

## CHAPTER NINE

The third year for the Misty Valley Christian School and Academy began with a marked increase in attendance. The new families who attended our church wanted to send their children to the school. For the first time, we had a waiting list; we had no room for everyone who wanted to come. Our three new rooms could only hold about 45 students comfortably; we admitted sixty. Since we now had three rooms full of students, we needed another teacher. Although Bonnie didn't have a teaching degree, she was a college graduate, and well versed in many fields. It took some persuasion, but she agreed to come, on the condition she wouldn't have either of her children as students. Kay was in high school, and Kacee would go into the sixth grade, so Bonnie taught the younger children.

We still had no cafeteria, but some of the men of the church built a building which would at least serve to keep the children out of the rain and cold. We found an old wood-burning stove for it, and one of the men laid in a large supply of wood for winter. The building soon served for chapel and assembly programs as well, particularly when we couldn't meet outside.

Our greatest strength in the school, apart from the Lord in our midst, came from the unity of purpose and belief among our staff. Pam, Bonnie and I had the same goals for the students, that we should train Christians first and scholars second, and our curriculum revolved around that central belief.

School began earlier than in past years, during the last two weeks of August. By the time we had our first class, both Emily and Pam were quite large with child, and very uncomfortable in the summer heat. Emily, usually a very even-tempered person, grew snappish and temperamental. I tried to be patient and understanding, but I must admit I lost my temper at times. Auntie Mae proved a real blessing during those difficult weeks, always ready to step in to soothe ruffled feelings or mend fences. More often than not, she took Pam's side, and put me in my place. She did it so sweetly, though, that I could hardly get angry with her.

The baby came one day too early, on September 18. We named him Patrick Elias, after Mae Mae's father. We knew, beyond any doubt, that he rated as the most gorgeous human ever born, insisting to everyone that we were perfectly objective in our assessment. Our breaking-in period began, with three months of sleepless nights. Emily nursed the child, but we still fed him by bottle at times. I developed a certain proficiency at testing the temperature of the milk, and at less desirable tasks. My wife insisted on cloth diapers, and the task of changing or cleaning them fell to me with some regularity. Mae Mae helped, too, of course, but she had her own tasks to perform. Patrick didn't seem to want to follow her schedule, or ours either for that matter.

Pam's turn came almost a month after Emily's, on October 15. We had anticipated her absence, and Pat Majors agreed to step into the gap for a few weeks. Our good friend gave birth to a beautiful baby girl, Amanda Louise. Once Pam came back to her job, Emily watched both children during the day, because Lamar took his duties as pastor very seriously. He visited members of his flock almost every day, and spent a lot of time in Bible study and prayer. He adored both his wife and his baby girl, but the Lord came first in his life. Emily and I were concerned sometimes that he spent too much time away from his family, but we dared not mention that to Pam. She worshipped the very ground Lamar walked on.

My life changed profoundly with the coming of Patrick Elias. The earlier intimacy I shared with Emily got lost somewhere between the diaper changes, the colic, and the miracle of Watching Baby Grow. I didn't like playing second fiddle in the orchestra of my wife's affections. Auntie Mae assured me this would pass, and our relationship would end up stronger than before, but I had my doubts. I secretly resented the intrusion of this new young life into our happy home, then berated myself for having such awful thoughts. It wasn't that I didn't love and adore my son; he was still the world's perfect child. I loved to play foolish little games with him, especially as he got a few months older and could respond to me. Still, though – I felt confused and

angry at times, confused about what I should make of this new Crandall, and angry with myself for my confusion.

Mae Mae was right, of course, as she invariably was. By Christmas, the baby slept through the night, and Emily returned to our wedding bed as my lover and companion. I realized how supremely selfish I had become, and I committed all my feelings and my confusion into the Lord's hands. By the turning of the New Year, I felt at peace with my role as both father and husband. Since I had never had a father, only a Father, the whole experience turned into a vast field of learning for me.

Amidst the concerns of fatherhood, school continued. Liz turned fifteen, and looked forward to sweet sixteen, a major watershed in her young life. Kay had already passed her seventeenth birthday, and had earned her driver's license the year before. She reminded her mother regularly that when she reached eighteen the following spring she would be a legal adult, ready to face the world. She said that with laughter in her eyes, because she committed herself to obey her parents as long as she lived in their home.

Bandy Leighton finally returned Liz's interest in him in more than a brotherly way. Though her parents forbade their daughter to date at her tender age, they did permit her to go on chaperoned outings with her young sweetheart. Like his brother, Bandy followed the Lord devotedly, which made him the perfect match in Liz's young eyes. When Liz wasn't with Kay, we could depend on finding her with Bandy.

Kay herself took no apparent interest in boys. Her experience with Nate had scarred her deeply, and she shied away when any of her school mates showed more than a passing interest in her. Like her mother, she showed intense loyalty for her friends, and just as fierce hatred for her enemies. If it had been left up to Miss Kay, we would long ago have stormed and burned down that Seat of Satan two hills away. I patiently taught her that we couldn't fight Satan with his own weapons, but I wasn't sure the lesson sank in.

Other than persistent rumors, we heard little from the Satanic Academy, the Devil's Roost, we called it. The Satanists kept to themselves for the most part; much of their power lay in the appeal to secret ritual and rites of passage known only to initiates. Animals mysteriously disappeared from various farms, and several Christians received grotesque packages in the mail, but this sort of torment had gone on for years before the school started. Far worse things would happen.

Halloween night had long since become Hell night, and that year was no different. We had our All Saint's Eve party at the church, early that evening, then people hurried away to guard their homes. The bands of young toughs inflicted no major damage, and we sighed our collective relief when November 1 finally came.

January 12 marked no special day on our calendar. No holiday, no church feast day, not even a birthday that we knew of. January 12 was, though, the birthday of someone we came to know all too well. Burgan Malovich, we later learned, marked that date as his birth as a child of Satan. That still would have meant nothing to our little church community before that year, the year after our child was born and Emily's father died, the year after the Satanist travesty of a school started. Forever after, though, that day did signify something for us, all bad. January 12 – the Night of the Burning.

Lamar first noticed the red glow in the sky, as he returned from a late visit to a sick parishioner.. Not willing to believe what it meant, he drove as fast as he dared over the icy road to where our new church building stood so proudly. He arrived far too late to do anything. Both structures, the old and the new, were fully engulfed in flames. The snow around the church was packed down with recent footsteps, and vehicle tracks marked the driveway. As with Crystal's house, however, the police and fire marshal ruled the blaze was accidental, caused by a short in the electrical wiring.

None of us could quite accept it. Hadn't we consecrated the church and the property to the Lord? Hadn't we prayed His watch care over it and the property, and asked Him to send His angels to watch over everything? Why, then, had He allowed this to happen? Did that mean we couldn't count on His care over our school or

our homes either? We had plenty of questions, but no good answers. Lamar called us all together in the school cafeteria the next evening. Never had I seen such a spirit of gloom and despair hang over our gathering.

For a while, we just sat, saying nothing. Lamar finally had Bonnie lead us in some praise choruses, but our efforts didn't lift much in the way of praise to the Lord. After that, we had a prayer time together, but still the Lord wasn't in it. I started to pray, not knowing quite what I would say, when the same spirit I had felt when praying for Pam that day came over me. This time I recognized what the Lord intended to do, and I opened my mouth to let the words come.

"The Lord says, 'My dear children. These things that have come to pass are not for your harm, but for my greater glory. I have not deserted you or forsaken you. The Devil can not destroy unless I give him leave. Do you not remember my servant Job? This fire which the Enemy meant for destruction I will use to refine you like gold, for without heat the impurities can not be removed. Remember also I told you that all things work together for good to them who love me, and are the called according to my purposes. Open your eyes, and you will see what great wonders I will perform. As to this place, it is my sanctuary, a place of refuge for my people in the wilderness. Be not ashamed or afraid, but rejoice, for you have been counted worthy to suffer for my sake.'"

The Spirit loosed his hold on my voice, and I sat down, unaware that I had even stood up. From somewhere in the room, someone began singing softly. Like a wave crashing in upon the shore, the spirit of praise rushed upon us, and we began shouting, singing, and praying out aloud, all at once. Instead of confusion, it all came together in perfect harmony, the tones blending like the chords of a mighty organ. We hugged each other, we danced, we ran about in wild abandon, grabbing each other and falling to the floor in uncontrollable fits of laughter.

To this day, I don't know how long it all lasted. When we regained a measure of our composure, we prayed and sang a while, then the Spirit swept us away again in praise. Some time after midnight, people left reluctantly to go home. The next morning, before school started, I felt led to return to the cafeteria. On entering the building, and switching on the light, I found I couldn't stand up.

I fell to my knees, praising the Lord. I crawled to the front of the room, and laid down flat on my face before the Lord. Minutes later, though I didn't even know it, Bonnie came in to see if she could find me, and she, too, fell under the Lord's power. One after the other, first adults, then students, several dozen people came into the room. Church members who had no reason to be at the school felt compelled to come there. For the rest of that day, people came and went. Sometimes, someone would stand to give a witness, or a word of prophecy or praise, but mostly no one could get to their feet except to come and go. I left around 11:00 in the morning, astounded when I saw so many people around.

No one attended class. Those not in the cafeteria gathered in small groups to pray and comfort one another. People confessed publicly sins that had never seen the light of day, weeping in utter desolation until the Lord gave them release. Those who had resentments toward others in the flock begged for forgiveness, and received it both from the Lord and the people involved. Kay Rathwell found the deep healing of her hurts that had eluded her for almost two years. Pam gave up the ghost of Bennie Bullitt at long last, and the Spirit pulled her hidden root of guilt out cleanly. I chased away my own demons, of my natural mother's desertion, my years of addiction, and my secret resentments against Pam and my infant son. Even Mae Mae found release from the effects of the years of loneliness she endured after her husband died at an early age.

For two days, the Lord would not release us. We went home, ate, slept, then returned to the cafeteria the next morning. On the third evening since the fires of revival swept over us, we left for our homes, physically exhausted but cleansed in every way. We could never look at life the same way ever again. God had his brand on us, and to deny Him we must deny our very existence.

We lost a building on that cold winter's night; but we gained a deep source of strength, joy and peace. God would not allow us to stay within the protecting shelter of the valley. He came to us that winter's day that He might send us out into the fallen world around us. We expected that of Lamar, but we didn't dream that we, too, had to go out to minister to the needs of a world that hated us. We didn't know where we should go, or what we should do; just that Lord commanded us to go.

For me, that meant going door to door to organize adult education classes for week day evenings. Traditionally, eastern Kentucky produced large numbers of functionally illiterate adults, people who spent ten or twelve years in school, and came out barely able to spell their names. The problem had worsened, not improved, as the country supposedly raced down the road of progress. I believed that, if I could meet people in this area of their need, the Lord would open doors of witness for me as well.

Many people slammed doors in my face. Others sent their dogs after me, or physically threw me off their property. With a zeal born of conviction, though, I persisted, and ten adults agreed to make the trek to Misty Valley four nights a week in that first class. Over the years, even after I no longer taught the class, hundreds passed through our doors, and many of these found Christ in that same cafeteria that became a shrine for us. Along the way, most of these people learned to read, write, and calculate well enough to function in their jobs and communities like any other normal adults.

Others from our church shared other talents with the people of our county. Renee Lambeth, a license practical nurse, volunteered her time to help elderly people who had little income and no insurance, but needed care for acute illness short of going to a nursing home. With her inspiration, we began a whole ministry to shut-ins. Bonnie and Kay started a counseling ministry for unwed mothers, to show them that they had other possibilities than abortion for the babies they carried. Meanwhile, Lamar began preaching at revivals all over the Big Sandy valley, and well into West Virginia.

On one of his trips, Lamar went to the coal mining and lumber mill hamlet of Bentown, the place of his birth. He looked up Jack Baker there, at my request, and brought him to visit us in Misty Valley. For years afterward, Jack and his mother, Mari bell, came to see us once or twice a year. In spite of regular contacts with us, though, Jack did not come to know the Lord . He came to visit us for the last time when he was eighteen.

"Come see! Come see!" Carmen was excited, even by her standards. I sat under the big maple on a spring day, enjoying a leisurely lunch with my wife and son, when she came running up, grabbed my hand, and literally dragged me away. "Darling, I think she wants you," I heard Emily giggle as we half-walked, half ran around the other side of the house toward the school.

What Carmen wanted me so desperately to see still spewed our from our old laser printer as we came into the computer lab. Liz, Kay, Bandy, and a couple of other students passed the pages about to each other as they came out of the printer. They read the freshly printed sheets with eager intensity, their young faces aglow with excitement. Liz looked around as she heard us come in.

"Some of us have been talking and praying, and we decided that the school needs a newsletter. We wanted it to be a surprise, since we've been planning it for weeks, but my kid sister doesn't know the meaning of the word 'secret.'" She ruffled Carmen's hair affectionately, not really upset. "We wrote articles about the Night of the Burning, the Great Revival, the things we've been doing out in the county, and the things that have happened here in the school. Little Patrick and Amanda Louise are in here, too."

"Wow, Liz, this is *great!*. I never knew you had this kind of talent."

"Oh, it wasn't just me, Mr. Crandall; all of us had a part in it. I'm just the editor."

In spite of her modesty, I knew she was much more than "just" the editor. I could hardly fail to give proper

credit to the others, though, who stood right there, looking straight at me." *All* of you have done a fantastic job. Run enough copies off on the copier so that everyone in school, including the teachers, can have one." The *Academy Mists* started from that promising beginning, and continued unbroken for as long as the school lasted. After Liz left us, others took up the mantle, and we eventually sent copies all over the country to school alumni. It inspired another area of ministry.

Pat Majors had a degree in journalism. She passed much of her knowledge on to Liz, and helped the students get their paper started. I had a wild idea for an additional outreach for the Lord's work, something that would take better advantage of the technology that too often served the purposes of Satan. We had access to the Internet, like most people. It occurred to me that we could send an electronic newsletter to thousands of people by E Mail, and reach, potentially, millions by making it available on a web page. A few Christian organizations still maintained a presence on the Web, in spite of systematic government attempts to prevent it, and we had contacts with a couple of them. We obtained their agreement to carry our newsletter, and let us use their Email lists to send out copies to other Christians. In return, we agreed to help others begin the same kind of ministry.

We put Pat in charge of the whole project, but many of us, especially Lamar, contributed articles. This ministry lasted ten years, until government efforts finally succeeded in eliminating every Christian presence on the Net. Only the Lord Himself knows how many lives He reached through that ministry, but we learned of hundreds of lives that His Word transformed. Many Christians, new and old, communicated with us electronically over the years, and some of these even came to visit us in the Valley. One of those who came was Marvin Reynolds.

Marvin came to us from Cleveland, where he met Drew. Drew gave us Marvin's Email address, and one of the articles Lamar wrote touched Marvin so deeply that it changed his entire life. A successful engineer, like Drew, he had never cared much for religion or the things of God. He first saw how Drew's life had dramatically changed, when he became a Christian, and he watched carefully the kind of life his friend lived after that. He resisted any change in his own routine or beliefs for several years, but the Lord gradually opened his mind and heart. When he read Lamar Leighton's article about God's transforming power, and realized he had seen it in Drew's life already, the dam burst inside him. He jumped up from his desk, knocking over his chair, and ran into the kitchen to grab his wife, Martha.

After she got over her initial shock, she followed him to the computer to read the article that had so excited him. He discovered, much to his surprise, that she had already been considering the idea of becoming a Christian, and had actually been reading a Gideon Bible she removed from a hotel room. Marvin called Drew, who immediately came over to their house, and both Marvin and Martha received the Lord. Six months later, Marvin quit his job, sold his home, and went to study at a Bible college. Two years later, he appeared on our door step, asking what he could do to help. We helped him start a church in Pikeville, and provided financial support until the church could stand on its own feet.

The newsletter ministry also inspired a second out reach. We condensed the best parts of it into a one page flyer, which some of our people carried to parking lots as far away as Williamson and Pikeville. We realized that most of them would be thrown away and ignored, perhaps even add to the litter problem, but we figured that just one life saved for the Lord would make it worthwhile. Our efforts provoked great anger from the servants of the Enemy, just like our ministry on the Web, but we persisted. For years afterward, we learned about people who would never have come to Christ except for what they thought was a chance reading of a paper left by someone they never saw and never knew. There is no "chance" in the Lord's work, though, and He knew each life that would be touched, even if we didn't.