



*Ripples is a narrative showing how a person's legacy isn't set in stone. It is the story of a family plagued by generations of violence and addictions. We walk through Biblical stories, personal stories and practical tips to show where we come from doesn't have to determine where we go. God is in the business of restoration.*

## **Ripples: Learning to let go of the past and leave a new legacy!**

By Laura Hicks

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# Ripples

A high-speed photograph of a water droplet falling into a pool of water. The droplet is suspended in mid-air, just above the surface, and is perfectly spherical. Below it, a series of concentric ripples spread outwards from the point of impact. The water's surface is highly reflective, creating a mirror-like effect. The overall color palette is a range of blues, from light sky blue to deep, dark navy blue.

Learning to let go  
of the past and  
leave a new legacy

Laura Hicks and Bill Hines

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## ADVANCE PRAISE

*Laura knows what it's like to walk through fire and come out on the other side trusting God. I love her dynamic story-telling and captivating narrative that she uses to lead us through the journey of letting go of generational sin and bondage. With Jesus we have the opportunity to embrace a new legacy of faith and Laura tells us how to do it. If you want to create a lasting legacy of faith, you will be encouraged by Laura's redemption story.*

**- Micah Maddox, National Women's Conference Speaker and Author of *Anchored In: Experience a Power-Full Life in a Problem-Filled World***

*An endearing walk down the spiritual legacy trail. Be prepared for a hard history--a family running with unrighteousness--to unfold with the hope and power of Jesus Christ. Readers, get ready for a journey. You'll be a part of this, too.*

**- Kristi Woods - Writer at [KristiWoods.net](http://KristiWoods.net), speaker, & Jesus girl**

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## Chapter 1

### **“We All Have a Past”**

Oral family histories have been diligently told and retold not just for generations but for eons. Long before the printing press, parents and grandparents made concerted efforts to share their families’ struggles and successes to retain their legacies.

My family story is one of redemption and God’s saving grace.

Like so many other families, our history hasn’t been stellar or smooth. To be perfectly candid, it sounded like a country song at one point. There is just so much heartache, abuse, and running from God in our storyline.

You may have heard those familiar, country song choruses about boozers and outlaws. The ones where you’re reminded how much your past plays into your decisions. Yeah, me too!

When the legacy handed down to you is one of outlaws, boozers and losers, you have a choice. You can continue on the same path or forge a new one. God desperately wants each of us to follow the path that leads to Him and abundant life.

My dad’s paternal side, the Hines’, were wealthy plantation owners and doctors in Virginia and Kentucky before the Civil War. They lost most of their material possessions, property and livelihood during that brutal time.

Enormous loss and its accompanying generational despair are common themes for deeply rooted, multi-generation Southern families. The destruction of the south led many formerly well-heeled families to resort to criminal activities just to keep themselves and their families from starving to death. Many vanquished families looked for honest work where they lived,

while many others left everything they knew behind—including their church families and beloved ancestors' graves—as they moved west in the quest to earn enough working wages to start again.

It was during this time that quite a few of the Hines family became outlaws and boozers. The way I understand it is that they felt they had no choice. But there is always a choice! God granted us free will, but it's one of the greatest, most challenging, and seductive aspects about living on this side of Heaven.

Several of my dad's uncles spent time in prison for moonshining and bootlegging during Prohibition. They had widely scattered stills in the backwoods of Missouri.

There was a prevalent sense of lawlessness in the country during that time, and Dad's family embraced it. A number of them were alcoholics too, the disease that all too often delivers physical, mental and emotional abuse to the families affected by it.

My dad isn't a talkative man, so he never shared stories of his childhood until recently. One story about an uncle stood out to me. The man was physically abusive to his family. When his daughter was 16, she decided she'd had enough. She was determined to get out, whatever the cost.

As she fled, he chased her. She crawled down a ditch beside a road for miles until she could hitch a ride to the big city. She lived in an abandoned car for quite a while before she was able to work and save enough money to afford someplace better to live. This incident alone speaks to the desperation my family faced at times.

On Dad's maternal side, the Wagners shared a polar opposite history. They were a family of faith. They, too, lost much during

the Depression and due to natural events. But they made the choice to turn to their faith and hold fast to God to get them through. They loved the God who gave them free will and made a choice that honored Him by relying on His wisdom and providence.

Grandma's side of the family was huge. Her parents had eleven children; ten of them made it into adulthood. Dad said, "We may not have had a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of, but we never missed a Wagner family reunion while I was growing up."

The first memory Dad has of his mother was of her reading the Bible to the kids around a small wood stove in a rickety old house. She took hold of every opportunity she had to read scripture to them. Her children spent years, all told, at her feet listening to God's word. And whenever the doors of the church were open, Grandma and her family were there.

My paternal grandpa left when Dad was just six years old and Dad didn't see him again until he attended his funeral 22 years later. The man left my grandma alone with five kids, four of whom were six and under, in the backwoods of Missouri, and he took everything that could help sustain them when he went. I mean everything! There wasn't a piece of firewood or an item of food left in the house for the family. His was an act of complete abandonment, in the fullest sense of the word.



***An Excerpt from Dad's Memory:***

**Abandoned by Bill Hines**

Nellie heard the sound of the engine before she saw the vehicle. "Moonshine Sam," she thought, "and I'll bet Millard is with him."

The deep throaty roar of Moonshine Sam's old farm truck was hard to miss because the vehicle was a farm truck in name only.

Although it was old, it sat on a beefed-up frame and had bored-out cylinders, oversized pistons, a racing cam, and a four-barreled carburetor.

In other words, Sam's "farm truck" could outrun any vehicle on the road, including police cars.

Sam got out of the truck on the driver's side in front of the house. Nellie's husband, Millard, got out the other side. Tall and lanky, the sight of Millard still thrilled her, even after all these years, despite the heartache he'd put her through.

Sam was a bent, stiff-legged old man with long scraggly hair and a long beard that was gray except at the left corner of his mouth where tobacco juice constantly dripped. His mouth had been injured in a knife fight years before, which had carved a perpetual leer into his face. He wore dirty bib overalls that were fastened only on one side so that half the bib hung down.

Nellie could tell both men were drunk. “Not again,” she sighed.

Millard hurried toward the house. “Nellie,” he spat, “help us hide this ‘shine in the house. Sam saw the revenuers in the woods near our still. They probably found it by now and will be heading here. We’ve got to hide it, quick.”

“No, Millard. You’re not bringing that into the house with the children. I won’t have it.”

“#&%\*@ woman,” he cursed, “this ‘shine will give us enough money to live on for a month, if the revenuers don’t get it and we can get it to Kansas City.”

She doubled down. “No, Millard, not in the house with our children.”

Outside, Sam weighed their options. Between Millard and himself, they could quickly beat the woman into submission, but if the revenuers got there, it wouldn’t look good if they found a bloodied woman and a house full of screaming kids.

They could just take off, but with the moonshine sitting there on the back of his truck in full view, they would soon be stopped.

Then he noticed the firewood stacked on the porch.

“Millard,” he called, “come on! Let’s cover the ‘shine with this firewood and get out of here.”

“Millard! The children! That wood is all we have to keep them warm!”

She may as well have been mute. They ignored her plea.

Quickly, Sam and Millard emptied the porch of every stick of firewood that she, her daughter Natalie, and her son Billy had so carefully cut and stacked over the past couple of weeks.

When the firewood was loaded, Sam jumped into his truck. “Come on Millard, let’s get this to K.C.,” he called, but Millard wasn’t finished yet.

“So, you think you’re too good to help us run ‘shine,” he sneered, now in a drunken rage. “Let’s see how well you get along without any firewood OR food.”

Grabbing the sack that contained their last few potatoes, he proceeded to empty the cupboards of every bit of life-sustaining food he could find.

“Now, see how you get along,” he laughed. “I’m gone, and I’m not coming back.”

Nellie started to plead with him for the children’s sake but then she stopped. She knew from experience that when he was like this, pleading would do no good. “*Pick your battles, Nellie,*” she told herself. “*This is one you can’t win.*”

Her heart broke as Millard and Sam pulled away, but she dropped to her knees to pray for the man she still loved in spite of his wicked ways.

“Father, please keep Millard safe, and please, Father, somehow stop him from this madness before he is killed by the law.”

Nellie sat down in a chair and tried to think what to do next. Millard had left many times before, but he had always come back, ashamed and sorry for what he’d done.

There were times when he was drunk that he would get violent and hit or threaten her, but somehow she just knew that this time he was gone for good.

It was such a shame, since he was such a talented painter and musician. He was throwing his life away behaving like this. But now, his deteriorating condition had turned deadly serious. He was callously throwing away the lives of his wife and children this time too.

She thought of the time they had stood looking down in adoration at their first surviving infant son Billy. Millard had put his arm around her and said, “Let’s make a doctor out of this one.” It was one of the memories that had carried her through the tough times...until now.

Now, he was gone, and the car, the firewood, the food, and any money they had was gone with him.

*“What to do? What to do?”*

Nellie thought back over her life with Millard. Since their marriage, she had birthed eight children for him.

Their eldest daughter Mary had gone to Kansas to work for a couple, helping care for their children, and had recently married.

Their next daughter Martha was just out of high school.

Their third daughter Natalie was thirteen years old and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

First son Millard Jr. had died in her arms at about a month old. Would she ever get over the ache in her heart every time she thought of him?

Second son Billy was six years old and in first grade.

Third son Johnny was four and a half years old.

Fourth son Eddie was three years old.

And their final child Becky was just months old.

Five of the children were still home and would need daily food. Where was she going to get it?

The house Millard had moved them to the summer before sat far back in the woods, away from the roads that people frequently traveled.

Nellie thought of a verse she'd learned in Sunday School as a young girl: *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you."* Deut. 31:6

*"Well," she thought, "this will certainly test my faith, because I'm already terrified at what the future holds for my children."*

My grandma had grown up with faith, but she was in a situation now where it would be put to the test. Would she turn to God and cry out to Him for help to get her through? Would she trust Him even when it seemed her children could starve? She could easily have slipped into self-pity mode and blamed God for her mess.

Grandpa was a broken man with a disease. Instead of turning to God for help, he resisted and went his own way.

This legacy of alcoholism and running from God could have easily trickled down to Dad and his siblings. Thanks to the faith of one woman and her prayers to a faithful God who *"loves justice and does not forsake His Godly ones"* (Psalm 37:28a NLT) there would be a different legacy for her children.

Dad only has three genuine memories of his father. He remembers going frog hunting with him as a young boy. Grandpa would shine a light to blind the frogs and then stab them with a "fork" they called a frogging gig. What little boy wouldn't love spending time with their dad in this way?

Another fond memory is of Grandpa playing the harmonica. Dad has tried over the years to recall the tune he was playing. He managed to remember enough of it to record on an album he

titled “Thank God for a Mama”. It’s only bits and pieces but any good memory is just that — good!

A more vivid memory of Dad’s is of Grandpa rolling a cigarette with one hand. Dad thought that was about the coolest thing ever, at his young age. It may have seemed cool, but it caught up with him and Grandpa died of lung cancer when Dad was just 28 years old.

***Excerpt from Dad’s Memory:***

**Boyhood** by Bill Hines

Nellie glanced out the front room window. There he was again, waiting in the front yard.

It had been eight days since Millard had left for good, and every evening after school when he finished his chores, their six-year-old son, Billy, would wait at the front yard gate.

She thought about what she should have done. Should she have shielded him as much as she did from the alcoholism and violence of his father? Would her son still have idolized his dad as much as he did?

But she knew that somehow she had to break the generational curse of alcoholism and violence that had plagued her husband’s family since the time of the Civil War.

Sighing, she went to the front door.

“Come on in, Billy,” she called. “It’s getting dark.”

“No!” he replied adamantly. “I’m waiting for Daddy to come home.”

“He isn’t coming home again Billy.”

“Yes, he is!” Billy shouted. “I know he’s coming home.” He balled his hands into fists and rubbed them in his eyes to keep from crying.

“Come on in, Billy,” his mother repeated.

Slowly, shoulders sagging, Billy turned to the house. Tonight, there was no supper to eat. Natalie and Billy had taken half a biscuit to school for lunch that day; the other half they had eaten for breakfast. There was nothing left for supper.

The children huddled around the woodstove trying to keep warm as a result of the sticks they’d managed to gather while Mama read to them from the Bible.

At bedtime, Billy headed up the stairs to bed; above the staircase a picture hung. It was a painting of a house in a valley with smoke curling from the chimney. On the hill above the house was a wolf looking down over the valley and house.

Billy always shuddered as he walked under the wolf. He’d heard Mama and Natalie talking about keeping the wolf from the door.



From the conversation, he knew it meant keeping starvation away, but it seemed to him the wolf was getting closer every day.

The next day, after Billy and Natalie had gone to school and the three younger children had gone down for their afternoon nap, Nellie went outside.

Their landlord came by every other day to put out feed for his cattle. He was a surly old man who never spoke to her. Nellie suspected he was involved in the moonshine trade, which would be how Millard learned about this place out in the middle of nowhere.

She decided she'd look to see if there was any corn left that his cattle might have missed. It wouldn't be much, but it would be *something*, which was more than she had at the moment.

She checked, but there was nothing left. Then something caught her eye. Between the barn and a pile of lumber something green was growing.

Nellie went over to investigate and discovered weeds. But not just any weeds. She recognized them as lambs' quarter and knew they could be made into a salad.

Lambs' quarter wouldn't deliver much protein or energy, but it would be packed with the minerals and vitamins that the children desperately needed.

There was a little vinegar in a jar that Millard had missed, so she took the greens in and washed them well. She prepared them with the vinegar for their salad supper that night. It would be all they would have to eat, but at least it would pacify their hunger for another few hours.

Then, sitting down, she took a sheet of paper, took out one of the three envelopes she had and put one of the three stamps she'd squirreled away on it. She wrote to Millard's mother's sister, Viola.

Everyone called her Oley, but Nellie always referred to her as Viola. She wasn't sure how to word what she wanted to say but she began anyway.

“Dear Viola, Millard has gone again, this time for good. He took the car, what little money we had, and nearly all the food in the house. The food is gone, and the children are starving. Please pray for us. Love, Nellie.”

She read through the letter. There wasn't much to add, so she sealed it inside the envelope. Next day she would have Natalie drop it in the mailbox out by the highway as they walked to school.

That evening after school and after finishing his firewood-carrying chores, Billy went out to the place where Mama told him she found the lambs' quarter. Maybe there would be something else out there they could eat.

He couldn't find anything, but he saw four rectangular boxes. All but one of them had a little door in the front that slid up and down.

He couldn't figure out what they were for, so he dragged one of them to the house to show Mama.

Nellie recognized it as a box trap. The string that held the door up was gone and only two of the other boxes had doors, but they could make them work.

She found some string that had once tied potato sacks shut and showed Billy how to rig the traps so they would catch whichever critters happened by. Any animal that went into the trap would likely bump into the stick and drop down the trap door.

Then Nellie found a piece of apple core in the trash. Cutting it into thirds, she put one third in each trap as far back as she could get and told Billy to take the traps out and set them out in the tree row north of the barn. She had seen rabbits there.

The next evening after school, Billy went to check his traps. When he got to the first one, the door was down.

He shook the box and could tell there was something alive inside. Gingerly, he lifted the door and reached in to get what was there.

“Yeeow!”

Whatever was inside bit his finger. He jerked his hand back and sucked on his bleeding finger.

Just then, something that looked like a large rat ran out of the trap and headed to the trees. He recognized it as a possum.

The second trap was still open and empty. But the third trap had something inside.

This time Billy didn't make the mistake of reaching inside. He looked around in the tree row until he found a stick about two feet long and two inches in diameter.

He planned to whack whatever was in the trap instead of reaching inside.

Slowly, he raised the door, his stick poised above his head. He waited until a little head appeared. A cute little rabbit sniffed the air before darting off, but he couldn't bring himself to hit it, so the rabbit escaped.

Shame filled him. He knew the rabbit could have fed his family that night.

He reset all the traps and went back to the house.

As he went up to bed that night, he glanced again at the picture of the wolf and shuddered. It seemed the wolf was right outside the door of their house now.

That night in bed as hunger gnawed at him, resolve rose in his heart. No more potential meals would go hopping away. The next time he got something in the trap, it was coming home for supper.

The next day there was no school. When he went out to check his traps again, the third one had something in it.

Remembering how quickly yesterday's rabbit had shot out of the box trap, he readied his club and then slid the trap so it was just a few inches away from a nearby log. Whatever was in the trap would have to hesitate briefly and recalibrate its escape plan before it could get away.

He raised the club over the trap and opened the door. A rabbit bolted out of the trap but, just as he'd planned, it hesitated a moment before turning. He brought the club down with all his strength, hitting the rabbit in the middle of the back. It squealed and tried to pull itself away with its front legs. Grabbing a hind foot, he brought the club down again, this time on the back of the rabbit's head and it went limp. Shaking with excitement, he left the trap and headed back to the house.

He thought about the wolf and wondered if it was close by. Gripping his club tighter as he ran to the house, he thought, "Mr. Wolf, you're not getting my rabbit."

Mama hugged him. "This will feed the family tonight, son," she smiled.

Nellie showed him how to skin the rabbit, clean it, and cut it into pieces. There was a little bit of flour in a bag that Millard had missed.

Nellie fried the rabbit in lard and flour, then took a little bit of the precious condensed milk she'd been saving for the baby to make some gravy.

That night they all ate. It wasn't enough, but it was more than they'd had in a while.

Two days later, Nellie heard the jingle of harness chains and the clip-clop of hooves before she saw Wallace's mules coming around the corner and, glory be, in the wagon behind them were Wallace and Viola!

Natalie and Billy were in the back yard sawing up firewood with the crosscut saw as Wallace and Oley slowly climbed down from the wagon.

Billy came running. "Aunt Oley!" he shouted as he ran to hug the aunt he loved.

Nellie was always amused by Billy's affection for Aunt Oley because her son didn't show much affection for his grandmother. But her sister, he seemed to truly love. Perhaps it was the genuine Christian love he could sense.

Oley attended one of the Pentecostal churches. Many other people called them Holy Rollers. They were a little too emotional to suit Nellie's staid Methodist upbringing, but she

had to admit these people—Oley in particular—truly showed the love of Christ in their lives.

Wallace and Oley brought in groceries and a gallon of milk, plus a few potatoes and carrots from their garden. They also had a small sack of flour.

“How can I ever thank you?” Nellie asked. “This will save the children from starvation.”

“I saw your friend Mary Anne Ebersole at the MFA store,” Oley said. “I told her about your letter, and she said she'd be writing to you.”

Wallace and Oley stayed for the night since it would be dark before they could get back home. They left early the next morning without eating breakfast.

Two days later, a letter came from Mary Anne Ebersole.

She wrote

I ran into your Aunt Oley at the MFA store. She told me about your husband leaving. I'm sure by now your baby has been born as mine has also. What did you name your baby? I named mine Rhoda May.

As you know, Arthur's father has died, and Arthur has been filling in as minister at the church. Since I saw you last, Arthur has had a stroke and is unable to continue

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as minister. The church has put out a call and a young pastor from northern Missouri will be coming soon.

Since I don't drive, and Arthur is unable to, I'll have to wait till the new pastor gets here to come see you. He has agreed to bring me over to your place and if you can get ready to go and are willing to move, the church would like to have you move over closer to us.

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to get together with our two little ones, them being so close in age and to be together and to have you with us to bring up our children together in church?

Hope to see you soon.  
Love in Christ,  
Mary Anne

It would have been easy for the legacy that was brought to the table by the generations before to continue. The good news is that even bad news can be righted when Jesus is involved.

What a blessing it would have been if Grandpa could have turned to the Lord and been a catalyst for change in his family. But, God is in the business of restoration. What the enemy meant to destroy my family, God used for good.

If Grandpa had stayed, the outcome could have been different. My dad, aunts and uncles could have been exposed to the drinking and abuse for a longer time. It's quite likely that the fight against the legacy coming from the Hines family could have been harsher.



Grandma wasn't perfect but she believed in the one, true, perfect God, the God who longs to be in relationship with us. So, even as she struggled with her feelings and how to handle things, she knew she could be honest with Him.

## Chapter 2

### **“Never Underestimate Obedience to God”**

There it was again. She had come to expect it, but she was still incredibly grateful. She refused to take it for granted.

It was a small bag neatly laid across the tattered table. As usual, there wasn't a note to go with it. But she knew.

Grandma's church family had been quietly slipping life-giving food to her family since shortly after Grandpa abandoned the family. As usual, there was no fanfare or repayment expected.

Whenever church would end, or Grandma got off work, she'd be welcomed back into her home by a basket of food sitting nonchalantly on the old, wooden table. There was no one there to take the credit or expect anything of Grandma or her children. There was just the unspoken, simple obedience to love others as God had called them to do.

The Berean Mennonite church stepped up to literally save my family's life. They knew God called them to show His love by feeding the hungry. They were obedient to that commandment and showed my family a foretaste of God's eternal love right here on earth. The help made a lasting impression on Grandma and her children.

Obedience doesn't always come easy. We want to follow God closely and do what we know He's calling us to do, but our flesh can scream in defiance, “How can you know for sure this is the right way to go?”

Sometimes obedience is blatantly obvious. God calls us to take care of widows and orphans. While my grandma wasn't literally a widow, she was most certainly alone with her children in the

backwoods of Missouri without many other options. It makes complete sense to us, looking back, how and why the Mennonite church stepped in and helped.

The small, seemingly unknown way they blessed my family makes me thankful that they walked out their obedience in a tangible way. And the fact that life was challenging for *everyone* in that area during Dad's youth makes the sacrifice very real.

Grandma was a proud woman who had worked hard her whole life. To have someone walk up to her carrying a handout would have been mortifying to her. Instead, God's wisdom prevailed; He placed simple, God-loving people in her path. They weren't looking for fanfare or pats on the back. There were no prideful "look at me" showoffs in the crowd. ***They simply loved!***

John 14:15 reminds us "*If you love me, you keep my commandments.*" (ESV) Not only were these faithful followers showing love to my family, they were honoring and loving God by keeping His commandments.

No reward on earth can satisfy as does sweet obedience to the Lord.

***Excerpt from Dad's Memory:***

**Moving by Bill Hines**

For the next two weeks, there was more or less a steady stream of animals in Billy's box traps.

Sometimes just one every two or three days, but one memorable day, Billy caught two rabbits on the same day. Every member of the family ate well that night.

Once in a while, there was a possum or a raccoon instead of a rabbit. They, too, went on the menu.

Billy found the bigger raccoons harder to kill, so some of them got away but, for the most part, there was meat on the table at least twice a week, sometimes three or four times a week.

The night after catching two rabbits on the same day, Billy looked up at the picture of the wolf and *didn't* shudder. He had faced the wolf and defeated it. He was determined that no more would it threaten his family!

Nellie prayed daily, "O Lord, my God, the flour is almost gone, the potatoes are all gone, and there are only two cans of condensed milk left. If I dry up, they are all that stands between life and death for baby Becky. Lord, You see our need. I don't know where to turn, Lord. Please hear my cry. Please help us, Lord."

The next day, a letter came from Mary Anne Ebersole.

Dear Nellie,

Our new pastor will be here this week. I have found a vacant house near the church that is for rent. We had a meeting of the congregation at prayer meeting last Wednesday and agreed that the church could rent the house for you for a while. Will you move here if we come get you?

Pastor Oney and I will be there before the end of the week. I am praying that you will come and be a part of our faith community.

Love in Christ,  
Mary Anne

Nellie read and reread the letter. Somehow, the “still, small Voice within” told her this was the answer to her prayer.

Dropping to her knees, she prayed again, “Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for answering my prayer. Father, You know of the generational sin that has plagued Millard’s family for so many years. Please help me find a way to break the curse so my children can be free from it. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”

The house they moved to near the church was old and drafty, but it would do for the time being. Later, she hoped, she could find work and get something better.

It was such a joy to be able to go to church again and fellowship with other believers.

The women of the church dressed in long cape dresses and wore white coverings on their heads. Nellie hadn’t been raised with that dress code, but she quickly adapted to it, wanting to fit in, and also to show the church how much she appreciated their help.

Often, returning home from church, she would still find a bag of groceries on the kitchen table. No note, or any way to tell who

it was from. She simply accepted it, too, as an answer from God.

At Wednesday night prayer meetings, Pastor Oney often asked folks what song they wanted to sing. Nellie's favorite quickly became ***God Will Take Care Of You.***

Be not dismayed, what ere betide,  
God will take care of you.  
Beneath His wings of love abide,  
God will take care of you.  
God will take care of you,  
Through every day, o're all the way.  
He will take care of you,  
God will take care of you.

Nellie soon found work as a seamstress. She could work from home, and at first there was just a trickle of jobs from the church members, but soon more orders arrived from other folks in the community.

Nellie knew that many of them could scarcely afford to be helping her in this way, and yet they did. She was grateful for each job!

Although she was still an only parent and worked long hours, starvation began to appear far less likely than it had in quite some time.

One evening she answered a knock on the door to find the old drunk who owned the house instead of someone needing a seamstress.

Nellie quickly locked the screen door because she could smell alcohol on him. The old man kept trying to get through the door, but Nellie had learned long ago how to deal with this behavior. She soon scared him off.

The next day at church, she asked Pastor Oney how to break the curse of alcohol that seemed to be following Millard's family.

"Nellie, I don't have any experience with breaking generational curses, but Bishop Milo Kaufman is coming soon for the semiannual communion and foot washing. I'll write and ask him to meet with us on this matter while he's here."

Nellie realized that with the landlord's drinking, and living so close to them, he would bother them in the future too, and perhaps become a danger to the children. She knew she had to find a different place.

The next place she found was across the road from a couple who had children about the same age as hers. The husband worked at a sawmill, and she seldom saw him. The wife came across the road often to visit Nellie, and she was able to share with the lady what God had done for her.

The neighbor seemed hungry to hear about the things of God, so Nellie invited her to church, and she began coming fairly regularly.

One Saturday afternoon while she was away from the house to deliver some sewing, the neighbor's husband came by with a friend of his. Both had been drinking and threatened her daughter.

Nellie didn't say anything when she heard about it, but on Monday, after the man had sobered up, she paid a visit to the couple across the road.

The man was very sorry, and said, "Nellie, I would never hurt one of your children. I respect that little white cap you wear too much for that."

But Nellie didn't want to take a chance. She soon found another house a few miles away and moved her family there.

In the early fall, Bishop Kaufman came for the semi-annual communion and foot washing.

True to his word, Pastor Oney scheduled time for Nellie and him to meet with the bishop. Mary Anne Ebersole kept the children for the afternoon so Nellie wouldn't be distracted.

The bishop reminded Nellie of her grandfather, Henry A. Walter, who also had a white beard and no mustache. But in contrast to her grandfather's long flowing beard, the bishop's white beard was carefully trimmed and only about two inches long.

"Bishop," she began, "my husband's family has many members, not only in his generation, but also in several of the preceding



generations who are alcoholics. Many are also abusive to their families. I'm concerned there is a generational curse operating in his family, and I don't want it passed down to my children. What can I do?"

The bishop sat for several minutes with his head bowed before he responded, "Nellie, can you tell me about when you think this began?"

"Probably shortly after the Civil War," she replied. "The ancestor five generations back from Millard appears to have been a good man; he freed the slaves he'd inherited following his father's death. But after being dispossessed from their lands in Virginia, the next generation went to Kentucky and got involved in making, transporting and selling illegal moonshine whiskey. That seems to be where the abuse and violence started, too."

"So, we have at least four generations who have been affected," the bishop mused.

"Yes," Nellie replied, "and I don't want my children becoming the fifth!"

The bishop lifted his worn Bible off the table and opened it.

"Nellie," he began, "God's Word says that the sins of the fathers are visited upon their children to the 4<sup>th</sup> generation. I don't believe this is God's perfect will for the coming generations, but it's a natural phenomenon that results from your forebears' disobedience to God."

*Ripples: Learning to let go of the past and leave a new legacy!*

*“Hosea 8:7 says of the fathers in Israel, ‘they have sown to the wind, and have reaped a whirlwind.’*

The descendants of the ones who had sinned were suffering right along with their parents. This was not God’s will for these people, but it was the natural consequence of their sins.”

The same is true today. Spiritual bondage can be passed down through the generations within a family, as you’ve seen with your husband’s family.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:18, *‘Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’*

This means that when we agree to bind alcoholism and abuse in your family, then heaven is agreeing with us. And when we loose healing and love in your family, heaven is loosing healing and love for us as well. It’s good to have heaven on our side!

Jesus also said, *‘If two of you agree on anything on earth, it will be done for you by My Father, Who is in heaven.’”*

“So,” Nellie asked, “how do I go about binding and loosing?”

The bishop replied, “We’re going to pray, and the three of us will agree in prayer to bind the alcoholism and abuse and to loose healing and love. Are you ready?”

Nellie said she was, and the bishop said, “Repeat this prayer after me; **‘In the name of Jesus, and by the authority of His**

**Word, I bind the spirits of alcoholism and abuse that are running in Millard's family, and I loose the spirit of healing and love for my children and their future. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."**

Nellie repeated each line after the bishop, then both the bishop and Pastor Oney prayed for healing and freedom for her family.

Then Bishop Kaufman said, "Nellie, today's decision determines tomorrow's reality. You have taken the first step; now, continue to fight with the spiritual weapons and armor listed in Ephesians 6. Keep a positive attitude and walk in obedience to God's Word."

We all talk about loving others, but how do we put that into daily practice? We look to God's word for instruction.

Jesus insisted, "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.*" *This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*" Matthew 22:37-39 (NLT)

God's greatest commandment is to love Him and to love others. It can be downright difficult to love others all the time. Truly the only possible way to show true love is to do what Jesus prescribed: "*Love your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your mind.*" Luke 10:27

The first, one true love of our life must be God. There is no human way to love your neighbor as yourself without loving God first.

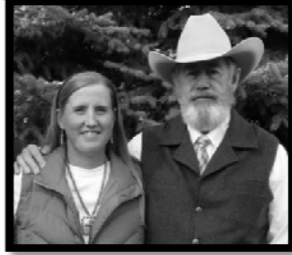
Oh, sure, you can probably be nice to them most days—the kind of nice that lasts while everything is peachy keen. But what about all the other times when the stuff hits the fan?

Grandma never discussed Grandpa with me or my siblings. No stories, recollections or even passing thoughts. I'm sure it would have been easy for her to carry a grudge against him every day for the rest of her life. But what good would that have done?

The only outcome, had she done that, would be that any poison she nurtured inside would trickle down to every fiber of her being. It's hard to hide bitterness. It can ooze and drip out when we least expect it.

My grandma was a strong woman, but the only way we can truly forgive someone who has done something as wrong as leaving you and your children with absolutely nothing is by putting God first in our lives. Grandma submitted and gave all her hurt over to the only One who could fill up the aching places in her heart.

## About the Authors



Laura is a writer, youth group leader, rancher and animal lover. She has a heart for helping others find freedom and hope in Christ! Laura lives way out in the "sticks" of western South Dakota with her biggest supporter and husband, Mike, and their family! She loves to write about ranch life and the lessons she's learned from God through it.

Bill is a pastor, rancher, veterinarian and gospel music lover! He is a family man through and through who loves to write and play music. Growing up, his kids would sit around his chair for hours listening to him play guitar and sing. Bill is Laura's father and encouraged her to believe anything is possible with Christ! Along with his wife, Jeanie, their family ranch is "just over the hill" from Laura in western South Dakota.

**Stay in touch!**

**Laura Hicks**

**[www.laurahicks.org](http://www.laurahicks.org)**

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*Ripples is a narrative showing how a person's legacy isn't set in stone. It is the story of a family plagued by generations of violence and addictions. We walk through Biblical stories, personal stories and practical tips to show where we come from doesn't have to determine where we go. God is in the business of restoration.*

## **Ripples: Learning to let go of the past and leave a new legacy!**

By Laura Hicks

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