE.**

LAMENTATIONS 3:57-58

a little girl after Pastor Charles Mugisha preached at IBC in 2021 and a second child beginning in 2022. I know this is how many of you have connected with Africa New Life as well. Sponsorship provides a beautiful picture of the gospel by breaking the cycle of poverty for that child and their family, meeting their physical needs, growing their minds and bodies, and, we pray, delivering true and lasting hope through saving faith in Jesus.

I freely admit my fondest memories from Rwanda are meeting our two beautiful sponsored children. What a blessing to meet these beautiful little souls in person,



to see the positive impact sponsorship is having in their lives and their communities, to pray with them and for them that they will come to know Jesus personally. And our meetings were just two of so many the team experienced while in Rwanda. Some on the team saw children they've sponsored for decades, who are grown and starting families of their own. What a testimony to God's faithfulness over generations and across continents!

If you are not yet involved in the work God is doing through Africa New Life, I hope you'll learn more about sponsoring a child or consider sponsoring a young woman in one of the development programs. Seeing the transformation brought about in Rwanda by compassion and the gospel reminded me that this is an investment in eternity!

This was my first visit to Africa, and I am praying it is not my last. This kind of trip is not possible without a tremendous amount of support, for which we are grateful to the entire IBC family. We treasured your prayers for us as we went, and even now as God carries on His work in Rwanda through Africa New Life.



WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Missions Statement:

Encouraging all women to be
faithful followers of Christ who:

READ • LOVE • OBEY & PROCLAIM

God's Word



IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH

6911 BRADDOCK ROAD, SPRINGFIELD VIRGINIA 22151

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MERRIFIELD, VA
PERMIT NO. 2157