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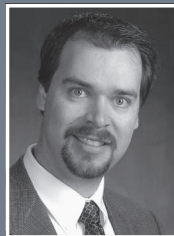


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Water! Just How Important Is It?

By Beni Johnson



WHILE IN MY JOURNEY TOWARDS GOOD HEALTH, I came across a book called The Seven Pillars of Health by Dr. Colbert. It impacted me greatly and I now highly recommend it to many people I meet. In this book he talks about “health pillars,” or tools that when applied help keep us on the right path to a healthy lifestyle. Focusing on creating a lifestyle is key. This is not about another diet, but tools that we can incorporate into our lives for us, as well as our families, to be able to live a healthy life. In this article I want to talk about the first tool to health.

If you were to ask me what the most important health tool is, I would tell you, water. Water is life. It has been said that you can go days without food but just a few days without water. Water is absolutely vital for health. I once had a friend come to me seeking advice for her mother. Her mother was sick and although she had gone to the doctor, the doctors told her there was nothing wrong with her. I asked my friend if her mother drank water. When she told me, “no” I told her to have her mother drink water for 2 weeks and then get back to me. After 2 weeks my friend told me that her mother was completely fine. Sometimes the problem with our health is that we just aren’t drinking enough water.

So, how much water do we need to drink to be healthy? Well, the rule of thumb is take your body weight and divide in half. The number that comes out to is the number of ounces you should be drinking a day. For example, if you weigh 130 lbs., half of that would be 64 oz. If you are an athlete then you need to drink more to replace what you lost through sweat.

Why is water so important? Well, our bodies are made up of 50 – 75% water! The way we keep our bodies hydrated is by drinking water or eating foods that are high in water content. It has been said that if you feel thirsty then your body has already started the dehydration process.

Water has often been called the “Fountain of Youth” because without it, nothing is able to survive. Every cell, organ, muscle, and bone thrives on good clean water. In fact, drinking water is one of the best anti-aging regimens. It’s the best way to prevent wrinkles, and it’s also a lot easier on your bank account than any wrinkle serum you might purchase at a department store!

Water is also our body’s main source of energy, sometimes known as the “cash flow” of the body, believed help the body generate electric and magnetic energy inside each cell. Water helps prevent DNA damage and makes the body’s repair mechanisms more efficient. It also increases the efficiency of the immune system in the bone marrow (where the immune system is formed), and assists its effort to fight cancer. Water aids in the digestive process and helps the body convert food into energy.

Water is also the most effective lubricating laxative and helps prevent constipation. It also serves as a great pick-me-up. If you experience an afternoon slump, and are in the habit of grabbing a

coffee or a sugary soda, instead pour yourself a tall glass of water, and allow your body to use its favorite source of energy! Women should know that water also helps decrease premenstrual pain and hot flashes.

These are just a few examples of how water helps to heal and restore your body. To see more reasons to drink more water, I suggest reading You’re not Sick, You’re Thirsty.

What kind of water do we need to drink? Should we drink just water from an alkaline water machine? Should we drink tap water? For me the important part of drinking water is that we keep our bodies alkalized. When you body is at a PH 7.0 it will be alkalized and not acidic. Having an acidic body when attract disease and alkalized body will keep your body healthy. So, whether you use an alkalized water filter for your home, drink spring water, bottled water, or use a table top filter pitcher the point I want to make on this topic is that you just drink water.

A little tip that I use each morning to start my body alkalizing is put a half squeezed lemon in 8 ozs. of warm water. You will find this very helpful for your digestive system and you can drink this throughout the day too.

Remember, if you are feeling like your body is out of sorts check the amount of water you are drinking. It just might be that you need more water in your life.

To Your Health

Beni Johnson

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By Eric Johnson



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This is a 20 day guidebook to finishing strong. Many of us are great at starting things but not so good at finishing them. How do we run our race in such a way that honors God and leaves us successfully crossing the finishing line?



Infinite Father

Bob Johnson



At times we may feel as if God is not as good a dad as we are because we would not stand back and let our children suffer. The truth is that God is “Infinite Father”, so He sees our tomorrow. Sometimes he delays our answers. Find out why...

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Angels

EXPLAINED BY CHILDREN

I only know the names of two angels, Hark and Harold.
-Gregory, age 5

Everybody's got it all wrong. Angels don't wear halos anymore. I forget why, but scientists are working on it.
-Olive, age 9

It's not easy to become an angel! First, you die. Then you go to Heaven, and then there's still the flight training to go through. And then you got to agree to wear those angel clothes.
-Matthew, age 9

Angels work for God and watch over kids when God has to go do something else.
-Mitchell, age 7

My guardian angel helps me with math, but he's not much good for science.
-Henry, age 8

Angels don't eat, but they drink milk from Holy Cows!!!
-Jack, age 6

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Angels talk all the way while they're flying you up To heaven. The main subject is where you went wrong before you got dead.
-Daniel, age 9

When an angel gets mad, he takes a deep breath and counts to ten. And when he lets out his breath again, somewhere there's a tornado.
-Reagan, age 10

Angels have a lot to do and they keep very busy. If you lose a tooth, an angel comes in through your window and leaves money under your pillow. Then when it gets cold, angels go south for the winter.
-Sara, age 6

Angels live in cloud houses made by God and his Son, who's a very good carpenter.
-Jared, age 8

All angels are girls because they gotta wear Dresses and boys didn't go for it.
-Antonio, age 9

My angel is my grandma who died last year. She got a big head start on helping me while she was still down here on earth.
-Ashley ~ age 9

Some of the angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don't make the animals get better, they help the child get over it.
- Vicki , age 8

What I don't get about angels is why, when someone is in love, they shoot arrows at them.
- Sarah , age 7

BUILDING HEALTHY MINDS & BODIES

Roberto D'Amico, MA



We are “fearfully and wonderfully made”. And yet, at Abba's Child Learning Center we routinely work with children who have learning problems and chronic illnesses. Almost all have poor diets. They are often picky eaters and addicted to sugar and other junk food. Without the right nutrients, their bodies, minds, and emotions are not working as God intended.

God created us with amazingly complex and efficient bodies, capable of acquiring what we need for life and health from the foods that He provided in the world around us. He created our food with a rich variety of colors, textures, smells, and tastes, and all the nutrients that we need to prosper.

More than 100,000 vitamins and phytonutrients have been identified in fruits and vegetables. Scientists are not even close to understanding all the ways that these elements work together synergistically for our health.

Nonetheless, for the past 70 years there has been a pervasive attitude in our country that we can change the food that God gave us into something that is more convenient or profitable, without any negative effects. Produce is grown, harvested, stored, and processed using methods that greatly reduce the nutritional value, while loading our food with tens of thousands of laboratory-produced chemicals. In addition, it is estimated that over 60% of processed foods now have genetically engineered ingredients (GMO's) created by combining genetic material from different species, circumventing God's design for life to reproduce “after its own kind”. In light of this dramatic move away from eating the food that God designed us to utilize, it is probably not surprising that our children's generation is projected to be the first in history to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.


To provide our children with an inheritance of life and health, it is imperative to return to eating the foods that God created for us, as He intended for us to eat them. Huge health benefits can be found in consuming organically grown, unprocessed fruits and vegetables, picked at the peak of ripeness (when the nutrient content is highest), and eaten before the nutrients deteriorate. (A week's delay between picking and eating can reduce the nutritional content by as much as 50%.)

The benefits of eating God's way can be rapid and dramatic. One mother shared a story about her adopted son, now in his early teens, who had been experiencing and creating a great deal of emotional turmoil with ADD (attention deficit disorder) symptoms and general teen rebelliousness. He was a picky eater with an addiction to sugar and junk food. However, once the sugar was reduced and his body began getting its nutritional needs met with natural whole food nutrients, all the problematic symptoms quickly disappeared and peace was restored. This same nutritional support is able to save our children from the current epidemic of chronic health problems that are afflicting their generation at ever earlier ages.


The following principles are common to most healthy dietary systems: eat organic food; eat an abundance of plant-ripened fresh fruits and vegetables; avoid refined grains and sugars; eliminate (or reduce) processed foods; if eating meat, eat grass-fed meat, free-range chickens, and wild-caught fish; and limit intake of sugars and avoid chemical sweeteners. All of this can be summed up by saying “eat food the way God created it”.

It can seem challenging for parents to help children make the transition away from eating highly-processed foods. Here are a few suggestions. Children involved in growing, harvesting, and preparing fruit and vegetables, are more excited about eating them. Children engaged in preparing healthy meals and snacks build a taste and enthusiasm for eating those foods. Age-appropriate education regarding the benefits of eating God's way can be beneficial. For older children and adults, videos like “Food, Inc” and “Super Size Me” can be strong motivators to make these life-enhancing changes.

At our learning center, we encourage parents to enhance the nutritional intake of their children by using Juice Plus+, a concentrated whole food comprised of 31 fruits and vegetables. Parents often report that once their children start receiving the nutrients that their bodies need, they develop a taste for healthy food. It is common to see these children make rapid improvement in emotional state, behavior, and readiness to learn. As a result, children with academic and behavior problems have been enabled to prosper in school and at home.



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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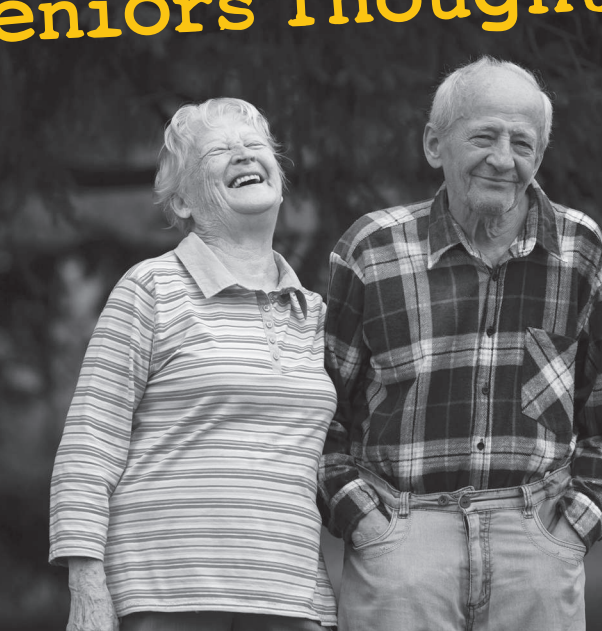
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Seniors Thoughts



2. Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet!

4. I don't need anger management. I need people to stop making me mad!

6. When I was a child, I thought Nap Time was a punishment ... now, as a grown up, it just feels like a small vacation!

8. Lord, grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the friends to post bail when I finally snap!

10. My people skills are just fine. It's my tolerance to idiots that needs work.

6 Joyful Living Magazine

13. I'm going to retire and live off of my savings. Not sure what I'll do that second week.

15. I've lost my mind, and I'm pretty sure my kids took it!


17. Why do I have to press “one” for English when you’re just gonna transfer me to someone I can’t understand, anyway?

19. Oops! Did I roll my eyes out loud?

21. Chocolate comes from cocoa, which is a tree ... that makes it a plant, which means ... Chocolate is Salad !!!

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By Joy Fry



I had traveled to Butare, Rwanda with Chris, the pastor I was dating. We stayed in the mission's complex next to the National University of Rwanda. Chris taught Biblical Studies classes for the local students and I was planning the furnishings for the hotel rooms in the mission's new building.

I knew the shoes would be hand washed and then dried outside the rest of the day. I hesitated and thought of missing my daily walk with Jane on the expansive grounds and gardens of the University. I often spotted the playful and entertaining Vervet monkeys. They amused me as they jumped from tree to tree and became friendly if they thought I might share a banana. I convinced myself I could skip the walk today and have clean shoes tomorrow. The other shoes I brought on the trip were flimsy sandals. I reluctantly placed my walking shoes in front of my door.

"I can't go today. I don't have any walking shoes." Then, Jane appeared with a pair of purple, canvas Mary-Janes.

I slipped my feet into the sturdy shoes. They fit perfectly and warmed my bare toes. “Thanks for letting me borrow your shoes”.

I stopped short. What a shock! Tears rolled down my cheeks. I had this brief image of my covered and protected feet while Chris had a raw and fragile heart. Chris's late wife Kim had died seventeen months before in a tragic auto accident in Rwanda.

“Lord,” I prayed, “why was I called to fill the shoes Kim left behind? She was a devoted wife and mother who sacrificed her time and resources and gave generously to serve in Rwanda. Can I fill these shoes?”

“Are you ready to leave?” I nodded and Jane led the way. It had only been a few minutes since I put on the shoes. And yet, my perspective on the future had changed significantly. I now had a new strength to walk in these shoes. I hoped I would soon walk side by side with Chris.

Today I am. We recently celebrated our one-year wedding anniversary. I was reminded I have the joy of filling the shoes Kim left behind as Chris's faithful and devoted wife.

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"I'M DOING THE BEST I CAN!"

By Bonnie Mark

Awhile back, my husband and I flew to sunny, southern California to attend our grandson's wedding. After renting a car, we began the arduous task of finding our way around the big city. As anyone who's spent most of their lives living in the laid-back-north-state can attest, when you're suddenly thrust into an unfamiliar metropolis with twelve gazillion freeways and zooming cars, well, it can be no small driving challenge.

We had maps. We had "aps". We even had a hundred years of driving experience between us. But what we didn't have at the time was a good dose of patience with one another. Have you been there? Every drop of forty-plus years of Christian training suddenly evaporates like dew in the sweltering Los Angeles sunshine. You wonder how you could lose it so fast, but "lose it" you do, temporarily, right out the window. Stress, OK, now that's what brings this out, we wail to God. But really, isn't stress the test for most of us, most of the time? That's where the rubber meets the road, so to speak, and our flesh makes a comeback. Ouch.

One thing I've realized about marriage is this—we are each a mirror to one another and the Lord doesn't hold back in using our partner to show us, oh, s-o-o-o many things about ourselves. The sooner we learn this lesson the better. In 28 years of marriage, I can't tell you how many times I've been called on the carpet, lovingly, by God, about my own behavior when I am finding fault with my mate.

It was just one of those times when I was expounding on my husband's driving choices that, in exasperation, six little words came out of his mouth that stopped me in my tracks and changed my attitude forever (thank You, Jesus). He simply said, "I'm doing the best I can!" Huh?

Wait just a minute here; he was doing the best he could. Really? Yes, really. The wind in my sails-of-criticism suddenly died down to nothing and I was dead in the water, faced with my own lack, truly a lack of love and forbearance. In that moment, I definitely needed more of Jesus and less of me.

Isn't it true, if we look around, we can see so many reasons to quickly criticize our husbands, our wives, our brothers and sisters, our pastors, the church down the street; the list goes on and on. And the reality is that most all of us are doing just what my husband said—the best we can.

I tell you, there would be a revolution in the Christian world, no the entire world, if we could just get past this one thing and see

that others are doing the best they can in most situations. Jesus came to transform the world with this very kind of grace and love (plus our own repentance where needed). It's that simple.

Jesus, help us, help me, we all definitely need more of Your understanding, Your grace, Your love, Your kindness to share with others. Help us "do the best we can", with Your power, to change the world.



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When Life Doesn't Go As Planned



By Sara Cormany

But then she got pregnant...

And when her body could not hold onto this sweet little love, she returned to a familiar fear that made her wonder if her frail, little self could even endure a pregnancy. And she mourned her loss quietly and quickly, she shoved it under the rug with all the other hard and put on her brave face only to go home and sob in the quiet of her own room. But in her tears, she could feel Jesus now bending toward her in all her brokenness.

And then came Grace...

Her first baby girl who would bring healing to her body. And then came her sweet towhead, Drew and her darling sassy bit, Sophia. And even though chronic illness beat at her door, she felt stronger and thought God had refined her and grown her enough to make her who He needed for eternity. So she threw herself into this ministry and that ministry and this job and that. And she thought her hard was over.

But then came February 2011...

A stroke. A miscarriage. Septic shock. Job loss. Secondary infertility. A cluster of tough stuff that nearly broke her and her little family. Their days became more about survival and trusting God with it all then it did about any agenda or plan or control. Because quite simply, they had none. It was a day-by-day holding onto the feet of Jesus. Clawing, scraping, reaching until He was all that they could see. For three years, life beat them down but Jesus held them up. And then came a day in January...

When she would look down to see a perfect little double line that

said new life was growing within her. A precious miracle that reminded her every single day of His kindness even in the greatest hurt. A miracle that saved her heart when a precious Daddy met Jesus a month before delivery. A miracle who brought beauty and joy and love into the very heart of grief. And the more she carried and then snuggled this new life, she marveled at how beautifully the face of Jesus was revealed in all things hard.

So that when April 2015 came...

When she would learn her auto-immune disease had spread to her lungs. When she would have surgery and face the truth that the same disease had touched every bit of her little body. When a week later, doctors would discover she now had a pulmonary embolism. When she received the news that immune suppression was just around the corner and she would once again, have to depend on a sweet community of friends and family that had surrounded her so faithfully in the last few years...

She knew that this time, in the hard of life, something breathtaking comes that is bigger than her best, bigger than her agenda, bigger than her plan. And that something was Jesus. The only One she knew that could take her hard, her broken and her ripped apart and turn it into something beautiful.

So the girl brushed off April and with a deep breath, looked up at His face, fell right into His arms and said, "Whatever it takes, whatever You need, wherever this leads, it's all Yours, Jesus. So go on, now. Go ahead and make it beautiful."

To learn more about Sara's journey, go to www.wherefeetmayfailyou.wordpress.com.

This story of faith begins with a little girl who went to church and did what she was supposed to do, who loved Jesus but didn't really know Him, who always brought her best but it was always on her own terms, with her own agenda.

And then she turned 24...

When four months later, she sat in the silence of an ultrasound-room, quiet and dark and she saw something she knew wasn't right. A mass the size of a grapefruit. And for the first time, she felt pain. Real. Pain. Pain from the tumor, pain from the fear and pain from the emotion of "What if it is cancer?" or "What if I can't ever carry a baby of my own?"

But then came December and the operation that would end in happy tears as her almost-fiancé would whisper in her ear, "No cancer AND we can still have babies!" Together, they celebrated and thanked Him. And she began to see Jesus a little differently; she began to bend toward Him instead of against Him.

And then she got married...

When she went back to her plans and her own agenda and her own

terms and lived quite happily there for two months. She taught in an inner-city classroom, her dream. And they lived a simple, little love-filled life. But then her body began to fail once again.

She had to walk away from the classroom, away from her dreams, away from everything that seemed utterly normal. And her life turned in to a litany of doctor's appointments and tests and question marks. She tried this supplement and that vitamin and this diet but nothing could stop her body from wasting its way down to 95 pounds. She dealt with angry and disappointed and fist-flailing at her God because life wasn't supposed to be this way for someone who had done everything right.

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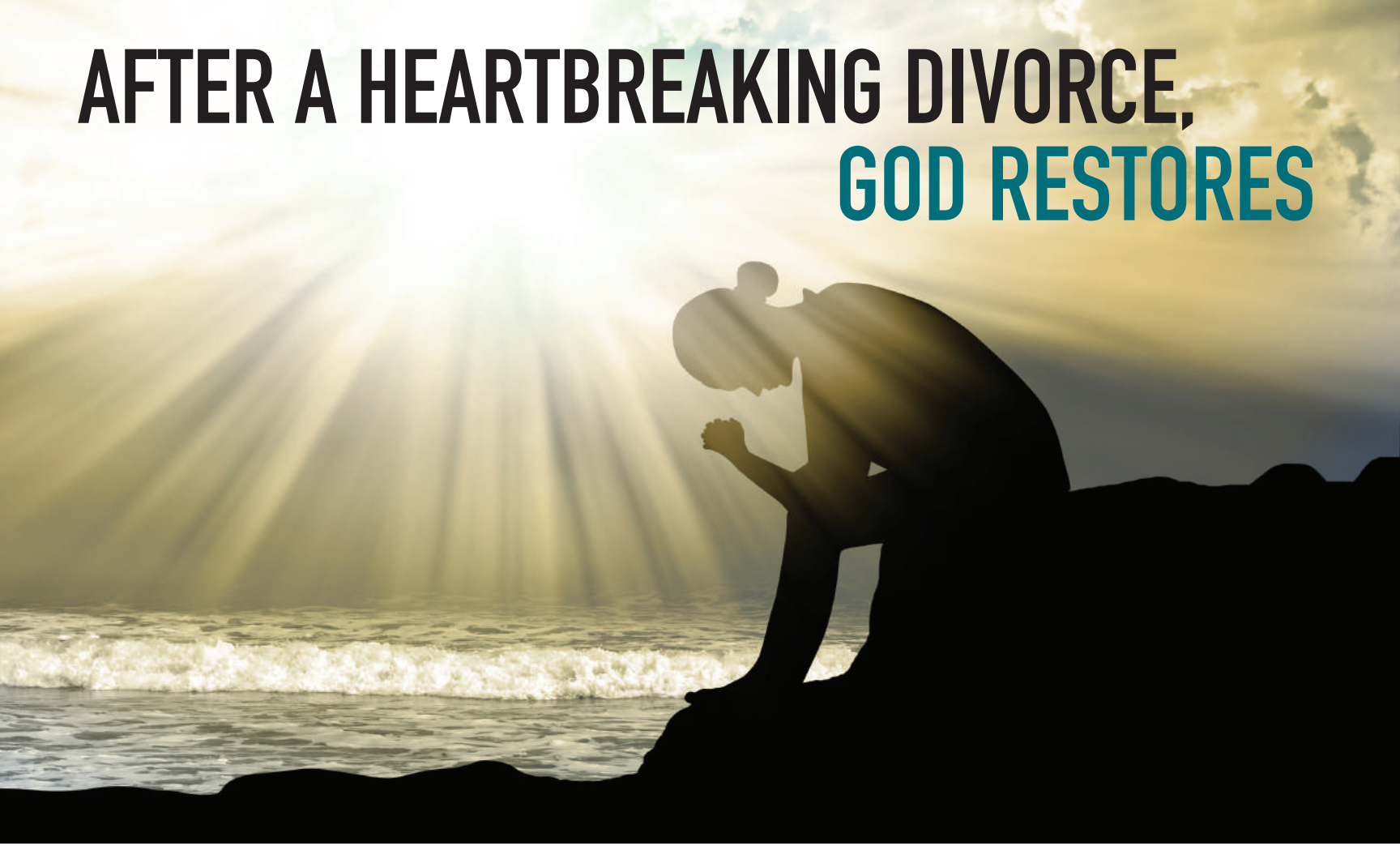
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AFTER A HEARTBREAKING DIVORCE, GOD RESTORES



complish; to rob steal and destroy. John 10:10. Like a knife to the heart. We were divided. I was hurt, angry, and abandoned. I had forgiven but that couldn't save my marriage. How could that be?

SHOCK

My partner was in a flash out of my daily life. I was left with a huge tear in my heart, I felt alone and without direction, all of our plans and dreams were no more. There were days I would feel I was going to make it and then the next moment a memory would trigger and again I could feel. The divorce was the most painful hurt I have experienced in my whole life. More pain and anguish some days that I thought I could bear. Horrible thoughts. Always over almost as soon as I had them. I could never leave my children. I know this now to have been the enemy working very hard.

GRIEF

I fought it. I didn't want the grief because that meant I had to feel it and I had to walk through it. I tried for some time to put my grief into a nice neat little package so I could seal it up and put it high-high on a shelf never to be opened again. Never to feel the biting pain of rejection. Never to cry so hard you can't cry anymore. I struggled with this for so many reasons.

My denial was probably one reason, how could I have not seen the signs that my spouse was not happy? Why weren't the vows broken? Why did he choose her? Why again? I forgave! He said forever! How do I put this away in box?? Did doing so mean I didn't love? Did wrapping up my marriage for eternal storage mean I wasn't loved? Would closing that book mean 13 years of my life never really happened? What about the children?!!! They may be teens but they still have tender hearts!At the advice of a good friends who had been through this grief I journaled, I exercised and I stayed as active as I could. But I still couldn't get past the deep loss.

STUCK

I recognized it and didn't want to be there. Stuck. Stuck to where I hurt over and over again. I prayed daily for God to release me from the stronghold the marriage bond had on my heart. I prayed for the shame and guilt and devastation my divorce had on me to go away! Friends prayed for me and with me. I could feel Gods presence in my life. I took daily walks to talk to God and to center myself. I could very much feel God moving in my life, everywhere I turned amazing friends and strong women came alongside me and boosted me up. My families love was there. My daughters were there. My sisters, my parents, every step I felt love, but why? Then could I not close the box? I still couldn't close that box up in a way that I was sure of. I needed to be sure for me, for my girls. My heart had to be right. For the six months after my divorce I went through the motions of life. I even went to work the day after my former spouse told me he was sorry but he was in love with someone else. I went to work but dreaded at times going home to an empty house. I spent entirely too much time in denial. I dated and with each disappointing date I became a bit almost hopeless that a loyal partner was out there for me. Because I dated too soon and because I didn't truly deal well with heartache, my grief moved along into anger and in that anger I once again I began to compare. Why is he doing so well? Why is he in love? Why does he get to travel? Why am I displaced from my home and my children displaced?

ANGER

The biggest source of my anger was the loss of control I

felt over my life. Why do I have to start my life over because of choice I didn't make? A choice that was made for me. I found that my divorce care class was the best way to work through that anger and to be honest, all it took was ONE time to hear the word that I would become a 'bitter woman' and I pushed myself to the next stage of grief.

BARGAINING

Thankfully this stage was brief – and I thank God He let me see what I needed to see early on so that I would not try to bargain my way into a relationship that was destroyed. I knew my bargains couldn't include my former spouse as he had done things that I could never be a part of again. The integrity that he had was gone and I knew that I could not trust him to be my partner in life ever again. My bargains quickly turned more and more to into prayer. I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice. Psalm 55:16-17.

(Continued on page 14)

By Leslie Parker



It's been awhile. I haven't written an article in five years. I made attempts to write, but I just wasn't ready. Ironically, the last article I wrote was about forgiveness. That article was part of my personal journey to forgive my former spouse for being unfaithful.

I wholeheartedly forgave and was prepared to move past the indiscretions. We were even working toward membership in a church together. The problem was, my former spouse's heart wasn't in it. He had checked out. He told me he wanted out of the marriage. He provided very hurtful reasons that over time I have come to know were excuses. The list of reasons didn't matter. The enemy had come in and he succeeded at what he wanted to ac-

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(Continued from page 13 - Divorce)

Call upon me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me. “Psalm 50:15

DEPRESSION AND ISOLATION

My depression was not always noticeable to the outside world. I didn’t let it affect my work or my family relationships or any obligation’s. My depression was my burden to bear. At home, alone. Sometimes on the floor crying out to God, “Why me”?

My mom, my sisters, daughters and closest friends were supportive. Like most families, they wanted me to be whole again. I wanted to be whole again. One day I found myself smack in the middle of self-examination. I knew then that I needed to be working on ME if there would ever be room for another relationship for me. I finally saw a trusted therapist and told him I felt stuck, angry and depressed. This was a turning point for me reaching out to him to admit I can’t do this alone anymore. I need a push! The counselor listened to me, he shared his testimony with me, he prayed with me and for me, and in time during one of my appointments he said there is something you need to know. What he told me next is something I will never forget. Those words were what catapulted me to redemption. My counselor reminded me that no matter what

I had walked through and no matter how I felt there was truth, and I needed to hear it and focus on that. He reminded me that I was a princess. And, that God loved me. As he led me in scripture to that truth that was buried deep in my heart I wept. And the tears flowed like cold rain on my cheeks.

It was a re-birth for me. My season of emptiness and depression had a ways to go, but I could hold my head high now. I could put the guilt, shame and feelings of abandonment in that box now as those thoughts weren’t helping my case at all. Carrying that burden I was carrying sure as heck wasn’t going to allow me to experience true joy. So I put away all the pain and sadness I could and I began to ‘live’ again.

ACCEPTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

My life went on. Time passed. I got older. My beautiful daughters got older. My grandchildren were born. I felt more and more like me again. The new me. I went on dates, I tried to connect with people and tried to be present but truth of the matter was I still wasn’t ‘whole’ and I knew that. I had accepted the divorce but I still had to accept myself. I forgave my former spouse and I told him so. He asked for forgiveness, too. Acceptance took its precious time. And I can tell you first-hand that there is no

magic time limit for healing and getting to know who you are again after the loss of a spouse. Those yucky hurtful parts of your life don’t go away. I learned something wonderful in my process. By truly putting all of your trust and making God the center of your life, you can be redeemed.

I came to know with all of my heart that GOD CAN RESTORE. God makes a way for your heart to trust again and to love again. And to love yourself again. Acceptance, faith and hope in Christ brought my spirit back to life.

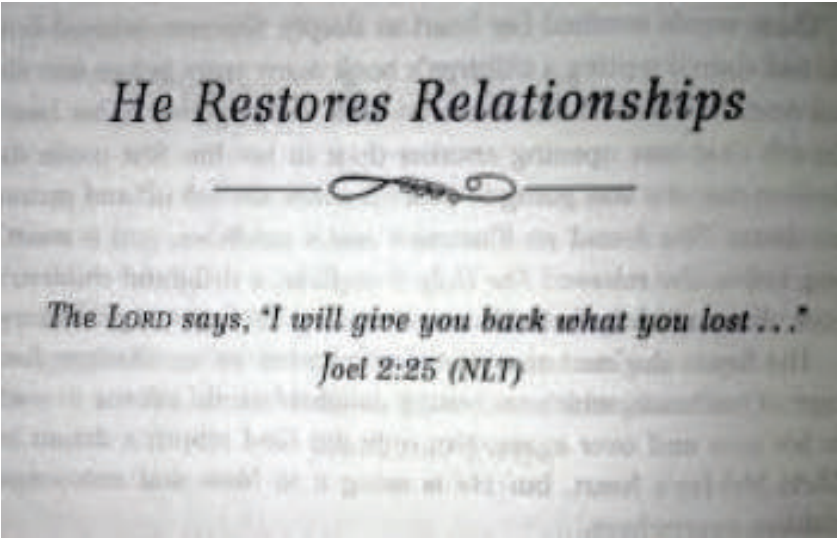
Anytime, I felt pangs of guilt or waves of loneliness or even those leftover thoughts of anger, or feeling like a cast away I knew how to purge those thoughts almost immediately and set them at the feet of our Savior and carry on with my day. The enemy is not welcome in my thoughts.

THE NEW NORMAL

Three years into my new normal I met up with an old family friend.

We went for a walk. A three hour walk. During that walk he shared his testimony with me. He shared the journey he has been on with his also painful divorce. His turning point. He shared his goals, his dreams, all about his children and about his great love for the Lord. At the close of our walk my friend turned to me and asked me if I felt I was ready for a true loving relationship. Without hesitation, I answered “Yes, yes I am”.

I have been dating this amazing man for two years now. We have grown together in the Lord and we have come to know each other’s heart for God, for our families, for our community and for God’s people. We have so much in common and we laugh every single day together. We know that the Lord brought us together for a special reason, and we are both so grateful for the chance to love again. We both thank God for restoring the years that were spent in sorrow and despair. We are excited about a future together. And we trust in Him for everything! Proverbs 3: 5-6



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What's Your ID?

By Wendy T. Deluca

mate but open to whatever God has planned. Even if I am single until He calls me home.

But my singleness doesn't define me. I enjoy many life experiences without being in a romantic relationship. I am a daughter, sister, friend, author, dancer, globetrotter, doggy mommy, therapist, and short-term missionary. These words describe activities I like and my different roles, but in no way represent all of who I am.

My true identity and significance are found in Jesus. In the bigger picture of eternity, this matters most. Nothing else satisfies or gives security. Through day-to-day struggles, my relationship with Jesus is what gives me purpose, hope, and helps me persevere. My life is bigger than just me. I may be single but I am not alone. I am in Christ.

The Bible has many promises about my identity in Christ. God's ID badge says I am a masterpiece, fearfully and wonderfully made, the apple of His eye. I am forgiven, cleansed, justified, glorified, and saved. I am a child of God, daughter of the king, princess warrior. In Christ, I am completely accepted and unconditionally loved.

Because of His love for me, the Lord has a plan and purpose for my life right now, whether or not my journey includes marriage in the future. I will not waste the time He has given me as a single. Rather I will embrace it. I am right where God wants me to be and He will use me. He draws me closer to Him so I may become more Christ-like toward others. God develops and strengthens my character qualities such as:

- Desire to put His kingdom first
- Fruit of the spirit, especially patience with others
- Trust for Him to provide my needs
- Humbleness so I don't think higher of myself than I ought
- Strength to care for myself without a help mate
- Wisdom and discernment to make good decisions
- Thoughts that focus on whatever is true, noble, and right
- Love, compassion, and forgiveness for my neighbor

My unique gifts, talents, and energy can be

devoted to projects that glorify Him, such as writing to encourage other singles. Joy overwhelms me when I invest in people. I don't feel alone or lost. Even my lost luggage arrived the next day as promised. The ID brought it back to the rightful owner. My life ID tag says I belong to God. Does yours?

BIO: Wendy Taryn Deluca, a U.S. Navy Veteran and Clinical Therapist, provides faith-based counseling. She studied at Liberty University and Australia's Hillsong International Leadership College. Wendy is writing a book to help women find joy and contentment in singleness. For more information she can be contacted at wendydeluca.com.

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The uneasiness in my stomach grew when the conveyer belt went around for the hundredth time. I still did not see my suitcase, the black one with the big rainbow strap. Most of the people on my flight from the U.S. to Australia had already left. I tried to remain calm and polite as I explained my dilemma to the customer service agent, a man in his mid-twenties.

"Did you have an identification tag on your luggage?" he asked. After I told him, he typed into the computer. In a few minutes he stopped. With a sad look on his face he looked up and said, "I regret to inform you that your bag is in New Zealand. It will arrive tomorrow."

I took a deep breath. Great. My suitcase is in a different country. I thanked God that the luggage tag revealed my ownership to the airport staff.

This made me wonder what the ID tag of my life would say to describe my personal identity. For people who know me, one of the first words would be that I am single. Or to be more specific, a three-time divorced woman with no children, not actively looking for a date or

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Angel in the Waiting Room

By Renae Tolbert

There are many things I don't recall about the morning my husband died, but one thing that vividly stands out is my encounter with the angel in the waiting room.

I got the call at 4 a.m. My husband was in respiratory failure and they needed to put him on a ventilator. I remember the phone ringing, the word ventilator, and my saying, "I'll be right there." But I don't remember driving to the hospital.

"CODE BLUE ICU – CODE BLUE ICU."

I was standing outside the ICU doors as nurses and doctors rushed past me to tend to the emergency. Somehow, I knew it was my husband. I stood there trembling, freezing cold but sweating. I was in shock. The doctor came to me and said, "We are doing CPR on your husband." I'm sure he said

more than that, but like I said, I don't remember much about that morning.

I looked toward the waiting room. There sat a woman, very calm, holding a book, looking at me. I cried out, "That's my husband!" I don't know why I felt compelled to call out to her, but my mind had checked out and I felt desperate to connect with someone. Our brains are not equipped to hear such news and process it quickly under severe stress.

She put her book down, walked to me, put her arm around my shoulders, and led me to the waiting room. She helped me sit down and held my hand, "Can I pray for you?" she asked. A beautiful sense of peace washed over my spirit at that moment. I don't remember her praying for me or how long we sat there or if I even talked to her. But I had a sense of comfort and peace

with her by my side.

The doctor walked into the waiting room and sat down in a chair across from me. The angel stood up and walked toward the door. Even though she was walking away, she kept looking at me. I felt the most desperate feeling in my life at that moment and said, "Please, you don't have to leave." She smiled, nodded, and slipped out of sight.

The doctor kept strong eye contact as he spoke. I saw his mouth moving but heard no words. When his mouth stopped moving, I asked, "You mean, he's gone?" I felt very confused since I didn't hear what he said. Weeks later, I finally remembered what triggered me to ask if he was gone. It was his words, "There is no pulse."

In my mind, I have revisited that morning at Mercy Hospital over and over. My entire life changed forever when my soul mate was ripped from my life in a blink of an eye. The scene was surreal.

I've tried to imagine what it would have been like had that woman not been there for me to cry out to and say, "That's my husband!" What if she had not come out and gently walked me to the waiting room, or if she hadn't been there to ask if she could pray for me? If there was anything about that morning that saved me from completely checking out, it was this angel in the waiting room. God provided this beautiful woman to bring kindness, warmth, comfort, prayer and peace during those minutes when my husband was taking his last breath. Without her, the fear and loneliness would have been more than I could bear. I believe God knew that.

King David wrote, "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." Psalm 91:11. And He does!

The book of John in the New Testament tells us Mary Magdalene saw the two angels at the tomb of Jesus. We have angels among us today. God is faithful to bring us what we need at the exact moment we need it.

I want to meet this woman who so graciously appeared at the worst moment of my life, who, because of her love for the Lord, became an angel in my darkest hour and deepest valley. I thank God for her obedience to Him to comfort this devastated stranger. Thank you to my Angel in the Waiting Room. May the Lord bless her life always!

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

"But Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angles in white, seated where Jesus's body had been. . ." John 20:11-1

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UNSOLICITED ADVICE

by Cheryl Stasinowsky



YOU KNOW THAT MOMENT when you sit down to meet with a friend whom you have not seen for a few months and they ask you how you are doing and you say one thing and the advice train begins? You find the advice is from their experience and does not even resemble yours. Maybe you are the one receiving the advice or maybe the one giving it, either way... read on...

I do not know why we bite into the temptation to tell people what to do. I am sure we have no intention of forcing our views of life on them, but, at times, we do. We mean it in love. We just want to help. We have no intention of offending them, but we do. Why? We do not like it when it is given to us, so why do we feel the need to give it to others? Read on...

My adult child calls and has found themselves in a bit of a mess or challenge in life and the moment I try to tell them what I think they should do, I hear the words, "Mom, I need to go, I'll talk to you later." Why? I have come to realize and learn they have not called me for advice; they just need to process their situation with someone who knows them and believes in them. This has taught me to be a good listener. This has taught me to ask if they would like to hear my thoughts on their situation or if they just want me to listen. Usually they just want me to listen.

Unsolicited advice, is just that, unsolicited. How do we hold our

tongue? How do we not step in to rescue them from the mistake we feel they are destined to make? How do we let our children, family, and friends figure things out for themselves? Read on...

Think back...when you were in a tough situation, did you really want someone to tell you what to do? When you were the age of your child, did you want to hear what your parent had to say or did you want them to tell you what to do? No way, we were an adult in our mind and had to figure this thing called 'life' out. Remember those days? We have to resist the temptation to fix the other person's situation otherwise, they will go elsewhere to talk and share.

I have learned and experienced this the hard way and from every angle I believe humanly possible. I have to go back to the example Jesus left for us. As I read the Gospels, I do not recall any situation where He gives advice and He, of all people, could give the best advice. He tells stories, He heals, He feeds, He loves, He delivers, He gives, He listens...but advice, I do not see. He allows them, and us, to figure it out and He is always there when help is needed, but we need to ask first. When we ask, we are ready to hear.

We need to teach ourselves to get out of the 'fixer' way of listening and into the 'listener' way of listening. If we are listening with the 'fixer' ears, then we are spending time trying to solve their issue instead of listening to it. Our 'fixer' ears stop listening to the other person while they are trying to solve the issue grabbed. The more I purpose to just listen, the more my children will call. The more I purpose to listen, the more people will learn for themselves.

We can also be tempted to give advice to satisfy our own need to feel important or valued. This is our issue. Remember how you don't like unsolicited advice and then don't give it. Pay attention the next time you are in this situation and choose well...

Cheryl is an author and speaker. Please check out her blog for more information. www.hishiddentreasure.blogspot.com



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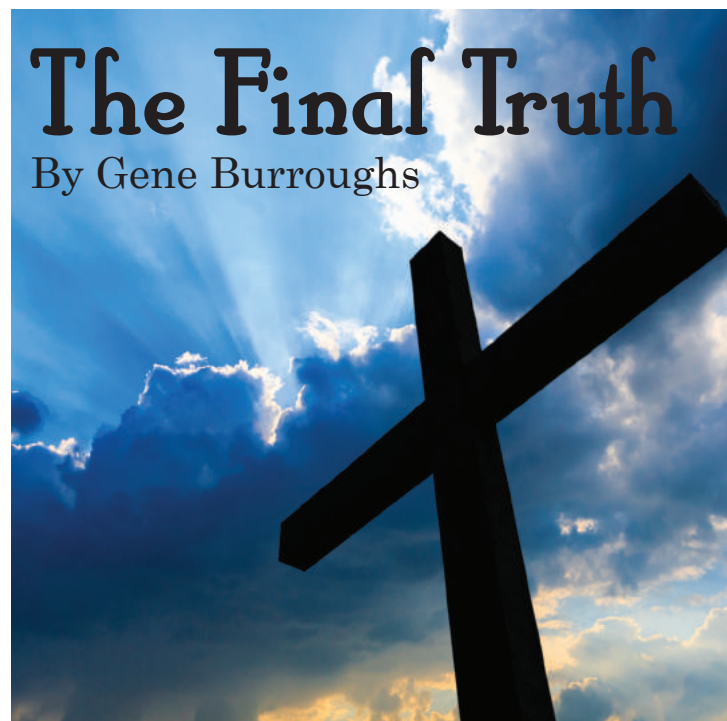
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Today more than ever it seems that many friends, family, and believers, are facing the trials of disease, potential death, and looming fears. Around the world we are seeing our brothers and sisters in Christ persecuted at levels not seen since Roman rule. However as

always there truly is nothing new in the enemies' bag of tricks, he simply cannot find any threat to believers greater than that of the fear of death. He is nothing more than a magician, a trickster, seeking to divert our attention from fellowship with God, yet in the face of trial we always run to our creator.

You see when we as true believers are faced with intense trials it is then that our belief goes from hoping to knowing. We tend to go through life playing well, or at least to the best of our ability the role of a Christian, whatever it is we by our culture, influence, or training deem that to be. However when the threat of death or life transforming trials befalls us there is a true and deep transformation that takes place, the same that every martyr for Christ has ever faced, the truth.

Just today my prayer list includes friends facing battles of cancers, unknown illness, loss of loved ones, poor choices made by some and others the victims of poor choices made by others, the list goes on and on and on. You see we all face trials and persecution of some sort, yet still the one truth remains death has been defeated! You see this is what sets us apart, apart from all who believe in other gods and deities, our God has provided a way, a way proven by history, time, and truth, Jesus Christ paved the way, He defeated death, and we are His "joint heirs".

This is the truth that frustrates the enemy, the truth that disarms him and brings us hope, joy, and comfort in every trial, there is no end for us, there is only a new beginning, a forever future where no more pain, no more trials, and no more enemy exists, a place where death is not even mentioned, for even now, it no longer exists! Bless the Lord oh my soul, I am forever alive in Christ!

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MOTIVATING OTHER'S TO *Change*

By Yvonne Martinez



One of the greatest joys in my ministry is the opportunity to motivate people to change by helping them discover what is right about them. When people discover their strengths and creativity, there is restored hope, vision, and faith.

Most of us know already what is wrong with us! Christians know the scripture "all have sinned and fell short of the Glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin is the falling short of God's Glory but the Cross of Jesus brings forgiveness and releases His Glory is us. Forgiveness and repentance invites those people who "fell short of the Glory of God" to pray and respond with worship to declare the goodness of God. It is, after all, the kindness of the Lord that draws us into Him.

Seeing people through God's eyes calls people into the Glory God has assigned to them. In John 1:42, Jesus called Simon (which means broken reed) the name of Peter, which means rock. Jesus prophetically declared and established that a broken reed would become a rock. Jesus encouraged Peter to be the rock he was destined to become. When someone receives the revelation of their identity in Christ, it brings awareness to the destiny God allotted to them, thereby convicting them of their "falling short" and inviting them into right relationship with God.

In keeping with Paul's exhortation (1 Corinthians 14:3-4) that encouraging words strengthen (build up), encourage (to call near) and comfort (to cheer up), people will be blessed and motivated to grow and know God deeper.

Inside each of us are treasures to be discovered. When we enter into our authentic identity, we access our hidden treasures and bring them into the light. When we co-labor with God we have access to His resources, strength and power. I like Hebrews 11:1 (KJV) "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Authentic identity promotes honor. Honor allows mercy to triumph over judgment. An encouraging community of family and friends will activate the power of the Holy Spirit to change you into the person you are already destined to become.

Let me give encourage you by inviting you to join in this prayer.

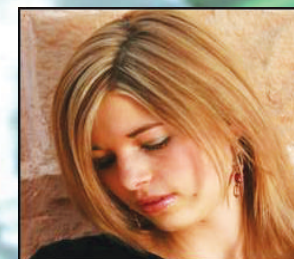
Lord, I ask you to forgive me for any way I hid, rejected or abandoned my strengths, talents and purpose. I deny every word ever spoken that limited my creativity. I come out of agreement with anything that blocked my authentic identity and expression of the strengths you've given me. I break the box of limitation and receive a greater awareness and revelation of your Presence living in me.

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 16 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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The Art of Listening

By John W. Nichols

of our conflict, I was not listening.

A marriage is made up of two people with two personalities and often widely-varying perspectives. The chances of agreeing 100% of the time on every issue is virtually zero. Resolution comes as we share our viewpoints and discuss our differences. Remove listening from the process, though, and we have two people sprinkling words on the floor

Hearing and listening are not the same. Hearing is passive while listening requires action as I discipline my mind to connect with the speaker and receive the message she desires to send. Her words coupled with inflections and gestures will help me decode the meaning, if I pay attention. Here are some helpful tips on listening.

Set aside time for listening.

For discussions on big issues schedule an appointment on the family calendar. Ensure the event is assigned the appropriate importance, and select a suitable venue such as a quiet coffee shop, a serene walking trail, or a favorite bench in the park.

Remove distractions.

Switch off the TV, move away from the computer, and drop that smartphone. Reading a book, munching chips, and following a ballgame in the background guarantees I will miss much of my wife's message. By way of considerate preparation I might request a few minutes to finish the current task and clear my mind

Observe a verbal ceasefire.

Subjects about which we are passionate induce a desire to interrupt the speaker and interject a response. That eagerness usually forces listening to an abrupt halt. Wait. Allow your spouse to finish her thought. Analyze and consider her message before responding. Remember the Creator gave us two ears and

a single mouth, perhaps as a reminder to be "quick to hear and slow to speak" (James 2:19).

Avoid rabbit trails.

Determine to remain on topic rather than scurrying through a cornucopia of issues. Pause to review, and repeat her points to verify the communication link is functional. Ask clarifying questions if necessary.

Listen with your mind as you would read a book.

Speaking and listening are real-time activities and momentary lapses in listening cannot be recovered by flipping back a few pages to review. We must keep up. We can mentally underline or highlight those ideas the speaker emphasizes to retain our focus. Taking notes may be helpful.

Be a kind listener.

Kindness is demonstrated through action. Listening with kindness means I exercise care with the tone of my voice and employ caution in choosing words. I consider my spouse and how I may benefit her in our current exchange.

Listening is more than bobbing my head and uttering a passive, "uh-huh." With a little effort I can improve my skills, reduce communication errors, and strengthen my marriage.



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One frustration we often express to the other party in our relationships is, "You don't listen!" Words are exchanged, sound waves connect with ear drums, but communication does not happen. Do we absentmindedly tune-out our spouses, or is the failure to listen a symptom of something deeper? Can we learn to become better listeners?

My wife was delighted that I was scheduled to attend a corporate effective listening seminar in an initiative to enhance verbal interactions both internally with coworkers and externally with customers. I took notes, completed the homework assignments, and applied myself to learn all I could. My efforts were rewarded as I aced the final exam. Three weeks later in a heated discussion my wife threatened to call my boss to request that he send me back for a refresher. In her analysis

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A WILLINGNESS TO TRY

By Maggie Fair

*“Facing our mistakes now,
so we can stand boldly before
God on that day”*

Like a dark cluttered closet in the hall leading to our warm welcoming family kitchen....our unresolved conflicts left unattended to, accumulate and soon overwhelm the space in our heart and diminish our capacity to choose love over emotional reaction. The next time we visit the closet that we’ve piled our hurts in we may well be surprised when we want to bring out that one treasure box with our feelings inside, when all the unchecked reactions to circumstances suddenly come tumbling down on our head once the door is opened.

I have learned thus far in my own life that I would rather not have to feel pain in the short run, and so out of convenience, lying to myself and or others I will “save the moment” and not deal with very important issues. The risk I take is that others who know me well may not adapt to my new life strategy of making healthy choices. This may well be because on some unconscious level we both know that my old strategy of avoidance served the purpose

of smoothing things over (people pleasing) at the cost of my own personal wants, needs and self worth. Do you see your self as a sacrificial lamb that keeps the peace? If so consider acting now verses emotionally reacting later. This requires letting others know how their choices make you feel. Once that occurs than communication and resolution have a fighting chance to come to your aid and help you reach a mutually amicable creative solution.

Let me give you a current example from my own life that you can use to ask yourself the question “what would I do?” Once you get this answer than you will know if you also have this same struggle that needs to come to the light of God to be healed.

I woke early one morning in order to prepare for taking my severely challenged daughter to church to be prayed for by a special speaker with a healing anointing. I had heard this couple preach 20 years ago in San Jose California and remember how many people the Lord healed through them. I was very excited to be able to bring her there. My faith was strong believing this could be her day to be healed! After the time it took to give her a shower, dress, give her a tube feed, meds, get her out of bed and into her chair and all strapped in then it was my turn. Needless to say hours later we were in the van and finally arrived at 7:40 am in order to get seats. The unfortunate problem that occurs frequently when I bring her to church is that in order to get her into a row I have to first remove a seat on the end of the row (if there is even an end seat available) than leave her there alone while I take the chair to the back of the room. This being difficult enough on this auspicious day because “someone” complained to the doorman that we were blocking two rows. We were told we had to go to the back of the room. The problem with this solution was that there was just as much room in front of and behind us as if a large person were sitting there that people would have to slowly move around in order to take their seats. Would someone complain about a large overweight person? I hope not. I have a lot of respect for the usher in this situation and so when the problem was presented I said “lets come op with a creative solution together because moving us to the back of the room will mean that people will walk into the back of her chair in the aisle behind her as well as have the same challenge to get by her to get to their seats. It also meant that we would not have a fighting chance to get her to the alter to get prayed for by the speaker because at alter call time people throng the aisles to also get prayer and it is extremely hard to get a wheelchair through in the short time between services that is allowed. After a very pregnant pause with people starring at us the answer the usher came up with was to remove two chairs from behind her. I offered to assist in moving the chairs with him, he declined. I thanked him for his help. We were able to sit there the whole service, me with tears pouring down my cheeks from the embarrassment and my daughter enjoying the worship chirping out her own version of the words. At the service end we were just barely able to get her up to the alter and she was prayed for briefly before the speaker was whisked away. I was very thankful that we made it up there. The days following my daughters breathing improved and she stopped choking at night!

Now see for yourself by asking and then honestly answering our dilemma’s question, what the best response would be? Thanks for listening and participating. May his kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven....Please forward your thoughts to me and I will include your responses in my next article. My email address is: maggie_fair@sbcglobal.net

Sincerely with love,
Maggie Fair and daughter Abby Rose



I Was That Girl

by Dottie Collette

I was that girl...who ran in the wrong direction.
I was that girl...who “gave” to get love and affection.
I was grief, expressed in the form of disaster.
Unaccustomed to love, I pushed away my master.
He never gave up on me, even when I wouldn’t reciprocate.
The world absorbed my tragedy, and I’d go on my way.

So much to learn, so little time...
I’d made so many mistakes.
Potential without purpose, seemed to be my way...

Then it came...
He was able to break through,
the ONE who loved me from the start.
HE was able to reach into me.
HE was able to soften my heart.

So much to learn, so little time...
made sooo many mistakes,
but now by the Grace of God, I am re-defined

I was that girl...who gives now to the Lord. HE can have all
of me, that’s what I was made for.
My life has changed...
My thoughts re-arranged...
It is HIM who I love first!
Is is HIM for who I thirst!

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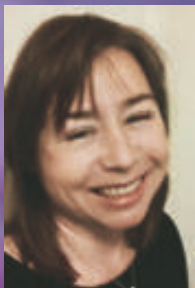




26 Joyful Living Magazine

Joyful Living Magazine 27

The Fragrance of You



By Diane Hunter

Desire arises... again. I thought I had mastered that longing in my heart. I thought I had submitted and surrendered it to the LORD. And I did, but there's something about being human that periodically draws me back to revisit the desires of my heart that have not yet been realized.

This process of surrendering all to God, and at the same time

continuing to pursue my God-given dreams, creates a tension within me. I have felt the increase of this tension mounting in the last several weeks. My heart has been stirred as I have read and heard many encouraging words about the promises of God being fulfilled lately.

But the problem with anticipating the promise for which my

heart longs, is that on the other side of the promise is a history of disappointment. For years I have longed for the fulfillment of this dream. For years I have believed for it, and declared it, and learned to worship in the midst of it.

And yet, in the waiting, I have felt an intensified tug-of-war wrestling for my attention. I have been tempted to view my life from the vantage point of those who have what I want... which is not helpful.

Looking at another's life who has been blessed with the fruit of my dream, is not only unprofitable, but destructive. Here, I realize that comparing my life with another's takes me out of worship, and catapults me into the enemy's camp where comparison leads to a begrudging spirit that begins to resent and divide.

This affects not only my own heart, but it also starts to separate me from others, and from God. What does this train of thought lead to? Accusation. Yes, this initially "innocent" comparison can lead to an offense that ends up accusing God—of not fulfilling my dream. This is the enemy's plan. He wants me to blame God and either rise up in anger, or wallow in self-pity, depression, and hopelessness.

What is God's heart for us? Can we trust His sovereignty and goodness in our lives—even when we don't understand? Can we allow our desires to bring us to Him? Will we consider that perhaps this very thing for which we long is a gift that teaches us how to fully come to Him? Desire clarifies our heart. And, it gives us something of value to offer back to God in worship.

What made Mary's gift of breaking the alabaster jar and lavishing costly oil upon Jesus so precious? The value was in her giving her whole heart. She gave her dignity, her love, her longing for Him. She gave the sustenance, and possibly the destiny, of her life to Him. The value was in the extravagance of her sacrifice. She gave everything.

How does this apply to us today? Does giving everything mean that we no longer have anything? No. God wants us to have full hearts and lives; He wants us to dream, and prosper, as we steward the desires of our heart. The question is: what do our desires prompt in us? Do they tempt us to look at what we do not have and compare, or do they bring us to our King in holy worship?

Is His gaze our focus, as we offer Him the sacrifice our heart as a fragrant offering? Are we willing to say, "Yes LORD, I want my desires fulfilled... but I want You more. Like Abraham waiting for Isaac, I give them back to You, and I love you more. More than my health, my marital status, my children, my provision, my fulfillment..."

I believe each of our lives have their own fragrance

that we have the unique ability to offer up to God when we put our gifts, talents, dreams, and life circumstances on the altar of the LORD. Imagine the savor your life gives to God when you trust Him and worship Him with the desires of your life—especially when things are hard!

Giving this love offering is the greatest opportunity every human being has in this life. May we live with this perspective and learn how to extravagantly give the most treasured parts of ourselves to Him, like Mary did.

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A THERAPIST ONCE TOLD ME to leave my husband. It was unclear the marriage would work and I needed to leave while in my thirties. It would be unrealistic to wait any longer if I wanted a chance to remarry. I was astonished! Now I was fighting for my marriage and I had to make a decision before I lost all chance of happiness in a future relationship. We worked on our marriage for another 10 years before deciding to divorce. What now, my worst fears had come true. I found myself single and over 40.

That was ten years ago and life has been interesting. Initially I lost all hope in happiness. All I wanted was to be a wife and mother. How could life have dealt me these circumstances? What was wrong with me? I was 19 when I got married and

never wanted to be single again. I was broken, hurt and lost. Looking back it’s amazing how I struggled with self worth and value. I felt a need to be attractive and to have male attention. It wasn’t a healthy perspective yet it brought me comfort. God was there for me and kept me safe through a difficult transition. If I look back I can always see how He prepared me to walk through the difficult times in life.

Being single is a difficult place to be in and protect your self esteem. We as women aren’t always nice to each other. It seems we buy into society’s fears and we see each other as competition. When a friend suggested it was true, I was appalled. Then, God began to show me my own thoughts, I was mortified. Since then I have taken captive thoughts of jealousy, competition and comparison. Comparison is always a no win. So let’s stop being jealous and in competition. Let’s be in relationship and celebrate together. Celebrate the agony of rejection and the joy of victory. Let us stay connected as women and help each other walk through the process.

I try as a woman to say physical appearance doesn’t matter. Was that before or after the 10 day juice fast and the latest wonder diet pill? Anchor men on the evening news are

distinguished as they age, women are past their prime. Older men are simply going through a mid life crisis when they marry a younger woman, women are cougars. Our society feeds us these fears and sorting through the lies to find truth is the challenge. Not long ago, I read an article about what attracts men. It was a secular study that stated men were most attracted by a confident woman. The truth is healthy men are attracted by women who have a heart for God.

How then do we find peace in our hearts and move forward with confidence. We find love and value with God, family and community. We will stop being embarrassed that we’re still single and be the daughters of a Good Father. We will walk into our destiny and purpose knowing Jesus loves us, just how we are in this moment. We will not be ashamed to share our insecurities. We will be powerful and confident. We will laugh at the lie that because we’re over forty we will not find love. We will first seek the Kingdom and believe God has a plan for our lives. We will find peace, joy and love in all our circumstances. And above all else we will guard our joy, hope and faith knowing that He is with us always.

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




Dear Yvonne,

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



Q. What is the best thing I can do for stress?

Stress, by and large, involves too much: too many pressures that demand too much of you physically and psychologically. Stressed people imagine, though, that if they can just get everything under control, they’ll feel better! I like to help my stressed clients learn to set better self-management boundaries and learn how to prioritize their tasks. Another great option is, if you know your core values and strengths, to assess if your strengths are calling you into situations rather than being led by God. Learning when to restrain our strength means we pull back to hear clearly from God about moving forward or not.

Q. When should someone get over a traumatic event?

Everyone’s experience may be different. It is not just the conscious memory of a traumatic event that must dealt with. Trauma is stored in the brain as primary sensory memory — a muscle movement, a taste, a smell, a feeling or a sound. Trauma can effect a person in every dimension; mind, body, emotions, and spiritually. Symptoms can start soon after the traumatic experience and may disrupt your life making it hard to continue with your daily activities. For some people, post-traumatic symptoms may not happen until months or years after the trauma. I find that symptoms are often stretching the person’s capacity to understand what happened and will occur until the person has, once again, regained safety and stability in their life.

Q. How does being thankful help me when I feel miserable?

It is as simple as focusing on the solution rather than the problem. As I thank God for what He has done, I begin to feel an increase in hope. The more we invest into gratitude and thankfulness, the more the experience of grace increases. Create a “gratitude list” and watch for faith to arise!

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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