

 **chapters**



CELEBRATING
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

MAKE ME A BLESSING

by Kevin VanNorman



Where do you turn when you need godly advice, when there seems to be no clear direction? I turn to Pastor Van. He doesn't tell me what to do. He gently walks me through the process of seeing God's hand at work. He makes sure I look at the situation from the perspective of what would be best for me, my family, and my own walk and growth in my spiritual life. He helps me to see how God's story is unfolding in my life. The greatest thing about my relationship with Pastor Van is that I have a little more access to him and his amazing wife, Joanne, because I get to call Pastor Van "dad".

What a difference God has made in my dad's life. The person I have called "dad" for 49 years is so much more of a man and a father now than he was when I was small. Remember when you were a kid and your dad could beat anybody at anything. So could mine. Over the years he has taught me what it takes to be a man and a father. What makes a true man is being obedient to the creator of that man. My dad is the godliest man I know. If I can be half the man my dad is, my creator will say, "Well done." For me and my family he is a great example of what it means to be a Christian. He is far from perfect (just ask my mom) but his greatest strength is that he knows that the closer he gets to God the more he realizes how far short he falls and how he needs to rely more and more on God and not on himself.

All of his children and grandchildren know he is willing to listen and offer godly advice for any situation. Although, you may not want to ask him for advice on riding a bike. His most recent attempt left him down a small hill and in a small pine tree! The total ride was about 30 feet long. I wish I could have seen it. For more details ask my sister. I'm sure she would be happy to fill you in. You may need advice on gardening but his skills seem to be diminishing as I believe his corn is not yet knee-high, even in August. He has vowed to remedy this for next year. However, the rabbits have been enjoying the leaf lettuce from the small planter on his front step.

He has an endless supply of comical jokes and stories. I'm sure you've heard many, if not, ask him about Michigan's U.P. declaring war on



the United States. Maybe he'll get tired of telling it and mom won't have to hear it... again. My dad is truly a unique individual. God made him that way. Dad has just learned to listen to his creator savior. He may be willing to share some of the stories and pains encountered along his chapter in God's story. You'll have to catch him before or after he does his Paul Bunyan impersonation. He still goes out to cut wood at the church or wherever there is a tree that just needs to be taken down.

My family and I had been gone from the Grand Rapids area for over twenty years. We moved back into the area just about 18 months ago. This has been a great opportunity for me and my family to reconnect with my parents. Not that we had disconnected or anything but the miles and busy schedules just interfered. We have been able to get together with mom and dad at least one evening per week on most weeks. My wife and I have come to cherish those nights. We may spend

our time eating (dad is still pretty good at that but a little smarter about it now, unless mom isn't paying attention), watching television, or just talking (vast majority) about anything from deer sightings to the latest book read or lesson learned. If any of my kids have joined us there may also be a game of RISK, which seems to be the family favorite. These are nights that I get my mom and dad to myself and my family (selfish?...yes) as it feels like we have missed out on so much over the past twenty years.

I can't say a whole lot about my dad without saying at least a little bit about my mom. She is the definition of a godly woman. She is the perfect help meet for my dad. God had put together quite a force when He called the two of them to Himself. Yet they still had to choose to be obedient followers. I think my mom could have done anything in life that she put her mind to. I have no doubt that she could have been

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a very successful business person or even the Paula Dean of her day. Her choice was to be a successful wife and mother. Mom's focus was always on dad and us kids. It has been amazing to watch the two of them serve God together. (That's free advice to couples...find an area where you can serve God together and watch Him draw you closer to Himself and to each other.) Dad wouldn't be half the man he is today were it not for mom's faithfulness...and cooking. Thanks mom!

When I received the opportunity to write this I was told it could be of any length (up to ten pages). I wondered what to share. What it all boiled down to was a simple man simply living for something other than himself. There's not a whole lot more to tell for I don't possess the same flare for stories as my dad does. I've seen my dad go through some good times and some tough times both in business and in the church. I have watched how he handled those and many other situations. He has been a model,

oftentimes at a distance, of what it means to be a man, a husband, a pastor, and in general a Christian. He has been more of a father to me than he will ever know or I could ever tell. My dad hasn't retired. He just doesn't have office hours.

My prayer for my dad is that he realizes that his years of faithful service have impacted hundreds, even thousands, of people. It's always nice to know that you have "accomplished" something. However many people may show up, whether to honor my dad or even just eat at the upcoming event, I

pray that he knows that his life has not been about results...it has been about being faithful no matter what the results may be (for that is God's area). Visible results are sometimes just God's blessing or a reward for faithfulness. I pray that he realizes that his faithful years of service and love have greatly impacted at least one and I have a suspicion that several others that would agree. God has answered my dad's prayer as reflected in his favorite hymn, *Make Me a Blessing*. Thanks dad!

PASTOR. FRIEND. MATCHMAKER?

by Bob Czerney

Pastor VanNorman was one of the first people I met after coming to Christ and starting to attend CBC. My wife Cheryl and I felt comfortable around him and JoAnn immediately. I appreciated his sense of humor, friendliness, and love for the Lord right from the start. He was my trainer in an evangelism class and it was there that I noticed more of his love for people.

When Cheryl was diagnosed as terminal, he came alongside us as pastor, counselor and friend. That was when I really saw his wisdom and compassion. From the funeral preparations throughout my time in his grief recovery group, Pastor Van and I became closer friends. There were times that he was concerned that I wasn't eating (imagine that!). He'd call me and say he had a Buy-One-Get-One-Free coupon from Wendy's. He'd pick me up and when we got there, he'd say he had already eaten and tell me that I should eat both meals. Hey, I knew

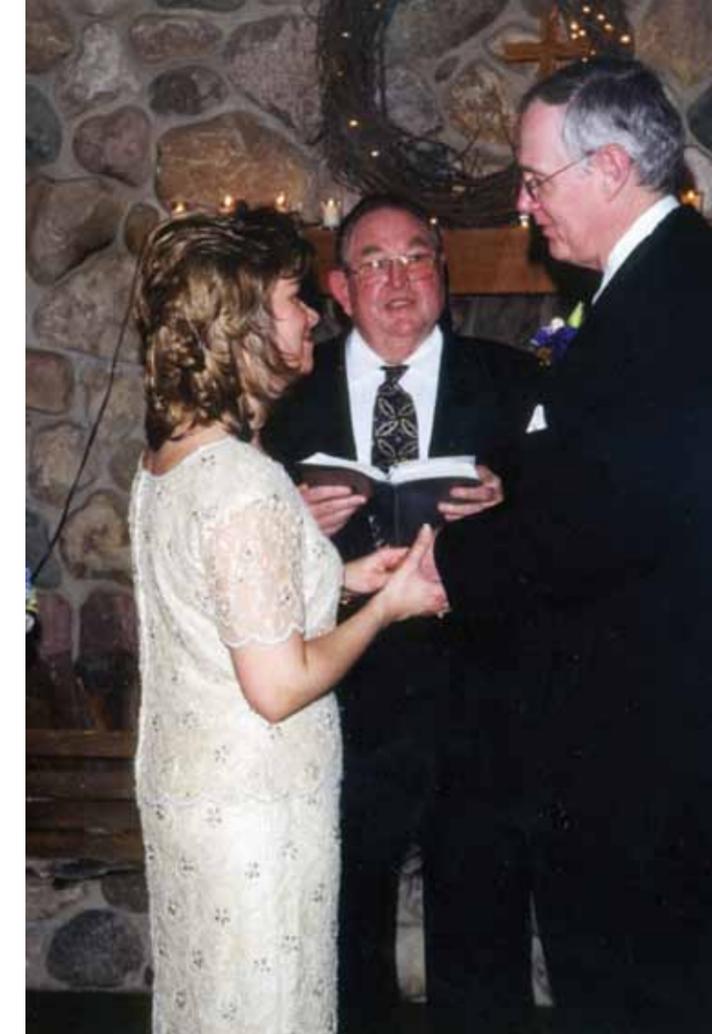
what he was up to, but I played along.

I guess you could say I've been accused of leading Pastor Van astray. On my days off we had a habit of going out for lunch and staying away too long. One Tuesday we came back late in the afternoon and there was Dorothy Weatherbee, his secretary, with her arms folded tapping her foot saying, "Wandering VanNorman missing in action again!"

I guess you could say Pastor Van has been accused of being a matchmaker. We were out for lunch one day and I was feeling guilty. It had only been a few years since I lost my wife and I told him that I had noticed this gal named Teresa and wondered if it was wrong. He replied, "I've been thinking about introducing you to her." He told me

I should ask her out ... it took three months for me to get the courage to actually do it. The following year he was the pastor at our wedding. The most vivid memory we have of that day is of our dear pastor standing with his back to the fireplace with beads of sweat pouring down his face...he was literally being roasted alive!

Over these past ten years since our wedding, Teresa and I have enjoyed Pastor Van in the role of pastor, teacher, small group leader, counselor, coworker, and good friend. We have had barrels of fun with him and JoAnn over dinners-out, dinners-in, games, jokes, and lots of other memory-making -- memories we hold very dear. And this is not the end. I look forward to more years of spending time together with Pastor Van enjoying one another's company and bad jokes.



Bob & Teresa Czerney on their wedding day.

Grandpa -

There are many things I have learned from you in the past years. There are many that come to mind, but here are the top 6...

- 1) Your jokes - Your jokes keep coming & coming; your delivery of these jokes are just as great as the jokes themselves
- 2) Pajamas - I will need to buy many pairs of pajamas when I get older just in case my grandchildren stay the night & raid my dresser
- 3) Bedtime Stories - These stories are key when it comes to bedtime, if I tell them long enough I will never have to have an ending to them
- 4) RISK - Show no mercy when it comes to world domination
- 5) Nursing Homes - How to pick up the women at nursing homes... & how to avoid/hide from them
- 6) Most importantly - How to live for the Lord & love Him on a day to day basis

When people tell me I remind them of my dad I smile & thank them because I view it as a great compliment for two reasons. The first being that it's my father who I'd like to be/resemble when I grow up. The second reason is that my father is told that he reminds them of you. So when I put this all together I hear, hope, & pray that it means that I am going to be a great husband, father, grandfather, & especially a strong man of God. I love you so much gramps & I can't wait to see what it is I learn next from you

-Joel

Thank You

Grandpa -

One of my best memories as a kid is that we would come to your home and ALWAYS have to wear your pajamas while you told us stories as we fell asleep. I loved your stories and probably enjoy them just as much (if not more) now! I can also always be sure that I will have a good joke if we ever come over now too. I can't say enough how glad I am that we live closer now so you and grandma can be a more frequent part of our lives. You are an amazing man and you lead this family with great wisdom and integrity. God has truly done amazing things through you and I can only hope to be able to look up to you the way I do. Thank you so much for being a great man and an even better grandpa. Love ya Gramps! - Cody

! Thank You !

Dear, Grandpa,
Thank You! ☺
for teaching me how to
play risk (wich we have to do soon)
for going on walks with me
for all the storys and knowlege
and for every thing else.

Love ya lots, Jax

"So I exhort the elders among you...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." 1 Peter 5:1-4

I believe we as a flock have been blessed with just such an elder-pastor in Pastor VanNorman. I would guess that more people have been blessed in and through the ministry of Pastor and Mrs. Van over the years than perhaps any other member of this flock. Faithful, loving ministry...that is their legacy.

Pastor Van is my friend. I think most would feel that way about him. We have shared quite a few jokes when he was able to get through them without laughing himself silly. We have spent time together praying for one another's family. We have been able to confide in one another when there was no one else to whom we could speak. Pastor Van was my friend during the darkest days of my life. From quiet, reflective times to playing games with Pastor and Jo (neither quiet nor reflective I might add!), Pastor Van remains consistent in his character. He genuinely loves you and wants God's best for you. He's a good friend!

Pastor Van is our pastor. He has regularly provided good pastoral counsel to me both in word and through my watching his life. My life and ministry is better having had him as a pastor in my life. I think most of the flock could say the same thing. Pastor Van has a unique gift in causing people to sense the security and strength of God's presence. He has brought comfort to so many during the most difficult times of our lives. Whether hospital visits, counseling engagements, or funerals, Pastor Van has shown love and offered peace in the midst of life's storms as we embrace the compassion of our loving Savior. Pastor Van is a good undershepherd.

Pastor Van is our example. I know that this thought still scares you Pastor Van, but let me assure you, we are so thankful for your example of faithfully following Christ for all of these years. Your gentleness and grace in tough times have taught us all so much. Your sternness when necessary has taught us just as much. You have taught us what is important and what might be understood as secondary through your life. We cannot begin to thank you enough for being an example to the flock.

Pastor Van has a GREAT wife! I know perhaps more than anyone that you would not be you nor would you enjoy the ministry you have without God's gift of Jo. Jo, you have been a good wife for Pastor Van and for this flock. No-one, except for the other pastor's wives, can fully appreciate the significance and depth of your role. You have been a faithful, godly help-meet and this flock is better for it. Thank you for your faithfulness.

Thank you Pastor! Thank you for being our friend, our pastor, and our example. Thank you for faithfully loving God and people. Your ministry will continue with this flock not only through your continued time with us, but through the lives you have touched from every generation. We honor you in your retirement as we thank God for giving this flock such a good gift as a pastor. On behalf of the entire church family, thank you for being used of God to draw each of us closer to him.

Your fellow laborer,
Pastor Halsted



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A silhouette of a person wearing a cap and holding a fishing rod, standing on the left side of the frame. The background is a sunset sky with soft, horizontal clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. The fishing rod extends diagonally across the middle of the image.

MAKE ME A BLESSING

Chorus 1

Make me a blessing make me a blessing
Out of my life may Jesus shine
Make me a blessing O Savior I pray
Make me a blessing to someone today

Verse 1

Out in the highways and byways of life
Many are weary and sad
Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife
Making the sorrowing glad

Verse 2

Tell the sweet story of Christ and His love
Tell of His pow'r to forgive
Others will trust Him if only you prove
True every moment you live

Verse 3

Give as 'twas given to you in your need
Love as the Master loved you
Be to the helpless a helper indeed
Unto your mission be true

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