

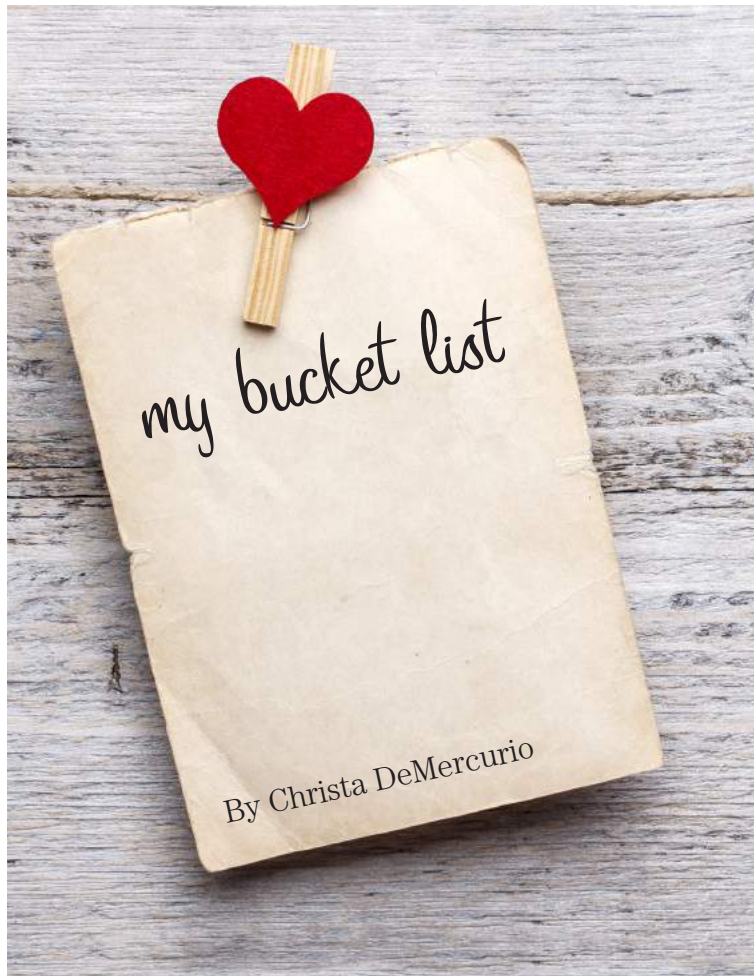
Joyful Living

Formerly Christian Quarterly



Summer 2014
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**“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”
Matt. 6:19-20**

My current addiction: Pinterest. Well, I’m not sure if it’s an addiction or just a fascination. I am truly amazed at the creativity of others and the inspiration that can be fueled by just a picture. Recently, I came across a pin of a brightly colored tin bucket with clothespins clipped around the rim, on which were scribbled a selection of individual tasks to be completed. Of course, this was a cute representation of

what we now know to be the “Bucket List”. It was at this point that I began to ponder what my bucket list would be, and came to realize I had nothing in mind. A couple of days later it hit me, there is only one thing I truly want...my royal inheritance of Eternity in God’s Kingdom. As time progressed, God showed me that my obedience and praise throughout the day was storing up treasures in Heaven. My personal bucket list then began to form, not as a list of temporal things to accomplish in this lifetime, but as a daily pursuit of thoughts and actions that God will gather and store as eternal treasure just for me.

So now I have a daily bucket list, written on cute little clothespins rimming a shiny tin, with things that will encourage me to run the race set before me, while bringing gladness to my Father God’s heart.

- Generous Giving
- Selfless Serving
- Grace-filled Loving
- Merciful Thinking
- Peaceful Surrendering
- Quiet Listening
- Active Spiritual Gifting’s
- Facedown Worshipping
- Thankful Praising
- Trust-filled Obeying
- WORD-inspired Praying
- Fellowship & Sharing

Do you have a bucket list? Have you considered pursuing God as your lifelong fulfillment? Remember, if we go after His Kingdom first, before anything else, don’t worry, the rest will come. Jesus said so in Matthew 6:33!

**My Gracious Lord,
You desire to give me more than I can fathom,
an earthly bucket list I would be leaving behind.
Help me pursue Your royal Kingdom, for a storehouse**

Having celebrated 25 years on the North Coast, Messiah Family Ministries launches:

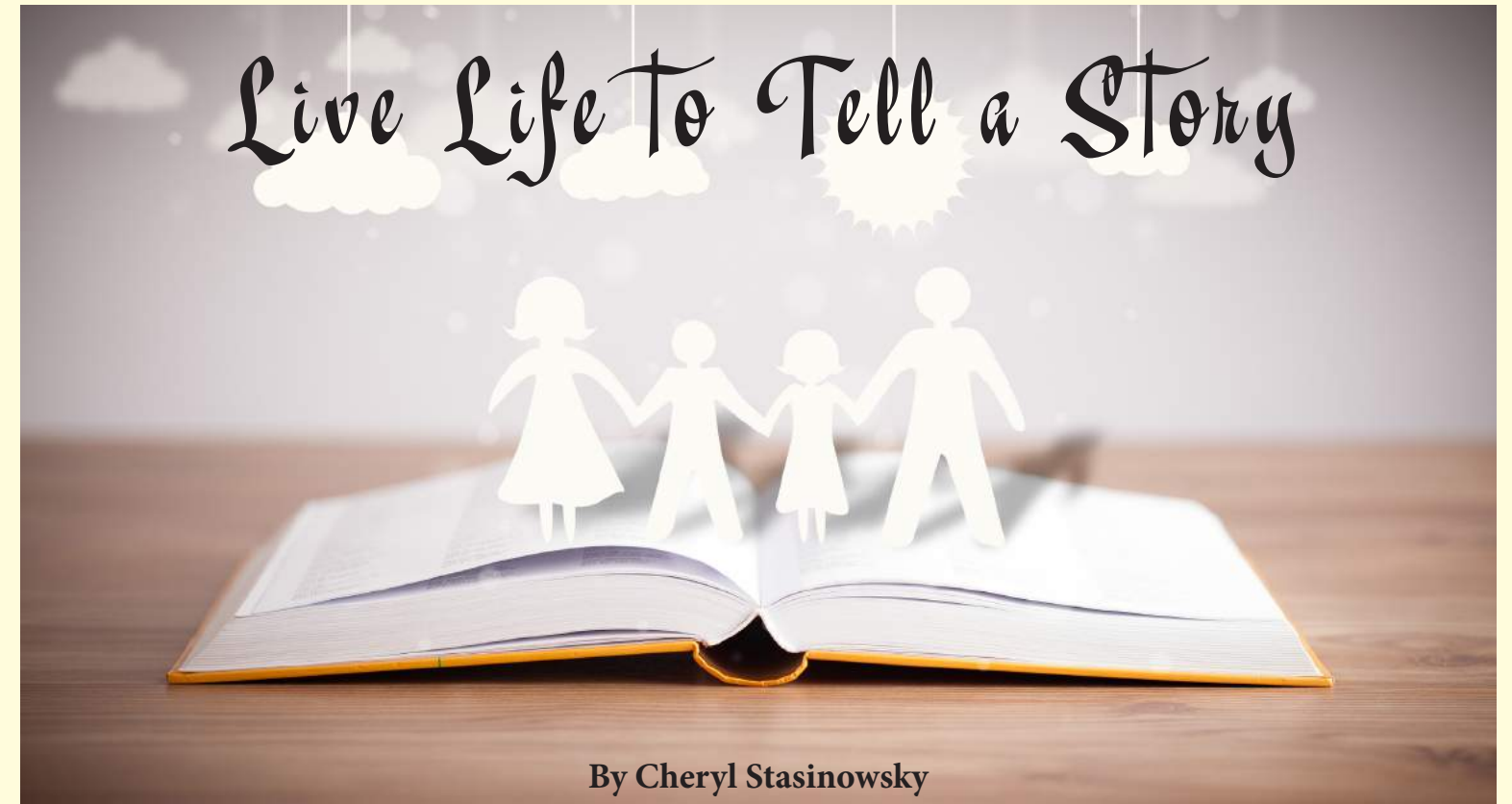
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Don Cushman, Director



By Cheryl Stasinowsky

Some of my cherished moments with my husband and grown children are when we are sitting around talking and something we are talking about starts a story of our past. We can sit there for hours talking about moments in New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Spain, and many other places we have been. We laugh and remember the stories. Many of the stories we are sharing were not funny or happy in the moment they were happening, but we as a family have learned in the struggles to think about the story this is writing inside each of us. Many times when our family is in a hard moment of life, one of us will say, “We are going to laugh about this later as we are telling the story.” It is so true. We have learned to count it all joy during the trials of life. We have learned that God truly does work all things together for good eventually in our lives.

Our family lives for the stories that our very lives write each day. When Daniel, our new son and daughter’s husband, came to us asking to marry our daughter, one of the things I told him was to give her a story to tell about the proposal. He gave her one. She has a wonderful story about her dress and now her wedding.

It might seem unusual to live life to tell the story later, but isn’t that what we do? In the later moments of our lives, we tell stories. Why not purpose to live a story? Why not approach a challenging situation from the perspective of the day that this is going to be a great story to tell? In the Old Testament, they retold stories and handed them down. Those stories inside of us can be very encouraging in the current challenges of life. They remembered the testimonies of God and so can we.

We all experience hurt, hardship, pain, disappointment, fear, doubt, failure, excitement, joy, laughter, fun, surprises and so

much more as we walk out this thing called ‘life’. What do we do with it? How do we take those moments that can potentially make us a bitter person and allow it to make us better? We, in our home, redeem the hardships with a story. Some of our most challenging moments are now stories that we sit around in the living room reconnecting to the challenge and again confirming that that was so tough and we then connect it to what we know now, and can view the growth and value of the story. These moments have connected our family and strengthened it into a strong family unit. We have been through thick and thin and have lived to tell about it. I love this about our family...

Yes, we also have those moments in our story times, when our children tell of the things they did that we never knew about. We laugh about it and enjoy the safety and freedom the stories bring. Sometimes those stories are how they were hurt by things and we are then able to talk about it and even apologize for what we did. These moments can be so healing. I remember the stories and love to listen to the perspective my children have of them and also share our perspective of them. Stories can bring families closer together. We do not put each other down. We do not embarrass each other. We all feel safe in our stories because we experienced them together. I would encourage you to live your life to tell the story later...turn off the television and enjoy each other...listen, talk, laugh, share, and be a family...I love this!

*Cheryl Stasinowsky is an author and speaker living in the Redding area. For more information check out her blog
www.hishiddentreasure.blogspot.com*





Thank God for Ice Chips

By Sara Cormany

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The God of Second Chances

Our world seemed to be crashing down upon us. It had been a terrible summer and fall with little, if any, work in the construction trade. My wife's income covered the rent and little more; we were quickly becoming desperate. Our marriage was not going well, efforts to have a child had gone in vain, and our future was anything but bright. We had both been to church as children, both accepted Christ, and even though I knew Him, I had been running for over 15 years. My race was about to change direction.

Our neighbors had been asking us to join them at their church. I knew the pastor very well, and, well, since all else was failing, maybe it was time to give up and give God a chance. Before leaving home we gathered our funds (because, after all, you can't go to church without giving an offering, or so I thought). We had four one-dollar bills between us, and we needed milk and bread. We decided to give \$2 for the offering and keep the other two for essentials, so off we go with \$2 in each shirt pocket.

The atmosphere in the church was much less than inviting. We were both wearing

our best; nothing more than Levis and a shirt for me and Levis and a blouse for her. Everyone else wore suits and dresses, along with a piercing and judgmental eye, but now it was too late, the pastor had seen me. Well, the offering came around, and in goes the \$2. There, I had paid my debt. Truly, this was all I had been able to think of—now that I had paid my debt, maybe things would turn around for me. My impression of God was far too based upon my own understanding of Him sitting in judgment, waiting for me to fail so He could punish me. The fact that He did or could love me was far beyond my comprehension. At any rate, the service continued on, and they were now preparing to take the tithe, but wait a minute, didn't we already do that! Thinking back, I realized I had made a fatal mistake—that had been the missions offering. Well, I'll just have to be embarrassed I thought; I can't give any more. It was then that I heard an old familiar voice, the same one I heard when I needed to know right from wrong, the same voice I had heard when I realized there was a God, and suddenly hope welled up in my heart.

The hope was short-lived, however, as He told me to trust Him and give the last \$2. Hmm, not what I was hoping to hear. Well, I had a choice to make, either face His wrath or my wife's; I chose to face hers and in went the money.

Needless to say, our discussion on the way home was not a pleasant one. The

very thought that I could hear the voice of God was far beyond my wife's comprehension or understanding, yet I did know what I had heard. Within an hour of being home, our neighbor dropped by and asked if he could purchase some roof coating from me he had noticed in my garage. I tried to give it to him, but he insisted on giving me \$20 for it! A short time later, my dad dropped by and asked me to build a fishing pole for him. He dropped off the supplies and \$60 for my efforts. Then, another knock at the door. It was my neighbor again. "Hey, I noticed when I was here earlier you have a trailer jack in your garage. Would you take \$20 for it? I have need of one."

Well, there you have it. God turned \$4 into \$100 in one afternoon, and the next weekend at a Calvary Chapel, October 7, 1979, my first wife (now in heaven) and I returned to the Lord. I surrendered my will to His, and I have never looked back. Later conversations with my neighbor revealed that the Lord had told him to give us \$40, and since I was too proud to accept charity (something I have learned to overcome), he got creative. You see, he didn't need the coating or the jack!

God is the God of second chances. He is the God of provision and love. He is the God of redemption, and He will never, ever fail you or leave you alone. He knows your need and He knows you. Hang in there, and if you begin to fall, remember He will carry you, and no load is too heavy for Him.

Pastor Gene Burroughs,

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Parenting Those Amazing Adolescents

Part 2 of a 3 part series

In my last article I talked about how our young adults are an untapped resource in society. It is important to be realistic in our views of about who they are and where they are in their lives. In part two of this series, I would like to explore warning signs that your child might be heading into troubled waters. How can you as a parent heed these warning signals?

The more obvious signs are:

- Complete withdrawal from the family
- Failing grades in school
- A change in friends
- Disrespect for you and your rules

You may think to yourself, 'How did we get here?' It is vitally important to honestly see your children. There are usually warning signs long before the more obvious behaviors. We love our kids and we can look past their imperfections, but can inadvertently ignore obvious behaviors. They are our babies after all. The first things to look for are more subtle changes:

- Being late to school
- Not completing weekly assignments
- Change in attitude towards siblings

and friends

- New friends
- Challenging authority
- Isolating from family activities

It is important that you not ignore these early warning signs. Life gets busy. Family time daily is crucial to stay connected.

Teenagers are learning how to walk, talk, and discern the world around them all over again. This time around, with peer pressure, hormones, and an overload of information made available through social media. They are counting on you to provide structure in their lives. They feel lost, unsafe, and out of control without boundaries.

Most studies agree that children feel safer and will play all the way to the edge of a playground if it is fenced. Once the fence is taken down, those same children will choose to stay close to the buildings. Having clear boundaries allows them to bump up against the fence with the assurance they remain safe.

This will allow them the opportunity to explore their identity and experiment in the world with a safety net called, Mom and Dad. If you have concerns about your adolescent, don't hesitate to take action. You have every right as a parent to have the password to their Facebook account.

I found a good practice was to establish an agreed upon family adult friend they could talk too. This gives them a confidential and safe avenue to process their feelings. You have the assurance that they are receiving advice from more than their peers. They really don't want you to be their best friend. They want you to provide a safety net so that they can go to the

edges and be pulled back safely from the cliff.

An effective tool for parenting teenagers is start when they are toddlers. As a parent, you celebrate and highly praise their accomplishments. When throwing a temper tantrums or doing something dangerous (like sticking a fork in the light socket) you redirect them to a positive activity. They can exhaust you with comments like, 'Why not?' 'My friends are doing it', etc. I found the broken record effective.

Talk to them, let them know you love and value them as human beings. They are deciding their core values, what they believe, and who they want to be when they grow up. Treat them with respect they know the difference. Your child could have an answer to world hunger or maximizing our natural resources. Who are we to tell them that dream is too big or unattainable.

If you find yourself in a situation you're not sure how to deal with, ask for help. Don't wait until the situation is out of control. You both deserve an opportunity to grow and navigate the transition.

In part three of this series we will deal how to reach out to a teenager without a healthy home life?

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




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Dear Yvonne



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

Questions may be confidentially emailed to yvonnem@ibethel.org

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

1. How do I resolve a conflict with a Christian friend?

Conflicts are inevitable and resolve is possible! Bridging a gap between friends starts with communication. When we don't know a person's heart motives, strengths, and spiritual gifts, it is easy to misunderstand their motives and

actions. Relationships may not always "agree" on each point but when we know and understand each other and the attributes of God that person carries, there is more grace for differences in opinions and courses of action.

2. What is an eating disorder and how do I know if I just want to be healthy or really need help?

Thank you for this question. Disturbances in eating patterns can manifest as eating extremely small amounts of food or severely overeating. The condition may begin as just eating too little or too much but obsession with eating and food over takes over the life of a person leading to severe changes, often with distress and concern about body weight or shape. For someone already struggling with disordered eating, the bent toward healthy food and healthy exercise can morph into unhealthy choices and controlling, self-destructive behaviors. An eating

disorder (disordered eating) could be a symptom of another issue. I'd recommend you start by talking to someone you trust to help you evaluate if you should seek counseling.

3. When steps can I take if my elderly parent seems forgetful and disoriented?

I know first hand that taking care of aging parents is a concern and challenge. Forgetfulness and disorientation could be caused by such a variety of issues that getting to the root requires a process of elimination to see what is really going on. Some of the steps I took was to accompany my parent (with all their medications) to a physician check up to screen for any misuse of medication or other physiological causes such as blood pressure changes or an underlying infection. Sometimes aging parents still consume alcohol, which could be a contradiction when combined with certain medications. When nothing

significant showed up on my parent's physical screening, I asked for a screening for Alzheimer's and dementia.

With my parents signing a Health Care Directive*, I was granted access at doctor and hospital visits, and had peace in making the best decisions to help my parents with their end of life wishes. *The Health Care Directive for your state can be found online or at a local hospital.

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. For a personal ministry appointment with Yvonne, call Transformation Center (530)229-7909.



TURNING THE FATHERS' HEARTS

By James Wilson

The Genesis Generation – born after 1983 – have been called a fatherless generation, as has my own Boomer Generation. In 2008 God called out a new season based on Luke 1:17. The verse – in its prophetic context – proclaims a John the Baptist generation of fathers (and mothers) turning their hearts to the children...all children. Fast forward to 2014 and I happened to watch two movies about fathering on a flight from Malaysia home to the States.

The first was the critically acclaimed Nebraska, a film I cannot acclaim. It depicts an alcoholic, thoroughly self-absorbed, and utterly disengaged father played – superbly – by Bruce Dern. He imagines he has won a million dollar prize and is obsessed with traveling from Billings, Montana, to Lincoln, Nebraska, to claim it. His sons and his wife move heaven and earth to get him there, in the vain hope he might actually notice the sacrifices they make for him. He stops in his home town – in Nebraska – and interacts with old

friends and relatives just as useless as he is; their reason for living is to con or coerce him out of money he has not won. The few people he knows who have lived decent lives and want nothing from him are given a few meaningless moments of screen time. It is all about this loser who never gets it and does nothing to justify his existence, relieve the suffering he has caused, or bless his children.

The second was the unacclaimed Delivery Man. Vince Vaughn plays David Wozniak, another loser, but with the difference that he wants to be different. David donates sperm twenty years back and takes his whole family to Europe on the proceeds from his donation. He discovers the clinic used his sperm to sire more than five hundred children with nearly one hundred fifty demanding to know him despite the confidentiality agreement he signed. Although his lawyer assures him he can win a lawsuit against the clinic if his name is leaked – he does win the suit – he comes gradually and freely to accept responsibility for fathering these kids. Beginning with reluctance, and without revealing his identity, he helps one secure a job, another kick a heroin addiction, and gifts his time to still another. Turning his heart to his children moves him to get rid of the marijuana grow in his apartment and, ultimately, to reveal himself. In other words, turning

his heart to his children changes him and creates authentic adult humanity in him.

David freezes when he meets his son with cerebral palsy, but – haltingly – steps up to the plate for this challenge as well. He makes the necessary commitment to really father his newborn son with his girlfriend, and commits to marry her. This is a film I do acclaim for presenting a man donning authentic humanity by taking up the challenge to turn his heart to the children – any children – because that is God-in-Christ's heart in this season.

There is plenty of good teaching about the Father Heart of God. There are plenty of opportunities for fatherless ones to experience that love from Him, mediated through men and women willing to parent in His image. But there is precious little on the reality that the act of fathering is what makes us good sons and daughters as well as good fathers and mothers. It works a lot like the centurion's faith in Matthew 8:5-13. The centurion understands that Jesus need only order it and his paralyzed servant is healed. He understands Jesus' authority because he operates both in and under authority as a Roman officer. Jesus applauds his faith as unparalleled in Israel. And the best news is that we need not know how to parent to begin. It is on-the-job training, just as it was

for David Wozniak.

My own father had no patriarchal role model growing up. He made plenty of mistakes raising me – hurtful mistakes. But when the chips were down he stepped up to the plate. He pushed when I needed pushing and had my back when I needed him behind me. He blessed me on my wedding day like one of the biblical patriarchs although he could not have understood – in biblical terms – what he did. I hope my children – those I raised and those I spiritually father – see my father and my God in me.

Our alternatives are simple. We can be as self-centered as the Bruce Dern character and kid ourselves that he is interesting, or we can be as Christ-centered as David Wozniak turns out to be – whether or not he knows it. The choice is very simple.

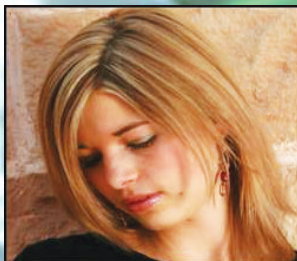


James A. Wilson is the author of Living As Ambassadors of Relationships and The Holy Spirit and the End Times – available at local bookstores or by e-mailing him at praynorthstate@charter.net

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Duplicity Uncovered

A Journey to Faith

by Sarah Anderson

Going to church was part of my family's culture. Saturday evenings were spent picking out dressy clothes and ironing them for the following morning. While all my friends would sleep in on Sunday, I sat in a pew as my mother played the piano and my father preached. I was acting the part, a mere character in a Sunday play. Because I behaved correctly, I had convinced everyone I was a Christian. To some, I was even a leader but I had only pretended to adopt my parent's belief system because I didn't want to disappoint them. However, the weekend masquerade was over when Monday dawned.

In high school and college, I was also a leader but for different reasons. I wanted to be the coolest and funniest in my year. I wanted to be popular. I skipped classes, chased boys and was disrespectful to adults. I lived a life of duplicity.

After a stirring sermon I would raise my hand for salvation or rededicate my life but my behavior would remain unchanged. I resumed my normal lifestyle. Eventually, I earned a reputation in Christian circles. There was little evidence that I was a true believer in Jesus Christ. The only fruits I could bear were inconsistency and a past riddled with sin and regret.

My decisions caught up with me in 2008. I had applied for a full-time ministry position at a camp. I had attended it as a teenager and the staff remembered my behavior. When they voiced their concerns about hiring me, I was devastated to know my reputation had

preceded me. The act was up. My double life had been exposed. I knew I needed to change but was unsure how to do it. I couldn't fix it on my own and I needed God's help. Jesus had to rescue me from my sin and give me his power to overcome the patterns I had set up long ago. It was then that I truly surrendered my life to Christ.

From that day, I've been learning to walk in obedience to his Word. I haven't been perfect but I've experienced the power of God's forgiveness. His grace propels me forward and every day I desire a deeper relationship with him. At the Spirit's prompting, I have said yes to many opportunities to serve Jesus. I've worked in camp ministry, in churches and now as a full-time missionary. There has been nothing more exhilarating and fulfilling as surrendering my life to the Lord each day.

Sarah Anderson graduated with a Youth Ministry degree from Cedarville University. She enjoys hiking and writing devotionals about her adventures at www.thelamplessons.blogspot.com. Sarah and her husband, Tyler, live in Northern Michigan.

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By Michael Gallagher

Why you are battling cravings and how to stop them using nutrition.

Chronic or irresistible sugar cravings are caused by functional imbalances in the body—like pain, They are a signal to you that something is wrong

They are NOT caused by a lack of willpower in most cases. Most cravings are caused by our body's natural ability to balance our blood sugar.

When we eat sugar, it acts as an inflammatory chemical. We wish it didn't, but it always does. Our bodies have 7 hormones that raise blood sugar, and 1 that lowers it. Before Industrialization the major source of sugar in our diet, was honey and seasonal fruit. We were not subjected to large quantities of processed sugar. The sugar we were exposed to was very reasonable, and natural than what we have now. Today we have sugar designed to overwhelm our body, create cravings so we will buy more of it.

With the addition of cheap processed sugar into our diet, we are creating a problem the body was never designed to deal with. In fact the ingestion of large amounts of sugar causes our body to respond with large amounts of insulin, which stresses our Vascular system, our Immune system, and every other system that is supposed to be keeping us healthy and safe.

If you get one thing from this article, that health is about adaptation, and our adaptation response, you'll be better for it. This loss of homeostasis ironically causes the craving for more sugar. When we feed our body sugar, we inflame it, which creates cravings for more sugar, even though our bodies are breaking down, we are asking for more. We are trying to feed the fire we are creating.

The ability to maintain homeostasis is definitely stressed by overeating processed sugar, but any stress. to your body can result in sugar cravings.

Your body is designed to live in the world around it. You have a natural detox process to deal with toxins. But when you are exposed to poor nutrition, allergins, poor digestive health sugar is not processed. (Even if you are eating good nutrition, you may not be processing it.) Hormones play a role in each of the body's systems, especially related to blood sugar balance.

So the key to Eliminating cravings, is to identify which of these 5 areas is breaking down, and provide the necessary support to fix it. That might be whole food nutrition, structural changes and/or dealing with stress better.

Our personal history will give us different starting point with regard to organ health, immune system levels, toxicity levels and stress handling ability. By identifying your individual challenges with balancing the body you can remove your individual cravings Find and eliminate hidden inflammations with a program to eliminate toxic overload of your body. Next provide the missing whole food nutrition, especially quality proteins, and this will allow your system function normally and restore homeostasis and balance to your body.

You win, not by resisting cravings, but when you have eliminated them, and now you have a choice.



Thank God, Grace had not listened to my son. “He wanted me to have an abortion. But I can't do that. I've already done that once and won't do it again.”

I held her 2-year-old daughter, Iris, as we talked, cuddling her as she drowsed. “Sweetheart, I'm so glad you've decided to keep this baby. Joe will love his baby once he sees it. I know he will. God will work everything out, I'm sure.”

“I hope so. I hope God can forgive me.”

I squeezed Grace's hand. “God will forgive if you ask him. Have you done that?”

“Yes, but I'm not sure He has. Even if He has, I don't think I'll ever be able to forgive myself. First I had an abortion, then I had Iris out-of-wedlock. Joe and I aren't married either. How can God forgive all of that?”

Iris twisted in my lap as she settled into a deeper sleep. Knowing God loved her and every child just as much as any child born in wedlock, I hugged her closer. “You know, Grace, I haven't lived a perfect life either. Did Joe ever tell you that I had him six months after I married his father? And his father was not my first lover.”

Grace's eyes widened. “I knew you were pregnant when you got married, but I can't believe that other part. You're such a strong Christian.”

“Well, I wasn't always. I grew up in a Christian home but as a

teenager I strayed and pretty soon I began to lose my faith in God. Like you, I thought He couldn't love a girl who had done what I'd done. After ten years God suddenly revealed himself to me again. I've not had a doubt since! I know He's there; He loves me and forgives me. He'll do the same for you.”

Grasping my hand now, Grace pleaded, “But if He forgives me, how do I forgive myself?”

I laid Iris down on the sofa beside me and gathered Grace in my arms. “Honey, who are you to not forgive someone that God himself

has forgiven? Is it okay if we pray together?”

Tears began to well up in her eyes as she said, “You do it.”

Tears began to boil down my cheeks, too, as we hugged and bowed. “Dear Lord, I know you love Grace even more than she loves herself. You know why that is, too. You know that her father raped her repeatedly in her childhood and because of that she's made some bad decisions regarding men. We women sometimes settle for sex when what we are really looking for is love. We're calling on your promise in Romans

3:23—**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace...** Lead us in your ways, and show us the love we so crave. Please forgive Grace and me for our sins and help us to forgive ourselves. We love you, Lord. Amen.”

This is a true story, and yes, the father of the mentioned child loves her to death, and yes, Grace has continued to be a strong Christian for the 20+ years since this story happened. All names have been changed for this story.

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MEN ARE NOT WOMEN

By Frank G. Upshaw, Ph.D.



In the ongoing culture war which aims to obliterate any and all differences between the sexes, it is helpful to stop and remind ourselves that the male/female distinction is created by God for His purposes. (see Genesis 2:18-25) Rather than deceiving ourselves into thinking all gender differences are merely a reflection of our culture, we need to better understand and appreciate these differences.

Modern research has discovered some amazing differences in the brain structure of males and females. For males, the amygdala's, which regulate sexual and social behavior, are larger than those in female brains. Females have 10 percent more white matter in their brain, which helps to connect the different parts of the brain. Males have 6.5 times more gray matter in their brains, which is associated with information processing. Females have more serotonin receptors, this neurotransmitter is very closely related to moods and depression.

In general, men have slightly larger brains than women with their parietal cortices (space perception) are also larger. This might explain why visual/spatial tasks are easier for men. They tend to be able to visually manipulate things in their brains, whereas women generally to need to see spaces and shapes on paper. In the language center of the brain, men tend to be left hemisphere dominant, whereas women seem to have language skills on both hemispheres.

In public school classroom settings it has been observed that boys engage in more risk-taking behaviors than girls. A ranger at Yosemite National Park reported that 9 out of 10 boys who got lost ended up seriously hurt. In contrast, 9 out of 10 girls are usually found very near where they were lost. Once again, in classroom settings another interesting difference has been noted: small group learning works for girls because they are more comfortable asking for help if they need it. If the boys get

stuck, chances are they won't ask for help and may even get rowdy to get attention. Their status in the eyes of the other boys in the classroom is raised by doing so.

Men are also different in what matters to them. Men tend to experience fulfillment primarily through success and accomplishment. In fact, a man loves to be observed by his wife or girlfriend doing something he is good at. Conversely, he is reluctant to "try something different" for his wife especially if there is a chance he will look foolish or incompetent. Next, when a man has a problem to solve and gets stuck, he will withdraw to "his cave" and not come out until he has a solution. The woman is advised to not go in after him because he will resent the offer of assistance as "an intrusion." Third, married men resent it when they feel their wife is trying to change them. The unintended message is "you are not good enough the way you are." Women love change and trying new things, but since men are not women, it is a mistake to think he feels the same way.

With all the evidence about male/female differences, let me close by pointing out how men and women are the same. First and most important, we are all created in the image of God and are designed by our creator to have a loving and secure relationship with Him. Second, salvation in Christ is open to all. When we come into a saving relationship with God, all our sins are forgiven and we are now saints rather than sinners. Third, I believe we have been given spiritual gifts to use in the service of our Lord. The settings for practicing the gifts may vary, but the results are in God's hands, for His glory. Finally, each of us is responsible for our growth in Christ, spending time reading the Bible, praying, and attending a loving Christian fellowship should be practiced by all. Remember, when we go to Heaven, the sexual distinctions won't matter because we will be like Him who loved and saved us.

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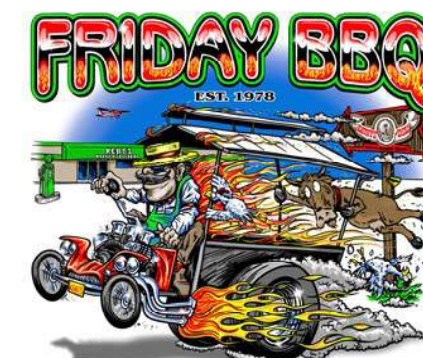
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Ever since I heard of Bob Jones’ passing into heaven I have been reminded of a God-encounter that he shared where the LORD asked each person the same pointed question: “Did you learn to love?” This has struck me and has become a marker for my life. How different would our lives be if we consciously answered this question in the midst of every interaction?

I have seen that LOVING—God, ourselves, and others—is truly the key that opens up how to live in victory, no matter what we encounter in life. I have learned that it is possible to prosper in the valley. I am learning what it means to be seated with Christ in heavenly places ,

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while walking through life’s difficulties. No matter what challenging circumstances we face, love gives us the resources we need to overcome. Love is the currency of the Kingdom. It’s life. It is the literal nature of God, and when we spend time with Him, the substance of Him (love) transforms us. It allows us see our circumstances the way that He sees them.

Love releases God’s perspective to us, and empowers us to walk in it. And when we live from this reference point, the enemy has lost his power in our lives. This is why there is such an attack on love. The enemy’s plan is to tempt us to focus on our difficult circumstances instead of God’s eternal plan of good for us. He wants us to doubt God’s love. He accuses God of not loving us and desperately hopes that we will agree with him, and begin to accuse God too. Doubt and accusation do not change God’s love for us, but they sadly hinder our ability to receive it.

Knowing God’s plan, and being aware of the enemy’s lies, will allow us to stay on-track whenever we encounter problems. My husband and I are practicing this as we are walking through his diagnosis of throat cancer. He is currently undergoing radiation and chemo treatments, which are excruciatingly painful. The enemy wants us to focus on our current life circumstances and get discouraged, but God has told us a different story. And we are choosing to believe Him! We are choosing to receive His love and learn how to better love in this process. We are focusing on the truth: God is sovereign and we are not at the mercy of our circumstances. Mercy actually follows us.

So LORD, teach us to receive, and understand the gift, and power, of Your love. Teach us how to live in such a way that our love makes other people’s lives better, and allows us to soar over the valleys. Teach us how to live intentionally and with Your Heart so that we will all be able to answer the question, “did you learn to love?” with a resounding, “Yes, LORD!”



It Takes Community

By Bonnie Mark

Years ago a popular phrase, “it takes a village” meant, it takes many people, their gifts and talents, to help nurture and raise one child. But in the Christian world, I’m convinced it takes even more than that—a true community for every Christian to thrive.

Coming out of the 70’s era, I witnessed the “shepherding” movement, which, unfortunately, gave small groups a bad rap. At that time, having others involved in our lives looked like the Gestapo police, as puffed up leaders made invasive decisions for those in their group. Ouch, talk about taking power to extreme! This abuse isn’t what Jesus meant by living and loving in community.

Jesus saw His community as followers who truly cared for one another, shared their lives, meals and needs. Genuine “koinonia”, Greek for fellowship, is a unity brought about by the Holy Spirit, and feels as comfortable and warm as standing next to a cozy

fire on a cold night. You most definitely know it when it happens.

Sadly, the majority of us are in way too much of a hurry, even doing good works, to open up to others. Somewhere deep inside, we know we should live life on a deeper level with our brothers and sisters, but just too much gets in the way. And even if we had the time, it can be a scary thing to get close to people, but I’m convinced that unless we do, we’re really just scratching the surface of a joyful and fulfilling Christian life. I’ve realized now that showing up to every Bible Study or church service in the neighborhood isn’t necessarily living in “community”. Unless we’re sharing on an authentic level, helping one another through highs and lows, we might as well belong to a social club. Personally, I’ve known that it’s true “community” and “fellowship” that I’ve needed to thrive and grow, but where do we find such a thing?

One thing I’ve learned is, you can’t force others into community. Wounds of the past (which God wants to heal) and busy lifestyles all shape what people are able to do. To be honest, instead of seeking a solution to the emptiness I was feeling, I wasted a good deal of time being frustrated that other people weren’t meeting my needs. Believe me, this is a long road that leads nowhere, except to our knees in repentance!

There’s no pat formula for actual community, but Acts 2:46-47 is a good place to start. “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Talk about evangelism! One Bible study that helped me on my journey to find Christian community was,

“True Spirituality; Becoming a Romans 12 Christian”, by Chip Ingram. Part of the material was on living in authentic community. We met once a week, shared a meal, watched the teaching video, and then talked over the lesson.

But more than the mechanics of the group was the heartfelt desire to be real and meet others’ needs. The group wasn’t “ingrown”, where only certain people were welcome, nor did it extend so far that it was too large for people to share. Deeper friendships were made, hearts were healed and I started to see the missing component in my life—Christian “koinonia” and a closer family.

If we find ourselves feeling lost and lonely in the vast sea of Christianity, I’m here to say, change is possible. Adjustments and a prayerful evaluation of our priorities must be made. Then, in the way that only God can, He is faithful to provide!

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“The Value of an X”

By Maggie Fair



X marks the spot in target practice, x's hold a place for a value in mathematical equations and formulas and let's not forget the O's in Tic, Tac, Toe...what about how we should treat our X's (husbands) following a divorce?

I recently had dinner with a new friend in my life that shared from his heart with me about how he purposed to treat his ex-wife in a God loving way. I was taken aback by the way the Lord shined through him as he described his encounter after the divorce with her. I look back at how hurt I was when I was divorced and I am sorry to say that my relationship with Jesus was hidden from view to my unsaved ex-husband because of my anger towards him. I had so many excuses that I

called reasons for treating him the way I did. I now realize that it took God growing me up, for me to let the anger go. I verbally forgave him way back when, but the truth about deep wounds is that they are harder to forgive. In an article in “Psychology Today” published on July 1, 1999 by Jean Safer “a psychotherapist counters that popular claim. (that forgiveness is necessary) “You can refuse to absolve your lover, spouse, parent, sibling or friend, she declares, and still be emotionally healthy.” I am not saying I agree with this I am just presenting what I believe is a worldly perspective and not at all based on the Bible.

See The NIV Bible in Matthew 18: 21 & 22 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

How about you? Are you angry that you are left single parenting? Have you

felt stabs of pain when seeing your X with his/her new girlfriend/boyfriend? Try as we might in these times to put a smile on our faces it isn't always real. We do it “for the kids”, but really what are we teaching them? We are the open book on relationships for our children. When what they see does not match what we say, than they are left with our confusion. If I could go back I would want to get to the place of forgiveness much quicker than I did, and yes at first it would probably be motivated for the kids' sake. Funny thing is when we do the right thing even if the reason is slightly skewed we in essence are asking God into the situation because he can't help but come to our aid when he sees us at

least trying. It's as if those angels he dispatches to earth to do certain tasks are just waiting for us to do the right thing. It releases a sweet aroma that goes up to heaven and motivates them to help. So go head and “fake it, tell you make it” just remember to spend that alone time with God that will feed your soul and equip you to “really” forgive those that hurt you, and that my friends will teach your children without words, “the value of intimacy with God in overcoming our weaknesses”. May the God of peace crush Satan under your feet and may you rise up on wings of Eagles and soar over your situation because you own Heavens perspective....In Jesus name Amen!



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Transition or Terror You make the call...

By Hellen Meade

What an intense season we are all in! It seems everyone has family members, ill or dying, friends, co-workers, even our pets under siege. Times where you look at your friend, share a bit of what's going on and you get that look, the one that says "Yes, I have seen hell also and when does it end? We are all in the same boat, going someplace we have never gone before, to a land far away, and ALL of our points of reference dropped off our maps, well, years ago!

So, where do we go from here? We go from trial and trauma to trust and peace. We learn to lay it all down before the Lord, to NOT be picked up again, ever! And how hard it is that, right? But we are boxed in, we are persecuted, perplexed, besieged on all sides but have not been abandoned! If we cannot trust Him, then we can trust no one. There is just no more room for wavering, for playing both sides of the fence. We have to choose to fully step into that place of transition. Think of it as that emergency chute to get off of the burning plane, stopping half way will merely get you just as burned and destroyed as not getting into the chute in the first place. It is a place of transition. A demarcation point that ends the old, sets the captives free, and sets them on a new path.

So what does your chute or transition tunnel look like? Is it closed in and terrifying, hemmed in on all sides? Do you feel as if you cannot stand even one more minute of where you are? Then push thru! Do serious business with the Lord in the realm of releasing your death grip on your life and loved ones. Do a transaction of transference and committal that is as permanent as it is serious. The choice is yours, but the power is His. You have heard this before, this is the time to actually do it and mean it.

For me, this has been an intense season of doing just that. Honestly, there are stories in my life I cannot tell, of

hard relationships and situations that seem to never heal. To tell you though would lead to more wounding all around. Let me give you an analogy of what my life has been life. I want to share with you my garden story;

For several years I tried to garden, every attempt failed, some with more notably awful results than others. Finally, my husband felt the Lord said to put in a garden, prayed and asked the Lord for wisdom. Suddenly there were huge tractors, boulders being moved, smaller rocks, (by the thousands) being removed by hand. We brought in truckloads of compost, supplemented soil and added back to the land what had been stolen thru bad stewardship of the land.

The first summers were great, well, if you loved corn, odd squash and weeds It was interesting to notice however that the years harvests went well, but the hundreds of volunteer seedlings I should have had from thousands of viable heirlooms seeds did not show up, not one!

So, this year, more prayer, more planting, more refinements and seeking the Lord for wisdom and for Him to be in charge of our lives, as well as the garden. Lo and behold, I now have hundreds of volunteers of all kinds! A harvest that is a miracle of provision, plants growing and even thriving, even without being watered. In a drought season, rain coming every time I need it! Supernatural provision and protection!

So, how does this tie into my intro? There are seeds planted, by the Lord, by the hundreds! They are just now, when the conditions and time is right, showing up where you can actually see them! Those seeds, for health and wholeness, for peace and joy, for His strength are yours and now you can see the beginning of the harvest! Hold fast, hold on, for your salvation draws nigh! Joyful living indeed!

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LIKE A RIVER

By Debbie Canavan

Life is a lot like a river, when you think about it... sometimes fast and furious, sometimes slow and meandering. There are rapids, eddies, whirlpools, snags, shallow places and deep pools. Wherever you are in your river (rapids, rocks and whitewater?) ~ Shalom!

I grew up swimming the waters of the Trinity River just west of Redding every summer. My folks own a beautiful piece of land along its banks in the small town of Willow Creek. I love that river! Even 100 miles away, my heart is stirred as in my mind's eye I can smell it...taste it...see and hear it.

Knowing us intimately, our heavenly Father longs for us to listen, to pay attention to His voice. He longs to see a lifestyle that results in peace like a river. His peace. When Jesus came up out of the water after His baptism God's voice filled the heavens saying, "This is my Son; listen to Him!" Do we?

Even as a youngster I was drawn to the river. There was a special rock I could climb onto without getting wet where I spent hours writing my songs, prayers, poems and thoughts. I didn't know it then, but I was journaling. I was learning to hear God; I was visiting with Him. Such a gift it was!

A river is moving, life-giving and life-sustaining. When the streams feeding it dry up, it becomes a stinking, stagnant, dead thing that no one wants to be near. But as long as it continues to be fed it is full of life, ever rushing onward to be poured out into something larger and greater than itself.

Raised on the river, my sisters and I had to learn to respect it. We learned early how to plan for the currents and how to avoid dangerous situations. We learned to be patient and wait until the spring overflow had receded before jumping in. One lesson in particular was that of negotiating a whirlpool. Dad taught us not to fight should we find ourselves in the grip of one, but to let it

pull us down and then swim out the bottom of it, where it runs out of strength. It is totally counterintuitive but I had occasion to find out this was good advice! It worked! How like life, sometimes, when the roil and boil on life's surface sucks the very breath out of me while I fight; I need only embrace Jesus and let Him take me down. There, under the surface's activity, it is quiet and calm. There I find the ability to swim, once again, to where I need to be.

In contemplating Is. 48:17 & 18 years ago, God invaded my thoughts with some very pointed questions, like, "What do people get when they take a drink from the river that is your life? Do they come away refreshed or with a bad case of food poisoning?" Oh dear!

Very often, the people in our lives are desperately seeking calm, safe waters from which they can be nourished and refreshed. Too many times, what they get is toxic and bitter. The Lord is teaching me to tend well to my river, that what comes forth might be sweet and healing. It's my lifelong quest.

Every day, we all make choices about how we will interpret life's events and how we will allow them to impact our hearts~ hearts that Jesus has told us to guard above all else. Will we walk away from life's traumas bitter, walled-up victims or life-giving rivers of peace?

Risk the river. Pay attention and know its peace; swim with abandon and delight with its Creator. As you do, righteousness will tumble over you and all you touch like the waves of the sea! This is the life we were made for! Swim!

"I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

Isaiah 48:17 & 18



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Truth or Circumstance?

By Yvonne Martinez

Simply knowing about God isn't enough. To assume we know God's will and desire for us without really knowing Him or His nature leaves us relying on our own faulty opinions or assumptions. Allowing past experiences to be a guide for the future is like speeding down a steep road without brakes. It usually doesn't end well!

Peter, after Jesus' crucifixion, was confronted about his association with Jesus and lied, (Matt. 26:69,70). In the midst of confusion and uncertainty Peter was overcome by doubt and couldn't hang onto what he had known to be true about Jesus.

After Jesus' burial in the tomb Mary's heart was broken believing Jesus was gone. Grief stricken over Jesus' death, she was weeping at the tomb's entrance. Mary, focused on her grief, couldn't hear Jesus behind her calling her name (John 20:15).

Perhaps, you too can think of an ex-

perience or circumstance that veiled the truth and blocked your ability to partner with patience and wisdom. Sometimes we are drawn away from truth because we make the mistake of believing God is like a person we knew—someone who failed to love and protect us, or left us alone and afraid.

Here are a few valuable principles to apply in the midst of uncertainty.

- As long as we can trust the Lord and wait on Him, there is opportunity to see His ability to rescue and redeem us.
- Losing the ability to make choices removes hope.
- Choosing a desperate course of action often results in unfortunate experiences.
- What happens around you or to you doesn't define you.

Lies we believe create the battles we fight. Fear creates a lifestyle that encircles around the lies and takes our focus off the truth. Hurt causes you to close your heart. The same wall

that holds out pain also holds out love. When you choose to love, love pushes you past the pain.


When Mary listened to Jesus voice, she turned away from the gravesite to face Jesus and experienced the truth. It is the "truth" (John 8:32) not circumstance or experience that will set us free.

Today, you can allow the ceiling of limitation and expectation to be replaced with anticipation and expectancy. Take Him by the hand and allow Him to enter your circumstance and lead you into truth.

This article is an excerpt from Yvonne Martinez' book, *Dancing on the Graves of Your Past*.


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 14 books and educational director of CARE-EDU, a CAA-DAC approved drug and alcohol certification program, www.care-edu.com. For a personal ministry appointment with Yvonne, call Transformation Center (530) 229-7909.





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Mama's Song

"Sing with me, Mama, sing with me!" I begin again, "My wild, Irish rose, the sweetest flower that grows...." I place a couple of fingers under Mama's chin, and turn her face a bit so that I can look into her eyes.

"Come on Mama, I know this is your favorite song." I begin again, "My wild, Irish rose...come on, Mama, I know you can do it." I watch as her mouth moves almost imperceptibly. It encourages me, so my singing continues, as do my attempts to get her to join me.

Sometimes, she is able to break through her dementia-induced fog enough to sing along with me. Singing is an activity she has enjoyed for over 80 years. It is an incredible thing to watch her go from barely moving her mouth to actual singing.

Of course, it hasn't always been such a challenge. When Mama first began exhibiting the symptoms of Alzheimer's, one thing she was able to hang onto was her ability to sing her favorite songs. We would sit for the longest time singing every song I could think of that she had taught me as a little girl.

Sadly, Mama's disease has followed a predictable course with bits and pieces of memory and ability fading into the misty fog that is taking over her mind, creating such an obstacle that it is the rare day that even one word is uttered.

I got to thinking about Mama's condition one day, about how the plaque in her brain created a barrier that prevented her from functioning the way she was created to live. It kept her from doing the things she loved, such as singing or simply pausing to enjoy the wonderful fragrance of Wisteria – one of her favorite flowers.

In a way, her current condition is a picture of what happened in the Garden. Adam and Eve were living simple, happy lives, enjoy the beauty of the garden – perhaps even singing. But once sin entered, they were no longer able to function in the manor the Lord had created for them to live and move and have their being.

Enmity entered the picture and brought with it serious consequences. It placed an obstacle between them and God by changing their nature. So complete was the change, all mankind inherited that nature as "children of wrath." (Eph 2:4)

So serious was the result, it broke God's heart – He knew that He was the only One in a position to pay the price to destroy the enmity and restore relationships. (Eph 2:16)

There is not currently anything medical science has that can destroy the plaque in Mama's brain. Her condition is continually growing worse, but I do take comfort in the fact that a long time ago – while she was still able to enjoy her garden and sing, Mama trusted Jesus to reconcile her to God.

Because she did, one day Mama will get to experience the joy of Jesus breaking through the barrier in her brain and call her to join Him in a garden where she can once again enjoy beautiful flowers and sing songs with every tribe and nation. A place where communication flows unhindered because all enmity is forever destroyed.

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Just Look At You

By Sharon Wagner

It's a great day
Just look in the mirror
You are beautiful
You were created with purpose
Your life is important
You are a creation like no other
God's gifts and talents make you unique
You are one of a kind
And he watches over you
To see how well you believe who you are
You are a masterpiece
A creation unlike anything created before
He truly throws away the mold
Because each creation is unique
Each with a different way they display God
No one can do what you do
The way you do it
God is rooting you on
He watches from the balconies of heaven
He knows you hold the future
The promise of a better day
You carry the possibilities to change the world
You have imagination
Creativity hangs all over you
You were created to shine in your world
Just your presence makes the world
A better place to live, to breathe, to play
You and God make this a great day
God in you gives the world hope
You were created for such a time as this
Honor God by being all he created you to be

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