



# CHRIST the SOLID ROCK

by Marilyn Rockett

## *In Memoriam*

**Christopher J. Klicka**

April 2, 1961—October 12, 2009

Three-year-old Bethany's sweet voice spontaneously came drifting from the backseat of the Klickas' vehicle. She was singing with amazing clarity the old hymn *The Solid Rock*. With tears in their eyes and joy in their hearts, Bethany's parents, Chris and Tracy, rode in silence listening to their precious toddler finish the first verse and refrain with innocent abandon. That little impromptu concert happened eighteen years ago, and twenty-one-year-old Bethany (a wife now) and her six younger siblings (Megan, Jesse, Susanna, Amy, Charity, and John) will immeasurably miss their father but will remember and cherish the solid-rock legacy he left them.

### **Chris's Life**

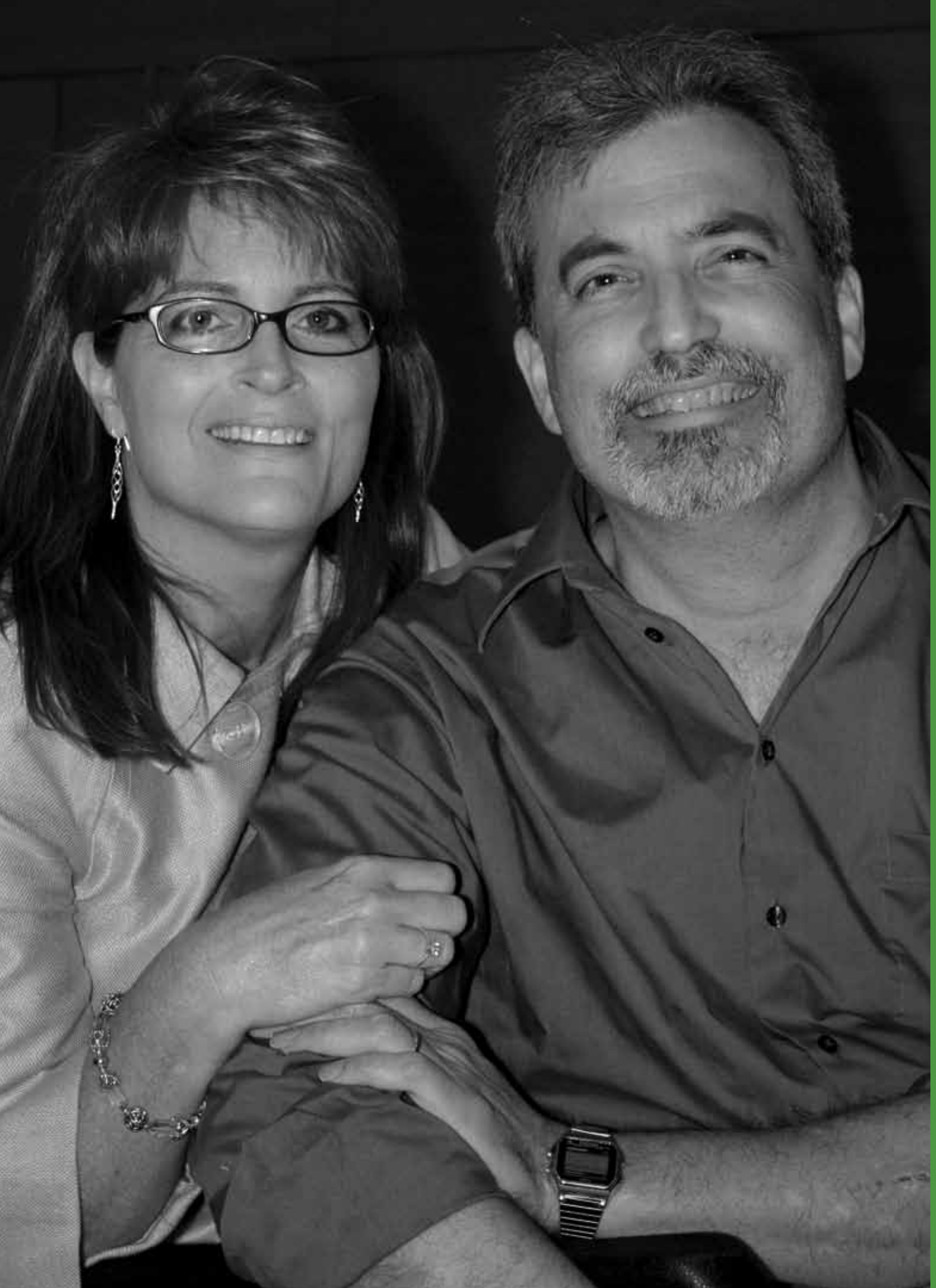
Chris Klicka, age forty-eight, went home to be with his Savior and Lord in October 2009\* after a fifteen-year battle with multiple sclerosis. For over twenty-four years, Chris championed homeschool rights around the globe. He was Senior Counsel for the Home School Legal Defense Association and was HSLDA's first full-time attorney, full-time employee, and first executive director. The then-budding legal advocacy group hired Chris, a recent law school graduate, in 1985 when the fire of homeschool legal battles was raging across the U.S.

The list of Chris's accomplishments is long. While an intern for the Rutherford Institute in 1984, his extensive

research of homeschool-related laws in all fifty states became the leading authority summarizing those laws. He lobbied Congress, testified before legislatures, argued in four supreme courts, wrote important legislation establishing parents' rights, and interacted with social service departments as an advocate for parents against these agencies' abuses. Because of Chris's passionate work, legislators exempted homeschoolers from regulations in the No Child Left Behind Act (2001).

Chris's life work for homeschoolers didn't stop in the courtroom or legislative hall. He fought for homeschoolers' rights in colleges, universities, and in the military. He worked on issues regarding educational grants, Social Security, and veterans' benefits and fought daytime curfew restrictions affecting home-taught teens. Chris spoke to thousands of families at hundreds of conferences, authored four books, and was writing two others.

His passion and advocacy for families knew no geographical boundaries. He directed HSLDA's international effort defending homeschoolers abroad. Chris knew that a parent's right to choose the best for his or her child is a universal God-given right to parents everywhere. He traveled to Germany to fight for German homeschoolers and served on a German homeschool organization's board. Chris served on HSLDA's Canada board and on the board of a legal defense and advocacy group in South Africa. Overall, he traveled and worked with families in more than fifteen countries.





The paths Chris cleared for those who follow have resulted in renewed families whose children know their parents' love and sacrifice to raise and educate them. That outcome will reverberate through the ages. HSLDA Chairman Mike Farris spoke of Chris's conviction: "Chris's accomplishments as a lawyer for homeschooling are clear and of value that cannot be overstated. He was one of the most important pioneers of our movement. He believed that this truly is God's way to teach children to love God. He believed it deeply. His conviction was infectious. He was a man of single-hearted devotion that I have never, ever seen equaled. The passion that Chris felt for the mission to which God called him never, ever, ever, ever dimmed, even slightly."

### Chris's Love

Those who wish to learn more about Chris's invaluable contributions that paved the way for millions of homeschoolers can easily access further information from a Google search of "Chris Klicka," which produces thousands of articles and information concerning his life and advocacy in multiple arenas. Families around the world can thank God for all Chris accomplished on their behalf. However, while these important undertakings were the tasks God called Chris to do on Earth, they were not the core of his passion and example.

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Chris loved his work, but his greatest love was for his Lord and his family. He deeply desired to share the joy of knowing Christ and raising children who love the Lord. Of the numerous articles he wrote for *Homeschooling Today*, many bore titles such as "Communicating the Good News," "Sharing the Gospel as a Family," and "A Husband's Unconditional Love." On a particular speaker's bureau that listed Chris's speaking topics, more than half were about family, the Lord, and joyful suffering rather than legal or technical issues. Encouraging and pointing families to Christ remained Chris's greatest passion.

All who knew Chris saw his indomitable spirit and felt his zeal. He loved people, and it didn't matter whether Chris knew you well or had just met you. It didn't matter if you were young or old. His infectious smile put you at ease, and when he talked to you he was genuinely interested in you and your interests. One young man, a graduated homeschooler who knew of Chris when he was a homeschool student, had occasion to meet Chris again at a mutual friend's house. The

young man and his wife came away saying they saw Chris's deep love for the Lord and for relationships.

HSLDA staff joked that the phone bills wouldn't be so high if it weren't for Chris. Chris's calls were always more than all the other attorneys combined! Bob Farewell, a longtime friend, said Chris was his hero. "Chris's attitude was always one of service. Chris's frequent question was, 'What areas can I pray for you about?'"

Tracy, Chris's wife, noted that if he were here now receiving abundant attention, he would respond by pointing upward to his great Savior. He truly wanted God to receive the glory for how He was using him.

When Chris traveled, he always carried a backpack full of tracts and Gideon Bibles. He gave thousands to all who would take them and listen to the gospel. His bold witness extended to all whom Chris thought might not know the Lord. Just a couple of weeks before he went Home, while waiting for a move from the hospital to home hospice care, he still engaged the nursing staff with his favorite question: "If you were to die today, do you know where you'd go?"

Despite his serious circumstances, Chris didn't lose the zany sense of humor that his friend Bob Farewell loved so much. In September 2009 (as Bob related), Chris called all his close male friends one Friday to say goodbye and tell them he was going to resign from HSLDA and go on disability. He could no longer work. He was rather low and had a bad day that day. Then, inexplicably, he had a good day on Saturday. On Sunday, he called all his friends again and said, "I changed my mind!"

Even in his weakened condition, Chris was determined to make the September trip to the National Homeschool Leadership Conference in Colorado, where he ultimately collapsed. When asked what in the world he was doing there, he replied, "I gotta be with my friends. I had to come say goodbye."

## Chris's Legacy

Suffering was a familiar companion to Chris. God gave the Klickas a large cross to bear with Chris's crippling disease, and Chris submitted to it as evidence of God's sovereignty and Christ's love for him. As the MS progressed, Chris fought to stay active and as strong as he could by swimming and biking. He was the most determined person I (who knew Chris for twenty-two years) have ever seen.

Chris wrote, "Times of suffering are the times God draws closest while intensely molding us, shaping us, and conforming us to the image of His Son. It is an opportunity to see our priorities clearly and to set them straight. We learn to concentrate on what really matters: living holy lives, sharing the gospel, advancing His kingdom, and training our children to love God with *all* their heart, *all* their strength, and *all* their mind. It is okay to suffer. I can say that

with my whole heart" ("Healing through Suffering," *Homeschooling Today*, September/October, 2005).

In many ways Chris exhibited strength few of us will ever have, but he understood he was a weak sinner in need of God's strength and grace. He wanted everyone to comprehend how great his God is. Admirers and friends, as evidenced by the more than 300,000 visits to Chris's CaringBridge site, will write articles and tell heroic stories of how Chris helped someone, how he fought to save homeschooling in a state, and how he encouraged so many people as he

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pulled himself up to a podium to deliver a message of encouragement just one more time when he could barely stand. Tracy is confident Chris would say, with clear conviction and passion, "Just love Jesus and love your family. That's what matters." Chris understood that God could take any ordinary human who loves the Lord and use him in extraordinary ways. He understood that life is not about homeschooling but about loving and serving Jesus Christ.

Chris passed from this world to the next with complete peace and assurance that his Savior waited for him with open arms.

Most homeschoolers will never be "famous" or have the far-reaching influence on others that Chris experienced. But Chris knew that by loving Jesus Christ and discipling our children, we each could influence many generations. He leaves his family and all of us that solid-rock legacy.

\* Read Tracy Klicka's thoughts shared at Chris's memorial service on October 31 and learn more of the Klicka family's journey during the last weeks of Chris's life on Earth at [www.tracyklicka.com](http://www.tracyklicka.com).

For information on how to obtain a video copy of the memorial service, go to [www.homeschooltoday.com/Bonus/09JF](http://www.homeschooltoday.com/Bonus/09JF) or to [www.hsllda.org/klicka](http://www.hsllda.org/klicka). All proceeds from the video's sale will go to HSLDA's Home School Foundation to help homeschool families in need.

Some of Chris Klicka's articles are reprinted at [www.homeschooltoday.com/Bonus/09JF](http://www.homeschooltoday.com/Bonus/09JF) or on the HST website at [www.homeschooltoday.com](http://www.homeschooltoday.com).

### Photos on facing page

(top to bottom, left to right, unless otherwise noted photos are courtesy of HSLDA)

Chris with son John (2008)

Chris with legal assistant Kevin Koons (late '90s)

Chris with Michael Farris on the steps of the Supreme Court building

Chris on steps of Colorado state capital addressing a homeschool rally

Chris during a speaking engagement (photo by Peter Cutts)

Chris doing a radio interview

The Klicka Family: Chris & Tracy, Megan, Jesse, Susanna, Charity, Amy, John; Ben (son-in-law) & Bethany (2008, courtesy of Tracy Klicka)