

MY LORD AND MY GOD

I have just spent several weeks writing the essay entitled “No Other Gods.” All the time another thought was swirling in the back of my mind: that I should write about my God, the One I love because he first loved me. Peter gives us good advice that I want to follow: *In your heart set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. Do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).* That is the purpose of this essay, which I consider to be a sequel to “No Other Gods.” As a spring-board I will use the story of a fellow disciple named Thomas.

People react to the death of loved ones in different ways. Through the years, I have spent time thinking about Thomas, one of the twelve disciples that Jesus called to follow him. In particular, I wonder why he behaved as he did in the days after the death of Jesus. Here are some of my speculations, based on information found in John 20:19-29.

On the evening of the day Jesus rose from the dead, ten of the original twelve disciples were together in a locked room because they were afraid of the Jews. Judas was dead; only Thomas was missing when Jesus suddenly was with them in the room, showing them his hands and side, filling them with joy. Why wasn't Thomas with the others? Maybe he was not afraid like the others were. I certainly don't think he had just stepped out to buy food when Jesus came!

Or maybe Thomas was not with the others because he needed to grieve alone. He had certainly been crushed by the death of Jesus. How could his Lord be dead? The last thing he needed was a dead God! Thomas was so distraught that, when the other ten told him they had seen the Lord, that Jesus had entered the room through locked doors, he could not enter into their joy. Instead he said, “*Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.*” Now we know what Thomas needed, among other things – a God who could be seen and touched.

Jesus also knew what Thomas needed, and so he entered the room again through locked doors, while all eleven disciples were present. “*Peace be with you!*” Jesus said and then he addressed Thomas: “*Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.*” Thomas must have been stunned! How did Jesus know what he had said last week? Instantly Thomas recognized who Jesus was and called out, “*My Lord and my God!*” He didn't have to actually touch the wounds. Here before him was Someone who filled his needs; Someone who:

- was alive, though he had been dead;
- knew his name and personality;
- could see, hear, speak and be felt;
- had supernatural powers that could not be hindered by things like locked doors;
- could be present in an invisible form, hence hearing what Thomas had said;
- could bring peace to Thomas' troubled soul.

I'm sure Thomas also experienced a quick flashback of all the miracles he had witnessed and the teaching he had heard during the years he had been with Jesus. All doubt was gone now. Thomas would never forget the day when his choice was fixed: Jesus was his Lord and his God!

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And now I want to tell you about my Lord and my God. You will notice that I use the words God and Jesus interchangeably, as Thomas did, since I believe that Jesus was God in the flesh.

The first need I remember was for a God who could promise me a home in Heaven, One who would

stay with me and not leave me stranded somewhere along my life. In 1953 God flooded my soul with abundant assurance that he would never leave me or forsake me. I was impressed then – and now – that God knew what I was worried about and cared enough to address my sore spot. That's where I identify with Thomas when Jesus revealed that he knew about his doubt. Something very personal is going on in moments like these. All through the years God continued to make eternal security – the certainty of Heaven – a strong point of mine, including in a recent incident that I want to relate to you.

I love when I hear of or discover a new name for God. About five years ago my friend Geneive called me and said a new song had come to her mind that morning. Would I mind listening to it? Phone in hand, I sat down on the piano bench, manuscript book and pencil within reach. What a treat I got as Geneive sang a beautiful tune with such unusual words:

He is the Traveler, the distance Traveler, He's Jesus Christ, our King,
He doesn't rest, he doesn't rest.
He is the Traveler, the distance Traveler, He's Jesus Christ, our King,
He doesn't rest, so we are saved!

The Traveler: isn't that a beautiful name for Jesus? Especially the distance Traveler, the one who goes with us all the way as we travel the course laid out for us. I took the word "rest" to mean "stop": he doesn't stop. Of course, that is what gives us the assurance of our salvation. Our arrival in Heaven does not depend on our good behavior, but on who is our Lord and God.

Soon Geneive was hearing her song played on the piano; then it was safely written down. Now it would not be forgotten. And then Geneive threw me a challenge. "This is only the chorus of a song," she said. "You write the verses to complete it." I was about to leave to go to my exercise class, about fifteen minutes from home. By the time I got there, I had two verses and a tune in my head. Isn't God amazing? Before going in to exercise, I sat in the car and wrote down the tune and the following words:

1. I need someone to go with me – Someone faithful and true –
For I am prone to stumble and fall
And quit before the journey's o'er, and quit before it's through.
2. I know someone who'll go with me – Someone faithful and true.
He's gone this way many times before
And never stops until the journey's o'er, never stops until it's through.

At home I put the whole song together with the instructions that both verses were to be sung before the chorus. In the verses I pictured people admitting that they needed security that did not depend on themselves, but also who were not worried because they knew the distance Traveler was with them. If you are among those looking for assurance of salvation, let me recommend my God. No one with faith in him has ever failed to make it all the way Home, nor ever will.

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My God does not show favoritism. Acts 10 tells the fascinating story of how Peter learned this truth soon after the ascension of Jesus. God, through a vision, let Peter know that he was to enter the house of a Gentile named Cornelius and to present the message of salvation to all who were gathered there. He obeyed and found the house full of people with whom he never would have associated before the vision. All who were in Cornelius' house that day became believers in Jesus, and Peter learned a valuable lesson. He said, "*I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts those from every nation who fear him and do what is right.*"

Paul says in Galatians 3:28: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* No favoritism with God: no favorite nation or race or station in life, and no favorite

gender. The latter is so important to me. For years I felt hindered in my service for God because of my gender. What a relief to find out that the hindrances were coming from people, not from God! All are valued by God, welcome to join his faith family and be useful in his service.

My God also values all stages of life, too, including old age. No favoritism there, either. God can do his work through young children, as he did through Samuel, or through the old, as Moses, who was eighty when he was commissioned to bring his people out of Egypt. Anyone who has been marginalized by society for any reason needs to know that God is not like that; God is open to everyone. So should his people be.

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My God is a jealous God. In fact, jealous is more than a characteristic of God; it is also one of God's names. Exodus 34:14 says: *Do not worship any other gods, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.* Some people don't like to think of God as jealous, seeing that only as a negative quality. I see it as a sign of love.

In a marriage, people vow to love each other to the exclusion of any other lovers. What would we think if one partner were unfaithful and the other didn't care? I would say there wasn't much love in that marriage to begin with. The greater the love, the greater the feelings of betrayal if the vows are broken. We all know heartbreaking stories of separation and divorce in marriages we thought were sure to endure. God knew all about our sin natures when he wrote "*You shall not commit adultery*" as one of the commandments.

Throughout the Scriptures God uses the imagery of marriage to describe his relationship with his people. When his people worship other gods, he calls that adultery. Spiritually, we have left our first love and gone after other lovers. To understand why this stirs jealousy in God, we need to look at the quality of God's love.

In Ephesians 3 Paul prays that the believers might have the power to know how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. We learn here that God's love is bigger than human minds can comprehend, but by the power of the Holy Spirit we can – and should – make the attempt. Meditating on the Scriptures helps. For example, in Jeremiah 31:3 the Lord says, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.*" A new thought for me as I write this is that of courtship, that of God's wooing us with loving-kindness. I will enjoy that concept in the time to come! If God loves us with an everlasting love, could his love for us end? Surely not! Deuteronomy 33:27 says "*The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*" Those everlasting arms are filled with everlasting love. Have you ever felt yourself wrapped up in those loving arms? I have. Love such as that can sustain you even when earthly loves are crumbling.

Poets have written about the impossibility of exhausting the subject of God's love. My favorite is the third verse of a hymn written by F. M. Lehman, entitled "The Love of God":

Could we with ink the ocean fill and were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill and every man on earth a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.

O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure the saints' and angels' song.

I will limit myself to just one more Scripture about the love of God, a familiar verse so full of meaning and hope. John 3:16 says "*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" We cannot fully comprehend the meaning behind that little

word “so.” But we can know that the death of Jesus on the cross was the greatest love gift the world has ever known. From those who receive this gift, our jealous God expects loyalty. Sounds reasonable to me!

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My God is a lavish God. I like words where the very pronouncing of them seems to give the definition, and “lavish” is my favorite of these. When I say “lavish,” I think “Splash! Splash!” which is very close to its dictionary definition of “expending or bestowing profusely; expended or produced in abundance.” Extravagance is another word I associate with being lavish. When Mary broke open her alabaster box of expensive perfume and poured the contents on the feet of Jesus, she was being lavish in her show of devotion. Others saw her actions as wasteful, but Jesus did not. Our lavish God knew exactly what she was doing and commended her for it. She was just giving liberally, generously, thus reflecting the image of her Lord and her God.

For many years I have thoroughly enjoyed 1 John 3:1: *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* One of the features I really appreciated about the New International Version of the Bible when it came out in the 1970s was that the translators used exclamation points where appropriate. This verse has two of them, both appropriate! It is amazing that God would bestow his love on us so profusely that he would actually take us into his family, giving us his name, calling us his children. Bask with me in that extravagant love.

Another wonderful quality linked with the word lavish is found in Ephesians 1:5-8: *God predestined us to be adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

Grace: undeserved favor – what a commodity for God to lavish on us! God splashes his grace all over us, leaving us clean, redeemed, forgiven. And none of the fallout is a mistake; God lavished his grace on us with all wisdom and understanding. This fantastic plan whereby we would end up as God’s adopted children – even the part about the shed blood of the Jesus Christ – was all in place before people were created, and brought God pleasure. Doesn’t that fill you with awe?

To think about: what image would you use to depict God’s love and his grace and the way he uses it in our lives? I keep thinking of an endless supply of water, no restrictions required, no more being told to turn off the faucet, no wells running dry. Buckets and buckets of water; fountains of water in which to frolic; pools, lakes, rivers, oceans of water into which to submerge ourselves for refreshing recreation and restoration – only it isn’t water; it’s God’s love and grace!

My Lord and my God is lavish. Oh, how I appreciate and enjoy that truth!

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My Lord and my God is alive and can see, hear, touch, think, walk, talk, understand and guide – everything we can do, only on a much higher and different plane! To the writer of Psalm 94, this was obvious:

Does he who implanted the ear not hear?

Does he who formed the eye not see?

Does he who disciplines nations not punish?

Does he who teaches human beings lack knowledge?

Certainly our Creator can perform the functions of the organs he designed for us! We could add to the list of the Psalmist’s questions, much to our profit. For example:

Does he who designed the nose not smell?
Does he who formed the mouth not speak?
Does he who created the brain not think?
Does he who made our legs and feet not walk?

Isn't it fun to ponder questions with such easy answers? We must not think, however, that God needs body parts, as we do, to perform these functions. Can you imagine the size of the eyes or the number of eyes God would need to be able to see everyone at the same time, as well as to watch when the doe bears her fawn (Job 39:1)? Or the size of the ears that could hear everyone's cries of distress and everyone's songs of praise at once? God is Spirit and does not need eyes and ears to see and hear. But if picturing body parts such as God's hand holding ours (something I frequently do) helps us to grasp the presence of God, we are allowed to do that. God knows the limitations of our human minds and language, and often uses the imagery of body parts in the Scriptures when referring to himself.

What a contrast between my God and idols, as described by Isaiah and Jeremiah:

*They know nothing, they understand nothing;
their eyes are plastered over so that they cannot see,
and their minds closed so that they cannot understand.
They fasten the idol with hammer and nails so that it will not totter.
Like a scarecrow in a melon patch, their idols cannot speak;
they must be carried because they cannot walk.
They have no breath in them.
They are worthless.*

I can brag about my Lord and my God! One day *the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah: "I am the Lord, the God of the whole human race. Is anything too hard for me?"* (Jeremiah 32:26,27). The expected answer to that question, "Certainly not!", was clearly stated several hundred years later by the angel Gabriel who had just told the virgin Mary that she was going to give birth to a son named Jesus. When Mary asked how this was going to happen, Gabriel explained, and then added: *Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God* (Luke 1:36,37).

Yes, my Lord and my God is alive and can see, hear, touch, think, walk, talk, understand and guide. Nothing is impossible with him!

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My Lord and my God is creative – and beautiful! When I say "creative" I am not referring to God as the Creator of the universe and of the invisible world around us, though I believe with all my heart that this was his doing. Rather, I'm thinking of God as continually creative, always making things new (including people), never running out of ideas. I think of the skies, for example, as the canvas on which God paints new masterpieces every few minutes, day after day, night after night, all over the globe, using an amazing range of colors – without a palette or brush! And when I say "beautiful" I have in mind dazzling glory and splendor that far exceeds all the combined beauty of every lovely thing that God has created and is still creating, including all those beautiful skies.

I have heard that there are no two snowflakes alike. I don't know how this could be proven, and it really doesn't have to be. I think the exquisite design of the snowflakes would bear repeating many times over in various parts of the world. I also believe that God is so creative that he could easily make each snowflake different in design and still have an endless supply of ideas left over.

As I write this I am transported in memory back to my childhood. There I am, seated with my classmates in our school room getting ready for art class. The teacher passes sheets of white paper and pairs of

scissors down the rows of our desks. We are instructed to fold over our papers several times and then to begin cutting into the folded sheets a design of our choosing. When we unfold the papers, what a variety of snowflakes we find! No two are alike. Those snowflakes, made to decorate our classroom windows, reflected the creativity of our God, as do all arts and crafts.

Many years ago our landlady said to me, "Isn't it amazing the variety of faces God makes when he only has two eyes, a nose and a mouth to work with?" Of course we know there are many more parts to a face than those four, but Marie was right: it is astonishing that we should look different enough from each other to be recognized by face.

Besides our facial features, our skin coloring helps to distinguish us one from the other. Did you ever wonder where the races came from? They came from the fertile mind of our creative God! This is the way I see it: Whatever race God made Adam and Eve – and there is no clue given as to which that was – that is the race everybody was, through the flood in Noah's time and through his descendants, until the Tower of Babel incident recorded in Genesis 11:1-9. It was God's desire that people scatter and populate the whole earth. The Bible tells us what actually happened:

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

The people were rebelling against God and his will by deciding to stay together and develop fame for themselves. Perhaps, too, they were on the verge of discovering things that God does not want us to know. And then The God Who Sees stepped in and disrupted their plans.

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that they were building. The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

What a burst of creative energy that was: to design and dispense many new languages all at once! I can well imagine that in addition to the language change, physical appearances also changed, including the genes, so that the new skin colorings and other characteristics would be passed on through the generations to come. Thus when the people regrouped after God's creative work, they gathered with others who looked like themselves as well as those whose language they could understand.

So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel – because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Today as we mingle with others, let's enjoy the beautiful results of God's creativity in making such a variety of human beings. Hasn't God done all things well?!

My creative God shares his creativity with humans. In fact, God lavishes his creativity on us. Splash! Splash! And so we join the people all around us in using our creative gifts in practical and decorative ways, bringing joy to ourselves, pleasure to others and glory to God. With joyful anticipation and with a thankful heart, I will now recount the part that creativity has played in my life. I have felt such a connection with God when occupied creatively, including now as I write my essays.

As a bedspread here in Drum Hill, I use a lavender patchwork quilt that I made about twenty-five years ago for my daughter Marty's bed. I remember envisioning the design, using a mixture of solids, prints and checks; sewing the squares and rectangles together to make my dream come true; tying together

the three layers with lavender crochet thread; stitching the edges and then enjoying the finished product. What a sense of accomplishment!

Also at Drum Hill I have a quilt that is at least eighty years old. This one is white and is made of patches on which designs, such as horses, butterflies and children, have been embroidered. The patches were then sewn together and all the layers were quilted with the tiniest stitches I can imagine. This is the quilt that kept me warm all through my childhood. What makes it so special is that the embroidery was done by my mother and her sister Sarah when they were girls on the farm in Maryland and the quilting was done by my Grandma Hicks and Great-grandma King. My mother gave the quilt to me a few years ago and I feel the love of the generations when I use it.

Early in my married life I read a magazine article written by a woman skilled in all kind of crafts. She was aware that some people would consider her activities to be frivolous. To her critics, even if it were her own conscience, she would say, "I'm not wasting my time. I'm making a thing of beauty!" I often thought of that, and even said it, while using my hands creatively. And what a volume of creative work flowed through our house! Leo and I both made many gifts for others. Later, the children and I made things to sell, both from our house and at holiday bazaars. It was a productive family activity as well as fun!

Many people were involved in my interest in making "things of beauty," including my grandmothers. Grandma Ziegler made beautiful flower beds outdoors. It was a pleasure driving up her driveway! Indoors her specialty was African violets. Plants thrived under her care. And she was the one who supplied me with cloth, thread and hoops for embroidery. Grandma Hicks always seemed to have a frame set up in her living room, either for quilting or for hooking rugs. I watched her add colorful stencils to the chairs she had painted and observed how she renewed the surface of her worn kitchen linoleum. First she painted the whole wall-to-wall piece a neutral tan color. When that dried, she took three pans of paint (red, green and blue), put a round sponge in each and, on her hands and knees, began to randomly apply three colors of spots onto the tan background. No two spots were exactly the same design. The end result was quite pleasing to the eyes.

When we were getting ready to sell our house and move to Drum Hill, I had many boxes of craft supplies to dispose of. Much of it was shipped to a missionary in Ukraine for use in God's work there. Many memories were wrapped up in the materials I gave away then and at other times in previous years, including a lifetime of memories of the many children I had taught to make things with their hands. To God be the glory.

One of my most creative times has been the time between waking up and getting out of bed for the day. I like to have forty-five minutes to an hour for what I have labeled my "mulching time." I could just as easily have called it musing time, for then I am communing with God and absorbed in thought. This brings a question to my mind: why would people look for other muses when they can have God as their source of inspiration?

On Friday, March 28, 1997 I was having such a mulching time. I remember the day of the week because it was Good Friday; that evening we would be having our annual service commemorating the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus at The Community Church of Yorktown where I was serving as pastor. The service, which was already planned, was very much on my mind as I lay there looking at the tree branches outside my window. Suddenly a new thought concerning trees came to mind, a thought that was taking the form of a poem. I sat up, grabbed a tablet and pencil that I always kept nearby and began to write, amazed at what I was putting on paper, especially when the crucifixion inserted itself into the verses. I felt so close to my creative, beautiful Lord that morning as he splashed some creativity on me. I inserted the poem into the program that evening and now I am sharing it with you in this essay.

TREES

What season was it when you created trees, Lord?

Was it winter time, when everything is exposed –
Trunks, branches, limbs
thick and thin,
Every twig visible
and beautiful?

Or was it spring time, when trees are full of promise –
Buds swelling, sap flowing,
changing daily,
Blooming, fragrant
and beautiful?

Maybe it was summer time, when trees are full of leaves –
Green – so many shades of green!
Some with fruit, some with nuts,
All with shade
and beautiful.

Perhaps it was autumn, when leaves change their color –
First a tinge, then breathtaking beauty.
Such variety!
Leaves preparing to die
and beautiful.

Lord, you designed the trees
so we could use them
creatively.
We could cut them down, trim the wood
And make 'most anything, bad or good.
Houses, furniture,
paper to write upon –
Why, we could even make some beams
and form a cross
to hang you on.

Thank you, Lord, for dying on a tree –
for hanging there – willingly –
for me.
Creator, Lover,
God and King –
Redeemer, Friend,
my Everything –
Lord, you are beautiful!

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Verna Kwiatkowski

Music is another area of creativity that God has splashed on me. God put music into his creation right from the start by giving voices to the creatures he made. I'm sure Adam and Eve were able to sing as well as to speak. Animals have their distinctive sounds and birds their varied songs. The weather adds percussive sounds from raindrops hitting different surfaces, including windowpanes, to thunder, ranging from rumbling to ROAR! The wind, from gentle whisper to hurricane force, adds melody to the music going on all around us. Even the silence in nature, such as snowfalls or the stillness of summer days just prior to cleansing storms, are not completely quiet, but are full of pause and promise, much as rests in a music manuscript.

My church, my school, my piano teacher and later, a college professor, all had big roles in my early music training. But it was not until I started taking accordion lessons at age 29 that music became a major part of my life. Within a year I was teaching at the studio and before long, was also directing two accordion bands. Contests, concerts and recitals became staples in my life during the nearly ten years that I held that job. Most importantly, I started giving our children music lessons when they were young. This led to the Kwiatkowski family orchestra, consisting of our five children and me, with Leo researching our music and serving as our announcer. We played mostly hymns, which I arranged for our various instruments, and gave many concerts in various places, often in conjunction with Leo's preaching. Our orchestra ended in 1976 when our oldest son, George, went away to college. That was one year before my music career took off in a different direction.

In November, 1977, the first Scripture song "came to me" while I was reading the Bible. I recognized immediately that God was having me learn the verse through music because it was a message I needed to hear. Over the next 25 years God spoke to me through his word by giving me over 500 Scriptural and devotional songs, all handwritten in notebooks. I used my songs in several churches and in Bible studies. When people would say they should be published, I thought of the abundance of new worship and Scripture songs that have come into public use in the past 30 or 40 years and wondered if mine were really necessary in published form. I decided that my beautiful, creative, lavish God could give me a huge amount of songs just to develop my spiritual life and those of the people I teach, and do the same to someone else just down the street. Rather than publish them, my job was to write them down and meditate on them. And I did.

Sometimes songs would come to me in the middle of the night. Once I woke up suddenly and found the words "Underneath, underneath, underneath are the everlasting arms" running through my head. The tune was beautiful, part of it similar to a folk song I had recently heard. I got out of bed, crept to the piano, quietly picked out the tune and wrote it down. I realized that this was only a refrain, so I looked up the reference and found: *The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms*. That certainly was a favorite verse of mine. Soon I had a tune for the verse to go with the refrain. Appropriately, the melody for the verse elongated the words "underneath" and "everlasting." That's one thing I can say about the Scripture songs: the tunes fit the words. Of course! My creative God is the author of them both!

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). With this powerful introduction John starts his magnificent account of the life of Jesus. With the same statement I want to introduce my beautiful, creative Lord and my God in the areas of the spoken and written word. In both, God is the Word with the capital "W." There is no higher speaking or writing than what God has done, and is still doing. Hence any aspiring speaker or writer would do well to study God's masterpiece, the Bible, as well as to meditate on God himself, including the various ways he speaks. I have done both; now I find within myself an inexhaustible supply of inspiration and ideas, like a bottomless well that will never run dry, even in eternity. I have already stopped speaking orally and one day I will stop writing, but it will not be for lack of ideas. When the time comes, I will continue to wallow in the richness of my thoughts but let others do the speaking and writing as they are moved by the Holy Spirit of God.

God spoke and the worlds came into being. God said, *"Let there be light," and there was light.* How

beautifully creative – as well as powerful – those words were! Have you wondered what they sounded like? Just as amazing as the fact that we can know each other by face is the fact that we can be recognized by voice. What a range of voices we humans have! Yet each one is limited in some ways: by the shape of our mouths, the size of our vocal cords, even by brain activity, as in my case.

God, of course, has no limitations at all; God doesn't even have a mouth! The sounds God made when creating the universe could have been softer than the softest whisper ever heard on the earth, softer than the falling of a snowflake. They could also have been louder than all the combined sounds ever produced in the world. Or they could have been quite ordinary. While we don't know the volume, we do know there was authority in those words. When God speaks, things happen! Jesus, the Word of God incarnate, did not have to rant and rave for people to realize that he spoke with authority. God's written Word, the Bible, also speaks with authority. That Book is a living Book. If we listen, we will hear God's voice as we read. It's an awesome experience!

All of the above was written in Drum Hill in the fall of 2005 and served as a series of sermons for the Friday night worship services. It is now mid-March, 2006 and I am at Sky View. I want to bring to completion several essays that I could not finish before I moved, beginning with this one.

The first night that George used a portion of this essay as a sermon, he remarked to the congregation that he felt this subject would go on for a long time. Although I couldn't say so, I disagreed. My only intention was to mention the particular characteristics that made God special to me, as I had already written about the general attributes of God. I thought perhaps four or five pages would be enough for me to respectfully give you a reason for the hope that is within me. I should have known better! The Lord has been my personal God and the chief subject of my meditation for more than fifty years. I will have to stop this essay rather than try to exhaust the subject.

As I read the section about God as creative and beautiful, I wondered if I should eliminate much of the material, especially the stories about our family's involvement with creative projects. I decided to leave most of it as originally written. If you are also a creative person, my stories may be there for you. In the past couple days one more anecdote has surfaced in my memory. When our family was making craft items for sale, I dreamed one night about a patchwork pincushion with nine small squares on one side and a single piece of fabric on the other. I considered that God had given me that idea and had fun making them. They sold well. God cares about all the details of our lives!

In my notes I found this additional material: "My Lord and my God does not change. Through the prophet Malachi, God makes a very clear statement: *I the Lord do not change*. I love Hebrews 13:8 also: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*. My Lord and my God is so wonderful that there is nothing I would want changed. You can't improve on perfection!" Amen!

I will follow my original plan to conclude with a short section in which I extol God as my Solid Rock Foundation, made possible because God does not change. I like the imagery from the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. Years ago I wrote a song with these words:

Be my Solid Rock Foundation, my Solid Rock Foundation,
Be my Solid Rock Foundation, O Lord.
I don't want a sand foundation, a sinking sand foundation.
Be my Solid Rock Foundation, O Lord.

And God answered my request! Praise his name! Now you know about my Lord and my God. What makes God special to you?