

A group of frail elderly residents of a Riverworld town venture into a Closing Life-Challenge from their Creator God. Reverend Gideon leads his childhood peers into an epic legacy adventure-birthing a fountainhead of spiritual comfort and grace.

ANCHORED: Closing Life-Challenge

By Janice R Hunt

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ANCHORED

CLOSING LIFE-CHALLENGE



JANICE R. HUNT



ANCHORED

Closing Life- Challenge

Discover how becoming Anchored and Living Anchored thru the Closing Life-Challenge experienced by this group of successful seniors called the Oaks, who are living a legacy of love and prayer cause enduring change in hearts and community.

Novel by Janice R Hunt.

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This is a work of fiction; some have called allegorical like.

References to warrior and warfare, battle, battlefield, and Valliant Warrior, etc., are of a spiritual nature.

An abundant thank you goes to my husband, 3 sons and 3 daughters-in-law and 5 grandchildren. Your lives are worthy of praise; however, your humility will take no pleasure.

References to teachers James Everette Weeks and Etta Mae Dunn Weeks are used with permission of their daughter, Nancy Weeks Vaughn.

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Many characters are inspired from passionate aged leaders, who are still fulfilling their purpose in life. Their names have been changed.

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This American historical Christian fiction work is suitable for young adult 12-18, and older.

May God be glorified.

“A life without God is like a boat without an anchor.” Billy Graham

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CHAPTER ONE

The Closer

“Gid!”

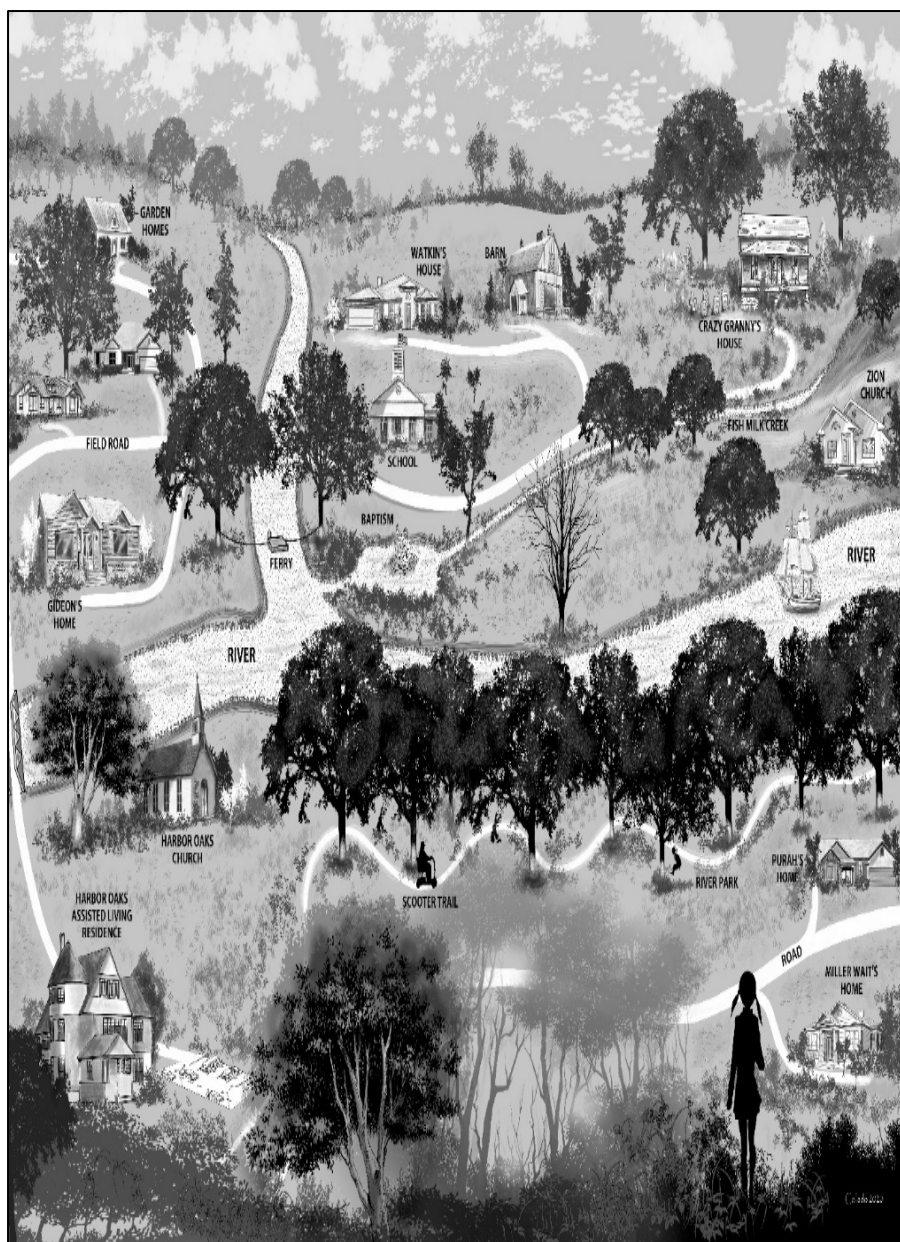
“Dr. Lucas.”

After a cordial handshake, their eyes met in mutual respect and admiration. “Gid,” said Dr. Lucas, “you will remember? We talked about the day...?”

Gid did remember. He sat in that same hard chair on that day, in Dr. Lucas’ office gazing through the window at the Oak trees down in the River Park with his mate Purah of 50 plus years, at his side—rubbing his swollen fingers. “Gideon, you have overcome some of the common health obstacles of being African American, but this time the odds are weighted against you,” commented Dr. Lucas.

Gids eyes had once again strayed to Harbor Oaks River Park.

Dr. Lucas continued, “...the day that I would refer you back to your maker. There really isn’t anything at this stage medically to be done, except keep you comfortable, and attempt to control symptoms. There won’t be any more hospitalizations. Gid, I will order a nurse to come to your house.”



Harbor Oaks World

Reverend Gideon¹ was not a stranger to the medical settings. Not only did he spend countless hours with his ill friends and local church folks, of late, he had spent numerous sessions in the hospital with his own Congestive Heart Failure. Walking to his doctor visits had become an arduous chore.

The Reverend Gideon, once an imposing presence, now sockless, shoes untied, and in a daze, found himself alone under the beloved oak grove, down by the river, crying out to God. “Um, um, um, how did I get here? Lord, I guess I will be seeing you soon.” Struggling to get a breath, “It’s been a long war.”

Hearing himself breathe, Gideon exhaled with slow weightiness.

Comforts from childhood came, being there on the oak-canopied riverbank, with the gentle breeze in his face, the fragrance of the lemon verbena mingled with the river smells, and that sound of almost ceaseless praying filtering through the trees.

In harmony, those cherished sights and odors satisfied his frequent longing to hear the captain’s cry, “Cast your nets to the other side,” Jn 21:6², then, a bizarre silence. *The Spirit of God is still hovering over the watery deep*” Gen 1:1³, thought Gid.

Over there it is, thought Gid, in the mist, that tattered old ship. Oh, how it weathers the storms. The timbers are scarred and worn. Yet, it is forever here, now—in my present.

Painfully, Gid inhaled with purpose and determination. *I heard that call so many years ago, now. It came for me, when I was an energetic young college student. That call is as fresh as ever. As long as I live, I will be casting my net for men.*

¹ ((King James Version) n.d.) (Inspiration for character Judges 6)

² ((KJV) n.d.)

³ ((KJV) author's paraphrase n.d.)

“Gideon, I have one more engagement for you, one more battle, one *Closing Life-Challenge*.”

Looking around, Gid was sure the Lord was right beside him.

Gid placed his hand on his chest. “That feeling is here again, like an enlivening stimulant.”

Gideon’s heart was vibrating.

“Gideon, this battle will be the most noted battle of your life.”

“It will demonstrate the significance of leaving a living legacy, that will bring to others a fountainhead of comfort and grace. You will receive your orders soon.”

Shaking out his long white handkerchief, “Lord, but this warrior is tired. Some of the battles have not been won, Lord. I am distracted and weak.”

“Gideon, you are a valiant warrior. You have diligently demonstrated your faith in the heat of battle.”

“Yes, Lord, I know my time is short and my body is worn out, but I still have so much love and experience to pass on.”

Weeping, “Lord, I wonder if we don’t know who or what we are, until we are faced with our final call?” Wrapping his handkerchief around his swollen hand, he swiped it across his face.

Longing to linger, he turned to leave. Gid felt a cool breeze kicking up. “Lord, walking is a struggle now; the shortness of breath makes me so fatigued. This old, scarred battleship is dragging my anchor feet around with no steam to go ahead.”

“Gideon, I will be your strength.”

Taking another step, “Doc Lucas said I could smother, if I lie down. You know. I have been sleeping in my recliner for months.” Gideon struggled to reach the bench beside the whitewashed tree.

“Gideon, you have diligently taught on grace and mercy. You will experience my grace the same tomorrow, as yesterday and today.”

“Yes, Lord. I believe with my whole being.”

The towering Harbor Oaks began to sway in the breeze, as Gid began plodding his way back to his assisted living apartment. He could smell the rain coming. Rain began pouring down in sheets, stinging his face, and yet he kept his feeble stride.

Thoughts of his past spiritual battles were rumbling in his head. Battle by battle, God had shown himself faithful to Gid. He had led so many wayward souls into the safe harbor of a loving, forgiving God. Gid kept repeating, “Orders soon?”

His counsel to friends suffering financial loss had strengthened their integrity and allowed them to remain honorable in their business deals.

Prayers, oh the prayers, for wayward children, mothers seeking abortion, a dad in prison—restored to family...!

Pastoring his childhood friends presented new challenges every day. Helping carry those heavy burdens was always a walk of faith.

“Lord, this little town is our mooring. You have allowed our neighbors to live here a lifetime, and with short commutes, we have all managed successful careers.”

Shaking his head, “Moving into this complex turned out to be just what we all needed. Our bodies are riddled with aging processes that are debilitating—with Purah’s arthritis, and compression fractures, and my CHF. The two of us could no longer manage day to day. Everything here is designed for the handicapped.” He chuckled.

“Oh, but thank you, Jesus, you have allowed us to keep our mental faculties. There are others whose cognition is failing. Lord, why us? We just can’t praise you enough. Lord, you have been our lighthouse.”

Purah, standing on the stoop as he approached said, “Gideon, our crew is out looking everywhere for you. They knew you had walked to your appointment. They don’t need to be out in this downpour any more than you.”

Just as she had finished lovingly scolding him, Miller, Maude, and Ochre came hobbling and staggering in behind him, drenched.

Maude, shaking her hands from the dripping rain, “While I drove through the neighborhood, Miller was praying like a wild man.”

“Oh, yeah, I heard him, down on the riverbank,” said Gid.

“The neighbors were coming out on their porches to see what the ruckus was. Miller knows how difficult it is for you to walk anyway these days, Gid.” Giving him a hug, “Oh, we are so thankful that you are okay. Why Gid! Your clothes aren’t even wet,” said Maude.

Ochre chimed in, “There isn’t a dry thread on any of us and look at you. Turn around. I don’t know what to make of this—you can barely creep along.”

Maude, snuff in lip, walked around him in a circle, then while stepping back, all the while staring at him, she pondered this oddity. Under her breath she muttered, “Nobody but you, Gid.”

Gid added, “Well, you did say ‘Miller was praying like a wild man’. I guess he got through.”

Facing Gid, Miller placed his right hand on Gid’s shoulder and his frail left arm, practically mummified on Gid’s arm. As he squeezed Gid’s shoulder, “I just thank God, you made it back, and you are okay,” Miller said.

They all laughed in bewilderment and then made their way out, leaving puddles behind.

Miller was an old cowboy who took God at His word. Everything stood black and white to him.

Ochre said, “Miller, you look like that limping fellar on TV.”

While making their way home Maude was thinking, *our saintly old schoolteacher taught Miller the value of prayer. His family was sharecroppers, back during the Great Depression. He saw his daddy being led to the Lord by that tenacious teacher. Mr. Weeks⁴ poured himself into us boys and girls. To this day, we are bonded together like brothers and sisters. The power of prayer was established in Miller's heart through those formative years, and he learned how to love others through his prayers.*

As Purah began mopping water, she said, "Gid, this one will take some explaining."

Gideon preoccupied with his recent encounter, "I remember the story in the Bible about the fleece being dry, with dew on the ground around it. Huh, *I am* totally dry. I'll have to look that one up."

"What *is* God about to do, Gid?"

Studying, "Baby, just maybe that dry fleece is something to do with my visit from the Lord, just now, at the oak grove, at Harbor Oaks River Park. He impressed on my heart, 'I have one more engagement for you; one more battle, one *Closing Life-Challenge*. This battle will be the most noted battle of your life and will demonstrate the importance of leaving a living legacy, that will birth a fountainhead of comfort and grace. You will receive your orders soon.'"

"Purah, God called me a 'Valiant Warrior.'"

"Okay, baby, let's begin dressing for the Wednesday evening worship." Purah wondered, *whatever could 'another battle' mean? Gideon is so frail. Just feeding himself takes all his energy.*

"Gid, baby, if anyone knows you have been a 'valiant warrior,' I surely do. Do you remember the time you got arrested for speeding?"

⁴ (James Everette Weeks, Sr. October 03, 1906; June 13, 2001)

Chuckling, Gid replied, "I sure do."

"That young woman called you from the abortion clinic to come get her. She was scared and alone. You had been counseling with her to give birth to her baby."

"How could I ever forget that?" said Gid.

"You went flying out of that wedding reception like your pants were on fire. You didn't any more get out of town when you got stopped for speeding." By this time, Purah was laughing out loud. "They thought you were drinking and arrested you."

"Yeah, once they realized what was going on, I was given a police escort all the way to that abortion clinic, sixty miles away."

"Yes, Gid, you are a 'valiant warrior.' You are the 'righteousness of God' 2 Cor 5:21⁵, in Christ!"

Gid, shaking his head as a tear escaped, "Um, um, um."

"Purah, baby, let's drive tonight. I don't believe I can walk and then preach."

⁵ ((KJV) n.d.)



CHAPTER TWO

When to Retreat.

At one time Purah had been a stout woman. She was slowly succumbing to a failing body riddled with arthritis and osteoporosis but always looking for a new adventure.

Buckling her seatbelt, “Gid, we’ve got a few minutes. We haven’t driven out in the country lately. Why don’t we just take the long way to church?”

“Baby, I am thinking the same thing.”

As they drove past the grove in Harbor Oaks River Park, Gid asked, “Why do you think they have whitewashed those oak trees?”

“It is a nice touch. It looks so fresh and clean. It seems to give dimension to the park. It is as though things are more noticeable. I wonder if it was done to add an old-fashioned charm for us ‘old folks’ to enjoy, you know, to cause us to reminisce? Nowadays, it may be for looks, but in our day, whitewashing served a purpose.”



Crazy Granny's House

Fixing his eyes on the grove beside the river where the Lord appeared to him, then slowing the car, “It was right there, Purah. This *Closing Life’s Challenge* must be monumental. My mind won’t let it go.”

“Will it be evangelistic, Gid?”

“I know it will involve you. We are one flesh.” Chuckling, “You learned to read my thoughts a long time ago. I know how you will react in certain situations.”

The rain had subsided, and everything had a soft green glow as though God had just given new life with a good scrubbing. Purah took a deep breath, commenting, “Nothing smells better.”

“Gid said, “I know with this extra humidity, it will make my breathing even more labored.

“You remember, here at the confluence of the rivers, we spent so much time during our childhood. Miller’s folks’ mill was just over the next ridge. Our family ferry was on over at Mosquito Fjord.”

“I remember, Gid. Let’s drive over to Ochre’s place. He told me he just couldn’t change a thing, even after all these years. Everything is showing such disrepair, though.”

“There is his grandmother’s little shack where his mother died. That shack may be his only memory of his mother,” said Gid.

Purah said, “Look, Gid, Ochre is out there now.”

Gid said, “Let’s see if we can inch down into Fish Milk Holler. It won’t be easy. The path is eroded and some of the saplings are bent over, into the yard.”

Gid cut the engine.

“Hold my hand while I walk on this spongy ground, Gid. This may have been a bad idea. We need to go through the brush and around the gravestones to get up on the porch. This place is creepy, Gid.”

“What is that awful sound? Creature or bird? Someone is wailing, Gid!”

The door stood open.

Gid, stepping onto the porch, yelled. ““When the border of the Hague and the coast requite, it’s time to retreat.””

Silence, then you could hear Ochre laughing like a hyena. “Come in here, you buzzard. Oh, I haven’t heard that in a month of Sundays.”

“It is fascinating, Gid, how a little humor breaks a tense moment,” commented Purah while she entered an open-spaced room with fireplace, a cradle, a wash bowl, a catch-all, and an eating table and chair.

Ochre, one of their crew from childhood, was still in the grips of his painful past. Educating himself as a social worker was his feeble attempt to understand and organize his premature thoughts and memories of his mother’s untimely tragic death. His baggage seemed to continue piling up. Gid tried tirelessly to understand Ochre’s jealous spirit and haughty yet cunning attitude. Now, aging and health issues developed into incapacities for Ochre.

Ochre’s small brim fedora always had a half smoked cigarette in the band. The crew all joked about it, but he said he kept it there for emergencies.

“Ochre, we were out for a little ride before church, and saw you here,” said Gid, noting the dry, curled timbers of the table. “This place holds a lot of memories for you, Ochre.”

Taking a slow breath and trying to regain his composure, Ocher responded, “I have a fragmented dream at times that I can’t help but wonder the meaning.”

Ochre’s lifestyle had many failed attempts at coping with his past. He was gripping both sides of the ladderback chair, while trying to break his sobs. “Gid, how do you know when it is time to cut and run?” Breathing deeply, “I can barely even say it, but to sell this place?

“In the dream, I am dropping a small, heavy bucket into a hole. You both know, I stop by occasionally. I feel a closeness to my mother here. She died slumped over this table. She had been eating her soup while Daddy’s cousin Gladys had gone to the neighbors to borrow cornmeal for supper. My baby brother was there in the cradle beside the hearth, when we found Mama. My ‘Crazy Granny’ was wandering around in here, just picking up everything and putting it back down. She couldn’t even talk anymore.

“Cousin Gladys said, ‘Crazy Granny probably gave her something to eat that killed her.’”

“So, is that what you always believed?” Gid asked. “What was listed as her cause of death?”

“I do remember when the doctor came. He said something about possible sepsis, from the birth. I suppose in those days, adults didn’t talk to kids about those things.”

Gid asked, “What do you remember about your cousin Gladys?”

“I remember how she smelled. She always smelled like smoke and snuff. That cheap dime store perfume mixed with that smell was sickening. She had tight flat curls around her face and wore rouge and red lipstick.

“She came to help Mama ’cause the baby was coming. Cousin Gladys soon went back home.”

Purah said, “I remember her. Oh yes, I remember how she would come to our house selling eggs. She would just walk in and prop her foot on Mama’s chair, like she owned the place. She wasn’t a pleasant person. Every time I saw her, she dissed me about my hair. She let me know I was not acceptable to her. Comments like, ‘What did you do to your hair,’ or ‘did your sister do your hair today?’”

“You always remember how a person makes you feel, said Purah. “Now, as an adult I know she had a heart problem, but as a child she was giving *me* a heart problem.”

“Purah,” said Gid, “it is amazing that you remember her. You were so young.”

Gid, commenting, “So, as an adult, you never looked into her death, Ochre?”

Lost in time, after all those years, Ochre labored to answer. “After Daddy died, we found her death certificate said, ‘Death consistent with poison.’”

“Ochre, do you believe your Granny was able to rationalize enough to carry out a thought, a plan?”

“You know, Gid, I have never thought of it that way. She came to live with us after that and she was total care. She couldn’t even verbalize a sentence. Her speech was garbled and agitated. She could not follow instructions. She couldn’t feed herself when you put the food in her hand. She didn’t live long after that. There was a lot we didn’t know about dementia in those days.”

Ocher continued, “Looking back, I believe she died of dehydration. But, to answer your question, she couldn’t follow your instructions, much less make a plan.”

“I really wonder if more was known about your mother’s death than you ever knew, Ochre?”

Gid had never been one to give up on anything easily. His tenacious spirit helped him minister in many difficult situations. “Ochre, you have got to find peace in all this!”

It was becoming obvious, Gid was giving out of breath and could not stand much longer. “Ochre, why don’t you check *The Lighthouse News and Views* archives for anything in the paper? Your mother’s death by poison would have been big news in this little community.”

As they walked out the door, “You are so right, Gid, why haven’t I thought of that? I have been absorbed with immature emotion for all these years. My brain just shut down when it came to assimilating all of this. I will get on this first thing in the morning.”

“Ochre, you can be objective about it now,” said Gid. “Don’t leave any stone unturned.”

#

“Purah! Don’t go in church yet, said Gid.”

With each word, his voice began to trail off. “Purah, we haven’t had a chance to talk about my...my diagnosis and what Dr. Lucas told me today.”

“Gid, I knew you would tell me when you are ready.”

“Baby, I always thought I would be ready...for the end.”

Reaching for his hand, weeping, “Dear Lord, please, no. Oh, Gid, are you?

“Dying?”

Gid, gaining his composure, “I need more time.”

“What are you saying?”

“There isn’t anything more they can do, Purah.”

Through her tears, “There is no new medicine to try?”

“He is ordering Hospice.

“I don’t know how I made it home from the Park today. We laughed about Miller praying like a wild man.

“It had to be my guardian angel. My feet felt so heavy, I was shuffling with each step. I was laboring to breathe.

“Purah, they order Hospice when you are in the end stage of your disease.”

“Gid, this is too much for you. Our service starts in moments. Let’s sit here quietly and regain our composure.”

Gid said, “They are ringing the Charity Grace bell. Let’s go on in.”



CHAPTER THREE

The Exhortation

(Setting: The Zion Chapel at Harbor Oaks Assisted Living)

The picturesque sanctuary lacked nothing in efficiency for worship. The choir loft had amazing acoustics—no need for a sound system. Pews were comfortably upholstered, with kneeling benches in front of each. There was an air of antiquity, yet all state-of-the-art accoutrements, from the pulpit furniture to the ornate bell and headstock, taken from an old ship, used to toll *The Charity Grace*. Its current use was tolling the beginning of all services, from the Sunday morning worship to the marriages, births, baptisms, and deaths.

Beginning to be seated, neighbors were interacting as Maude shared the disastrous afternoon of Reverend Gideon being caught in the storm.

They all loved Gid so much and were fighting the grief of his congestive heart failure. Loving Gid was easy. He lived his life finding ways to help his neighbor.

“We were all worried sick and were about to report back to Purah that we couldn’t find him, when, in he walked,” Maude said. “Each of us was drenched from the driving rain, and there he stood completely dry. I am here to tell you, not even a raindrop on him.”

“Maude,” whispered Miller, “maybe the Lord would want us to ponder on this some more. It deserves our attention and may give us a new insight. I believe God is about to map out a new itinerary for us here at Harbor Oaks Assisted Living.”

“There is something in the Bible about a dry fleece,” he said.

The choir sang their rendition of “Way Maker,”⁶ with the orchestra strings reverberating in close legato harmony, along with a lyrical countermelody, creating a descant for the choir.

David Adams, music minister’s, long bowing technique on the double bass caused the worshippers to feel a deep vibrato in their chest. The texture alone of that bass/baritone foundation served glory to the creator.

David, with his attention to every detail of his orderly dress, down to the freshly cut boutonniere, was deeply consumed with the presentation of delicate phrasing within the piece.

With the upbeat, David gently drew the words of ‘Way Maker’ from the choir as though he were slowly drawing in a rope.

The Exhortation Like a Tree

With humble distinction, Reverend Gideon methodically assumed his position in the pulpit. Placing his hands on the pulpit, with his face turned upward in prayer, after a brief pause, he said, “I am just glad to be in the house. Holy Spirit, I am glad *You* are in the house.

With half-cocked face, as though looking through one eye, “Precious friends, today, our reader will be reading from Jeremiah 17:5-9. Blessed be the reading of The Word.

“Let us stand in reverence and in awe.”

⁶ (Sinach 2015)

Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? Jer 17:5-9⁷

Holding tightly to the horns of the pulpit, Reverend Gideon began.

“Like a Tree.”

“You elders *are* the trees.” Taking a short breath, “Yes, you, and you, mamas and papas, and the boys and the girls. Yes, all God’s children.”

Hearing the scripture, Ochre could only focus on “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord” Jer. 17:5.⁸

Reverend Gideon waited as he heard, “Yes, amen, well.”

“You will be extending your lifeline of your root system into the stream of the spirit of God,” he said.

“Preach it!” The congregation was energetically engaged by now.

⁷ ((KJV) n.d.)

⁸ ((KJV) n.d.)

Ochre could hardly concentrate. “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” Jer 17:9.⁹ Now, focusing, “heart,” “deceitful,” “desperate,” “wicked!”

Gid continued, “Extending your lifeline into the lifegiving fountain. You are stepping out into that cool clear water. Brothers and sisters, your lifeline is your anchor!”

“Amen” were coming from all over the room.

“Yes, yes,” said Dr. Morrison.

Reverend Gideon continued. “The heat, I said the heat can’t wilt your passion.” Pausing to catch his breath, “It can’t scorch you because, I said, the heat can’t scorch you because you have no fear. Fear comes from the enemy. You all know our enemy well. That old slew-foot. He is a liar. Yes, he turns up the heat of our circumstances and wilts our passion.”

With that, the worshippers stood and clapped and cheered. “You know it, Brother Gid!”

“Preach it, Pastor.”

“Aaamen.”

“You have demonstrated the newness of life in righteousness. You have led others into that new life with freshness, and purity and fruitfulness. Yes, I said ‘fruitfulness.’ We will prosper despite circumstances. The circumstances of the drought of our aging bodies, the drought of our handicaps, the drought of loss of homes, the drought of loss of our ambulation, drought of loss of loved ones.

“But does our life consist of outward things?

With a victory shout he began—

⁹ (Ibid n.d.)

“We

“Will

“Yet

“Bear

“Fruit!

“Our last season is not passed. Our last season will be our most fruitful. Our fruit will bear fruit, and that fruit will bear more fruit. Friends, our last season just began. Reader, please read Psalm 1:3....”

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.¹⁰

Looking around the room, “Each of you are trees, you are mighty *Oaks*, that are rooted in love and nurtured by God’s Grace,” then pausing for the amens.

“Beloved, we fight our battles on our knees. Is there anything that our God can’t do?”

Miller stood, as though bearing a battle flag. “Nothing is too hard for God,” while waving his frail bent arm from side to side.

Gid emphatically quoted JER 32:17. ““Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:””¹¹

After a pause, “My friends,” making eye contact with different individuals around the room, “God impressed on my heart, we will engage in another battle. What that will be is yet unknown.

¹⁰ ((KJV) n.d.)

¹¹ ((KJV) n.d.)

“We will know it when it comes. Allow me to encourage you.” Pausing, “That battle, my friends, is our Alpha Omega God’s. Yes, He knows the end from the beginning. He knows our uprising and our down sittings. He numbered the very hairs of our heads.”

Pausing, “He knew our days before there was one of them. Our job, I said, our job is to be patient.

“Our bodies are not strong. We will exchange our strength for his, our weapons for his, our garments for his. He will give us the battle plan” (Ref. 1 Sam 18:4).¹²

The Oaks all stood waving their frail hands and swaying, while holding the pews.

Reverend Gideon stated emphatically, “I feel the unity. I feel cooperation. We will yield fruit in season. My friends, Our God will provide. Yes, Our God will provide!”

“We will enter a season of waiting. Oaks, please, be in an attitude of prayer.”

As Gid was stepping down from the pulpit, his personal attendant Rose assisted him into the wheelchair. Gid’s day was completed, and he was consumed.

Rose Taylor, tall and stout, had been the Gideons’ personal attendant since they moved to Assisted Living. Chores were always completed with promptness, giving little time for casual conversation. Rose was always interested, though, in spiritual talk and sometimes asked questions.

Preaching for Gid was now so laborious. The fluid he was retaining and collecting around his heart was causing the shortness of breath that so characterized his illness and disabled his once energetic body. “Let’s head home, Rose.”

¹² ((KJV) n.d.)

Rose was visibly moved by the service that night.

“Reverend Gid, you have done used up yourself.” Stooping over, she put his feet in the supports and began to wheel him home.

They passed Ochre, who gritted his teeth and whispered to Rose. Gid heard him say, “Give it up, Rose!”

Gid noticed that Rose was visibly disturbed but didn’t comment.

“Yes, Rose,” said Gid, “that is how the Lord works. The apostle Paul said in 2 Cor 12:10, ‘for when I am weak, then am I strong.’¹³

“I am broken. I had about three more points in that scripture, but just spent myself.

“That scripture in Psalms 1:1 says: ‘Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.’¹⁴

“I *am* a blessed man, even though broken physically, but I have more to give than ever.”

Gid was struggling to get the next breath. He believed Rose needed to hear this.

“All our Oaks have prayed about being able to leave a legacy.” He took a slow shallow breath. “Now we have physical limitations.” Closing his eyes, with labored breathing, “We couldn’t imagine helping even one person.”

“Mr. Gid, you need to get some rest.”

“Rose, that is when God uses you the most. He takes our weaknesses (pause) and magnifies His glory. In my weakness, he is giving me my *Closing Life-Challenge*.”

¹³ ((KJV) n.d.)

¹⁴ ((KJV) n.d.)

“Mr. Gid, you prop those feet up when you get in the bed. They look like water balloons.”

“Thank you, Rose, you always know just what to do. I will see you in the morning.”

“Purah, see if you can help steady me. I should have let Rose help me into bed.”

“Gid you just sit on the side of the bed, and I will help you swing your feet up.” Stepping back, “Oh, Jesus, help us.”

“What?”

“Gid, your legs are weeping. Fluid is running down both of your legs into your shoes. I will call your Hospice nurse; this is an emergency.”

#

“Connie, thank you for hurrying.”

“Ms. Purah, when I am on call, I stay ready to go out. Bring me his supplies, please.”

“Mr. Gid, I am going to wrap your legs in gauze. We sure don’t want them to get infected.

“How much diuretic have you taken today?”

“Just regular, then I took the PRN dose as soon as I got home from prayer meeting.”

“If you lie down with this much fluid, it will fill your lungs,” Connie said. “Try sleeping in your recliner tonight. I’ll be right back—I left something in the car.”

Purah was standing at his head. Gid reached for her hand. “Baby, this must have been serious.”

Connie was back in a flash. “I just had to make my report to Dr. Solomon. Taking a chair over to face him, “I am going to stay the night. I need to monitor your breathing.”

“Connie, will I make it through this?”

“Reverend Gideon, it could go either way. That is why I am staying. You remember before, you would end up in the ER. With Hospice, you won’t be going back to the hospital.”

“So, I will die at home?”

“Yes, Reverend Gideon. You will be able to be in the comfort of your home, with your loved ones.”

“Baby, call the Oaks.”

“Reverend Gideon, there could be many of these episodes. Let’s wait a few minutes.”

Putting her arm around Purah, Connie said, “Just get me a blanket. I will rest here beside his chair. You can sleep there on the sofa if you wish.”

It was a sleepless night for the threesome. The diuretic did its job. Gid struggled to the bedside potty numerous times.

Into the night, Gid’s respirations improved. “Mrs. Gideon, it looks like he made a turnaround—this time. Taking that PRN dose of diuretic may have made the difference.”

“Oh, thank you, dear Jesus,” said Purah.

Squeezing Purah’s hand, Gid said, “Thank you for the prayers, baby.”



CHAPTER FOUR

Season of Waiting.

Next morning came with Rose wheeling Gid back from the restroom. “Let me catch my breath,” said Rose. “Mr. Gid, I just can’t get these wheels locked.”

As Rose transferred Gid to his recliner, he observed how quiet and distraught she seemed. “Rose, is there something I can help you with? You are not yourself.”

Slowly inhaling, with tears streaming, “I don’t want to trouble you, Reverend. I know you have your own concerns. My tenth child will be coming before long, and I am at wits’ end with decisions.”

Purah reached for her hand.

“Ya see, my husband is an ineffective alcoholic.” Rose began to wring the towel in her hand. “He can’t keep a job; we have bills to pay. We have seven children in school and two still at home.

Wiping tears with the towel, “Reverend, my husband doesn’t know about this child. I have been able to hide my pregnancy. I done already gained a lot of weight.”

Rose couldn’t hold back the tears. “I feel I need to give it up for adoption.” Sobbing, “That would be the best thing for the baby and for my other children.”

Trying to regain her composure, “This rips a mother’s heart out. More than anything, I need your prayers.” Almost wailing, “Reverend, I love this child, more than you know.”

“Rose, may I share this with the Oaks? You know we believe in the power of prayer.”

“Yes, sir, Mr. Gid, I need help from the Almighty.”

“Rose, you do need to tell your husband. It is his right to know.”

Rose left Harbor Oaks that day with a heavy heart. She was in labor.

The next day, Rose did not show up for work. Maude learned from Nathaniel the Chef, that Rose had been sick on Thursday.

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As usual, the Oaks met at the Gideons’ apartment for morning coffee.

Miller didn’t just pray; he was in the scripture daily. He said, “The Lord brought me to his scripture, y’all. This is about the dry fleece. The ‘dry fleece’ (Ju 6:36)¹⁵ was a sign.

“I believe the Lord is going to use our Gideon to fight a mighty battle. In the Bible, God used Gideon to lead a weak group of people to fight a major battle. They were outnumbered, ‘450:1,’¹⁶ and won the battle through the almighty power of God. They knew that it was God’s will that they fight this battle, but only God could give them the victory. Y’all, this battle God is leading us to fight—we will win.

“It is His will; it is His battle. We are weak warriors.

¹⁵ ((KJV) n.d.)

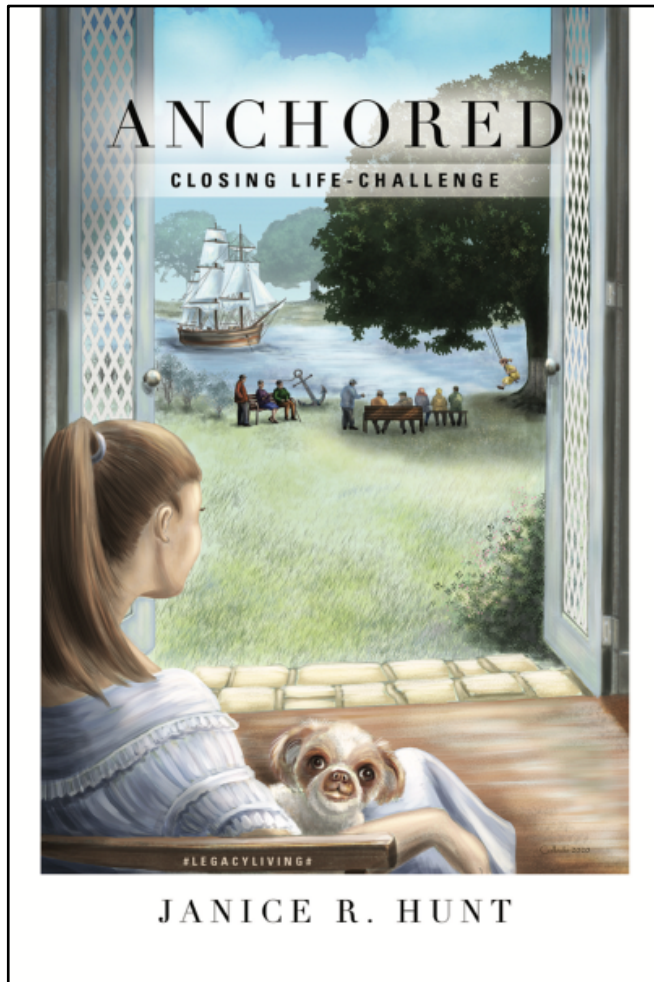
¹⁶ (Shirer 2013, 2019)

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Author-Janice R. Hunt

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