

MOTHER'S Wonder-Working WORDS

By Hegge Iverson

My little 100-pound mother was one of the greatest spiritual giants I've ever known. Why was she great? Because she learned to trust completely in God, and like him, to create wonders with her words.

I'll never forget the day the doctor told my sister Ruth, "I'm afraid we'll have to amputate your leg."

Seven years before Ruth had contracted tuberculosis of the bone in her leg and had to walk with crutches or a cane. After two operations to remove her ankle joint, she was told that she would never walk again without dragging her foot. For two years an incision drained constantly. Now the tubercular infection had spread above her knee and the doctor thought that amputation was the only answer.

But he hadn't reckoned with my mother. The evening she marched up the stairs to my sisters room and asked a startling question, "Ruth, do you want your leg healed, or do you want to lose it?"

"Of course I don't want to lose my leg, Mom!" Ruth answered.

So mother laid her hands on the infected leg and prayed. Then, lifting her head, she declared confidently, "Tonight Jesus Christ will heal you!"

The next morning my father was sitting in the kitchen having his coffee and doughnuts while Mother was bustling about preparing breakfast. He cocked his head as he heard someone walking around upstairs then coming jauntily down the staircase.

"Do we have company, Mom?", he asked. "Who's that coming down the stairs?"

Father stared unbelievably as Ruth walked briskly into the kitchen, normal as could be. Today Ruth looks back on many years of active missionary service in Japan.

My present ministry of counseling is built on what I learned from Mother. She used more authoritative declarations based on the word of God than almost anyone I've ever known, even though, she never had the opportunity of attending a Bible class.

Mother had what I called "long-arm Christianity". Like the giants of faith described in Hebrews, chapter 11, she saw God's promises, she was persuaded of them, she embraced them, and she saw them fulfilled.

Where did Mother get the unusual faith in God? It certainly did not come easily. Few women have taken more denunciation or more harsh treatment from their husbands than my mother did. As a counselor, I have heard about terrible situations in many homes, but Mother's plight was worse than any of these. She overcame obstacles that seemed insurmountable.

Mother was born in Utgaarden, Sondre Helgeland, Norway in 1879. Because she was needed on the family farm, she had to leave school at the end of the second grade. Each morning she cleaned out the barn and milked the cows. Then after helping her mother in the house, she worked in the fields all day. The slight girl was exhausted by the grinding labor.

My father, Carl Iverson, was born in Nordre Helgeland, Norway. Later he went to America, bought a farm, and when he was forty-one years old, returned to Norway to find a wife.

After courting mother for a short time, he told her, "I'll take you to America if you marry me." So Mother married Father when she was thirty, hoping to leave behind her life of endless drudgery.

However, Mother soon found that life in America was no different. She still had to muck out the barn and milk the cow early in the morning. When she finished the chores, she put on the coffee pot and called Father for his first breakfast of coffee and donuts. Then she made a larger breakfast, which father also ate heartily. Even after seven children were born, mother worked all day in the fields. When they were in bed at night she cleaned the house, baked the bread, and did the laundry by hand.

Mother had no modern conveniences. She had no indoor bathroom, no refrigerator, no telephone, no electrical appliances, no running water. For Saturday night baths she hauled water from the well, lugged it into the kitchen, and heated it on the wood stove. The youngest crawled into the galvanized tub first, and by the time the last one got in, the water was rather murky.

Mother seldom left the farm. She didn't go to the nearby town more than three or four times in thirty years. Attending the little Norwegian church was her only outside activity.

Mother didn't turn into a spiritual giant over night. When she found out that her husband was not only drinking heavily, but was also cheating on her, she was heartsick. Then she saw the children going the same way - cursing, drinking, staying out late - and she was shattered. I often heard her crying in hopeless frustration.

Slowly, slowly, she had to let God teach her the reason for her afflictions.

One day Mother cried out to the Lord, "Why am I in this terrible darkness?"

"So you will learn to know Me and trust Me," came the answer. *"I have wonderful things to teach you."*

As she read her Bible, Mother discovered some encouraging verses:

"Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness" (Ps. 112:4)

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. 9:2).

"He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death" (Job 12:22).

Excitedly, Mother went to her pastor to share what God was teaching her. "From what I've been reading in the Bible," she confided, "I think that Jesus Christ can take care of the problem I have in our home!"

"My dear woman," answered the pastor, "The Scriptures to which you are referring are not for you and me. They were for people living in Bible times."

“But I’m suffering!” Mother said as she wiped the tears away. “I don’t know what to do! I can’t cope with my husband; I’m too small and weak. He often gets drunk too. Pastor, what shall I do?”

“Leave him!” The pastor almost spit the words in disgust, as he crossed his legs and leaned back in his chair. “He’s hopeless. You have every scriptural right to leave him. If you continue living with him, hell ruin your family.”

“Thank you for your time.” Mother whispered. Stuffing her handkerchief in her pocket, she stumbled out the door and trudged home with a broken heart.

“I can’t leave him, Lord!” she cried. “That wouldn’t be good for the children. But oh, please show me what to do!”

Mother kept searching her Scriptures until one day she found another comforting verse:

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). In the Norwegian Bible, the verse is translated: *“He is able also to cure them to the uttermost...”* “Uttermost” means the “farthest point beyond the farthest point.”

She got so excited about this verse that she went back to her pastor.

“Pastor!” she exclaimed, “I’ve found that most wonderful scripture! God says he can cure my husband in spite of his awful condition. And he can help my children too!”

The pastor adjusted his glasses and glared at her.

“Listen, Mrs. Iverson, I’m asking you to stop putting your own meaning to the Scriptures. Since you have had no training, you don’t have the capacity to understand the Holy Scriptures.” He measured every word. The wrinkles in his brow deepened. “I’m asking you to stop this practice of the misinterpreting the Bible!”

But Mother couldn’t stop. She kept seeking the Lord and searching the Bible. One day she found a verse that gave her the key to victory: *“and God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”* (Gen. 1:31).

“Why,” Mother exclaimed, “God made my husband; He made my children. And He made them very good! I don’t see them being good now, but if God says they’re good, some day they will be!”

Mother almost skipped along the rough country road to the parsonage to show this wonderful verse to her pastor.

Instead of rejoicing with her, he scowled at her. “Mrs. Iverson,” he accused, with flushed face, “I can’t stand your tormenting me with these strange interpretations. Now, please go and don’t bother me again.”

Mother froze, too stunned to reply. It was as if her pastor had slapped her in the face. Then, picking up her Bible and purse with trembling fingers, she stumbled out of the room.

Her heart felt like stone. What had she done that was so terrible? Why had her own pastor acted like that? Suddenly hot tears stung her eyes as she thought, “Where

will I go to church now?" She neither spoke nor understood much English, and this was the only Norwegian church in the community.

"Oh Lord! What am I going to do?" she cried in agony.

Mother did the best thing she could do; every day she retreated to her bedroom and spent time with the Lord. She prayed, she read and searched the Scriptures.

Then, perhaps to keep her mind from wondering, Mother began reading her Bible out loud. In so doing, she discovered one of the greatest concepts I know of – the power of affirmative declarations – the miracle of the mouth.

As she read the first chapter of Genesis out loud, she suddenly realized that when God spoke, things happened. When he said, "*Let there be light,*" there was light. Whatever he said came into being. Later she saw the same thought in Hebrews 11:3, "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God...*" From the book of Revelation she learned that God is going to destroy the world by the words of his mouth (Rev. 19:15).

Mother took off her apron and put on her old shoes and sweater. It was time to go out and hoe. She took a deep breath of the clear morning air as she closed that kitchen door behind her. The dew was clinging to the grass in the shimmering crystals. The grinding work was still there, demanding to be done; her husband and her son still drank and cursed as much as ever. But somehow, after time spent with the Lord, and His Word, everything looked beautiful. Mother was changing.

"Dear God," she said as she moved the hoe deftly around the corn stalks, "I see now that Your words somehow make Your will and program happen. Now, father, how can I use my words to see Your will done in my family?"

In her simple reasoning, Mother began thinking that the mouth is the gateway to the stomach. "There must be a 'mouth' opening to the heart, too," she pondered. "Why, I see it now! The mind is the gateway to the heart!"

One day she read a verse, which suddenly became very meaningful to her: "*The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand*" (Isa. 14:24). "God **thought**, God **said**, and then what He said came to pass," Mother mused.

Mother began to understand that if God worked this way, she could too. Several verses of Scripture helped make this clear:

"*Thou also shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee*" (Job 22:28). "*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart*" (Rom. 10:8). "*We having the same spirit of the faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore I have spoken; we **also** believe, and **therefore** speak*" (2 Cor. 4:13).

Mother began exercising her faith with the animals. When dogs, pigs, or chickens got sick or hurt, she prayed for them and they got well. Our cow once was in terrible labor and we thought she would die. But Mother prayed in faith and the cow delivered her calf successfully.

Her rebellious children and husband still seemed unchanged. Then one day she read a scripture passage that threw new light on her problems:

“It is true that I am an ordinary, weak human being, but I don’t use human plans and methods to win my battles. I use God’s mighty weapons, not those made by men, to knock down the devil’s strongholds. These weapons can break down every proud argument against God and every wall that can be built to keep men from finding Him. With these weapons I can capture rebels and bring them back to God, and change them into men who hearts’ desire is obedience to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5 TLB).

As she reread and thought through these verses, she saw that there were four “I can’s” mentioned: Through God I can break down every stronghold of the devil in my family,” she thought. “I can break down every wall that they have put up against God. I can bring their rebellious thinking into captivity to Christ. Why, I can capture these rebels and bring them to God!” The prospect was exciting.

So Mother began using affirmative declaration of faith to deal with the problems in her family. Cam, the eldest son became an alcoholic while in the seventh grade and had to drop out of school. The older he grew, the more he drank. Night after night he stumbled home too drunk to do anything but fall into his bed in a stupor. Night after night Mother patiently prayed for him. Ignoring his vomit, she often got a can of oil from the garage and squirted it on his underwear declaring, “Jesus Christ makes you free!”

One day Cam became so deeply convicted of sin, that he went to Mother and cried in anguish, “Mom, I need God! What can I do?” She had the unspeakable joy of seeing Cam receive the Savior. Today Cam is an outstanding citizen of his community and has won many people to Christ.

Mother began to realize that Satan’s power can be broken by praising God:

“Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people, to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written; this honor have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord” (Ps. 149:6-9).

Instead of complaining and whining about her hard lot in life, Mother began praising God in the middle of it. As she spent time worshiping and praising in her secret chamber, she fell in love with Jesus in a new way. She adored Him, she told Him how much she loved Him, she poured out all the thoughts of her heart as she became intimate with Him.

After Mother learned that “death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21), she never again spoke negatively about her husband. Never once did I hear her criticize the pastor or the church or other people., But over and over again I remembered hearing her say quietly as she kneaded the bread or did the dishes, “Wonderful Jesus! I thank You for all that You have done for me. I love You. I praise You!”

When I was twelve years old, we were playing at the neighbor’s house when a storm blew up suddenly. A tremendous bolt of lightning hit a nearby tree and set it on fire. We were all scared and ran for home. My sister took the path, but my brother and I took the shortcut through the fence. Just as I grabbed hold of the barbed wire, another lightning bolt struck it and knocked me unconscious to the ground.

My brother took off across the fields like a scared rabbit to tell our parents. Father was very upset as he carried me home, and was sure that I was going to die. I was in a coma for days. But every day my mother walked confidently into my room, laid her hands on my unconscious body, and declared: "Jesus Christ makes you whole!" It wasn't long before I recovered.

When I was twenty-four years old, I was on my deathbed with tuberculosis of the lungs and spine. I had been sick for eight years, had been in three different sanitariums with thirty-six different doctors treating me. I was a living skeleton, with no hope of recovery. Mother came to visit as often as she could. She always put her little hands on my chest and declared in faith, "Hegge, Jesus Christ makes you whole!" One morning at two o'clock, I awakened with the awareness of the presence of God. My heart was truly hungry for him, so I asked Him to come into my heart, to forgive me of my sins, and to change my life. He not only did that, but healed my body as well.

Mother also depended upon the Lord for counsel. When I was about sixteen, my brother and I had many hives of bees. We belonged to a bee club, and our instructor said, "I think your bees are the best controlled in our whole group." We were so fond and unafraid of those bees that we would take the hives apart and let the bees crawl all over us. We were sure they wouldn't sting us; they were our friends.

One day my brother and I were working with our "pets" when a whole hive of bees swarmed out and attacked me. Suddenly I had several hundred stings all over my body. I walked six or eight steps and collapsed. In answer to my brother's screams for help, my parents rushed out and carried me unconscious into the house. Pulling off my clothing they found hundreds of bees still on me. We had no telephone, so father drove madly into town to get the doctor. But already I was beginning to turn blue.

Mother fell to her knees beside my bed. "Dear God," she sobbed, "what shall I do? He'll die before the doctor gets here! Lord, You are my Counselor!"

The answer came clearly, "Go get the cream from this morning's separator and give it to him." She ran to the pantry and got the fresh cream. Then she had the other children help prop me up in bed. She poured half the cream down my mouth and the rest all over me.

When the doctor came, there was cream everywhere.

"Lady, what in the world is this?" he questioned.

"It's cream." She replied.

"Who told you to use it?" he asked in astonishment.

Well, I knew that he would die before you got here," Mother explained, "so I asked God what to do and He told me to use cream."

"Have you ever read a medical journal?" the doctor asked next.

"Medical journal? I don't know what you are talking about," she answered, "what's that?"

"A book on medicine," he explained. "Has anyone ever told you that cream is the antidote for bee venom?"

"No, I didn't know that. I just did what God said," she replied.

The doctor knit his bushy brows together and peered at he keenly. “Do you mean to tell me that God gave you those instructions? Incredible! Humph. Well, at any rate you’ve saved the boy’s life. He would have been dead if you hadn’t given him that cream.”

In Mother’s quiet, secret life, God came to be wonderful. In her times of crises, God showed himself to be her Counselor. In answer to her simple prayers of faith, God demonstrated that He was the mighty God, the everlasting father (Isa. 9:6).

One day Dad called me long distance and said, “Mother is such a fantastic Christian! And I’ve been so brutal. I’ve struck her, maligned her, been nasty to her, cheated on her – and yet she loves me. She should have divorced me long ago, but she loves me and has stayed with me. Hegge, I’d like to be a Christian, too!” So I had the joy of leading my father Jesus Christ.

Now you know why I am in this counseling work. Using her concepts, we at Burden Bearers have seen god’s miraculous healing of homosexuals, alcoholics, and prostitutes. We have seen marriages mended, divorce proceedings canceled, and people brought to Jesus Christ.

But I am merely echoing the voice of the woman who preceded me, my little Norwegian mother.

THE BURDEN BEARER’S STORY

Burden Bearers was a Christ-centered organization that helped people discover and develop their full potential by sharing practical, life-changing concepts through counseling individuals and families, serving families as a licensed agency in adoption and foster care, providing training, developing resources and equipping others to do the same.

Burden Bearers was founded by Hegge Iverson in January 1964 in Seattle, Washington. The ministry grew from a one-man counseling operation to an organization with numerous affiliate offices in the United States and Canada serving thousands of people each month through counseling sessions, training seminars, cassette tapes and literature programs.

I was privileged to train under and work with Hegge Iverson from 1979 to 1986. He and his wife Lillian were my mentors and my friends.

Richard Loyd