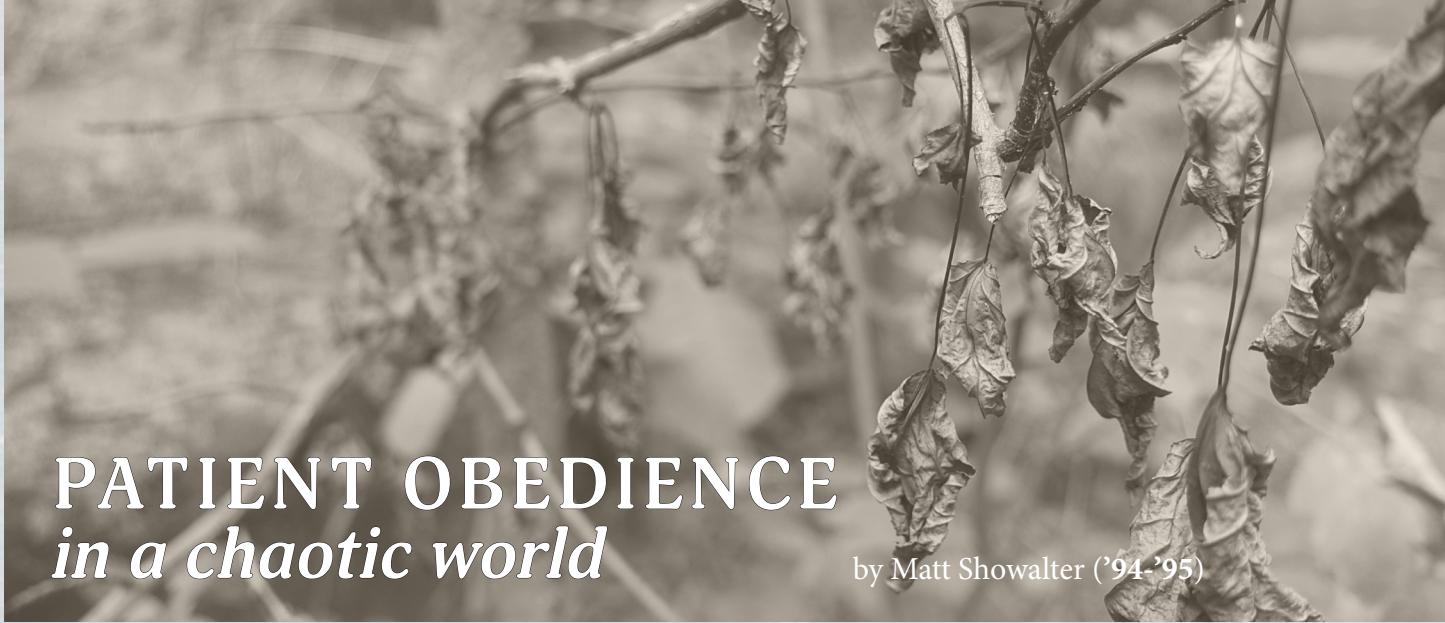


MIRROR



HABAKKUK
patient obedience in a chaotic world



PATIENT OBEDIENCE *in a chaotic world*

by Matt Showalter ('94-'95)

I recently had a fun conversation with my oldest son. He's married, 24 years' old. Juggling work and school. I love talking with my kids! As I relate to them now as adults, the interactions often trigger memories from long ago. Most of them good. Some of them painful. All of them, though, seem to come from a different time.

This conversation with my son triggered the memory of a rather dark time in our lives. My wife and I were looking to start a family, but Colleen's first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. We mourned that loss and began to try again. We rejoiced at the news of a second pregnancy, but soon Colleen began to show signs of a second miscarriage. We sought medical help, but our fears were realized.

At one point in the process, I was sent to the pharmacy to pick up some medicine. I was angry. I was frustrated. I was near tears. As I sat, waiting for the prescription, a stranger sidled up and offered me a cigarette. I must have looked in bad shape. It was a kind gesture, but I needed more than a physical "fix."

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? (Habakkuk 1:2)

The prophet Habakkuk uttered these words at the start of his book, verbalizing a sentiment that we all feel at times. We live in a world where evil is real. Pain exists. Suffering is a part of life. And where is God in all of this? Habakkuk's cry can often be our cry.

About the cover:

Oil on canvas painting by Jean-François Millet, created 1860-1862

Habakkuk lived during a time of shifting political and social realities. In the political sphere, years earlier the Assyrians had decimated the Northern Kingdom of Israel and threatened the south. Habakkuk lived in the south, in Judah, and would have been raised on stories of God's deliverance from the Assyrians. But now there was a new force to contend with in the east. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Nineveh, the prize of the Assyrians. The Babylonians were on the rise. Nebuchadnezzar marched west and defeated an Egyptian army at Carchemish. Now he was threatening Judah.

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? (Habakkuk 1:2)

But it's not just the political realities that were shifting. The social realities of his day were also in flux. Habakkuk had lived through the time of Josiah's reforms that are referenced in II Kings 22 and 23. As repairs were made to the temple in Jerusalem, the Book of the Law was found. Josiah had it read to him and his response was appropriate. He tore his robes. He set out to reinstitute the worship of the Lord. He demolished the idolatrous shrines that had been endorsed by his predecessor. But these reforms were short-lived. II Kings reports that following Josiah's death at the hands of an Egyptian army, the next king, Jehoiakim "did evil in the eyes of the Lord." (II Kings 23:37)

Instead of emulating the leadership of David or Hezekiah, Jehoiakim repeated the sins of Manasseh, the worst of the Judean kings. We are told that "Manasseh...shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end—besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the Lord." (II Kings 21:16) The

social fabric of Judah was being pulled apart. Idolatry, violence, and injustice were on the rise as the worship of the Lord was in decline.

Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted. (Habakkuk 1:3-4)

Habakkuk arranges his book as a dialogue. The prophet asks and the Lord answers. The Lord's answer isn't necessarily satisfying, though. "I am raising up the Babylonians..." (1:6) says the Lord. The very threat that Habakkuk fears is actually part of God's plan. It's easy to understand the prophet's reply. "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous?" (1:13) It's at this point that the Lord directs Habakkuk to take the long view. To have **patient obedience in a chaotic world.**

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)

Currently it feels as though we are living in a world where there are shifting political and social realities, much like in the time of the prophet Habakkuk. If I were to see pictures of a protest on the news, it wouldn't be immediately obvious what they were protesting. On the right or the left, every issue seems to be portrayed as an existential crisis.

In the church, it isn't much different. Is Trump a present-day "Cyrus" or is he the present-day Antichrist? I've seen hot takes espousing both views. And these are people who worship sitting side by side on a Sunday morning.

To up the ante, it's in this context that we're trying to raise our family. My oldest is studying at a secular academic institution. What is he being fed there and how is he processing it all? As my teenagers scroll their Instagram feeds, what random ideas are being fed to them by the algorithm?

We try to talk to our kids, to keep open lines of communication, but I still worry. Are we doing enough? How will the shifting currents of today's social and political context affect my kids? It keeps me up at night. How long, oh Lord, do we have to call out before we see an earth that is "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea"? We aren't there yet! Anxiety may just climb to a level where a stranger would sidle up to offer me a comforting cigarette.

But it's at these times that conversations with my kids play a key role. It's the dark time, sitting at the

pharmacy, that moments spent with my kids can take me back to. I didn't have hope. All I felt was despair. Anger. Frustration.

But now, as I take a longer look, I can see God at work redeeming and restoring. He has indeed given me a family. I don't look back with anger at the cigarette offered. I look back at it with a sense of gratitude to the Lord for the ways that He has shown Himself faithful. It has seldom felt immediate. But He has been faithful.

This is where the prophet Habakkuk ends up as well. Though God's answers to the prophet don't involve immediate rescue from pain, suffering, and evil, Habakkuk ends with a beautiful perspective.

I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. (Habakkuk 3:16-18)

We are called to follow. We are called to obedience. We are called to patience. These are all attributes that we want to instill in our kids, but they are hard to nurture in my own heart. Especially in a chaotic world.

Habakkuk's cry can often be our cry. May his attitude be our attitude as well. May the Lord nurture this patient obedience in His church. As we wait and long for the day "when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."



Matt Showalter is academic dean at Rosedale Bible College and president-elect of Rosedale International.

Showalter family, left to right: Isaac ('26), daughter-in-law Jewel ('21-'22), Josh ('21-'22), Colleen ('93-'95), Kenna, Matt ('94-'95), Nava, Clay ('23-'24).



SPREADING heavenly leaven

by Amanda Miller ('06-'08)

my earthly leaven is visibly spreading, some tiny yeast granules scattered along with the wayward flour, yet at least a few are also kneaded throughout the wheaty mixture in the bowl; there they slowly and surely work at transforming the entire dough. In a mysterious way that seems both too poetic to be embodied and too mundane to be transcendent, is my simple act of taking part in the fingertips process of a tablespoon of yeast a channel for heavenly leaven?

There's a lot going on in the world outside our farmhouse kitchen; I don't have to tell you about it, but it's chaos. (I mean, it's chaos inside this kitchen sometimes too, but in a very different way.) How are a few loaves of bread supposed to do anything about the maelstrom of darkness?

As I paused in that exact space from writing, I read the first chapter in a WW II-era novel by Elizabeth Goudge. Amidst what could completely be described as a maelstrom of darkness, both internal and external, the protagonist hears a violin; its tune cuts through the grip of fear. "And she knew it was the truth that she was listening to now. She heard no words, she saw no vision, but she was slowly made aware that she was one of a multitude that went upon pilgrimage to something or other...as they journeyed, they sang, and always they went on; whatever happened they went on, and sang...and it was a matter for rejoicing" (p. 3, *The Castle on the Hill*).

This too is us, I think. Both in that we are the ones pilgrimaging in heaviness yet rejoicing, and also that we are the ones enkindled to be the scrap of music cutting through fear and noise. We're not naive; we know this world is broken, and things are breaking all around us. Yet alike as in the Advent season we have just walked through, we cry out for Emmanuel to come. O come, Emmanuel!

Those four weeks in the church calendar before Christmas are intentionally set as a season of waiting, of aching for things to be set right and for Christ to come, but the other 48 weeks of the year are in no less need of a Savior. As Kate Bowler recently phrased it, "[Advent hope/hope] looks squarely at the world as it is—fragile, unjust, unfinished—and still insists that God is not done yet...The world is still a mess, but God is still coming."

There's flour poofed on the countertop. Flour powdered onto the kitchen floor and tracked around in an increasing radius. Child-sized flour handprints dusted on the cabinets, the fridge door, and my pants. I thought the kids and I were making bread, not a wheaty winter wonderland.

Is this what heavenly leaven is supposed to look like? I ask myself this first in exasperation, and then again with some actual reflection. Maybe when Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God being like yeast, He didn't have in mind my second-hand Bosch mixer and row of glass bread pans, but He was speaking to me, to us. To my over-exuberant two-and four-year-olds, who clamber directly onto the counter to enter into this once-simple bread baking process with me. It is because of them, they who cannot keep from overmixing, over measuring, over-everything-ing, that the kitchen is a wreck. I'm messy, but not that bad—and yet it is also because of them that this is so important.

As the Scottish minister and author George MacDonald mused, "**I begin to suspect...that the common transactions of life are the most sacred channels for the spread of the heavenly leaven,**"

We light our candles, pre-Christmas and beyond, and emblazon hope: not optimism, not despair, not naivete. We echo the *O Oriens* Antiphon that has for a thousand years been pointing to Christ as the Morning Star on winter solstice, the longest, darkest day of the year.

Winter evenings in general are long and dark, but one of winter's most redeeming aspects for me is the yellow-glowing candles I station in the windows; I get them out along with the Christmas decorations, but I leave them in for months. My parents and grandparents did this before me, and Christians have been doing this for centuries as flickering yet powerful reminders of joy, hospitality, strength.

It is better to light candles than to curse the darkness; better to play the music than to let fear silence; better to rejoice in the Lord than to count the fig trees that haven't budded.

So out here in windy Kansas farmland, I go ahead. I keep on loving my children, the ones I've birthed, the ones we are gifted through foster care, and the one I'm currently carrying. I keep on supporting my husband and encouraging his passion for finding more regenerative agriculture. We keep on cooking food that nourishes our bodies and souls, trying to stay close to the process, and perpetuate the cycle by giving the chickens the scraps. We keep on caring for the cows and teach our kids how God created all the animals; we keep on feeding the rabbits, trying to keep the pig in her pen, and tolerating the turkey. We keep on planting seeds...and accepting garden bounty from the neighbors when army worms eat all ours. We keep tossing stuff in recycling, trying to reduce packaging and purchase more justly in the first place. We keep telling people to "come on in!", cooking food together from all around the globe, making another pot of tea.

And we keep on baking bread. We grind the wheat berries, a gift from the dusty candles God has asked Brian to light, we knead the dough, and we wait for the yeast to rise.

Hopefully we clean a little flour off the floor, too. Something so common, so daily, and yet perhaps, so sacred.



Amanda (Weber) Miller ('06-'08) lives on the family dairy farm in Hutchinson, Kansas, with her husband Brian ('07-'09) and their two (as of yet) children.



Brown-Sugar Oatmeal Bread

Makes 4 loaves

2 cups boiling water
2 cups rolled oats
1 heaping cup dark brown sugar
1 tablespoon table salt
2 ounces butter
3 cups milk or "real" buttermilk
3-4 cups whole wheat flour
1 ½ tablespoons instant yeast
8 cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
(I never measure...)

Combine water, oats, sugar, salt, and butter in a heat-proof bowl and let it sit for about 10 minutes; stir in the milk.

In a mixing bowl, combine whole-wheat flour, yeast, and several cups of all-purpose flour. Add the oat mixture to this, then add and knead in more all-purpose flour until the dough is the right consistency, cleaning the sides of the bowl—a little sticky is better than a little dry.

Cover and let rise until double, about an hour.

Divide and shape into four loaves (about 1 ¾ lb each); place in greased 8x4" loaf pans. Cover and let rise again. [Brush with an egg wash and sprinkle with oats if you're feeling extra sacred.]

Bake at 350° for 35ish minutes, until the center registers around 190°. After a few minutes, transfer from pans to a wire rack and cool completely...or slice and eat right away.

"SHAKE THE DUST OFF YOUR FEET?"

by Anonymous Author

The writer of this article is an RBC alumnus ('11-'13). He and his family serve in a part of the world where the good news of Jesus is very little known.

As I write this letter I cannot help but feel some frustration. This morning I read Mark 12:28-31 about the greatest commandments with my language teacher, and he didn't seem interested or concerned about it. We've read Bible passages before and he's taken an interest, but with this one, full of meaning for our faith and life, he didn't have much comment. We analyzed the grammar and discussed some words that I didn't know in the local language, but that was about it.

Almost every day people ask if I'm Muslim. You'd think that this would be a natural way to talk about God and faith. However, almost every time, once they believe they've correctly categorized me, they are ready to move on without a discussion of any depth. This people group has such a poor reputation for its receptivity to the story of Jesus that I've heard other workers use them as an example of a time to "shake the dust off your feet when you leave that place, as a testimony against them" (Mark 6:11).

My wife and I moved to this part of the world because we felt that God was asking us to use our skills to help in a place with huge needs, physical and spiritual. We have obeyed, but feel almost daily that we're not making much progress on either the spiritual or the physical needs. We joined a family who has served here for more than 15 years and they have also not seen the type of fruit that they hoped to see. We're learning from them how to patiently persevere in the face of opposition and disinterest. There are many others who have gone before us in sharing the story of Jesus with this society, yet the response is so slow.

So you might wonder, why do we persist? We love God and want to obey Him. There is no place in scripture where our faithfulness to God is contingent on any kind of response from someone else. For example, we are to love our enemies regardless of how they treat us. We are to pray for those who persecute us despite how they mistreat us. Doing what is righteous and good in God's sight is our calling and we're even asked to suffer if need be in order to follow Jesus example (1 Peter 2:21). The suffering can be daily as we strive to interact with that one neighbor kid who isn't very lovable, to succeed in our business when ignoring God's way here and there could help

us make more money, to treat our spouse and kids with love, and other such things over a long period of time. Being faithfully present in a lost society does make a difference.

We serve a God who leaves ninety-nine safe sheep behind to go and find one lost sheep. Jesus invested a lot of his time in only 12 men. We live in a time when everything has to be big and bold. Our society likes questions like, "How many Instagram followers do they have?" "How big is his church?" "How many churches have you planted?" These are not necessarily the most relevant questions in God's kingdom. Making disciples of all nations involves millions of Jesus followers reproducing themselves one disciple at a time over many years. So as we look out over the sea of faces that we could focus on and invest our energy in, we need to simply ask Jesus who is He guiding me to today, and that's it. We can so easily get overwhelmed by the needs, by the lostness of the people, by the obstacles to overcome. If we're focusing on these things, it means our eyes are not as focused on Jesus.

As we live here, we want to follow Habakkuk's example of asking honest questions in prayer. As many churches and mission agencies emulate marketing practices of positivity and momentum, scripture gives us an example of lament when things are bad (instead of creating a positive spin), mourning when evil momentarily triumphs (instead of sharing only the good stories), and waiting on the Lord when He is silent. When the Lord does answer, His answers are sometimes confusing. Habakkuk was disturbed that God would use a nation even more evil to bring judgment on Israel. But he ends his book with praise and says "The Sovereign LORD is my strength! (Habakkuk 3:19)

Thanks be to God that He is bigger and wiser than us. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He modeled discipleship for us, not huge buildings and flashy lights. He uses the weak things to shame the strong, He uses disobedient Jonah to save a city, He uses strong headed Peter to lead His church, He uses the daily obedient actions and words of millions of His followers to bear witness to His resurrection from the dead. Praise be to God!

" We have obeyed, but feel almost daily that we're not making much progress..."

RBC NEWS & NOTES

Campus News

Parents' and Associates' Dinner & Drama drew a capacity crowd for the meal and drama, *Little Women, the Musical*, November 15.

During winter term 18 Rosedale Trades students scattered to serve with MDS in Puerto Rico, Texas, Louisiana, South Carolina, Washington, and Hawaii.



The first three graduates of RBI, **Walter Beachy**, (student 1968-69 and RBC teacher/president 1970-2000), **Lucy (Beachy) Maust**, (student 1966-69, '72, librarian and administrative secretary), and **Mel Shetler**, (student 1965 and '69, founding pastor of Maple City Chapel) attended Willard's funeral.

"Founding Father" dies at 99



Willard Mayer, founder and longest-serving teacher at RBC, died peacefully in his home, October 8, 2025.

Born June 25, 1926, to the late Ezra and Lydia Anna (Byler) Mayer, in Pigeon, Michigan, Willard was the third of five children and the only son in a devout farming family.

Willard felt the call to pastoral ministry early in life but did not disclose this sense until his late teens when, to his surprise, his parents insisted he study for ministry. They had dedicated him to God after his near-death experience at age seven.

Willard earned a BA and B Th from Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1951. Two years later he was ordained for ministry at Pigeon River Mennonite Church. In the winter of 1952, Willard began his defining role as a Bible teacher, serving among the first faculty of Berlin Bible School, a winter Bible school which by 1970 grew into RBI/C.

He was married to Esther Swartzentruber for 63 years. Esther died in 2016.

Willard served RBC as principal, academic dean, and teacher, retiring in 2001 after 49 years of service. His trademark courses were Genesis, Gospel of John, Hebrews, and Christian Evidences.

Willard also conducted renewal meetings all over the U.S. and Canada, averaging seven series per year for 50 years.

MIRROR

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RAGE BAIT

It is telling that the 2025 Oxford Word of the Year is, “rage bait.” In an era of alternate realities, it is also fitting that the “word” of the year is, in fact, two words.

Irony aside, Oxford defined rage bait this way, “online content deliberately designed to elicit anger or outrage by being frustrating, provocative, or offensive, typically posted in order to increase traffic to or engagement with a particular web page or social media content.” Rage bait has risen to prominence over the last 25 years as divisions among Americans have unearthed gaping chasms between neighbors. The floors of these deep chasms are warmed by the fires of hell. Outrageous content draws us in and reminds us of the evil in our neighbors and the goodness of our own lives. It is endangering our souls.

So much anger leaves us tired and vulnerable to self-righteous indignation. The Psalmist declares, “refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself, it tends only to evil.” (Ps 37:8 ESV).

Anger, even of the righteous sort, can quickly distort the mind and facilitate choices that welcome destruction.

In a letter to a friend, Mark Twain once commented, “Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.”

To be sure, there is a place for anger. But I wonder if we can easily know that place when it has become the water in which we swim.

When I consider the weary man on the cover of this *Mirror* and reflect on the era of anger we inhabit, I’m reminded that we serve a King who asks for our trust. He reigns. He will set right all that is broken. He is also tender with those who are weary. His Kingdom is not built on rage. It is governed by the Prince of Peace, full of grace and truth. May we find a home in His palace of peace. Amen

President
JEREMY MILLER

