At the dinner table where their six young children once sat, and as they ride together in the sedan that replaced their minivan, Rev. Scott and Janet Willis often talk about the day their family will be reunited.

It will be in heaven, they believe, and it will be for eternity.

It has been six months since the six youngest of the nine Willis children died in a freak accident on Interstate Highway 94 south of Milwaukee.

A few hours after leaving their home at Parkwood Baptist Church on the Southwest Side, where Scott Willis is pastor, the crowded minivan he was driving ran over a large chunk of metal that had broken off the back of a truck.

It punctured the van's gas tank and set off an explosion that ripped a hole through the backseat floor.

Scott and Janet Willis escaped the blaze with burns, but they couldn't save their children: Ben 13; Joe 11; Sam, 9; Hank, 6; Elizabeth, 3; and Peter, 6 weeks old.

Seen through the eyes of a public that gasped at the enormity of their tragedy, Scott and Janet Willis faced unendurable grief.

When the couple—bandaged, bruised and still in physical pain—asked to speak at a hospital news conference and seemed at peace, while praising God, they could only be
viewed as remarkably devout.

Or perhaps, some thought, still too numb to comprehend.

Today their grief is wrenching and unremitting. Yet they also have come to view the tragedy as a blessing: a way of spreading their beliefs to thousands who they couldn't have reached otherwise.

Moreover, since the accident, the couple have become a phenomenon within the evangelical Christian community: a widely heralded example of a depth and purity of faith that is available to everyone.

Certainly even non-believers might wonder whether it was something more than blind coincidence that such an unfathomable event struck this couple.

"I'll put this as strongly as I can," Scott Willis said. "Those six little children died that we might be able to further the cause of Christ by giving out the Gospel to people who may never have had an opportunity to hear it. I'm willing to accept God's will on that."

Scott concedes he doesn't have all the answers. Everything will become clear, Willis likes to say, when he enrolls in heaven's most popular class, Course 101.

For now, while he's ready to accept that his children died so that he might spread the Gospel, he can't say God caused the Nov. 8 accident. He prefers to think God allowed it to happen.
Toby Willis, a 25-year-old surviving son who plays piano in his father's church, is also reconciled. "What would really be hard is if we were products of chance," he said. "It would be a pretty lonely universe."

The Bible remains the Willises' sole counsel. A month or so after the accident, her hands beginning to heal, Janet Willis decided to get rid of some of her infant Peter's birth cards. No one else had the heart, she said.

But as she tossed one of them into the garbage, her eye caught the illustration of a baby on the card as it fluttered downward and she flashbacked to Peter being buried. She ran to the bathroom to cry.

"I no sooner shut the door than a Bible verse came to mind," she said. "It was, `Why are you weeping?'(John 20:15)

And I realized this was what Jesus was saying to Mary as she was standing in front of the tomb. Here she thought Jesus was dead, crucified, and he was standing right in front of her. It made me realize Pete was just as alive as I was."

When she speaks publicly, Janet tells another story about faith. It was in the hospital, as she struggled to accept the fact that she was losing six children. Then, seemingly from nowhere, a Bible verse came to mind: "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

"It was like God telling me," she said, "`You did what I wanted you to do. You just didn't know my timetable.' "
**Job 1**

1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job.

This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

2 He had seven sons and three daughters,
3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred
donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

4 His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, “Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” This was Job’s regular custom.

6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.

7 The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the LORD, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.”

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

1 Peter 5:8
8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

James 4:7
7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
Revelation 12:4
4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth...

9 “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied.

10 “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

12 The L ORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.” Then Satan went out from the presence of the L ORD.

Psalm 17:8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings 9 from the wicked who are out to destroy me, from my mortal enemies who surround me.

Isaiah 54:17 no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you...

Psalm 34:7
7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

Jeremiah 29:11
11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

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Jeremiah 29
1 Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive—to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.
4 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:

5 Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit.

6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished.

7 And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.

8 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed.

9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the Lord.

10 For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.

Jeremiah 29:11

11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.
14 I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:
11 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.
13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.
13 One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, 
14 a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, 
15 and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house,
19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!”

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship
21 and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.”

When everything is stripped away all that remains is...GOD

Matthew 6:19–21
19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.
20 “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;
21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Why God?

What would You like me to do with this?

When everything is stripped away all that remains is...GOD

Do we know God well enough that He is all we need?