



Abundant Living Ministries

Encouraging Christian Living since 1978

November 2023

Dear friends,

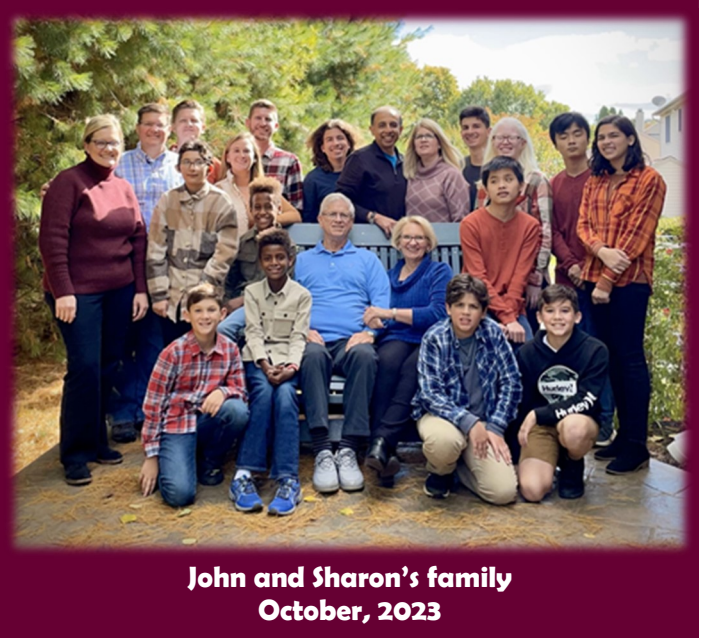
Happy THANKSGIVING to all. And we sure do have a lot to be thankful for, don't we!

In last month's letter, I reminisced about the early years of ALM as we had just passed its 45th year of ministry. I don't think I mentioned in that same letter that, also in September, Sharon and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. Sharon remembers that, as a young person, she thought couples married 10 years were "old people."

We are blessed with four children (seven, actually, including the three who went to heaven even before their natural births). Three of our four have married, further blessing us with 12 grandchildren, ranging in age from nine to 19.

An interesting side note - our oldest child (Monica) and her husband have seven of our 12 grandchildren... AND they are ALL TEENAGERS right now. (Three were adopted which explains why they are so close in age.) When we visit their home in Maryland, it's as though we're walking in to a church youth group!

Sharon and I are thankful, grateful, humbled, absolutely amazed as we consider God's kindness toward us... His direction and provision! As we are reminded in *James 1:17* that **every** good gift "comes from above," we recognize that **GOD IS THE ONE TO WHOM WE SHOULD PRIMARILY EXPRESS OUR THANKS ON THANKSGIVING DAY!**



**John and Sharon's family
October, 2023**

At the same time, we are also very thankful for the many individuals (you, for example) who have encouraged us personally, prayed for those of us who serve in the ALM ministry, and contributed finances to support the ongoing counseling services. THANK YOU so very much!

I think of the old hymn, "**Count your many blessings, Name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done!**" YES, HE has done great things!

May we EXPRESS our thanks to God and others!
John Charles (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)



Open Arms Childbirth Class

Four Consecutive Thursday evenings 7:00 - 9:00pm
January 4 - 25, 2024

Covering the important information offered in a hospital course, *Open Arms* adds a distinctively-Christian perspective. You will enjoy meeting other expectant couples as you prepare for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course.

Register by contacting the ALM office.



EXTENDING the table

Is there room for one or two more at your Thanksgiving table this year? Could you reach out to bless someone you've never met or don't know well? Here are some suggestions for expanding your holiday celebrations beyond your current circle of friends and family.

THE GUESTS

International students – What an opportunity for Christian families to touch another part of the world with the love of Jesus. Contact a local college/university and ask how you can post an invitation with the campus international student organization.

Elderly - Bring a widow or widower to your home. Or, take a meal to a "shut-in" who rarely receives visitors.

Refugees - There may be immigrants in your own community who are feeling very lonely. They've lost everything. If they are reluctant to join your family, consider giving a monetary gift, or Thanksgiving foods so they can enjoy a special meal.

Neighbors - As they join you, begin building a friendship through which you can model Christ's love.

Families with special-needs members - These families will quite possibly bless you more than you bless them.

THE GATHERING

Guests who don't know you well may feel nervous about socializing with strangers. Keep these tips in mind:

- **Explain ahead of time** what they can expect at your gathering... approximate size of the group, whether it is a formal or casual setting, the time they should arrive and when they will be free to leave. Find out if there are special food allergies/restrictions. If the guest is not a Christian, explain that there will be a prayer before the meal (plus any other Christian traditions you typically include).

- **Assign friendly family members** to be with your guests at all times... perhaps someone to chat *before* the meal, another *during* the meal, and another *after*.

- **Have a few toys available** to occupy young guests.

- **Officially introduce your guest(s)** to the entire group, but don't require them to say anything.

- **Provide your family with some questions** they can pose to jump-start conversation with the guest(s).

- **After the event**, call your guests or drop them a note, telling them how glad you were they joined you.

This Thanksgiving could be the start of some wonderful, new God-given friendships. Remember **Hebrews 13:2...Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.**

As you extend your table and your heart, you may discover that love is extended back in a measure you never expected!

Written by
Sharon Charles



Everyone loves a good story...especially at Christmas! **Christmas Tales that Warm the Heart Volumes 1 and 2** (each with 12 stories)

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON

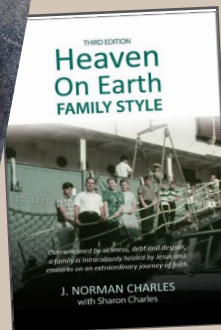
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