



# Abundant Living Ministries

*Encouraging Christian Living since 1978*

June 2019

**Hear, my son, your father's instruction,  
and forsake not your mother's teaching,  
for they are a graceful garland for your head  
and pendants for your neck. Proverbs 1:8-9 (ESV)**



**my parents, Norm & Betty Charles**

I am so blessed! I had parents who instructed and taught me in the ways of the Lord! I remember, eight years old, walking down the hallway to my parents' bedroom, knocking gently on their door and asking them to pray with me. I asked God to forgive me of my sins and asked Jesus to "live in my heart."

Dad and Mom's early family life was marked by serious physical illnesses, financial debts, and emotional stresses. They consulted with specialists, drank carrot juice, purchased different pots and pans, drank tea from India. Nothing brought relief. Only more despair! UNTIL they cried out, with the most sincere prayer of their lives. "Father, You have never had all of me. I am now totally Yours! I will go wherever, say whatever, and do anything that You want!"

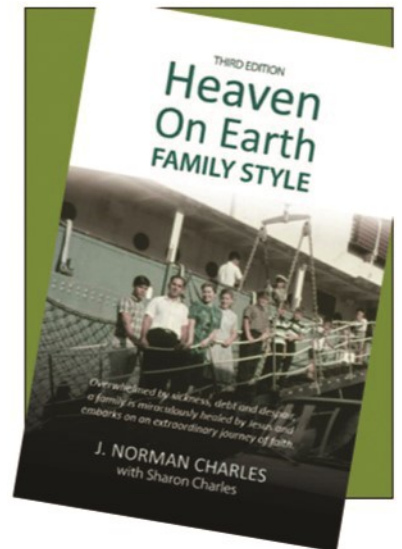
That was the start of their new life. I was five years old. In the years following, I saw so many amazing things happen that could not be explained other than, "That was an act of God!" I saw first-hand so many of God's unexplainable deeds that I became... and remain... convinced of God's goodness, His power, and kindness! He is truly God of the impossible!

About 40 years ago (1980), Dad decided to write their life story. So dramatic was God's involvement in their lives, that he dared to title the book, *Heaven on Earth, Family Style*. After four or five printings, the book went out of print 10 years ago.

WELL... I am very happy to tell you that a THIRD EDITION of that original book has just been released (full details are available on the back panel of this letter).

This is Dad's story of encountering Jesus in a powerful way, regaining health and wholeness, and beginning an incredible adventure of faith with his wife and family. As compared to the earlier editions, this Third Edition has a new final chapter which references Dad's and Mom's passing (January 1994 and February 2007) and presents information on the counseling ministry they founded, Abundant Living Ministries.

This amazing story of God's power is just as encouraging today as it was, when written, 40 years ago. And I can remind you of one of Dad's favorite verses, Hebrews 13:8, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*. In other words, Jesus does the same things today as he did in the 50's... and the same things He did as recorded in the gospels! He is STILL God of miracles! God of the impossible!



Be encouraged and blessed by this book!

John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)



# When the Stars Come Out

**Question:** My family has become a group of bickering, irritable people. We are quick to snap at each other when something doesn't go our way and we angrily debate the smallest, most petty issues. It is not a pleasant environment at all! And it definitely doesn't seem like the way a Christian family should operate. Any suggestions for getting out of this rut?

**Response:** I grew up in a big city in Canada. I remember how, as a child, I loved sitting on our porch looking up at the stars. My father would point out the different constellations and even encouraged me to do a school project about stars. Stars shining in a dark night were beautiful to me!

Your question brought this memory back, because the Bible says that we all can be like stars. It also warns of two habits that will cloud the believer's light. Philippians 2:14–16: “Do everything without *grumbling* or *arguing*, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will *shine among them like stars in the sky* as you hold firmly to the word of life.”

It sounds like the members in your household have “lost their shine” by getting into a rut of grumbling or arguing. Grumbling (complaining, griping, fussing, whining or bellyaching) kills joy in an individual's life and his/her gloomy attitude can easily rub off on others. Some people seem to never be happy about anything. Even if

something is good, they think it could be better.

A negative old lady was watching her little granddaughter playing in the water at the beach. All of a sudden, a huge wave came crashing over the little girl. When the water receded the little girl was nowhere to be seen. She had vanished. Her grandmother raised her fists to the sky and screamed, “Lord, how could You? Haven't I been a good person? Haven't I given money to the church and tried to live a life You would be proud of?”

A minute passed and another huge wave crashed on the beach. As the water receded, the little girl was standing there, smiling, splashing around as if nothing had ever happened. A loud voice boomed from the sky, “I have returned your granddaughter. Are you satisfied?” The old woman responded, “But where's the hat she was wearing?” ☺

Folks grumble about the weather, aches and pains, politics, high prices, not getting their own way, etc., etc. Such whining and fussing extinguishes their light.

“Do everything without *grumbling* or *arguing*, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will *shine among them like stars in the sky* as you hold firmly to the word of life.”

Philippians 2:14-16

The second “light-stealer” that God warns against is arguing (disputing, fighting, feuding, bickering, etc.). Some people just seem to enjoy picking a fight... and of course once they start, they don’t ever want to lose. So the arguing can go on and on.

We met a couple many years ago who at that time had been married over 40 years. We congratulated them on being married for so many years. The husband responded, “Well, thank you, but it has been 40 years of fighting!” They proceeded to tell us about events that occurred early in their marriage. They were still upset about these things and frequently fought about them.

This is not what God wants. Grumbling and arguing are like big black storm clouds that hide our light as His stars.

Fortunately God gives the solution to both of these star-darkeners in his “word of life.” The solution to grumbling is gratitude. I Thessalonians 5:18 says, “In everything give thanks...” Notice it instructs to give thanks “in” everything, not “for” everything. Every person will encounter many bad or difficult situations during their lifetime. God doesn’t ask His children to thank Him for things that are not part of His plan... but He says we can choose to have a thankful attitude even the midst of the challenge.

Like the character Pollyanna in the children’s book, we would all do well to begin playing “the glad game.” Challenge your family members and yourself as well, to identify something for which to be thankful even in tough situations. Gratitude is God’s instant antidote to grumbling.

The solution to arguing is making peace, being agreeable, trying to settle disputes, not making them worse. There is a proverb that says, *A gentle answer quiets anger, but a harsh one stirs it up (Proverbs 15:1)*. Another says, *Kind words bring life but cruel words crush a man’s spirit (Proverbs 15:4)*. Jesus Himself encouraged us to be *peace-makers (Matthew 5:9)*! God wants His children to pro-actively work to quiet arguments and restore harmony. This happens most effectively when we choose to speak positive words in a pleasant tone of voice. This requires a decision to let go of resentment and forgive. Granted, this does not come naturally to human beings. But it is absolutely possible when we choose to listen to the quiet voice of God’s Spirit that whispers in our minds how to respond in the heat of the moment.

When your family members begin to argue, call a time out and then discuss what specific sentences would be helpful to calm the riled emotions. Ask what Jesus might say in a similar circumstance. Encourage each one to practice these statements. Give affirmation and/or rewards when you see children choosing to halt fights with soothing words that promote peace. When a family develops God’s peace-making skills, the arguments will dwindle.

When I was a teenager I worked one summer at a Christian retreat center in northern Ontario. One evening our staff supervisor led all of us workers on a hike through the dense forest. With flashlights, we wound



our way through trees, up over hills and finally arrived at a hidden lake, deep in the woods. We settled ourselves on blankets and then our boss told us to turn off our flashlights. What I saw that night were the brightest stars I had ever seen... in the black of that night, the light of the stars was breathtaking!

We live in dark times, spiritually. Many of us are in the midst of some kind of “dark” situation. And grumbling and arguing only worsen the darkness. However, as my father-in-law used to say, “the darker the night, the brighter the light shines!” Philippians 2:14-16 encourages us to “hold firmly to the word of life.” When we apply God’s life-giving principles... giving thanks, making peace... they help you and me, God’s stars, shine more brightly in a dark, dark night. And that is a sight our world is longing to see!



Written by Sharon Charles

## What if...

- **You lived with unbearable pain** from an injured back after falling 36 feet, headfirst, from a farm silo?
- **Your children were confined to bed** with debilitating illnesses?
- **Your medical bills** had plunged you hopelessly into deep debt?
- **Your spouse** was paralyzed by depression and anxiety?

*In Heaven on Earth, Family Style, Norm shares the amazing story of how he and his wife encountered Jesus in a powerful way, regaining health and wholeness, and beginning an incredible adventure of faith.*

*Once dairy farmers from rural Pennsylvania, Norman and Betty Charles and their family spent ten years as missionaries in Brazil. Returning to Lancaster County, they launched Abundant Living Ministries, a Christian counseling ministry which helps families and individuals discover and apply God's life-changing principles.*

**NOW AVAILABLE ON AMAZON:**

**\$12.99 paperback**  
(plus tax, shipping & handling)

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(plus tax)

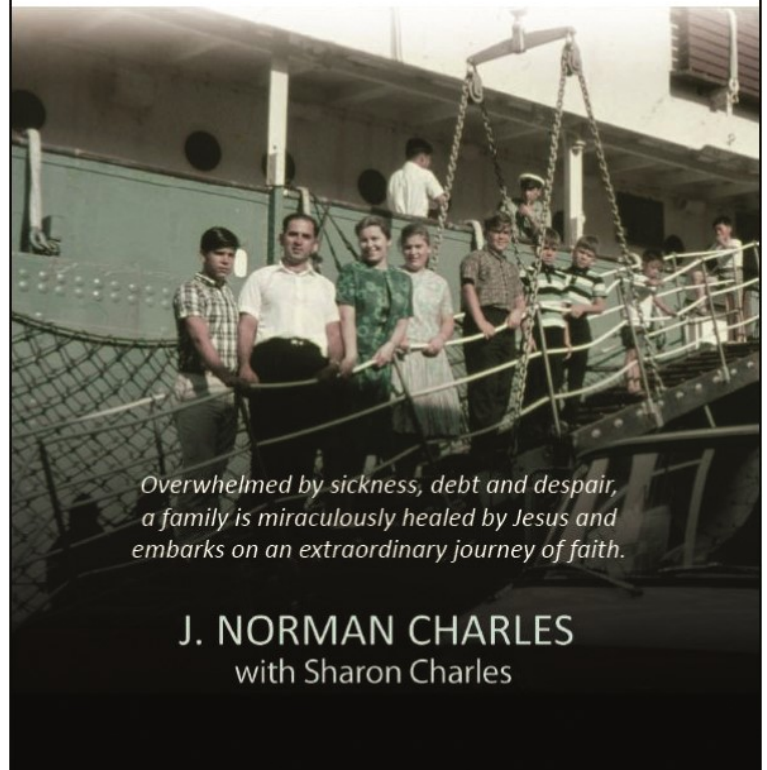
**ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE ALM OFFICE:**

**\$11.00**  
(plus shipping & handling)

**AVAILABLE NOW!**

THIRD EDITION

# Heaven On Earth FAMILY STYLE



*Overwhelmed by sickness, debt and despair, a family is miraculously healed by Jesus and embarks on an extraordinary journey of faith.*

**J. NORMAN CHARLES**  
with Sharon Charles

## Lay Christian Counselor Training

**6 Monday evenings: Oct 7-Nov 11, 2019**  
**7:00-9:00 PM**  
**\$120 per person or \$150 per couple**

Designed for those who wish to be more effective people helpers within the Christian community.

Please register no later than September 20th by calling the ALM office or emailing Chris at [info@AbundantLivingMinistries.org](mailto:info@AbundantLivingMinistries.org)

## Open Arms

Childbirth Class

Five Consecutive Thursdays

**July 11 - August 8, 2019**

Taught by an experienced childbirth educator, this class covers the same information offered in a hospital course, but includes a distinctively-Christian perspective. You will meet and connect with other expectant couples and gain many practical helps as you prepare for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course. Please register by contacting the ALM office.

# Contact Information

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