



Betty M. Hockett

Often friends I haven't seen for awhile ask, "Are you still writing?"

"Yes," I reply. "Old writers never die. Their screens just go blank."

It took me several years into my writing career to realize that God actually had called me to the vocation of writing. Before that I thought of writing as something I enjoyed doing and something I felt thankful that I had opportunities to do. After that, realizing I worked within the bounds of a *call*, not unlike that of a pastor or missionary, helped me understand even more the responsibility of choosing the right words.

One day God showed me Psalm 45:17 (NKJ). It became my writing goal. *I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations.* Readers of different ages—generations—have and do still read what I write. For that I say, "Thank You, Lord."

I also am glad there's time to knit and read, though sometimes not as much as I wish. My reading encompasses the book list for the reading group in our Friendsview Retirement Community (Newberg, Oregon), and also extends to other writers and their works. Nowadays I limit my knitting to baby afghans for our newborn great-grandchildren. So far I have kept up with their arrival dates.

BIBLE READING: Deuteronomy 10:12-21

When I set out to knit a new baby afghan I must have a pattern. It sometimes takes me awhile to find exactly the one I want, although the Internet has negated the need to spend hours at a craft store looking through books of knitting patterns. Occasionally I find exactly the right one on the Internet, sometimes a friend loans me a special pattern, or I delve into old books to select a pattern that still fits my ability and inclination.

In many areas of life we need a pattern with instructions: cooking, sewing, other handwork and hobbies, vehicle or equipment repair, setting up a new computer, figuring out how to use a camera, construction of all kinds. The need for instructions goes on and on. Why do folks sometimes think it would be any different living a life pleasing to God?

God knew that people needed an instruction book for a righteous life. Long ago he chose those who would and could write down what he wants us to do. In the centuries since he has called gifted people to translate his instructions into words we, and others, can understand.

Verses 12 and 13 of today's reading leave no doubt as to what God wants and expects of us. Okay, but now the job amounts to finding the specifics of how to live that godly life.

The readings for this week remind us of five patterns in the Bible. Real-life people I know about will serve as the examples. I have, however, changed their names.

SONG: Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help me read your Instruction Book often, carefully with an eye and ear to knowing how to follow your pattern for my life.

—Betty M. Hockett

*BIBLE READING: Matthew 7:7-8;
1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 5:13-18*

Mercy, a toddler at the Africa Gospel Church Baby Center near Nakuru, Kenya, watched one day as the director prepared items to send along with Malachi, another toddler awaiting his adoptive parents. Later she watched as Malachi's new mommy and daddy carried him to their car.

"Mercy wants a new mommy and daddy," she said to the director.

"Well, Mercy, we'll keep on praying," the director replied.

Mercy climbed up on the chair. "God," she said, "this is Mercy. She wants a new mommy and daddy." For days after that, Mercy sat herself on the chair and repeated her prayer.

My husband, Gene, and I saw Mercy one day as we visited the baby center. Already as a toddler she exhibited a strong personality; I imagine that she spoke her wishes to the director in a no-nonsense tone. Likely she prayed that way.

God heard Mercy's intentionally specific prayer each day. Meanwhile, government agencies and authorities at the baby center worked with a Christian Kenyan couple wanting to adopt a child. In God's perfect timing and in answer to Mercy's prayer, this Kenyan mommy and daddy came one day to the baby center, ready to take Mercy home with them.

Our kind heavenly Father always listens as we pray, no matter our age. It's good to pray intentionally with direct, specific requests.

SONG: I Must Tell Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Kind heavenly Father, thank you for allowing us to talk directly to you. Help us today to fearlessly tell you exactly what we need you to do for us. Help us have patience to wait for your answer.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Matthew 6:25-34

In the spring of 2007 the effects of violence following national elections caused concern for David, principal of a day school for both boys and girls in the northernmost part of his country. The next year insurgents caused unrest and violence in the forested area near his school.

David continued to keep his school open in spite of the violence. “I want to provide a safe place for the children so they can continue to learn.” Late in 2009 the money for his school dwindled, and David wondered how he could keep the school open until the end of the term. He scheduled a school board meeting to discuss possible options. The day before the meeting David received a phone call telling that a truck would arrive at his school the next day bringing a donation of 60 bags of corn, each weighing 200 pounds.

The next day the truck arrived with the precious donation. The corn provided food and barter for other goods and services. David kept the school open for the remainder of the term, sending invoices home to parents of several families. “Your school bills are paid in full.”

David, never knowing the name of the donor, continues to rejoice in God’s provision for his school.

How is our [my] faith today? Does it extend to intentional praying about specific needs? I sometimes find myself telling—perhaps only suggesting—to God just how he should answer, but as in David’s case, our kind heavenly Father always knows exactly what to do and how to do it.

I hope I always remember to rejoice in his goodness.

SONG: Trusting Jesus

*PRAAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, bolster my faith today
as I recall past times when my faith brought results.*

—Betty M. Hockett

*BIBLE READING: Isaiah 1:19; Matthew 6:19-24;
Colossians 3:23-24*

Joseph grew up in a poor family in the western part of his country. But he did have educational opportunities, studying hard through high school and making good grades on the national test. A large university in the capital city accepted him into its business courses.

After graduation he found employment at a prestigious bank, where he became a successful, highly paid banker. Joseph worked there for 20 years and then felt God leading him into full-time ministry for the church. He resigned his position at the bank while his colleagues remonstrated, “You’re out of your mind to leave behind such a life.”

Now, after almost six years in this ministry position, he administers great responsibility overseeing the ministry of Friends yearly meetings and their schools in his home country. “Education is the only way for young people to make a better life for themselves and their families and break the cycle of poverty,” he opines.

A co-worker from the States says, “Joseph is an amazing man of God who leads by example and service to others.”

Joseph has never looked back to determine if he made the right decision when he obeyed God’s leading. He has influenced many Friends and others by saying “yes” to God, rather than storing up financial treasures. While busy about God’s work in his homeland, Joseph studies mostly long distance toward a graduate degree from a school in the States. The results of Joseph’s obedience reach some of us in Oregon.

SONG: Trust and Obey

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help me listen to you today and then obey your leading.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: 2 Corinthians 9:6-14

Joseph, the former banker and now Friends denominational leader featured in yesterday's reading, also accepted God's call to good stewardship. His belief in education led him to provide funds from his personal wealth to make sure young people have opportunity for education. In addition to his own three children, Joseph has helped or is helping ten different young people attend high school and college.

Certainly Joseph is an example of a cheerful giver. Photos show him with a broad smile on his ebony face, and although I haven't met him, I believe this smile indicates the attitude he holds in all aspects of his ministry, even as he faces challenges.

God doesn't distinguish between those with lots of money and those with only a little to give (Mark 12:42). It's the attitude towards giving that counts. Under God's direction we can know what he requires of us, regardless of our resources.

Many days our mail includes opportunities to give, describing aspects of God's work around the world. It's impossible to help everyone, so I often remember the wise counsel a friend gave long ago. "We're not able to give to every organization that asks, so as I drop the letter in the wastebasket I pray, 'Lord, put it on the hearts of those who can give to do so.'"

My husband and I do the best we can with God's guidance to give wisely. It's cheerfully that we give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, thanking God for the privilege of sharing what we have, then reminding God to prompt others to give where we cannot.

SONG: Little Is Much, When God Is in It

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Lord, help us follow your pattern for good stewardship of our financial resources.

—Betty M. Hockett

*BIBLE READING: Luke 10:30-35;
1 Peter 3:8-12; Colossians 3:12*

Violet, administrator of a Quaker girls' school in her homeland and a mother of six children, has a heart full of compassion. Currently several orphans, complete with papers documenting their status, attend her school. Violet uses her own resources, along with the help of her church, to pay the school fees for these orphans.

She also opens her home to other children during school breaks. "They have nowhere else to go and no one else who can care for them," she says.

Violet trusts God to provide. According to an American friend and fellow educator, "Violet believes she is giving these children a chance to be able to lead productive lives."

Jesus preached compassion and lived it. Think about the story he told that featured a Samaritan who came across an injured traveler. That epitomizes situations often pictured on television news: a man rescues a stranger from a burning building; a person sees a vehicle accident and rushes to the aid of the driver or a passenger. On and on...we recall instances of compassion that draw our attention.

But what about the ordinary days? Not often do we have opportunities for heroism. Usually we find our compassion limited to simple words of encouragement, a chance to pray for or with a friend, remembering to give to the local food drive, or to smile at a stranger in the market.

God's pattern includes generous amounts of compassion, given in his name.

SONG: They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Dear Father, give me a heart full of compassion for those around me today and the same compassion for those far away who need your love and presence.

—Betty M. Hockett

BIBLE READING: Deuteronomy 10:12-21; 11:1; 5:32

Knit(K) 3, yarn over (YO), K3; slip 1 as if to knit, K1, pass the slip stitch over (PSSO)... That's the first part of Row 1 in the pattern I'm knitting at the moment. I knitted an afghan from this pattern once before, but even now I must read the pattern carefully so that all 36 inches by 40 inches end up as a baby afghan, recognizable and pleasing.

Probably most serious knitters occasionally need to rip out a row or two because they failed to follow the pattern correctly. As least that's the story of my knitting. Thankfully, I almost always see the error and after unknitting the problem, I can proceed.

Prayer, faith, obedience, stewardship, and compassion fit together in the pattern of our godly lives. Do we need to read about them? Yes, no matter how long we've done our best to follow God's pattern for a righteous life, we need to read his instructions as found in the Scriptures. Not just once, but many times, memorizing the pattern, checking our progress often, to make sure we're following exactly as the Bible says.

God, in his kindness and love, points out where we've mixed up his pattern and tended toward an unpleasing end full of tangles. When we recognize and admit the problem, he gladly forgives, offering courage, mercy and grace to follow his pattern once again, presenting ourselves in his likeness.

SONG: I Would Be Like Jesus

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Kind Father, I want to follow your pattern for my life. Help me read it correctly, often, making sure I understand your righteous ways. Thank you for your grace and peace as I do my best to live a righteous life, pleasing to you.

—Betty M. Hockett