

Treasures of the Snow and Beyond: The Gift of Patricia St. John's Stories

Episode 279

Rachel Winchester [00:00:03]:

Today we are sharing with you one of the best Christian children's authors of all time. She beautifully incorporates biblical truth into her writing that leaves a lasting impression on children and adults alike. Do you know who it could be? You're listening to the Homeschool Made simple podcast. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively and enjoyably. Carol Joy side has been helping families homeschool for several decades now through her literature based approach to education. In this episode, Carol shares a biographical sketch of Patricia St. John and some of her favorite books by the author. Don't worry, you can find all the books mentioned in this episode's blog post via the link in the show Notes.

Rachel Winchester [00:00:44]:

Speaking of book lists, we've put together a list to help you build your family's home library and fill your shelves with the best books. Because a bad book is a big thief. You can find the free book list@homeschoolmadesimple.net for now, let's get into the episode. Listen in.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:02]:

I wanted to bring you just a gift in introducing you to a woman, an author, a missionary, a leader in the church for many, many years in England and in Africa and around the world. Her name is, we pronounce it in America incorrectly, Patricia St. John. Patricia St. John. Her name is actually pronounced Patricia St. John in England and that is how she pronounced her name. But we in America pronounce it as it's spelled St.

Carole Joy Seid [00:01:42]:

John. And Patricia and her family were raised in a very unique situation. Her brothers and sisters were raised in a home. First of all, the really fun part is that her father met her mother when she was just a little girl and he was in a church service and her mom's dad, so her grandpa was speaking and the little girl fell off the chair and made a big

noise and the young kind of preteen picked her up and carried her home for her family. And from that day he felt that the Lord told him that she was going to be his wife someday. And he waited a very, very long time. And finally, as they were crossing a busy street, he proposed to her. And she looked up to him as a Bible teacher and so many he was such a herald.

Carole Joy Seid [00:02:43]:

St. John was such a stellar Christian on every level and a teacher and a leader and a discipler of men and she idolized and idealized him. And so when he finally proposed, she just stood right in the middle of the street and said, well, yes, of course. And they went on to have a nice big family. And because Harold St. John was a missionary and basically an evangelist, a traveling evangelist and discipler, really, in an apostolic kind of way, not in terms of the 12, but you know what I mean, who kind of was sent out and brought the gospel and mentored and disciplined people and raised up the church throughout the world. And so his sweet wife, who had a wonderful, upbeat, happy personality, finally one time when he was going to be gone, like a year discipling and traveling, she decided, well, my nanny is in Switzerland. And she had stayed very.

Carole Joy Seid [00:03:54]:

Patricia St. John's mother had stayed very close to her nanny. And so they just moved to Switzerland for a year, and they just lived in a beautiful little village where Ella's nanny lived still, and she rented rooms and things. And so Patricia and her family grew up in this idyllic village for a year. And then after that they went back to Melbourne and stayed with the grandma and the great grandma and just really had a wonderful life. Patricia St. John was a ton of fun, and so were all of her siblings. And they were not raised in some kind of a weird, you know, stuffy, stiff Victorian home, but they were raised to love Jesus and love one another and to have fun and to be creative and artistic and athletic, and they just lived a rich, full life.

Carole Joy Seid [00:04:56]:

And as they got older, the Lord called each of them. Patricia was a nurse. Her brother. Her older brother became a medical doctor, and her other sister, Hazel, was also a nurse. And so their brother went off to Morocco, and while he was serving there, he basically built a hospital there for Muslims in Morocco. And Elizabeth, after teaching. I'm sorry, Patricia, I should say after teaching in different schools and doing all sorts of different types of ministry, really felt called to the mission field as well. And so she rode on her brother's motorcycle all the way to Africa and went to Morocco, to Tangiers in Morocco, and she served there pretty much the rest of her life as a British nurse.

Carole Joy Seid [00:05:59]:

And if you've read her book, *Star of Light*, it's semi autobiographical about a little boy named Hamid and the way that she ministered to the street children and all the different things that Patricia St. John did. And we're so blessed because even though she went to be with the Lord, I would guess about 20 years ago, but we are so blessed that she wrote her own autobiography on the story of her life. And if you want to order them, I don't mind paying a lot of money for certain things that I really, really want. And so you have to be a little bit of a detective. You might have better luck with British book companies, you know, used book Companies, but in America Erica, her book is called Patricia St. John. Excuse me.

Carole Joy Seid [00:06:52]:

No, I'm sorry. This is the British. This is the Scottish edition. Patricia St. John tells her own story. Harold Shaw Press also did an edition of the same book and with a slightly different title. It's called *An Ordinary Woman's Extraordinary Faith in Ordinary Woman's Extraordinary* the autobiography of Patricia St. John.

Carole Joy Seid [00:07:18]:

So Patricia is best known not for being a nurse or missionary, although she was one of the most famous British women missionaries of all time. But she's best known for being a writer in her own realm, and she wrote fiction for children. She wrote many biographies, and then she also wrote some books for adults. And I never tire of reading her books. I read them over and over and over again, and I cannot recommend them highly enough to you. Let's start with the children's books, which she's best known for, and we'll kind of go from there, and then I'll give you a few others. So probably the book that most people Associate with Patricia St. John or St.

Carole Joy Seid [00:08:06]:

John is the book *Treasures of the Snow*. *Treasures of the Snow* was such a bestseller that Moody Press, who was the publisher here in America, actually decided that they wanted to make a film of it. And when they did, they contacted. It was set in Switzerland, where Patricia and her family had spent that idyllic year. And Patricia kind of fictionalized some of it, and some of it was very autobiographical. And she did have a snow white kitten, and she did everything that she talked about, the Christmas and the chalet and the cows being let out. And, you know, all those things was very much autobiographical. And when Moody wanted to make a movie of it, they contacted the Village there in Switzerland, and they said, absolutely not.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:00]:

They've had terrible experiences with movie film companies coming in and just, you know, destroying their village. And they said, no. And then they found out that it was

for Patricia St. John, and they remembered her mother, Mrs. St. John, and how they all loved her in the village. And they said, oh, why didn't you say so? And they said, yes, you may come. And so Patricia and the film crew all came in and filmed the movie, which I highly recommend as well.

Carole Joy Seid [00:09:34]:

The book of hers that I consider her masterpiece not as well known for, but I consider it the very, very best book she wrote for children is a book called *Star of Light*, and that, again, is set autobiographically there in Morocco, and it stars a little boy named Hamid, and he was actually based on a real child, a real street waif there in Morocco. And the nurse is Patricia So that's my very favorite book of all time. And when I read it to my granddaughter, at first it kind of was a little scary because it starts with this kind of dark situation. And then as the little boy and his sister escape that situation and come into the city and meet the British nurse, as they call her, it becomes the most joy filled, gospel centered book you could ever read to your children. And if you have a child that really doesn't know Christ yet, I think it would be a great book to read out loud with them and let the Holy Spirit do his work. She also wrote a book called *Three Go Searching where the River Begins*. She wrote a book called *Tanglewood's Secret* and that was also made into a film. So is she's just a very, very well known author.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:04]:

I first discovered her as a young mom myself through the writings of Susan and Edith Schaeffer. They talked about how Edith Schaeffer read these books to all of her children living there in Waymos, Switzerland. And then Susan, her daughter, talks about the impact they had on her. And she wasn't that well known back then in America, but she was very well known in England. And so I just would, you know, scrape. And of course, that was before the Internet and trying to find books online that were hard to find. And so when I would find one, I would just do a little dance of glee because they were very rare. One thing you need to be aware of is over the years, Moody published many of Patricia's children's books, but they didn't.

Carole Joy Seid [00:11:59]:

They published them unabridged, which I'm so grateful for. But then in recent years, before they went out of print completely in America, they published them and edited them. So on the front page it'll say as told by or retold by and with some lady's name or something run from those like the hills. We don't ever want to read abridged books if our children are too young to read the real thing. We just want to wait so that we don't rob the of the beauty of the writing and the richness of the content. So if we can help it, other than *Pilgrim's Progress*, I don't ever recommend reading an abridged book and certainly not her books. So be sure that you find older editions and hopefully

those will be safe, you know, from the 50s, the 60s. But when you get into the 80s and the 90s, that's, I think, when Moody very sadly started editing her books.

Carole Joy Seid [00:12:58]:

Now she also wrote some biblically set books and then some nonfiction Books for children. So the two books that I just highly recommend and are on all my book lists, if you've been to my seminars, are the Runaway and Twice Freed. The Runaway, it's by Philo, a Phoenician voice, and he has a sister who is demon possessed. And he comes as a Gentile. And then of course, his mother comes. And the mother said, yes, but don't we get to at least eat the crumbs? And Jesus said, great is your faith. Your daughter is well. And this precious little girl that had just been demonized, her whole life was delivered and healed.

Carole Joy Seid [00:13:44]:

So that's the story of the runaway. And then the book Twice Freed is the story of Onesimus, who was the runaway slave from the book of Philemon. And it's a lovely, lovely book. And it's. You know, the thing about Patricia St. John is she does her homework. She really knows her history and the culture and the scripture. And so it's not.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:15]:

Sometimes Christian fiction can just be like, ugh, deliver me from this. It's so lame. But you will never say that with a Patricia St. John book, ever. Then she wrote several books that are nonfiction. Many, but I'm just skimming the top. Probably my favorite to just hand to children who can read. Well, I know my granddaughter's read this to herself, and a young mom that I was just speaking with told me that her children are now reading it to themselves.

Carole Joy Seid [00:14:44]:

And it's called A Young Person's Guide to Knowing God. A Young Person's Guide to Knowing God. And it is from the publishing company in. In Scotland, and it's called Christian Focus Publication. Christian Focus Publication. And it was Originally written in 1983. Patricia St. John lived to quite a ripe old age.

Carole Joy Seid [00:15:14]:

She had come home to England, but continued to write and mentor and disciple. And she worked with all the street kids, and they'd come and have tea and stories and prayer at her house, all these rough, tough little boys. And she died in her sleep after a full day of ministry in her middle 80s. And what a stellar Christian she was and someone who I want to grow up to be like. So she wrote A Young Person's Guide to Knowing

God. And she just talks about, you know, doctrine and just gives children a really good foundation. But it's not one of those preachy, annoying devotional books for children that just, ugh, children don't care for. And no one who reads to them would care for them either.

Carole Joy Seid [00:16:05]:

Then another book she wrote called *Prayer Is An Building a Friendship with God*. And she just talks about how to pray and what does that look like? And these are such practical things without being like sermonettes. And then some of my favorite books that Patricia wrote were based on her ministry that she did in the later years of her life. It was like a third world mercy ministry that she and another young man created. And out of that she spent time in refugee camps during famines and during civil wars. And I mean, she just saw all of what the world is walking in. She didn't live a sheltered life, is my point. So she wrote a book called *A Courageous Journey, the Story of a Family's will to Survive*.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:05]:

And it talks about an Ethiopian girl and her brother and sister and how she travels to save their lives and meets Christ through the journey. And then another book set in kind of a war zone. This book is set, I believe, in Lebanon. And yes, during the civil war in Lebanon in the 1980s. And it's a story of lovely family and how they walk in forgiveness and love. And so it comes in two different titles. One is called *Nothing Else Matters*. It has a horrible cover, I'm so sorry to say.

Carole Joy Seid [00:17:48]:

So you might want to. It's just. It would not appeal to a child. It wouldn't appeal to anyone. Then another edition is just called *if youf Love Me, A Story of Forgiveness*. And that one is from Moody. *Nothing Else Matters* is from Kingsley Press. And I think that might be a European.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:09]:

Let me just see her. I believe that is not an American publisher. Yes, Scripture Union. So Patricia primarily wrote for the Ministry of Scripture Union in England. And that's what her books all originally were published through. And so then there are often American editions as well. And then she wrote some biographies that you just don't want to miss. And anyone that.

Carole Joy Seid [00:18:39]:

And they're hard to find. But one of my favorites is her biography on Lilius Trotter. Lilius Trotter, who also worked with Muslims. She predated Patricia. And this is also published

by OM Publishing here in the States. And there's probably a British edition as well. But this book is so beautifully written. And it's a story of Liliias, who came from a very wealthy family.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:11]:

And she was a fine artist, you know, a true artist and painter. And the art critic Ruskin discovered her when she was on a trip with her mother. She came, as I said, from a well off family and she was kind of making the grand tour and she was sketching and drawing. And John Ruskin saw her work and he asked her mother if he could take her under his wing. And he said, I will make you one of the most famous women artists in the world. And she had the whole world at her feet. And she said, I'm really. No, sorry.

Carole Joy Seid [00:19:52]:

I'm called to the mission field. I'm called to the Muslim world. And she gave up fame and fortune and prestige and served quietly and barely had a single convert. Gave her whole life to the Muslim people, sharing the gospel of Christ there. And she was unhealthy, but she just never gave up. She never gave up in ministry there in North Africa, and she worked for 27 years in the same place. And in those days, missionaries didn't come home. They didn't have furloughs.

Carole Joy Seid [00:20:33]:

It was the real deal. They were. Not that it isn't the real deal to be missionary today. I don't mean to say it that way, but it was just such harsh conditions with little or no communication available, no support, and how these. These especially these women missionaries that didn't even have, you know, the protection of a husband, how they faithfully served and never gave in and never gave up, and the role models that we just benefit so much from. And then another one of her books that I enjoyed so much is the story of Patricia's father, Harold, who was much more famous than she was in many ways. And this is called A portrait. Oh, it's called Harold St.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:20]:

John, a portrait by his daughter. Harold St. John, a portrait by His Daughter. I love it. It's, of course, the true story of another very famous missionary. He was so much fun. And when he would come home, just chaos would break out in their family. All discipline would go.

Carole Joy Seid [00:21:42]:

They would just have wild, fun times because Daddy was home and he was so loving and he was so kind, and the impact that he had on Patricia and each of the children and the unconditional love and the wisdom and the theological knowledge. I mean, he

was such a famous theologian and how that influenced all of his children who went into the ministry as well. And so often missionaries, children don't want anything to do with the missionary because maybe they had a, you know, a difficult or traumatic childhood. The St. John family had so much joy in their upbringing. And Sunday was their famous favorite day of the week because their mom made it so fun, even though church was all these little elderly people and their wild family. But when they'd get home, everything was just great. Food, fun games.

Carole Joy Seid [00:22:36]:

And they kept it, you know, biblical. You have to spell, you know, a biblical name or you have to, you know. So they kept it biblical, but they made it so, so much a source of rejoicing. In their family life and in their adult life as well. So I wanna close with a book that I just got and I'm super excited. It's also from Scotland from Christian Focus and it's called Life Everlasting and it's subtitled. It had several different titles. Let me read you the original title.

Carole Joy Seid [00:23:10]:

It was originally called A Missionary Muses on the Creed. A Missionary Muses on the Creed. It was Originally written in 1964 there in England, in Scotland, and then it was republished, Life Everlasting, A Better Way to Live. And it's of course from England, but what it talks about is Patricia really exhorting people as they go out into the mission field, preparing them because so often missionaries are always fighting with each other and they can't get along. And really preparing people's hearts for the missionary field and the experience of how difficult it is to just have maybe 10 English speaking people in your life and they may be very, very different and quite a bit more elderly than you are and with much more conservative views on comportment and, you know, financial expenditures and, you know, these older missionaries and then they how the young missionaries can really annoy them and vice versa. And just she gives such practical, joyful advice. So any missionary as they're leaving needs to have this book tucked under their arm as they're getting on. Now the plane, it used to be the ship.

Carole Joy Seid [00:24:34]:

And she just was such a seasoned warrior for the Lord and had been through very, very hard things but never left her, never lost her sparkle, her vitality and made such an impact on everyone who she knew. Her nephew at her funeral said, tea and cookies with Auntie is an adventure. Everything she did just, she just brought such excitement and life into every interaction that she had. So I highly recommend Patricia St. John to you. Don't let your children grow up without her and don't you live life without her mentorship. She will change your life.

Rachel Winchester [00:25:24]:

You've been listening to the Homeschool Made simple podcast. If you like what you heard in this episode, please leave a rating and review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify or share this episode with a friend. It means so much when you help us spread the message of Homeschool Made simple with others. Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made simple podcast. Remember, Jesus commandments are not burdensome. What he calls you to do, he will enable you to do. Blessings.