

Engaging Stories

of God's Grace

Summer
Edition



Eternal Truth



New Heart



God's Grace



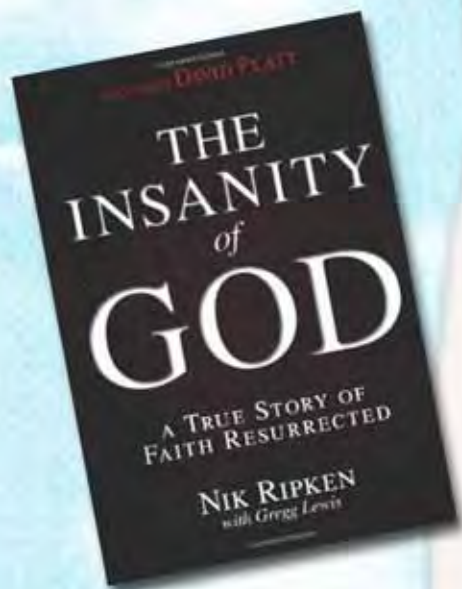
Authentic Living



Growing Relationships



Everyone Equipped



While on vacation I read an excellent book entitled "The Insanity of God" by Nik Ripken. I was undone by most of what I read. Pam can testify that I would read several chapters and then just sit and either weep or take time to absorb.

Having done relief work in Somalia, Nik and his wife sought to understand how Christians endure and flourish in repressive persecution. So he traveled to Russia, China, Southeast Asia, and many Muslim nations to interview people. Their stories were so compelling that when Nik had the opportunity to pull a larger group of people together in one country, they said they would not do more interviews with Nik unless he did them in front of all of them. They were finding great encouragement by hearing what God was doing in the lives of others.

That is what Engaging Stories is all about. In here we all get to listen in on each other sharing what God is doing in our lives. Our hope is that it will not only encourage you but also prompt you to tell your story so others can be encouraged as well. And if you say, "I don't have a story," just know that the Lord is waiting and wanting to write His story in your life too. Just come to Him and He will take care of the rest.

For His Glory,

Pastor Pat

Have you ever felt that the road in front of you was too steep to climb and the tasks were simply beyond your abilities? There have been many days in the last few years where I was weary. As my sons became adults, my husband and I sought God for guidance as we entered this next season of our life. My work as a nurse was always a ministry, but I felt God was calling me to do something more at this point in my life. So in the fall of 2006 I returned to the role of a student as God had called me to teach. Through the strength and provision of God, I just completed a fairly strenuous degree. I had moments when it simply seemed unattainable; I just could not find the time, energy or resources to do all that was being asked of me. It was not easy to juggle family, work and school, but God always provided what I needed at the moment I needed it. Many long days and nights, as well as missed family events led to that moment that I had longed for, when my efforts were recognized and the degree was awarded. It was an important moment to celebrate with family and friends. This degree is necessary for the path that God has set before me. It opened doors and opportunities I was previously denied.

As I heard the words acknowledging my successful completion of this last degree, God reminded me that this degree or accomplishment was not the end destination. He has much more for me to do. Those words I had longed to hear will pale in comparison to the words I most long to hear, "well done, my good and faithful servant." As rewarding as it can be to earn academic degrees or recognition, God has reminded me that these accomplishments are points on our journey and not the end destination.

Deborah Merriam



How God Revealed Himself to Me

I prayed 'Please let us know what you want for our family Lord. All things come from you. My two beautiful children come from you. Please help me to know if we should grow our family.' That night, my husband and I went out to dinner to celebrate our anniversary. My husband gave me a tiny wrapped box with beautiful earrings inside. I looked more closely - they were bird's nests! With eggs inside and there were three little eggs. It didn't dawn on me until later that this was a message from God to me. He had heard my uncertainty and answered my prayers.

A little while later, my husband asked me, quite out of the blue, if I had ever considered adoption. Would we want to adopt a child? My answer was like a box I had put away on a shelf many, many years ago that suddenly fell down into my lap, and ultimately, into my heart. My answer was 'yes!'

When we were first married I had a very strong urge to adopt or become foster parents after seeing a powerful photography exhibit of children waiting for families. With time, however, that dream faded into the background. We decided to start a family and it happened right away. So I didn't give adoption any more thought. Maybe I started to believe the unfortunate misconception about adoption. It is a shared cultural misunderstanding that adoption is only for couples who cannot conceive...a 'last resort' choice. In reality that could not be further from the truth. Adoption is simply another way for families to grow. Some children come to us by birth, others through adoption. We are all adopted children ourselves. As Christians we are adopted into God's family. How blessed we are to be so lovingly welcomed into His family!

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Looking back, I see how much God was at work in our lives. He placed people and lessons in my life that would help prepare me for this new journey: my boss who adopted her second child while I was working for her, Sister Paschalia who shared stories of children in Tanzania and their lives at her orphanage, my mother who has been a dedicated pro-life advocate for so many years, and a book by a Christian writer who herself was in the process of adopting. Despite all these 'clues' I still didn't get it until God worked to move my husband's heart. Steve was in his car on lunch break and heard a Focus on the Family radio program dedicated to adoption. He opened his heart to the idea of adopting that very day. Steve and my hearts were on the same page without us even knowing it. God is that good. God is so good, God is great.

Christina Nelson



Early last year in one of Pastor Pat's sermons, he asked everyone to pray for someone we know who needs Christ and see what happens. I have an extended family of over 35 people that either have never been to church or haven't attended in over 20 years. They are devoted to their families and children, but they fail to see their need for God. I decided to pray for each person by name. I prayed that our Lord would soften their hearts, and that He would bring people into their lives that would influence them (co-workers, neighbors, school friends, sports friends, etc.).

Last year, two children were invited by school friends to attend Awana at a church in their neighborhood—they have been going. A college student was invited to go to church with his girlfriend on Christmas Eve—he went. Some that never go to church and have never taken their children are asking for prayers for family members that have serious health concerns. Two people have attended church without being invited by anyone. One person when told we were praying for them (who usually responds sarcastically by saying "whatever") called to make sure I knew they were having surgery the next day...his way of asking us to pray for him! Like most families, there are many concerns. God is working in unexpected ways.

Invite people you know to come to an activity at EHWC, a children's program, a Men's Breakfast, a ladies' event and see what happens (if they are resistant to coming to "church"). Pray by name for those you love that God's will be done and that He will receive the glory. If you don't pray for your family, who will?

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WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Do you have a story you would
like to share?
Email stories@easternhillchurch.org

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