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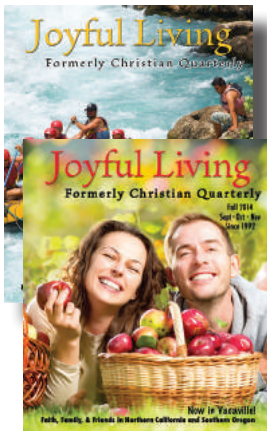
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For all the time executives spend concerned about physical strength and health, when it comes down to it, mental strength can mean even more. Particularly for entrepreneurs, numerous articles talk about critical characteristics of mental strength—tenacity, “grit,” optimism, and an unfailing ability as Forbes contributor David Williams says, to “fail up.”

However, we can also define mental strength by identifying the things mentally strong individuals don’t do. Over the weekend, I was impressed by this list compiled by Amy Morin, a psycho-therapist and licensed clinical social worker, that she shared in LifeHack.

It impressed me enough I’d also like to share her list here along with my thoughts on how each of these items is particularly applicable to entrepreneurs.

1. Waste Time Feeling Sorry for Themselves
You don’t see mentally strong people feeling sorry for their circumstances or dwelling on the way they’ve been mistreated. They have learned to take responsibility for their actions and outcomes, and they have an inherent understanding of the fact that frequently life is not fair. They are able to emerge from trying circumstances with self-awareness and gratitude for the lessons learned. When a situation turns out badly, they respond with phrases such as “Oh, well.” Or perhaps simply, “Next!”

2. Give Away Their Power
Mentally strong people avoid giving others the power to make them feel inferior or bad. They understand they are in control of their actions and emotions. They know their strength is in their ability to manage the way they respond.

3. Shy Away from Change
Mentally strong people embrace change and they welcome

challenge. Their biggest “fear,” if they have one, is not of the unknown, but of becoming complacent and stagnant. An environment of change and even uncertainty can energize a mentally strong person and bring out their best.

4. Waste Energy on Things They Can’t Control
Mentally strong people don’t complain (much) about bad traffic, lost luggage, or especially about other people, as they recognize that all of these factors are generally beyond their control. In a bad situation, they recognize that the one thing they can always control is their own response and attitude, and they use these attributes well.

5. Worry About Pleasing Others
Know any people pleasers? Or, conversely, people who go out of their way to dis-please others as a way of reinforcing an image of strength? Neither position is a good one. A mentally strong person strives to be kind and fair and to please others where appropriate, but is unafraid to speak up. They are able to withstand the possibility that someone will get upset and will navigate the situation, wherever possible, with grace.

6. Fear Taking Calculated Risks
A mentally strong person is willing to take calculated risks. This is a different thing entirely than jumping headlong into foolish risks. But with mental strength, an individual can weigh the risks and benefits thoroughly, and will fully assess the potential downsides and even the worst-case scenarios before they take action.

7. Dwell on the Past
There is strength in acknowledging the past and especially in acknowledging the things learned from past experiences—but a mentally strong person is able to avoid miring their mental energy in past disappointments or in fantasies of the “glory days” gone by. They invest the majority of their energy in creating an optimal present and future.

8. Make the Same Mistakes Over and Over
We all know the definition of insanity, right? It’s when we take the same actions again and again while hoping for a different and better outcome than we’ve gotten before. A mentally strong person accepts full responsibility for past behavior and is willing to learn from mistakes. Research shows that the ability to be self-reflective in an accurate and productive way is one of the greatest strengths of spectacularly successful executives and entrepreneurs.

9. Resent Other People’s Success
It takes strength of character to feel genuine joy and excitement for other people’s success. Mentally strong people have this ability. They don’t become jealous or resentful when others succeed (although they may take close notes on what the individual did well). They are willing to work hard for their own chances at success, without relying on shortcuts.

10. Give Up After Failure
Every failure is a chance to improve. Even the greatest entrepreneurs are willing to admit that their early efforts invariably brought many failures. Mentally strong people are willing to fail again and again, if necessary,

as long as the learning experience from every “failure” can bring them closer to their ultimate goals.

11. Fear Alone Time
Mentally strong people enjoy and even treasure the time they spend alone. They use their downtime to reflect, to plan, and to be productive. Most importantly, they don’t depend on others to shore up their happiness and moods. They can be happy with others, and they can also be happy alone.

12. Feel the World Owes Them Anything
Particularly in the current economy, executives and employees at every level are gaining the realization that the world does not owe them a salary, a benefits package and a comfortable life, regardless of their preparation and schooling. Mentally strong people enter the world prepared to work and succeed on their merits, at every stage of the game.

13. Expect Immediate Results
Whether it’s a workout plan, a nutritional regimen, or starting a business, mentally strong people are “in it for the long haul”. They know better than to expect immediate results. They apply their energy and time in measured doses and they celebrate each milestone and increment of success on the way. They have “staying power.” And they understand that genuine changes take time.

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Sleep & YOUR HEALTH

BY BENI JOHNSON

It was once said that a good laugh and a good nights sleep could be the cure for most anything. I couldn't agree more, especially when it comes to the importance of sleep. Sleep is one of the building blocks to good health. For many of us, especially young parents, getting a good night's sleep feels like a long lost dream. I remember being a young mom years ago and cherishing my alone time, which as a mom, seemed to only come once the kids were tucked into bed. I would stay up until 2am only to regret that decision a few short hours later when I would be awoken by my children around 5:30am. Knowing what I know now, I would go back and tell my younger self to go to bed!

Why is sleep so important? Well, sleep is what heals and prepares our bodies for the next day. There are four stages of sleep and each one plays a vital part in our sleep health.

Stage 1 is the stage that if you wake from you will wonder if you have been sleeping at all. This stage is the peaceful stage that helps clear and calm your mind.

Stage 2 is the moderately deep sleep stage. This stage is the one that you stay in most of your sleep time. This stage is where you heart and vascular system slow down and begin to get a well-deserved rest.

Stage3 is our deepest stage of sleep. This is where our breathing slows down our blood pressure drops and our muscles and tissues are repaired. Primarily the human growth hormone is produced at this stage. The growth hormone is your friend. Children need it to grow, adults need it to stay healthy and repair and restore their bodies.

Stage 4 is the REM sleep. During this stage our bodies and especially our brains are being recharged with much-needed energy.

You see, our bodies recalibrate as we sleep. Our brains, nervous and respiratory systems, and organs are all being restored during this time. Sleep also regulates hormones, such as those that regulate appetite, thus reasoning that getting a good nights sleep could help you lose weight. By getting the right amount of sleep, you are setting yourself up for success for the next day.

So the next question is, how much sleep should you be getting? The best time to sleep is from 10pm-6am and the ideal amount of sleep for an adult is 7.5 to 8 hours (school aged children need about 10 to 11 hours since they are constantly growing and developing). If you can throw in a short power nap during your day, that is even better for you! Wouldn't it be nice if our work places allowed power naps? I think we would be much more

productive if we could take a 10-20 minute nap every day.

With that said, don't think like I once did that your body is doing just fine with only 4 hours of sleep a night, because eventually your body will start rebelling. I understand that there are things that can get in the way such as babies, and small children but you need to get the sleep when you can to support your health. There's nothing wrong, moms, with taking a nap when your babies are napping because you need to sleep!

I know that many people may struggle with actually falling asleep once they are in bed, so lets talk about what interferes with a good nights sleep. Stress and anxiety, painful physical conditions, caffeine, cigarettes and alcohol (both these are stimulants, many people like to enjoy a glass of wine at night and then wonder why they wake up wide awake at 3 am), medications, certain foods (eating to much sugary food or carbohydrates, pop corn, these stimulate excessive insulin release to the pancreas and can also cause hot flashes during the night for women), exercising 3 hours before bedtime (this will raise your stress hormone levels), a bed mattress or pillow, a snoring spouse, and hot flashes and menstrual cramps.

Some of you may have just read that and may feel overwhelmed, but let's talk about solutions! One of the best ways to help yourself sleep is to begin preparing yourself in the morning. Yep, the morning! If possible, go outside in the morning and sit in the sun for 10-20 minutes. Don't be afraid to get your face directly in the sun without sunscreen. The early morning sun is going to increase the hormone melatonin, which is essential for good sleep. You can also take a melatonin supplement, but know that if you take it all the time your body will become dependent on it. The best way is to get outside and get melatonin naturally. Another solution is magnesium. Many of us are depleted in magnesium due to insufficient dietary intake. Magnesium helps calms the nerves and relaxes the muscles. Increasing your magnesium intake right before bed will help you sleep. I use a product called Calm and it works beautifully. I also use pure 100% essential oils. Apply Cedarwood and lavender oil to your feet right before bed. You can use lavender on your kids as well. Both these oils have a calming effect. Also be sure to begin dimming the lights 2 hours before bed, listen to calming music, read a good book and don't eat a heavy meal right before bed. These are just a few things that will help aid in a good nights sleep. Remember, sleep is an important part of your over all health. Don't neglect a good thing.

To your health,
Beni Johnson



What You Need to Know to Lose Belly Fat

Fred W. Schafer, MS, CFT
Author, Trainer & Nationally
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SO YOU WANT TO GET RID OF SOME BELLY FAT.

And you can't help but be on the lookout for that magical exercise that will give you flat abs once-and-for-all.

I'm sorry to burst your bubble of hope...

But all the ab crunches in the world won't make a dent in your belly bulge, as long as you continue with your unhealthy lifestyle.

This isn't a cutting edge discovery. In fact, by now it's common knowledge that spot reduction is a myth.

And yet, time after time, I'm asked to reveal the exercise, or exercise machine, that gets rid of stomach fat.

There is no such magical exercise.

The magic is found in altering your diet and exercise routine to promote fat loss from your overall body, including—but not limited to—your midsection.

Here's how to really get rid of that belly fat:

FLAT BELLY TIP #1: CUT OUT PROCESSED FOODS

You know how Disneyland has the FastPass tickets that allow you to cut to the front of the ride lines?

Consider processed foods as a FastPass ticket to belly fat.

I wouldn't be surprised if future studies show that the over-processing, chemical additives and high fructose corn syrup that are pumped into processed food specifically adds fat around your belly.

If you want to lose pounds then stay away from sugars, sodas, chemically altered fats, processed, packaged, fried and pre-served foods.

FLAT BELLY TIP #2: EAT FRESH, WHOLE FOODS

Once you've cut the garbage out of your diet, fill in the void with fresh foods such as:

- Green veggies
- Whole fruit
- Lean, high quality meat
- Colorful veggies
- Whole grains, in moderation

While these foods may seem boring at first, stick with it long enough and you'll grow to love the unadulterated flavor of real food.

Eating a diet filled with the foods listed above will give your body all the nutrients it needs to shed pounds and lean out.

FLAT BELLY TIP #3: A CONSISTENT, CHALLENGING EXERCISE PROGRAM

The absolute best way to fight the battle of the belly bulge is with a consistent, challenging exercise program.

- Consistent: You should exercise 3-5 times each week.
- Challenging: If you want to see results then keep your body guessing with new exercises and varied intensity.

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THE GRAFT

by Cheryl Stasinowsky

We recently returned home from Italy. We spent two weeks there with our grown children. I had dreamed of taking our children to Europe when they were older, and now it was happening. I was a very happy and excited mom.

This vacation was going to be a little different because we had a new person joining us. Our daughter got married over a year ago and her husband had been waiting to join one of our trips, and finally to be included in the stories that we tell afterward. We are a very close family, we love to travel, and we have lots of stories. We had a wonderful time, but it did have its moments. We are five strong leaders; you are bound to get into interesting conversations. Four of us have always sorted through our differences and we are solid, but now we have another. He is equally as solid, just trying to find his place. Were we aware of it? Not always, but I paid particularly close attention to it.

My daughter's husband, Daniel, has been grafted into our family. We didn't choose him, she did. Don't take that wrong, but the truth is, our child chose her spouse, and we have to include him

into our family. I struggled with what to call him. Yes, by law or marriage, he is our son-in-law. Others have chosen to call them son-in-love; I am working on calling him son. I want to think of him as my son, and treat him as my son. I am, on purpose, thinking of him this way.

I, too, was once grafted into a family when I married my husband 33 years ago. The graft didn't take very well. It does no good to point a finger as to who was to blame for this, but I never really felt accepted or included as family. It was, most likely, both sides contributing to my conclusion. So, because of my experience, I wanted to work hard at nurturing this graft. I know that what happens in the beginning of their marriage is the foundation of our future. We are establishing trust, acceptance, love, pain, conflict, struggles, and so much more. Vacation seems to bring it all out as we are with each other day after day through heat, hours of walking, and ideas of what we want to do. It got tested, and I got to see a side of Daniel which pleased me. He loves our daughter, I knew that, but I experienced it through the tests of vacation.

He was raised differently and thinks differently. How do we nurture the graft? It is not about him conforming to our way, but all of us transforming into a new family unit. We love unconditionally. We forgive always. We, on purpose, include him in the discussions and listen when he is speaking. I had to work at it, not that it was about him, but it was about the graft growing within our family and my heart. Unforgiveness will kill the graft. Unrealistic expectations will kill the graft. Focusing only on my two birth children will harm the graft. I was very aware of what was being established for the future. We all had to do this, but I can only be responsible for me. I do know that my heart, attitude, words, actions, and choices have a significant effect on the future of our family and generations to come. I managed my heart and forgave when I needed to. I chose to love at all times, care at all times, and hope at all times. I made 1 Corinthians 13 my prayer and will continue to do that. It is my measuring rod and the path to establishing a healthy graft into our family.

It is never too late to bring healing to the graft, but it will take some work. Forgiveness is the first thing on the list to bringing healing. As the parent, I don't want to have to be right, I choose love over being right. I always think, "Be the grown-up, Cheryl, and lead the way in this." I want a healthy graft, and it happens one day and one choice at a time...



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By Joy Fry



SIX ACTIVITIES BRINGING JOY DURING MY FIRST YEAR OF RETIREMENT



Although I had been planning my retirement for several years, my business career ended abruptly after my position was eliminated. I suddenly found myself with lots of time on my hands. My fiancée had retired a week earlier from his position as Senior Pastor at a church. Thankfully, I had a companion to share this new season of life.

We have now past the one-year mark since retirement. As I have reflected on the past twelve months, I discovered there were six activities that helped me experience joy. Here they are:

-Joining a Bible Study Group: Making the commitment to join a weekly Bible study and small group provided the motivation I needed to read and study. I soon grew to look forward to the lecture and small group discussion. The sense of community was just what I needed to replace being part of a project team during my previous job.

-Finding a place to serve others: I had to explore several options to find something that did not require attending meetings. I chose to spend time with a disabled young adult who wanted to share lunch and conversation. There are many ways to bring joy to others. This may be as an informal as regular visits with someone in a convalescent home or involve teaching the Ladies Sunday School at your church.

-Participating in a regular exercise activity: I became a docent who leads group hikes under the redwood trees in the local open spaces. The key is to choose an exercise you like and one you will continue to perform on a regular basis. This may be a ladies' walking group or something more formal such as attending a water aerobics class at a fitness center.

-Carving out time for a hobby or class: I had always dreamed of writing a devotional book for time-pressed women. During the first six months of my retirement I completed the book. What a delight to share the book with others. We all have something we have dreamed of trying. Block out time on your calendar to explore this. Otherwise, your schedule quickly becomes filled with appointments, projects, and volunteering.

-Developing short-term and long-term goals: Setting specific goals helped me focus where I wanted to spend my time. One of my weekly goals was to participate in two group Pilates classes and to make friends with at least one person in each class. As a longer term goal, my husband and I began planning our first Mediterranean cruise.

-Adopting a pet: A small Jack-Chi (Jack Russell and Chihuahua mix) rescue dog, named Jody joined our home a couple months after we stopped working. Her affection, facial expressions, and constant playfulness frequently led me to burst out in laughter and smiles.

As I begin my second year of retirement, I am reminded of 1 Thessalonians 5:16 (NIV), where we are commanded to have joy.

"Be joyful always;" What are the ways you will experience joy after retirement?



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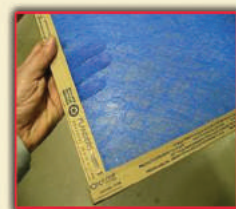
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Identity Theft Are you at risk?

Identity theft is the fastest growing white collar crime in not just the USA, but the world. It has been the #1 consumer complaint for the past 14 yrs with an estimated 26,000 new victims each day!

Are you at risk? The short answer is yes, EVERYONE is at risk.

There are steps you can take to minimize your risk, but no one can offer you a guarantee.

- Shred documents with personal information, such as pre-approved credit card offers you receive in the mail or old credit card and tax statements.
- If someone asks for your social security

number, ask why they want it and how they will protect it.

- Use a locking mailbox or po box and do not put bills in your home mailbox for pickup.
- If someone calls that you don't know, do not volunteer personal information.
- When doing online transactions, make sure you're on a secure site.
- Monitor your credit card and bank charges carefully and immediately address any unknown charges, no matter how small. Often times an identity thief will make smaller transactions of a few cents or a few dollars just to see if they can get into your account.

- **NEVER** leave personal papers or information in your car or lying around.
- Create strong passwords and lock electronic devices.
- Never offer money or passwords to people you meet online - and never agree to send money to strangers. Be especially cautious of "out of country" requests.

No matter how careful you are, your information is out there. Everyone has a copy of your personal information: schools, employers, doctors, credit card and loan companies, insurance companies, your bank, etc.

Most of us do everything on line, from bank transactions and paying bills, to applying for credit cards and loans to shopping and filling out job applications. Last year one in three people were notified of data breaches.

People often times will say "my credit is so bad, let them take it". Well folks, it's not just about credit any more.

**Did you know there are
5 types of identity theft?
Yes, that's right FIVE.**

- Credit fraud
- Social security fraud
- Driver's license fraud
- Medical fraud
- Criminal/character fraud

People are actually dying from medical id theft. People are getting arrested because of id theft, and no, I'm not talking about the criminals, but you, the identity theft victim! When an identity thief commits a crime in your name the police will come looking for you. And how often do the police hear "it wasn't me"?

Sadly when it comes to identity theft, the burden of proof is on you. Why? Because the police will ask you 3 basic questions and your answer will always be yes!

1. Is this your name? YES
2. Is this your date of birth? YES
3. Is this your social security number? YES

Sometimes when you have id theft issues, it results in legal issues as well. This is why I sell legal and id theft plans together. One phone call can put you in touch with a licensed investigator at no additional cost to you to help you resolve the issues and restore your identity.

If you have a monitoring service through your bank or credit card company, they may alert you to a potential problem, but it won't help with legal issues or restoration. But, there is a company out there who can.

Contact me for more information on how you can protect yourself and your family. I also conduct free ID Theft seminars for companies, schools, churches and other community organizations.

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CATCHING A VISION BY VIV



Hi, my name is Grandma Viv. I wish I had known more about being a parent when my first child was born but that’s quite a few years ago now. When Rachel was born I remember telling my husband, “This baby needs to go back to the hospital until she gets older.” I felt insecure and wasn’t sure I would do a good job. But we wanted each of our babies. We had four children and the desire to love them and understand that they are real little people with their very own personalities and needs propelled us forward. Over the years we picked up a few ideas here and there. We tried to learn from our mistakes which were quite a few. Thank goodness there is excellent material on parenting.

“Children are a gift from God: they are his reward.” Can anyone say that better? Although many of these principles we will talk about today are for down the road, it’s important to remember that a child is mostly formed into the person they will be by the age of five. It’s smart to study your child from an early age to discover their abilities and talents, their personality and inborn responses. Don’t forget to enjoy your children’s intelligence, uniqueness, and quirky charms. Most important of all is to ask our heavenly Father to help us and give us wisdom when ours comes to an abrupt dead end. *“How can men be wise? The only way to begin is by reverence for God.”* Are you ready? Here we go! Let’s learn about the amazing responsibilities in the great venture of being a parent.

A home is a place to learn values, to learn to give and receive love, and to develop relationships. The atmosphere should be one of love, acceptance, openness, forgiveness, and honesty. Home is at its best when it’s a place of fun, creative activities, encouragement, and relaxed attitudes. You may have already heard that it takes about five positive comments to overcome one negative. The tone of the home is greatly enhanced when parents as the prime example are openly admitting their mistakes and asking forgiveness from their children when they embarrass them, break a promise, or treat them poorly. As parents we all need to ask ourselves, “Am I enjoyable to live with?” If the answer is no we should begin to make a few important changes. Here is one consideration we might have overlooked. We need to treat our children with courtesy, to say please and thank you to them. We must be what we want our children to become. I believe this calls for dependence on God and personal discipline to train ourselves to be under God’s wise leadership.

A top priority in parenting is giving affection. “Without strong bonds of parental affection, a

child may develop feeling of insecurity, inferiority and inadequacy.” We all really do want our children to be happy and secure. Children take great security from the assurance that their parents love each other. It truly affects a child to see parents fighting or yelling at one another. Remember, love is the glue that holds a family together. It’s also important to give lots of physical contact and expressions of affection. Children need to be hugged often by both mother and father.

Here’s an easy practice to fall into- the habit of yelling at our children. As someone has observed, “shouting to make your children obey is like steering your car with the horn.” Kenneth Boa Let’s not forget that children are immature and need to be allowed to make mistakes in order to grow. When we don’t expect them to be perfect they don’t expect us to be perfect either. It’s clear that as children grow they learn more from who we are and what we do than from what we say. I’ve learned that the transparent life of a parent does more to develop a child than anything else. When children come to respect us for being a genuine, consistent person they will also most often accept our core values.

Whether your child is very young or grown, children spell love T-I-M-E. So take time to play and do things they enjoy. Reading is a wonderful way to connect and spend time together. Last of all, may we listen, allowing children to express their feelings and opinions before responding. Share your own thoughts, hopes, dreams, and feelings too. Open communication is great for closing up any generation gaps.

Every child is God’s personal miracle, making them remarkable, exceptional, and extraordinary. *“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body, and knit them together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. It is amazing*

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to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous.” Ps 139: 13, 14 A life is an important thing to miss. May we discover the wonderful gift sent from God, our children. May the faith of mothers and grandmothers be passed on to the next generation!

14 Joyful Living Magazine

Joyful Living Magazine 15

Compassion: DIVINE LOVE

By Karen Duffy

Suffering with someone who is in pain, whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual, challenges us to be human in an uncompassionate world. There is a deeper love to be found in all of us when we walk a little closer to Jesus.

Let me tell you about a good friend of mine who suffers from severe pain in her legs and has for many months. Doctors are trying to figure out what is causing the pain but until they do, she is taking powerful pain medication that doesn't seem to help much.

I stopped by to visit my friend a few weeks ago and during our conversation she appeared to be uneasy and combative. Admitting the pain was making her angry, tears filled her eyes when she confessed, "The pain is unbearable! I can't think about anything but the pain. Maybe you should go now before I say something else hurtful to you. I'm so sorry for my behavior. It is hard to be nice when you are miserable."

On my way home, my heart grieved for the pain she must endure. I couldn't bear to see how fragile she was and in my heart, I was broken. All of a sudden, I experienced deep mental suffering and I became very sad and depressed.

When I got home I went to my study to pray for her and the sadness wouldn't go away. Her suffering made me very unhappy, and the misery I saw in her dark, sleepless eyes was more than I could bear. I felt her pain in the pit of my stomach and I was distraught and felt totally helpless. Seeing her health go from better to worse in just a few days, gave me a terrible sense of dread and I was downhearted to the point of feeling sick.

In my despair, I cried and prayed for her, asking God to heal her body, to restore her health. I put my faith in God, and yet my soul cried out, "Why must she suffer to the point of agony dear Lord," and I asked for divine compassion from a

loving God, to heal her pain.

As a rule, we do not like to suffer with others. To the contrary, we stay away from people who are sick and we abhor hospitals and funeral homes. Those who suffer have no place in our hearts because we are callous and selfish, but that way of thinking is the exact opposite of a compassionate God.

When we are sick or hurting, we depend on technology to heal our broken bodies through medical treatments and drugs but what about love and compassion? Shouldn't we be like Jesus and show more kindness and bring hope to people who are suffering?

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus performed many miracles and it was compassion that stirred his heart. When he saw the blind, the deaf, and the paralyzed, he trembled from within and experienced their pains in his own heart and he felt their sorrow.

We can comfort those who cry out from the depths of despair, longing for a kind word, a gentle touch, and a warm embrace by practicing Divine Compassion through the power of Almighty God who dwells in us.

Embrace the loving presence of God and bring hope to the weary.

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16 Joyful Living Magazine

Joyful Living Magazine 17

Facebook and Grief

The Blessing of Social Media

by Renae Tolbert



Facebook can be all consuming, eating hours and days of our lives and it can be negative. It can divide us or unite us. For me, it has done both, but this article is about how it is helping me through the grieving process. There have been days when my grief is deep and overwhelming, but when I share a photo and a memory of my late husband on Facebook, the comments from friends literally pull me out of the emotional muck.

When my husband died in December 2014, the news of his passing spread quickly via social media. On one hand, that alleviated my burden of making hundreds of phone calls, however, it required a delicate balance, since there were some friends and relatives who should not learn of his death by reading it on Facebook.

As the days passed, Facebook and social media became a blessing. It enabled me to “talk” to people without being face

to face to see my pain and tears. Facebook allowed me to be in control of my time, which was about the only thing I felt a smidgen of control over. Life was 99% out of control in every sense of the word. Just the fact that I was able to decide when I communicated was essential for my emotional and physical wellbeing. Without social media to communicate in my own time frame would have made the demand of phone calls, incoming and outgoing, unbearable.

I was able to communicate with others in between the myriad of other immediate tasks that pulled and challenged my attention. It is such a hard thing to lose your spouse and then immediately be thrust into making serious decisions and dealing with difficult situations. I found that excruciating, but social media was a tremendous help.

As weeks passed, I freely shared my emotions and grief publicly on Facebook. I quickly realized how healing that was. I learned that when I posted my thoughts, challenges and sorrow, it ministered to others. People began to open up to share their grief experiences with me. Because of that, I made new friends who had also lost loved ones. In a couple of instances, I met two people on the journey through the last weeks of their spouse’s life. It was healing to meet other people who had been through the same pain I was working through in my own heart.

After a couple of months, I joined Grief Share at Redding Christian Fellowship. These meetings are held once a week for 13 weeks. They are faith based and focus on healing through the many facets of the grief journey. These meetings proved to be invaluable to me. Not only because of the fellowship experienced at the meeting, but the workbook used during the week. Then, again, I’d share on Facebook the topic we discussed at Grief Share and more healing would take place through conversations with others. I signed up for the Daily Devotion Grief Share emails, and occasionally I post those on Facebook as well. Many people share their hearts with me because of something I have posted that spoke into their lives and in their stage of grief.

One of the topics we discussed in Grief share was how helping others helps heal our own grief. While I tend to isolate, because I like to be alone, Facebook has enabled me to stay connected enough to stay above depression and loneliness.

I am moving forward in ways I would not be ready to if I didn’t allow myself to be vulnerable and open my heart, exposing the pain for all to see and read. Social media has been a positive conduit through this experience. I have my days when I think I probably spend too many hours on Facebook, and then I will receive a message from someone who comments that my post ministered to them and helped them process through something. It is then that I realize that as long as God is in it, it’s OK because HE wastes nothing!

Proverbs 27:17
“Iron is sharpened by iron; one person sharpens another.”

Renae Tolbert lives in Redding, where she writes short stories and enjoys the outdoors and wildlife photography. She’s been published in Cup of Comfort for Christian Women, Guideposts Heavenly Company anthology, and Birds and Blooms magazine. 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.

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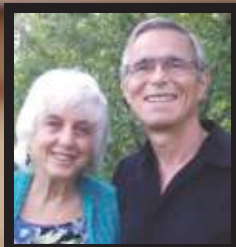
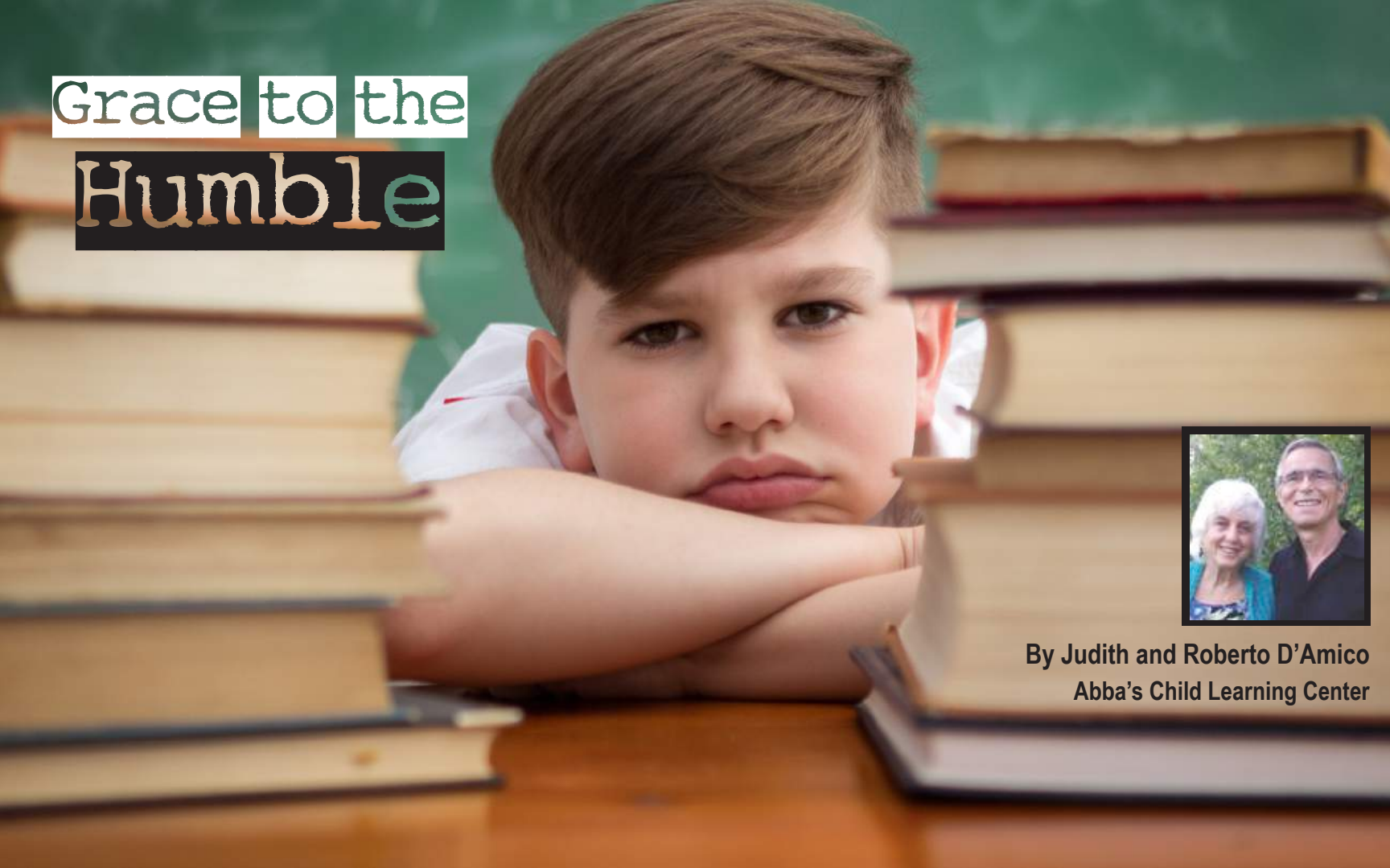
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Grace to the Humble



By Judith and Roberto D'Amico
Abba's Child Learning Center

lated between arrogance and hopelessness – two opposite expressions of his focus on self-reliance and pride. Some days he was self-centered in arrogance, denying the importance of learning to read and boasting of his superiority in other areas. Other days he was self-centered in defeat, comparing himself negatively with his friends and younger siblings and declaring his situation to be hopeless and therefore unchangeable. Both these expressions of his self-centered focus on his own abilities, efforts, and pride had huge negative consequences on his inability to focus, retain information, or invest himself in trying to learn.

After a few frustrating sessions for all concerned, we began to talk about his attitude. He shared that he was a Christian and had asked Jesus into his life. “Do you realize,” I asked him, “that you are not alone in this struggle, and that God’s spirit lives in you? That’s a whole lot of power! You don’t have to do this all by yourself. I believe that God wants to help you.”

At home with his mom that night, he explored some of the self-defeating lies he believed about himself. Like most struggling students, he told himself things like: “I’m dumb”, “Even if I try I’ll never get it”, and “My teachers, parents and friends all know I’m stupid.” After identifying and rejecting these lies, and acknowledging that God’s spirit in him was able to help, Nico asked Jesus to help him learn to read.



A very excited boy showed up for his next session. The very tasks that had been laborious and frustrating 2 days before were now being accomplished easily. Nico was energized, confident and excited about his new discovery. He showed me a medallion he was wearing. “This will help me to remember,” he declared. It read, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13)

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6b) Nico dramatically experienced God’s faithfulness as he shifted from focusing on himself to focusing on God’s provision and empowerment through

Christ. * Not his real name.

Judith and Roberto D’Amico are the owners of Abba’s Child Learning Center, providing home-based and center-based services to struggling students. They have seen many children freed from the bondage of learning problems to become successful in school and life.
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This summer at Abba’s Child Learning Center, we have experienced a greater revelation regarding the importance of attitude: the profound difference between an attitude of self-confidence/self-esteem and one of Christ-dependence/Christ-esteem. The benefit of this shift was vividly demonstrated by the story of spiritual and academic breakthrough for one of our students.

Nico* was a very bright, handsome boy preparing to enter third grade . . . and unable to read. An assessment had revealed that Nico had visual and auditory processing problems, reversed his letters and numbers, and had difficulty combining more than three letters to form a word. Working with Nico had been slow and frustrating - for him, his parents, his teachers, and now me. His attitude vacil-

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LETTING GO OF LISTENING TO *Should*

By Joy Fry

Recently I faced an unexpected decision. I was offered a part-time job at the fitness center where I exercise. I became paralyzed by should. My mind began racing through the reasons I should say yes. It was close to my house, my friends worked there, and it would get me to the gym three days a week. However, I felt anxious. If I took the position, I would have to give up other commitments.

Before I came to know the Lord, I would struggle through these decisions alone while scolding myself for indecision. Often, I would choose a commitment to please others. Then, I would be left with the consequences of that choice.

Since beginning my faith journey, I have followed a different approach when making a decision involving my time or resources. Here are steps I follow most of the time:

- **Take several days for personal prayer.**

In evaluating this decision, I practiced the discipline of sitting quietly talking and listening to God. I even wrote down my prayers as it helped me to stay focused.

- **Discuss with a wise believer.**

I talked through the pros and cons of the decision options with my husband and my best friend, Teri. Next, I asked for their honest feedback and what questions they had. I valued their insights.

- **Seek prayer from a trusted family member or friend.**

I gave myself a week before making this decision. The bigger the decision, the more time I give myself. I reached out to several family members and friends and asked them to hold me up in prayer.

- **Write a note to God expressing your concerns and fears.**

After following the three steps above, I spent time writing my feelings about the new job. What aspects of it made me excited and which led to anxiety? Doing this freed me from the confusion caused by should.

After following the four steps above, I chose to let go of listening to should. I proposed a solution that would work for me. I offered to take the job but only to be on-call and not committed to working a certain number of hours each week. This would allow me to continue teaching Sunday school, leading hikes, and participating in a weekly Bible Study. Although I had fear about proposing this alternative, I was confident in the peace I had after making my decision.

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WHAT ARE BOUNDARIES?

By Yvonne Martinez



A boundary is a "dividing line." In geography, a boundary is that which marks the end of one property or jurisdiction and the beginning of another. In interpersonal relationships, a boundary is what divides one person from another, so that each can have separate identities, responsibilities, and privileges. A boundary creates necessary "space" between individuals. Healthy boundaries define expectations and show respect for others.

External boundaries are about what you will accept from others. They are the limits we set with those around us based on certain people, times and places. They are about what behaviors we will accept from other people and those behaviors we will not accept.

Internal boundaries are about what you will accept for yourself. Internal boundaries are based on knowing your own beliefs, values, thoughts, feelings and attitudes. They are about the decisions and choices you make for yourself and the experiences you participate in.

Personal boundaries help us to self-manage and to display self-control, choosing to restrain personal thoughts or actions that are controlling or manipulative, unproductive, unhealthy or unholy. Likewise, boundaries protect us from those who have no self-control and those who don't self-manage. A person with clear, healthy boundaries communicates to others what is and is not permissible. When people are being destructive, the boundaries we set can limit the evil they commit against us.

A person with healthy boundaries takes responsibility for his own life and allows others to live theirs. The goal of boundaries is to make sacrifices for people when appropriate, but never in a destructive manner. We should be available for people in a crisis, but unavailable to indulgent demands. Being gracious is not a blank check for others to continually drain our emotional account. Saying "yes" out of fear of rejection is really a selfish motive for being kind. Being kind in order to gain someone's favor shows a need for boundaries.

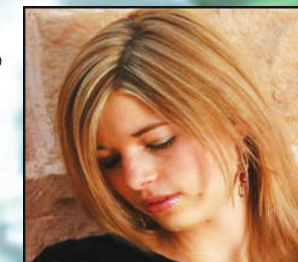
Boundaries teach us to accept one another as being different yet still valuable. God uses boundaries to help us appreciate the differences in people rather than be upset by them. We are free to be ourselves with others if we control ourselves. Boundaries are not selfish when we use our freedom to serve and love one another because we are self-managing (Galatians 5:13). In a Godly relationship, both people are free to love each other and to be themselves because neither is using or manipulating the other.

Yvonne Martinez has nearly 30 years experience ministering God's power, healing and freedom. She is an ordained minister and serves as director, 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 CAADAC 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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Launch out into the deep

By Bonnie Mark

ing water flow over my feet and calves. I was definitely wet now, and there was no turning back. That’s when I heard it, faintly at first, but plain as day,

“Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a haul,” Luke 5:4

“Launch out into the deep, launch out into the deep,” the words kept echoing deep within my soul. Why, I hadn’t really launched anywhere for quite some time. When had this dryness happened in my life? Was this part of normal aging, this propensity to stay “tidy-dry” in many situations, the failure to take risks, this insane obsession with safety and comfort? Somewhere within my heart a tiny something began to break loose, as salty tears trickled down and mingled with the sea.

I know Jesus told His disciples to go out there, not to stay onshore with nice-and-tidy-dry feet. If we fish where He directs, we will receive a great haul. What was I waiting for? What was stopping me? What was I afraid of anyway? My job was to catch “fish”, not sit around in a recliner.

Heavy with seawater and sand, my soggy pant legs dragged the ground as I headed back up the steep, twisting trail. I was a mess, and the funny thing was, it felt good. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d felt this free, this fresh, this alive.

“The deep” certainly looks differently for each individual, but my “deep” was definitely calling my name. No matter what my age, the walls I’d built of a tidy, comfortable life were starting to crumble into the brine. All I can say is, praise the Lord and bring on the fish; it’s high time to get wet.

It was a rare, brilliant sunny day on the northern California coast as I gazed far down the steep cliff at my favorite sliver of beach. The screech of seagulls and the pounding surf once again took me back to my childhood as if it was yesterday; I’d been coming here since I was five years old, nearly sixty years.

A lot has changed in my life over the years, but Agate Beach has been a constant; it still has the ability to draw me in like a magnet. Though not a swimming beach, due to the cold water and strong undertow, there are always lessons to be learned, joy to experience, tears to cry, and of course, agates to be found. God meets me every time.

I started out looking for agates as a kid with my parents. Unfortunately, their method of staying in one spot and digging a giant hole to China wasn’t the best; we rarely found a thing. But in later years, I discovered that walking the beach line, especially at low tide was a surefire way to find the best agates. And that’s just what I was doing when it happened.

Thankfully, it wasn’t a big wave, but still, it took me by surprise as it drenched my nice-and-tidy-dry tennis shoes,

socks and jeans. I twirled around as another wave hit me from behind and my fanny pack snapped off and fell into the surf. Stunned, I waded in to rescue it as it bobbed out to sea. Just in time, I snagged my valuables and hurriedly got out of the water. A kind bystander noticed the commotion and asked, “Are you alright?” Well, yes, I was fine. It wasn’t that high of a wave, but still, I had been surprised and I guess I looked it. Apparently, it doesn’t take much to alarm a 61-year-old woman. After all, I was trying to stay dry.

I continued up the beach, still a bit dazed by my drenching in the Pacific Ocean, and for some odd reason, as if to explain my drippy appearance, I said to the first woman I saw, “I was trying to stay dry.” It’s true; I was really trying to stay dry. Her joyful response, “Oh, you never stay dry at the beach!” Really? Hmm, I kept pondering those words, “you never stay dry at the beach”, as I watched the woman’s children playing in the surf, their squeals of delight piercing the damp air as they tried to outrun the crashing waves and frothy surf.

For a moment I stood with that happy family, felt their zeal for life, smiled and laughed with them as I let the cold, refresh-

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There is an overall sense of weariness and indignation that we haven't quite been able to live out or experience the victory that the Bible says we have. It has been preached from the pulpit time and time again and we experience a confusion and dare I say, "guilt" that we can't quite live out this spiritual reality. There is a disconnect between the head and the heart. Well we believe all that is about to change. There is a shift coming! All that we have been believing for, the victory that we have read about and heard from the pulpit is about to download from head to heart and when it does our very DNA, belief system, thoughts and actions WILL change. We will begin living in power and authority unlike any other generation. And remember that what you have struggled with and received breakthrough for becomes a tool of breakthrough for others. We have hoped against all hope, we have believed in the midst of dreary circumstances always holding on to the promise that after we have suffered a little while the God of all Grace who called us to His eternal glory in Christ, will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish us. 1st Peter 5:10. The saying "it's always darkest before the dawn" seems to ring true especially now so we take comfort in knowing we are God's own possession and he has and is calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light 1st Peter 2:9. So many people are focusing on that which is wrong and the downward momentum of the world but we have been instructed to keep seeking and setting our minds on the things above not on the things of this earth Colossians 3:1 & 2 when we focus on the answer which is the Lord instead of the problem we keep our confidence in him which he has been proven worthy of over and over. We feel so blessed to have been born in this exciting time in history as should you. The Lord has chosen each of us to carry out a portion of his will in this epic time in history. What an honor! We all have an instrumental role to play.

So hang on to that hope that is knawing at your gut and don't be swayed but what you do or don't see. We are coming into the greatest adventure ever told and remember we win!

Adam & Christina Messenger



Chicken & Veggie Stir Fry with Mango

Eating healthy does not need to be boring! This Chicken & Veggie Stir Fry with Mango will wake up your taste buds, feed your muscles and satisfy your fiber needs, all in one delicious bowl! Meals like this, built around lean protein and veggies, are the way to eat in order to get your best fitness results possible. Enjoy!

 Servings: 6

Here's what you need...

- 1 pound organic, boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 2 Tablespoons Olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 2 heads broccoli, chopped
- 2 carrots, cut in half and then into 2 inch segments
- 2 heads baby bok choy, chopped
- 1 zucchini, chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- 3/4 cup chicken broth (divided)
- 2 Tablespoons arrowroot starch
- 2 Tablespoons toasted sesame seed oil
- 1 Tablespoons ume plum vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon coconut aminos
- 1 ripe, organic mango, peeled, pitted and chopped

1. Rinse the chicken and cut into 1 inch cubes.
2. Place the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic and onions, sauté for about 10 minutes, until soft. Add the broccoli, carrots and chicken and cook an additional 10 minutes. Add the bok choy and zucchini. After 5 minutes add 1/4 cup of chicken broth, cover, and cook an additional 10 minutes.
3. In a small bowl combine the remaining 1/2 cup chicken broth, arrowroot, sesame oil, vinegar and coconut aminos. Add the seasoned mixture to the skillet, along with the chopped mango, and cook for another 5 minutes, stirring constantly until the mixture thickens.

Nutritional Analysis: One serving (without rice) equals: 243 calories, 11g fat, 675mg sodium, 15g carbohydrate, 4g fiber, and 19g protein



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By Hellen Meade

In this day and age where the only things people believe is what is seen, a true miracle has to be shared. And while I recognize that as believers we have the miracles of the Lord in our lives every day, we just don't always see them. I believe that when a shift happens that is so utterly of God, we have to acknowledge His grace and mercy. It is also radically necessary to do so when it is in situations when we have tried everything we can to fix problems, finally give up and then get out of God's way.

I want to give one of those praise reports! Many of our friends have been praying for Roy and I and our marriage, for years now. We have both carried deep wounds from the past, some of things we did not even know about! It is a longer story than we have time for here but it is an amazing one! The short version summary is that the Lord, in answer to both of our prayers, has healed Roy and I and our marriage! Heart, mind, spirit, will, emotions, have been renewed and restored! We are still walking out what His grace has released in our lives, pulling on His grace! We are still learning to allow Him to break patterns and strongholds in our lives that were deeply set

into our souls. He has done it miraculously thru supernatural touches and thru our committing acts of obedience and surrendering everything to Him. In our gratitude, we have committed to go where, when and how He wants. We will do whatever He asks to release the Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth. We have committed to obedience in all areas of our life, even if what He asks seems impossible. Perhaps, especially when He asks what seems impossible for us to do. A few months after our big shift the Lord also had us go thru the process to get ordained together. It was an amazing ordination service and Jesus also renewed our marriage covenant in the midst of that service! Life has been kind of crazy cool the last seven months.

We have truly learned to trust Jesus and to, together, put our hands in His and wait upon Him for the next step, then the next and next. We have anchored our walk with Him by really committing to intimate times in His presence and in taking the time with each other to be real. We have learned to allow intimacy and grace to pervade every area of our lives. We have learned to declare God's word in each and every one of our situations. We have seen again and again that His word cannot go out and comeback void. We have hope again, for plans for ourselves and those we love!

The primary purpose of this article is to praise the Lord and to encourage you as you stand in the gap for your or other's marriages! We believe there is hope for all relationships that have seemed irretrievably broken! He is relentless in pouring out His grace to all lives and marriages! He is healing them! If there is anything you can glean from this testimony, take it and run with it! If there is any way we can encourage you, that is our hearts desire! Roy and Hellen Jesus says... I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.



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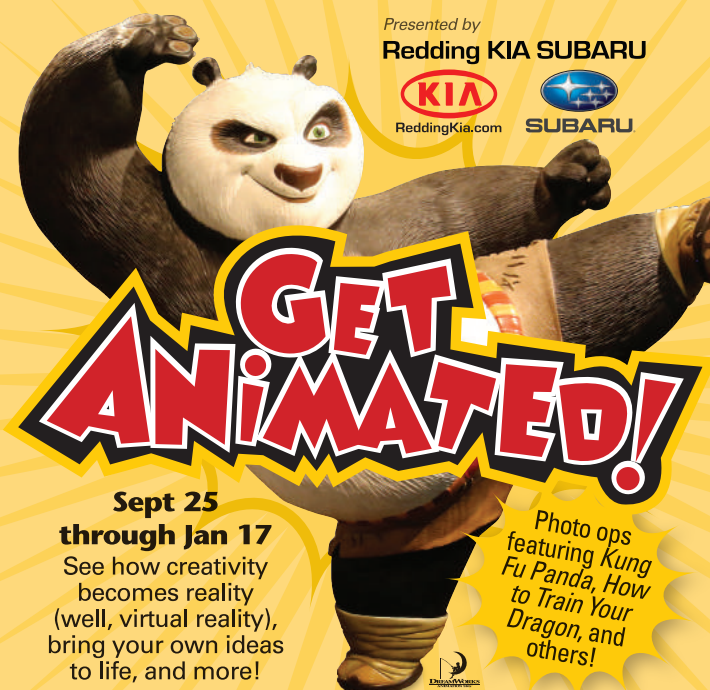
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To the Mom with Chronic Illness



By Sara Cormany

I see you.

Wincing a little every time you put on your public "brave" face. The measured steps. The dark circles. The swollen hands that so lovingly hold the little ones that need you.

I know you.

What you give every day even when you hurt, even when it's hard, even when the world would say that the day you had was not much. I know it was the best you had to give.

I hear you.

When you say your heart is begging for simple and normal and easy. When you share that a new health complication in your journey feels like a loss. When you quietly whisper that you are grieving over the you that used to be.

I get you.

Why you have that handicapped decal and why you wish you didn't. Why you have to say no to the park today and why it hurts your heart. Why the kids are watching movies for the fifth day in a row and why you sit there wishing you could be so much more.

But mama?

Jesus sees you. Jesus knows you. Jesus hears you.

Jesus gets you.

He sees your widow's mite. He knows your grief. He hears your cries.

And you know what?

He absolutely adores you for who He made you to be.

Yes, sometimes things will get a little hairy...

You'll burst into tears the first time your physical therapist tells you, "You can't hold your baby." You'll feel like you want to barf when you have to tell your kids the warning signs of a stroke. And you'll wonder if your friends realized when they signed up to be your bestie that you are the freaking poster child for the phrase, "It takes a village."

But even when days end with everyone looking a whole lot like this....

Remember that all a kid really needs is you...

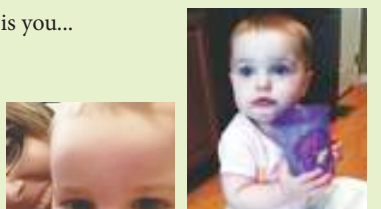
So rock on, little mamas.

Rock your canes. Rock your meds. Rock your not-so-fluid dance moves.

Rock. It. All.

And know this too...

You are never, ever rocking alone.



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.

Q. What is enabling?

One of the most common problems is confusion about how to help a loved one who has a problem. Enabling is rescuing your loved one so they don't experience the painful consequences of their irresponsible decisions. Enabling is anything that stands in the way of persons experiencing the natural consequences of their own behavior. When we rescue a loved one from the painful consequences of irresponsible decisions, we often slow down their motivation to change.

Q. How can I influence someone without authority in their life?

Your own character is your greatest source of influence. Do you lead by example and follow through on your commitments? Are you respectful, authentic and trustworthy? If so, people can be influenced and motivated by the common good when they see you are not out for personal gain. Another way is through forming close relationships with people. You can influence by appealing to shared values and your emotional connection.

Q. How can I be strong in the face of adversity?


In a world that pressures for conformity it takes courage to be who you are. When you fail to be authentic you keep from others that which makes you most attractive. When you conform to peer pressure, you deny the attributes and values which are uniquely yours. Be yourself and thanking God for His attributes inside of you takes the focus off your short comings and aligns you with the most powerful force in the universe...your Heavenly Father!!

Yvonne Martinez has nearly 30 years of experience ministering God's power, healing and freedom. She is an ordained minister and serves as director, 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 CAADAC 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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