

Transforming Lives in **The Midst of Life's Storm**

MATURING



by Larry Black, Church Planting Strategist, Central-West Region

Theresa Maner lived the “American Dream”. At a young age, she married Gerald Maner (“J. J.” to his friends) who became a building contractor. J. J. worked hard at what he had always enjoyed—working outside and providing well for his family. Theresa and J. J. enjoyed life with their four boys; Dustin, Devin, Dillon, and Damon. The boys loved sports, J. J. loved his work, and Theresa loved her family. Together they lived very caring and connected lives with their friends and neighbors.

This sounded like the “American Dream” family, until two and half years ago. Theresa discovered she had cancer and would endure a single mastectomy and chemotherapy. Remission was an encouraging word but would last less than a year. She returned for tests after back pain over the Christmas holiday and discovered that the cancer had returned and would be inoperable. She was told that she had two years to live.

The following is the result of one seeking answers, but not for herself. Theresa did ask the “why” question but would tell Pastor Rick Ewing at Pleasant View Baptist Church in Lynchburg that she was able to “trust God in the midst of the why without answers.” The final year and half journey started with Theresa seeking spiritual peace for her family. You see, she didn’t want “her five boys to have to face life alone.” She told Pastor Rick that she wanted to be baptized with all of her sons. Pastor Rick confirmed her relationship with Christ and then explained why he would need to do the same with each son. She understood and led the way by being baptized first.

Pastor Rick worked with Theresa on a plan to get the Gospel to the boys through something they loved...sports. Remember, they loved sports. The three youngest heard the Gospel, but the youngest, Damon, received Christ first. God had his heart ready. Shortly after, the middle two boys followed as a result of the middle school ministry of the church. Then Dustin, the oldest son, surrendered at his home but not without Dad praying for salvation also and saying that he needed to be baptized with the boys. Momma had been crying out to God for their souls—now they wouldn’t have to face life alone. Pastor Rick presented Theresa’s



The Maner family

“five boys” to the church the following Sunday...excitedly ready to be baptized. This took place just a few short months before Theresa’s homegoing.

While lying in the hospital bed on one of her last good days, she told Pastor Rick and J. J., “In the midst of this whole thing, God has been so precious to me.” She then turned the conversation and told them that she wanted to plan her own funeral. Because the church wouldn’t hold all of their friends, she asked for the funeral to be in the gym of the church and she wanted Pastor Rick to preach on Jesus. He did so in a gym that was overflowing with family, friends, and neighbors. More than fifty people gave their lives to Jesus that day, one of which was J. J.’s dad.

Weeks later, Theresa’s friend called Pastor Rick and said she needed to talk. Her life was a mess, but she had watched Theresa in the midst of the storm and saw a difference. She said, “I need what Theresa had.” God uses our storms to transform our life and others. How is He using your storm?

RESOURCE

■ **Website:** www.pvbc-lynchburg.com

■ **Contact:**
Call the SBCV at 888-234-7716 for details from your region’s missionary.

■ **Books:**
The Power of a Praying Mother by Stormie Omartia
Don’t Waste Your Life by John Piper

■ **Consider:**
Share Jesus without Fear,
Lifeway Christian Resources