



The Faith Journey of Robert & Elizabeth Strawbridge

The story of Robert & Elizabeth Strawbridge is more, much more, than simply recounting the history and heritage of their lives.

It is the story of faith! Faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior that is meant to be shared and told and retold!

Use this guide to help yourself and others know their faith story of vision, witness, and working together in Christ.



VISION

“Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” Genesis 12.1-2

Robert & Elizabeth Strawbridge left their native land of Ireland around 1760 and journeyed to the “new world.” We do not know why they left and made the dangerous trip across the Atlantic to America, but we do know they had “a sense of vision” that gave them the courage to venture into the unknown. They were willing to take the risk. They truly felt that God was on their side, or even more, Emmanuel, “God was with them.” Someone once said, “If you want to walk on the water you have to get out of the boat.” Robert & Elizabeth had been touched by the “living water” of Jesus the Christ and they were willing to take the risk. There are times when we need “to get out of the boat” both individually and as a church. Rather than stay in the “comfortable pew or pulpit,” we know that God is with us, and we need to venture forth.

Questions for Discussion:

- 1. When we know that change is necessary, why are we often fearful to take the risk?**
- 2. Why are we often comfortable with the way things are rather than having a vision for the future of what might be?**
- 3. Sometimes people want to wait until they have everything in order before they make a decision. Is it possible that we will never have all the pieces in order or together?**
- 4. What does it mean to you to “get out of the boat?”**

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WITNESS

“Jesus said to them, ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” Matthew 28.19-20

It is interesting that as soon as Robert and Elizabeth established a home base and started their farm in what is now the New Windsor area of Carroll County, they immediately began to witness to their faith.

In response to the invitation of Jesus to “follow me” a man confronted him by saying, “I want to follow you but I can’t do it right now. Once my father dies and I settle the estate and get things in order, then I will come and follow you.” Jesus responded by telling him that if it was worth doing, it was worth doing now! The Strawbridges began to witness to their faith immediately. Robert was very fortunate to have a strong Christian wife who could not only “run the farm” while he was away preaching, but could also share the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Robert went all over the area (Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey) spreading the good news and inviting people to make a commitment to the Lord. Elizabeth stayed home and not only (with the help of neighbors) worked the farm but had time to witness. Using the “Wesleyan class meeting model” (the first in America), they brought the first converts into the discipleship adventure of our Lord Jesus. Many times we say, “I will do something as soon as I have my life together,” or “as soon as I get my desk cleared off,” or something like that. If it is worth doing, it is worth doing now!

Questions for Discussion:

- 1. Like the man who told Jesus that he would follow him once his father died and the estate was settled, why do we put off doing what we know is right?**
- 2. Apparently Robert and Elizabeth Strawbridge began to witness to their faith as soon as they got settled. What do you think inspired them to share their faith so soon?**
- 3. Robert shared his faith away from home while Elizabeth shared her faith at home. Is there any place where you are more comfortable or less comfortable in sharing your faith story?**
- 4. When was the last time you shared your faith story with someone?**

CONNECTION

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” I Corinthians 12:4-6, 27

Even though “Christian witnessing” is often done by individuals, Robert & Elizabeth Strawbridge, by forming Class Meetings and Methodist Societies, remind us that those of us that follow Jesus need some type of structure on which to build our lives so we can grow and mature in the faith.

Too often Christians have a tendency to act as “Lone Rangers” proclaiming the gospel, bringing converts to the Lord, only to find that the new disciples fall away and go back to their old lifestyles after a time. The early Methodist Class Meeting offered the opportunity for believers to come together on a regular basis, to sing songs of the faith, to study the Scriptures, and to hold each other accountable in their daily lives and actions. Believers today need one another in Christian fellowship to talk and listen to each other and learn what the Scriptures say to our everyday lives, and support one another in both good times and not so good times. Small groups have had a profound impact on the lives of many believers. Churches that are more than Sunday morning services help believers grow and mature in their faith. The old “Class Meeting concept” is alive and well today. We are partners in the faith.

Questions for Discussion:

- 1. Why is it easier sometimes to do something on your own rather than share the responsibility with other believers? Have you ever heard the comment, “if you want to get something done right, do it yourself?” Is that a healthy way to live out your faith?**
- 2. Do you think it is difficult or easy to hold one another accountable for their actions?**
- 3. The Christ-followers in Corinth had a difficult time working together. Why do you think it is often difficult today for believers who love the Lord but share different theological viewpoints to work together?**
- 4. Have you ever been in a small group? Did you find it meaningful or not meaningful? What are the strengths and weaknesses of a small group?**