

Follow the Path He Set for You: A Novel

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FOLLOW

the

PATH

HE SET FOR YOU

A Novel

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Dedicated to
all my readers
for your love
and support
throughout this series.

You've encouraged
me so very much
and I love you all!

May God bless
and keep you in the
palm of His hand.

[FAMILY TREE](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

No one knew.

That was the way he wanted it. A man needed something of his own. He and God spent a lot of time together – early morning and late night, but no one knew. Everyone thought of him only as a jokester, but God had told him to be this way to bring joy and laughter to everyone he could and he enjoyed it. But he had his very serious and deep moments with his best friend, God.

At that moment before sunrise he was in the woods at his favorite spot – an old stump of an oak tree – praying and reading scripture. He did his devotion there every morning and not even Lillian knew, he thought. He prayed for everyone connected to the farm and family and any other needs he knew of. He constantly prayed for his family.

He read John 18:36 and I Peter 2:11. “Lord, no wonder we’re not always happy on earth because we are strangers here and only passin’ through on our way to our heavenly home with You. Praise You, Lord. Thank You for heaven and preparin’ a place for us. If a person settles for earth and thinks this is all there is, they lose so much of what You have planned. We can’t be happy here completely. Is that why you want me to bring laughter to people?” He stopped and listened for God for several long moments. He felt confirmed in his heart that he was doing what God wanted him to which was a comforting and encouraging knowledge. He continued to pray for his family at length and other loved ones. When he finished, he closed his Bible and, taking long strides, headed for home with a big smile on his face. It was going to be a good day!

“Clyde, come to breakfast!” He heard his name called and his stomach rumbled at the thought of food. Lillian always made a hearty breakfast, especially for Clyde and Ban, who was then nineteen and working with the men. His shoulder and arm muscles were beginning to develop due to good, hard labor, which all the men told him was good for him.

“How’s my family this great mornin’?”

“I’m good, Pa. Slept good and ready to go! How are you?”

“Great, son! Gonna be a good day. I can tell already. Where will you be workin’ today?”

“Not sure yet. Maybe with Thomas. Whatever I’m told.”

“It’s good to follow directions. It’s good trainin’. And how is my sweet Beth?”

“Good, Pa. I slept well also and look forward to helpin’ Ma today.”

“Okay. I didn’t sleep as well as everyone else seemed to. My lower back kept hurting. I don’t know why. I think we’ll stick to less stressful chores today. Maybe catch up on sewing. What are you doing today, Clyde?”

"Clem and me have some work to do in the corn fields. I'd say we all have busy days, so we better get at it. Great breakfast, honey. I appreciate you and love you. You take care of that back today." He hugged her and kissed her. Beth always thought her parents' relationship was so sweet. She loved watching them together. Ban was oblivious.

Clem had come close to dying about a month before with an unknown fever. Susannah was so afraid she was going to lose him, but as the days went by he improved slowly. The fever began to go down and he began to feel better. Everyone had stayed at the house to pray and be together in case he did die. Even Dr. Hiram had stayed days and nights to keep a watch on him. Then one morning when he was better he got up and walked to the breakfast table and everyone cheered. He couldn't keep from grinning at everybody. Applause followed. Susannah was so excited to feed Clem after his being sick for a month. The other women helped make breakfast for everyone and they all sat down together for the first time in a month. Everyone was laughing and talking.

Clyde and Reggie had to have a little fun. They'd been quiet too long.

Reggie said, "Clem, you look tickety-boo."

Clyde turned and looked at Reggie. "What in sam hill is tickety-doo?"

"It's tickety-boo. It means he looks well and things are going well."

"Why don't you just say that then, British cowboy?"

"What does sam hill mean and why do you use it?"

"I don't know. I just grew up hearin' it used and I picked it up. Most people in Texas say it. I have no idea if it means anythin'."

"Well, there you go."

"There you go what?" Everyone was laughing at the twosome.

Everyone looked up as Melody rolled in and Jeff walked in carrying the twins who received the proper oohs and aahs from everyone who crowded around to see them. Clem asked if he could hold them. They put one in each arm and Melody and Jeff put a hand under each of Clem's arms to provide support. Clem couldn't stop grinning and he kissed each one on the head. "They are precious gifts from God, children. Love them and take care of them." The moment was similar to the Old Testament when the family patriarch blessed the children. Susannah wiped a tear that escaped.

"Oh, we are and will keep doin' it."

Clyde was especially moved by the healing of Clem because he had spent hours praying for him and God heard and healed him. Of course, he wasn't the only one praying. They all were, especially Susannah, because she and Clem were so close.

Susannah didn't say anything for a while, letting Clem enjoy himself, but finally she suggested he needed to get back to bed to rest. He was feeling weak. After she got him settled into bed, she called Dr. Hiram to come and check Clem and see what he thought. After his examination and talk with Clem, he told them, "I think you're on the mend, Clem. You'll need to rest and maybe sit on

the front porch for fresh air, but do not go back to work yet. Not for a long time. Let the young men take care of things for a while.”

“They have been for a month already.”

“Well, that means they’ve learned how and can keep on filling in for you. You’d better listen to what I’m saying and follow my instructions so you won’t have a setback.”

“I’ll listen, believe me. I don’t want that fever again.”

During his recovery time, Susannah hovered over Clem for weeks to see that he rested, got fresh air and sunshine, took short walks, ate well and visited the twins, Micah and Meredith. He really grew close to them and loved them dearly as well as Susannah. Every day Clem reached for her hand, kissed it and told her how much he loved her. She also did it for him. Not many couples after so many years were as close as these two. They sat on the porch and watched the sunsets and the stars come out and remembered good times.

“Michael, send Gema down to watch over the Brown family. They are a godly family.”

“Yessir! Tis done!”

Thomas and Victoria’s new baby, Tommy, became their whole world. He filled their empty arms and kept them busy. When he learned to walk, Victoria had a hard time keeping up with him and out of trouble. At three, he broke his arm falling out of a swing that Thomas had built, not for his use by himself. He was a tough little guy. Victoria cried more than he did when he broke his arm. He was up and playing the next day. Victoria thought Thomas taught him to play too rough – to ride a horse by age five, make friends with the cattle and even pet them. Tommy gave most of them names. Thomas kept telling her, “A boy has to be a boy and learn these things.” Still, she worried.

One afternoon Reggie stopped by his room off the tack room to pick up some gloves he had forgotten and found a letter on his table. He never got mail and thought it very unusual. He looked at the return address in London which read Erin Watson. His sister! Why would he be hearing from her? Their parents were gone, so what could it be? Surely not one of her children. When he needed a place to live after the Great War, she had flat turned him down, but now she wanted him for something. He just stood looking at it and turned to go back to Jeff’s shop.

When he got to the shop, Jeff could tell Reggie was distracted. “What’s wrong, Reg?”

“Oh, uh, I just got a letter from my sister in London. You remember, the one who wouldn’t let me live there after the war.”

“Yes, I remember it well. That’s why you’re here.”

“Yes, well, I guess I’m afraid to open it. I can’t imagine what she wants after all this time. It can’t be good, knowing her as I do. We’ve never gotten along. Last I heard, she has two children, but I can’t imagine it would be about them. I don’t know.”

"You know the only way to find out is to open the letter, Reg. You could keep on guessin', but that won't tell you a thing. Right?"

"Right. I know. I will open it after supper." They went back to work.

After supper that night when Reggie was back in his room, he looked at the letter, turned it over, reread the return address, held it up to the light and in frustration put it back on the table. He lay down on his bed for a while trying to think what she could possibly want with him. He was sure she wanted something. That was just Erin.

"Michael, send Opa down to help Reggie Barnhouse. He's about to face a major life change and needs our help."

"Yessir! Tis done."

Reggie finally made himself get up and open the letter and was shocked more than ever by what she had to say. She told him how much she missed him and wanted to see him. She wanted her two children, a boy, Devin, 8, and a girl, Bronwen, 6, to get to know their uncle. Then the bombshell hit. She wanted him to bring her and her children to America to live. He was shocked at first but couldn't help but read between the lines and wondered if she was trying to use him for her own purposes. Maybe she had money or some other problems and saw him as a way out. He hated to think like that, but he knew her. He lay back on the bed and reread the letter two or three times, trying to read her mind. He practically stared holes in the paper. What should he do? He began to pray.

The next day Reggie talked with Clem and told him the whole story. "Clem, I don't know what to do. What would you recommend?"

"I understand how you feel. I believe I'd have to know more than you do to make an informed decision. Like why does she suddenly want to come to America? She may be tryin' to run from London for some reason. You are the only one who can decide what you can do for her, if anythin'. I assure you I will be prayin' for you and I'll ask Susannah to, also."

"Thanks, Clem. I'm really ferhoodled about this. That means confused and is actually an Amish word. My mind is scattered and distracted right now. Can't think straight. I'm going to find Clyde." And he suddenly left.

Reggie looked all over for Clyde but couldn't find him. He went to Jeff's shop and there was Clyde and Jeff. "Well, I've got both of you together. I can tell this one time." He told the whole story once again and asked them to pray for him to know what to do. "I don't trust her. She's been in trouble before and I have to wonder if that's why she wants to come here. I confess I really don't want her in my life. I guess I'm being selfish, but she uses people to get what she wants and then casts them aside, like she did her husband. I've always worried about what she might do with her children. Just keep praying, guys. I need some major prayer." They agreed they would.

About a week later Reggie received another letter from his sister begging him to send for her. There was a real urgency in her wording, but this made him more skeptical. This time he wrote her

back and nicely asked why she wanted to come to America. While the letter was in transit, he remembered a friend from the war who had gone to work for Scotland Yard, Metropolitan Police Services, in London. He contacted him by telephone and asked him to investigate her situation. He told him the whole story, especially about her wanting to come to America. Several days later his friend, Ben Parsons, called with his report which was not good. She was wanted in London for forgery and theft. Reggie was devastated but couldn't help her run from the law. Following prayer, he told them where to find her and she was arrested. He learned the children were put in the foster care system in London. He was torn apart about her two children and didn't know what to do. He knew what the foster care system was like in London and could only imagine how the children would be treated.

He went to see Susannah. He told her the story and asked, "What can I do? What should I do?"

"What do you want to do, Reggie?" Susannah probed.

"I'm not sure. All I know is that I don't know how to raise children. I have no experience with them. I don't know her two children. I have no space for them to live. We can't all three squeeze into my room. But I don't want to see them as foster kids pulled here and there. Should I take them, Susannah, as impossible as it sounds?" *

The 1930s were a different time from the 1920s. The Great Depression hit and as time passed many people lost their jobs, homes and land. Some families and individuals rode the rails looking for work. A Dust Bowl hit and blew much of the soil across the country. People did what they had to in order to survive. The Brown family was a little better off because of huge gardens they all grew and inheritance from a few family members.

You'll find other changes in the lives of Ban, Thomas, Jeff, Reggie, Ruth, and Jon. In fact, most of the family faced chances bad and good. Ban became the pastor of the local church they all attended and reached out to help needy people. He also had to face preaching his first funeral.

Jeff and Melody had twins and the family ended up with many grandchildren. Two of the grandsons became real troublemakers. Wait to see what happened to them! Hitler came to power and World War II began with the U.S. entering December 8, 1941. Several grandchildren were drafted or enlisted.

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