



Fiction

FROSTED WINDOW FAITH

Edward Pritaker's revival began, oddly enough, in his own living room. When the pressures of life, the onslaught of the world, and the struggles of his own heart became too much, he found comfort at the piano, his hands rediscovering tunes from memory that brought him back to truth, back to his own heart. Funny how old songs could do that.

by Chris Fabry

AS A LIFELONG CHURCH member, Edward had witnessed and lamented his congregation's slow drift. Sermons were shorter and less meaty these days. The Word was a smorgasbord, picked and chosen from as desired (or not) rather than something expounded verse by verse. The music was louder but bereft of the deep theology

of hymns he'd sung since childhood. Belief these days felt as thin as a child's helium-filled balloon, but it looked cheery and colorful to the eye.

The culture was coming apart at the seams, there was no question. People did what was right in their own eyes, making up rules and genders as they went along. Morality and truth was a toss of a coin rather than something written in stone. And as he saw it, the church — meaning the people, not the building — needed to drive a

stake in the ground and say, "Here I stand; I can do no other." But these days, drive a stake and you'd be criticized from all sides and accused of hurting the stake's feelings.

Edward had been praying earnestly for revival. What that meant was he prayed for an awakening he could quantify. He prayed sinners would repent. He prayed Christians would come to their senses and reconnect with

God, and not the God of their imagination or the God who acts like us, but the true God who said, "I AM WHO I AM." He prayed people would get serious about their faith, serious enough to share it and live it and accept the consequences. This, he believed, would eventually bring cultural change.

Society always reacts to people who align themselves with the heart of the gospel, with truth and grace.

As a result, politicians would get right with God. The courts would hand down decisions that didn't defy logic or morality. Drunks would get sober. The opioid wave would recede. Jesus would be praised.

That was what he prayed for. Revival meant change out there in the big, bad world. But on this day, in his own living room, Edward realized he'd been praying for the wrong thing. Actually, he'd been praying in the wrong way, because sometimes what you want is not what you need.

It happened like this.

Edward placed his hands on the piano keys and took a breath. He could have picked any number of tunes, but for some reason, "Blessed Assurance" came to him. He remembered the page number in the hymnal; he could see it in

his mind's eye. And that made him lament the fact that hymnals were now passé. All that truth, all that experience traded for words on a screen and no more four-part harmony.

He played through the irritation these thoughts raised, and as he did, he heard the words written by a blind woman who lived in a time much like his own, when everything in her culture felt up for grabs. These rich words reverberated in his heart,

and he smiled — a moment of pure praise, heavenly sunshine breaking through, a light illumining his clouded mind. Spiritual bliss.

He had been driven to the piano after leaving a heated online argument. Old friends tossed verbal grenades at each other on social media. The latest political dust storm had degenerated into name-calling. He knew if he didn't physically leave the

computer, he would post something regrettable.

His hands moved across the keys in 9/8 time, the words like incense rising inside. What was going on in Fanny Crosby's life for her to pen such truth? When he reached the second verse, he softly and audibly murmured, "Perfect submission ..."

It was at that unguarded moment that he glanced out the window and saw a teenager with black hair, black fingernails, and a sleeve of tattoos. Was it a he or a she? He couldn't tell. And he wondered if the kid knew. Such a crazy, mixed-up world.

He chose to believe it was a male because of the kid's height and posture. Studying closer, Edward saw the young man had metal in one lip and in his nose and ears and who knew



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where else. He stood on the sidewalk, looking at Edward's house.

"Echoes of mercy ..."

Edward stopped playing and stared. Was the teen waiting for someone? Listening to something? Looking for something to steal?

Edward felt a jolt of fear, thinking the kid might have seen him through the window. But that was impossible with the way the light reflected off the glass at this time of day. Still, the young man stood transfixed. Had he lost something? What made him stop in front of Edward's house?

Edward studied him more closely. Holes in his jeans. Rips and frays and tendrils of white cotton. Had he worn the jeans out or had he bought them that way? How much did he pay for all that ink on his skin? And where did he get the money? Wasn't it illegal for kids to get tattoos? Maybe he wasn't a kid. Maybe he was 30. If so, why wasn't he at work? Why was his hair covering his eyes? When was the last time he'd bathed?

Edward shook his head and frowned. The questions rolled and roiled inside him, and he came up with even more until he heard movement in the hall. He turned to see his wife staring out one of the frosted glass windows in the front door. The windows provided a measure of privacy. You could see shapes and figures from either side of the glass, but nothing clearly.

"He keeps looking at the house," Edward said quietly. "I can't figure it out. Do you think he wants something?"

When his wife did not respond, he stood and approached her. What he saw shocked him. There were tears in her eyes.

"Honey, what is it?" he said. "Is something wrong?"

She took her time, blinking. There was water on her cheek, and he brushed it away and put a hand on her shoulder. Then with both hands, he gently turned her to face him.

"What is it?" he said.

"He looks so lost," she whispered. "Like a sheep that wandered away. Isn't that what he looks like?"

Edward looked out the window at the blurred image of the young man. He hadn't seen anything of the sort. But now, looking again through her eyes, he didn't see tattoos or long hair or ripped jeans or dark nails or piercings. The vision was too fuzzy for details. What he saw instead was the outline of someone made in God's image. The outline of a soul.

"Whispers of love ..."

He thought of those friends on social media. It was much easier to watch an elephant draw a picture or click on videos of cats jumping into trash cans or laugh at dubbed dogs speaking funny lines. He liked talking with people who agreed with him about political and spiritual things. He liked posting Bible verses and hymn texts. It was hard to engage with people who disagreed with his political views. Harder still to engage with the spiritually incorrect.

Looking through this window and seeing the compassion his wife had for someone she didn't know and couldn't clearly judge made him question his own eyes. The way she responded without condemning, without getting lost on the veneer, flipped a switch inside he didn't know was there.

"This is my story, this is my song ..."

It struck him then that the view from this window was clearer than the one by the piano. And as the words and notes and thoughts and this new vision coalesced inside, he did something strange that surprised his wife and shocked himself. He smiled at her and opened the door and walked outside. ☺

Note: Find the article at lifeway.com/matureliving.

CHRIS FABRY's new novel, *Overcomer*, is based on the Kendrick Brothers movie by the same title. The book releases in July. Last November, Chris was inducted into the Christy Awards Hall of Fame. Hear him daily on Moody Radio's Chris Fabry Live. If you dream of writing and want inspiration and encouragement, visit his new website, heyyoucanwrite.com.