

### Anonymous Seasons

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:52 NIV)

Wisdom that comes to us from others is one of God’s blessings—an example of the importance of community, of the church, of the family of man. Recently I read somewhere that “the hours often go slowly, but the years fly by.” That struck me as a wise saying.

Colleen, my wife, has often been a source of recommended readings for me; she should have been a librarian! This year she shared with me an amazing book—*Anonymous: Jesus’ Hidden Years and Yours*, by Alicia Britt Chole. I highly recommend it. The basic premise is that we know little about the first thirty years (90%) of Jesus’ life. The Bible focuses on Jesus’ three years of public ministry; but His first thirty years were foundational. That quiet season of anonymity prepared Him for true greatness and made Him unshakable when His time came. Chole writes that when our potential is unseen and our abilities are unappreciated, when we are living in the gap between our dreams and life’s realities, we are in what she calls an “anonymous season of the soul.” She centers the book around Matthew’s account of Jesus’ forty days in the Judean wilderness and explains how she sees Jesus’ life up to that point preparing Him for His encounter with Satan.

One of many sentences that really grabbed my attention opens Chapter 18. “Time is not really spent. Instead, it is invested in a future we cannot see.” Reflecting on that thought and the whole book has helped me deal with “anonymous seasons” in my life, like the one right here and now. Colleen and I have a

son who has numerous “disabilities,” or what one of Colleen’s special education professors called “differing abilities.” Ben is forty-two years old. He has not been able to complete schooling beyond high school nor hold a job. Ben lives in an apartment on our property, takes his meals with us, and is with us many of his waking hours. It is hard for him and us. We all wish Ben could have things in his life about which to feel good. He is angry at his situation and us much of the time. Colleen and I struggle to meet his needs and find opportunities for him. We rarely get off our place as a couple. That’s hard.

*Anonymous* said to me that perhaps Colleen, Ben, and I are in a season of preparation for things ahead. It rejuvenated my hope that God’s answer to our and friends’ and family members’ years of prayers for help will move from “not yet—wait—trust” to “yes.” Just after I finished the book this fall, we got word that Ben’s place on the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs waiting list for services had progressed from number 5381 in April 2014 to Number One. We are close to direct services for Ben and services that will meet some of our needs for respite care. Time invested praying, working and waiting has brought us closer to the future that we could not see. Not all is clear, nor

will it all go smoothly, but hope lives on!

#### —Steven L. Preston

Steven is a retired Library Director from Milligan College in Johnson City, Tennessee and former ACL president. He has been a member of ACL since 1986.

