

## Autobiography – Helen Kamenos

God had been trying to get my attention for a while. I was extremely stressed with my responsibilities as principal of a private school and about the health of my elderly parents. Some days almost seemed unbearable, working ten to twelve hours a day and dashing to doctors and hospitals. Gradually, I developed my own personal health concerns.

I was diagnosed with stage four cancer, a very aggressive form that required immediate attention. I was told over the phone, while I was still at work. I was shocked, even though I suspected bad news. Somehow, hearing it out loud made it more real. My first thoughts were how I would tell my family. Strangely, I also thought about the need to write a will, not that I have much to pass on. I believed in God with all my heart, so I wasn't really afraid of dying, but I worried about how my family would cope. While driving on my way home, I talked to God. I told Him that whatever fate He chose for me, I would accept. I told Him that whether I lived or died, I knew I had the victory. In death I would be blessed in heaven, but if He chose to allow me to live, I would try to be a blessing to others. Either way, I prayed that God would be glorified. From that moment until the end of my chemotherapy and radiation treatments, I felt a remarkable peace. My stress disappeared! Almost a year later, I was declared free of cancer, and I was back at work, until the next time God tried to get my attention.

After 23 years of working for the same organization, I found myself out of a job. I felt pierced to my soul because my work was my life. It gave my life purpose. At that point, I did not know what God had planned for me. Compared to battling cancer or anything else in my life, this was much more devastating to me. Immediately, I relied on my faith. I read the Bible and talked to God, and this time, I listened for His voice with a message for me. I felt God comforting me and helping me to understand my circumstances, yet, for months, I did not know what He wanted me to do. What would be my new purpose in life? I struggled with understanding what was to come next. I sought employment without any luck. Rather than sitting around and doing nothing, I decided to go back to school and earn my Master's Degree. That in itself, was quite a journey, but it gave me a purpose.

One day, I had a conversation with my sister. She suggested that I begin a journal to help me determine my new direction in life. I took her advice, at first, but I found that writing about myself did not inspire me. I decided to write about what did inspire me, God. However, at first, I had no idea what to write about. I thought about my own attributes. I considered myself humble and meek, but I believed those traits to be a detriment to my professional career. I believed I needed to be more assertive, yet I knew Christ taught us to be humble and meek. To help me resolve the contradiction, I decided to begin writing about the Beatitudes from Matthew 5, where Christ declared, "*Blessed are those who are poor in spirit*" (humble) and "*Blessed are the meek.*" I wanted to prove to the world and to myself that humility and meekness are attributes we should aspire toward in ourselves, characteristics that are valued by God. At the same time, due to my experiences, I had become disappointed with people. I wanted to know why so many Christians struggled with putting Christ's teachings into practice, including myself. So, I began writing.

The writing process for me was incredible. I wrote what I knew, but I also purposefully listened more closely to God. I searched for truth, and God answered my prayers. The thoughts and ideas were coming to me so quickly that I had to jot down notes as I went in order to remember everything. Everything just flowed out of me.

The creative process is extraordinary. Through the writing process I forged a deeper connection with God. I had experienced this before, when I painted. I paint mostly landscapes, what I consider the beauty of God's creation. When I paint, I am in a different zone, another reality, almost outside of myself. The feeling is exhilarating, and I know that God is right there with me.

I felt the same way when I wrote. Often, I would go back and reread what I wrote and would feel like I was reading something someone else wrote. Other times, I would read a section because I wanted to add an important point, only to discover that I had already made that point. In both cases, when I paint or write, I feel like it is the work of someone else. I know that feeling comes from God because He is right there with me. For me, the creative process brings me closer to God. As I wrote "*A Journey Toward Perfection*," I was often brought to tears because I experienced how amazing God is. I was also so very thankful and felt so blessed. For me, this confirmed that what I was writing had God's approval. In church tradition, the "gift of tears" is an outward expression of our faith and of our experience with God.

Throughout the process of writing my book, I became more open to hearing God's voice. A new perspective or way of understanding God and our journey with Him would light up my mind as I recognized God's truth. The writing of *A Journey Toward Perfection* changed me. There were many times when God put the mirror up to my face and told me to take another look. I reevaluated my thinking and my beliefs about the Christian life. The most important theme was love. God taught me what it means to truly love unconditionally. I often saw my own ego and pride as an obstacle to my spiritual growth. Christ's words, "*If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me*" (Matthew 16:24) took on a new meaning for me. The writing of this book was truly a journey for me.

Even while writing *A Journey Toward Perfection*, I was not certain that it would actually become a published book. As a young girl, it was always a dream of mine to write a book, but I had no idea that I would write about God. As an adult, I never considered that this childhood dream would become a reality. Yet, I felt I was on a train that could not stop. I had to keep moving forward and see it through. Before beginning the writing of this book, I felt lost, not knowing my purpose in life. Now, I know from experience, that God will reveal His purpose to us when the time is right. I did not see it, until I was well into writing my book. I knew this was part of God's plan for me. He has placed me on a new trajectory in life, and I am thankful and blessed to follow Him.

I hope that the book itself, can open the door to God for everyone who reads it. The writing of this book took me out of the ashes of my life and propelled me onto a new road in my journey toward perfection. I know it is the Holy Spirit who works in us, who reveals Christ to us. I pray that He will touch your heart like He touched mine.