

A photograph of a baseball field. In the foreground, a baseball with red stitching is resting on the reddish-brown dirt. The background shows a green grassy field leading to a line of trees under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

 **chapters**

**Living when
life throws
you a
*curveball***

BE STILL MY SOUL: THE LORD IS ON MY SIDE

by Rachel Battey

BE STILL MY SOUL: THE LORD IS ON MY SIDE.

As my windshield wipers bounced to and fro on June 28th, 2010 I was having a conversation with God. I was headed to the doctor to have a lump investigated - a total surprise. It was difficult to discipline my soul to be still that morning. I began to talk to God out loud and reaffirm that I knew He was in control. I also had a strong desire to audibly remind Him of the things in my life He had entrusted me. "You see, Lord, I have a son with special needs. This is summer and my whole family needs me. Next week a camp is planning on me to be their nurse. You understand the intense burdens I have with my family. My parents are six hours away. I have a job you have provided as ministry. I have a spot to hold in the children's wing at church...." I put before the throne of God all of the things I had in my life that were weighing heavily on my heart that morning. I affirmed that I trusted in Him alone. I asked desperately for mercy. Then, with confidence, I went into the doctor's office sure that a traumatic diagnosis was far beyond what God knew I could handle.

BEAR PATIENTLY THE CROSS OF GRIEF OR PAIN.

"Rachel, you have Stage III Invasive Ductal Carcinoma. Breast Cancer."

"Your lymph nodes have been affected."

"Your genetic profile came back positive for the breast cancer gene - what a surprise..."

"You will need to undergo surgery, 20 weeks of Chemotherapy, 6 weeks of Radiation, a complete

Hysterectomy, a second mastectomy, and 5 years of hormonal therapy."

"We cannot give you an "all clear" but if you avoid a relapse for ten years we assume your chances are pretty good that we gave you the right treatment."

LEAVE TO THY GOD TO ORDER AND PROVIDE

Is it really possible God can order our life right now? Is it really possible God can fulfill all of the daily commitments I carry for my family? Can He really provide enough help for us? Can He provide what my husband needs right now? My three boys ages 4-8 are home for the summer. How in the world is this going to work? What about my job? My income? My ministry? HOW can I handle chemotherapy with three young sons? I don't think I can do it - I really do not think I can do it.

IN EVERY CHANGE, HE FAITHFUL WILL REMAIN.

A cancer diagnosis is so abrupt. So life-altering. It is the ultimate insult of physical body wounding even the strongest spirit. Cancer deceived me. Nothing felt stable at that time. Nothing felt certain. I was blindly wandering into a diagnosis that I dreaded. Never before have I ever felt so unprepared. Nothing was, or would be the same except the loving Father who assured me with full confidence that His rock had a cleft just my size. I could hide there with full confidence and faith that He would remain faithful. More faithful than my own body. More faithful than my schedule. More faithful than anything that this world



could possibly offer right now. He, faithful, remained. Hallelujah!!

BE STILL, MY SOUL: WHEN DEAREST FRIENDS DEPART. AND ALL IS DARKENED IN THE VALE OF TEARS,

There was no breast cancer in my family. My friends did not have breast cancer. I can remember only one remote friend who had it. I felt so completely on my own with this one. The vale of my tears darkened so many moments. I tasted hopelessness.

Continued on Page 3



**THEN SHALT THOU BETTER
KNOW HIS LOVE, HIS HEART
WHO COMES TO SOOTHE
THY SORROW AND THY FEARS.**

When we are broken down in spirit and in body and in emotion, God reveals Himself mightily. There is nothing fragrant about who we are in our eyes. Our body is damaged and we can feel utterly helpless. To have the Almighty God come to us and first soothe our sorrow, then soothe our fears is nothing short of a gracious God! A God who dries our tears, listens to our 2 AM anxiety, lifts up our face to see His image amidst the hair loss and the last blink of an eyelash. Having a relationship with that God is a miracle. Through the most difficult of the difficult I craved to know more about His love and His heart. I claimed scripture and hid it in my heart. I affirmed His working in my life. I noticed things that He worked out for my GOOD amidst my despair.

**BE STILL MY SOUL:
THY JESUS CAN REPAY
FROM HIS OWN FULLNESS
ALL HE TAKES AWAY.**

Would I gladly give up something in my life, so that something would be repaid from God's fullness? Sure! Sign me up! I am willing to give most things really. I like giving! I gave God my job and stopped working for eight months. Done. I gave God parts of my body because they were bad news, and I had a good surgeon. Done. I gave God my ability to run and train for a longer race. I had just finished a 5K, I should be good for a while. Done. But then, God started taking other things away too. Physical comfort. I don't like pain. Control over my care. Didn't God give me the gifts to be merciful? Did he give them to anyone else?!! Giving up my hair. Giving up my eye brows. Giving up going to school with my boys to help their teachers. Giving up the ability to be able to walk comfortably to the end of the road. My appetite. My sense of smell. Motherhood as my whole family knew it. Marriage as Dave and I both were comfortable with. I could not hug my sweet friends at church because of infection risks. The things that God took away during this time spilled away from me like water dumping out of a bucket.

In exchange, I continue to journey in faith believing that God CAN repay everything from His own fullness. Some of the things that He took away I gladly don't want back. And, yes, on earth I am confident that cancer may TAKE more from me than it GIVES back. I have come to know a God who can be trusted. I want what He wants. He knows what I need, and I trust that He gives me just enough encouragement to sustain my earthly curiosity as He diligently works things together for my good. I am learning to be "OK" without having an answer to why God chose this for me.

Through this journey I have felt the presence of the Lord like no other time in my life. There were so many days when nothing but the very word of God could soothe my weary soul. I needed to experience the side effects of treatment, although I asked the Lord to spare me. I understand now that I had to go through them. At the same time, as I was in a dark valley, I saw God PROTECT me from so many other things. He indeed was working for my GOOD. He provided friendship, encouragement,

wisdom, practical help and much needed breaths of fresh air. He spared me from so many things that could have overwhelmed me and my family. I sensed like never before how much God loved me, and although He allowed me to walk this difficult path He was WITH me.

**BE STILL MY SOUL:
THE HOUR IS HASTENING ON
WHEN WE SHALL BE
FOREVER WITH THE LORD**

On June 28th 2010, I could have told you that all of our days are "ordained for us" by God. I could have told you I have claimed Christ as my Savior for my entire life and should not need to fear death. I could have told you that I believe that there will come a day when we all die. All of our days are numbered. There are two things certain in life, birth and death. But after June 30th, 2010 I have to tell you that thinking about death when you are 35, with three young boys, living parents and siblings, a husband, ministry and responsibilities is terrifying and excruciating. The thought of cancer taking my life is still very difficult. The enemy is relentless at times reminding me that a recurrence can happen and dangling statistics over my head. Why would God want that for His good? That would be awful for my husband. How could my boys grow up without their mother and turn into fine young men who love and serve the Lord? It would be such a disappointment to those with whom I am deeply connected. My husband, children, parents and siblings would grieve!! To top it all off, I am afraid.

**WHEN DISAPPOINTMENT,
GRIEF AND FEAR ARE GONE,
SORROW FORGOT,
LOVE'S PUREST JOYS RESTORED**

**BE STILL MY SOUL:
WHEN CHANGE AND
TEARS ARE PAST
ALL SAFE AND BLESSED
WE SHALL MEET AT LAST.**

I am still struggling with being "OK" should God choose to end my life through cancer. Every cancer patient goes through those thoughts, and sometimes they can be productive. I should clarify too, that no one has told me that I am going to die from this disease. I am aware of my statistics. I am also aware of many other women who also had similar statistics and cancer took their lives. At this time, there is really no good prediction tool of which women will experience a recurrence and which won't. For now, I am doing everything that research has shown will treat the cancer that I had.

Like most people, I want to live a full life. I want to grow old with Dave. I want to be healthy and happy, and I want to serve God with all that He has given me for His glory on this side of eternity. I do not want my family to grieve my departure! At the same time, when we come face to face with eternity it is very apparent in scripture that when we die, our sorrow will be forgotten. Our joy will be restored. Our tears will be dried and we shall meet our Savior face to face. It will not be about the people and things around us like they are here on Earth. Heaven will be a one-on-one dialog with my personal Creator and Savior. The

Daniel, Rachel, Landon, Dave, & Devon Battey



*To have the Almighty
God come to us and
first soothe our sorrow,
then soothe our fears is
nothing short of a
gracious God!*

meeting will be so grand, it promises to wipe away my sorrow, grief and despair forever. Is it possible that while I am alive, the anticipation of meeting my Lord would overshadow my thoughts of grief and fear? This can be a daily struggle that washes over me like gulping fresh and salty water. I am a work in progress.

**BE STILL, MY SOUL:
BEGIN THE SONG OF PRAISE
ON EARTH, BELIEVING,
TO THY LORD ON HIGH;
ACKNOWLEDGE HIM
IN ALL THY WORD AND WAYS
SO SHALL HE VIEW
THEE WITH A WELL PLEASD EYE.**

**BE STILL, MY SOUL:
THE SUN OF LIFE DIVINE
THROUGH PASSING CLOUDS
SHALL BUT MORE BRIGHTLY SHINE.**

Our whole family continues to adjust to our lives on this side of cancer. Some things have changed a lot, but most things, have not. I don't know why God has allowed this to happen to me and my family, but I strongly feel He trusted me with this disease. He has let me experience a trial that very few women go through at my age. I cannot say that I enjoyed it. I will say that I want to continue my song of praise to Him, believing Him, acknowledging Him in all my words and ways. My desire is that through this "passing cloud" in my life, God will more brightly shine. To God, be the Glory!

MEET THE PHILADELPHIANS ABF

by Shannon Popkin

When Cade was about four years old, I asked him, "Do you know why we go to church?" As if I had missed something quite obvious, he said, "To see Mamaw and Papaw!" (Like, duh, mom.)

While I want Cade to understand that church is all about Jesus, I love his sentiment. And apparently he is not the only little person at Calvary scoping the halls for some folks a couple generations older. I learned that the Philadelphians have twenty-eight grandchildren and great-grandchildren representing them in our Children's Wing! Twenty-eight!

CHILDREN'S STORIES

And let me tell you. These grandmas and grandpas love to talk about those kids! I got to hear several precious stories, during my interview. Nana (Nancy) Wells told about the time she took her granddaughter, Gracie Wells, to Taco Bell after church. Gracie asked why Nana had only ordered one taco. Nancy answered with a sigh, "Oh, Nana's too fat. I just got a taco for you." But

Philadelphians

Teacher: Terry Tufts & Pastor Van Norman

Deacon: Leon Wells

Class Leader: Don Tiffany

Room: 38

Gracie responded, "Oh, no, Nana! You're not fat! You're just right!" Nancy said, "Well then, maybe I can have your taco?"

Gracie thought for a moment before saying, "Well... maybe you're a little bit fat."

Mimi (Kathy) Brewer told about the time her granddaughter, Emma (who was about five at the time), was sitting in church with her. When Pastor Halsted mentioned the 'elephant in the room', Emma looked toward the back doors,

wide eyed. She leaned over and whispered, "Mimi! I think an elephant is coming!"

The Philadelphians enjoy the children that spill over from the Children's Wing who aren't related to them, as well. Grandpa Ben (Fogle), who magically produces a line of children with his bag of candy each Sunday, told about one Sunday that he was traveling. A youngster from Calvary, noting his absence, sent him a 'Get Well' card which said, "I sure hope you're better soon!"

And Grandma (Sandy) Sisco told about the time that she was checking Josh Heagle (Ed and Linda Heagle's grandson) into his class. She pointed to the smiley sticker on his nametag and said, "Do you know what that means? Every time you see a smiley face, I want you to remember that Grandma Sisco is praying for you." Some time later, Josh heard Pastor Halsted say, from the pulpit, that he hoped everyone listening knew of someone who was praying for them. Josh leaned over to his mom



Joyce Myers & Arbie Fogle



Duane & Brenda Brown

and said, "I know who's praying for me! Grandma Sisco!"

BROTHERLY LOVE

The Philadelphians love kids, but they also love to support each other. They often interact outside of Sundays and have an active prayer chain. As they've met together in various homes, they've even invited neighbors to join in their fun. Chuck Sisco said he thinks the Philadelphian class is an exceptionally caring group—expressing their concern for each other through practical help, prayer, sharing the Word, and even financially. Chuck also mentioned that Pastor VanNorman has been his drinking buddy for years... but recently they've had to switch to caffeine free.

The class has a bulging prayer list full of health challenges, but they rejoice together, too. The day I visited, the first item of praise, submitted by Ed Heagle, was: "We're all still here!" JoAnne VanNorman also mentioned that class members pray sincerely for their extended families, and try to live lives that encourage godliness.

All in all, the Philadelphians seem to truly live up to their name - a community of brotherly love.

WHO ARE THE PHILADELPHIANS?

SECRETARY OF CELEBRATIONS:

Nancy Wells—she sends out a monthly newsletter which keeps everyone updated on birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

NEWEST MEMBERS:

Nancy and Leon Wells have attended three years

LONGEST MEMBER:

Shirley Ritsema began attending Calvary Baptist Church in 1923 and became a member in 1932!

MOST HOSPITABLE:

Ed and Linda Heagle

MOST CARING:

Pastor VanNorman, Arbie Fogle

MISSIONS MINDED:

Gary and Kathy Brewer

BEST SENSE OF HUMOR:

Gary Brewer, Leon Wells

BEST TREATS:

JoAnn VanNorman, Joyce Myers, Kathy Brewer

GOD'S PLAN IS NOT ALWAYS OUR PLAN

by Rose Crawford & Neva Dunlap

GOD HAS A WAY
OF SUPRISING US
AND TAKING US TO
PLACES WE WOULD
NEVER VENTURE ON
OUR OWN.

ROSE'S STORY

Have you ever gotten "the look?" – You know, the one that makes you feel like you're crazy or from another planet. I've been on the receiving end of that look for the majority of my life; and Doug, well, what do you expect? It's the initial response people have written all over their faces when they've asked us about kids (before Sheyenne and Ryan) and we've told them that our first desire is to adopt. We have had a burden to adopt and believe it is something vital in which the Body of Christ should be involved with especially when we look at Jesus' teaching on the little children, our adoption by God, and James' writing about what pure religion looks like.

Many of us appreciate and give thanks for the theological significance of adoption in our own lives; we are adopted by God, brought into His family and given all the blessings of an heir. As Doug and I began to see the gravity of adoption in our own lives through Christ, our passion

for adoption increased. We began researching, information-gathering and making a plan.

In fact, we had a five year plan we were attempting to implement; but, as many of you have come to experience, God's plans are not our plans. We attended various adoption fairs, meetings, and concerts for both domestic and international adoption. The idea of foster care with the intent to adopt was also explored for financial reasons, and we went to a few of those meetings. While attending those gatherings, Doug and I envisioned taking young children or babies into our family. I was interested in toddler age kids and Doug wanted to adopt an infant. The thought of bringing older children into our family was – in truth – a terrifying thought. It was really an option we hadn't even considered or explored.

However, God has a way of surprising us and taking us to places we would never venture on our own. When

Karen Strauss passed away July 10, 2010, God began leading us down a new path - a path converging with Wendell and Neva Dunlap's path, which began long before we were in the picture.

NEVA'S STORY

Since childhood I've wanted to be a mother and a nurse. I didn't know that God would keep Wendell and me to parent three generations. And though I didn't wear a uniform or name tag, nursing became a very big part of my life.

Our granddaughter/adopted daughter, Karen, was a very brittle diabetic. Countless trips to emergency rooms, scary intensive care admissions, hopeful visits to U of M, heart attacks and a stroke were part of the journey.

Helping Karen with her children, Sheyenne and Ryan, was our great joy, "keeping us young." God gave us strength and grace to be a part of their lives. But we are in our seventies and needed a family for the kids when we could no longer parent.

It became clear that Karen needed to live with us. We put her furniture in storage telling her "until you are better."

At 6 a.m., July 10, 2010, Karen woke me saying; "Nana, I need to go to the hospital. I've been vomiting all night." I quickly dressed and we were on our way. I thought this to be an ER trip like many others we had made.

While waiting for the nurses, we told each other again, "I love you." By 8:30 a.m. Karen had left IV's, blood draws, heart cath's, and pain behind to meet her Lord and Savior and never hurt again.

We were soon surrounded by family and friends in the ER spending some time together in Karen's room before making funeral plans.

This is where our stories begin to intertwine:

Doug received a phone call on Saturday morning, July 10, 2010. He was told Karen had passed away and the family was at the hospital. Doug went to the hospital where he met with Pastor Van Norman, and



Sheyenne, Doug, Rose, & Ryan

Wendell and Neva Dunlap. I waited at home and was thinking and praying for this family I really didn't know; I barely knew Sheyenne, who had just moved into middle school the previous fall.

While I was praying at home, Doug was listening to Neva's heart and concern for the children. Neva had been looking for years for a family to take care of Sheyenne and Ryan if Karen's health failed. However, nothing had been finalized for the kids; and she was concerned about what would happen if they weren't able to care for Sheyenne and Ryan. During this conversation with Wendell and Neva, God began to open Doug's heart and mind to the idea of taking the kids.

God began working in my heart the next day in church. Pastor Halsted

talked about the Strauss-Dunlap family and the need for the church to be the Body and support them. Some things were mentioned about adoption, legal issues, and the age of Wendell and Neva as great-grandparents trying to raise younger kids. I started praying and told God that I was willing to help raise those kids, who I didn't even know, if that's what He wanted.

Nothing was really discussed between Doug and me regarding the Strauss-Dunlap family until the day of the funeral. We attended Karen's memorial service and I saw the family for the first time. Though I didn't know Karen, I was moved by the things friends and family shared about her; and I was broken by the reality that Sheyenne and Ryan needed parents.

Continued on Page 9

Pastor Doug Crawford led the singing in Karen's memorial service. None of us knew then that in just a few days this young man would be Daddy to Sheyenne and Ryan, our great-grandchildren.

Doug and I came home from the service and were eating dinner that night when he brought up Sheyenne and Ryan. Doug said, almost nonchalantly, that he had toyed with the idea of adopting the kids. I was stunned and honestly couldn't believe what I was hearing. I told him that I had been having the same thoughts, to which he was equally surprised. We discovered that God had started prompting both of us almost a week prior, individually, and yet, somehow we were in complete agreement on the issue. We decided we would let Pastor Halsted know we were willing to be an option for the kids, and notified him that evening.

It was Saturday night, July 17th, when we shared our willingness to take the kids into our family. Doug and I assumed it would be quite some time before anything was done about what we said, but again, God had another plan.

Monday morning, July 19th, Doug and I were on our way up to middle school camp when we received a phone call from Pastor Halsted. He was wondering how serious we were about our offer to take the kids; Doug assured him we were completely serious about it. We found out then neither Sheyenne nor Ryan had any official guardians because, according to Michigan law, there is a limit to the number of years allowed between the ages of a guardian and child. Even though Karen's will listed Wendell and Neva as guardians, this, most likely, would not have been recognized by the courts.

Before we moved forward, Pastor Halsted met with Wendell and Neva to get their thoughts on the matter. He and Robin also came up to camp to talk with Sheyenne and give her the facts so she could have a say in what happened to her and Ryan.

Sheyenne thought the best scenario would be to move into our family. Pastor Halsted found us a lawyer and Wendell and Neva approved the children's placement with us.



Ryan, Karen, & Sheyenne

We didn't know Doug and Rose personally. In fact, we'd never had a conversation with the two of them. We simply knew that Doug and Rose becoming parents of Sheyenne and Ryan was a God-thing, a part of His gracious plan.

Doug and I signed the paperwork, and the courts awarded us emergency guardianship Friday, July 23rd, the same week we agreed to be an option.

Because of a history of violence on the part of Ryan's biological father, we stayed out-of-town with friends the week Sheyenne was at camp. Ryan knew this was for his safety. When the court gave Doug and Rose guardianship we were no longer afraid.

Wendell and I took Ryan out for breakfast to give him a special message. "Ryan, remember how you would say 'I wish I had a dad. Why can't I have a dad like other kids?' Well, Jesus has heard a little boy's prayer. You now have a Dad and a healthy Mom." "I do?" Ryan replied. Tears rolled down his face. I asked, "Ryan, are those sad tears or happy tears?" "They're happy tears," Ryan responded. He now had a dad.

The week at camp was very short

for us and the amount of time we had to get the house ready for two kids wasn't much at all. On Saturday, when Sheyenne returned from camp, all of us sat down to talk – Pastor Halsted, Wendell, Neva, Sheyenne, Ryan, Doug and I. We discussed how Sheyenne and Ryan might want to visit our house that day to see where they would be moving.

The kids were really excited to see their new home and didn't want to stand around church talking about details any longer. Wendell, Neva, Sheyenne, and Ryan followed us home. They looked around the house and the kids saw their new bedrooms; they were pretty excited to have their own! Then we went to dinner and the kids went home to stay one last night with Wendell and Neva.

There were some conflicting emotions preparing our children to leave. Tucking them into bed that night, reading the Bible to them, and hearing their prayers was difficult. Even when God has clearly shown His grace and answered our prayers, He doesn't add a sticky note saying, "This will be easy."

Sheyenne and Ryan came home with us after church on Sunday, July 25th.

When the kids moved in they called

Even when God has clearly shown His grace and answered our prayers, He doesn't add a sticky note saying, "This will be easy."

us Doug and Rose, but Doug and I had been trying to figure out another name that they could call us, without forcing "mom" and "dad" but so there would be some distinction and respect for us as their caregivers. We had been looking up names in other languages, talking with other people for ideas and were still coming up blank. A week after Sheyenne and Ryan moved in, Doug and I shared our dilemma with them. Ryan's simple response to us was, "Why can't we just call you mom and dad?" Sheyenne echoed this question.

Doug and I were pretty surprised by their reaction. We shared with them our concern that it would be hard since they had just lost their mom, but Ryan replied, "Well, you kind of are like our mom and dad." So that settled it; from that point forward, both of the kids started calling us dad and mom.

We still get "the look" from people, but now it's for a different reason. We've been out many times as a

family and you can see the confusion on people's faces and the wheels turning attempting to put a story together. We were getting ice cream a couple weeks ago and as soon as all four of us stepped out of the car and the kids started saying "dad" or "mom," all the heads turned to stare. Doug and I think it's funny and are used to people thinking we're a little odd – because, let's face it, we are and we know it! The stares and curious faces used to bother the kids, but now the kids have started to find amusement and humor in it too.

We enjoy laughing and having fun, but as you think about or pray for us and the unique aspects of our family, know that we have many of the same struggles many families have. Please pray for unity and a deepened understanding of our roles as father, mother, daughter and son.

It's our delight to watch and be a part of this new family. And we are learning how to be great-grandparents.

The expectations, guidelines, and relationships are still new and being developed. Pray for each of us to have a growing passion and desire to honor and glorify God through our family as we interact with each other. May those who observe our family be pointed to Christ and give God, our Father, all glory and praise.

Wendell & Neva Dunlap



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New Song Spotlight

AS LONG AS YOU ARE GLORIFIED

by Pastor Chad Vitarelli

We know that God is good. We know that He is in control. But evil in the world, and trials in our lives can cause us to doubt His love and sovereignty, and strain our trust in and commitment to Him. As a congregation we've wrestled with this tension between the goodness of God and the problem of evil. This song captures beautifully the tension between the reality of trials, and the greater reality of His abiding love.

The song writer asks questions of God, but it is clear that he already knows the answer to each one. There are echoes of Job's words here: "Shall I accept good from the Lord's hand, and not trouble?" Job 2:10. In times of plenty or want, ease or trouble, he commits to always abide in His love, and seek His glory.

This can be a difficult song to sing! But pray this truth, voice this commitment, even as we ask God to "quiet our restless hearts" in him.

As Long As You Are Glorified

Verse 1

Shall I take from Your
hand Your blessings,
yet not welcome any pain?
Shall I thank You for days of
sunshine, yet grumble
in days of rain?
Shall I love You in times
of plenty, then leave
You in days of drought?
Shall I trust when I reap
a harvest, but when winter
winds blow then doubt?

Chorus

Oh let Your will be done in me;
In Your love I will abide.
Oh I long for nothing else, as
long as You are glorified.

Verse 2

Are You good only when
I prosper? And true only
when I'm filled?
Are You King only when
I'm carefree? And God
only when I'm well?
You are good when I'm poor
and needy, You are true when
I'm parched and dry;
You still reign in the deepest
valley; You're still God in the
darkest night.

(BRIDGE)

So quiet my restless heart,
Quiet my restless heart,
Quiet my restless heart in You.

CCLI Song No. 5171644

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Mark Altrogge

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