

# PENINSULA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Tonight I want to tell you a story. A story I have told you many times, but each time I tell it I learn more about myself than I had before. I realize the impact it has not only on me, but anyone who hears it. I will tell you this story over and over again, in fact it will be your story! The World needs to hear it and share it. Every star filled night takes me back to the beginning of this story.

12 months ago I was making some of the most important plans of my life. Work was going smoothly, relationships were perfectly normal, life was going on just as it should. We were making lists of all the things we wanted to do together. Oh you should have seen this list there were so many adventures, places to visit, events to attend and so much more. This year was going to be amazing, so many hopes and dreams lay just out of reach by days on the calendar. We were making the plans for our most important adventure and suddenly we were hit with news that dropped us to our knees. Suddenly time stood still, and I was in a fog. This was no ordinary fog that rises from the fields on a fall evening, but rather thick and harsh like smoke. Every breath I took in made me cry even harder, I was filling with rage and bitterness. Why have my joy filled plans come crashing down like a load of bricks falling from a building? All that was left are broken hope strewn about the ground.

Many months passed and since that time I have had my ups and my downs. Sadly, far more downs than ups if I am being truly honest with you. And there I found myself on that calm cool night

sitting on the dirt looking at the stars above. The heavens distort with every tear that rolls from my aching eyes. Another one forms and rolls down my dusty cheeks. I am questioning my identity as a husband, no matter how hard I try I keep failing. And as a father my track record is no better. Here I am on this starry night I have let you both down in one simultaneous moment! My heart aches when it should be happy, my identity has been stripped away. I honestly don't know how I can continue if the last few months define who I am.

You see on this starry night we finally got into town. This journey was not one that was easy or desired, as the government has forced our hand. As we got into town, I went to the first hotel and it was booked solid, not a single suite or closet available to rent for the night. This was the case for every hotel, Airbnb, and house that I tried. There wasn't even a hospital with room for us. Your mother's labor pains were growing more and more frequent and painful. I must find her a place.. Then I found a simple barn. A barn for my wife, is that really the best I can do? And the time has come for you to be born! I am excited, scared and filled with panic to remember what we need to do, there were so many things to remember to care for you and your mother in this moment. Next thing I know I am holding you and filled with joy about this life that I hold in my hand. A bad dad joke comes to my mind; I am going to ask you all the time if you were born in a barn. Fortunately, that joke will end with us and the rest of the world will never have to

suffer through it! I look around to soak this moment in and I am hit with the reality that we are still in this barn. And the only bed I see for you is a meager feeding trough. I laid you down and that is when I went out to sit in the dirt and look up to that starry night.

The calm of this silent night is displaced as I hear the rushing of sandals slapping the hard packed dirt street. This group is talking so fast and excitedly, I am wondering if they just came from the tavern. As they burst from the shadows, I can now see they are shepherds, and they are heading straight for us. My heart sinks as I am certain they are going to kick us out of their precious barn. Instincts kick in and the strength and desire to still be a good husband and father empowers me, and I jump to my feet and rush to intervene. I am prepared to fight this mob off if that is what it takes to protect my wife and you. They stop just a few paces in front of me, and ask if the messiah who was just born was inside. Suddenly my mind rewinds back 9 months and I see the angel standing before me telling me what was about to happen to change our lives and this world forever. Breathing again I see the shepherds still standing in front of me. I stutter for words not knowing if I am even making sense, I invite them in and the next few hours melt away. They sang and danced, then hugged us and cried with us. They blessed us with the telling of how the angels appeared before them this very night.

And now this story starts to impact me in a new way, and it is all because of you. I always knew that the angel had shared this amazing news with your mother and I, but I still wondered if it was a

hoax or a twisted dream. But these shepherds just confirmed the good news that I had buried in my own self-doubt. Your birth and the chaos of these last 12 months leading up to this starry night has changed me.

I knew despair and I called it my friend, but you my Lord have replaced it with hope!

Grief and sorrow were the chain around my neck, but you my Lord have destroyed these chains and showed me joy!

The internal conflict about who I am raged like a fire, but you my Lord snuffed it out and now I know peace!

I felt like an unloved husband questioning the truth of this child, but you my Lord showed me the truth and showered me in the understanding of love.

Here I am now months later from that starry night. The clouds above me part and I see those glistening gems floating above and the tears start all over again. I will never stop telling you this story. I need to tell your story to everyone. Not for my glory, but so every broken person will hear of you and be healed by your story.

My son I doubt I can even fully dream of what the rest of your story holds. The things you will say, the things you will do, if people will listen and watch they can be changed like me. You my Lord are the perfect gift.

- Charles Wilder 12/2020