

LOVE

Mariah Watkins

It was a large family Bible. One of the most beautiful I have ever seen. Though that Bible is over 100 years old the name "Mariah Watkins" is still quite legible. It is written in small gold print right in the middle of the large and ornate front cover.

I had heard about this Bible before. It was the one which George Washington Carver read virtually every day of his life. He even read from it on the day of his death.

It was given to him by Mariah Watkins in 1876. He died in 1943.

I knew that George was an orphan boy who had been befriended by Andrew and Mariah Watkins of Neosho, Mo. I knew that they were poor. Andrew did odd jobs and Mariah was a washer woman and mid-wife. I have seen a picture of the shanty in which they lived.

When I read that Mariah had given a Bible to that little black orphan boy I mistakenly assumed that it was the kind of a Bible that I would give to a little black orphan boy. I probably would have given something cheap and inexpensive, or something that I

was done with and had no further use for, or something which the kids had cast out or abandoned. That's probably the kind of a Bible which I would have given to a little sickly black orphaned slave boy who could not speak without a stammer. But that is not the kind of a Bible which Mariah Watkins gave.

When George came to live with the Watkins he didn't even have a real name. His master's name was Carver. Therefore, he was known as "Carver's George." Mariah Watkins would have none of this. She insisted that henceforth that orphan boy be known as George Carver.

For three years Uncle Andrew and Aunt Mariah treated George Carver like their own son. During this time he received the first formal schooling of his life. He paid his way by scrubbing clothes, washing dishes, and ironing.

Since a slave child was given no birth certificate we can only estimate his age. He was therefore thought to be only 13 years old when he said goodbye to Aunt Mariah to continue his pilgrimage in search of knowledge. He wanted to know what made snow and hail, and whether the color of a flower could be changed by changing the seed.

Aunt Mariah doubted that George could find this knowledge in Neosho, or even in Joplin, or Kansas City. But she believed that it could be found, and she believed that George would find it. Thus, she commissioned him to continue the quest for knowledge, and when he had found it to share that knowledge with his people.

But she did not send him forth empty handed. She gave him a Bible. It was not just any Bible, it was her Bible. It has not only the inspired text of Holy Scriptures, but also a dictionary, concordance, references, and other study helps. Though it is frayed from more than a hundred years of use it is still beautiful. It was "state of the art" quality and must have been one of the most expensive Bibles that money could buy.

When that stammering little slave boy started off to see the world he carried with him a pearl of great price. His clothes may

have been ragged, he may have had no money in his pocket, but he carried under his arm a treasure too valuable for words. That Bible was a precious gift by even modern standards, but at that time and under those circumstances, it was so great a sacrifice that young George Carver must have been breathless with wonder each time he touched its pages.

Years later when as a famous scientist he testified before a Congressional Committee he was asked where he gained such wisdom. "From a book" was his reply. "What book?" Dr. Carver answered, "The Bible."

Dr. George Washington Carver could have added incredible wealth to his worldwide fame, but he chose instead to give away the valuable lessons which he had learned in life. Such generosity was a beautiful tribute to the lessons he had learned from the sacrificial gift, and example of Mariah Watkins.

A Christian Epitaph (George Washington Carver)

He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world.

From the grave of George Washington Carver

If the essence of a godly life is to be like Jesus, then George Washington Carver achieved that goal to an extent that few men have ever equalled.

As a sickly son of slave parents he grew up with more adversity than most will ever be called upon to endure. Without bitterness or rancor he triumphed over them all.

He spent his last days reading a frayed leather Bible that had been given to him many years before by a colored washerwoman and midwife named Mariah Watkins. Since she and her husband Andrew had no children they felt that God had sent George into their lives. He was 13 at the time and spent his first days in school while living in their home in Neosho, Mo. When he left their home Mariah sent him forth with this commission, "You must learn all you can, and then go out into the world and give your learning back to your people.

George died January 5, 1943, true to his commission. He had not only given himself freely to black people, but to all people.

On April 1, 1896, Booker T. Washington wrote to him: "I cannot offer you money, position, or fame. The first two you have. The last, from the place you now occupy, you will no doubt achieve. These things I now ask you to give up. I offer you in their place work — hard work — the task of bringing a people from degradation, poverty and waste to full manhood."

With that George W. Carver accepted a teaching position at Tuskegee Institute for \$125 per month. Forty years later he was still receiving the same meager amount. He declined every raise

he was offered and even gave away to those in need what little money he had. "What would I do with more money?" he once said, "I already have all the earth.

Thomas Edison tried to hire him at a minimum salary of \$100,000 per year. Carver declined, as he did also many other lucrative offers.

A group of peanut farmers in Florida sent him some diseased specimen with a check for \$100. He sent back his diagnosis, and also the check. "As the good Lord charged nothing to grow your peanuts," he wrote, "I do not think it fitting of me to charge anything for curing them."

When a dyestuffs firm heard that he had perfected an array of substitute vegetable dyes, they mailed him a blank check and offered to build him a laboratory. He mailed back their check together with the 536 formulas he had found to that date.

He once held a congressional committee spellbound for two hours while demonstrating a dazzling array of products from the peanut. The list would ultimately include some 300 products, including vanishing cream, rubbing oils, milk flakes, buttermilk, Worcestershire sauce, pickles, quinine, etc. Representative Barkley asked, "Where did you learn all this?" Carver answered, "from a book." "What book?" Carver answered, "The Bible."

Carver believes that his insight into the peanut came as a result of a direct communication from God. According to the story Dr. Carver asked God to explain to him the universe. God responded, "The universe is too complicated, you will never understand it." Then he prayed for God to explain man. The Lord responded, "Man is too complicated, you will never understand." He asked God, "Mr. Creator, why did you make the peanut?" "That's better" the Lord seemed to say, and he gave Carver a handful of peanuts and together they went back to the laboratory and got down to work.

Inside the laboratory Carver put on his apron and tore the nuts apart, isolating their gums, resins, fats, sugars and starches. Spread before him were pentoses, pentosans, legumins lysin,

amido and amino acids, etc. Gradually his list of synthetics began to grow. Milk, ink, dyes, shoe polish, creosote, salve, shaving cream, insulating board, fuel briquettes, marble, etc.

For two days and nights he worked, dismissing worried students who tapped upon his door. He felt himself to be in God's hands, the mortal instrument of a divine revelation. Later he would say, "The Great Creator gave us three kingdoms — the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral. Now He has added a fourth — the kingdom of synthetics."

Carver once said, "I love to think of nature as an unlimited broadcasting system through which God speaks to us every hour, if we will only tune Him in."

With reference to discrimination he said, "You must never let the haters of the world divert you from the path of your own duty."

George Washington Carver was one of the most remarkable human beings who ever lived. He was born in slavery, became a scientist of undisputed genius, an artist whose paintings were prized by museums all over the world. He felt the wounds of discrimination but would not allow himself the luxury of hate. To him the world was the Garden of God.

His greatest epitaph, however, is not best written upon his grave, but upon the hearts of those millions who have been influenced by the power of his Christlike life.

How Strange? (W. Carl Ketcherside)

W. Carl Ketcherside is an eighty-year-old preacher living in St. Louis, Missouri. He has preached all over the world, authored thirty-four books, and baptized thousands of people into Christ.

Instead of retiring, however, he is involved in starting a new congregation in the inner city of St. Louis. How strange?

Strange letter — he wrote to me on March 21, 1983:

We will soon be in the satellite congregation. It will necessitate our going into a thousand homes, where often there will be the dull stare from drug or drink-sodden eyes, to encounter the hundreds of despair-ridden who are depressed and forsaken. I am anxiously awaiting the time. . . .

What a strange thing to anxiously await! As a matter of fact the facility they planned to rent was formerly a tavern and house of prostitution which had been fire bombed, killing one of the women. How strange indeed?

Within a month or so the work was under way. Carl wrote again on April 28, 1983:

Day before yesterday I made 200 homes in the vicinity of the new place. Today I am starting out again. I met a bearded man who was just out of prison and talked with him a long time: I sat down on the sidewalk beside an old man who had slept in a garage the night before and rose at 5:30 a.m. and was drinking a cup of coffee and eating a doughnut; I conversed with two foul-mouthed prostitutes and talked to them of Jesus; I saw a number of old people who had lost hope. Pray for us. . . .

This seems to me an unusual type of retirement! How strange! How utterly strange!

On June 11, 1983, Carl wrote again:

The inner city work is going strong as ever. There has been no slackening of resolution upon the part of those who are a part of the spiritual project. The sign is going up at the place this evening. It reads "The Cornerstone — An Adventure in Christian Fellowship — By Oak Hill Chapel — Telephone 522-6680." It is a hard pull. But those who come seem interested and we place the work in the hands of the Lord. We are starting this evening a training course to enable us to liberate the captives. We will be trying to develop commandoes for Christ. These will involve both black and white, as well as a few Mexican folk.

There are some dedicated people working with me on the venture, people who will sell their lives dearly for Jesus on the street. With a few like this it will help to know that our absent King is working with us and is interested in the result. It is a costly project from the standpoint of life, finance, and frazzled nerves as people lie to you without realizing they are doing it. It is a strategy of survival which they have developed. Pray for us. . . .

I think this is a strange way to spend one's declining years. How about you?

As winter approached Carl, wrote again on November 18, 1983:

We are as tired and weary tonight as a wet collie that was beaten with a two-by-four. . . . Monday we were at the Cornerstone all day folding and sizing clothing to give away. Yesterday we began the distribution. The doors were to be open at 9:30. Nell and I got there just after 9:00. There was a line waiting. More than a hundred went through yesterday. Some of them were ill-dressed and ragged. Some stank. Some had the smell of wine or other strong drink as they gave their names. Some of the women were pregnant. Others had two or three little children clinging to their dresses. Some of them were suffering from malnutrition.

All of them found coats and things they could wear. Today the more than sixty who went through did the same. We gave away one of the biggest stacks of clothing I have ever seen. We will duplicate the two days with another two, December 7 and 8. We

HOW STRANGE?

paid the rent for a woman who was to be evicted from her home. We gave away fifteen blankets and our blanket distribution has not started yet. We have given away food to the hungry, comfort to the weary, and sown the seed of good deeds in the hearts of many. Please pray for us. Pray very earnestly. . . .

Strange choices — I can't decide whether I would like to spend the winter in Florida or South Texas. How strange that anyone by choice would spend the winter in the ghettos of St. Louis?

June 21, 1984:

I write this as I prepare to go to the Cornerstone for the fourth day. Yesterday I went house to house in the vicinity and only made slightly in excess of a hundred homes. I got stymied in the backyard of a Laotian home with an elderly man who left his immediate family behind because they chose to remain in the jungle rather than be rescued and come to the United States. He was wrapping copper wire and flattening beer cans for the aluminum. I sat down with him on an old rug and taught him three words — screen, pliers, and hatchet.

I intend to continue going until we can start a class in his backyard this summer and learn to speak English. I say that because I am sure that I will learn as much as they do. I wish I had jobs for all these. Their little half-naked children worry me. There are about forty-five or more Laotians in this "compound." It is three blocks from the Cornerstone. Pray for us. . . .

I really think that someone's backyard is a strange place to hold a class. How about you?

If you think all of this is strange, wait until you read this letter postmarked August 2, 1984:

Nell and I are in the process of selling our home. We are moving down into the area where the work is. I have talked about the suburbia complex until at last it has made me uncomfortable. I spend a lot of time down in the area. I meet scores of people the likes of whom I have never seen before. One would never meet

PERSONAL VIGNETTES

them inside a church building but they come to us in their pitiable state.

One of our best people, one of the most dependable, was a tavern owner across the street from the time he was eighteen until he was twenty-nine. He is now forty-five and blind. He has been a real blessing to me and I deeply love and respect him. We have no trouble with those who have not been reared in the church. Nell works by my side and is a powerful witness for Jesus . . . pray for us. . . .

Isn't that strange? When a person sells his home where will he find any security?

August 28, 1984:

The upstairs over the Cornerstone was raided and women pushing drugs were hailed into court. We are where we are needed. . . .

September 6, 1984:

We are literally swamped with responsibility at present. We will probably have to move in two weeks. There is a woman from North Ireland in our home for a month. The Cornerstone is exacting a great deal in time and emotional involvement. This week I was there four days. One morning I talked in succession to two girls, the oldest of whom was twenty-three. Both of them had two children by different men. Neither of them is married. one brought clothes, the other came hoping to find them. I prayed with both of them and made arrangements to perform a marriage for one of them.

As soon as they left, a Pentecostal Holiness woman came in. Her husband had been without work for three months. They were literally starving. She was pregnant. I gave her a sack of food and she asked if she could pray for me. We are beginning to make headway. This woman had called the St. Louis Social Services and they had sent her to us first.

They called me last week and congratulated me on what we were doing for the community. But they told me they were preparing to raid the upstairs where drugs were being pushed.

HOW STRANGE?

They did so and got rid of the pusher. The month previous they raided upstairs and removed a hooker who was taking men whom she had solicited on the street to her upstairs apartment which the government was providing. So life goes on and there are really no dull moments. I am not satisfied with what I am doing. I awaken tired every morning. . . .

Stranger still — you know, the more I think about it the stranger it gets. Now I have come to the place where I think it is strange that I should think it strange.

I think it was Watchman Nee who said that by the time the average Christian gets his temperature up to normal everybody thinks that he has got a fever.

As strange as it seems, now I wonder if Carl and Nell Ketcherside aren't normal and the rest of us are strange!

“Little Annie”

(Anne Sullivan)

When Queen Victoria pinned England’s highest award on the late Helen Keller, she asked, “How do you explain the fact that even though you were both blind and deaf, you were able to accomplish so much?” Without a moment’s hesitation she responded that without her teacher, Anne Sullivan, the name of Helen Keller would have remained unknown.

Who was this miracle teacher? What ingredients were incorporated into her life that she might have the patience, love, and determination to transform an incorrigible human animal into a refined and educated lady.

The story begins many years before when Anne Sullivan was herself a “human animal” confined to a cage. She was in the dungeon of a mental hospital just outside Boston, Massachusetts. Though the institution was one of the more enlightened ones for the treatment of the mentally disturbed, “Little Annie” was considered as hopelessly insane. She was therefore placed in a cage and consigned to an area where she would be out of sight. On occasions she would violently attack anyone who came near her cage, at other times she would become so completely withdrawn that she seemed oblivious to their presence.

At about that time an elderly nurse in that institution began to show a special interest in “Little Annie.” She felt that there was hope for all of God’s creatures. Each day she would go to the dungeon and eat her lunch just outside of Annie’s cage. Little Annie gave no indication that she was even aware of her presence. One day the nurse brought some brownies to Annie and left them outside of her cage. Though Annie gave no hint they were there, when the nurse returned the next day they were gone.

From that time on the nurse brought brownies each week on her Thursday visit. Soon the doctors began to notice a remarkable difference in Little Annie. After some time she was

"LITTLE ANNIE"

moved upstairs and eventually was considered as completely cured.

This is the story behind the story. It is another remarkable tribute to the awesome power of human love. It reminds us of the compassionate Christ who gave Himself for hopeless wretches like us who were trapped in dungeons of deep despair. It encourages us to eat with sinners and to leave a few brownies in reach of the hopeless.

There are "Little Annies" all around us, and Helen Kellers yet to be born. Our love and understanding may be the key that will open their dungeons and fill their lives with radiance and sunshine.

Adapted from *See You at the Top*
by Zig Ziglar

Teacher

(Anne Sullivan)

Everything which God commands us to accomplish, He can do better. Instead of doing it for us, however, He lovingly and patiently teaches us to do it for ourselves. This is a principle ingredient of discipleship.

How beautifully this principle is illustrated in the life of the late Helen Keller. As a small child Helen Keller was afflicted with a terrible illness which left her blind, deaf and dumb. Her miserable little world was black and silent and her untrained hands sought to destroy virtually everything they came in contact with.

Her teacher was Anne Sullivan from the Perkins Institution for the Blind. The job of the teacher is not to do things for students, but to train students to do things for themselves. Sometimes progress can be painfully slow.

For half a century Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller were inseparable companions. When Miss Sullivan died in 1936 her student had become one of the most famous women in the world. Helen was able to graduate from college with honors, to correspond with famous men all over the world in both French and English, and her ability to speak has been described as the greatest individual achievement in the history of education.

With reference to her ability to speak Helen modestly wrote, "I have only partially conquered the hostile silence. My voice is not a pleasant one, I am afraid, but I have clothed its broken wings in the unfailing hues of my dreams and my struggle for it has strengthened every fiber of my being and deepened my understanding of all human strivings and disappointed ambitions."

There is little doubt that her teacher could speak with clearer and more articulate tones than Helen was ever able to achieve. The job of a teacher, however, is selfless instead of selfish. What the teacher is able to do is not the point. The success of a teacher

is reflected in what the student is able to accomplish.

Every parent has experienced the frustration that comes from trying to teach. It is in some respects easier to feed and clothe children than it is to teach them to do it for themselves. We can tie those shoe laces in only a few seconds . . . they may struggle for minutes to do the same thing . . . and then not even have it done right. To always do things for our children which they are capable of learning to do by themselves, would be a terrible injustice to them and their future.

Remember that everything which God commands us to do He can do better. He patiently gives us the privilege, however, of learning to do these things by ourselves.

Those of us who want to be like God must also patiently give ourselves to the work of training others. There will be many times when we will be tempted to throw up our hands in frustration and do it ourselves. There will be moments of impatience when we grow tired of perennial mistakes and sweep aside our concern for the progress of others.

In times like this may we pause to reflect upon the life of Jesus, who is our ultimate Teacher and Guide. Everything which He has commanded us to do He can do better, and faster, and more efficiently. He gives to us the blessed privilege, however, of laboring together with Him in the work of His Kingdom.

Let us strive to be as patient and concerned with others . . . as we want Jesus to be patient and concerned with us!

