

Christmas Wishes from Baptist Church Planters

Christ has come! And we are filled with great joy as we celebrate this Christmas season—knowing that the Christmas trees and the presents that sit under them are but a shadow of the glorious and eternal gift His coming has secured.

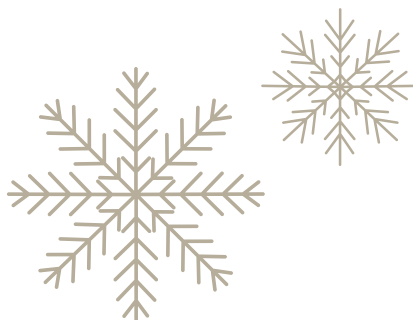
We end the year with the same thoughts and attitudes that we would do well to cultivate throughout the year. Things like love, generosity, and a renewed desire for those who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior to come to Him.

After all, He is the “reason for the season” whether it is Christmastime or the middle of June.

May we finish this year well as we celebrate our Savior’s coming: in our hearts, in our homes, and in our local churches.



Jon Jenks
PRESIDENT



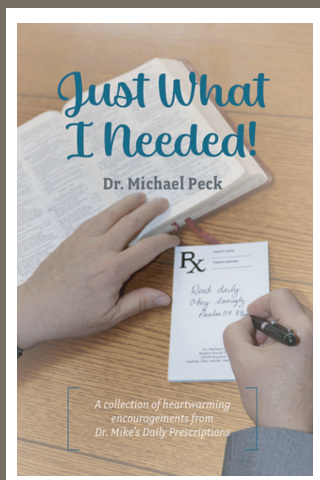
Just What I Needed from Dr. Michael Peck



In life, we all face many of the exact same situations. Each of us encounter times of discouragement, difficult decisions, and those dreaded days of feeling unwanted, unneeded, or forgotten. In those moments, it's a word from God that we desperately search for. We long for encouragement that causes us to proclaim, “that's exactly what I needed!”

Michael Peck has been writing Dr. Mike's Daily Prescriptions for over ten years. Having served for many years as a pastor, Dr. Mike has a great love for and knowledge of the Word of God. Through Mike's short daily devotionals from the Bible in “Just What I Needed” you too can find heartwarming and fresh encouragement for any time or season.

Now available in the BCP store for \$10.95 per book. BCP is offering a bundle discount of 20% off for the purchase of 10 books or more when ordered using the discount code **rxbundle**. It is also available by calling the office: (440) 748-1677.



As God Would Have It:

The Life and Ministry of Bob and Donna Bennett



Bob and Donna Bennett came to Baptist Church Planters with a burden to assist local churches in whatever way they could. They left behind careers, sold their home, and launched full-time into a ministry helping churches. This heart for ministry and discipleship grew in them, as God would have it, through their particular and varied life's experiences that began, well, right from the beginning.

Donna

As God would have it, Donna grew up in a home with four older sisters, a believing mother and an alcoholic father. Donna's dad had a reputation in the community as the best mechanic around, but drinking caused the home situation to be hard for them all. Her mother took the girls to church faithfully. Donna remembers sitting in the pink chairs because pink is for girls, and she remembers listening intently to her Sunday school teachers. One in particular, Mrs. Gibbs, stands out to Donna. Mrs. Gibbs loved Jesus and would have tears streaming down her face as she taught about Him. She told Donna that she "could be the only Bible her dad might ever read," and that impacted how Donna would interact with her dad right up to the day he passed away.

Donna was saved at age 7 at LeTourneau Christian Camp on Canandaigua Lake Bible Camp in NY. One day her counselor, Miss Bean, took Donna aside to talk. As they gazed down on the lake, she asked Donna if she'd ever accepted Christ as her Savior. Donna responded, "I'll ask my sister Barbara." She jumped up, ran off and found her sister then went back and told Bean that she had not. Bean led her to the Lord that day.

At age 16, Hornell Police Sergeant Dillon, a man at her church, asked if she'd like to teach SS to primary children. Donna began doing so and absolutely loved it. Those ensuing years of teaching prepared her for everything God had planned for her in ministry. Donna is still in touch with a few of those students, and she and Bob are even supported by one gal and her husband!

Donna recalls as a youth agreeing to bring a can of fruit to a youth group meeting. She knew her dad would get upset if she took food from home to church, but instead of sneaking it out the back door, she felt compelled by the Lord to stand up for Him. When her father confronted her about the can of fruit she told him the truth and was eventually allowed to take it. On his deathbed years later, Donna asked if he wanted to know Jesus. He knew the truth and had heard and seen the gospel lived out in Donna's life. He responded that he did and accepted Christ before departing to meet Him.

Bob and Donna grew up together, even beginning kindergarten the same year and continuing through grade school. Donna renewed her acquaintance with Bob when he was home on leave. He offered to help her remove rust from her car and they spent much of the time laughing and enjoying each other's company. Bob returned to the military for 6 months, and when he returned home, Donna informed him she would not marry him because he was not a Christian.

Bob

Bob was born into a moral yet unbelieving family. His dad was a full mason, and his mom was opposed to all forms of religion. Bob remembers attending "release time" classes at Southside Baptist Church, right across the street from school, where Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Seaman taught them Bible stories, songs, and verses.

He recalls coming home from school and saying to his mom, "Do you know, Mom, if we don't know Jesus we're going to hell."

Bob wasn't allowed to return to release time after that, but Bob never forgot the verses or songs he had learned. During his military service those songs and verses would pop into his mind.

Bob hung out on the streets and went through high school with no ambition. He didn't want to be there, and with moderate to severe dyslexia, learning was a challenge. Bob remembers hearing his teacher say, "He'll be alright. He'll be able to sell shoes at JCPenney. He has a good personality." Bob remembers thinking, "That's NOT what I want to be." It took him 6 years to do it, but Bob eventually finished high school.

Bob chose to join the AirForce and served for five years. It was in the service that Bob got involved in drinking. He spent some time in England and played rugby and drank heavily.

Bob always had a sense that there was something that he didn't know about himself. The Lord was working in his life, and Bob knew it. As God would have it, one day he was drinking with friends, and they crashed the car. The car ended up on its roof, but they were able to flip it back over and drive it back to base. Bob was shocked to learn the next day that he and the driver had actually switched places somehow as the car went flying through the air. Bob was so distraught that he couldn't eat. He recalls changing into civilian clothes and going to the chapel. As God would have it, the chaplain there was a preacher of the Gospel. He preached the same gospel Bob had heard at Southside Baptist Church as a kid in release time.

Bob came back to the states on leave, and that was when he renewed acquaintance with Donna. He went to his next duty station in KS which was a dry state, and it was there that Bob quit drinking. Donna had begun sending Bob her Sunday school lessons. She would mail them on Mondays, and as God would have it, Bob would get it on Wednesday when Donna and others were actively praying for him. Bob recalls that his bunkmate would ask what he was reading, and Bob would read the material to him.

When Bob finished his service duty, he moved to Syracuse and found a job and a \$10 a month room. He recalls feeling oppression from Satan, as if he was saying, "I'm not letting him go." Bob was even afraid to go to sleep. He prayed, "Okay, God, I don't know what this is about, and I remember that Jesus died for my sins. Whatever I'm supposed to do right now is what I'm doing right now." The oppression left immediately.

Donna continued to tell him they couldn't date because he wasn't saved. Meanwhile, Bob was reading through the gospel of John, and he began saying to Donna, "I think I am!" She helped arrange for Bill Knight, a deacon, to meet with Bob. They went through the gospel again, and Bob recalls saying over and over, "Yeah! That's what I did!"

From there on, God worked wonderfully. The Word became so important to him. Bob worked hard on memorizing verses. Bob was introduced to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, which he immediately began reading

and looking up each word in the Bible. As God would have it, this backward approach worked perfectly for a dyslexic, and through the years he has taken many courses to learn and study the Bible better.

Together

As God would have it, faithful men got involved in Bob's life and disciplined him—showing him firsthand the power of discipleship. Bob and Donna married in their mid-20s and began doing devotions together using Our Daily Bread. Bob maintains that part of his growth was partly due to Donna encouraging him to take on the husband's role as spiritual leader.

They joined West Genesee Hills Baptist Church and began serving right away. For six years they served in the youth group, organizing banquets and inviting college teams to minister so their teens wouldn't need to go to local school prom. In their last year, over 100 teens opted to attend the church banquet. Many are still in touch with Bob and Donna, oftentimes calling them Mom and Dad.

Bob's passion for discipleship grew from the example and instruction of Bob Sauser (a former BCP Regional Field Director). When Bob's dad at 83 was facing surgery, Bob Sauser made a point to go very early in the morning to witness to him and that resulted in Bob's dad accepting Christ as Savior.

Bob worked in the world of technology, and Donna had a cleaning service. But God had plans to use them in ministry. He had been preparing them through all of their life's experiences, and as God would have it, BCP needed Bob and Donna to bring their passion and priority for caring for people to the Missions' growing ministry to churches.

As God would have it, Bob's business was sold five times in four years, and this whittled down Bob's salary, insurance, and most of their retirement income. They decided to live on Social Security and Bob's pension and trust the Lord to provide. They sold their home and bought a '23 camper for travel. They wanted to do North American missions in which they would minister to churches, and in their self-supporting status, not be a burden to them. They would do whatever was helpful, from helping with visitation to babysitting, to sweeping floors and cleaning, to building furniture, and more. Under ABWE Bob and Donna first went to a church near Chicago who had just done a renovation. They helped with cleanup, and Bob used his woodworking skills to build a portable bookshelf. The next place, also under ABWE, was in Tucson, AZ, where they helped with outreach while staying in less-than-desirable student housing.

As God would have it, Bob went to a banquet hosted by Baptist Church Planters, and afterward approached President David Little and described what he and Donna were doing. The president told him to talk with BCP Director John Little because what he was describing was a ministry that

BCP was developing—the Tentmaker ministry.

Bob and Donna officially joined BCP in 2003 as Tentmakers. Several churches were impacted by Bob and Donna's traveling ministry. At First Baptist Church in Bath, NY, as God would have it, they renewed acquaintances with a lady who had been in Donna's primary Sunday school class years ago. There they had the opportunity to assist in a pastoral transition and discipleship before going to Heritage Baptist in Moberly, MO, to disciple that church's leadership team. When invited to remain as the pastor, Bob and Donna politely declined—they had found their calling.

They continue to be supported to this day by Londonderry Baptist in NH, where they served even as Bob had pneumonia. It was during this time that President Little called Bob and Donna and invited them to begin visiting college campuses. They were to go to recruit, but their caring hearts led them to prioritize caring for the students.

Through their 15 years of traveling for the Mission, Bob and Donna were multiple times on the campuses of Appalachian, Faith, Clearwater, Northland, Maranatha, and BJU, leading workshops, preaching in chapels, giving devotions in the evenings in dorms, and generally just loving on "their kids." Donna describes these times as wonderful teamwork for them as she recalls being the one to stay back and connect with those students who tended to do the same, while Bob would move forward, approaching kids and seeking out opportunities for discipleship.

Bob and Donna became the Mission Candidate Coordinators in 2006. They faithfully coordinated candidate visits to the office and arranged the training sessions and material very efficiently. They also served the volunteers who came to the Mission to assist the work, generally loving on them with parties and all kinds of goodies every week. They officially retired from active duty at the Mission in 2018 but have continued to serve at their local church, to this day, Donna teaching the little ones and Bob serving the pastoral staff by leading the senior saints and until very recently, the college age kids. No surprise there.

Bob and Donna have served together for 60 years thus far, and the fruit from their impact is eternal. While at Appalachian recently (at the invitation of a student getting married), a student came up and asked Bob if he was Bob Bennett. The young man shared that he was in the church of a former Appalachian student who had been impacted by Bob and how he did discipleship. This young man is a Pakistani who wants to do discipleship Bob's way in Iran!

Their story is one that only God could tell. Filled with the fruit of faithfulness and a passion for the new life comes only through Christ.

"As God would have it?"

Bob and Donna Bennett wouldn't have it any other way.

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