

Though
Trials
May
Come

Stories of God's Faithfulness

Dedication

To those faithful ones,
all over the world, who are
standing courageously
for Christ.

Introduction

When I was a young boy, there was a TV program called *Naked City*. At the end of each episode, the narrator intoned: *“There are 8 million stories in the naked city. This has been one of them.”*

While Alliance Defending Freedom may not have 8 million stories to tell since the launch of our ministry in 1994, I can look back over those years and think of a few hundred that have inspired me, and all of us on the ADF team. We’ve had the privilege of working with so many clients whose lives are testimonies to God’s grace and faithfulness. We have come to love and admire these men, women, and children for their steadfast faith in times of great personal difficulty.

These courageous believers are present-day embodiments of the words of James: *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,*

for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4).

This book is made up of the testimonies of individuals who took a stand for Christ when their faith was challenged – people who persevered, and emerged with their faith stronger than before. It has been an honor, a blessing, and an encouragement to serve such great men and women, and to know them as brothers and sisters in Christ who are fighting the “good fight” for the faith.

This book is our gift to you, and it is our hope and prayer that these testimonies will encourage you just as they have encouraged us. These stories are far more than just legal cases. They tell of God’s faithfulness toward those who have been faithful to Him. These are stories of ordinary people – small business owners, medical professionals, public servants, students, and others – who courageously stood for Christ when the trials came, regardless of the temporal result. Each has learned that the words of Deuteronomy 31:6 are true: *“Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”*

There are many stories in addition to these, but it would take a much longer book to cover all of them. But this small sampling is intended to demonstrate God's faithfulness, and prompt you to consider how God can use you to encourage those who stand – and to help you stand as well, should trials come.

Thank you for your faithful prayers and support, which make it possible for us to defend outstanding individuals like these. Because you have come alongside us in this vital work, we are all more free to enjoy our God-given gift of religious freedom, and most importantly, to grow together in Christ.

God bless you, dear friends.

Alan E. Sears
President, CEO, and General Counsel

John 15:5

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“I realized I had a choice to make: apologize for speaking the truth, or suffer the worldly consequences for speaking the truth.”

Kelvin Cochran

Kelvin Cochran

Fire Chief

When Kelvin Cochran's career as one of the nation's most acclaimed firefighters flamed out overnight ... it was clearly a case of arson.

Raised in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Louisiana, Cochran rose quickly through the ranks after becoming a firefighter, acquiring a national reputation along the way. He'd only been Fire Chief of Atlanta for a year when, in 2009, President Obama chose him to serve as U.S. Fire Administrator – the highest post in his profession.

One year later, though, at the request of Atlanta's mayor, Cochran resumed his leadership of that city's firefighters. In 2012, he was named national Fire Chief of the Year.

All the acclaim went up in smoke two years later, when Chief Cochran wrote a book expressing his religious beliefs. In a brief section on sexual morality, he echoed the

Bible's teaching that God created sex for marriage between a man and a woman, and that sex outside this context – including homosexual behavior – is contrary to His will.

Although the book had nothing to do with his work, the city fired him, citing his comments on homosexual behavior. An ensuing investigation proved conclusively that Chief Cochran had never discriminated, or been accused of discriminating, against anyone based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.

Still, the city stood by its decision, saying that Chief Cochran had to be fired to show “the need to tolerate diverse views.” Cochran asked Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys to represent him in a lawsuit against the city.

When I was called into Atlanta City Hall because of the biblical views expressed on marriage and sexuality in a book I wrote for Christian men, I realized I had a choice to make: apologize for speaking the truth, or suffer the worldly consequences for speaking the truth.

From the standpoint of worldly consequences, I have lost my childhood-dream-come-true, fairytale

career. I have been publicly vilified by false witnesses and public officials who have spoken very cruel words. I have lost close friends and colleagues, all as a result of my stand for biblical truth. But Jesus promised that whatever we lose for His name's sake shall be restored one hundredfold in this life.

In Psalm 27 there is a promise that says, *“He shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies around about me”* (verses 5-6). That promise is unfolding daily in my life.

“I am not
the first
government
official to
experience
persecution.”

From the very outset of this fiery trial, God has made His presence known. The immediate and overwhelming support from my pastor and church family, the Georgia Baptist Convention, and Christians all over North America has been evidence of the manifest presence of God. His presence has ordered my demeanor and choice of words under very difficult circumstances.

God promised that He would be a very present help in troubling times, and I've experienced immeasurable peace and calm that can only be attained in His presence.

My case is a reminder that God is as faithful today as He has shown Himself in the Holy Bible.

I am not the first government official to experience persecution. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faithful government officials in Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was a faithful government official in Babylon under King Darius. I was a faithful government official in the City of Atlanta who, like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel, stood against an unjust government decree. God always prepares His children for persecution, and He has an established track record of being undefeated when coming to the aid of faithful government officials. There is no need to fear persecution when we stand for Christ.

Though there are worldly consequences for standing for our Lord and biblical truth, there are also kingdom consequences. And the kingdom consequences are always greater than the worldly consequences. Sufferings for standing glorify God publicly ... and the child of God who endures will experience

blessings exceeding abundantly above all we may ask or think, to His glory.

– Kelvin Cochran

I've had the privilege of listening to Chief Cochran share his story, and I cannot help but think that he was handpicked by God for this trial. As he shared his childhood of extreme poverty and the racism he was subjected to while working up the career ranks, I quickly realized he was no stranger to adversity.

Clearly, the Lord has prepared him for this moment in time – a time of mounting assault on our religious liberties. Chief Cochran exemplifies what the Christian walk should look like through trials, and he demonstrates that despair is not an option for the Christian. Only hope is.

Romans 5:3-5 reminds us that "... we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

I am encouraged by Chief Cochran's faith, a faith

that is fortified in God's Word. I am encouraged by his heart, a heart that remembers God's Word. I am encouraged by his stand, a stand that is firm and righteous for Christ.

– Valerie Johnson, ADF Ambassador

“**D**o nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Philippians 2:3-7 is a verse I memorized in high school, and it's become my life verse. It's something I aspire to do, and I see that being modeled by Kelvin.

I was struck almost immediately by Kelvin's humility, and his calm and assured demeanor. He is always truthful. His integrity and his willingness to sacrifice everything that he believes in has been a great example for me. People give a lot of lip service to saying they'll do that, but Kelvin has been a great role model for me personally, to say, "Look, there may come a time I may have to sacrifice something dear to me, like my career, and I need to be ready for that."

It's one thing to take a stand, one thing to say what you

believe, but when you know that's going to cost you your job ... that's another thing altogether.

I really count it a privilege to do this kind of work for a living, to help people like Kelvin and keep the doors open for the Gospel.

– Kevin Theriot, ADF Attorney

Chief Cochran's case is ongoing, and ADF will stand with him throughout what could be a lengthy battle. A federal court has ruled that his lawsuit can go forward against the City of Atlanta.

☞☞ He shall set me
high upon a rock.
And now my head
shall be lifted up
above my enemies
all around me.☞☞

Psalm 27:5-6

“I remember sitting there, knowing that no matter how it all turned out, it would be all right. We, as a family, had been obedient to God and it was all in His hands.”

—Katie Ayers

Katie Ayers

Student

Most 10-year-olds, with Christmas around the corner, are wishing, dreaming, and conspiring to get that certain magical something they desperately want to find wrapped and waiting beneath the tree. But Katie Ayers is made of different, wonderful stuff.

With Christmas coming, all she could think of was the children's Christmas party at her church, and how many of her friends at her Pennsylvania school – friends who didn't really know about Jesus – she might persuade to come to the event.

So, she made invitations for everyone in her class, tucked them into her schoolbag, and was handing them out before class when her teacher stopped her to ask if Katie had permission from the principal to do that. Katie didn't realize she needed permission – she knew several of her classmates had handed out invitations to birthday parties and soccer games without having to get anyone's okay.

Embarrassed, she submitted her invitation for approval. That night, Katie's parents noticed that something was bothering her; she was not the excited child who'd left for school that morning. They were surprised to hear what had happened – and even more astonished a week later when the principal sent a note to say no, Katie could not hand out the invitations. By then, the party was too close at hand for most of her friends to make it, anyway.

Fired up by their daughter's disappointment, her parents scoured the Internet and happened upon Alliance Defending Freedom, whose attorneys told them they had grounds for a lawsuit. After a good deal of prayer, the Ayers decided to go through with the suit – for Katie's sake, and for a lot of other children's, too.

It was a very difficult decision for me, whether to just let it go or to look at other options. But as our family took our time, truly seeking God's will, it became clear to all of us that we had to take a stand. It is always our calling as Christians to reach out to others with love and to invite those around us to know Jesus.

I was initially worried about what my teachers and classmates would say to me (and about me), and was

dreading the stares, whispers, and comments that I thought would be made. But I took that to the Lord as well, and God gave me an incredible peace about the whole situation. He also gave me confidence, which helped me face my peers and instructors. I realized that, like Paul says in Romans 8:31, it doesn't matter what anyone says about me. *“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”*

When we went to the courthouse and had to face the school district superintendent, the attorneys, and the relentless questions of the media, I really couldn't see how we would defeat

“I really couldn't see how we would defeat the giants that faced us — it was overwhelming.”

the giants that faced us – it was overwhelming. But I remember sitting there, knowing that no matter how it all turned out, it would be all right. We, as a family, had been obedient to God, and it was all in His hands.

As the court hearing proceeded, God's favor became clear, and I began to realize that we might win after all!

This journey has definitely shaped my faith into what it is today. In this situation – standing up against my teachers, my peers, and my school – I had to rely on God. I had to trust in Him more, and that helped me develop a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him.

Looking back on it, I can say with certainty that the whole experience was honestly amazing. Yes, it was difficult at times, and we were all scared of the implications of pursuing legal action. But everything that happened brought us closer to God and to each other.

Even though it was years ago now, the experience still encourages me today. Whenever I get discouraged, I can look back at that moment where God gave me the faith to take a stand, and then went on to use that stand to make a real difference. If He did it then, what's to stop Him from doing it again now, or in the future, no matter what situation I'm up against?

The greatest thing about this was that all the glory goes to God – I couldn't have done anything without Him. Knowing that – knowing what God can choose to do despite my weakness – helps me know that, whatever is happening, what seems impossible can be made possible through Christ.

– Katie Ayers (at age 16)

We are so proud of Katie, and of her desire to share her faith with her fellow students. My husband and I know firsthand the power of being invited to learn about Jesus. Early in our marriage, we were drinking and using drugs and on the brink of divorce. Then a neighbor invited us to a Bible study group, and our lives were radically changed.

So, when Katie told us that she was not able to pass out the flyers for the church party, I struggled a lot with what to do. I wanted to protect my daughter, but at the same time I knew God had placed it on our hearts to challenge this. I had to really step out in faith and let Him take care of her in His own way, rather than trying to do it myself.

During this time, doctors diagnosed me with multiple sclerosis. It was absolutely devastating to me, that my daughter was being called to stand up and I couldn't protect her, because I could not get out of bed. That diagnosis eventually changed to fibromyalgia, but God used all of these things to draw us closer as a family. Katie was a huge part of that blessing. She stepped up to help all the other kids and me, and really became the "mother hen" in our house for a while.

To any others facing this situation, I would say:

remember that your children each have a faith of their own, and encourage them in that. If they want to stand up for what they believe in – even if it’s scary for you – know that God has given them a purpose and a plan. And their stand could be part of that plan.

– Angela Ayers, Katie’s mother

Jesus so often referenced the importance of children, and of their faith in particular. When I heard about how Katie’s passion for inviting her friends to church was being squelched by school officials, I knew our efforts were going to be worthwhile.

Katie’s case was one of the first I handled on my own upon joining ADF. I’d just left a law firm in Nashville because I wanted work that would have a Kingdom impact. So joining ADF and getting to work on a case like Katie’s reaffirmed that God had called me to do this kind of work, and to defend the rights of children.

I especially remember when I saw an email from the superintendent of the school district refusing to allow Katie to hand out the invitation. That email made it clear that the school district was looking for any reason to justify censoring Katie’s flyer. This hostility toward a child and an innocuous religious flyer made me pretty

upset, and God used it to motivate me to fight even harder for Katie's sake.

That turned out to be crucial, because the school district decided to fight us harder than any district had before in this kind of case. But that was all part of God's plan, too – the additional time and effort and anxiety – because when we ended up winning at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, it was a much bigger victory than it would have been otherwise. That really clinched it for me: God is always working, even when things don't look good.

But God's grace was revealed most clearly after the lawsuit was over, and Katie was able to hand out her flyers for another church event. A friend accepted that invitation, and eventually she and her parents accepted Christ because Katie was free to ask them.

There is no battle too small. God glories in working through the small things.

– Matt Sharp, ADF Attorney

A district court found that the policies cited by the school district in silencing Katie's speech violated her constitutionally protected rights. The school district

appealed that decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals, which upheld the lower court's ruling.

It's hard to overstate just how important that ruling was. The policies in place at Katie's school were being enforced statewide (in more than 500 school districts), so the Ayers' victory ensured that nearly 2 million students saw their constitutional freedoms restored. The decision is also likely to affect students outside of Pennsylvania, setting a crucial precedent for districts nationwide.

☞☞ What then shall we
say to these things? If
God is for us, who can
be against us?☞☞

Romans 8:31

“As scared
as I was, I
understood the
attack was not
against me. It was
against God and
His church.”

Petya Dimitrova

Petya Dimitrova

Church Lay Leader

The next time you're inclined to complain about your church – how long it takes to get there, how long the morning service went – give a thought to Petya Dimitrova.

A citizen of Bulgaria, Petya wanted nothing more than to hold prayer and Bible study meetings in her home, while attending an evangelical church related to the Swedish Word of Life group. That shouldn't have been a problem: Bulgaria is a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, which supposedly guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion to everyone in the country.

But Bulgarian officials said no – worshiping God and teaching the Bible were deemed to have a “negative psychological effect” on the congregation. Undeterred, Petya started inviting anyone who wanted to come over to her house to worship together. That didn't last long. State police broke into her home, searched it

without a warrant, confiscated her religious materials, and arrested her ... all for simply leading a few friends in worship.

Bulgarian officials recognized the overreach, promising Petya compensation for damages and the return of her materials. Ten years passed, though, with no compensation in sight – at which point her claim for damages was dismissed. After years of meeting dead ends in her own nation’s courts, Petya finally enlisted an ADF International Allied Attorney to present her case at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), where she charged the Bulgarian government with violating her freedoms of thought, conscience, and religion.

It all seemed to happen so fast. The Bulgarian police – working for a government openly persecuting Christians – came to my home, arrested me for holding private worship services, and confiscated my Christian audio tapes, books, and other materials. At the time, I was a single parent, and I felt very vulnerable and afraid. I did not know where to turn for help.

But as scared as I was, I understood that the attack was not against me. It was against God and His

church. I knew it was time for me to take a stand for the Lord and find a way to expose the oppression and persecution of the Bulgarian government. I had no idea that stand would take over 20 years of my life.

But all along, I knew that the Lord was with me. Knowing that He would never leave me or forsake me – that He would be with me always – brought great comfort. And the Lord was faithful as I trusted in Him. He sent me people like Viktor Kostov and Nevena Stefanova, who initiated the effort to bring the police to trial for their actions. Then He sent my husband, Evgeni, and eventually (and miraculously) ADF International. Sending me all these people was proof that He would not forsake me when I took a stand for Christ.

“I felt very vulnerable and afraid. I did not know where to turn for help.”

All of this strengthened my faith and gave me a peace and a joy that were so much more than what I felt before the police raided my apartment. I finally understood His unfailing love for me and that His

Word and promises were true. If I were to encourage my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ when they take a stand for Him and face trials, it would be to say: stand firm. He will always be with you. And, as the song goes, *“because He lives, I can face tomorrow.”*

In this world, we all have problems and tribulations. As Christians, we are facing growing persecution for our faith. We should expect that, as that is what the Bible says will happen (John 16:33). But if we stay close to Jesus – if we follow Him – He has the power, the instruments, the people, and the cases in His hand. He is willing and able not only to help us, but to elevate us in the Spirit and in our earthly life.

– Petya Dimitrova

*A*t the time that the police broke into Petya’s home, confiscating her books, audio tapes, and other personal items related to her Christian faith, we were not married. I first met her after hearing about her situation at church and was quickly drawn to her as a woman dedicated to Christ, the church, and, as a single parent, to her sweet 4-year-old daughter. I would see Petya buying books about her faith and giving them away to relatives and friends.

About a year later, we were married. Over the years, and during the trial – despite the lost possessions, personal discomfort, and even persecution – Petya remained strong, faithful, and humble. If I admire one thing most about her faith, it is that she trusts completely in the Lord.

When I think of Petya and her experience, I am reminded of the church in Acts. Despite the persecution and the struggles, the church only grew stronger and experienced explosive growth. That's Petya. Her experience was not always easy; there were questions and struggles. But Petya emerged with her faith even stronger than before – allowing her to continue to reach others for Christ.

– Evgeni Dimitrova, Petya's husband

***E**ver since I became a Christian, I have been interested in religious freedom, and finding the right balance for Christians in relating to their secular government. My country's history makes that difficult. After all the years of communism, it is typical for people in my country to look with great suspicion on evangelical Christians.*

Unfortunately, not many Christians are willing to go

to court to try to influence this culture of suspicion and fear. As an attorney, I have been ready to take up such cases, but willing clients are few and hard to find. That's why Petya's resolve was helpful. After all, she was a sister in the Lord whose alleged "crime" was that she hosted a prayer group! This case was a righteous cause we had to pursue.

If you're faithful, I believe, God will eventually bring you to victory. I am completely delighted that this case – which we were bound to lose in 1995 – finally came full circle, and 20 years later, we ran the final stretch to victory. Yes, it took 20 years ... but if we had given up, or not filed in the first place, or if we (and especially Petya) had not stayed the course, we never would have seen this victory for freedom and Christianity.

My relationship with ADF International as an Allied Attorney was also crucial – our work throughout the years likely would have been lost if not for help from ADF International in the final stage at the ECHR.

God asks us to be perseverant and diligent, acting in faith and obedience. He will bring the results. I did not enter this case to win. I pursued it because, as God led, it was the right thing to do.

The rest was up to Him, and of course, all He does He does well (Mark 7:37).

– Viktor Kostov, ADF International Allied Attorney

Finally – after two decades of fighting for her most basic civil rights – Petya received her overdue justice from the ECHR. The court found that Bulgarian authorities had unjustly arrested Petya and violated her human rights. As a result, the Bulgarian government could no longer request any official registration for believers to conduct prayer meetings – especially in their own homes. This sets an important precedent for more than a half-billion people throughout all the member states to allow Christians to have religious gatherings and study the Bible without any government registration.

The ECHR ruling read, in part: “The denial of legal registration to [Petya’s] church was done in a spirit which lacked any semblance of state neutrality. At all stages, the state authorities acted on the basis of discriminatory value judgments rather than evidence. The action of the state authorities failed to respect the need for true religious pluralism, which is inherent in the concept of a democratic society.”

For Petya, it was an affirmation worth waiting for.

☞☞ These things I have
spoken to you, that
in Me you may have
peace. In the world you
will have tribulation;
but be of good cheer,
I have overcome the
world. ☞☞

John 16:33

“I opened
the door –
and God came
in like a flood.”

Blaine Adamson

Blaine Adamson

Business Owner

When Kentucky printer Blaine Adamson, managing owner of Hands On Originals, was asked to create some T-shirts promoting the Lexington Pride Festival, he politely declined. As a conscientious Christian, he is thoughtful about the kind of work he lends his creativity to, and investing his imagination in a celebration of themes the Bible frowns on just wasn't an option.

He politely referred the event's sponsors to another nearby printer. Nevertheless, they filed a complaint with the local Human Rights Commission, which found Blaine guilty of illegal discrimination.

His decision – and the ensuing media uproar – cost Blaine not only a profitable opportunity, but a lot of business and several long-time customers. Still, he remains convinced he did the right thing. Although he is willing to serve anyone – he regularly does business with the LGBT community and employs homosexuals – Blaine believes he is accountable to God for what he

prints, so he can't print a message that violates his faith and conscience.

All the lies and accusations that rained down on us after I made my decision didn't change my thinking, but I sure felt the impact. It is a hard thing to have what feels like the whole world screaming its hatred at you.

Along with the love and support of my wife and family, two things saw me through those first hard days. One came in our darkest moment, sitting with my wife on the floor of our bedroom, pouring out our pain to God. By then, I was almost sure we were going to lose the business. I felt sick, thinking what might happen to the people who worked for us. But worse even than that – I just felt so very alone. It seemed like our church and even many of our friends didn't really grasp why I had made this choice ... why it had seemed so crucial to make this stand.

I finally just began to cry out to the Lord. "God," I said, "I will stand, no matter what the cost. But I am so broken right now."

A few minutes later, the doorbell rang.

I opened the door – and God came in like a flood. A bunch of people from our church had all just come over to hug and cry, pray, show us their support, and encourage us. That was a real turning point for our whole family. Starting that very next morning, a lot of the calls and social media contacts became more positive, supportive, encouraging. And ever since that day, they've continued to be.

Somewhere about that same time, we were visiting a church, and this man who was leading in prayer quoted a verse, Isaiah 30:15: *“In repentance and rest, that will be your rescue, in quietness and trust ... it will be your strength.”*

“I will stand,
no matter
what the cost.
But I am
so broken
right now.”

It was just like it was the voice of God, speaking so deeply to me. My heart raced – filled with new joy and conviction. That verse brought me such peace. It's stayed with me through the whole process, and it's answered more questions than you can imagine. Any decision I was about to make, this verse kept me

right in line where I was supposed to be. And it still does.

To be honest: this kind of experience is like having a chisel that goes deep into you ... removing the lumps in the clay. You see sin in your life more clearly than before, and how He's removing what needs to be removed. He conforms us to the image of His Son. And in the end, we have joy because we have suffered for His name.

Wherever God has us, *He has us*. And our family just feels such a peace right now that, even if we ultimately lose the case and have to sell the business, it's okay. We're going to continue to follow what God says in His Word. My only hope is that somehow – through all of this – the Gospel goes out.

I can look back and see how the Lord was strengthening [Blaine] for this. Kind of giving him a little ... sharpening. Conforming him more and more into the image of Christ so that he could deal with everything that was going to come his way. I feel like I rode on his coattails.

I had a young lady – a believer – say to me, “Why didn't he just print the shirt?” It just broke my heart,

because it was like, “Take the easy way out. Is it really that big of a deal?” But Blaine desires to be righteous, above all else. And even in the church, that’s rare. I hope I would have done the same thing ... and followed through with my decision.

We took – from Blaine’s leading – the scripture seriously that, in this life you will have trouble (John 16:33). I don’t want to believe that. I want what Blaine calls “Disney Jesus.” But the reality is that as a believer, we will be persecuted. I have to learn to walk in that reality, not in ignorance.

It’s easy to say, “God is faithful. God is good.” But when you’re going through something like this ... I feel like I’ve grown up in my faith.

– Amy Adamson, Blaine’s wife

***B**laine takes his faith seriously. He thinks critically about how his faith and work interact and how his faith informs everything he does. For him, it’s an unwillingness to promote messages and ideas – not an unwillingness to work with people. Blaine will work with anyone, and he wants to show the love of Christ to all, but he cannot promote messages that violate his faith.*

Throughout this case, he's always thinking, "How does this aspect of the case bring God glory?" That's refreshing – it's not just about winning the case, it's about honoring God in the process.

Blaine's heart and his story have helped me to crystallize the way we talk about these "rights of conscience" cases, because I've seen, firsthand, a really great example.

– Jim Campbell, ADF Attorney

A trial court in Kentucky reversed the Human Rights Commission's ruling against Blaine, declaring that he has a constitutional right to decline to print messages that conflict with his beliefs. The commission is challenging that court's decision, and the case is now pending at the Kentucky Court of Appeals.

☞ In repentance and
rest is your salvation, in
quietness and trust is
your strength.☞

Isaiah 30:15

““ When we are stretched to obey God in a way that seems too hard, we have to rely on His strength and wisdom. This is the best evangelism, because something of God is seen by others and He receives glory.””

Dr. Nancy Fredericks

Dr. Nancy Fredericks

Physician

Dr. Nancy Fredericks had been working at an outpatient surgery center at UW Hospitals and Clinics in Madison, Wisconsin, for four years when she heard of an upcoming change of policy: starting soon, the clinic would offer abortions. Up to then, those had been the concern of a nearby Planned Parenthood facility. But suddenly, quietly, administrators were making arrangements to bring the killing of babies under the umbrella of the UW medical facilities – including Nancy’s clinic.

At first, it didn’t really occur to Nancy – who is deeply opposed to abortion – that she herself might be enlisted to assist with the procedures. But she grew suspicious, as her medical director kept evading her requests for a chance to express her concerns. The new abortion plans were quickly becoming a fait accompli, and her doubts multiplied. Finally, she contacted Alliance Defending Freedom.

An ADF attorney told her that the clinic could be trying to require everyone to serve as a backup, and eventually a regular participant, in the abortion process.

Nancy didn't believe it. She'd been told that her shifts as an anesthesiologist could be scheduled so she wouldn't be on call, or that other doctors would be responsible. But in a crisis, a colleague reminded her, or even in the closing shift of the day, every doctor is required to respond. Then came the question that changed everything.

“Do you really think,” her attorney asked, “that people who have no qualms about taking innocent pre-born life will have any qualms about trampling on your conscience rights?”

In that moment, Nancy knew she had to speak out. She began making plans to raise her questions and objections at the next board meeting ... even if that meant losing the job she loved.

As a Christian and a student of God's Word, there was never any question about the stand I would take. I believe it is necessary to be prepared for situations like this, because they can happen to anyone. Unknowingly, I had been preparing through a lifetime of in-depth Bible study and service that

called for much more power than my own. In fact, as the situation developed, I felt as if God had been preparing me my entire life for such a time as this.

One must have a firm grasp of who God is, who we are, what He has done for us through Christ's work on the Cross, and what our appropriate response is to that historical fact. I was especially strengthened by Psalm 64, 1 Peter 2:13-17, Judges 6-8, and 1 Corinthians 1:24 (which I have on my license plate). Psalm 23 ran through my head many nights as I went to sleep. Once, a colleague in surgery reminded me of the words of Mother Teresa: "*We are not called to be successful, necessarily, but we are called to be faithful.*"

Waiting to speak before the governing board – following numerous Planned Parenthood and pro-abortion speakers – I felt increasingly apprehensive and isolated. When my turn came, I was grilled by the board. All of a sudden, a nursing colleague piped up in support of me. I was amazed they'd even let her in, much less allowed her to speak! But as a result, the board added a contingency to their approval of the plan.

Later, at another meeting, I was feeling extremely nervous about confronting the planners in person. So, I requested prayer. Previously, I'd left the meeting shaking with fear and a sense of inadequacy. This

time, though, by the grace of God, they were the ones rocked back on their heels, sputtering with frustration. And all I had done was ask questions.

As Christians, we can only grow by living out the faith we have been given. When we are stretched to obey God in a way that seems too hard, we have to rely on His strength and wisdom.

This is the best evangelism, because something of God is seen by others and He receives glory.

Through this experience, I grew in faith, grew less naive about our enemy and his tactics, and was prompted to become more historically informed, politically engaged, and supportive of efforts to safeguard the freedoms we have so often taken for

“There were times when I felt intensely alone, and moments of fear when I wondered what could happen to me by doing this.”

granted. Now, I am convinced that *Roe v. Wade* must be overturned. Legalized abortion has made all of us a little more tolerant to brutality and injustice – and we are all diminished by that.

God is still teaching me that our culture is greatly in need of people who will take a stand in the public square and take risks to speak the truth in love. How many Christians have the courage to stand firm, despite persecution and sacrifice, believing in the promises of God?

I give God the entire credit for even enabling me to see this injustice. He was with me from the very beginning, giving me the courage to take a stand. There were times when I felt intensely alone, and moments of fear when I wondered what could happen to me by doing this. I risked my job, my reputation, and our material well-being, but I always knew the Lord was with me.

– Dr. Nancy Fredericks

Nancy is a very strong, resolute woman of God. Despite intense stress, she was a natural leader, protecting her rights and the rights of others. Her courage was unique and impressive.

During the case, I recommended to Nancy that she read That Hideous Strength by C.S. Lewis, which she did. It explores a pro-death agenda and the way it infiltrates influential institutions in society and uses bureaucratic levers to bully and intimidate people to cooperate.

When the governing board eventually announced that the entire plan for instigating abortions was being scrapped and no abortions would occur, I knew that God was profoundly using Nancy and this case. Because of it, there are now no abortionists in Madison who perform abortions in this late stage. For me, Nancy's courage, blessed by God, vindicates the fact that a single person who is willing to take a stand can defeat even the largest of organizations.

– Matt Bowman, ADF Attorney

Nancy soon found that she wasn't alone. Pro-life organizations across Wisconsin joined together in unprecedented cooperation to protest the UW's decision to offer abortions. More than 60,000 residents signed a petition opposing the plan – and all but a handful of the nearly 100 staff members at Nancy's clinic signed a statement refusing to take part in abortions.

Despite that massive opposition, the board approved

the plan ... initially. Nancy and her ADF attorney wrote another letter, asking them to reconsider, and Nancy kept raising questions.

The abortion instruments arrived ... but no procedures were scheduled. Months passed. Finally, the state attorney general disclosed that UW had abandoned the plan entirely. The Lord answered Nancy's prayer and blessed her courage. In the years since her stand, not a single abortion has been performed at the center.

☞☞ But to those who
are called, both Jews
and Greeks, Christ the
power of God and the
wisdom of God. ☞☞

1 Corinthians 1:24

“I felt the Lord
asking me to
step out and be
seen and heard.
And He gave me
the strength to
do it.”

Emily Brooker Landis

Emily Brooker Landis

Student

College brought a rude awakening to Emily Brooker Landis' somewhat dormant moral convictions, which she admits hadn't really been challenged much in her youth. In her freshman year at Missouri State University, though, she received a class assignment to perform homosexual behavior (such as holding hands or kissing) in public, then write a paper about her experience. Emily didn't do the assignment ... but wrote the paper as if she had. The ruse earned her an "A," but she vowed never to compromise her faith again.

Three years later, as a senior, Emily again faced a difficult choice. One of her professors announced a class project that involved advocating for foster and adoption rights for homosexuals, culminating with signing and sending a letter to the state legislature. Emily fulfilled all the requirements of the class, but drew the line on signing the letter.

She tried to explain to her professor that she couldn't advocate for something that went against her faith. He responded

angrily, and filed a formal grievance against her. That meant a hearing before the professor, the department head, and seven faculty members, to decide if she could still graduate. She wasn't allowed to bring a lawyer or her parents or even to record the proceedings, which lasted 2 1/2 hours and included intensive interrogation about her Christian faith.

When Emily refused to back down, the faculty members insisted that she sign a contract vowing to "close the gap" between her faith and the social work program – or else not graduate.

When the professor in my first social work class paired us with another student in the class to go out into the community and display homosexual behavior, I was fortunate to be paired with another Christian girl. We agreed to turn it into a creative writing assignment instead.

But after we turned in the assignment, I felt the Lord prick my heart and convict me about how I had handled the situation. I prayed that I would have the courage to stand up for Him if another situation were ever to arise. That opportunity came my senior year.

When I did have that chance to stand for the Lord, I

was probably most surprised by the lack of support from people in the Christian community. Friends in my church and campus ministries reacted in different ways. I was often told to “go along to get along” or just “turn the other cheek.”

“I’m so sorry this is happening to you,” someone told me, “but we don’t want you to talk about it in front of the church or in front of the student ministry. Just keep it to yourself.”

“My professor stirred up the debate almost daily, trying to persuade me, and even using Scripture to try and change my mind.”

But the Lord gave me strength to walk into my classroom each day and face my professor and classmates – who were all having to do extra work because of my stand. Many of them tried to pressure me into changing my stance. My professor stirred up the debate almost daily, trying to persuade me, and even using Scripture to try and change my mind.

Outside the School of Social Work, I met less opposition. My parents were a big encouragement to me during this time, as was a family friend whose mom worked at the university. Just having people pray for me meant a lot.

That was one of the things that stuck out to me about Alliance Defending Freedom, too. I had never met with an attorney before. I definitely wasn't expecting to walk into a law office and pray with my attorneys, who were actually concerned about what was going on with me and how I was doing. But they walked with me every step of the way to help protect my faith. I was never one to want to be in the spotlight – a go-getter or a driven person who wants to be out front. I've always kind of been the wingman. But this time, I felt the Lord asking me to step out and be seen and heard. And He gave me the strength to do it.

We just have to lean on Him, and recognize that it's not about us. It's about Him.

– Emily Brooker Landis

I was appalled by the assignment that was given to Emily, as well as the way the faculty – people that I work with – treated her during that hearing. It was inconceivable to me. As a professor, you just don't do that. But I think the way

Emily presented herself at that meeting surprised them. She is a tiny, petite girl, but she is a fighter. And I think they were surprised by how she could articulate her viewpoint – and with good facts.

Today Emily is a stronger woman than she has ever been before. I have seen her graduate and move on to a very successful career as a social worker. She has a heart that really cares, which is what makes her so successful at what she does.

*– Dr. Debra McDowell, Faculty Emeritus,
Missouri State University*

***E**mily really was the ideal client. She was a poised young woman in college who was smart, committed to her faith, and readily demonstrated the Christian kindness to which we all are called. She was firm in her convictions, but warm and welcoming to everyone.*

We filed the case, and only a few days later received a response from university officials that they were going to do something about it. They settled. They removed from her file both the disciplinary note and a contract they had forced her to sign. They paid her attorney fees and offered to pay for her graduate education at any public university in the state of Missouri.

Honestly, we thought the case would go on a lot longer. That it didn't was only possible because God was behind what happened, with His people in the right places. They saw the injustice and corrected it immediately.

Knowing they had gone after this young woman who was so kind and loving was very motivating to those of us on the legal team. Emily's case was one of the first cases I worked on at ADF, and it motivated me to stay in the battle. Now, a decade later, I'm still in that battle – and her case not only continues to give me a good perspective for other, similar challenges, but to underscore my determination to help students like Emily get the justice they deserve.

– David Hacker, former ADF Attorney

ADF filed a lawsuit against Missouri State on Emily's behalf, challenging the university's violations of her religious freedom. Within 10 days, the president of the university publicly apologized to Emily, offered to pay for her graduate school education, and began an investigation of the School of Social Work. As a result of that probe, four tenured professors were moved to other departments, and four other faculty members were dismissed.

🔖🔖 Your ears shall hear
a word behind you,
saying, 'This is the way,
walk in it,' Whenever
you turn to the right
hand or whenever you
turn to the left. 🔖🔖

Isaiah 30:21

“God will
absolutely give
you more than
you can handle
– precisely so
that you will
be forced to
turn to Him.”

Jack Phillips

Jack Phillips

Business Owner

When two men came into Jack Phillips' Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, Colorado, requesting that he create a wedding cake for their same-sex ceremony, Jack gave them a clear, gracious "no."

"I'll sell you birthday cakes, shower cakes, cookies, brownies," he said. "I just don't do cakes for same-sex weddings."

The two men left angrily, not waiting for an explanation. If they had listened, Jack could have told them that his objection was not to them, but to using his God-given creative talents – including a real artistry for creating cakes that are both imaginative and personal to the customer – to celebrate an event that violates his biblical convictions.

Soon after, the two men filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, charging Jack with sexual orientation discrimination. The Commission

eventually ruled that Jack not only had to bake cakes for all kinds of weddings – or none – but also had to file regular reports with the government detailing every cake order he turned down, and why. Worst of all, the Commission ordered Jack to provide sensitivity training for his employees (including his own mother and daughter) that would compel them to understand that his faith position is wrong.

I had decided long ago that there were certain cakes we wouldn't create at Masterpiece Cakeshop. The Bible clearly teaches that marriage is reserved for one man and one woman and, in Romans 1:18-27, it says that to participate in homosexual behavior is a sin, a distortion of God's will.

So it was clear what I would have to do the moment I learned that the wedding cake the two gentlemen requested was for their same-sex wedding. But even in the midst of that conversation, I sensed God's presence. I was absolutely confident that what I was doing was right – confident in a way that I couldn't have been without God.

Throughout this whole case, this whole situation, God has continued to give me grace. If I could tell my fellow Christians one thing, it would be this: know

that the saying “God won’t give you more than you can handle” is not true! God will absolutely give you more than you can handle – precisely so that you will be forced to turn to Him, knowing that you are totally inadequate to the challenge. That is what I have had to do, over and over, and my faith now is stronger and more real than ever before.

God has strengthened me and used His Word to strengthen me. One passage that has been particularly powerful is Daniel 2:21: “[God] changes times and seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings.” He also puts judges on their benches and civil rights commissioners on commissions, and He is in control of all situations at all times. And knowing that He is the One I place my confidence in is what gave me strength during this time.

I tend to see God at work everywhere – every blade of grass gets His tender care, and every molecule in that blade of grass is held together by His Word. He is always at work in our situation, and in every situation. That is a source of strength for me, especially as this case hasn’t turned out the way we wanted it to so far.

But God provides for us, and often in ways we don’t expect. He has daily provided for us financially, but if He didn’t, I would still trust Him. People ask me,

“Has your business been significantly impacted?” Yes, it has. But that’s not ultimately my concern. God will provide. I do my best to try to be obedient. And even when I’m not, He still provides.

“God provides for us, and often in ways we don’t expect.”

And one of the biggest, most surprising ways He has provided for us is by working through us to reach other people. It’s not just my faith that has become clearer and stronger. My family and I have been blessed to see countless other Christians, who’ve watched the effect of

this case on our lives, stand up boldly and with greater confidence. Some weren’t standing up at all, and now they are firm in God’s teachings.

That’s deeply encouraging to us, and I think it is one of the most beautiful things that could happen to anyone in a similar situation – to know that other people will be encouraged and, in turn, will encourage others. That really has made all of this worthwhile.

– Jack Phillips

Up until the weekend that David and Charlie came in to our Cakeshop, I was pretty content to call myself a Christian, go to church (most of the time) and talk about God with fellow believers (when it was comfortable). But after that weekend, I began to wonder: would I still be willing to stand up for Christ if no one stood with me? I didn't know the answer to that.

I also realized that I didn't know what the Bible says about marriage and homosexual behavior. So that started me reading what the Bible had to say about those issues ... and then about everything else. In other words, my dad's decision in the Cakeshop made me want to know the God of the Bible, and His Son Jesus Christ, for myself.

God has chosen some beautiful ways to encourage us and to make His presence felt, like the day a local radio station did their broadcast from the Cakeshop, and well over 500 people came to support us! We've received dozens of letters of support from fellow Christians. We even got a phone call from a sailor in the middle of the ocean – at 2 a.m., his time – who had heard what was going on and wanted to encourage us.

Through it all, my dad has had this unearthly peace. People call him and say such hateful things. They slander him in the news and on the radio, and he knows the whole time that it is Christ they are slandering and hating. He considers it an honor to be counted among those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake, and he would willingly do it again.

It's a beautiful thing to watch and learn from: Christ giving him all the strength, and my dad giving Christ all the glory. Watching my dad's trials undertaken for the sake of Christ has only made me want to know Christ more.

– Lisa Phillips, Jack's Daughter

When I first met Jack, the thing that struck me was the genuineness of his faith. It's not just a Sunday faith. It is evident every single day, and you can see how it truly impacts every aspect of his life.

The verse that continually comes to mind when I think about Jack's story is Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Nobody in this situation believes that more than Jack does, even though he is the one with the most

to lose. It is convicting to spend time with him and to see the firmness of his faith in the midst of such difficulty.

I'm continually amazed to see how God brings ADF such high-quality, faithful, loving clients. I could not have imagined a nobler client than Jack Phillips – he is a dream come true to defend. People who know him have only good things to say about him, and his whole attitude when you meet him is one of humility and graciousness.

The amazing thing is that we don't pick these clients. Our opponents do! Our opponents chose Jack to sue.

This just goes to show how God really does work through all things; our opponents don't choose to put the spotlight on people who actually are hateful or discriminatory. Instead, they choose people like Jack and throw him into the arena, where everyone can see his faith. I am continually amazed by who God chooses to put in the crosshairs, and grateful for the opportunity to defend these individuals in the courtroom.

– Jeremy Tedesco, ADF Attorney

ADF attorneys and Allied Attorneys represented Jack at the Colorado Civil Rights Commission and before the

state's Court of Appeals, which upheld the Commission's ruling against him. The Colorado Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal. ADF then appealed Jack's case to the U.S. Supreme Court. If granted review, ADF will represent Jack and fight to protect his religious freedom at the highest court in the land. A victory at the Supreme Court could set a significant precedent for religious liberty and clear a path for others who find themselves likewise challenged for living out their faith in the marketplace.

Regardless of the outcome, Jack continues to have unswerving faith in God's plan for his life and for the future of Masterpiece Cakeshop.

☞ [God] changes
times and seasons; He
removes kings and sets
up kings. ☞

Daniel 2:21

““No matter where
we are in our
faith walk, there
is always more,
another level.””

Sue Thayer

Sue Thayer

Former Planned
Parenthood Manager

Sue Thayer has deep religious convictions against abortion, but applied for a job at her town's Iowa Planned Parenthood anyway, because as a single mom, she needed the work. Plus, she had a genuine desire to help other women in difficult straits, and this particular facility didn't offer abortion services.

She managed staff, trained workers, oversaw patient records, and maintained the financial books. She also participated in family counseling, and – at first – she was convinced she was making a difference for good. But, as the years passed, Sue began to get more and more glimpses of the philosophy behind the scenes at Planned Parenthood. What she saw convinced her that the company's main motivation was making profit, not helping patients – and that the organization would do almost anything to cut costs and raise revenue.

Her doubts were already reaching critical mass when she learned that her facility would soon begin offering

“webcam abortions” – by which a doctor in a remote facility confirms, via video, the patient’s desire to have an abortion, then pushes a button on her screen that opens a drawer with two sets of pills: one for immediate consumption, one for the next day at home. No mess, no expensive staff to pay ... and no medical resources if anything goes wrong.

And, of course, no baby.

Horrified, Sue knew she had to get out – and do something to stop Planned Parenthood.

My life was a mess, and I knew in my heart I needed to make a change. I felt increasingly unhappy about how Planned Parenthood was doing business, to the point that I could hardly stay silent. My personal life was a wreck, my marriage had fallen apart, my kids were suffering.

When you’ve hit rock bottom, I learned, God is the only one there with you.

For two years after leaving Planned Parenthood, I suffered from the Ostrich Syndrome – just trying to ignore God. Finally, I shared the truth about webcam abortions with several of my Christian friends ... and

was immediately convicted, just by the sheer horror on their faces.

That was when I got busy for the Lord – and He got busy with me. Once you offer yourself to Him, hang on for the ride of your life!

God really prompted me to speak up about Planned Parenthood. He nudged me to do a 40 Days for Life prayer vigil at my former clinic, then led me to start speaking publicly, and, in time, to found a pro-life pregnancy center. And, of course, He also led me to Alliance Defending Freedom.

Before I met the ADF team, I didn't even know there were Christian attorneys! Knowing that there are wonderful men and women who fight every day for biblical principles is such a comfort. No matter how dark the world may seem, I know so many other believers are standing right beside me.

We all need that kind of encouragement. As I take a stand for life, I have seen the spiritual battle that we face and how relentless the enemy is. But as Christians, we know that – in the end – our side wins!

Standing for the unborn has blessed me in ways I can't even explain. Every aspect of my life has changed. For

the first time in my life, I know I am right where God wants me to be. There is no fear of the future. If I ever have a doubt, I just glance back at all He has brought me through.

"I have seen the spiritual battle that we face and how relentless the enemy is."

Joshua 1:5 brings me great comfort, especially as a single mom, trying so hard to raise godly kids: *"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."*

Those words, and what I've experienced in the years since leaving Planned Parenthood, make it apparent to me that God expects me to be bold and loud and truthful. And maybe not just me.

Take the leap. Get out of the boat. Don't be afraid. Know that God has your back ... and that, when you honor Him, He will honor you in ways you cannot even begin to imagine (1 Samuel 2:30). Let Him stretch you. No matter where we are in our faith walk,

there is always more, another level. And when we are faithful in the little things, He will trust us with so much more (Luke 16:10).

– Sue Thayer

When my Mom was notified that she would be doing webcam abortions, she came home and told my sister and me that we were “probably going to lose the house” ... because she would never do it.

She was a recently single parent of three at the time, and the Planned Parenthood salary had been caring for all of us. Planned Parenthood was all we knew; she had been employed there since before we were born. It was a moment that will always be etched in my memory – both the fear I felt of the unknown future, and the pride I felt for a mother strong enough to commit to a decision that went against everything she had practiced for 18 years.

If my mom has taught me anything throughout this journey, it has been to stand up for what is right and persevere against those who persecute you. She embraced the role God called her to lead – and did so simply because she knew it was the right choice. This has impacted my faith ... giving me a shining example

of what God can do in the lives of those who serve Him.

– Kim Thayer, Sue’s Daughter

I never thought I would ever meet a former Planned Parenthood clinic manager, let alone one who has become a recognized pro-life leader. Now I’ve met several. It’s a real privilege to know them, to represent them, to be their friend.

Our clients make the kingdom of God real.

To me, Sue represents what it means to lay down your life and follow Christ. At great personal cost to herself, she has completely accepted all the changes and heartaches and difficulties that have come with walking out of that life and into a new one. It challenges me as a believer and as a lawyer, because I have to ask myself, “What have I given up?”

Friends and clients like Sue remind me of the cost of discipleship.

These cases are a huge undertaking that require prayer and a lot of work. It’s always true, without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5). Everything we are privileged to do is, according to Ephesians 2:10: “prepared in

advance to do.” *We take up that appointed work and we do it in His strength, and we can’t do it without being in communion with Him. I am challenged that I must pray more and I must hear God more to fulfill His purposes for my life.*

You take a lot of losses in this work, but we are called to be faithful, we are called to tell truth, we are called to preach what Pope John Paul II called “the Gospel of life.”

– Steve Aden, ADF Attorney

On Sue’s behalf, ADF attorneys filed a “whistleblower” lawsuit under the federal False Claims Act and the Iowa False Claims Act, claiming that Planned Parenthood’s Iowa affiliate submitted “repeated false, fraudulent, and/or ineligible claims for reimbursements” to Medicaid.

After a district court judge dismissed the case, ADF appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. That court ruled that Sue had enough facts to support her lawsuit, and she’s now preparing for a hearing in federal district court.

Sue is also working as a pro-life advocate, speaking out against Planned Parenthood and the evils of abortion whenever and wherever she can.

☞ No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ☞

Joshua 1:5

“It’s easy to lose sight of the big picture. Being involved in this lawsuit ... gave us a glimpse of how big our God really is.”

Pastor Clyde Reed

Pastor Clyde Reed

Church Leader

Soul-winners don't come more natural than Clyde Reed. Just try getting out of a conversation with him – no matter how brief, no matter how casual – without finding yourself talking about the Lord.

Still, Clyde took a roundabout route to the ministry. As a young man, he felt the Lord's nudge, but followed his own impulses into engineering. Trouble was, even his fellow engineers said he ought to be in the ministry. At age 40, he finally took the hint and headed to seminary.

He spent the next four-decades-plus serving with his faithful wife, Ann, in churches all over the country. At the age most men retire, the Reeds opted to start churches – and found fertile ground for a new congregation in the growing Phoenix suburb of Gilbert, Arizona. The only real challenge was finding a place for his new church to meet – and some way of telling visitors where to find them.

A hospitable public school solved the first problem; unfortunately, it wasn't in a high-visibility area. To direct a little Sunday morning traffic to his services, Clyde put up a few small signs on avenues nearby.

Town leaders, he soon found, didn't like that. They had a code imposing very specific limits on the size, location, and number of signs a church could put up. And yet, Clyde noticed, other people were free to put up all kinds of other signs promoting a yard sale or a favorite candidate – only church signs came in for such restrictions.

And the town meant to keep it that way. Sign code violations could result in substantial fines – even jail time. Realizing what he was up against, Clyde contacted Alliance Defending Freedom, whose attorneys filed suit against the Town of Gilbert on behalf of his church. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

When the Town of Gilbert started issuing citations to our church because of our small signs, we knew we were in trouble. But backing down wasn't an option. The signs were crucial: before the church had a permanent location, I relied on them to attract new people and let them know where we were meeting.

It didn't seem right for a town to set such stringent restrictions on churches about signage when there were homeowner association signs, garage sale posters, election banners, etc., all over the place. For the sake of our Lord, our faith, and our ministry, we knew we had to do something ... but I had no idea what that something was.

I “happened” to share our dilemma with a minister friend; he suggested I contact Alliance Defending Freedom. I'd never heard of the organization, but soon it became clear that God had orchestrated this conversation for His glory.

I reached out to ADF. Ann and I still weren't completely sure whether fighting city hall was God's will or not. But ADF assured us they were willing to pursue the case, which was exactly the “sign” I needed to know God was going to give us the strength to stand.

“We knew we were in trouble. But backing down wasn't an option.”

Our church was so small, and suing the town over something so seemingly insignificant really did, in our human understanding, seem hopeless. We had no idea if this was something that our church elders would support, but here again, God went before us. The elders agreed to work with ADF on the lawsuit.

After decades of ministry, I've learned that it's easy to lose sight of the big picture. You get busy with your own little circle of Christians, your own denomination and its missionaries. Being involved in this lawsuit and working with ADF pulled us out of our circle and gave us a glimpse of how big our God really is.

As happens so many times with God, I just started the ball rolling, then stepped back and let Him work. And work He did! Gradually – over eight years, losing at every court level – I became aware of the many, many Christians who were standing with us. People we'd never met, who were freely giving up their time, their money, and their prayers. Time after time, we went to court and lost, but ADF and God's army of Christians continued to fight on.

Even as we were losing, Ann and I watched other ADF cases unfolding, and we realized how little we had sacrificed personally compared to our brothers

and sisters whose businesses and personal lives were being threatened by those who would crush Christianity. Through those other ADF clients, we saw how God sustains those who follow His will. He chooses to use the weak as well as the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27), and I can say with certainty that it is a privilege to be a part of God's program.

– Pastor Clyde Reed

Clyde and I have always been a team, so when he sensed God urging him to take this stand, I knew this was coming from a place of strong faith and leadership, and I went along gladly. Neither of us had much hope that anything would come from our case. We were impressed with ADF's optimism, despite our many losses, and this affected both of us (even if we didn't share the optimism).

But even when we struggled to see a path to victory, God was clearly working through the case. Though our church was so small and our case sometimes seemed so overwhelming, over the years we met more and more people who were playing a part in our case – wonderful people who became real friends. We learned of complete strangers who were praying for us and ADF.

It wasn't until we heard our case being presented to the U.S. Supreme Court that our hope flourished. The 9-0 decision – in our favor! – astonished us. How often we underestimate our God and His plans.

During my quiet time a few days ago, I read Psalm 115, and in the margin by the first verse I had written: “Supreme Court decision: 9-0!! 6/18/2015.” That verse says, “Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory because of your love and faithfulness.” Clyde and I are just glad that God could use our little case for His glory.

– Ann Reed, Clyde's Wife

***T**his case will always hold a special place for me as the first case I argued before the U.S. Supreme Court – but if you'd asked me at the beginning if it would go that far, I'd have said no. I knew that Clyde and Ann were a remarkable couple, but I had no idea how God would work through them.*

It was clear all along that Clyde and Ann just wanted to be obedient to what the Lord would have them do. That attitude was absolutely necessary to this case, because for nearly eight years we lost. Every single person involved in this case was seeking to serve the

Lord. If they'd been in this for any other reason, they'd have given up. Those eight years forced us all to have incredible perseverance and to know, with absolute resolve, that what we were fighting for was right.

I knew the principle at stake was important – protecting religious speech so it couldn't be treated worse than other speech – but after losing over and over, we honestly started questioning our view of the case. But when the Supreme Court took it (something I'd never have predicted), God gave us confirmation that this was worth fighting for.

Working as an attorney is my second career; before I embarked on it, I spent a lot of time praying about what the Lord would have me to do. As it turned out, He guided me to law school, to equip me to do exactly what we do at ADF. After 20 years as an attorney, there's always the question: how effective am I being? This case repeatedly reminded me that the battle really is the Lord's, not ours (1 Samuel 17:47), and it's an honor to be called to participate in that.

If the Lord lays that calling on you, keep going – even in the face of defeat. You don't know what He is preparing down the road.

– David Cortman, ADF Attorney

When the case was heard at the U.S. Supreme Court, the justices ruled unanimously that the government cannot play favorites when it comes to free speech.

This legal precedent affirms the right of churches to communicate to the public on the same terms as all other organizations. The impact of this victory is still being felt all over the country, and it will be for years to come.

☞☞ But God has chosen
the foolish things of the
world to put to shame
the wise, and God has
chosen the weak things
of the world to put to
shame the things which
are mighty....☞☞

1 Corinthians 1:27

“All of us have
the opportunity
to teach by our
actions.”

Dr. Mike Adams

Dr. Mike Adams

Professor

During a 1996 teaching exchange in Ecuador, Dr. Mike Adams – an atheist and leftist criminology professor at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington (UNCW) – encountered inmates in a local prison whose experiences made a life-changing spiritual impact on him. He observed that the prisoners were subjected to many terrible things, from being fed spoiled food to the use of torture. These abuses shocked him, and he began to recognize the fact that there is an absolute moral law. “I really began to see the absurdity of the relativistic worldview, and it lit a fire in me,” he said. That fire sparked a few years of study and questions, and eventually Dr. Adams became a Christian.

His new faith significantly impacted his political views. In his free time, he began publishing online columns that addressed cultural and political issues from an increasingly conservative perspective and often critiqued the leftist biases of higher education.

Dr. Adams' co-workers didn't take kindly to his newfound Christian faith and worldview. Branding him mean-spirited and a "pathological liar," they gave him poor peer evaluations and even launched a secret investigation against him. In 2006, when he applied for promotion to full professor, his application was coldly denied – despite overwhelming professional achievements, multiple awards from the university, and consistent high marks from his students.

Stunned, he immediately contacted Alliance Defending Freedom and began the process of suing the university.

I've faced many difficult decisions in my life; filing a lawsuit against UNCW was not one of them. I had to take a stand for my faith. Just seven months earlier, I had urged Ruth Malhotra (see p. 113), a student at Georgia Tech, to bring suit against her university to protect her free speech rights. How could I remain on the sidelines when facing similar circumstances?

Making the call was easy, but I had no idea how tough the road ahead would be. One of the most difficult days of my life was March 10, 2010, when a federal district court judge accepted UNCW's arguments and threw the case out of court. I was convinced no one would ever listen to anything I said about free speech again.

But the very next morning, I received a word of encouragement that I will never forget. ADF attorney Joe Martins called. His exact words were: “This is not defeat, this is Providence.” He reasoned that we would get the case back in front of the district court, but only after establishing an important First Amendment precedent in another court. At that moment, Joe’s words offered little comfort ... but 90 minutes later, I received a phone call from a student asking me to speak at his college in Rhode Island. When I asked, “What college are you calling from?” he replied, “This is Providence – Providence College.”

I knew in that moment that everything was going to be okay.

The day I returned home from the final trial in 2014 was the weekend that the movie *God’s Not Dead* was released, and my case was mentioned in the credits. I started receiving hundreds of emails from young people, saying that they were praying for me. I kept responding, “We won!” And this is what I learned in that moment: God allowed

“I was convinced no one would ever listen to anything I said”

this case to set an example for the young men and women who are walking into the lion's den. And He allowed it to show other Christian professors that they can speak out on issues of public concern and integrate their faith into their work as professors.

Most of all, my case shows that Christians and conservatives can stand up and fight – with ADF – and that there is a chance. David can face Goliath and prevail.

All of us have the opportunity to teach by our actions. After going through this trial – and seeing God's faithfulness in both the valleys and the victory – I have no more patience for people who refuse to stand up. I now end my College Prep Course talks at Summit Ministries and my Fearless Faith lectures at churches by telling the story of my sixth great-grandfather who fought in the American Revolution at the age of 13. I tell the audience that they spit on his grave when they refuse to take a stand.

The culture continues to sprint away from God, and the time will come – if it hasn't already – when you will need to make a choice. When the battle comes to you, you can stand and fight, or you can take flight. I beg you, make the choice to stand on the side of the Lord.

– Dr. Mike Adams

The only way to keep higher education a true “marketplace of ideas” is to ensure that those who advocate views that are at odds with the prevailing leftist atmosphere on campus are not driven from the university. That is exactly what UNCW tried to do to Dr. Mike Adams – deny a well-deserved promotion to a prolific scholar and accomplished teacher simply because he expressed conservative and Christian ideas.

I was privileged to be a part of God’s work through Dr. Adams, and it was deeply humbling to see how God used our efforts, including the initial defeat, for His glory. Dr. Adams’ entire life – even before the lawsuit – manifests God’s power. The Lord changed the heart of a stereotypical leftist atheist professor, using an unlikely combination of elements: a South American prison, a mentally challenged death row inmate from Texas who inspired him to read the Bible, and the writings of Christian apologists such as Chuck Colson and C.S. Lewis.

After coming to the Lord and having his entire worldview changed, Dr. Adams became a leading critic of higher education’s frequent disregard for the constitutional rights of students and faculty. God used that background when He allowed Dr. Adams to experience that disregard firsthand.

He also used the lawsuit itself – and Dr. Adams’ seven years of patient persistence – to bring about a far-reaching federal appeals court victory that protects the rights of professors in general and a federal jury verdict that vindicated Dr. Adams’ rights personally. Since that verdict, the campus atmosphere at UNCW has changed dramatically. Some high-level changes in the administration have created an environment much less hostile to Dr. Adams. And UNCW is now reviewing other policies to ensure that they respect the First Amendment rights of students. So it is clear that the Lord continues to work through this victory in ways that extend far beyond Dr. Adams.

– Travis C. Barham, ADF Attorney

ADF filed Dr. Adams’ lawsuit in 2007. In 2010, a district court ruled in favor of UNCW. ADF appealed the decision, and in 2011, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit ruled unanimously in Dr. Adams’ favor, issuing a decision that is now one of the leading precedents in the nation protecting the free speech rights of professors. In 2014, after a four-day trial, a federal jury ruled that UNCW violated Dr. Adams’ First Amendment rights.

The court ordered the university to promote Dr. Adams

to full professor and pay him \$50,000 in back pay. UNCW also adopted procedures to protect Dr. Adams from further legal retaliation.

☞☞ He shall call upon
Me, and I will answer
him; I will be with him in
trouble; I will deliver him
and honor him. ☞☞

Psalm 91:15

““I was never
fearful or
nervous. I was
filled with peace,
because we were
proceeding
under the hand
of God.””

Eleanor McCullen

Eleanor McCullen

Sidewalk Counselor

Though a faithful lifelong Catholic, Eleanor McCullen was in her mid-60s before Jesus really took hold of her life in a powerful way. Overwhelmed by a new sense of His love and calling, she asked her priest what she could do for Christ. He suggested she go downtown to the busy Boston street where Planned Parenthood kept its offices and committed abortions, and pray for the women and couples she found there.

“I’m too old for that,” Eleanor told him.

“Are you 103?” he asked.

“No,” she admitted.

“Then you’re not too old,” he said.

She has been there ever since – five hours a day, two days a week for the last 14 years – rain, heat, snow, sleet. She greets everyone passing or entering Planned

Parenthood with a disarming smile and a warm hello, gauging her best approach for presenting each one with the truth about abortion and the wonderful alternatives to the terrible choice that person is about to make. She has become one of the most effective sidewalk counselors of her kind – boldly, lovingly persuading countless parents to keep their baby ... and then helping them deal with the practical challenges that come with choosing life.

Planned Parenthood executives weren't pleased with anyone who provided an option other than abortion, and they used their influence to pressure state lawmakers into passing a law designed to stop sidewalk counselors. With the law in place, the city of Boston posted a 35-foot "buffer zone" to keep Eleanor away from Planned Parenthood's doors ... and the women she wanted to help. But Boston had underestimated Eleanor's determination. To save a child's life, she was willing to take her case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

And with the help of an Alliance Defending Freedom Allied Attorney – she did just that.

Originally, I told Michael, my attorney, that Jesus can trump any buffer zone, so I was not

interested in the case. I thought to myself, “Okay, we will just go along with it.” However, it soon dawned on me that not only was this another compromise of our values, but it was also complicating my ability to have an intimate conversation with a couple outside Planned

Parent hood, thereby killing any momentum that I might have in the conversation. I woke up in the middle of the night sensing God’s presence and understanding that I must take a stand.

At some point, I realized that this was not just about a buffer zone – it was about the free speech that we all enjoy. During the case, I was never fearful or nervous. I was filled with peace, because we were proceeding under the hand of God.

“I woke up in the middle of the night sensing God’s presence and understanding that I must take a stand.”

I live under His mercy and am always willing and available to act. Since I fully believed from the start that I was walking in His will, I was able to know it was the right thing to do, which strengthened me. The joy of the Lord was (and is) my strength (Nehemiah 8:10), enabling me to see a clearer picture.

Michael was adamant that this case was going all the way to the Supreme Court, which I thought was a long shot. But it turned out he was right. The experience was all a miracle to me. It has increased my faith and perseverance. As I always say, faith builds on faith.

Before, when the buffer zone was in place, I felt as if I was yelling at people. Now, people can trust me from the moment I approach them, because I am able to be gentle and loving. I am available, and it is this experience that I love so much.

I have tried to let people know that sidewalk counselors are not angry people. Ours is – and should be – a gentle, loving, and merciful discipline. The sidewalk counseling of old, which was marked by anger, is gone. Those who yell and scream, we tell, “Go home.” Hope, help, and love – that is my motto.

For anyone who might find him or herself in a similar predicament: pray for courage. We are often lacking

courage. I would urge such people to stop attempting to discern and start *doing* something. Speak the truth – not for your glory, but for God’s. Let Him lead you, and trust that He is doing so. People may not like you, but you will be respected for standing on truth. Concern yourself with what God thinks, not what people think.

– Eleanor McCullen

Eleanor has a real gift. She is just this sort of oasis in these people’s crazy lives ... offering them another way. Not just, you know, “Don’t get the abortion” – she always talks about the Lord, too, in a very practical, sort of non-threatening way. She’s also very humble. A lot of these women come from really poor backgrounds, [but] there’s nothing in Eleanor that makes them feel like she’s better than them.

She never seems to get off track. She’s really focused on the mission and on the women, and there’s this joy. “Mary,” she says when someone rejects our efforts, “there’s always the next one.”

– Mary Gerard, Eleanor’s Close Friend

I am always impressed by the cheerful, non-threatening postures that pro-life activists like Eleanor exhibit in the face of such opposition. Particularly, I was impressed at how Eleanor gave of her time each and every single week, even though, as a grandmother, she has grandchildren and other family members she could be committing her time to instead.

I was also impressed by Eleanor's perseverance, despite the fact that we lost four times in lower courts and the case lingered on for years.

I am often amazed that the Lord called me to be an attorney. I had never been a pro-life activist, but my life's work has been providential at every pivotal point – Eleanor's case included.

– Michael DePrimo, ADF Allied Attorney

For eight years, ADF Allied Attorneys Mike DiPrimo, Mark Rienzi, and Philip Moran worked tirelessly on Eleanor's behalf. Eleanor kept up her counseling, often standing out in the street, dodging trucks while watching for a chance to engage another abortion-bound mother. Finally, her case was heard by the Supreme Court, whose justices ruled 9-0 in Eleanor's favor. It's a crucial affirmation of free speech now being

cited as binding precedent in similar “buffer zone” cases all over the country – which means Eleanor isn’t just making a life-and-death difference for babies in Boston, but for children in wombs all over America.

Do not sorrow,
for the joy of the Lord
is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10

“I learned to hold on to so many of the promises in Scripture – promises of God’s faithfulness, protection, and comfort.”

Ruth Malhotra

Ruth Malhotra

Student

The daughter of a 30-year Georgia Tech faculty member, Ruth Malhotra felt born to be a Yellow Jacket. She was proud to arrive on campus as an International Affairs major, carrying on her family's tradition – which is why the way she was treated stung so much.

Ruth eagerly joined several Christian and conservative political clubs on campus, only to find those groups the target of aggressive university speech codes – rules sharply censoring and curtailing what students can and can't say on campus. The lack of free speech in what was supposed to be the marketplace for ideas, debates, and conversation was bad enough. But Ruth soon realized the speech codes were also stifling the sharing of the Gospel on campus.

For four years, she and a fellow student, Orit Sklar, fought the good fight, standing up for their free speech rights as students and as citizens. When they realized they couldn't crack the codes themselves, Ruth contacted

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys and asked for help. She had no idea what that would unleash.

Hate mail. Death threats. New student groups forming specifically to isolate and silence her with outright lies and vicious innuendo. By the end of her senior year, Ruth was attending classes accompanied by police. Worse than all that, perhaps, were the fellow Christians who spoke out to condemn her: “We want to show people that not all Christians are like Ruth Malhotra.”

Ruth never asked for special treatment for Christians or conservatives – just equal treatment under the law. To her, that fight was worth everything she was going through at Georgia Tech. But that didn’t make the quest for justice any less painful, or scary.

I expected some people to respond negatively to our lawsuit, but I never imagined that the reaction would be so extreme. I definitely lost a few friends and made a few enemies as a result of my case.

To be honest, until this experience, I really didn’t know what it was like to have enemies. But I often thought of what Winston Churchill said: “*You have enemies? Good. That means at some point in your life you stood up for something.*” I would also think about

the biblical command to “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*” (Matthew 5:44).

But God also brought so many people into my life during the lawsuit who encouraged and prayed for me.

My pastor called, after reading about the Georgia Tech case in the newspaper. He prayed with me over the phone. I had struggled at first with understanding that it was okay for me, as a Christian, to file a lawsuit against my school. But having my pastor reach out to me and pray for me really affirmed the decision I had made to take a stand and hold my school accountable. His call was a tremendous encouragement to me.

Through this process, and in talking with my pastor, I learned that the law is God’s gift of grace to us to change things that are wrong, under our system of government. God has established the very system whereby change can be made, and since God ordains government, laws, and leaders, we trust that the legal system will bring justice where there is injustice.

I won’t deny that being involved in this lawsuit was a difficult time in my life. But God used the experience to bring some of His biggest blessings into my life as well. My faith grew stronger with every challenge during

the case, and I learned to hold on to so many of the promises in Scripture – promises of God’s faithfulness, protection, and comfort. I had to learn patience and perseverance, and learn to trust that

“Until this experience, I really didn’t know what it was like to have enemies.”

God’s timing is perfect. But, most importantly, I learned that if God has called you to do something, He will equip you every step of the way.

I also made some awesome friends and formed some incredibly meaningful relationships with people whom I met

as a result of this lawsuit, like fellow clients Orit Sklar and Emily Brooker (see p. 55). These friendships have stayed with me to this day, 10 years and counting.

It was a significant decision – I never imagined I would “go legal” – but our love of liberty and our love for Georgia Tech compelled us to take this stand.

Galatians 6:9 was a verse I clung to during the case, and it remains one of my favorite Bible verses today.

The verse exhorts, *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

Life in the legal realm is a long process, but throughout the case, I truly believed that if we stood firm, everything would be worth it. And it was.

– Ruth Malhotra

Ruth and Orit’s case was one of the first for the Center for Academic Freedom at ADF. And while I had been doing cases on behalf of students for a while, the thing that was extraordinary about this one was not the university’s policies or the hostility. The thing that was extraordinary was the fact that there were personal attacks on Ruth and Orit.

This reaffirmed the significance of the fight. Unless people have the courage to stand up and challenge these policies, then the incredibly oppressive, liberal conventional wisdom of our liberal monoculture settles in and isolates Christians.

But Ruth and Orit really wanted to change their university’s unconstitutional policies. Their resolve only increased as the backlash increased. A lot of

people would have retreated immediately, but they stood their ground.

– David French, former ADF Attorney

Ruth and Orit provide an inspiring example of how the Lord can use two ordinary people to accomplish His will, which in this case involved pursuing justice and protecting freedom on their campus. As a result of their willingness to take a stand, countless students – most of whom know nothing of Ruth and Orit – are freer to speak and to share God’s truth on campus.

Ruth and Orit’s case stands out as memorable to me for several reasons. First, it was one of my first cases, both as an attorney and at ADF. More importantly, this case stands out because of the amount of persecution that Ruth and Orit endured – and how joyfully they endured it. Never before or since have I seen clients suffer so vicious a backlash for defending principles that should be so self-evident and freedoms that should be so celebrated. And never have I seen two people who endured so much mistreatment, so undeserved, with so much grace, poise, and joy.

It was a privilege to be a part of the team of attorneys who walked with Ruth and Orit through their trials

and to see how the Lord blessed their resolve with victory and with long-lasting changes on their campus.

–Travis Barham, ADF Attorney

ADF attorneys filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Ruth and Orit, challenging Georgia Tech’s unconstitutional policies and speech codes. A federal court issued an order repealing those speech codes. To ensure the institute’s continued compliance, ADF attorneys elicited an agreement from school officials that they would maintain the new, revised policy for at least five years – and seek court approval before making any changes.

Ruth and Orit’s stand made it possible for other students on Georgia Tech’s campus to speak and live out their faith freely.

Ruth now works at Ravi Zacharias International Ministries as Public Relations Manager, a career she says she wouldn’t have desired if not for her experience at Georgia Tech.

Orit graduated with a degree in civil engineering, but after this experience became a PR and marketing consultant. “The experience was life-changing for me,

and I decided to switch career paths instead to be on the front lines of public policy debates in the country and to do more in the aspects of religious freedom, religious liberty, and free speech,” she says.

☞☞ And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.☞☞

Galatians 6:9

““ Many people
really are doing
the right thing;
many are
supportive of
those who take
a stand.””

Anthony Hahn

Anthony Hahn

Business Owner

The Hahn family has worked hard for many years to build a national reputation for excellence in making kitchen cabinets – so they understand open-and-shut cases. And they hoped their legal matter might be one. Instead, their case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Hahns' business – Conestoga Wood Specialties – began a half-century ago in founder Norman Hahn's garage; it now employs about a thousand people. Based in rural Pennsylvania, the devout Mennonite family has always been generous about taking care of its employees, stewarding environmental resources, and giving back to the community. But with the passage of Obamacare, everything became complicated.

Under the federal HHS mandate, the Hahns soon learned, they would be required to fund abortion-inducing drugs through their employees' insurance. Doing so would violate their deepest religious

convictions ... but if they refused, they faced fines of \$100 per day, per employee – a \$100,000 per-day penalty, or more than \$36 million per year.

So, the Hahns faced some difficult choices: abandon their beliefs, face devastating fines, or stand and fight for their faith. (An identical, simultaneous choice faced the Green family, owners of the national chain of Hobby Lobby stores.) Despite their personal reluctance to go to court (it's not generally the Mennonite way), the Hahns realized their fundamental freedoms were in danger. So, they enlisted Alliance Defending Freedom and its Allied Attorneys to challenge the U.S. government on their behalf.

We knew that we had to take a stand against any deliberate taking of human life, certain forms of contraception included. Our belief that human life begins at conception – and that each life is a sacred gift from God – mandated this.

During the case, I was encouraged by two Scripture passages in particular. The first, Matthew 5:13-14, challenged me to be salt and light in this increasingly dark, wicked world. I don't want to be salt that has lost its usefulness; I want to be used by God for His glory. My wife shared the second passage with me, Titus

2:7-8: *“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned: that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”* The passage fit so well with our case, as we stood for the principles and values of God’s Word.

The week before the Supreme Court was due to rule on our case, we took our annual vacation to a Christian campground in Pennsylvania. Anxious as I was, I looked forward to a relaxing time, now that media attention had quieted down. Funny, though ... on Sunday morning, the visiting minister at the campground preached on “How a Christian Should Live in an Increasingly Ungodly Society.” He did not know us personally, yet specifically mentioned our case. The worship service, topic, and Scriptures (Hebrews 10:32-34, Romans 12:12, and Psalm 46:10) were such an encouragement to me. They were God’s gift, and God’s timing, reminding us we were not alone. He was in control.

We sensed God’s presence in the prayers of fellow believers. On the Sunday before our Supreme Court presentation, slips suggesting half-hour time slots for prayer were posted at the back of our church. After church, my minister and I found nearly every single

slip had been taken. “Now you know that someone will be praying for you and your family and the outcome of this case as you are in Washington, D.C.,” he said.

Later that week, as we sat listening to the oral arguments, we could feel the prayers of our fellow believers. I was surprised and humbled by the overwhelming amount of support our family received from people who did not even know us. Many people

“We may not like what we have to go through, but the outcome is in His hands.”

really are doing the right thing; many are supportive of those who take a stand.

Don't be afraid to take a stand yourself. The future may be unknown, but God is in control. We may not like what we have to go through, but the outcome is in His hands, no matter how

vocal or intimidating those who oppose His Word can be. We must pray, be patient, be obedient – and let God be God, working His plan however He pleases.

Through our case, I learned I'm limited in what I can do – that I must give everything to Him and not be anxious about the outcome. That has certainly deepened my faith.

– Anthony Hahn, Conestoga Wood Specialties

“**A**nd let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (*Hebrews 12:1-2*).

Everyone wants to avoid adversity. It's natural. It is never fun to experience pain. When adversity comes, our foundations are tested – yet that is often when and how we discover what it is that we truly believe.

Witnessing the Hahns' adversity up close, I could see that their feet and their faith are on solid ground. Their grace and steadfastness challenged and encouraged me, as my family walked through a similar journey.

Our families never imagined that our beliefs would put us on a path to the Supreme Court. All we wanted was to continue practicing our faith, the way we understand

it, in our workplaces. But this experience has reminded me of the joy that comes in putting our hope in the God of the Bible – not in our company, or anything else. So I encourage you, amid the hardships, to remember that we are not walking alone. The adversity may not be glorious, but our God is.

He is faithful, and holds all things in His hands.

– Lauren Green McAfee, Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.

***T**he Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, community has deep roots. I grew up Mennonite, and my father and Norman Hahn knew each other years ago. It's a joy to work with persons who share a common faith and way of life.*

As clients, the Hahns are among the best I've ever had. They are peaceful, loving people who showed no bitterness – they simply wanted a win, for the sake of their own consciences and for those of other Americans.

The losses we experienced along the way I carried very heavily on my shoulders. As it turned out, though, if we hadn't lost, we wouldn't have been able to get this case to the U.S. Supreme Court – an opportunity that benefited all of us who love freedom, not just the Hahns.

It goes to show that we can trust God even when things look bad, because He often uses those “bad” times to accomplish, in the end, a more dramatic victory.

This case taught me to keep fighting, even in the face of loss. For all the problems we see in our modern society, God is still giving His people important victories – wins that allow us to continue to exercise our faith in Him.

– Randy Wenger, ADF Allied Attorney

ADF staff and Allied Attorneys defended the Hahns all the way to the highest court in the nation. (The Supreme Court heard the Hahns’ case in conjunction with a similar one involving the Green family, owners of Hobby Lobby.) In a landmark decision with far-reaching implications, the high court ruled that the Obama administration could not enforce its abortion mandate against the Hahns, and that the family did not have to surrender its religious freedom in order to remain in business.

☞☞ You are the
light of the world.
A city on a hill
cannot be hidden.☞☞

Matthew 5:14

“‘Victory’ is not measured in a court’s decision, but in how well and how faithfully Jesus and His truth (the Gospel) are represented.”

| Pastor Jack Roberts

Pastor Jack Roberts

Church Leader

In 1973, pastors Jack Roberts and Robert Hall started Bronx Household of Faith in an area of New York City considered by the police as one of the city's most dangerous. Their desire to reach the lost of this volatile, diverse, economically depressed community with the good news of Jesus Christ drove them to establish a church that would offer a beacon of hope to people living in inner-city darkness.

At the request of local officials, Bronx Household of Faith launched a much-needed after-school program at a nearby elementary school. The program was so well received that, when the congregation grew too big to meet in the pastors' homes, Roberts and Hall approached school administrators for permission to hold church services in the school's auditorium on Sundays. The principal agreed – but the New York City Board of Education did not. While public school facilities could be used by other community groups for their secular activities, the board's policy

banned worship services on government property.

Pastors Roberts and Hall felt that wasn't right. When they heard Alliance Defending Freedom attorney Jordan Lorence on the radio, saying that school districts violated the Constitution when they prohibited religious meetings in public schools, their suspicions were verified. They contacted Lorence and explained their situation.

It was, in the words of the old song, "the start of something big." The church's lawsuit against the city would soon become a legal fight for the religious freedom of many other congregations all over New York City – an epic struggle that would move through the courts for the next 20 years.

Our 20-year legal battle started because we needed more space, so our growing church could continue meeting in our neighborhood. We had already been using a public school for after-school programs we offered to children, so when the Board of Education rejected our application to rent the school auditorium, it seemed like deliberate prejudice against Christianity.

We did not have the money or the knowledge to

challenge New York City, so we were relieved when ADF offered to take on our case and represent us in federal court free of charge. That gave us the encouragement we needed to engage in this significant battle for religious freedom. As the church prayed together for the Lord's intervention, we sensed His affirmation that this was His doing, and that He would be glorified through it.

In the early days of litigation, one of our attorneys shared a Scripture with us that really strengthened us: *"The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord"* (Proverbs 21:31). We knew our ADF attorneys had prepared the case well, but the outcome was the Lord's to decide. In fact, we ended up losing the initial battle ... but the Lord had more avenues to victory than we knew.

"We ended up losing the initial battle ... but the Lord had more avenues to victory than we knew."

Receiving a lot of both positive and negative attention

has helped me to become less concerned about the opinions of others – and reinforced the truth that the audience of One is the only one that counts. The Lord has also shown us again and again that prayer matters: I don't understand how, but God clearly works in response to the prayers of His people.

Walking through this long and winding experience, I have realized that “victory” is not measured in a court's decision, but in how well and how faithfully Jesus and His truth (the Gospel) are represented. We are called to be faithful and true messengers – not necessarily “winners.”

The fact that our case was ultimately rejected (a second time) by the U.S. Supreme Court meant that we would not get to participate in the final outcome of these crucial legal issues. This continues to remind me that we are only one tiny part of what God is doing; we don't have the right to demand to see the conclusion. Being faithful in our own divine assignment will enable others, in turn, to do their part – and perhaps they will see the conclusion.

Regardless, God will have the last, and best, word.

– Pastor Jack Roberts

Every case I've ever been a part of has in some way confirmed my calling as an attorney. But this case was different. I've never been involved in a case like it, one with multiple ... resurrections. It was one little church against the city of New York. A real David-and-Goliath scenario.

I look at Pastor Roberts and Pastor Hall and see a living and vibrant faith. They faithfully trusted God, prayed at every step of the journey, showed strength no matter the outcome, and turned up with their own congregation and many others in great numbers to make a statement.

Throughout the ups and downs, I believe the Lord has shown them that perseverance is an essential part of faith. I've learned that lesson walking alongside them, too. They have conveyed to me a real sense that you should always fight and never quit.

This case has taught me that God will take us in many unexpected directions. We just need to trust Him in every step and know that He is in control.

– Joseph Infranco, ADF Attorney

“**A**nd let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

This verse seems to sum up the bottom line of the Bronx Household case: we had to persevere. The pastors and I knew this case was bigger than just their church. Dozens of other New York City congregations were depending on the courts’ decision. That motivated us to keep going.

The two pastors and their wives are such amazing people; they gave up everything to move to a very poor area of the city to serve God. That’s what initially drew me to them and this case. I wanted them to have larger space to accommodate all the people who wanted to be a part of their loving congregation.

A 2002 court injunction related to our case opened New York City schools to churches for the next decade. In early 2012, it looked like all churches then meeting in public schools in the city would be evicted. But we threw the legal equivalent of a Hail Mary pass – and saw it caught in the end zone. The district court issued a new injunction, so the churches got to stay. I felt like the Lord confirmed to the pastors that He would sustain their ministry in the city.

It all worked out, but not the way we thought it would. We never won a definitive court victory in favor of equal access. But we did win, when Mayor Bill de Blasio fulfilled his campaign promise and lifted the city's ban on worship services, hours after the U.S. Supreme Court denied review in the case.

Today, dozens of diverse churches still meet in New York City public schools. On occasion, I'll look at some of the churches' websites and see that they are still holding Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and still meeting for Sunday services. I think of all the life changes that have taken place and wonder how those people would be doing if they could not meet in a local school.

So, to me, it feels like Jack and Robert were like the little boy bringing five loaves and two fishes to the Lord, and hearing Him say, "I'll use this." Their openness to become plaintiffs ended up "feeding the 5,000" for His glory.

– Jordan Lorence, ADF Attorney

Churches continued to meet in New York City public schools throughout the two-decade back-and-forth legal battle that seemed to take the Bronx Household of Faith case through every legal arena in America.

The case ended in April, 2015, when the U.S. Supreme Court denied review of the case.

However, Mayor Bill de Blasio's announcement immediately after the Supreme Court's decision ensured that the churches would continue to enjoy their constitutionally protected equal access.

Most important, though, is the fact that the Bronx Household of Faith lawsuit kept the door open for churches to continue meeting in public schools all over the city. Because of that, dozens of churches reached countless souls and ministered mercy to an untold number of people across those 20 years. Only God knows the eternal difference this lawsuit made.

☞☞ The horse is made
ready for the day of
battle, but the victory
belongs to the Lord.☞☞

Proverbs 21:31

““This situation really helped me grow in my faith, because it forced me to seek God even more and to put Him first ... which is easier said than done.””

Jonathan Lopez

Jonathan Lopez

Student

Jonathan Lopez's speech instructor at Los Angeles City College (LACC) was clearly unhappy a few years ago when California voters passed Proposition 8, which amended California's state constitution to define marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman. The instructor walked into class, slammed his papers on his desk, and yelled out that anyone who voted for the proposition was ... well, several unprintable things.

Jonathan – a fairly new Christian with strong sense of his newfound faith and a desire to share it thoughtfully with others – wanted to explain where many of the pro-proposition voters were coming from. For his next speech assignment (“a topic of your choice”), he decided to share his Christian testimony, along with a few biblical slants on current events ... including same-sex unions. As part of the speech, he shared a dictionary definition of marriage.

The instructor loudly mocked Jonathan's views in front of the class. When Jonathan approached him for his speech evaluation, the teacher handed him a form scrawled with "Ask God what your grade is."

Over the next few days, the instructor continued to make snide comments about Jonathan and his speech. When Jonathan complained about the teacher's behavior to the dean, the teacher told him he would make it his mission to get Jonathan expelled. The dean did nothing to support Jonathan, who finally determined to contact Alliance Defending Freedom and pursue legal action.

I didn't grow up in a Christian home. When my family started coming to faith, one by one, I was the hard-headed one. I didn't want to have anything to do with church, anything to do with God. My heart was so hard.

But God kept tugging on me. At church camp one year, I accepted Christ as my Savior. I learned more and more about my new faith through church, the Word, and family. I know now that God was preparing me to stand up for my faith.

When my speech professor crossed the line and called everyone who supported Proposition 8 a "fascist

bastard,” I knew I had to take a stand. But I also knew that I didn’t need to say anything in that moment. It was one of the hardest things I have done – to keep quiet. I’m a very outspoken person. I’ve never been one to sit back and keep quiet. But if I had spoken up then, things would have escalated and maybe even gotten worse.

Throughout the whole situation, I wanted to make sure that I did not do a disservice to God by presenting Him in a wrong way. I wanted to pray about the situation and see if God wanted me to do or say anything. My most common prayer during this time was to ask God that His will be done and that His name, not mine, be glorified.

I also had a lot of conversations with my mother about what was going on. Her wisdom and knowledge of the Bible and the things of God were a constant encouragement.

I felt God’s presence every step of the way through this. I felt His guidance, His patience, His wisdom, His approval, and His vision. I got a lot of support and encouragement and conviction from God that really made me feel comfortable in the action that was taking place and during the entire process.

This situation really helped me grow in my faith, because

it forced me to seek God even more and to put Him first ... which is easier said than done. To genuinely put God first in every aspect of your life is very difficult. But to know that God is first in everything allows us to be comfortable with whatever the outcome may be.

Living in the world today, we are constantly in situations where our faith

is being challenged. To know when to stay quiet is just as important as knowing when to speak up. That's something that has stuck with me.

Looking back, I feel that this is something that God put in me to do, and I did it for Him. I knew in my heart that it had nothing to do with me. And now other believers on campus can speak up, and feel comfortable about speaking up. And that is only attributable to God.

"I wanted to make sure that I did not do a disservice to God by presenting Him in a wrong way."

– Jonathan Lopez

I prayed for Jonathan for years and years after my conversion to Christ. He would come to church with me to keep me from nagging him, but I could sense that he wasn't willing yet to commit himself to Christ. He didn't want anything to do with it. He was the last one of his brothers and sisters to come to the Lord.

But I used to remind myself, "The harder the conversion, the more it will 'take.'" And it was true.

When Jonathan was faced with this lawsuit, we prayed and talked it over as a family. Many times, I tried to remind him that the outcome would be positive, and that God's name would be glorified.

Now, looking back, we can see how God strengthened him for this time, so that he could speak out for God, and for His glory.

– Elizabeth Ortega, Jonathan's mother

Jonathan is a man of strong faith who really understood that what had happened to him could happen to other Christians. I was always impressed with his spiritual maturity. He acted with a lot of prayer and thoughtfulness, and he wasn't afraid of his convictions.

He was willing to stand boldly for his beliefs, not only in the classroom, for himself, but beyond that for others whose rights were as endangered as his.

Jonathan's case had a lot of ups and downs. In a case like his, you really see God's work at times, but it requires you to trust that He is still working even when you suffer a big setback. It increases your faith.

It was an honor to be able to represent a man of such strong faith who really had been attacked for no good reason. This case has stuck with me because of the egregiousness of what had happened – and because it reminds me that, ultimately, God's truth will prevail.

– David Hacker, former ADF Attorney

ADF filed a federal lawsuit asking the court to put a stop to the instructor's behavior. After years of litigation, the court ruled in favor of Jonathan and awarded him damages for the violation of his rights.

Meanwhile, Jonathan finished his semester at LACC – earning an “A” in his speech class. His story, along with several other ADF cases, helped inspire the 2014 hit movie God's Not Dead.

☞ Those who
honor Me,
I will honor. ☞

1 Samuel 2:30

““I was
determined
that, one way
or another,
I had to raise
my voice against
the pressure to
take an innocent
human life.””

┌
Linda Steen

Linda Steen

Midwife

The letter caught Linda Steen entirely off guard.

All she'd asked for was some assurance that, as a newly trained midwife, about to start her two-year rotation with a women's clinic in Sweden, she would not be required to take part in abortions. After all, no one signs on as a midwife to take life. Surely the clinic, informed of her deep faith convictions, would understand that.

They didn't understand that. Indeed, her letter from clinic officials not only reneged on their commitment to hire her, but also belittled her personal beliefs: "It is not our policy or our approach to leave any opening for a conscience clause. We have neither the ability nor intention to work with such exceptions." If Linda wasn't willing to take babies' lives as well as deliver them, the clinic no longer had a job for her.

That wasn't the end of it. Linda applied for a promising position with another clinic, only to have her interview

cancelled. Officials from the first clinic had spread the word, and she was effectively blacklisted ... as were several other Swedish midwives with strong faith convictions.

Not that Sweden doesn't need midwives – there's a serious shortage; it's one of the few countries in Europe that does not respect the right of conscientious objection for medical professionals. Linda, though, could not stand by, losing her livelihood and watching her fellow Christian midwives lose theirs. She decided to do something – and she called Ruth Nordström, ADF International Allied Attorney.

Ever since I was a small child, I have had a strong internal sense about the importance of standing up for what is right. When I was young, I learned about human rights at school, and the one that really struck me was the “right to life.” This is the most fundamental of all rights.

That is why I felt it was particularly wrong for a midwife – who wants to work in the service of life – to be forced to participate in the taking of an innocent human life. It was not only wrong; it didn't make sense. I have no doubt that the Lord made each of us – no matter how small, no matter how helpless – for

a purpose. That is why I have taken the stand I have, despite the pressure I've received to compromise my beliefs and willfully take a life that God has created ... a life that He planned right from the start.

I was determined that, one way or another, I had to raise my voice against the pressure to take an innocent human life. By standing up and subjecting myself to this process, I have become a stronger person – a person who cares more about what God thinks than what people think (Acts 5:29).

And as I read my Bible, these verses came to me: *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men,*

him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33). Since then, those verses have given me courage to stand up for my faith. Taking a stand has not been easy. Because of my current situation of not being able to practice as a midwife in my own country, I have to travel far away to work in our neighboring country of Norway, which costs

“It was not only wrong; it didn't make sense.”

a lot of money. Thankfully, as He always is when we are faithful, God has been faithful, providing me with good friends who have offered to let me live in their house for free while I am working, and this has helped my family to manage financially.

But beyond the financial blessing, these friends and my family have partnered with me in taking a stand for life and for what is right. I am so grateful to everyone who has made it possible for me to continue working as a midwife. For the first time, I truly feel that I love my job – the job God has called me to do.

– Linda Steen

*L*ike Linda, I have always had a great respect for the sanctity of life and I have never been shy about my pro-life beliefs. As a midwife who brings new life into the world, I could not even imagine performing or participating in an abortion. In my profession, I never thought this would be a problem. One day, I found out that it would.

Everything started when I kindly asked my future employer if she could place me in a position where my beliefs would not cause a conflict with other workers

in her clinic. Since my primary role is to help with live births, I could see no reason why she would not be open to this accommodation.

Instead, she became upset. Very upset. So was the rest of the clinical team. They angrily told me that I was not welcome at their clinic, and never would be. I was shocked and saddened by their response.

As it is for Linda, all of this has been very hard on me and my family, but it has also helped us to understand that God has a plan for each of our lives, no matter the difficulties we may be facing. Now I realize that God is asking each of us to trust Him a little more every day.

I know that I had to. I couldn't have done any of this without Him, and I wouldn't be taking the stand that I have, and enduring the ridicule and rejection that have resulted, unless I truly believed that this is what He wanted me to do.

– Ellinor Grimmark, Fellow Swedish Midwife

***B**oth Linda and Ellinor are licensed midwives who had a dream of helping deliver babies and caring for mothers and children after birth. They wanted to work with maternity care, not assist in abortions.*

That desire was far more than just a professional preference. Their conscience, morals, and religion told them that life begins at conception and that they cannot perform any act that terminates an innocent human life.

I have a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on my wall. It reads:

*“Cowardice asks the question, is it safe?
Expediency asks the question, is it politic?
Vanity asks the question, is it popular?
But, conscience asks the question, is it right?
And there comes a time when we must take a position
that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one
must take it because it is right.”*

The Swedish midwives have decided to follow their conscience, their inner moral compass, about the protection of innocent life, despite facing a very hostile reaction. Because of their convictions, they are now excluded from working in the Swedish health care system. The Swedish authorities refuse to allow freedom of conscience in the workplace. Given the enormous shortage of qualified professionals in this field in Swedish hospitals, the health care authorities, by excluding competent midwives such as Ellinor Grimmark and Linda Steen, are jeopardizing the

proper provision of health care services within maternity and birth care.

To stand up for our inner convictions takes courage. It might not be safe, nor politic, nor popular, but if we have the courage to do what is right, despite fear, personal risks, and the possibility of paying a heavy price – and fight on – we can win.

– Ruth Nordström, ADF International Allied Attorney

ADF International Allied Attorney Ruth Nordström, from the Scandinavian Human Rights Lawyers, is working to represent Linda and Ellinor and has filed two lawsuits in the Swedish District Courts. ADF International also filed two expert briefs that highlight the mandate for protecting freedom of conscience under international law. The cases are still pending.

But – as the only country of 28 in the European Union that does not have either a general conscience provision or specific laws protecting medical staff – Sweden now faces a serious human rights issue.

☞☞ We ought to obey God
rather than men.☞☞

Acts 5:29

“I know that
the only way
to defeat evil is
through love.”

Dr. Kenneth Howell

Dr. Kenneth Howell

Professor

After 10 years at the University of Illinois, Professor Kenneth Howell was one of the most respected professors on campus, and for good reason. Not only were his academic achievements outstanding – two master’s degrees and two Ph.D.s – but students loved his kindness, fairness, and compassion during and outside of class.

They were not, however, qualities everyone appreciated. In his “Introduction to Catholicism” class, Dr. Howell explained the Church’s views on homosexuality: that feeling same-sex attraction isn’t immoral, but acting on those feelings is. When he sensed that not everyone appreciated such distinctions, he sent his students a follow-up email to clarify the point – and one student’s roommate, seeing the post, took offense. The student passed the email along to campus officials who, under pressure from LGBT groups, fired Dr. Howell immediately.

Outraged, Dr. Howell's students, former students, and friends immediately organized a massive protest on his behalf. They contacted the media, sent letters to the university president, and started a support page on Facebook. Dr. Howell, meanwhile, contacted attorneys for Alliance Defending Freedom, who sent the university a letter explaining that administrators had violated the professor's First Amendment-protected rights and asking that he be reinstated.

Two years earlier, a student had come up to me after we discussed homosexuality in the class and told me she disagreed with me, but now understood why I believed what I believed. And that's all I can really ask for. But I had started to see more and more hostility around this subject of homosexuality.

Still, I was surprised when one of my students mentioned to me that some in my latest class really hated me. I could see signs of people being very critical, and unreasonably so. But at that point, I had not realized how forthright and virulent the opposition was to my teaching about the Church's views on homosexuality.

I do try to be sensitive to students who may feel inclined to homosexual things, to help them understand that this is a very human issue, and something that we all need to be concerned about. I try to do it with delicacy. If I were teaching a class on civil engineering, I wouldn't broach the subject. But since I'm teaching a class on Catholicism, then it is my obligation to teach what the Catholic Church is teaching.

After I was dismissed from the university, it became clear that I needed to fight for two reasons: freedom of speech, and the substance of the subject of homosexuality. If the university could dismiss me because of my views, it was clear that it was discriminating against me on the basis of my beliefs – a violation of the rights guaranteed to us in the First Amendment.

I also felt I could not let down my students and others who were looking up to me as an example. This was confirmed when hundreds of students went to the media and the public forum on my behalf. They felt this was their battle, too.

Through the prayers of God's people, I sensed an unusual level of God's presence in the midst of this trial. I also took much comfort in the promises of

“I have had to fight against unforgiveness and bitterness within myself.”

Scripture during this time. All of the promises about God being with us seemed to jump off the page and became very precious.

Experiences like mine can make a person turn to the negative. I have had to fight against unforgiveness and bitterness within myself. I keep 1 Corinthians 13:13 in mind, where Paul says the only things that really matter are *“faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love.”* I know that the only way to defeat evil is through love.

When we face trials, the best thing we can do is to hide ourselves in the heart of God. We must remember that God uses all things, including our trials, to work out His will for us. It is in Him, and Him alone, that we find peace.

– Dr. Kenneth Howell

“A lot of professors seem to be interested just in the material or in [how they’re perceived] as a teacher.

Dr. Howell was legitimately interested in students, in their ability to handle the material. I like his very face-to-face, person-to-person sort of teaching style.”

“He encouraged us to ask questions. Part of our grade from this course was our ability to ask questions in class and actively participate in discussions. He made us stimulate our own minds and examine both sides of an issue before deciding on an opinion.”

“He took questions, he was very calm and very well thought-out in what he said. Never did he say anything that was wrong about homosexuals, the people ... he said [what] the Catholic Church’s teaching was on the act itself.”

“He proposes what the Catholic Church teaches. He did not try and change that in any way, but just proposed it in a way that was clear and understandable. He doesn’t impose his views on anyone.”

– Remarks by Dr. Howell’s students

The main thing that sticks out to me about this case was that we didn’t really have to litigate it – because the students acted on Dr. Howell’s behalf.

That, and the fact that the actions of the university were so outrageous.

It's ridiculous that a school would fire a professor without even giving him a chance to defend himself, when he simply taught Catholic beliefs in a class about Catholic beliefs. It really exposed the level of anti-Christian hostility on campus.

Because the university's actions were so egregious, the best thing we could do was to publicize it. When we did, the university had no leg to stand on.

Even though this case only went on a few weeks, you can never minimize the impact of justice. Every time you can get justice in a case, it's incredibly heartening to see the individual vindicated. And in this case, Dr. Howell was vindicated.

– David French, former ADF Attorney

The efforts of the students, the community, and ADF attorneys paid off: while not admitting any wrongdoing, the university eventually invited Dr. Howell to return to his teaching position – to bring Church teachings to life for his students, and to demonstrate the love of Christ in his classroom every day.

☞☞ And now abide faith,
hope, love, these three;
but the greatest of these
is love. ☞☞

1 Corinthians 13:13

“Life has its
seasons, and
every season
has its trials.”

Adriana Hickman

Adriana Hickman

Parent

For some children, the challenges of life come early – and hit hard. Brian Hickman Jr. was born three months premature, and faced his first heart surgery after just five weeks. Then came two eye surgeries, a double hernia repair, and a string of other surgeries over the next nine years. Then, the toughest diagnosis of all: cerebral palsy.

It's a lot for a boy to carry, but Brian has always been unusually strong-willed. Even his parents, who've had to grapple sometimes with that willful personality, have long recognized it as God's gift to a boy who otherwise might not have survived everything he's been through.

So when, in fifth grade, Brian announced his intention to dance to his favorite Christian song at the school talent show, the Hickmans encouraged him ... though dancing doesn't come easy for a boy whose hips and legs are cramped by cerebral palsy. But Brian wanted to do

it for the Lord; to him, that joy more than made up for the pain.

School officials loved his routine, but objected to his taste in music – they told him he'd have to find a less religious song to dance to. For Brian, that wasn't an option – and he really couldn't fathom why anyone wouldn't want to hear a Christian song, anyway. His mother, Adriana, sensed that the school had no legal right to censor her boy's song, and she soon contacted Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys to see if they would defend that right.

They agreed to do so, but warned her that persuading the second-largest school district in the country to change its mind – with only a week to go before the show – would be a tall, tall order. Adriana asked the lawyers to sue and told Brian to practice ... while she began to pray.

I have never been one to handicap Brian. He just has to do things as best he can and figure them out for himself. When he was little and would fall a lot, I would tell him, “I’m not going to be there to catch you when you get older, so you have to get back up on your own.”

That's a hard thing to tell your son, on days when he's struggling just to get out of the car and make his way up the school sidewalk, while his classmates are watching. I would sit in the car, across the street, and watch how long it was taking him. That was hard.

That's why his dad and I were so happy for him, trying out for the talent show. We knew it would be hard for him, but that he really wanted this. It was important to him to show his friends a side of himself many had never seen. More than that, it was a chance for him to glorify God.

One of the most wonderful surprises during that week of waiting to see if he'd get to perform was a phone call we got from the pastor of our church. We go to a megachurch – 12,000–15,000 members – and to have that pastor aware of what was happening, and calling to tell us our church was praying ... that meant so much.

God worked in such a special way in those days – and that night. Even several years after the fact, people still mention that show and what Brian did, and sometimes telling his story gives us opportunities to share about the Lord in ways that people will listen to, when maybe they wouldn't listen to just a sermon or a Bible verse.

Remembering what God did for us then is also a comfort to me now. It would be great to say that was the last and biggest trial we ever faced, and that everything has been perfect since. But life has its

“It would be great to say that was the last and biggest trial we ever faced, and that everything has been perfect since.”

seasons, and every season has its trials. Brian has had two more major surgeries since the night of the talent show, and he prayed so fervently that God would use those to completely heal his most difficult physical problems. But that’s not how God chose to respond, and dealing with that has been a real challenge to my son’s faith.

As I pray for him, and for wisdom to help him learn these hard lessons, I sometimes put in the DVD of that talent show, or look back through my prayer journals during that time. I remember how God helped us, and think of Proverbs 3:5-6: “*Trust in the*

Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

“Lord,” I think, “You have always been there for us. I don’t know what You’re doing now, or how or when You’re going to do it, but in the meantime, please give us peace. Please give us faith. And give my son straight paths for his feet.”

– Adriana Hickman

When I first met him, Brian came up, said a quick hello, and immediately appointed himself tour guide of the house. He was excited. And nervous, I think. But he pushed through those nerves and showed us where to go – even suggesting what he thought would make a good “opening shot.”

After that, I wasn’t surprised by Brian’s choice to dance at the talent show. Or that he chose to go through with the lawsuit. I was surprised to feel so personally challenged by the matter-of-fact way he approached the entire situation. He chose to take each step, in faith, simply because it was the right thing to do. Scary? Probably. Anxious? Likely. But did he still choose to do it? Absolutely.

“We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) came to mind, as I took one of my last photos of Brian that day. His posture communicated that he was facing his struggle with bold strength. I felt nudged to look at him with not just physical eyes ... to see him, instead, as the Lord seems to see him. Brian walks by faith. And, regardless of his condition, his walk is strong.

That picture exposed a need in me. I’m called to faithfulness, too ... courageous faithfulness. Whenever I see that photo, I realize that Brian is still showing me where to go.

– Bruce Ellefson, ADF Photographer

***F**rom the beginning, I was moved and inspired by Brian’s faith. I was trying to explain to him and his parents how difficult this might be, persuading the school district administrators to change their minds in less than a week. Sure, we could press the lawsuit, but I couldn’t guarantee that Brian would be able to perform in the talent show.*

All the while I was talking, he just sat there ... shy, quiet, with his head down. Then, when I paused, he looked up at me, and said, “I really would like to perform at the talent show.”

I could see the resolve in his eyes. I could see faith. He was just 10 years old, but he was so sure this was something the Lord wanted him to do. Brian already had so many problems, physically. So to see him sitting there, that firm in his faith ... it really affected me.

I have two sons of my own, and I often tell them that, when you're a parent, there are two questions that affect every decision you make: 1) How can I do the best thing for my kids? and 2) How can I keep them safe? I saw those same questions in the eyes of Brian's parents. Their first thought was for No. 2: "How do we keep our son from being hurt by the school's decision?" But when they realized how much he wanted to do this thing, to praise God with this song ... they moved to No. 1: "What do we have to do to make this happen for him?"

Brian's commitment to doing what, even at that age, he felt God calling him to do, and his parents' commitment to helping him do that – no matter what the cost ... that faith and love are still a testimony to me, all these years later.

– David Cortman, ADF Attorney

When days passed with no response to the lawsuit, ADF filed an emergency motion for a temporary

restraining order to allow Brian to perform. This time, the officials capitulated, and – one day before the talent show – Brian learned he could dance to the song of his choosing.

The story was a media sensation in Los Angeles, where the Hickmans live, and the school auditorium was packed the night of the talent show. When Brian came on stage and the music started, the crowd was cheering him all the way.

The impact of his dance, though, stretched far beyond that auditorium. Faced with the family's lawsuit, the school district changed its policies to allow religious music in public school performances – opening the way for tens of thousands of other youngsters to sing and dance for God's glory.

☞☞ Trust in the Lord
with all your heart, and
lean not on your own
understanding. In all
your ways acknowledge
Him, and He will make
your paths straight. ☞☞

Proverbs 3:5-6

““ We didn’t ask
to be put in this
situation – but
over the years
it’s become clear
that God put
us here, and
that He had
a purpose in
doing so.””

Greg Stormans

Greg Stormans

Business Owner

People in Olympia, Washington, know the Stormans – for over 70 years, the family has owned and operated Ralph’s and Bayview Thriftways, two of the busiest grocery stores in town. The Stormans are civic leaders and generous supporters of their community. Their customers are their neighbors, and in many cases, their friends.

The family’s Christian faith informs everything they do in their business, from how they interact with their grocery and pharmacy employees to what they stock on the shelves. And what they don’t stock ... like abortion pills.

The Stormans’ faith teaches them that all life is sacred. So, when a customer asks for a pill that would destroy a young life in the womb, employees are instructed to graciously refer them to one of the 30 other stores within a five-minute drive that offer the drug. That wasn’t good enough, though, for local pro-abortion activists,

including Planned Parenthood representatives, who began “test-shopping” the Stormans’ pharmacy – then filed complaints with the state when the pills weren’t provided. Boycotts and picketing soon followed.

Not long after, state officials (under intense political pressure from the activists) announced new regulations specifically prohibiting pharmacies from referring customers to other stores for religious reasons. All other reasons were allowed. (It’s standard practice in all 50 states to allow referrals for any reason – including concerns of conscience.)

Clearly, the new rules were aimed directly at the Stormans. They faced three tough choices – sell the abortion pill, close their pharmacy, or file a lawsuit. They chose to fight for their religious freedom ... and a long legal battle began.

Our faith informs us that taking a human life is wrong, so whether or not to stock the pill was a simple decision: we refused to do it. We didn’t ask to be put in this situation – but over the years it’s become clear that God put us here, and that He had a purpose in doing so.

I would never have imagined, though, that this

would last for 10 years. Looking back, I see how God has worked out His plan for our family ... and shown Himself to me in profound ways.

Though I believed in God, I used to rely on myself in life and business. Through all this, He has taught me to rely on Him first in everything. The verse that continually comes to mind is Philippians 4:13: *“I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”*

A believer’s life is not about coincidence and chance. God has a purpose and a plan for all who believe, and He gives us everything we need to withstand our trials. Honestly, I believe God has deliberately slow-walked this case to give us more opportunities to give glory to Him.

“I have learned that following God can have serious consequences — consequences that, without Him, would be unbearable.”

He has been teaching us – first, patience, then persistence, and finally that He will always prevail, no matter what the outcome is. Nothing about this case – deciding to pursue it, or living with the consequences – has been peaceful in any way that the world would understand. But the Lord has given us all a tremendous sense of peace about our decision every day.

Beyond doubt, I have learned that following God can have serious consequences – consequences that, without Him, would be unbearable. He tells us in Scripture that if we pray and seek Him, we will find peace and joy in all circumstances, even when we face personal threats, financial devastation, and physical harm. God orders our path when we lean on Him.

Our family has seen that, again and again. There's no rational explanation, other than His providence, for how we financially survived this ordeal. We look back amazed at how often we were days – even hours – from going bankrupt. But God provided, so we could keep on fighting for Him. He has given our whole family encouragement and faith for this battle, and by allowing us to stand on the front lines, He has blessed us immensely.

He has used our trial to shine a national spotlight

on the human carnage of abortion and the growing callousness of our society. We live in an increasingly dark world, but God calls us to stand, fight for our faith, and bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ ... even when it feels like we are losing the battle.

We won in the district court after a full trial, but then the Ninth Circuit reversed that decision. We asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear our case. It takes four votes for the court to do so, and we only got three. The day we learned the high court would not take our case, God encouraged us in such a visible, tangible way – using another Christian, who lifted us up in prayer at a large gathering of believers. Our Lord knew we needed encouragement, and this was His gracious response. Even now, we see Him at work in our situation in unexpected ways. Knowing His mercies never stop, we wait, and pray, and seek His good will.

– Greg Stormans

This lawsuit has been going on for nearly 10 years. For the first six, Greg's focus at the business was to stay solvent in a difficult economic climate. We have great concern for our employees and their children, and

my role has been to support Greg in the workplace as our family business provides employment for many people.

Then, about four years ago, Greg came to a turning point. He decided to turn over his cares and anxiety about the business to the Lord. Since then, we have tried to engage the circumstances of this situation more positively in every way.

We often call upon 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12: “...dear brothers and sisters, we urge you to love them even more. Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not believers will respect the way you live...”

We didn't ask for the lawsuit. We live our lives to love and respect others and to love and please Jesus. It's our belief that, if we live a Christ-centered life – if we can remain loving and respectful – that's the win, no matter what the courts rule.

And that's my advice for anyone else on a similar journey: Practice joy. Love fiercely. Be authentic. Pray. Walk and talk often. Surround yourself with lovely, loyal friends. You'll find, as we have, that – as hard as it all is – your faith will be strengthened through this journey.

– Cristina Stormans, Greg's wife

When the test-shoppers and the State of Washington first came after the Stormans in 2006, we never expected that the legal battle would go on for over a decade. The family could not possibly have anticipated what this would cost them – personally and professionally. But what inspires me most about the Stormans family is the depth of their trust in God’s plan and their fierce commitment to do what’s right. Never once did they flinch.

The depth of the sacrifice the Stormans were making only gradually unfolded. There was picketing and boycotting and a recurring cycle of negative and inaccurate publicity. Sometimes people were intimidated from going into the store because of the picketers blocking entrances with signs and chanting. Legislators and the governor tried to hurt their business. They received hate mail, all the while treating every customer with respect. Week after week, month after month, even year after year, they struggled to make sure the family business they’d owned for 70 years – a business built on their Christian faith and convictions – would be able to survive.

When you do what you know to be right before the Lord, the victory may not look like what you anticipated in the beginning. But you can be certain

that you will end up with a victory. God will bless your faithfulness in His own way and time. Regardless of how this case ends (and it is by no means over yet), the stand taken by the Stormans has caused their family and mine to grow closer to Christ and has impacted countless others. The Stormans' legacy will last for generations. God promises to use all things for His glory. And He has certainly done so here.

– Kristen Waggoner, ADF Attorney

After a 12-day trial with 22 witnesses and hundreds of exhibits, a federal court ruled that the State of Washington's Pharmacy Commission targeted religious pharmacists and pharmacy owners in order to force them to choose between their livelihoods and their religious beliefs that prevent them from participating in the taking of human life. Washington officials and others represented by Planned Parenthood appealed. The appeals court reversed the earlier decision.

The Stormans petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to hear their case, but the court declined that request 5-3. Justice Samuel Alito was one of the three justices who voted to grant review. In his dissent from the court's denial he wrote, "If this is a sign of how religious liberty

claims will be treated in the years ahead, those who value religious freedom have cause for great concern.”

The Stormans’ journey continues, but one thing is certain: They will not violate their conscience and participate in the taking of human life. And ADF will stand with them to protect that decision.

☞ I can do all things
through Christ who
strengthens me. ☞

Philippians 4:13

““I believe we
not only serve
a loving God,
but a God who
has expectations
of us ... we are
going to have
to take up our
cross.””

Julea Ward

Julea Ward

Student

A straight-A student well-liked by her peers and professors, Julea Ward was weeks away from earning her master's degree in counseling at Eastern Michigan University when she asked the "wrong" question.

As part of a practicum course, Julea was assigned a potential client seeking advice about his same-sex relationship. Julea knew that, in light of her Christian faith, she would be unable to affirm that man's relationship without violating her religious beliefs. She asked her supervising professor what she should do. Per his suggestion – and in keeping with the program's clearly delineated protocols – Julea quietly referred the would-be client to another counselor. (Such referrals are commonplace in the profession, whenever a counselor feels he or she might not be the best fit for a client.)

Which is why Julea was stunned, shortly afterward, to find herself summoned to meet with the head of her department, who gave her a choice: undergo a

“remediation” program, designed to help her “see the error of her ways” – and change her “belief system” as it related to same-sex relationships – or be dropped from the counseling program.

It was not a hard choice for Julea, who refused to abandon her beliefs. University officials followed through on their threat, kicking her out of the program and ruling that her faith made it impossible for her to be a good counselor. She appealed that decision, but the school wouldn’t budge. That’s when she contacted Alliance Defending Freedom.

I’ve always felt that the Holy Spirit resides within us. So that, if something is said that is not in line with God’s Word, a little red flag goes up. And that’s what happened when the university gave me my three options: 1) correct the error of my thinking by taking part in a remediation program (as far as I’m concerned, there was no error in my thinking), 2) voluntarily withdraw from the master’s program, or 3) go through the formal review, and try to explain myself.

That’s when I knew that I really couldn’t back down.

Going into this, I really didn’t have a lot of support, except for my church and a few friends. I didn’t have

people lined up to say, “Good for you!” or to give me any pats on the back.

But God showed me that He was with me in two different ways. First, He gave me total peace. While I didn’t like the position, I always felt comfortable and at peace. A lot of times, even when I was feeling intimidated, I felt the peace of God surrounding me.

And, second, He let me meet the people behind ADF and Michigan Family Forum. It was very uplifting to see Him putting people in place who would fight this battle for me.

One verse that really stuck with me during this time was Matthew 10:33: “*But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*” I don’t ever want to be in a situation where compromise is an option.

I also had to continually remind myself to keep an eternal perspective. It’s not about my degree or my livelihood. The question is: Is God pleased with me?

At some point, all of us are leaving this world, and we will have to stand before Him. I believe we not only serve a loving God, but a God who has expectations of us.

Being a Christian doesn't mean things are going to be easy. It means we are going to have to take up our cross – not live in fear, but just be prepared to stand. Think about all that God has done for you, and let's show some gratitude! That was motivation for me – focusing on what God did for me.

One thing that's really

stuck with me is this:

It's not over. Those

three little words.

The case may be over,

but looking at the big

picture – it is far from

over. The enemy does

not rest. As I look

and see the direction

in which our country

and our world are

going, I can see that “*the harvest is plentiful but the*

workers are few” (Matthew 9:37). I've got to step up

my game. God may ask me to do something even

harder next time.

“I knew that I really couldn't back down ... [but] I really didn't have a lot of support.”

And if He does, I want to be in a place where I can say, “I'm ready.” Fearlessly.

– Julea Ward

Julea would come home and tell me about the discussions they'd had in class, and of how she would speak up if she didn't agree. Sometimes the other students would say, "I felt like you were right, but I didn't want to say anything." Like they were protecting themselves, and protecting their grades.

If [the university] is going to say, "We're going to be open and tolerant of things," then let's show that you're going to be tolerant, and not just say it. They were telling Julea, "We don't accept what you're saying. You have to conform to what we want you to say, and to the stance that we want you to take."

But Julea didn't compromise. She stood up to say, "I can't sell out God."

– Darryl Ward, Julea's husband

When a judge at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit unrelentingly questioned the opposing counsel, I knew God was using Julea and this case in a big way. Usually, when we litigate cases like these, we expect to face judges who are hostile to our arguments. But in this case, we walked in and immediately knew something was different. It clearly

showed that the judges perceived the truth. I'd never seen anything like it before.

Just as the outcome of this case was a testimony to God's faithfulness, so was Julea's genuine faith throughout the ordeal. It was pretty convicting to see. Julea experienced incredibly hard circumstances – she was kicked out of school, mocked, and reviled – and yet she simply grew in fortitude.

Most students would have buckled under the pressure she was exposed to, and just done whatever they were asked to do to get their degree. But she believed her conscience was being violated, and she drew a line in the sand.

This case shows that if we keep showing up and litigating to the best of our ability, we can win these kinds of cases. God can give us the victory.

– Jeremy Tedesco, ADF Attorney

Though Julea's case soon went to trial, the vindication she was hoping for didn't happen right away. A district court sided with the university, but the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit eventually reversed that decision and issued a strongly worded opinion that

said, in part, “A university cannot compel a student to alter or violate her belief systems based on a phantom policy as the price for obtaining a degree.” The judges added: “Tolerance is a two-way street.”

As part of the resulting settlement, EMU paid Julea \$75,000 and removed the expulsion from her record.

☞☞ But whoever denies
me before men, I also will
deny before my Father
who is in heaven.☞☞

Matthew 10:33

“I have a responsibility as a servant of the Word, and I can't only lay that responsibility on the shoulders of the leaders of our denominations.”

Pastor Åke Green

Pastor Åke Green

Church Leader

It's hard to speak your mind in Sweden, where any expression perceived as disrespectful of certain aspects of certain groups – race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, faith, and sexual choice, for instance – can be treated as a crime. It's even harder, in some cases, to preach the Bible ... as Pastor Åke Green, of the little Swedish town of Borgholm, learned the hard way.

The theme of the sermon that caused all the trouble was “Are people born with homosexual orientation, or is it the result of influence by evil powers?” Preaching that – even as thoughtfully and biblically as Pastor Green did – was enough to get him sentenced to one month in jail for disrespecting those who embrace homosexual behavior. He could have gotten four years.

The prosecution opted to make an example of Pastor Green, hoping to put some muscle behind a new law, which (as the prime minister of Sweden had recently announced) made it illegal to refer to homosexuality

as unnatural, even in religious contexts and settings. Unfortunately for Green, small-town pastors in Sweden are hardly in a financial position to mount a strong defense against the full legal powers of the national government.

More fortunately, attorneys with Alliance Defending Freedom heard about his case.

The problems started in 2002, when the Swedish Parliament enacted a novel law that criminalized expressions of “disrespect” toward those who practice homosexual behavior. At about the same time, I experienced a deep stirring in my soul. I was noticing a lot of things around me promoting this very kind of behavior. It was everywhere – on TV and throughout all of the media – and I felt a deep sorrow in my heart.

The more that homosexual activity seemed to engulf our society, the more I thought that the leaders of our churches and denominations should come forward and proclaim God’s plan for human sexuality. So, I started preparing a sermon. As I prepared, I found Ezekiel 3:17-19: *“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from My mouth, you shall give them warning from Me. If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give*

him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.”

“Those who pushed for the enactment of the law were looking for a small, unknown, rural church with an unknown pastor and limited resources that they could attack.”

I have a responsibility as a servant of the Word, and I can't only lay that responsibility on the shoulders of the leaders of our denominations. According to Scripture, I also have a responsibility to clear my

own conscience, and to let people know that they are trapped in destructive behavior. So, that is what ultimately led to my sermon.

Unfortunately, those who pushed for the enactment of the law were looking for a small, unknown, rural church with an unknown pastor and limited resources that they could attack. They chose mine.

But throughout the trial, and my initial sentencing, God gave me peace that this experience would ultimately point to His glory and justice would be served. And He was faithful. He brought me an incredible legal team from Alliance Defending Freedom and several of that ministry's Allied Attorneys. Ultimately, I was acquitted and religious freedom was affirmed, creating awareness worldwide of the dangers of these laws. But I can honestly say, because of ADF, I am a free man.

– Pastor Åke Green

Once the trial was over, some of the pressure was off. But that didn't stop the debate in the media. We continued to get a steady stream of letters, most of them quite nasty and impolite.

We cannot help but express our deepest appreciation for the many helpful and supportive letters we received, for the articles and amicus briefs that were submitted on our behalf from lawyers, politicians, and human rights activists from around the world. Both Åke and I are overwhelmed, moved, and encouraged by the support we have had from people across the globe.

While many people contributed to the victory, Åke and I believe all glory goes to God.

– Hjördis Green , Åke’s wife

I was involved in the defense of Pastor Green when he was charged and prosecuted under Sweden’s “hate crimes” law for “causing offense” to the “homosexual community.” You get a pretty clear picture of the attitudes he was facing from what the state prosecutor said at his trial: “One may have whatever religion one wishes, but this is an attack on all fronts against homosexuals. Collecting Bible citations on this topic, as he does, makes this hate speech.”

Contempt for the Scriptures became a running theme of the trial. At his appeal before the Supreme Court of Sweden, the prosecutor badgered Pastor Green with cross examination that challenged him to use a different

Bible – one that did not disapprove of homosexual behavior. Unfazed, Pastor Green calmly responded three times that “there is only one Bible.”

One great irony from the case gave me extraordinary satisfaction – especially given the determination of Swedish prosecutors to censor the Bible’s message regarding homosexual behavior and, of course, make an example of Pastor Green.

Because of the widespread notoriety and attention the case received in the Swedish media, the entire hearing at the Swedish Supreme Court was on national radio and television. Under the rules of the court, the state prosecution was required to play the recording of Pastor Green’s sermon. To accommodate those rules, the state prosecutor had to play the sermon for the entire nation on television and radio. So, through the efforts of the very state officials who wanted to silence him, the truth was preached and heard far beyond Pastor Green’s small pulpit. Amazing.

Åke Green is a hero, and we are grateful for his stand and his perseverance.

– Benjamin Bull, ADF Attorney

Pastor Green appealed his prison sentence to a Swedish appellate court. From there, it wound its way up to the Swedish Supreme Court, whose justices were forced to choose between following the new national laws prosecuting “disrespect” or those of the European Court of Human Rights, which protects freedom of speech. In the end, the court ruled in favor of Pastor Green.

The memory of the prosecution and the still-standing law, however, have prompted considerable self-censorship among pastors in Sweden who might feel led to preach sermons similar to Pastor Green’s. Most don’t want to risk going through a similar prosecution, so the chilling effect of the law – and its prosecution – lingers on.

☞☞ For if I preach the
gospel, I have nothing
to boast of, for necessity
is laid upon me; yes,
woe is me if I do not
preach the gospel. ☞☞

1 Corinthians 9:16

“I felt as if God
had enveloped
me in His arms,
having given me
permission to
be the Joan of
Arc of my little
world, and my
given time.”

Cathy DeCarlo

Cathy DeCarlo

Nurse

It was her childhood experience in the Philippines, watching medical teams rescue her school classmates after an earthquake, that persuaded Cathy DeCarlo to become a nurse. She wanted to help save lives, and her commitment to that aim made her so good at her job that – on moving to the U.S. – she soon landed a spot on the surgical team at one of the most distinguished medical centers in New York City.

As serious about her Christian faith as she was about her work, Cathy made it clear to administrators at her hospital that her religious beliefs would not allow her to participate in the taking of children's lives in the womb. Hospital officials presented her with standard documents, which she signed, exempting her from helping with abortions.

Five years later, though, Cathy was called in and ordered to help abort a 22-week-old baby. She immediately contacted her supervisor, and then the supervisor's

supervisor, pointing to abundant evidence that this case was clearly not an emergency – and noting that other nurses were available. But Cathy’s supervisors refused to back down, saying if she refused, they would file charges that could cost her her job and even her nursing license.

Her heart breaking, Cathy was required to set up the room and then reassemble the baby’s parts to ensure the abortion was completed. Immediately afterward, she began looking for legal help to hold the hospital accountable for what her supervisors had so deliberately put her through – and for the signed agreement they’d so blithely ignored.

I never really wanted to sue anyone, least of all the hospital where I worked full-time as a nurse. But, after being coerced into assisting with an abortion, consistently belittled for complaining about having to do that, told I was going to have to assist with abortions from then on because of cost cutting, and deemed “emotional” when I expressed confusion that this could even happen in our country, I knew I had to take a stand.

The final straw came when two managers locked me in an office and tried to coerce me into writing a statement saying I would voluntarily assist with

abortions, as long as they were labeled “emergencies.” Because of my protests, they had stopped calling me in and giving me overtime – but if I signed the statement, they said I could have as many calls and as much overtime as I wanted. I turned them down.

As a professional, I had always prided myself on my sense of self-worth and independence. Suddenly, everything I had held to be true was in question. I was ... a victim. I felt helpless – and I hated it.

I quickly learned who my real friends were. Some of my coworkers wanted to know if I was simply suing the hospital because I wanted money. Another senior nurse said I was too rebellious; questioning authority was “disrespectful,” she said. Someone even suggested that I probably was not holy enough and needed to pray more, and this was why I was being persecuted.

In these moments, I thought of how the Bible teaches that the devil will use false prophets and one’s own nature to trick and deceive. I also remembered Eve and the serpent, and how much easier it is to simply stop fighting. How tempting that was!

But, thankfully, my faith in Christ was stronger than that temptation. For, during all of this, I realized God was using me as an instrument of His grace.

Several nurses came to me and told me how glad they were that I was resisting this policy, as they would have remained quiet, not knowing how to fight back. Once, when I was particularly despondent and angry, one of my lawyers told me, “It is a grace from God to be persecuted and to go through suffering” (James 1:2-4). I found comfort in this. I thought of other women who had suffered, such as Rosa Parks, and my resolve strengthened. Through all of this, I felt as if God had enveloped me in His arms, having given me permission to be the Joan of Arc of my little world, at my given time.

“I quickly learned who my real friends were.”

– Cathy DeCarlo

Cathy's attorney asked me to provide a professional statement in support of her case. After reviewing her testimony, it was obvious to me that either what she was told about the medical situation being an emergency was a lie, or that malpractice had been committed (for such an "emergency," there should

have been a lot more preoperative medical treatment).

It will be such a joy to meet Cathy someday. I am very grateful for her courage, not to mention her foresight – obtaining written confirmation at the time of her employment of a right that should be accorded to everyone working in healthcare. That such a right of conscience should be challenged was no surprise to me. Though I have had the privilege of working in a setting where – so far – such positions are respected, a growing number of medical professionals are under increasing pressure from government and society to change their stance and beliefs. That makes me especially appreciative of her personal sacrifice.

Around the time I first heard about Cathy, I had begun memorizing the Sermon on the Mount. I still have not finished, but I have found reciting the Beatitudes to be such an encouragement, in particular Matthew 5:11-12: “Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Jesus promises much more than just surviving or making it through okay. He promises blessing. May Cathy – and the increasing number of people who are being similarly tested,

and all the foot soldiers of Christ who come alongside us to help in so many ways – be blessed as He promised.

– Susan Rutherford, M.D. (OB/GYN)

Cathy's case showed me that medical professionals who are facing coercion to do abortions are largely powerless, and that many do not know what their rights really are. To persuade such a large hospital to protect conscience rights was so important – but winning that protection cost Cathy a lot.

Her experience has been one of intense tragedy, perseverance, and redemption. She was exposed to unspeakable horror and endured a very long and difficult legal process, but finally, she was able to see the hospital change its policy and have her rights vindicated.

I was continually inspired by Cathy's strength and steadfastness. Even now, she is sharing her story on Capitol Hill, advocating the protection of medical professionals from coercion. Ultimately, her goal is to protect other nurses from having to go through what she did. I pray her great sacrifices will accomplish that for her professional peers all over America.

– Matt Bowman, ADF Attorney

Cathy enlisted attorneys from Alliance Defending Freedom to hold her hospital accountable to the law, and to help ensure that neither she nor any other nurse would ever again be forced to participate in an abortion against his or her will. With the help of ADF, she filed formal complaints against her supervisors for forcing her to violate her faith.

After a government investigation, the hospital changed its policies to protect the rights and religious freedom of all medical personnel. The hospital now exempts any staff member from participating in abortions if that person requests the exemption.

☞☞ Indeed we count
them blessed who
endure. You have heard
of the perseverance of
Job and seen the end
intended by the Lord
— that the Lord is very
compassionate and
merciful. ☞☞

James 5:11

““The questions I have had to face are questions I think all of us have to ask, at some point.””

Barronelle Stutzman

Barronelle Stutzman

Business Owner

A floral artist in Richland, Washington, for almost 50 years, Barronelle Stutzman's specialty has always been her creativity. Any good florist can sell you flowers; very few can create a floral display that captures the essential spirit of a person or occasion. That has been Barronelle's gift, and it has endeared her to generations of customers who have shared with her their stories, their struggles, their celebrations and ceremonies ... their lives.

Her friend Rob was a favorite customer for many years. More than most, he understood the nature of Barronelle's creativity – so he enlisted her often for birthdays and other events, and she enjoyed coming up with something just right for those occasions.

That all ended, though, when he asked for her help with his upcoming same-sex wedding. While Barronelle had long understood that Rob was homosexual, she knew she could not create custom wedding designs and

participate in a religious ceremony that would celebrate a homosexual view of marriage – one completely at odds with the teachings of Scripture. She couldn't find a way to honor God and celebrate something that so clearly violated His Word.

So she referred Rob to three other florists who she knew would do a good job, telling him she couldn't participate in his wedding because of her "relationship with Christ." At first, she thought that, understanding her so well, he would grasp why she couldn't separate her creativity from her faith. Rob said he understood, but his partner posted about it on social media. It was then that the attorney general of Washington got wind of the situation, and filed a lawsuit charging Barronelle with unlawful discrimination; the ACLU filed a similar suit on behalf of Rob and his partner.

Because both lawsuits charge Barronelle personally, as well as her business, she stands to lose not only her shop, but her home and life savings as well.

When my husband, Darold, and I talked it over, we decided we didn't have a choice. God is pretty clear that marriage is a sacred relationship between a husband and wife. I had no choice but to act consistently with His truth. My dilemma was how

to tell my friend Rob in the most loving way possible that I couldn't participate in his wedding because of my relationship with Christ and His teaching that marriage reflects the relationship of Christ and His church.

I prayed that God would give me the words to tell Rob. Even though I cared deeply about him and had designed floral arrangements for him for years, I could not participate in this one event that conflicted with my conscience. I did not want to sound "pious," or "holier than thou," but to simply demonstrate the love of Christ to my friend.

When I told Rob that I couldn't help celebrate his wedding, I felt the Lord gave me the words "relationship with Christ" to lovingly share with him Christ's truth about marriage. I also referred Rob to other florists who I knew would do a good job for him. That was important to me.

God gave Darold and I perfect peace over the situation, and continues to fill me with love for Rob.

The verse that I have read over and over is Isaiah 41:9-10: *"Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and will not cast thee away. Fear not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed: for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea,*

I will help thee, Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of righteousness.”

To think that God would choose a little old lady working in a flower shop to use for His glory seems impossible. But our case has emphasized that God indeed is in control, and the plan is His, not ours. The en-

“I did not want to sound ‘pious,’ or ‘holier than thou,’ but to simply demonstrate the love of Christ to my friend.”

couragement we receive just about every day is incredible. And when I ask God, “Am I where You want me?” He sends me people with cards, letters, hugs, and more.

I know that God’s promises are true. The Bible says He

uses the foolish to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27) – that’s me. Regardless of whether we win or lose this case, it is already a part of God’s plan and will be used for His glory, so how can we really lose?

Through all of this, my eyes have been further opened

to God's Word. God says that He will refine those He loves so that we can know and serve Him better. The blessings that have come from this experience have been overwhelming, and we are humbled and blessed beyond words.

The questions Darold and I have had to face are questions I think all of us have to ask, at some point: How much am I willing to give to Christ? Am I willing to take a stand? What do I own that isn't already His? What do I possess that He has not given me?

In the end, all we have left are these lives we're living ... and that's what we offer You, Lord.

– Barronelle Stutzman

God's in control. Both Barronelle and I accepted what we could lose early on. How about you? Are the things you have more important than your relationship with Christ?

There's no question, really. Everything we have is His and we are but sinners, saved by grace.

I knew the Lord at 23, and through the years I've come to know that little by little, He prepares you.

He prepared Barronelle, and she's gone through some pretty tough stuff even before this. When something comes up in your life, you just go through it. He gives you the courage and faith when you need it. It's all from Him. And He uses your past experience to prepare you for what's next.

Some people call us heroes, but we're not heroes. We're just commons sinners, saved by God's grace, and we know who and what we are. This is just a part of His plan.

We know all things work together for the good of those who know Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). God gives us the faith we need, when we need it.

– Darold Stutzman, Barronelle's husband

I decided to become an attorney when I was 12 years old. I had heard my father talk about Esther and Deborah in the Bible and say, "You need to know what God's called you to do." At a church camp, for one of the few times in my life, I felt that the Lord was impressing something directly upon my heart – and it was to become a lawyer.

Barronelle's case, though, has marked a pretty big step in my faith journey – and in my family's, too. That's one of the privileges of working at Alliance Defending Freedom: your kids, like you, get to see believers take a stand for their faith.

During depositions, Barronelle wanted to go to her friend Rob, to “love on him” and talk to him. That's very unusual at a deposition, and normally we'd tell our clients that they should not have discussions with opposing parties. But if you know Barronelle ... she really does love and care for him. So she went over and gave him a big hug.

Not many attorneys have ever seen two opposing parties hug each other at a deposition. It was certainly a first for me – and I've been practicing for 17 years.

Anytime you have a front-row seat to see a believer taking a stand and doing so in such a loving manner – and especially when you see what it costs – it has to inspire you. It has to motivate you to be stronger, to live a life that's more consistent with what Scripture has called us to do.

During a break in the depositions, Barronelle, my co-counsel, and I were in the car, praying, and Barronelle said to us, “I just want to thank you for giving me the

opportunity to represent Jesus.” I was overwhelmed – and thought, “No, thank you for giving us the opportunity to represent Jesus.”

– Kristen Waggoner, ADF Attorney

For Barronelle, the price of following her conscience has been steep – but the case has indeed brought her many opportunities to represent Jesus. She has been profiled in publications and interviewed on network and cable news outlets all over the country, and – for the first time in her life – has found herself called to share her faith before audiences large and small. God is blessing her courage and her eloquence, and ADF is fighting not only to save her business and home, but also to preserve her religious freedom, the religious freedom of her eight children and 23 grandchildren, and that of the growing number of other creative professionals who are finding themselves in the same situation.

☞☞ You are My servant,
I have chosen you and
have not cast you away:
Fear not, for I am with
you; Be not dismayed,
for I am your God. I
will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you, I
will uphold you with My
righteous right hand. ☞☞

Isaiah 41:9-10

“The God who
defeats giants
is still willing
to do that.”

— Pastor Dave Welch

Pastor Dave Welch

Church Leader

They became known as “the Houston Five” – a small group of Houston-area pastors whose bold sermons encouraging their congregations to take note of what was happening in their city entangled them in an epic legal battle with civic leaders that drew national attention.

Houston’s mayor, Annise Parker, one of the first openly homosexual mayors of a major U.S. city, had persuaded city officials to hastily pass a “non-discrimination” law requiring all buildings open to the public to allow access to restrooms and other facilities without regard to gender. City administrators passed the bill without even putting it to a public vote – seriously underestimating how many citizens would oppose it.

Thousands signed a petition demanding that the law either be repealed or put to a vote of the people. Although the petition secured more than the required number of approved signatures, the mayor’s city

attorney disqualified it. As a result, a group of pastors and citizens filed a lawsuit against the mayor and other city officials.

In an apparent effort to intimidate pastors who opposed the mayor, attorneys for the city issued subpoenas against five local pastors (including Dave Welch), none of whom were party to the lawsuit. These subpoenas ordered the pastors to turn over to the Houston court system all personal correspondence (texts, emails, letters) and sermons related to the non-discrimination law, the petition, Mayor Parker, homosexuality, or gender. The order – and the refusal of the Houston Five to comply with it – sparked a national uproar.

It also awakened Christians coast to coast to how seriously the so-called “culture wars” were endangering their religious freedom.

It has become very clear that there is an agenda to compel people through the force of law to not only accept, but celebrate, all sexual lifestyles in our society. This puts us – as pastors who hold to God’s vision of marriage as between one man and one woman – in a position of having to choose between the directives of God and the laws of man.

When this sexual agenda came to a head with the election of an activist lesbian mayor in Houston, the five of us pastors knew our “Alamo moment” – our line in the sand – had come. And that, no matter what happened, we must not yield, for the sake of our faith, our freedom, and our families.

One of the clearest signs of God’s blessing during the nearly two years of this struggle was how our coalition of pastors – from

very diverse backgrounds –

experienced such a consistent unity of mind, message, and methods.

We were able to work together in a way that can only be explained as the hand of

God working in our hearts. Each of us saw, felt, and experienced the Holy Spirit at City Hall, in front of TV cameras, in the courtroom, and “in the streets” as we lived out our daily calling as ministers.

“The five of us knew our ‘Alamo moment’ – our line in the sand – had come.”

I particularly remember that we quoted Psalm 37 many times to remind ourselves that this was the

Lord's battle, not ours. We also returned frequently to Psalm 91, which assured us that because the battle was His, we had no need to fear or falter, no matter the "odds" against us. I needed this encouragement often, knowing attorneys from a major law firm and the mayor of one of the nation's largest cities were working to trample our God-given, constitutionally protected rights.

During the trial, the judge withheld content from our petition that would have clarified our purpose: to protect women and children by keeping biological males out of women's restrooms. But one page of the blocked content apparently slipped through to the jury, revealing our true motives. The page they saw was 3410. Our attorney put that number into his Bible app, and 2 Chronicles 34:10 came up: *"Then they gave it into the hands of the workmen who had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD used it to restore and repair the house."* We believed that this was the Lord's word of encouragement for us – He was going to "restore and repair" this situation and give the people of Houston the right to vote on this matter.

This situation took a huge toll physically, emotionally, and financially, and stretched me at times to the

breaking point. However, I would do it again in a moment, knowing the much higher price our spiritual ancestors paid to protect our religious and political freedom. We five are so inspired that God used our “David vs. Goliath” stand to inspire pastors and leaders across the nation. Truly, the God who defeats giants is still willing to do that – if we are!

– Pastor Dave Welch

The massive reaction to this from all across the country surprised the five of us pastors most of all. We five are really nobodies. We all looked at each other and wondered how we had ended up in that situation.

If the mayor had just come to us and asked for the sermons, I'd have said, “Absolutely. Give me a couple of days to print them all off.” But when the city demanded our sermons, we knew it was an attempt to bully us. That's what I said no to.

At one point during the uproar, a reporter wrote a headline about me, “Megachurch Pastor to Preach Politics from Pulpit.” And I said, in response, “Moral values, not politics. This is about moral values.” That is what many people don't understand. If I, as a pastor,

don't stand up and speak to my congregation about the moral issues of the culture, who else will?

– Pastor Steve Riggle

***N**ever in my wildest dreams did I think that this would happen to us in America. This feels like a recurrence of what I knew and experienced in Vietnam. Some days, I actually wake up and wonder, “Do I have to take my family, my children to another country, again?” – because this is what we fled Vietnam to escape.*

The city's demand that I turn in my sermons and communications and correspondence – that violates what this nation is for. It shocked me at first, but I know now that this was just a tactic to silence us. But it didn't work. It will not work. The helpful words and actions and support of pastors and leaders all over America ensured that in Houston, and I'm so grateful.

– Pastor Khanh Huynh

***F**rom the time I was in high school, I knew my calling was to fight these kinds of battles for the Body of Christ. So when I saw what was going on in Houston, how unconstitutional and aggressive the subpoena was, how big the stakes were – I knew I had to be a part of this case.*

Meeting the clients and hearing their stories confirmed that decision. These are really remarkable people, with unbelievable stories – one who moved from Cuba to escape political oppression, another who fled Vietnam on boats to find a place to live free. Now, in America, they’ve found themselves facing the same bullying and intimidation they fled their homelands to escape.

Even with all that, though, I was totally unprepared for the scale of this case. After the first news release, a media firestorm erupted and public interest just exploded. The Houston situation struck a nerve with American Christians in a way I’d never seen before. Pastors I hadn’t heard from in years reached out to me – wanting the opportunity to stand with these five pastors. Even some of my own family and friends who hadn’t really engaged with these issues suddenly, finally, got it.

God clearly used the pastors’ story to awaken people to the struggles we’re facing for religious freedom in America ... and it was such a blessing for me to be “on the ground” in this crucial fight.

An even bigger blessing was seeing how the Body of Christ came together, and how much grace came from that. This case was won primarily through the intense public pressure put on the mayor by countless

Christians who had suddenly awakened to the danger of losing their freedom. Which made me ask myself: how many more battles could we be winning, if only we could sustain this same kind of intense, loving focus from the Body of Christ?

– Erik Stanley, ADF Attorney

Outraged at the mayor's decision, the five pastors enlisted the help of ADF attorneys, who filed a motion on their behalf asking a federal court to quash the city's subpoena requests. Faced with that legal action, national media attention, and a major pushback from the citizens of Houston, the mayor withdrew the subpoenas just days before I Stand Sunday (a citywide rally of support for the five pastors) and Pulpit Freedom Houston (an event encouraging pastors to speak boldly from their own pulpits on the most pressing social and political issues of our day).

The Texas Supreme Court finally ordered the City of Houston to either repeal its illegally created law or put it to a vote. City officials chose the latter course, only to see their ordinance roundly defeated at the ballot box.

But the salvation of
the righteous is from
the LORD; He is their
strength in the time of
trouble.

Psalm 37:39

Closing

Some might finish a book like this and think, “Wow – it’s getting harder to live for Christ.” And for many, in the United States and all over the world, it is. Jesus Himself told us it would be so.

But this isn’t a book of fear – it’s a book of hope. These are not, by their own admission, extraordinary people with superhuman faith ... just ordinary Christians who have found God’s grace sufficient for meeting the painful challenges placed before them (2 Corinthians 12:9).

You may well identify with them, having your own powerful story of how the Lord has led and blessed you in the midst of a trying ordeal that could so easily have undermined your faith. Or, maybe you are still awaiting whatever trials may come.

Either way, we hope this book has been a blessing and a challenge to you – to share your story with others,

or to summon God's abundant courage for your own tests. Reading about these fellow believers, we understand better how vital it is that we pray for each other, encourage each other, and stand together, as we prepare for the trials we each may face in the days and years ahead.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Here's to seeing the unseen – and impacting eternity. And may He be glorified in our trials.

☞☞ I am the vine; you
are the branches. If you
remain in Me and I in
you, you will bear much
fruit; apart from Me you
can do nothing. ☞☞

John 15:5



ALLIANCE DEFENDING
FREEDOM

FOR FAITH. FOR JUSTICE.