



# Joyful Living

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# A Playground Accident

By Delbert Teachout



Image Laura Molloy

When my wife hung up the phone she could hardly get her words out,” Our son just fell off the slide at school. He’s hurt.” It was 1982. Our oldest child was six years old and in first grade at Whiteman Air Force Base elementary school. He was a typical six year old, full of energy and not afraid of anything. Tall slides were nothing to be afraid of. Neither were asphalt playgrounds.

Fortunately I was off duty that day so as soon as I heard the news I was out the door without even waiting for her and on my way to the school. I didn’t know what to expect but my mind was thinking of worst case scenarios. When I was his age I broke both the ulna and radial in my left forearm when I fell from a bicycle handle bars only three feet from the ground.

Picturing him with a broken arm or leg was nightmarish. Even worse, I remembered the story of a man who fell from a second story balcony and landed head first on a sidewalk. He fractured his skull and bled out. The thought that my son would be lying in a pool of blood was beyond terrifying, it was horrifying. The fear made it feel as though my car was instantly transported to the school because within seconds I had driven the mile or so from my home.

I prayed for the safety of my children every night at bedtime. Back then we also had a four year old daughter. Today we have four adult children. I took seriously the concept that the man is the priest of his family and I remember Job always praying for his children. That is something I still do even though my four children are adults and three of them have their own children. The Bible promises that when we pray God would protect them from danger. At least that’s what I believe.

Upon arrival at the school I found a few students clustered in a small circle on the playground. If any teachers were there they are gone from my memory

though I’m certain they would have been there. My heart sank and the anxiety increased, despite my faith, as I ran toward the cluster.

Finding my son on his back with his eyes closed seemed to elicit my worst fear. Is he dead? I knelt down beside him and placed my right hand on his forehead. I prayed for his life, for his health, for his total recovery from the fall. Looking around I wondered why the ambulance had not arrived. But I knew that when I prayed God would arrive. I knew that even though a young boy fell from the top of a slide to land head first on asphalt, God could still take care of him.

Accidents sometime happen. They are not caused by the devil or by God. God could intervene to prevent them, but even when Jesus was on earth he mentioned accidents as something that happens. They are part of life. Accidents don’t mean God is punishing us or the devil is attacking us. Apostle Paul wrote of being afflicted by the devil but I don’t believe every affliction or injury is caused by spiritual beings. Sometimes things just happen.

As I knelt beside my unconscious son I continued to pray. I knew the Bible said that through the stripes Jesus received we are healed. After a few minutes my son opened his eyes. A few minutes later he sat up. A few minutes later he stood up

There were no broken bones, no fractured skull, neck, or back, and no blood. There was not even a concussion or contusion. He didn’t even have a bump on his head. How could it be that a young child could fall from the top of a slide and land on his head without serious injury? The Bible says the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, (James 5:16). I am not righteous but when I pray in Jesus’ name God hears and answers. This time the answer was to heal my son.

# WHAT DID WE KNOW ABOUT MARRIAGE?

by Cheryl Stasinowsky

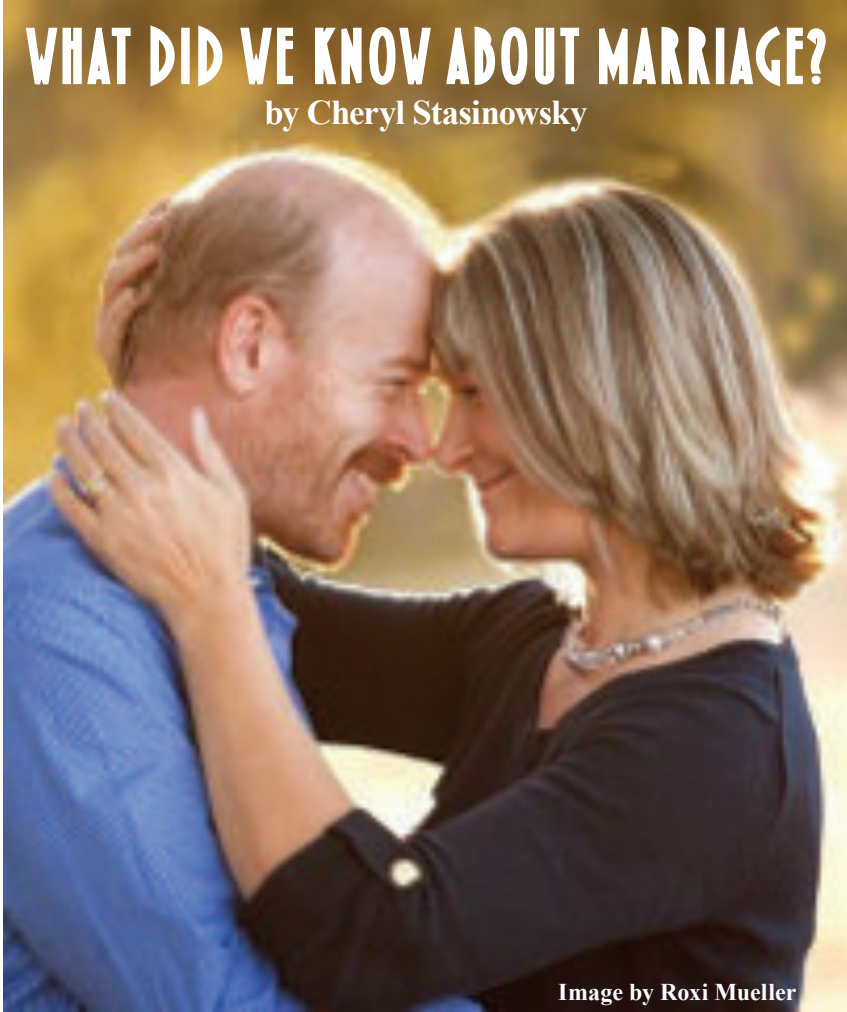


Image by Roxi Mueller



Recently, I was looking at our wedding picture and thought, what do a nineteen year old and a twenty year old know about marriage? The truth is...nothing, but we do not know what we do not know. We think we are ready. But really, what did we know about marriage, other than the mar-

riages we had experienced with our parents and felt we witnessed in those around us. But what did we know about marriage?

So, here I am today, almost thirty-two years later, looking at all the years and moments that are in between as we got up close and personal in learning about marriage and finding out all that we did not know. People can look at our lives and the pictures and think that it has been this perfect life, but what does perfect look like anyway? Has it been easy? Absolutely not! Have we fought and argued? Absolutely yes! What do you think you get when you put two strong-willed-and-determined people together? This is the true meaning of iron sharpening iron. What has kept this marriage together when many others are falling apart? Sometimes besides the grace of God, it has been sheer determination not to give up and quit.

Over the years we have had amazing moments, success, and laughter. We have been knocked down to the point of sitting on the bathroom floor looking at each other and saying we have no idea how to move forward in this marriage. We have just cried and cried at our mistakes, words, and actions we have chosen. But God, who made us, made us determined, and He has remained with us from that first day when we included Him in our vows. I believe He has kept us together. When our mouths were speaking we wanted to quit, He somehow picked us both back up and told us to try again.

A while back, I was sitting with the Lord complaining about Wally, and as I was complaining, the Lord told me everything I was complaining about, I created. Over the years, my words and actions have contributed to who he is today. So, if I wanted him to change, I had to change first. Yikes, that is not what I wanted to hear. I wanted God to agree with me. He showed me I had dug in my heels and was determined to change when he changed, but the fact was...I needed to change first.

I began working on me. I started forgiving him every day. Not to his face, but in my time with the Lord, I would purpose to forgive him and ask the Lord to forgive him, and then ask the Lord to forgive me. I also began reading and studying 1 Corinthians 13, and as I saw how I was the clanging cymbal, I began to pray and make this chapter my prayer guide and hearts cry to the Lord. I took that determined individual inside of me and made her purpose to change the way He showed me to change. I gave Him full permission to work on me. I got my eyes and energy off of trying to change Wally and put it into changing me. I quit blaming and took responsibility for my part. I learned that being still and knowing that He is God meant that I needed to be still with my mouth. I was amazed as I started to do this, as I would hear my thoughts of what I would have said, and it was not good.

So, what have I learned about marriage over these last thirty-two years? I cannot change Wally! I need to take responsibility for me and my actions! I need to forgive seventy times seven and maybe even every hour if necessary...not for him, but for me, as this influences my love and care for him. My heart filled with unforgiveness only destroys the marriage. My heart willing to always forgive builds my marriage. Do I do this all perfectly? Absolutely not, but what is perfect anyway?

So, what does a 51 year old and a 52 year old know about marriage? Not sure yet, but let me get back to you in another 32 years as these two determined-and-strong-willed individuals walk out this journey called marriage, with God changing each of us and being okay that sometimes it is only the strings of the vows holding it together.

## Joyful Living Magazine

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# A Transforming Trauma

By Frank G. Upshaw, PhD.

“God loves  
you and  
is in  
control  
regardless  
of what we  
see in  
the world  
around us.”

It was the type of news that every parent fears most: their 19 year son had been in a serious accident and was now in the ICU of a local hospital. Steve and Barbara (names have been changed to preserve privacy) rushed to the bedside of their son, along with his fiancée Nicole. Eventually, the doctor’s had to report that he would never walk again and would be in a coma indefinitely. As it turned out Bryan would spend a year in the hospital, and eventually lose his fiancé to someone else.

As Steve and Barbara endured the painful ordeal, they looked to their friends for emotional support. Tragically, their friends began to systematically withdraw from them at their hour of greatest need. Thus Barbara began to seriously question her childhood beliefs in a loving and powerful God. For his part, Steve was on his knees in Bryan’s room begging God to heal and “bring back” their son. One night Steve cried out to God “Take me instead of my son!”

When this type of tragedy strikes a family it tends to produce one of two very opposite reactions. For some, it may draw them closer to God. But for the others, it may drive a wedge permanently between the suffering person and God. With clenched fist, the one may scream at the heavens “This isn’t

fair!” The trauma may close the door to any subsequent relationship with God.

With Steve and Barbara it turned out differently. Although raised to believe in God, Barbara didn’t truly commit her life to Christ until after the accident involving Bryan. Without the support of their friends, Steve and

Barbara, found refuge in God. Eventually, Steve and even Bryan were baptized! With the loss of their so-called friends, and almost losing their son, the family turned to their only alternative: God.

Since the accident, 11 years ago, Steve and Barbara have joined a church. Although confined to a wheelchair, and unable to communicate, Bryan attends with them and obviously enjoys the experience of worshipping God. Barbara says she prays for her son’s healing every day, but that she is also “at peace” with whatever it is God may choose to do. Indeed, Barbara is fond of saying “My son is perfect as he is now.”

If you are suffering with a permanent physical disability, or have been through a medical or automotive accident, you may find hope in Steve and Barbara’s story. Some Christians only believe in God after he performs a miraculous healing. But for others, one’s faith in God is vital and strong even when He chooses not to heal. God loves you and is in control regardless of what we see in the world around us.

And remember: there is more to come. Our experience on earth is just a brief moment in time compared to the eternity we will spend with the Lord with our new and perfect bodies. Trust Him today!

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# Raising Children Is Not For Cowards

What's Your Legacy?  
By Vivian White

Our lives were planned by God to make a profound difference upon our world. This world begins at home. Children are to be the first recipients of our Christian legacy. In believing this truth we must ask ourselves how much time and effort is invested in this sacred trust. It has been said, "What a man accomplishes depends on what he believes."

All that you are, all the experiences, sorrows and joys were meant to be shared. You are a teacher of life. It is a call you cannot afford to ignore. If ever you excel at anything let it be in passing on your personal, godly legacy. Galatians 6:4 gives our children a foundation of happiness and God-confidence. "Let everyone be sure that he is doing his very best, for then he will have the personal satisfaction of work well done and won't need to compare himself with someone else." It's so easy to think that our children will turn out alright. It's so easy to pursue our own interests and careers when all the time our children are without godly instruction or parenting. Do we really believe our faith and convictions will be passed on to the next generation without intense effort? Ephesians 6:4 urges us in the raising of our children to "...bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Parents must always remember that obedience to the absolute truth of scripture is the defining factor in their personal life. "I advise you to obey only the Holy Spirit's instructions; He will tell you where to go and what to do." Galatians 5:16 Only then are we ready to be the godly teacher not just when the children are in the home but for as long as they live. Loving God requires a lifelong commitment to pass on our Christian legacy to our children and those God brings into our lives. George Eliot wrote this compelling statement. "It is vain thought to flee from the work that God appoints us, for the sake of finding greater blessing, instead of seeking it where alone it is to be found- in loving obedience."

Parents often ride the wave of discouraging days. Raising children is not for cowards or slackers. However, the results of staying on course are immensely rewarding. When deeply draining days wear you down be strengthened by Galatians 6:19. "And let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up." This is your finest hour when you present to the Lord and the next generation your greatest reward, a godly legacy.



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Part 1 of a 3 part series

# Parenting Those Amazing Adolescents

Whitney Hartmann Photography

We often as adults say “You couldn’t pay me to be a teenager again.” My question is, ‘What about that time was so difficult?’ If we truly feel that way about our own adolescent then where is our compassion for our own children?. In this three part series we will look at how as parents, we can help our young adults navigate through what was obviously a drudgery in our own lives.

When I typed in statistics for adolescent in Google, the headings that followed were: crisis in literacy, and depression, and drug use. Did you know what some of the statistics say:

- More than one third of all juvenile offenders (median age 15.5 years old) read below the fourth-grade level (CJJ, 2001).
- The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2001) reports that 82 percent of prison inmates are high school drop outs, and a very high proportion of them cannot read.
- One of the top three reasons for death among young adults from the age of 15 -24 is suicide.
- According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse there has been a decline in substance abuse among high school students. Except for the use of Marijuana.

One of the possible causes listed for the literacy crisis was a low level of belief in their abilities to succeed. I had to type in the word positive to find anything good about teenagers. In an article in the New York Times, Positive Trends Recorded in U.S. Data on Teenagers, (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, Published: July 13, 2007) it stated that:

- Fewer high school students were have sex and

more were using condoms in 2005, according to the latest government report on the well-being of the nation’s children.

- The teenage birthrate hit a record low.
- More young people are finishing high school.

I think teenagers have seen the consequences of sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy. Education and parents offering guidance has made a difference. In the age of technology the importance of education is being realized.

It can be such a confusing time with hormones changing. I have often said it is much like when they were toddlers. They have to learn how to walk, how to talk, and how they relate to their peers all over again. It is the time when they ask themselves; Who am I? What do I want to do with my life? What do I believe? It’s in their actions that the answers become apparent.

I think we are on the verge of experiencing a generation who says, “I will learn from your mistakes.” In the face of a seemingly hopeless world they are standing up and saying, “Ask me!” I heard a speaker on the radio once ask; Why are we in such a hurry to convince teenagers that they aren’t invincible?” It is such a short time that they really believe it. What if instead we empowered them and sought them out for ideas and solutions?

For example Boyan Slat at age 14 was awarded The Best Idea of South Holland and a Guinness World Record for his ideas on how to clean up the plastic dumps in our oceans. He has a web site where you can see his idea on how the ocean can keep itself

clean. We have a wealth of innovative ideas to tap into with our youth. They have access to more information now than ever. They are also more aware of the world’s problems and are taking their own initiative to provide answers.

What does this have to do with my teenager who is in trouble? It is difficult to find answers if we don’t first establish the challenges and possibilities adolescents face. Look at their strengths and weaknesses as a whole. They have an education system that is challenged in teaching them to read, and the odds are against them without an education. Yet, in the midst of all the chaos they are starting to make better personal choices.

Are we as a society honoring our adolescents or have they just become another problem without an answer? Do we listen to the fear based media and statistics or is it time to take a stand for our young adults. How as parents do we wade through the swamp of social media, video games, and the values being presented in movies and on the television?

In part 2 of this series we will look at ways we can identify if your adolescent is headed for trouble? What we can do to help them? How to stay sane while were in the process raising them?

Laura Burwick is a certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor on staff at Bethel Church, Transformation Center and educational instructor for CARE-EDU, providing professional education for drug and alcohol counselors. For more information or an appointment, email [laurab@bethelsozo.com](mailto:laurab@bethelsozo.com)



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# Going First

By Beverley A. Napier

IF YOU ARE ANYTHING LIKE ME, then perhaps there have been times in your life when you have done more than your fair share of complaining. I will admit there have been times that I have even complained about things to the Lord. On one of these particular occasions, the Lord's response left a very deep impression on me. This is what I would like to share with you today.

I am not sure now of what the exact circumstance was, but it went something like this. I and someone else were having differences. I believe that in my mind I thought that I was the one that just happened to be "right" in the situation. I remember feeling rather content in that belief, and I was more than convinced that the other person was the one that should come to me and attempt to make things right.

I can remember that I spoke to the Lord about all of this. I "presented" my case to Him, and I was more than confident that He would agree with my reasoning. You can imagine my surprise when He responded in the exact opposite way than I thought He would. Instead of agreeing with me that I should wait for the other person to make the first move in an attempt to reconcile the way things were between us, He actually asked me to take the first

step. I couldn't believe what I was hearing!

I had just gotten done explaining all of the circumstances to Him. He knew that I wasn't the one who had made the error in behavior towards the other person. It was the other person who had made the error in behavior towards me! I hadn't done anything wrong, I reminded Him. I had simply been the victim in this situation. Surely He didn't really expect me to take the first step! That just wasn't fair, I thought. I then proceeded to tell the Lord so.

What I heard inside of my heart were words that I would never have expected. I heard the Lord say to me, "I went first". Those words literally startled me. I was shocked as I began to realize that the Lord was speaking about His going to the cross. In an instant I realized exactly what He meant. He had gone to the Cross for us, while we were yet sinners. He had not waited for us to approach Him. He had taken that long and painful journey before we were even aware that we would need Him. He gave up His life, willingly, before we ever chose to love Him, to follow Him, or to serve Him.

He had taken the first step, and by doing so, He had made possible the most important reconciliation of our lives. His "going first" had allowed us to reconcile with God. There was no other way that this could have taken place, and I cannot find any place in the Bible where it says that Jesus complained about what was being asked of Him.

I was silent, and more than deeply humbled. This realization seemed to change my whole attitude. If Jesus, my precious Lord and Savior, had accomplished so much by being the One to take the first step for us... then perhaps there would be something of value that could be accomplished by my going first, also. Suddenly the whole situation seemed to take on a complete different meaning for me.

Jesus is our example in this life. If ever there is a time when we don't know which direction or action to take, we can safely look at His life and find our answer in the way in which He walked out His own life. He is the only One who ever walked out this life perfectly. What He did for us then, continues to save us, lead us, and heal us today.

I quickly and quietly asked the Lord to forgive me for my selfish way of thinking. I thanked Him for being so gentle and kind to me in the way in which He shows me things. I thanked Him again for "going first" and making a way for us to reconcile again with His Father, and our God. In ending, I asked Him to continue to make my heart more like His.

There are times in my life in which the same question will form on my lips, or in my mind. The question of "Why do I always have to be the one to go first?" It will not take me very long to remember the Lord's response to me. It is almost immediate. I wish that I could say that my heart and mind don't even ask the question anymore, but that would not be true. The truth is that I do. The difference is that after recalling the Lord's response to me on that day, that now I am able to look at things differently. Because of this, I am then able to think things through with a whole different mindset, and hopefully, make a much better decision on how to proceed in the given situation.

I am so thankful that the Lord gives us wisdom. I am so aware that if He ever left me alone, the selfishness and self centeredness of my mind and my heart would certainly ruin me. I need to be reminded always of His goodness, His gentleness, and His humility. His never ending love for me, His favor towards me, and of His great ability to be so patient and so kind to me. His selflessness and of His overwhelming and incomparable sacrifice, not only for me, but also for you.

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# Zits and Wrinkles

By Gene Burroughs

Shortly after Christmas of 2013, my wife Deborah and I received very disturbing words from the Lord; words that no one desires to hear. “You are about to suffer financial hardship.” Of all of the things you desire to hear from your creator, this would surely rate near the bottom of the list, if it made the list at all. Well, just as He said it would, the trial came. First came car repairs, dental bills, and then further, more expensive, car repairs and a shortfall in our home es-crow account—a couple thousand-plus, followed by a substan-tial increase in our monthly mortgage, and, if that were not enough, another two-thousand-plus in unexpected expenses!

I don’t know about you, but any one of these was out-side of our budget, let alone all of them added up and due at once. By the way, I left out the minor IRS bills and more that all added up to substantial numbers as well.

My family and I are committed to serving the Lord full time. We are sustained by His provision in any number of ways, but this mountain seemed to be one we could not see beyond. We began to wonder what we had done wrong. We re-pented, we fasted, we prayed constantly, and yes, I even wor-ried. You see, I forgot about grace. I took the burden upon me. I even began looking for work; after all, this must be my fault, right? Yet in the midst of it all, I knew the only answer was God, and as I turned all of my attention to Him, He reminded me of words He had spoken to me a few years before: “Gene, either you can provide or I will.” While the words were still ringing in my ears, I repented once again for forgetting, for losing faith, for taking the load upon myself.

The very next day through nothing less than divine in-tervention, no rolling of coins, no selling jewelry or guns, but simply by His grace we received every penny needed to pay all of these bills! I was reminded not only of God’s promise to me but also words daughter Natalie had once spoken to me: “Dad, the worry is not worth the zits and wrinkles.”

I don’t know your situation nor the circumstances surrounding your trial, but this I do know: our God is bigger than every trial and every challenge and situation we face, and either we surrender to His will and His solution or we have zits and wrinkles! Trust God more than you do yourself for He is able .

Pastor Gene Burroughs, Missio Dei Ministries, Navarre, Florida





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## CLEAN UP ON ISLE THREE OF MY LIFE

By Maggie Fair

“I bet you think this spring’s single parent’s article is about making healthy food choice”.....

Actually, what I want to talk to you about is taking care of the unspoken things that clutter up the pathways of our heart and mind. These “things” are the unresolved issues of life that can be excused away in light of the busy daily stuff of single parenting. When God wants us to deal with a commitment we’ve made and not kept or a word we spoke to someone and shouldn’t have, we don’t always feel “ready” to deal with it. The down side of putting things off is that we short circuit opportunities and blessings, and we damage relationships. There comes a time when the only right answer is to remove the obstacles, for ourselves and the ones that our bad choices affect. In the New King James Bible it says to let our Yea be Yea and our Nay be Nay. Indecision I have found is in fact, a decision and carries consequences. Some wise person once said “not to put off until tomorrow what we can do today”. I like that. Please

don’t think that, I think I have arrived in regards to what I am writing about. The truth is that I am in process. I like you, need other’s for accountability for my weaknesses so that I can improve, and that is why I am writing about this. Recently I gave my word to head up a project that was very important. I fully intended to do so and then....life happened, I caved, and nothing got done. It is true that illness needs to be attended to and bills need to get paid etc...but not at the expense of what is most important to God. He cares that we go to him and ask what it is that we are supposed to be doing, and even then, we need to wait on him for the strategy we need to be victorious in our pursuit. This is especially true regarding ministry. As a single parent we have valuable assets to share with the body of Christ. What we’ve overcome can benefit others behind us, we just need to make sure that when we say yes to something we remember that we are also saying no to something or someone else and if it isn’t God’s will we might miss the blessing of what God has planned for us.

### STRUGGLE

by Kim Harmon

He validates our anxious thoughts;  
His whispers stop impending death.  
He musters angels to our cause and  
Roars when we're victorious!

He bends down at our softest cry;  
He laughs at our "sure" hiding.  
He lends His hand to help us up.  
His love compels, inviting...

...Us to trust Him,  
To let Him in.

Like the gentle, old man on the bench in the park,  
With nowhere else to be,  
He pats the seat beside Him,  
Smiling easily.

When we resist, so full of wrath,  
With flailing arms and discontent,  
He nods to show He understands,  
And gently pats the seat again.

When anger ebbs, outmatched by peace;  
His arms extend as we collapse.  
Rantings stop and tirades cease,  
He pulls us weeping to His lap,

And we are home,  
We're home at last.



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## So Much More than the Luck of the Irish (A Miracle on St. Patty's Day)

By Patty O'Malley~Plumb

The yearly celebration of St. Patrick's Day comes in many forms, and varieties of 'Clover- Green-Colors'. Children of all ages are careful to wear green clothing to avoid the common practice of 'pinching' by classmates, friends, or even family members. Some families may gather for a Festive Meal which may include Corned-Beef and Cabbage, Irish Potatoes, Soda Bread and Lamb; while others may only focus on the opportunity to join friends at a local Irish Pub and toast the day with a dark beverage.

Well, its been many a Grand Time for this Family of Mine with the Irish name of O'Malley.

But on the morning March 17th, 2006, I was so fortunate and blessed to share in a wonderful Miracle of a Life Encountering Death. It was my Dear Friend, Timothy Klock who was center stage and experienced so much more than the 'Luck of the Irish' that day.

Our paths had crossed at the Catholic Church here in town back in the mid 70's as I was raised in an Irish Catholic Family and Tim was devoted to the Lord, leading a Prayer Meeting/ Bible Study in the basement of St. Joseph's Fellowship. It was during this time when ripples of the Charismatic Movement began to appear in the Prayer Gathering. And not too much long after, that our yearnings for 'More of God' led us beyond the statues and traditions of the Catholic Church, falling head over feet in Love with Jesus and His Living Word. Much Spiritual Growth was gained as I worked at a Bible Bookstore in town and joined Tim as he continued to lead several Bible Studies and Prayer Gatherings in Redding as well as Weaverville.

And after 30 years of friendship, I found it to be a precious moment when I arrived to the scene of the accident on Mistletoe Lane, finding Tim unconscious, and by all indications, on his way to Heaven.

Not knowing how or what to pray~ in the Spirit, and anything but English will do just fine. I embraced his Sweet Wife, Florence, and thought, what a privilege it is to be here and experience the glory and humility of this somber moment. Tim had experienced a massive heart attack while driving his wife home from breakfast that morning, and as a result, slumped over the steering wheel, pushing the accelerator to a high rate of speed, crashing into a tree on a neighbor's front yard.

It appeared hopeless, when suddenly, an off-duty, male nurse arrived, which some may say by 'Luck or Coincidence'... being at just the right place at the right time, and possessing the strength and ability to pull Timothy from the wreckage and perform CPR until the paramedics arrived. Upon arrival, the ambulance crew had to implement all means necessary to save him, however the patient was not responding, and was rushed to Mercy Hospital where a heart cath was performed. It just so happened that this nurse who assisted at the scene was a Cath Lab Nurse, and stated that he never drives down this particular street and he feels anyone would have done the same if found in his position. Tim and Flo know differently and believe 'Miracles Do Happen Each and Every Day', and thank Mark for his willingness to participate in their very own Miracle on St. Patrick's Day.

The Klock's also extend their gratitude the many doctors and nurses who also share in the enormous credit of saving Tim's life. After a five-way bypass surgery, and a remarkably quick recovery, Tim was able to walk out of the hospital just a few short days after his procedure, to reunite with his wife, six children, and eight grandchildren.

Since this 'Heart Changing Event', Tim has continued his ministry to the sick and injured at the hospital, and has also added a Health Membership at the Shasta Family YMCA. He and his wife, Flo exercise at least three times a week together in the hospitable and respectable environment which the YMCA provides, embracing a healthier and happier lifestyle, and posturing themselves for Miracles.

*Patty Plumb lives in Redding with her husband Ron and two of their seven children. She is a Writer and Sales Advertiser for Joyful Living Magazine. Patty@joyfullivingmagazine.com*



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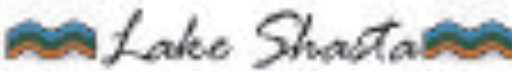
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At the time we truly receive Christ by faith, we know by the power of the Holy Spirit we have changed. We are moved not simply by emotion, but rather a deep understanding and thankfulness for who we are in Christ. What we used to embrace—our sin—we forsake; what we used to forsake—Christ Himself—we embrace, and discover we are not the same people we once were (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are in awe that the God who created the heavens and universe would choose us, because left to our sinful natures and apart from His grace and mercy, none of us would ever choose Him (Romans 3:11).

While there is spiritual joy in our Christian journey, some of us falsely believe our Christian walk will be marked by continual happiness and feelings of elation. But that simply

is not what Christ nor does the Bible teach. Once we become a child of God, it is only a matter of time before we experience trials and suffering. And when they come, the enemy throws questions of doubts our way. The closer we get to our Lord, the harder it seems the enemy works to discourage us. We may find ourselves questioning God, our salvation, and whether He still loves and abides in us. But why should we not suffer? After all, didn't our Lord suffer and are we not to share in His sufferings (1 Peter 4:12-16)? And does He not use our suffering to refine us and make us more like Him?

Our Lord graciously provides some powerful truths on which we must stand during our trials to keep us from falling and being led astray by the enemy. Our weapon, God's Holy Word, is a powerful counter to the lies

we might otherwise believe. Isaiah 55:8-9 declares that our Creator's ways and thoughts are much higher and greater than ours, so we must rest on the promise that if we truly belong to Him, we are under the leadership of the infinite One who surpasses our greatest ability to fully understand the reasons for life's inevitable trials. So even when we don't experience human happiness for a season, we can and do have unspeakable joy—joy that is not rooted in life's circumstances, but rather solely upon our steadfast Creator who knows us, understands us, and intercedes on our behalf during our weaknesses by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26).

As we have all experienced, our plans in this life don't often work out the way we would like. When that happens, especially during our darkest hours,

we may find it easy to question what our Lord has previously revealed to us during times of joy. How soon we forget our limited, finite vision pales in comparison to God's unlimited, infinite imagination and foresight. He alone knows the plans He has for us, and we can rest knowing His perfect plan gives us hope, is for our good, and ultimately for His glory (Jeremiah 29:11).

Left to our own, it's natural to become discouraged when we face trials and suffering. But Christ, who endured the most shameful suffering ever known, understands our affliction. And why do we suffer? The Apostle Paul answers this question in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." And later in James 1:2-3, we are instructed to consider it joy when we encounter trials, knowing the testing of our faith produces endurance in this life.

Of course, rejoicing in and during suffering is possible only through the strength provided by our Lord. And while no trial seems enjoyable at the time, God promises our faith will grow as we withstand suffering in His name and for the sake of Christ. And that, brothers and sisters, will ultimately result in His name being glorified; not only now in this fallen world, but in eternity to come. As one of my favorite authors John Piper says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him"; yes, even in our sufferings.



by Diane Hunter

Have you ever seen a Facebook post and thought, "Wow! I wish I was there...or eating that...or celebrating that...or getting to experience...?" If you are simply inspired by what someone else is doing, great. If however, reading about someone else's life pierces your heart with disappointment that reminds you of what you do not have, I have an encouraging challenge for you.

As a backdrop, I recognized that there were certain areas of my life where I had more longing than fulfillment. I knew I was off-track when I would wander through the same disappointments over and over again. But because I thought my circumstances had to change before I no longer felt disappointed, I was stuck—waiting for the shift. The bummer was, I could not find a way to change my circumstances. Years had passed and my longings were creating a hole in my heart.

I knew enough Scripture to know that God wants us to "prosper and be in good health just as [our] soul prospers" 3 John 2. And that He came to give us abundant life (John 10:10), but in the area of health and with a couple of unfulfilled dreams, I did not feel abundant.

So, I have been on the quest for an answer. Many of my last several articles have shared my process of learning how to overcome heartbreak and walk in victory. And I have discovered another key that has been a part of bringing life and prosperity to my soul.

This key has two parts. The first is a familiar concept to most of us: delighting in the LORD. Psalm 1:2-3 tells us the great value in delighting ourselves in God and His Word. When we do we will be like a tree that is firmly planted...which yields fruit and does not wither...and prospers in all areas. Since I want to prosper and walk in His fullness I have been practicing delighting in Him. While doing this, I began to understand a new and powerful aspect of delight.

This new revelation is the second part of the key. So what is it? The second part is delighting in other people. It is a simple but profoundly powerful truth. When I delight in another person I am seeing God's goodness in their life and celebrating it. And since delight—like every attribute of God, originates from Him—when I delight in someone else, it is a part of Him pouring through me. And, my soul always prospers when He is pouring through it.

As we delight in others and rally for goodness in their lives, we are positioned to be a catalyst that receives and releases the delight of God. This delight ushers in, transforms, and strengthens our souls. The delight of God brings life. And life is the foundation of a prosperous soul.

So my challenge is: when you are feeling a lack of any kind, practice delighting yourself in God, and in others, and see how quickly your perspective is restored and you feel full of life.

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# Our Possessions Do Not Define Us

By Renae Tolbert

"Go! Go down there!" After 30 minutes, I caved in to the voice, grabbed my camera and took off to see the eagles at Turtle Bay. They were soaring high and majestically. This is why the Lord nudged me to get down here! He wanted to bless me today!

People often stop to ask what I'm photographing. When this man rode up on his bike and stopped, I expected to converse about our resident eagles, Liberty and Spirit. Instead, he looked at my camera, and asked, "Did you lose a camera like that down here?"

"Yes! On September 24th!"

"I have it." He said with a smile.

My jaw dropped.

Four months earlier, while photographing the eagles, I ran into some ladies who recognized me from my Northern California Eagles Facebook page. I took a picture of us with my smaller camera on the tripod, so I laid my big expensive camera next to the cement wall. After the photo-shoot with friends, we went separate ways. I walked up the trail, and suddenly it hit me, My camera! I ran as fast as ever, only 15 minutes passed but it was already gone. Snatched by some thief! I was sure of it!

When this man claimed to have my camera, unsure if I believed him, I asked him to show me where he picked it up. He pointed to the exact spot. We exchanged names and I asked questions about the day he found it.

"Did you know there is a \$250 reward? I've posted it in Craigslist and Facebook. It was on the news, in the paper and the pawnshops had flyers."

"No, I don't have internet or television." He paused a few seconds. "Maybe I'll buy a camp stove for my tent. It could keep me warm and I'd be able to eat hot food."

"John, are you homeless?" His head lowered, "Yeah."

"Do you know the Lord?" Throwing his arms out wide he said, "What is God? Is he an IT? Is he a man in a robe and a long beard?" John grasped his own long beard, giving it a tug.

"Lord, please give me words! "Love." God clearly whispered the word love.

"John, God is love. When you see people loving people, that is the spirit of God." When he looked up, a tear slid from under his sunglasses.

We arranged to meet the next day at Turtle Bay Café. "Is there anything I can bring you?" "Nah, I'm ok." The tear indicated he needed much, yet asked for nothing.

Two friends and my husband went with me to meet him at 1 pm. John was right on time. He pulled up on his bicycle with a smile.

He placed a blue denim bag on the table as if presenting me with a gift. I removed the camera. It was wrapped in a towel and in a plastic bag. "To keep the dust out." he told me. The straps were folded and secured with twisty ties. He stored it this way in his tent for 4 months!

I asked why he didn't sell it, he shrugged, "I knew it belonged to someone and eventually I'd find them." He said he rode his bike twice a month on the Dana to Downtown trail, keeping his eye out for someone who resembled a photographer.

I gave him a bag with home-made cookies and The New Testament Message. Then handed him the envelope with the reward. Several other friends donated gift cards and money for to give him. With hand to heart he said, "You say what a blessing this is for you. But, this is a blessing to me. Thank you."

I pray he realizes how much Jesus loves him. No doubt he witnessed the love of God the day we met at Turtle Bay.

John may have lost his home, a closet full of clothes and his car. But he did not lose his character, honesty, integrity, respect, kindness and responsibility. He was articulate, educated and honoring. That is what defines John. I am honored to have met John.

{ "Speak up and judge fairly; defend  
the rights of the poor and needy."  
Proverbs 31:9 }

Renae Tolbert lives in Redding, where she writes short stories, enjoys the outdoors and wildlife photography. Her "Creator's Touch" prints and greeting cards of local wildlife and scenery can be purchased at Enjoy the Store on Placer Street in downtown Redding. She's been published in Cup of Comfort for Christian Women, Guideposts Heavenly Company anthology, and Birds and Blooms magazine.



# IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT

By Yvonne Martinez

Jenny returns to the old house where she lived as a child with her abusive father. Jenny, revisited by the trauma and abuse, picks up rocks throwing them with all her physical strength at the old house.

Forrest watches and remarks... “I guess sometimes there just aren’t enough rocks.”

(Excerpt from the popular 1994 movie, Forrest Gump)

Jenny’s life was surrounded by people of a questionable nature, a lack of boundaries and uncertain intentions. She wants to be famous and rich, but ends up with dead beat jobs, emotionally unavailable men, using drugs and talking about suicide. She wants love, but can’t receive love from the one (Forrest) who is close by and truly cares for her.

Jenny’s character is fictional but her life is the story of many women who had an absent mother and were traumatized and abused as young girls. Their adult life and lifestyles continued to be marked with patterns of abuse, trauma, and exploitation.

Often adults who were abused as children lack the ability to set any boundaries. This includes boundaries that keep us safe from others as well as boundaries that help us self-manage our behavior. Jenny was unable to set any boundaries to self-protect from her father’s abusive behavior and in life, she continually failed to set limits. Another example is Susan, who when she tried to have an opinion different than her mom, mom would get mad and verbally berate Susan. She learned that setting boundaries conveyed an unintentional resistance or refusal to submit to mom, which only enraged her mom causing more rejection or verbal abuse.

Sometimes not having boundaries, limits or protective resistance sometimes is the only way to self-protect during an altercation. Not having boundaries may be the best defense during a crises to appease the abuser, stall the violence, or deflect the abuser’s anger, diminish the abuse, or even initiate peace.

With very good intentions we teach our children how to be safe. We talk about “stranger danger,”

and not to go anywhere with someone they don’t know. We talk about their private parts and never allow someone to touch them or to hurt them. We teach them self-defense and empower them to say “NO!”

However, when a person’s attempted defenses (words or actions) fail to stand up to protect them when faced with someone in authority or anyone trusted, a resulting feeling of shame may be intensified. If the abuser was stronger or more powerful and won against them, feelings of failure and self-contempt can emerge when the child’s ability to protect themselves didn’t, or couldn’t, match up to the situation.

Unable to make sense of it all, a child may arrive at the conclusion; “It must be my fault.” “It must be my fault” is reinforced by ~

- Why didn’t you ...
- You should have...
- You could have...
- How many times have I told you not to...
- Didn’t I tell you to never to...
- How could you have...

Concerning abuse or exploitation, absolutely no form of blame, implied or imposed, should ever be placed on the victim. Implying the victim was in any way at fault instills shame and guilt and suggests the victim had control or responsibility in what happened.

Within the context of a particular incident there may be points of confusion as to who is at fault. Sorting out responsibility is a huge part of effective prayer ministry so that any unresolved internal or spiritual conflict gets dealt with.

Any belief in the lie that abuse was “my fault” can warp and twist into the belief the victim had the power to stop it or allow it to happen. This is taking on a false responsibility. If this belief isn’t replaced with the truth, it partners with believing you have the power to make someone behave or perform in a certain way. Coming out of agreement with the lie that abuse

was “my fault” and any resulting lie of “false responsibility” is essential to getting free from this type of shame.

## Sorting it out ~

- Ask God to help you determine who is responsible. What did they do, say, or imply vs. what did I do, say or imply, if anything?
- Give back responsibility where it belongs, forgive, and break ungodly bonding.
- Repent for believing the lie it was your fault, ask God’s forgiveness.
- Renounce and repent for any false responsibility for another’s thoughts or behavior.
- Accept responsibility for your part, if any.
- Ask God to forgive you and forgive yourself.

This article is an excerpt from Yvonne Martinez’ book, *I am a Woman – Healing the Feminine Spirit*.



Yvonne Martinez has nearly 30 years of experience ministering God’s power, healing and freedom. She is an ordained minister and serves as co-leader, pastoral counselor and addictions specialist, in the Transformation Center at Beth-el Church in Redding, CA. Yvonne is the author of 14 books and educational director of CARE-EDU, a CAADAC approved drug and alcohol certification program, [www.care-edu.com](http://www.care-edu.com). For a personal ministry appointment with Yvonne, call Transformation Center (530)229-7909.

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*think • shift • move.* 



**COMFY?** • By Mimi Moseley



Image Laura Molloy

Have you ever sat in the coach cabin of an airline flight and noticed the special treatment extended to those beyond the blue curtain in First Class? Sure some of those folks paid for that special treatment, but others get it because someone else, like an employer, has paid the price. Yet I sit in my narrow seat with my little bag of 13 peanuts resenting the “entitlement” attitude I’m convinced those First Class passengers must possess. By the time I get off the plane they are long gone with their full stomachs as I drag my back and share their filet mignon with any of us. We were on the same plane going to the same destination but they were able to enjoy the ride because of their position inside the blue curtain.

I’ve been pondering how comfy I am inside the “blue curtain” of my church home. Life is pretty good. I have options to fill my time with godly brothers and sisters. But do I have that assumed “entitlement” attitude I accused those First Class passengers of having because I’m in the “right place”? I’m growing in the knowledge of Jesus; I know more Scripture than ever; but am I walking outside the blue curtain to tell those in “coach” what’s on the “other side”? Oh, don’t get me wrong, I give to send “flight attendants” beyond the curtain onto other flights that go abroad to countries around the world, but do I care about the folks that are just a few feet away?

When Jesus instructed the disciples, to:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19 He had us in mind. We are His disciples and we are to be recreating ourselves. But how to we do that if we don’t go out with intentions to meet those in “coach”? It’s safe on this side because we know what to expect and what results will be when we are comfy. Jesus prayed we would not be “taken out of the world, but keep them from the evil one”. (John 17:15) I’m pretty sure Jesus wants me to walk into the lives of those that think we are fat, dumb and happy in First Class but won’t bother to dirty our hands to love and accept the grocery clerk, the Starbucks barista or HEAVEN FORBID the man at the light with a “need food” sign.

A pastor in Santa Cruz recently said, “We have to define ourselves or others will do it for us.” Are we defined by our love like the old chorus “they will know we are Christians by our love”? Have “they” even met us or are we insulated and safe inside the curtain? If you ask them who Jesus was they will tell you “He was a great man that loved people and He cared for the poor and fed

the hungry”. If you ask these same people to define Christians they say: “They are judgmental, oppress women, homophobic, negative and arrogantly think they are right and everyone else is wrong.” (Taken from Compassion Unleashed Conference, San Jose, CA May, 2008.) Wow, doesn’t sound a lot like Jesus, does it? They typically draw their definitions when we do make ourselves known. Most are very aware of where we stand on political issues. They see us as followers of Rush Limbaugh rather than Jesus Christ. What if they could see the real Christian in us? If they did, Jesus would be seen. We would break some of those stereotypes by showing them love while reaching into their world. What are their needs? Can we offer a smile? Call them by name?

It’s going to cost us something. It may take getting uncomfortable to get up out of our First Class seat and take what has been given to us to those without. It is said we don’t have to have the answers when we step out because the Spirit of the living God dwells within in us and wherever we go His presence is there. Just go and let Him do the talking. After all, Jesus paid the price for us to sit in First Class and He wants the whole plane to know they can be there too, enjoying the ride by knowing Who paid price for them to be there.

*Mimi Moseley is a Christian women’s conference speaker & author. Her first book is on in-law relationships “Arm Around Shoulder/Hand Over Mouth”. For more information [www.mimimoseley.com](http://www.mimimoseley.com).*

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Today, I am going to  
say it before my  
feet hit the  
floor, "Jesus, I need  
you right now."

## A Tired Mommy's Tired Prayer

By Sara Cormany



Good Morning Jesus

At least I think it's morning...maybe I missed it...or maybe it hasn't even come.

All I know is that I am not ready for the demands of what this morning will bring...

I want to pull the covers squarely over my head and ignore the rappings on my door, the giggles from the bathroom and the smell of poo coming from the direction of my two-year-old.

I am not ready. I am not ready. I am not ready.

My head is throbbing. My body, aching. And my laundry room smells like throw up.

I am NOT ready.

But I know I am needed.

And oh, dear Jesus, so are You.

I will not wait to say it until breakfast or naps or playtime.

Today, I am going to say it before my feet hit the floor,

"Jesus, I need you right now."

I need you to open my hands so wide they cannot help but love those who come underneath their shadow.

I need you to strengthen my body to meet the demands of throw-up and messes and fevers.

I need you to grow my patience beyond my inexplicable, mind-blowing exhaustion.

And I need you to swing wide the gates of my heart so that I can be the mommy my babies deserve.

I need you every second, minute and hour of today.

And when my body fails and my frustration grows, bring to me these words, over and over and over again:

Your power is made perfect in my weakness. Your power is made perfect in my weakness. Your power is made perfect in my weakness.

And Your grace is sufficient for me.

In throw-up. In messes. In exhaustion.

You are beautifully enough so that I don't have to be.

Yes, I need you, Jesus.

And I'm sorry it takes all this for me to remember that I need you.

But sometimes, it is in a sleepless night. Or a rough morning. Or a smelly laundry room.

Where I can find the clarity to remember that You are enough every day.



## Dear Yvonne



Dear Yvonne is a ministry to those needing help resolving issues of conflict.

Questions may be confidentially emailed to [yvonnem@ibethel.org](mailto:yvonnem@ibethel.org)

The Joyful Living editorial staff reserves the right to select questions for publication.

### Q. What can I do to help my adopted child bond with me?

The inability for children to bond can happen in the aftermath of isolation, neglect or abuse. As adoptive parents, we may have thought our love will be enough to help a hurting child recover but when the child doesn't respond the way we anticipated, we may feel our love failed but God tells us that "love never fails." Helping a child to build a capacity

to receive and give love can be a challenge but here are a few suggestions:

- Find the connection between feelings and words
- Help the child to express their needs
- Identify positive actions that can help the child get their needs met
- Show attention and affection that brings closeness but not overwhelm the child
- Discuss choices, rewards, and consequences (not punishment)
- Celebrate the child's uniqueness

### Q. Why do I always feel that I am at fault for my wife's outburst of anger?

You are not at fault for someone's inability to self-manage or their failure to apprehend the Fruit of the Spirit called "self-control." She might be depressed, stressed, or not have the skills needed for healthy emotional expression. Angry outbursts are often the result of a perceived injustice, feelings of disrespect, or seemingly overwhelming demands. Consciously being fair, respectful, and helpful are quick ways to unite together as a couple and reduce anger. We all know the weak spots of our spouse, and can easily target "zingers" that sting. Especially when our spouse is angry, we may think our verbal attacks are justi-

fied. This will only escalate anger, and it is better to hold our peace. Having an angry spouse doesn't mean you have to be angry or to push their buttons, but it also doesn't mean you should have to tiptoe and make excuses. Any consequences from angry behaviors belong to the one who was angry, and it is not your mess to clean up for them. The basics of caring for each other and learning healthy emotional expression can help reduce anger in your spouse. If this doesn't work, she may benefit from a Christian counselor who can help her to heal any underlying issues and provide tools to help her manage her angry outbursts.

### Q. Can you help me understand sexual purity?

Many Christians are confused about where to draw the line with sexuality, and it's easy to understand why. We live in a world that constantly invites to think about sexual behavior and encourages participation in it. While sexual purity certainly includes abstaining from sexual intercourse until marriage, moving beyond hugging and casual kissing can easily begin the process of crossing that line of arousing desires that cause couples to compromise their limits.

The challenge to remain sexu-

ally pure was even highlighted by Apostle Paul encouraging believers to run from sexual sin because no other sin affects the body as this one does. "For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body...for God bought you with a high price...so you must honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

Sexual purity is not only about establishing personal sexual boundaries, but also honoring, respecting, and protecting the boundaries of others. Sexual purity is a total commitment of sexual needs, desires, thoughts and actions to God. A Christian view of sexuality does not ask, "How far from purity can I wander before I have sinned?" Rather, a Christian perspective guides us toward seeking purity in our thoughts, attitudes and actions.

Yvonne Martinez has nearly 30 years of experience ministering God's power, healing and freedom. She is an ordained minister and serves as co-leader, pastoral counselor and addictions specialist, in the Transformation Center at Bethel Church in Redding, CA. Yvonne is the author of 12 books and educational director of CARE-EDU, a CAADAC approved drug and alcohol certification program, [www.care-edu.com](http://www.care-edu.com). For a personal ministry appointment with Yvonne, call Transformation Center (530) 229-7909.

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# The Arms of God

by Bonnie Mark

No matter how long a person has walked with Christ, we may all have times of despair, despondency and even depression. Trials will come our way and we will find out if the joy of the Lord really is our strength. There have been times in my life, while dragging myself to church, I've barely been able to squeak out a meager prayer, "Oh, God, just show me someone in worse shape than me so I can encourage them." Amazingly, by encouraging someone else, I myself was ministered to. It's remarkable how God uses every single thing in our lives as teaching points.

Last fall, we had a series of very challenging circumstances happen within our family. My nephew had a serious car accident and was in intensive care for several weeks. As he clung to life, our small family and Christian friends rallied around to support one another and do what we could to help. My husband was away on a trip to Canada, so I was "home alone", feeling the brunt of the situation and responsibilities at home. A dear friend was dying of cancer and needed my support, too. About that time some of my own health issues cropped up. To be honest, at times I felt like I was being torn

in ten directions, "going under", unable to cope with the difficult emotional strain. How I cried out to God at that time!

At times of trial, we may be tempted to think God does not hear our cries, but I am here to say enthusiastically, HE HEARS! HE CARES! He doesn't always remove the situation, but His ways of showing His care are as varied as the flowers in a meadow or the birds in the sky. We just have to open our eyes to see and ears to hear, and as we do, His incredible arms of love lift us up.

Perhaps God will send a Scripture to lighten our load. Several Scriptures that touched my heart deeply during my family trial were: "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" Deuteronomy 33:27. And, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom (or what) shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1.

Sometimes God sends a friend to pray. How I thank God for the Christian sisters and brothers who prayed for me in that difficult time. On one particularly dark and gloomy day, it felt as if the prayers of the saints were a literal lifeline

that held onto my family and kept us all from sliding off into a dark abyss. After their prayer, we felt lighter and the oppressive load was lifted. Amazingly, my nephew began to recover. All praise to Jesus!

At one point a dear friend sent a card of encouragement with a lovely bookmark inside. On it was pictured a hummingbird in flight above a beautiful flower. A short poem by Victor Hugo was written on the bookmark: "Be like the bird that, pausing in her flight awhile on boughs too slight, feels them give way beneath her and yet sings, knowing that she hath wings." I began to see the wisdom of those words.

During this family trial, it felt as though all that was familiar and stable in my life was shaken to the core, the boughs beneath me had given way. But I discovered that I too, like the hummingbird, could still sing and even fly. God had given me the wings I needed to soar above the circumstance. Truly, I didn't even know I had those wings until there was nothing to land on. The trial had come, but God's arms were more than able to hold me up. How I praise God for His care!



Image Laura Molloy

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