

From the Pastor...

As I sit down to write this, I have just returned from one of my favorite continuing education events—the Festival of Faith and Writing, held every two years at Calvin University in Grand Rapids. This festival is a gift. It's a place where people not only learn about writing as a craft and a process, but also gather with fellow lovers of literature from across North America. You get to hear remarkable speakers, discover new voices, and even meet authors whose words have shaped countless lives. One of the authors I had the joy of hearing—and later briefly meeting—was Ariel Lawhon, the writer of the wildly popular novel *The Frozen River*. She shared the unexpected moment that sparked the writing of that book. At the time, Ariel was pregnant with her fourth child and sitting in her OB/GYN's office waiting for her appointment. While she waited, she was told that her doctor had been delayed by an emergency at the hospital and might not return for several hours. She had a choice: cancel and reschedule, or stay and wait. She chose to wait. And so she waited.

She finished the novel she had brought with her. Then she worked her way through the piles of magazines in the waiting room—old *People* magazines, *Cosmo*, *Time*, *Newsweek*—until she reached the very last one. It was something called *The Word in Season*. As many of you know, *The Word in Season* is a daily devotional written in short, easy-to-read reflections—just a few paragraphs at a time. Ariel turned to the devotion for that day, and the anonymous author had written about a midwife named Martha Ballard. Ariel said that as she read those few paragraphs, the hairs stood up on the back of her neck. Something stirred deep within her. Something holy, almost electric. She tore out that page, began researching this fascinating woman, and before long Ariel Lawhon's life—and career—were changed forever. Think about that.

A bestselling novel read by millions...inspired by a brief devotional reading from a small publication. A reminder that God can use even the simplest words, in the most ordinary places, to plant seeds that grow into something lifechanging. We all look for inspiration in one way or another, don't we? Without inspiration—large or small—life can become dull, routine, and spiritually dry. But inspiration awakens us. It lifts our eyes. It stirs our hearts. It reminds us that God is still speaking. And Scripture tells us that God's Word is inspired in the truest sense. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is inspired by God." Another way to say it is that Scripture is God-breathed.

To inspire is to stimulate. To awaken creative activity. To motivate, invigorate, and encourage. To inspire is to breathe life into something—and into someone. And that is exactly what God does through His Word. The Bible is a remarkable gift: sixty-six books written by forty authors across three continents, in three languages, over the span of 1,500 years. It contains history, poetry, prophecy, stories, letters, biographies, and practical wisdom for daily living. It has been translated into nearly 2,000 languages and, after all these centuries, continues to be the bestselling and most influential book in human history.

Yet inspiration does not mean dictation. The Bible did not come to us as a single voice speaking word-for-word while someone simply copied. God worked through real people, real circumstances, real personalities, and real histories. And still, through it all, God ensured that His message—His truth, His love, His call, His promise—was delivered to His people. The Bible is more than a historical document. It is more than a record of religious development. It is the living Word of God for the people of God. It contains what God wants to say to His children. So my hope for you is simple: that you will take the opportunity to be inspired by the Word of God by reading the Word of God.

Perhaps one of the devotional books we provide in the Welcome Area—*The Word in Season* or *Christ in Our Home*—might be the very thing God uses to stir your heart. Perhaps a few paragraphs on an ordinary day might

make the hairs stand up on the back of your neck...or even change your life. Because you never know what God might do through a single page...when you open your heart to His voice.

See you in church!

Pastor Fogle