

The 13TH *Disciple*

PAUL STUTZMAN

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CONTACT

www.paulstutzman.com

www.hikingthrough.com

www.facebook.com/pvstutzman

pstutzman@roadrunner.com

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PAUL STUTZMAN

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Design by | *Lori Troyer*



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Dedicated to

Andrew D. Stutzman, Fred Hostetler,
Abraham Mast, Aden R. Miller, and Atlee Barkman

In my writing, I occasionally refer to my childhood church teachings in a manner that some could construe as being critical.

And yes, I did sometimes chafe a bit at some of the rules laid out by the church leadership.

However, my memories of church taken as a whole are pleasant. During my formative years and up until I was married at age 23, I was ministered to by these five men who were seeking to preach what they believed was best to prepare our souls for eternity.

All five of these church leaders had come out of an Amish background and did not have the benefit of any seminary training. The knowledge they acquired they achieved by searching the Scriptures and seeking to do God's will.

It is with deep reverence that I dedicate this book to these five men.

Their love for God instilled in me a desire to discover for myself the meaning of following Jesus.

With gratitude

If left to my own volition, the thoughts and lessons realized during my many adventures would likely never see the light of day. For a certainty, many words would possibly be written to entertain my grandchildren in some distant future—but they would never be published.

The fact that these ideas and ramblings are actually in your hand now requires a standing round of applause and a tip of my hat to several special people.

Thank you to Craig Clapper for being my guide and hiking partner during our sojourn in Israel. I couldn't find any tour groups offering hitchhiking opportunities to the Golan Heights, so I contacted Craig, who was a seasoned hiker as well as a retired minister of the Gospel. Craig had already been to Israel with several tour groups and had a reasonable sense of the lay of the land. Yes, there were times we had no idea where we were, but we were never truly lost.

Thank you to Debbie Lassiter for reaching out and introducing me to her neighbor, the accomplished portrait artist Igor V. Babailov.

Thank you to Igor and Mary Babailov for welcoming me, joining in this project, and generously bringing Igor's talent to this book.

Thank you to Elaine Starner for providing the impetus that gets my books published. This is the ninth book on which we have collaborated. Her encouragement, editing, cajoling, and interchange of ideas assures that more than my grandchildren will read my writings.

About the cover

Can you imagine living during the Golden Age of Dutch art? This was the era during which Rembrandt, Vermeer, Bosch, and other master artists produced some of the most famous art in existence.

What fascinates me about these works of art is the detail the artists have included. A person can be mesmerized by small, intricate touches in a painting of a familiar story. Rembrandt, for example, painted many scenes depicting Bible stories, like *The Storm on The Sea of Galilee* and *The Raising of Lazarus*. One of his most famous works is *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, displayed in The Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Can you also imagine being invited into the painters' homes or studios? What would it have been like to join the artist as he walked among his paintings, explaining the inspiration that put thought, genius, and paint to canvas? Although it's not possible to become a time traveler and go back to visit those painters, their work still inspires millions to this day.

I recently had the privilege of visiting with a modern-day master portrait artist.

A friend of mine informed me that her neighbor was the world-famous portrait artist Igor V. Babailov. She certainly had my immediate attention. I wanted to meet him, if that could be arranged. It was, and I found myself in the home of Igor and Mary Babailov in Brentwood, Tennessee.

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Igor's paintings hang in several Presidential libraries and in numerous museums around the world. He was commissioned to do portraits of the last three popes, and these portraits are exhibited in the Vatican. He has taught at the Florence Academy of Art in Italy and lectures at universities and art venues around the world. His numerous awards include being elected as an Honorary American Academician of the Russian Academy of Arts.

One can only imagine the honor and reverence I felt as Igor took me through his studio, showing me many of his beautiful works.

Later, sitting in the Babailovs' living room, I entertained them with stories of my recent trip to Israel. I told about sitting by the Sea of Galilee and wondering what it would have been like to be there when Jesus picked His disciples. I spoke about being on the hillside where Jesus fed the 5,000. There He took several loaves of bread and miraculously multiplied them to have enough food to feed the entire crowd. I noted a detail that had recently been impressed upon me: Jesus did not distribute the bread. He gave it to His disciples to serve the crowd. I described my visit to the site of the last supper, where Jesus did offer the bread and cup to His disciples. In essence, what Jesus was doing at the last supper was akin to the feeding of the 5,000. He gave his body as living bread to His disciples with the intention that they would feed the crowds living bread following His death.

I voiced my desire to create a book cover that could make folks curious about who The 13th Disciple might be. Yes, the possibility of having Igor Babailov create a painting for the book excited me, but I also realized I didn't have the resources required to hire a master painter.

I shouldn't have been concerned about that, since I serve a Master who can do the impossible.

A gift of inspiration came then. Mary Babailov suggested a scene

About the cover

where Jesus offers His body and blood to an enquiring pilgrim. The rest of us in the room knew, with a clarity from the Spirit, that this was exactly what the cover should portray.

Igor sat back in his chair and was silent for a short period of time.

After a while, he exclaimed, "I've got it, and I'll do it!"

An image had formed in his mind, and now that image is the art you see on this book cover.

Look at it, question it. Art speaks every language known to man. What does it speak to you?

My prayer is that you will contemplate the scene and place yourself at the feet of Jesus. Ask to be His disciple, then silently listen to what Jesus might be saying to you.

For more information on Igor V. Babailov and to view many of his masterpieces, go to www.babailov.homestead.com.

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Introduction

Up until a year ago, I had never felt an inclination to visit what we call “the Holy Land.” It just wasn’t on my radar. Then the opportunity arose, an invitation was extended, and I simply knew that I must pursue plans to make this hike happen. I *knew*. It was a clear call that I was compelled to follow.

If you haven’t followed my wanderings and wonderings before, here’s a quick background:

I was raised on church rules. That’s what formed my thinking and shaped my behavior. It’s likely I was already absorbing church rules while still in the womb.

That’s also why, in 1969, during the waning weeks of the Vietnam War, I turned eighteen and registered with the draft board as a conscientious objector. Born Amish and raised in a strict Mennonite church, I never even considered military service because killing others, even those who were trying to kill us, was against one of our church’s most distinctive and strongly held beliefs.

After graduating from high school (which was, by the way, not exactly a breaking of church rules, but at least a break with our tradition), I had no desire to follow the expected route that most of our young men took into a life of carpentry or masonry. I chose,

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instead, to volunteer two years of alternate service at a hospital in a neighboring city.

In that environment, I ran headlong into the world beyond the sheltered, relatively carefree place in which I had spent my early years. My interactions with the doctors, nurses, and patients opened a window through which I glimpsed lives quite different than the one I knew. Values and lifestyles were far removed from my own. Incidents and details that many of you might consider slight and insignificant jolted my comfortable thinking. Televisions were constantly playing (strictly forbidden in our church); I heard words I'd never encountered before (beyond hospital terminology!); and smoking was an accepted, commonplace habit (a sin against the temple of God, I'd been taught).

We all have one thing in common, though—death. Life and death met at that hospital, and I was a witness and a student. In my first-day tour of the facility, we passed one room where staff were using a defibrillator to resuscitate a man. The paddles were in place, I heard the “Clear!” and the body lurched above the bed. As I cared for and learned to know patients, I heard stories from army veterans and old folks who were fading away. Looking into the face of death changes one's perspective on many things. I listened to the stories of folks who knew they were approaching death or who had felt its shadow cross their path through illness or surgery, and I learned a great deal.

Every morning, my shift started with “report.” My co-workers and I would meet with the lead nurse from the night shift, who would report on the night's activities. *Mr. So-and-So was admitted for congestive heart failure. The patient in 101 expired during the night. Apparently not enough change in his parking meter.*

At the end of report, I was handed a sheet with my assignments

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for the day. Some days the workload was staggering; other days, I found it very manageable. My tasks included feeding and bathing patients who could not manage these challenges on their own. I also changed bed linens—quite an ordeal if the patient is bedfast. (You roll the patient to one side, then remove dirty linens and insert clean linens simultaneously. Push, shove, and roll the patient the other direction, and you're halfway done.)

Thus, one word always caught my attention when I glanced at my assignments for the day. I rejoiced at seeing the word *ambulatory*, as I would rejoice in welcoming a good, helpful friend.

Ambulatory patients were allowed to get out of bed and walk. *Hallelujah, off to the shower you go whilst I make your bed.* Other patients required time- and energy-consuming attention, but the duties I performed for ambulatory patients were quickly dispatched.

The most enjoyable of those duties was to ambulate patients who were ambulatory. That simply meant taking Mr. Smith by the elbow and walking down the promenade with him. I liked that because I liked ambulating myself. While the patient and I ambulated, I also heard interesting stories about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As I walked alongside older folks in the waning years of their lives, I often heard reflections on how precious life itself was. In addition, I became aware of how much I was learning just by the simple movement of my body. You can't be dead while still moving, so keep moving.

From that beginning, ambulating has become a beneficial and necessary thing in my life.

Following my wife's death, I determined to put ambulation to the utmost test. I decided to hike the entire 2,176-mile Appalachian Trail (AT), hoping that such an extended time walking through nature would help me work out what my life would be after that

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great loss. The grueling trek took me through three hundred deep valleys and over three hundred mountain tops, and it did bring incredible healing and insights into my life.

That hike also changed my relationship with God, but I still had questions for Him. Even before my wife's death, I had struggled to understand what it meant to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus. What should the Christian life look like and be? What did it mean to believe in Jesus? If I claimed to follow Jesus Christ, how would that shape my life? My questioning was probably intensified because ... well, after all ... I was into the second half-century of my life and *shouldn't I know this by now?*

In the years following the AT hike, I continued to ask these questions. One search for answers took me to Spain, where I was determined to ambulate across the country on the Camino de Santiago, a pilgrimage trail. That hike is also known as the Way of Saint James. James was one of Jesus' twelve disciples, and when Jesus said to "go into all the world," James went to what was then thought to be the end of the earth—Spain. Today, he is the patron saint of Spain, and everywhere in the towns and along the trail, I saw statues and images of this disciple. I tried to imagine what James had witnessed as one of Jesus' close friends, what he'd felt, and how it had compelled him to "follow" Jesus as a wandering missionary for the rest of his life. Several incidents during that hike convinced me that I was edging closer to the truth of what it means to follow Jesus.

Following each of these hikes, I returned home and wrote a book about the experience. Besides creating vicarious adventures for my readers, the books were also my attempts to sort out new insights and partial answers that God had given me while I was ambulating along the trails.

However, in spite of all I'd learned on the Appalachian Trail and

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the Camino de Santiago, I was still reading the Scriptures with a measure of perplexity. I'm well aware of Jesus' words that one has to accept Him and have faith in Him just as a child would accept and trust. But I found that difficult. Too many questions kept stomping around in my head.

Following Jesus is supposedly the most important choice for a person to make. Heaven and hell lie in the balance. So why is it so confusing, even difficult, to comprehend some of the things Jesus said and did? That was one line of my questioning. I had always believed all those stories about Jesus because I believed what my parents told me. I believed "about" Jesus because that's what my church teachers and leaders taught me from youth to adulthood. I had declared my allegiance to Jesus; I wanted to follow Him. Yet I knew there was something still missing in my reading of and understanding of the Scriptures.

I look back over those years and experiences to explain the call to Israel in 2016. Yes, I truly believe it was a call. Just as surely as Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee and called out to fishermen to join Him or as He walked through a town and stopped at a tax collector's booth to extend the same invitation, so He has been leading me down a path, always inviting me to follow Him a little more closely and with clearer sight. That's why I've had the audacity to choose the title you see on the front of this book.

The trail that beckoned me is called the Jesus Trail.

What better way to bring understanding to my wondering mind than to go walk where Jesus walked, to actually ambulate in the footsteps of Jesus, to "follow" Him through His years as a human being on this earth and to learn from Him. I had never dreamed I would do this; but unexpectedly, I was convinced I *must* do it.

I know that many folks who were born into and reared on the Gospel, in insular communities like my own, still find it difficult to

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grasp the true meaning of believing in Jesus and following Him. One day in Israel, I was explaining my perplexity at this paradox to my hiking partner, Craig.

“It’s simple,” said he. “You were born and raised in a barn.”

Say what?

He went on to explain, and his analysis made sense.

Jesus was born in a manger, and I was born in a barn.

And therein lay the obstruction.