

Local woman pens commentary on Biblical sermon

Karen L. Oberst examines Sermon on the Mount as well as the Beatitudes

By LEE BEACH
H&H Staff Writer

Karen L. Oberst, an acquisitions assistant at the Klamath County Library, has written a book espousing some radical ideas.

The book, "But I Tell You — Jesus Introduces a Better Way to Live," examines the Sermon on the Mount, as recounted in the book of Matthew, chapters 5-7, which she translated from the Greek language.

Jesus was speaking to a crowd of listeners near Capernaum when he gave the Sermon on the Mount.

It contains the Beatitudes, new laws, the Lord's Prayer, Christian attitudes toward money and worry, and warnings about false teachers and hypocrisy.

"The Sermon on the Mount teaches a whole different thing," said Oberst. "Jesus begins 'blessed are the poor,' not 'blessed are the rich.' It's still a radical idea for today — maybe particularly for today."

Oberst has had a lifelong love of languages. She graduated from Houghton College, in Houghton, N.Y.,



H&H photo by Andrea Malinen

Karen L. Oberst, an acquisitions assistant at Klamath County Library, has published her first book titled "But I Tell You — Jesus Introduces a Better Way to Live." It can be purchased online at amazon.com or through the publisher's web site barclaypress.com.

a four-year Christian liberal arts college operated by the Wesleyan Church, with a major in Greek.

Translating aspirations

She aspired to become a translator for Wycliffe Bible Translators, which translates the New Testament into languages around the world.

Before Wycliffe would accept her, she had to have all her college loans paid off

To do that, she worked at Roberts Wesleyan College in her hometown of Rochester, N.Y., a liberal arts college with a Christian worldview. Here she realized she loved working with books and in the college environment, so she stayed on.

A trip to visit a friend introduced her to a new part of the United States.

"I stepped off the plane and immediately fell in love

with the Pacific Northwest," she said.

Oberst moved to the West in 1981 to Newberg, Ore. She worked at George Fox University, founded in 1891 by early Quaker pioneers.

During this time, she made a decision to join the Religious Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers. Her background had been Free Methodist, the church in which she grew up.

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"Free Methodists broke away from the Methodist Church in the 1860s," she said, "on three main issues: free people, that is, against slavery; free pews, people didn't have to buy their pews in the church, and freedom in the Spirit."

The big city calls

She worked at George Fox for 10 years, before being attracted to life in a larger city. She found a job at Seattle Pacific University, and loved the stimulation of being in a college town. Still attracted to books, she later took a job with Amazon.com.

Then 9/11 happened, and being in a metro area became less attractive to her.

Four years ago, after visiting friends in Klamath Falls a number of times, she decided to move here. She has been employed at the library for about 3 1/2 years, where she places the orders for books.

She also found a Friends church here, and while doing a personal Bible study, came

to a decision.

"I felt like I was learning a lot and I needed to share that. I decided to dust off my Greek and write this book. It's tricky, translating from Greek, because Jesus spoke in Aramaic, so this was a translation of a translation."

A year of writing time

It took a year to write while working full time. The book was published by Barclay Press, a publishing company affiliated with the Friends church, and was released July 22.

In writing this book, she said, "I would hope people would gain a new perspective about how God, Jesus and the Bible view secular culture — and what they consider the important way to live."

If there is one central message, it is, in Oberst's belief, "In this day and age, in a time of all the wars, the most telling instruction is: 'Love your enemies.'"

She has already started her next book, going through the New Testament and picking out all the questions Jesus asked.

When she is not working or writing, her hobbies include reading, crochet and gardening, especially vegetables.

"But I Tell You," is available at Amazon.com or at barclaypress.com.