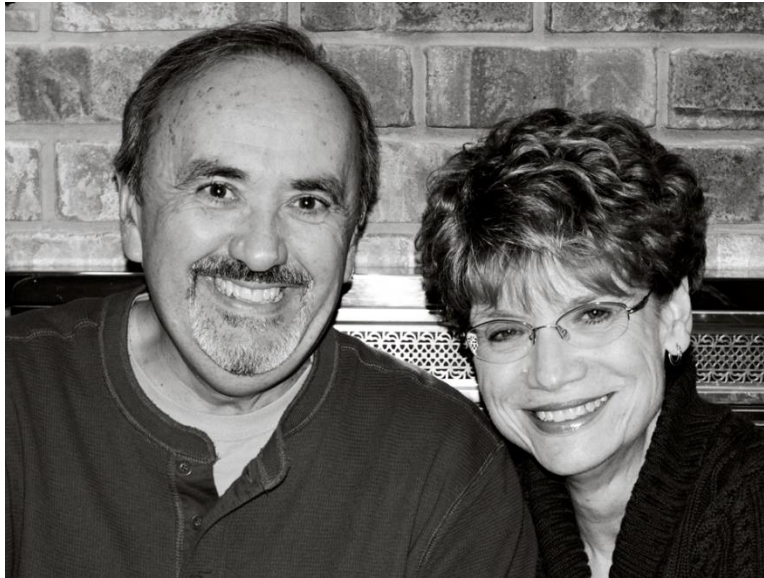


Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

Two Lives Well Outlived

June 24, 2018



Ephesians 3:7-8

Isaiah 40:31

Isaiah 61:1-4, Psalm 1:3

They will be called oaks of righteousness,

a planting of the Lord

for the display of his splendor...

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,

that bringeth forth his fruit in his season

On the retirement of Pastor Terry Martell, June 24, 2018

There is a ritual that I have when taking out-of-towners on a tour of Green Bay. I take them on “the names” route: Lambeau Field, Lombardi Avenue, Holmgren Way, Mike McCarthy Way and others. The names of Packers legends grace buildings, streets and at least one bridge throughout the city. But

imagine living a life where your presence is felt in a place, long after you are gone, even if your name isn't on a building. Max Lucado writes about this in his book: "Outlive Your Life."

Leaning heavily on the Book of Acts, Lucado urges the reader to do God's work so profoundly that the fruits of that labor will long outlive your natural life. In other words, the impact will be so profound your presence will continue to be felt in the places you've been. At a small group meeting at Oakbrook Church where we were using Lucado's book, we were asked to think of someone we know personally that either outlived their lives already or is destined to outlive their life. My answer took about a millisecond to produce: Pastor Terry Martell, P.T., as we call him. In retrospect, my answer was incomplete. It should have been P.T. and his wife, Susan. Allow me to tell you about two lives well outlived.

After more than a decade at a church in Peshtigo, Terry and Susan moved their family to Green Bay and began training meetings in their home in April 1994. In July and August of that year, the Launch Team for Oakbrook along with additional families, worshipped at a chiropractic office. In September, they began worshipping in the Ashwaubenon High School auditorium. Flyers were distributed promoting the grand opening of Oakbrook Church. Oakbrook went "public" on February 5, 1995 at the high school. Father's Day in June 2001 saw the first service in Oakbrook's current building. The only facilities that day were port-a-potties; the bathrooms weren't ready.

It would be another 15 years and two months from that day before my wife, Ramona, and I would discover Oakbrook. We had recently left our previous church home of 12 years and had visited a few other churches. I've been asked several times in the nearly two years since our first visit to explain what it was that prompted us to come back. All I knew was I had never felt at any other church what I felt at Oakbrook.

The current mission statement is: "Meet God, Grow in Faith, Follow Jesus." Ramona and I didn't know that when we found Oakbrook in August 2016. Yet, we would feel it and begin living it before we would have those three elements committed to memory, because Oakbrook and those who attend feel it, live it, exude it and share it. P.T. didn't deliver the message that first Sunday we visited. But he was there, just returning from sabbatical. I couldn't explain it then, but I would come to know very quickly that Oakbrook was exactly where God wanted us to be. And then, we found out why.

The God stirrings Oakbrook prompted in me revealed a hard truth: I didn't know Jesus and had been faking my faith for a long time. Ramona and I met with P.T. and Susan just once; and in that moment she changed our lives, just as she had changed so many, many lives.

I shared that other people hear from God; I didn't. I asked if it was possible to miss a message from God. Susan smiled and said: "You won't miss a message from God, if you're listening." Less than a month later, as P.T. helped navigate us through a very difficult period of our lives, I would accept Jesus as my Savior. And I would hear and see God's messages everywhere. It was as though Susan had tuned me into a frequency I previously didn't know existed. A month later, God would call Susan home. But He let us know her long enough to experience that single moment that would have her in our lives forever. We are just two examples of where Susan Martell is outliving her life.

Being a new Christ-follower who had seldom picked up a Bible in my old life, I was ravenous for the Word. Simply put: the more Jesus I got, the more Jesus I wanted. And P.T. fed my appetite in every way

possible. Ultimately that led to him mentoring me on giving Sunday messages and writing Fresh Start, callings I was hearing. Reflecting Christ with love and patience, he helped me hone my presentation skills. More importantly, he guided me in discerning the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Through P.T. I came to understand that I am a conduit, not a container of what God wants to share through me.

Before July 2016, I sat in church and pretended to listen to messages, for the last year I've been blessed to deliver them. In May 2018, I heard the call to the ministry. The first person I told was Ramona. The second was P.T. We don't know what that looks like, but we do know that God used P.T. to get our lives back on the path He had planned for us. As I grew in my faith, Ramona grew in hers and was recently baptized. Our transformation is a gift we couldn't have imagined just a couple of years ago. The gift was from God. The delivery system for that gift was Terry and Susan Martell.

After months of prompting from God, P.T. listened and announced his retirement in March; his season of service at Oakbrook would come to an end. June 24, 2018 marks the end of nearly 40 years as an active pastor for Terry Martell. But no one who knows him would believe for a moment that his service to God will ever end. He will go on teaching, coaching and encouraging in whatever way the Spirit prompts him. It's not what he does; it's who he is. He always will be "P.T."

I am now called to share the Word and bring people to Jesus. I have been so blessed to have God use me to bring others to Him. Terry and Susan Martell will be outliving their lives. Ramona and I are just two people. Multiply that by the many lives the Martells have touched and transformed. And all the lives those lives will touch and transform. And that doesn't include other churches planted through Oakbrook.

So many people who've met Jesus. So many people who continue to grow closer to Him each day. So many more people who will come to know Jesus through the people whose lives were touched by Terry and Susan Martell. So many people who were not treated as projects but were simply loved. As P.T. puts it: "People matter to God, so they matter to us," "People don't care about what you know until they know that you care," and "It's about relationship, not religion." That's what we felt that first day at Oakbrook that we couldn't identify. When people ask what it is, now we can tell them.

Susan Martell is missed at Oakbrook. Terry Martell will be missed at Oakbrook as he starts the next season of his life. June 25, 2018 marks the first day in its existence that Oakbrook will not have Terry Martell as its pastor. But Oakbrook will thrive because of the seeds Terry and Susan so firmly planted. They will be missed. But they will never be *missing from* Oakbrook or from the countless lives they have touched. Two lives, well outlived.