

*Eulogy to Ann.*¹

1. *Emma Ann Steelman Phelps McMichael, b. October 9, 1935, m. by her pastor Dr. R. G Lee of Bellevue Baptist Church June 20, 1957, d. August 24, 2016.*

We grieve but not as others that have no sure hope; we must sorrow but not as those that have not the promised hope. What is that promised hope in the words of I Thessalonians 4:13-18?

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which

are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

1. Jesus "will bring with Him" at the Second Coming, which mean those whose bodies now sleep until this resurrection at Jesus' Coming, spirits and souls must be with Him. So the sleep in Jesus is for the body; for as Ann wrote in her Bible out of 40 years of nursing and 71 years of Christian life, "the moment that you die you go to heaven".

2. We want to live and not overly grieve in order to honor such a wonderful name of Emma Ann Steelman Phelps McMichael. For one thing, she is now not only with God and Jesus in the same location of heaven, but at the same place of a family reunion with her Steelman father and her Phelps mother, no two more noble souls in the world. Yes, even as we have missed her mom and dad, we will miss her probably every day, but determined to live a life that will honor

her name and that of Her acknowledged Lord Jesus Christ.

A couple of nights before her going to sleep in the Lord, about 4 o'clock in the morning ([generally the time we had some of our best conversations](#)), I heard somebody talking a great deal and thought it was Nike on the phone, who was sleeping in the middle bed room and since it had in recent weeks become hard for Ann to talk. [{By the way, do you know what really killed your mother, it was the inability to talk.}](#) Anyway on checking on Ann she had been praying and when I touched her soft hand, she said in assurance for Nike and me, and all of you, as was always her main concern for others, "I will be alright for I am going to a banquet."

An instant thought was that she was a little out of her head from the pain pills, but knowing she was always thinking and at rare moments made so much sense and with so much wisdom, I said 'what banquet', and she quickly replied "a banquet with Jesus".

It seemed strange that she chose banquet instead of the standard "feast" with Jesus of the Bible; and I can suppose that she was thinking of the sweetheart

banquet at Bellevue Baptist Church--perhaps the closest place to heaven she experienced--where I was the youth speaker. Just before the banquet in the beautiful auditorium of Bellevue that seated about 5,000 or more people under a large crystal chandelier I ask her to marry me and with the yes slipped an engagement ring on her finger.

Ann was a real Bible reader and almost Bible scholar with many years of experience as a Bible teacher, so the image in her mind had to be on one of the feast or banquet passages in the Bible on which she had taught, and since her favorite for reading was the Living Bible versions, it was checked for banquet or feast. Both were found in the NLT (New Living Translation) in Matthew 22:

"Jesus also told them other parables. He said, 'The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come.'"

In one of our many Bible discussions during the 10 months she was in Hospice, we spoke of the sermon I preached as a young preaching sailor in Lexington

Park Maryland, shortly after 1957 when we married. She remembered. It was called "Shoestring Reasons for Tragic Decisions"--you know one married a wife and couldn't come, another bought a yoke of oxen and another land; and I am sure by way of consolation for Nike and me and another statement of faith she expected to go very soon, as invited, to a banquet with Jesus.

3. There are some times, like here, for sad thoughts. Like the Bible says there are specific times for ever thing under the sun, and we must find a balance as Ann was so able to do.

"A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance..." (Ecclesiastes 3:4)

4. Ann wore the Yoke of Christ so gracefully that you could hardly see it. Repected, admired, loved, befriended, she could not stand for anyone to not like her. {And by the way there are limitations on time and space here, so please go to the Yoke of Christ group for a series on Emma Ann Steelman Phelps McMichael. It is a closed group especially for you, and almost all of you have already been invited or can request to join.} Ann went about doing good, like Jesus, in such a manner that it was hardly noticed.

For example I recall at Portales when we were interim pastor of University Baptist Church, when a member was seriously ill she would not say anything but just go over to their home and do the laundry. You probably never heard it, since she was always so nice, but one of her pet peeves was the custom of people saying, "If you need something, let me know", or "you are in our prayers" when it was so obvious immediate help in a crisis had to be given. One of her favorite stories about the father she admired was how consistently he would take groceries for prayers to any cousin in Tennessee or West Virginia that needed it; and a lot of times like at her profession of faith in Christ, she said, "I want to be baptized in that river just like my daddy".

5. Primarily like Ann knew how to do, put the sad thoughts in the background and "the think on these things" thoughts in the foreground. With 40 years of serious nursing, the first to go to work and the last to leave, she told me recently of how she had seen thousands of people die, and I would add even more sick and hurting. She had to think about those thoughts, and you could tell when someone close to our family age had died as she would stare at us more intently. Even as there is a time for sad thoughts and

a time for laughing and dancing thoughts, so we must achieve a balance by the Bible practice of "thinking on these things".

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phillipians 4:8)

6. Ann, like the Apostle Peter taught, loved life and also saw many good days. In the details of Peter's explanation of how to love life and see good days, you can perceive the Yoke of Christ in the life of Ann.

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." (I Peter 3:10-11)

In spite of the fact that we tend to make saints out of all the dead, think it over and you really know this was true of the life of Ann: her tongue never spoke any evil; any guile or deceit was foreign to nursing life, her

family life, her church or social life; she despised evil to the extent that another pet peeve was hearing anyone on TV that would take the name of God in vain; oh, the seeking of peace with family, with friends, with fellow workers, with all was one of the primary facets of her life, and another most unassuming manner in which she wore the Yoke of Christ so naturally; and then in the running after peace as one translation puts it, she was an expert but natural and practical practitioner.

7. It is a sad thought that is turned into a good thought of how during the predominately sad days of Hospice--normally 6 months but out of her toughness and determination lasted 10 months for her--she constantly expressed concern for the care givers. One serious discussion when she could still talk a couple of weeks ago was that we must find some options to take care of my back. But it was everybody, out of the pain and sorrow, she managed to express concern for them.

However I must close; but please when you want additional good memories of Ann go to the Yoke of Christ closed group on Facebook. She is the best example of the practical and sincere, almost invisible,

wearing of the Yoke of Christ you will ever find. Anyway any words, even from one like myself who lived and worked, laughed and cried, had good times and rough times for 59 years with my “joint heir in the grace of life”, would be inadequate to express such a life as Emma Ann Steelman Phelps McMichael, through 4 kids and their spouses, 6 grandkids and their spouses, and 4 great grandkids. For all of us I say, "Thank you wife, partner, best friend, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, for all the love and care and all the pleasant memories. {Surely everybody would agree Annie was my better self.}

This world was a better place for such a great soul being in it, and inevitably must be a sadder place as we miss her in spite of the great thoughts of how she is now laughing and dancing and talking with ease in heaven. Nike found in her Bible the statement, "The moment we die, we are in heaven." She is at a great banquet that last for days with Jesus, loved ones and friends, Danielle Maria, the aborted boy we lost, Pastor Dr. Lee, and so many doctors and nurses that loved her in about 6 states; and you know she would want me to say that we all should move the sad thoughts to the background at the proper time and generally in time, and move the good thoughts to the

foreground.

Parenthetical NOTE: [The more standard eulogies and memorials of her more visible accomplishments are and will be listed in a series of posts on the Yoke of Christ group.](#)}

8. Lastly and briefly I must say we are Blessed not only by memories of such a beautiful person, but are Blessed according to Jesus when we see the greater things that are not generally seen. There is a lot more in this universe that is unseen than that are seen, and the unseens are greater than the seen even as our very limited human perceptions tell us that all matter like what we stand on is solid, we know it to be primarily space within the atom and between billions of atoms.

From John 20:29 we read:

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

And pardon one last quote from Hebrews 11:1, something Ann also believed in strongly, that faith gives us confidence

in the greater things that are not seen to help us have balance with the seen things--

"Now faith is the substance of {unseen} things hoped for {with reasonable expectations as Ann had and is now experiencing}; and the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

What the evidence of where Ann is and how much fun she is having at this moment, the evidence is in the faith of the unseen as given in the Bible and applied by thousands like Annie in their personal quite testimony.

Eulogy to Ann.
