



The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced, wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. **TrailNotes** is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing.

ELDERTALK: “Give thanks with a grateful heart”

RICK WIDENER

Some of you may know of my penchant for “hot.” Hot tubs, saunas, and steam baths are, for me, a “day off.” Recently, I was enjoying a steam bath at the local YMCA and struck up a conversation with another man in the room.

We talked about his employment and retirement, among other things. One thing that struck me during that conversation was that he immediately began talking about the negative things of his past employment. At one point I tried to steer the conversation to a more positive place, suggesting that there were good things in his story. He acknowledged that but did not move the conversation in that direction.

During a quick search of my Bible, I found 133 instances of thanks and only seven examples of complaining. Hmm? I think God is saying something to us. Giving thanks was a standard part of the Old Testament. “*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever.*” *I Chronicles 16:34 (ESV)*

In the New Testament, to give thanks is also common. “*He took the seven loaves, and the fish, and, having given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples...*” *Matthew 15:36 (ESV)*

Perhaps, because we live in a fallen world, our initial response to things seems often to go to the negative—all that is wrong mentally. But we have been raised with Christ. With a little effort on our part, we can change how we initially respond to people, situations, conversations, and God. We can see how God is working and moving in someone’s life (or our own) instead of their shortcomings.

We can see the blessings of God rather than the results of the curse as our first response.

This way of reacting to things, revealing our

(continued on page 3)

PENELOPE ANN SHIFLEY

(May 11, 1939-April 15, 2024)

Beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and great grandmother, Penelope Ann Shifley went to be with Jesus on April 15, 2024, in Ashland, Ohio, with her family by her side.

Penny, as she was known to her friends, was born in Lorain, Ohio, to John W. and Edna P. Tufford. John was a salesman, and his jobs took the family all over the United States. She often mentioned that she went to ten different schools in nine years.



In 1958 she married Charles F. Shifley in Bucyrus, Ohio, and had three children: daughters Melinda (Tom) Lueck and Kara (Wayne) Ruman, and son Jonathan (Jay) (Heather) Shifley. Penny excelled in raising her children and was gifted at creating traditions and memories that stay part of the family to this day. It was important to her that her children had a childhood that was secure and stable, and she lived with her family for over 20 years on Sherwood Drive in Bucyrus, Ohio.

(continued on page 2)

PENELOPE ANN SHIFLEY *(cont. from p. 1)*

A gifted decorator with an eye for beauty and color coordination, Penny always had a wonderfully decorated home. She worked in flower shops all her life, even as a teenager, and always had an appreciation for a good flower arrangement or wreath.

Penny was a committed follower of Jesus, and she instilled that love of Him into all three of her children. She enjoyed sermons by Billy Graham and Charles Stanley, and she loved the Bible teaching of Les Feldick. Penny attended Grace Fellowship Church in Mansfield for many years and treasured her relationships there.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her brother John Tufford, and her husband of 55 years, Charles Shifley. Overall, Penny's legacy will always be her kids, many grandchildren, and several great-grandchildren. She will be missed greatly, but her family and friends are comforted that she is now in the presence of Jesus.

In accordance with Penny's wishes, a private memorial service will be held at a future date. She will be laid to rest with her husband Charles in the columbarium at Grace Fellowship Church, 365 Straub Rd. East, Mansfield, Ohio 44803. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to OPEN USA at 604 Buena Vista Avenue, Ashland, Ohio 44805. Condolence cards can also be mailed to this address.

Online condolences may be shared at the funeral home's website at denbowfh.com. The Denbow-Gasche Funeral Home and Crematorium are handling the arrangements.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us." Hebrews 12:1 NLT

MARRIAGE PIT STOP

***Four ways to refuel your marriage
and check in on your
relational health***

BETSY BARBER

1.

Pray together

Through this daily practice, you can construct a sacred space for seeking, sacred guidance, expressing gratitude, and strengthening the spiritual connection that underpins your marriage.

2.

Differentiate skills

Decide which tasks are most important to keep your house running smoothly. Now based on skillsets and preferences, determine which spouse is best suited for which tasks. Trust that your spouse can handle his or her task.

3.

Practice forgiveness

Mistakes and miscommunication will happen. Tell the truth and then forgive.



4.

Retreat together

Seek adventures, big or small, that break up the routine.

*From Christianity Today, April 2024.
Used by permission.*

MAY 2024

- 2 National Day of Prayer Parade on Park Ave. at 6:30 pm. with service following at the Gazebo.
- 4 Women's Relax, Renew, Refill at the Inn at Haven Hill in Mt. Vernon. Meet at GFC at 9:30 am.
- 5 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching: Heb. 12:12-17. KDTs meeting: 12:30 pm.
- 5-11 MCS uses auditorium for play.
- 12 Eric Byrom preaching: Heb. 12:18-24.

- 18 Church Workday, 8:30 am to 1 pm. Wade Martin Memorial Service, 4 pm.
- 19 Matt Godsil preaching: Heb. 12:25-29.
- 26 Eric Byrom preaching: Heb. 13: 2-6.


ELDERTALK: *"Give thanks..."* (cont. from p.1) hearts of thanksgiving, also impacts our children and their relationships with our Lord, which gives us another good reason to make the change.



The Thankful Leper – Woodcut engraving after a drawing by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (German painter, 1794 - 1872), published in 1877.

**Give thanks with a grateful heart,
Give thanks to the Holy One.
Give thanks because He's given
Jesus Christ, His Son.**

[Eds. note: Rick Widener, is an Elder Emeritus at Harvest Christian Church in Elyria, OH. He also serves as the Missions Director for Table Fellowship. This article originally appeared in the November 2017 issue of TrailNotes]

A Letter to the Women of Grace after the Retreat: "Pursuing God's Presence"

Thank you for supporting the April 6 retreat with Harvest Christian Church. The retreat planning team was very pleased about the turnout from both GFC and Harvest—about 60!

If you would like to hear any of the talks again (or for the first time), check out our website:

apeopleforgod.org

Several statements Melissa Martins made really struck me: *"When we have pain and are aligned with God's purpose, we can know His presence."*

"When I feel wounded, I look to the wounded One."

From Jennifer Brasileiro on the panel: *"God's presence is always with us."*

"In Scripture God says 389 times to seek Him. When we seek Him..., we will find Him."

"God plays Hide and Seek with us. In the children's game, the best part is being found. Likewise, the best part is when God finds us."

May you continue to praise the Lord and pursue His presence each day.

"My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:14.

Blessings on all of you!

Kay Berry for Marirae Frankenfield,
Karen Gates, and Linda Mathias



FAITH ISN'T FEARLESSNESS

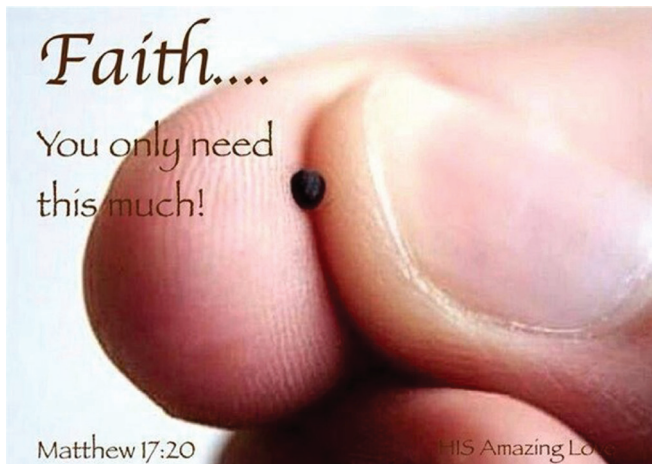
An Excerpt from DEFIANT JOY

JENNIFER M. GREENBERG

One day, the disciples were stumped by a demon. They tried to cast it out of a little boy, but it refused to budge. In desperation, the boy's father went to Jesus and begged for help (Matt. 17:18).

Jesus was exasperated, "You unbelieving and perverse generation," He exclaimed. "How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" Then Jesus rebuked the demon, and immediately it departed.

The disciples asked Jesus, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He answered, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."



Notice that Jesus didn't say that they had no faith. He said that they had "little faith." If this was true of Peter and the disciples, then you and I have micro faith! Are you brave enough to look a demon in the eye and tell him to take a hike?

In the past, I've trusted God to help me give birth, find a job, get to church on time, hold my marriage together, and raise my kids. But telling off demons? For the disciples to even attempt this was remarkable. Surely, they believed they could cast out the demon, or they'd never have tried, least of all in front of all those people. So why did

Jesus become exasperated? Because He'd expected a few fishermen to give the devil his walking papers?

I think Jesus was exasperated because His disciples got cocky. They mistook courage for faith. The more they relied on their own bravery, the less they relied on Jesus. Instead of asking Jesus why *He* didn't drive it out, they asked why *they* couldn't drive it out. They had forgotten that they were only little children.

A few years ago, I walked into the kitchen to see my spindly little daughter preparing to lift an angry, bubbling casserole out of the hot oven. I didn't decry an "unbelieving and perverse generation." But I certainly yelled, "Whoa! Stop!"

You see, the disciples had no business evicting powerful demons all by themselves any more than my eight-year-old had any business extracting a molten dinner from the oven. It was way out of their league. Working up the courage was all fine and dandy, but it wasn't enough.

Faith isn't fearlessness, and it isn't courage. It's a work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It's His faithful endeavor to soften our hearts, fix our eyes on Jesus, and keep our hope alive, no matter what this life throws at us.

*Excerpted from Defiant Joy, copyright 2024
by Jennifer M. Greenberg; Published by Multnomah.*

Grace Fellowship Church

365 Straub Road East • Mansfield, OH 44903
419-526-4699 • gracefellowship01@gmail.com



Eric Byrom	Presiding Elder/ Pastor
Jadaé Fox	Elder
Matt Godsil	Elder
Jerry Mathias	Elder
Cameron Karger	Treasurer
Kay Berry & Karen Gates	Women
Lori Judd	Missions
Andy Heininger	Worship
Judy Nichols	Prayer Chain
Kay Berry & Jadaé Fox	Office
Andy Anschutz	Sound/Power Point
John and Donna Kurtz	TrailNotes