

A Nazarene Roots Project Resource

An Interview with Janine Metcalf
(Creator of the documentary *Ablaze with Love: The Living Legacy of Our Nazarene Foremothers*)

Interview by Dr. Bob Broadbooks, USA/Canada Regional Director

“Reflecting on Our Nazarene Heritage”

BB: Janine it is wonderful to be able to visit with you a little bit today. We are thankful you are part of the Church of the Nazarene. We are interested in how you found us, and what persons were instrumental in shaping your thoughts and faith.

JM: I actually came into a born-again relationship with Jesus Christ through the discipleship of Pastor Earl Lee. I was a reporter in television and covered the Iranian hostage crisis back in 1979, 1980, and 1981. I was sent by The Today Show to interview Pastor Lee and his wife Hazel. Their son was one of the 52 Americans taken hostage by the Ayatollah Khomeini. Spending time with them, I saw a committed life that was so beautiful it began to fester within my spirit a question: What do I do with Jesus? There was something about them that manifested a peace, a kindness, a goodness, and a true faith that made me wonder, is there something more about Christ that I need to investigate? After 10 months of following the family, I wound up covering the story actually in their church (First Church of the Nazarene in Pasadena).

One particular Sunday morning, I was there to cover the story, and Pastor Lee read a passage of Scripture from Isaiah 43: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.” It pierced my heart. In the middle of the service, while no invitation was given, I stood up and had the distinct impression that God was there and calling me to his heart. Without knowing all the words for it—such as atonement or justification—I knew I was a sinner. I knew I needed to tell God that I was sorry for placing people and a career before him, and I received Christ into my heart that morning. My life has never been the same. What is beautiful about Pastor Lee and Hazel is they spent time discipling me. They spent time teaching me what it means to follow Jesus Christ. They invested a lot of time and prayer into my growth as a Christian. Others in the church as well came alongside me in those formative first years as a babe in Christ.

BB: Pastor Lee is a wonderful man and a great influence in our history as a church. I know he was a missionary in India for 14 years. I wonder if missionary service impacted his pastoral style or the way he did ministry.

JM: I think what really stood out in Pastor Lee’s life and his missionary style was this inclusive nature about him. He had nothing to prove to anyone. He took all

kinds of people into our church family and made them feel welcome. God had given him a blessed gift—a gift that I pray I have as a pastor—to remember names. He would reach out to people and invite them to get to know Christ the way he has. His prayer life was exemplary. He was on the front lines of the mission field in India and took the dependence on God with him into the pastorate. In prayer, in fasting, in living a genuine Christian life before the body was a great influence on me and so many other people.

BB: He was a writer, and we are familiar with many of the things he wrote.

JM: Yes, *The Cycle of Victorious Living: Commit, Trust, Delight, and Rest in Jesus Christ*. *The Cycle of Victorious Living* was taken from Psalm 27. This has been a stalwart, inspirational piece in my journey.

BB: Janine you are a female leader in the Church of the Nazarene, a pastor and educator. Were there some female leaders in the past who had an influence on your life in ministry?

JM: So many of our early women leaders exemplified a “holy boldness” to take the message of Jesus Christ to anyone. They had the courage, the perfect love, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which was lived out in the way they stepped out and obeyed the call. One of those women, Estelle Crutcher (Pastor Lee’s mother-in-law), had a major impact on my life. She is a description to me of what it means to truly devote your life to Jesus. I spent many days at her feet “walking through the Bible” and learning from her the key stories of our faith and what it meant to live a holy life. She also held me accountable in order to grow in my faith. When there were times that pride seemed to emerge, she would tell me: “Daughter, it is time to crucify that nature and get down to business.” So not only did she affirm me, but she also held me accountable. There are many other women who have gone before us who had an impact on my life. People like Johnny Jernigan, who reached out to the poor and the disenfranchised in the south. Mary Lee Cagel, who pastored 17 churches in 4 different states also comes to mind. I think of Leona Gardner who was a single woman, because I was a single woman when I stepped out to obey the call to preach. I would look at her and think to myself that if this woman could leave everything and step out for Jesus, this is something I need to pay attention to. They had a great influence on me, especially in low days when I found that their prayer life and their genuine walk with Christ was something I needed to follow.

BB: We have an increasing number of women clergy in our church today. Do you have any personal advice that you could give to them? Perhaps something you have garnered from our foremothers?

JM: The advice I would give to any woman is what I would give to any person who is considering the call. That is, to remember always that you are totally devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love God with all your heart, mind, and

strength; God has placed in your heart a love for people; your call is genuine and you desire to obey God, embody his love and life, and to care for others. In terms of being a woman leader in the church, we go back to that call. It is of the Lord—there is no one else calling you but the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom you would give your life. Wherever God calls you and whatever he is calling you to do, it makes you exceedingly humble and thankful to be in a denomination that allows you to use your gifts to their utmost potential. What a gift to the Body of Christ! When doors are not open, it may mean it is time to wait, to learn, and to use your gifts wherever they are open. I do not spend a lot of time defending this call. I go back to Scripture itself to justify why I do what I do. I spend more time doing what God has called me to do and that is to preach the gospel before a congregation and people.

BB: You know, I was a district superintendent for 12 years, and often, it was difficult to encourage a church board to receive a female as their pastor. Many of them did, but some of them were challenged by that. Do you have any advice for district superintendents or perhaps the church in general about opening their arms to called clergy women?

JM: One of the things I think we need to do is not be afraid to address the issue. When there are women as well as men who are being called to use their gifts to their utmost potential to preach, teach, and lead in the church, we need to come alongside of them. One of the ways we do that is to go back to Scripture itself. Do not be afraid to look at Paul's prohibitive passages. Take a close look at what Paul is trying to say. Also look into why we in the Church of the Nazarene from the very beginning have endorsed mutuality in church leadership. Do not be afraid to look at the issue and to expose the truth of the stories from our past and our present of men and women serving in a variety of capacities. I think what we need is exposure to women and the past and exposure to women in our present in order to use them as illustrations in our sermons and in our story to tell others this is okay. In doing this, we not only affirm that it is okay, but that it embodies the message of the gospel, as we live this out with gender mutuality in ministry. It is a wonderful thing for people to look and see men and women serving together as partners in this endeavor.

BB: We have also heard that you are doing a lot of instruction, encouragement, and speaking in the area of spiritual formation. You have served as a contributor to the book, *The Upward Call*. What value has spiritual formation had for you as a pastor, and what does that say for all of our pastors?

JM: Spiritual formation takes in growing in Christ using centuries-old disciplines of the church as well as new and vibrant disciplines of the church to grow as disciples of Jesus. Out of our Wesleyan heritage and out of a heritage even before that, is the importance of endeavoring to pray using the sacraments and developing our meditation on the Word as well as spending time serving and being engaged and living out this faith with others. It is all part of growing in

Christ. It never ends in salvation—this is all part of our formation. This happens when we poise our lives to receive the Spirit's fullness and live that out; manifested in a surrendered life that is given to the congregation and given to people far beyond that. Spiritual formation is living the way Christ lived. Following Christ, following our heritage, and endeavoring to be engaged in various disciplines of faith are so important to help us grow as followers of Jesus.

BB: We are thankful that Earl Lee had an impact on your life, and we are confident that there are others who have come behind you and look to you in similar ways. I am sure there are those out there who are saying "Janine has blessed my life and led me to Christ." You are a treasure to our church.