

# My Walk of FAITH AND HOPE

By Naomi Lightfoot

*“Some through the waters, some through the flood, some through the fire, but all through the blood; some through great sorrow, but God gives a song, in the night season and all the day long.”<sup>1</sup>*

**W**e used to sing this song growing up in the Open Bible Church in Galesburg, Illinois. (If the church doors were open, we were there!) I didn't realize at that time how prophetic the words were.

I am so thankful for the strong foundation of faith given to me by my godly parents, Joe and Evelyn Flynn. I have wonderful memories of life on the farm with them and my three sisters. As young girls, we developed a close blend of harmony. Known as the Flynn Sisters, we traveled to various churches, sharing the gospel through music. Today we still love to sing together.

In 1965 I married Charles Lightfoot, whom I had met at Hickory Grove Camp in Iowa. Charles loved the land. We settled close to the land he farmed with his dad, near Lock and Dam 18, on the Mississippi River, east of Burlington, Iowa. In June, three months after we were married, a massive flood covered hundreds of acres of farmland. Charles helped the National Guard

My first real sorrow, however, was when Dad was diagnosed with a brain tumor at age 59. He had surgery in November of 1971 – and God took him home on January 23, 1972. We all felt the pain of his passing.

Our next real sorrow would involve Troy. He had been diving in the St.

Louis area during the floods of '93 and then went on to Morgan City, Louisiana. While there, Troy started experiencing memory loss. Many times while driving home, he would get lost along the way. We were unsure of what was wrong with him or where to take him. A chiropractor took an MRI and told us to get him to a hospital immediately. At age 25, our son faced surgery for a brain tumor. We prayed and

had faith, but our hearts were broken. God had a different plan for our handsome, full-of-life kid. He went home to be with His Lord in 1997. Troy never complained. He had such peace and even shared his faith with his buddies. As his mother, I am thankful for the 27 exciting years the Lord blessed us with.



Naomi (Flynn) Lightfoot, a graduate of Open Bible College, is a sought-after speaker. Her story was also followed by *The Hawk Eye*, a local newspaper in Burlington, Iowa.

Center: Charles and Naomi Lightfoot

Below: A visual progression of the devastation of the Lightfoots' home: from its original condition, to its inundation by the floodwaters, to its demolition after the waters receded.



with flood duty.

God blessed us with two children. Our son, Troy, was a great kid who lived life on the edge. Four-wheeling, fast cars, and skiing in the mountains of Colorado were his loves. He attended school in Texas to become a commercial diver. Our beautiful daughter, Tausha, became a second grade teacher and married a young man, Adam, who became like a son to me.

After the loss of Troy, Charles decided we would not wait to travel. We would do it now since we didn't know what lay ahead in the road of life.

The mighty Mississippi has a mind of its own. During the floods of '93 we had been forced to evacuate our home for three months. That seemed like a huge ordeal, but nothing could prepare us for what lay ahead. In June of 2008 we kept hearing news

reports that water was coming down from the north. Our hearts were in denial that a major flood could hit yet again. On a Thursday night I rode my bike to the Lock and Dam; the guys there knew me and would tell me the truth [about our situation]. Fear gripped my heart when I saw the wire fence rolled up and the motor to the lock gate being transported down the road. I asked one of the workers, "How serious is this?"

His words still ring in my ears, "It's coming and it's going to be big. You had better be ready."

The words sounded prophetic. Neither Charles nor I wanted to face it, but we had to. Once again family and friends emptied our home into semitrailers. We also had a garage and a large machine shed full of farm equipment. Everything we owned would be stored for months.

On June 17 the water came, destroying everything in its path, including our home of 35 years. On the Sunday following the flood, I sang "God Leads Us Along" for church. When I got to the words, "Some through the waters, some through the flood," I looked back at my strong husband, head in his hands, tears streaming down his face.

We stayed with our daughter for several weeks. Then dear friends offered us their furnished cabin, which became a refuge for us. We lived there for two months, contemplating what to do.

On a Sunday morning, August 31, 2008, I went to awaken my husband for church, but he didn't move.

God had taken him home. I had lost my love of 44 years. It was such a shock for our family. Charles had been the picture of health. I believe the weight of it all – not knowing where we would live, the extreme stress – took his life. During the span of just two months time, I became both homeless and a widow.

Our marriage began with a flood in 1965 and ended with a flood in 2008.



I moved back in with Tausha and Adam for a year, which was healing for all of us. (In one year I moved five times.) God often gave me songs in the night. One night I awoke with the song I sang at my husband's funeral, "God Will Take Care of You." God truly has taken care of me, and has walked with me daily.

He never promised a rose garden, but He will lead us through the deep waters and sorrows of life. Every chance I get, I share my walk of faith and hope. Even though my husband isn't here to walk with me, I must go on. As I look back, I cannot believe how God has brought me through to a spiritual level I never knew existed.

One day while visiting the site of our demolished home, I asked God for "something" from the rubble. A cluster of African violets "popped" out at me. Next to them was a Bible – not just any Bible – but a Bible from the Holy Land. My sister Nadine and her husband, Ken Groen (former Central Region Executive Director), had brought it back as a gift. The front and back of it were made of olive wood and stamped "Jerusalem." This little Bible had been in our flooded bedroom in water, mud, and mold over a year. Then as the house was demolished and burned, the Bible somehow survived. The pages are even still readable. God's power through His Word protected this Bible. I take it with me every time I have a chance to share my story. People are fascinated with it.

God is truly my rock and foundation. "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (Psalm 18:1-2, KJV).



<sup>1</sup>George A. Young, "God Leads Us Along."

Left: The Holy Land Bible, still readable, that survived it all.

Below: Naomi takes her treasured Bible with her every time she shares her story.

