



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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My Place of Refuge

By Anne Gillam

We all need a place of refuge, and for me it is usually in the flower beds. We have several out back on our little strip of property. We live on three acres wedged between two large fields of alfalfa. I garden in what I call organized chaos. Many different flowers come up on their own every year and I consider them gifts from God. I allow some to grow here and there and sometimes weave paths through them. They give me great pleasure.

When the pressures of life get me down I head outside to my place of refuge. My favorite tool is a shovel. I constantly battle what I call the “devil weed.” I believe the proper name is quack grass. Its roots can be a foot underground. It travels along unnoticed at first, then it pops up everywhere, especially in the middle of your favorite flowers. If you let it stay it chokes the life out of the flowers and if you battle it, you most likely kill the flowers along with the grass.

As I battled the devil weed, I asked God if it were possible to get a little help. I wouldn’t mind if he zapped that grass. He didn’t have to take it out all over the world; I realized he made it for a purpose. But if he could just tell it, like the oceans, This far and no farther, I would really appreciate it.

It was then I heard a strange roar. I could not place it at first. It sounded something like a welding torch. I knew no one was home but me, so I looked around to see if one of my neighbors was out working in his fields. I saw no one and the sound kept getting louder.

I became confused and worried. The thought came of the many times I told God I would like to go as did Elijah and Enoch. They skipped what Paul called being “unclothed” in 2

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My Place of Refuge

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Corinthians. I began to wonder if the chariot of God was descending above my head.

When I looked up I was totally amazed. I could only repeat over and over again, “That is so awesome, God.” What I saw were several flocks of black birds, possibly black cormorants. They are birds that fish in rivers. They were merging over my head and tunneling down from a great distance. It made a roar that gave me chills. As quickly as they came they went, but I stood for a while praising God.

It’s comforting to know God is present in so many wonderful ways. He may not take out the devil weed in the flower bed, but he sure can take it out of our lives. Was there a message here? I believe God wanted to say, I am here. He is my true place of refuge, and I take great comfort in resting in his arms.

Awesome Father, thank you for letting me know from time to time that you are still present in my life!



Anne says: “We are now beginning the process of renewal to our home. Part of it was built many years ago (early 1900’s we believe). It is exciting, frightening and unsettling all at once and we are just in the planning and prep stages.” You may email Anne at WEBEBASS@aol.com.

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Connections

Mission Statement

Primary: The Connections for Clergy Support Department provides intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual support and encouragement in the personal lives of GCI ministry families.

Three primary means of serving are the *Connections* journal, the Connections for a Successful Ministry and Life web pages, and the Nurturennet forum. We highlight women in ministry but are inclusive of the needs of the entire family.

Secondary: To promote respect, understanding and support for women, their personal ministries and ministries that serve them.

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• CALIFORNIA •
TAM 2 U

Surviving the Wilderness

I have almost caught up to the 21st century—I say almost because I still have an old flip phone and it takes me 10 times longer to send a text message than my daughter. But I do have an iPod and successfully downloaded music and podcasts. It took me all day (don't laugh) but I was rather proud of myself. It didn't help that the manual was written by a bunch of teenagers who can't seem to understand that anyone older than 50 needs everything spelled out in simple terms. The manual seemed to assume I actually had prior knowledge of these touchy feely things.

Now that I've mastered downloading, I've been listening to podcasts and recordings of conference presentations while I walk. I'd like to pass on some helpful information from a speech given by Amy Warren Hilliker, Rick and Kay Warren's daughter. She talked about the Israelites and how they weren't allowed to walk around the wilderness but had to go through it. Our lives are like that. We have to go through the difficult times even though we wish and pray we can somehow go around, over or under them.

Hilliker gave five points to help us go through times of wandering in our own wilderness: seek solitude, create community, practice contemplation, pursue service and surrender to Jesus.

This is nothing new but it's nice to be reminded sometimes, isn't it? How many of us have good intentions but never seem to get

around to spending quiet time with God? Just you and him, in real solitude and silence. Do you ever take the time for contemplation? When we hear someone talk about silence and solitude, most of us nod our heads and think, yes, I need to do that. But how many of us put it on the calendar and give it priority? It really is important. Schedule it now.

You're probably OK on service. What about community? We need real friends, garbage friends, as Kathleen Hart calls them. Sometimes I think we should go back to simpler times, when women got together to wash their clothes in the river. Wait, not that far back! We can still wash clothes in the machine, but the talking together would be great. When was the last time you and a friend solved the world's problems over tea or coffee? Or even chatted online? Distance is no problem now. Get together with someone soon.

And then there's surrender. Most of us women like to be in control, even though we know we really don't have much control over most things in our lives. When we worry, we think we're exerting control, when we're only causing stress to ourselves and those around us. It takes time, but surrendering to God means we learn—sometimes the hard way—to depend on him and not on our own power. We learn to choose joy instead of worry and let him take care of what we know deep down we can't control.

Our difficulties and trials must be faced, head on, no going around them. If we practice these five things, we can enjoy the wonders of the wilderness and be thankful God knows the way through. Just follow him.

Tammy



From Here to Phoenix

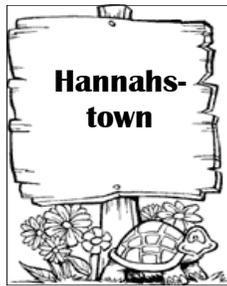
By Hannah Knaack

You've heard it said old habits die hard. Boy, do they. When my husband asked me several years ago what I thought about taking a road trip for our 25th anniversary, I had the suitcase mostly packed before he finished his sentence. He proposed we add to the total of U.S. states we've visited by swinging through several of them on our trip. One small thing I forgot to factor in: my hubby's mantra—Phoenix by sun-down!

Being a former 18-wheeler trucker, he had passed through most of the contiguous 48 states, except for a few in the far northeast corner and South Carolina. I'd been to all states west and south of New York, with the exception of a few in the northwest. I'd not seen a handful in the northeast either, but we decided in case an early October snow storm should blow in, we'd be better off heading for the Carolinas.

My idea of a great trip is to sleep in until 10, maybe take a dip in the hotel pool, enjoy a leisurely drive through the country and a late lunch at a local eatery before moseying on down the road. I suggested we stay off the highway as much as possible, taking the secondary roads for more local flavor.

Entering Pennsylvania, I cranked up the CD volume and perused the Atlas road map. I discovered a town with the hilarious name of Oliphant Furnace. And a bit up the road, Lemont Furnace. Wouldn't it be fun to pop into town and sleuth out the story behind those names? And there, down the road a piece was Hannahstown. Wow—a town of



my own!

I stuck my finger on the name and glanced up just in time to see the brightly lit sign of our hotel. How on earth did we go from home to hotel so quickly? Somebody was driving like his pants were on fire! Well, tomorrow was soon enough to begin our leisurely enjoyments, I supposed. Perhaps this would give me more time to plan tomorrow's sightseeing.

Virginia's autumn splendor came alive as we viewed the small, homey towns. Towns I'd liked to have walked through, but that would "slow us down too much." I noticed the town of Valentines (how appropriate for our anniversary trip) on the map, but before I could mention it, I was reading "Welcome to North Carolina" and shortly thereafter, the hotel sign.

North Carolina overflowed with quaintness and country, a truly beautiful state—most of which passed in a blur. No time for Sunny Side, Chocowinity, Gum Neck or Scuppernong.

We barreled past Scotland Neck, Kitty Fork and Waxhaw, as South Carolina was calling us forward. I should remember more about the Palmetto state, but *someone* was already on the subject of heading home through the Appalachian Blue Ridge Parkway.

Finally, a place to slow down. Being terrified of heights, I was torn between going faster through the toothpick-wide hairpin turns just to get it over with, and wanting to soak in every inch of awe-inspiring beauty. Before I could fully catch my breath, hubby was pulling into the hotel. I was grateful to have my stomach still intact and a whole day's worth of delightful sights to replay.

A few hours from home on our final day of travel, we enjoyed a lovely drive through the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsyl-

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From Here to Phoenix

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vania. Minutes before we left the forest, we were astonished to see an adorable black bear cub dash madly across our path. What a delightful ending to our memorable trip! We knew the exact moment mama bear belted, “Theodore James Bear, get back here this instant!” Little Teddy spun in mid-air and scurried back across the two-lane road.

I could really empathize with the little guy—hurry, hurry to get where you’re going. Seems like on this trip one of us was more interested in relaxing all throughout the day, and one was intent on relaxing once he got to the hotel room. Hmm—I’ve been married this many years and didn’t see this coming? I hate to admit it, but I think I’m slipping a little.



Hannah says: “The Buffalo area has had one of the nicest and warmest summers on record and everyone here is thrilled—especially those with central air. Working on our new landscaping is a great way to spend our time and enjoy the sun. We have to soak it up this time of year!” You may email Hannah at justmomhik@gmail.com.

Has this world been so kind to you
that you should leave with regret?
There are better things ahead than any
we leave behind.

—C.S. Lewis



Briefly Speaking...

Jesus Christ, Superstar

I’m too tired to cook. Let’s go out.” “Where do you want to go?” “I don’t know. Where do you want to go?” Sound familiar? If we don’t know where to go, we usually end up at a Mexican food restaurant.

Back in Jesus’ time, people didn’t have many options when it came to eating out. They didn’t have the variety of food either. (No Mexican food!) Is it any wonder they followed Jesus around? But it wasn’t only for food, Jesus was a rock star. He was high entertainment. He was a miracle worker. You never knew what wondrous thing he might do next. He had some interesting things to say too. One was never bored around Jesus.

Remember the rock opera, *Jesus Christ, Superstar*? Though it was quite a stretch when it came to biblical accuracy, I really liked the music. That’s what Jesus was to these people, a superstar. Thousands of people followed Jesus around. After the miracle of the loaves and fishes, he could hardly go anywhere away from the crowds.

Need healing? He could do that. Need food? He could do that. He could even create wine for you. Need money to pay taxes? No problem. He could calm storms and raise the dead as well. He was a superstar indeed.

Let’s be careful we don’t look at Jesus in the same way. We can, if we’re not careful. Check out prayer time. How much time is spent in praise and worship of the one who’s already given his all? If you’re like me, not nearly enough.

—Sheila Graham
sheila.graham@gci.org



Renewal or Death

By Graciela Hui

We live in an era where it is common for a family to have shared responsibilities. Men and women are forced to earn a living outside the home to cover expenses. When we women are younger we can take on many activities at once—care of a family, work, study, service in and outside the church and have a social life. Then we reach the stage where we have to set priorities based on our real capacity for activities and work.

I attended a seminar as a sales representative, where we heard a lecture titled “The Vision of an Eagle.” The theme was the wide scope of vision we should have for our business or work. Using the analogy of these majestic creatures, we learned an eagle can live up to 70 years. But to reach this age, at around the 40th year they must confront difficult decisions that will allow them to prolong their life till its culmination (sounds familiar).

At the age of 40 eagles become senile. They have difficulty flying because their feathers become heavy. They can’t hunt or fish because their beaks and claws become

too curved and they can’t feed themselves. In the face of this crisis some of them stop eating and starve to death.

But others dare to go through a transformation process that lasts 150 days. During this time the eagles go to a mountain where they find a straight wall and begin hitting themselves against it until their beaks fall off. When their beaks grow back, they use them to pull out their claws. When the new claws grow they use them to pull out the feathers from their wings through a painful and humbling process. Finally, when the new feathers appear the eagles once again overcome great heights, flying like the queen of birds they are.

God’s Word makes many references to the eagle, teaching us lessons for Christian living. Referring to this renewal process the eagle goes through, we read Psalm 103:1, 5: “Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name... who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (*NIV* throughout).

Based on this, to continue having a full

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Nurturenet

Nurturenet is a computer forum for women in ministry. Its purpose is to help you stay connected through digest-mode communication (each day’s messages compiled into one e-mail). You may use it for requests for information, prayer requests, to share



ideas and resources, to receive updates on *Connections* news or just to stay connected! To join or change your e-mail address, please send Tammy a message at tammy.tkach@gci.org. Please do not reply to a post unless you want to address the entire list.

Renewal or Death

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life our God teaches us to be renewed: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Let's look at what weighs us down and keeps us from flying toward our dreams and goals. Let's eliminate what does not allow for spiritual nourishment and avoid what ruins our physical and mental health.

As women in ministry sometimes we enjoy what we do so much we want to do it all ourselves. But we need to equip others for when we cannot do it all and are forced to delegate some activities. We may feel guilty for not doing everything we used to do, but we have to accept our reality. If after we examine our lives we can continue at the same rate of work, that is fine, but if we can't we have to make adjustments based on our level of energy and health.

Let's prepare ourselves to reemerge, renewed and strengthened like an eagle to continue in the rest of our lives, as the queens we are, like the daughters of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.



Graciela and Ming serve as bi-vocational pastor and wife in Tijuana, Mexico. To contact Graciela, email Carmen Fleming at carmen.fleming@gci.org.

Joyce's blog:
<http://i-love-to-tell-the-story.blogspot.com>

If you have a blog, please send the URL to Tammy.

Angel Tears

By Joyce Catherwood

Do angels cry? I really don't know. I had not thought about it until assisting my eldest daughter as she and her husband prepared for a move. As empty-nesters, they planned to downsize, with no yard to worry about, to see how they liked it. She asked me if I would take her weeping-angel garden ornament and keep it for her. She had become attached to it because in difficult moments she said she would look at her little angel and think, Yeah, that's how I feel today too.



The minute she said that, I felt a sudden twinge of heartache. It was a literal momentary ache I felt deep inside. I know everyone has good days and bad days, but I did not want my daughter to hurt, not at all, not in the least, not ever.

So the little angel came home with me and now sits against a tree in a special spot in my backyard. Every time I look at it, it reminds me of my daughter and her tears on her bad days. Most of us as moms can easily identify. We don't want our children to suffer, no matter what age they are. Even as adults, they never stop being our children.

As I thought about it, I wondered, if I can react with such emotion to the mere thought of one of my children being unhappy, how much more must our God of compassion respond to each of us in our struggles and trials. Metaphorically speaking, I believe his heart aches for us when we suffer adversity.

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Angel Tears

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And the heart of God ached in the person of Jesus as he delivered and lifted up his children from disease, oppression and sorrow during his ministry on earth. In one instance, when he saw the widow of Nain weeping in her son's funeral procession, Scripture says Jesus' heart went out to her. How unbelievably reassuring this is.

God figuratively catches our tears in his tear bottle according to David. Psalm 56:8 says: "You have seen me tossing and turning through the night. You have collected all my tears and preserved them in your bottle! You have recorded everyone in your book" (*The Way Living Bible*). Archaeologists in Israel have unearthed ancient wineskin tear bottles used to preserve the owners' tears shed during times of grief or distress. So our tears do have value. Our tender, loving God catches our tears, but doesn't always prevent them. As we journey through this life, we will not be able to completely escape circumstances that bring us to tears.

For many years, I felt as though my heart were made of stone. It did not ache easily. My experience from childhood in a rigid, legalistic religious environment shut my emotions down. I grew up thinking my pain, my sorrows and my tears were not valid because somehow I must have done something to bring my troubles on myself and the ensuing heartache was what I deserved.

The grace and forgiveness of our Lord Jesus have since allowed me to realize my tears do have value, whether pain comes from my own mistakes or not. In his book *Soul Making*, Alan Jones talks about the gift of tears and writes: "Real unhappiness is for those with dry eyes and a cold heart.... Weeping...softens the hardened and dried-out soul, making it receptive and alive. It

clears the mind.... Tears falling on the soul will bring it back to life."

Jones suggests that emotional explosions of grief, pain, embarrassment, anything that bring us to tears, may leave gaping holes in our soul. But at the same time the holes open up new space in us, allowing us to be more receptive to God who then fills those empty places. Often our temptation is to drift, to become thoughtless or self-centered. Hardness of the human heart affects the lives of our families, neighbors, communities and nations. As difficult as it may seem at the time, there may be a need for the occasional thunderbolt, an event totally beyond our control that gives us the gift of tears to soften our hardness.

The little angel shedding angel tears remains in my garden. And I know there will be moments when I also will look at it and say, Yeah, that's how I feel today too, as my daughter did. But that's OK. Tears keep us soft and supple in the hands of a loving God. And some day, when all is said and done, the Lamb at the center of the throne will wipe away every tear from our eyes forever (Revelation 7:17).



Joyce says: "Major life changes have come fast and furious for our family in recent months: a granddaughter going off to college, another moving out of state, two starting high school, a grandson starting middle school, new jobs for two sons-in-law, new teaching position for one daughter, etc. Wish I could find the pause button." You may e-mail Joyce at joyce.catherwood@gci.org.

Zorro and Me

Cars—More Than Transportation

By Barbara Dahlgren

When the animated movie *Cars* came out a few years ago I couldn't help but think about all the cars we've had through the years. Life is definitely a highway and we've driven down it in a myriad of automobiles of all shapes, colors, models and sizes. These vehicles have been more than transportation for Zorro and me; they have been an integral part of our family life.



Zorro and I married in 1969 and our first car was Ralph the 60

Rambler, a '60s model with a manual transmission. One of our first mishaps on the honeymoon was Zorro not liking the way I slid the clutch when I drove. Men get touchy about such things. Our marriage was saved when we bought another old Rambler for me named Rachel. She was an automatic. We

looked at Ralph and Rachel like they were married and so our car memories began.

Once Zorro drove Rachel out of the carport and forgot the passenger door was open. It bent off the hinges. Not having much money, Zorro got a replacement door at the junk yard. Unfortunately it was hunter green and Rachel was beige. Rachel made quite a fashion statement the two months before we could get the door painted.

By the time our daughters were born, Zorro and I were in the Appalachian areas of West Virginia and Kentucky. Zorro had to travel many miles on curvy, two-lane roads to see people who requested visits to talk with a minister about biblical issues. This kept him away from home quite a bit so we would all accompany him. I'd pack lunches, drinks, books, toys, games and music for these whole-day outings. For the first five years of our daughters' lives, our car was our home.

By then we had a station wagon. In those days cars didn't have seat belts, so we made a cushioned bed for the girls in the back. I was a stickler for keeping the girls on some sort of schedule. Visits were timed so we

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Confidential Peer Listener Line

Shall we talk? We're here for you!

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Ginny Rice
225-205-2901, Central
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Helen Jackson
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Cars

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could put the girls down for a nap at the same hour each day while traveling. Our last stop was planned just before bedtime so they could sleep on the way home.

Cleanliness is a big thing with young mothers so during our last visit I would ask to use the rest room, check out their bathtub, then ask if I could bathe the girls while Zorro answered any Bible questions. By the time Zorro was done, the girls were clean, in their jammies and ready to sleep on the long trip home. Ten years later when our son was born, getting a daily bath was not even a priority.

To some men cars are a status symbol. Zorro has always been more concerned about gas mileage and cost effectiveness. One year money was tight so when Zorro was sent as a guest speaker to Alaska he decided to Rent-a-Wreck to save funds. These cars are always clean, well maintained and safety inspected, but some are not all that attractive.

Ours looked like a black and-white police car, fortunately without the flashing light and siren. There's nothing quite like the guest speaker driving up in an old police car with the license plate UGLY 397. Our family would sneak into the parking lot, get out while no one was looking and distance ourselves from the vehicle as quickly as possible. But we saved lots of money!

Did I mention Zorro would rather walk over cut glass barefoot than be saddled with a car payment? So the bad news is our cars have rarely been current models, but the good news is everyone in the family old enough to drive has always had a vehicle. One used car we had was a black Buick with a sun roof that leaked so badly we had to use an umbrella inside the car when it rained. Silvery metal letters on the back read B_ICK because the U had fallen off, so we just called it the BICK.

Then one of our daughters hit the mail delivery truck while backing out of our driveway. No one was hurt. Those mail trucks are like tanks. However, the B fell off. After that the BICK most appropriately became the ICK.

Through the years as families change, so do our cars. Sports cars become compacts after marriage. Compacts become station wagons to accommodate growing families. Station wagons become vans to take teens on trips. Vans become trucks to help our kids move away from home. Trucks become mid-size cars so we can be comfortable as we get a little older.

Life is a highway and if we travel it long enough we learn the make, model, color or size of the vehicle isn't as important as those who drive it. What's on the inside is more valuable than what's on the outside. The same analogy can apply to people. We are all different vessels with a precious cargo within—Jesus Christ. Our size, shape and color don't matter as much as Jesus Christ who dwells within us. Thinking about that helps me drive a little more carefully and confidently down life's highway.



Here are Barbara and Zorro at a Christian Retailers' Convention in St. Louis. If you enjoy Barbara's Zorro and Me column you might enjoy her new book: *Zorro and Me: Adventures With a Masked Man Wielding a Sword*. It has some updated versions of her columns plus a few extra adventures. You can order a copy for around \$10 from Amazon or her blog site: www.barbdahlgren.com. You may contact her at bydahlgren@pacbell.net.

Preparation for Ministry

By Becky Deuel

How does Jesus prepare a woman to be a pastor in a denomination with no female pastors? It's astonishing to look back over the years at how Jesus gave me opportunities that prepared me to serve in this capacity. God is incredibly faithful when he promises he will equip us to accomplish whatever plan he has in mind for each of us.

From childhood, I wanted to attend Ambassador College. That was my goal and what I worked toward. I graduated from Ambassador with a business degree. As graduation approached, I could tell which men would most likely become pastors. As much as I liked some of these guys, I wouldn't date them anymore. No way did I want to become a pastor's wife. I couldn't see myself setting the kind of example required of that position. Did God have another plan for me at that time? Someday, I'm going to ask him.

I've had several employment opportunities as the first woman to do that kind of work at that location or as the only woman in the group. Learning to successfully work in a man's world and still retain a sense of femininity can be challenging. Jesus gave me opportunities to learn how to do this.

My ex-husband was involved in serving our congregation. After he was ordained as a deacon, he was given the opportunity to prepare and give messages. Helping him prepare sermons was Jesus teaching me the skills I would need on my own.

During the summer of 2001, our pastor gave a series of classes on preparing exegetical messages. He opened the classes up to anyone in the congregation who wanted to

attend. The class was another way Jesus helped me learn to prepare a message using a pericope.

In November 2001, our full-time pastor was offered a job with a larger congregation in another state. At that time, the financial model of our denomination was changing. How were we going to replace our full-time pastor when our local congregation was not able to support a full-time pastor's salary? One of the options recommended was a bivocational pastoral team. The pastor's wife told me they were going to recommend I be a member of the team. My immediate concern was not offending anyone in the congregation. Her response was it was time to get over it.

I have been asked many times about my calling to be a pastor—it was a phone call.

Dave Fiedler, the district superintendent, called and asked if I would agree to be on the pastoral team. After some discussion, I said yes. It was a couple of months later I suddenly realized I could have turned him down. It hadn't occurred to me at the time. Dave was incredibly supportive and encouraging. He spent a lot of time and energy helping train and mentor me to develop my skills as a pastor.

Shortly after starting in the pastoral function, I changed positions at my place of employment. I moved to the Training Department and received regular training on how to develop and present material. Once again, Jesus equipped me for the future. I have also taken advantage of other chances to improve the skills needed to develop and present material, such as attending *Speak Up With Confidence* Workshops at Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

One of my best supports has been the GCI

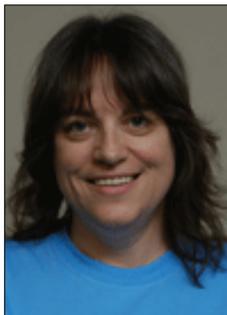
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Preparation for Ministry

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congregation in which God placed me to begin this journey. The people in the Appleton, Wisconsin, church have been wonderfully patient and encouraging and have given useful feedback that has helped me make tremendous progress in my ability to serve them.

I would like to encourage all of you to listen to the Holy Spirit. If he can give me what I need to be a pastor, don't be afraid of where he can take you. And remember, he often gives the opportunities before he has fully equipped you to do the job. Be available, step out in faith and respond to his call.



Becky lives within walking distance of Lake Michigan in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, with her husband Steve. She is co-pastor of the Appleton GCI congregation, Grace Christian Fellowship. Becky is employed at Point Beach Nuclear Plant as a Human Resources consultant and plays flute in the Two Rivers Municipal Band. She is looking forward to her oldest son's wedding October 1. Becky would love to hear from you at becky.deuel@gci.org.

God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

—C.S. Lewis



God Is Never Late, He Is Never Early, He Is Always on Time

By Sybil Norling-Ely

Why is it we always assume God should answer us immediately when we ask him for anything?

I remember growing up as a child with five other siblings. We had to wait our turn for anything we wanted, be it clothes or shoes. My parents could not afford to buy all of us things at the same time. Being fourth in line it took a while for my turn, but wait I had to. My sister, two years younger than me, always threw a tantrum when it was my turn because she couldn't understand why she had to wait her turn.

God knows when to give us what we need (not want) in his time, but he always comes through for us. He never fails us. Seven years ago I experienced just how true God is to his word and how he came through for me.

I decided to visit my daughter and grandchildren in Hamburg, Germany, where my son-in-law was based with the South African Navy. I was excited, but also filled with trepidation. My dad was terminally ill and I was not sure if I should go. When we visited his doctor I told him of my plans and fears. He told me I shouldn't put my life on hold as my dad could live for a long time. My dad was still up and about and never complained about any pain.

The day I left was like a whirlwind,

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running around in circles, hurriedly saying goodbye. I remember my dad coming to see me off at the door and the longing look in his eyes. I was supposed to go away for two months, but in the sixth week of my stay, on a Saturday morning, my husband phoned.

He spoke with my daughter as he did not know how to break the news my dad had died that morning. Friday evening I had written a letter asking him to hang in there. I was going to fax it to him, so you can imagine how devastated I was when I received the news. I threw myself prostrate on the floor and cried bitterly. I howled so much, my grandson who was only 5 at the time comforted me. They could not understand my grief.

I had always wondered how I would react if one of my parents should die. I had not experienced losing anyone close except my grandparents when I was in my teens. My mother and father were always there—through my childhood years and as an adult—so it seemed as if they would be there forever.

Now I had another problem—getting back to South Africa. As my dad died over the weekend, no way was this going to happen. I prayed hard, asking God to intervene for me. I also told him if it was not going to happen it would be OK. Mom scheduled the funeral service for Thursday, so from Monday on I prayed for a miracle to happen.

After a lot of phoning around, my daughter

approached a woman who was a public relations officer for the South African Navy. She phoned the airlines and with much persuasion got me a flight on Wednesday morning. I reached Johannesburg at 9:30 p.m., missed my connecting flight to Cape Town and had to sleep at the airport (if you could call that sleep). I arrived in Cape Town hours before the funeral service started. My mother was in shock when she saw me. She looked as if she'd seen a ghost. She did not know I would be able to come, but I made it, because God wanted me to make it—to be there with my family.

My dad was an amazing man. He did not speak much but when he spoke about his heavenly Father he was on a roll. He was very dear to me. He always shielded me when my mom tried to spank me. My eldest sister, Hazel, who never married and who was still in the home with my parents at the time my dad died, was my dad's concern. When I took him to his doctor he would start to tell me something, but when my sister approached the car he would stop.

The night after he died he came to me in a dream. It was so amazing. I still see him as he appeared to me. Sometimes dreams have faded by morning, but this was so real. He was smiling and his face was as handsome as ever. He spoke to me, and the message he gave me was for my sister, Hazel. This is what he said: "Tell Hazel she must dance with me and that she must not worry. I am OK," and then he was gone. I guess that is what he wanted to tell me all that time. I was so happy God gave me that last chance to see him as he always was, with no pain and suffering. He gave me the opportunity to say goodbye to my dad. In the morning I awoke with a calm over me and felt at peace—my

Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival.

—C.S. Lewis

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dad was at peace.

He left us a legacy we will never forget. God gave him more than his three score and ten years, and he lived it to the full, going about his heavenly Father's business. My dad was 90 when he died.



Sybil and Benjamin have two children, Cheslyn, 39 and Liesl, 38, three grandchildren, Adrienne, 15, Liam, 12 and Cheme, 12. Sybil was an elementary school teacher for 32 years, then did in-store promotions in supermarkets for eight years. In 2004 she joined WEIGH-LESS, a weight and health management program to lose weight. Her goal was to lose 25kg (55 pounds), which she did within a year and has kept it off ever since. Sybil became a group leader for WEIGH-LESS, encouraging and motivating others to live a healthy lifestyle. She loves singing, reading and writing and is addicted to doing puzzles. She also helps with children's ministry. You may email her at sybilben@vodamail.co.za.

If you're a woman and have been ordained for ministry, we'd like to hear from you. Please consider writing a 500 to 750 word article for submission to *Connections*. We'd like to know your experience as a pioneer in this exciting new world of women elders. Please send your article, photo and bio to Tammy Tkach at tammy.tkach@gci.org.

Book Review—

The Jesus Storybook Bible—Every Story Whispers His Name

Author: Sally Lloyd-Jones.
Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI ©2007

Reviewed by Lee Berger

I've been involved in children's and youth ministry for 30 years, and I just discovered the best children's Bible book I've ever read. What makes this book special?

While some Bible story books end each chapter with a good moral lesson, it's been frustrating to me that the authors missed the opportunity to tie in each specific story to God's bigger story. But the back cover explains the universal picture the author shares:

"*The Jesus Storybook Bible* tells the Story beneath all the stories in the Bible. It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby, the Child upon whom everything would depend. From Noah to Moses to King David, every story whispers his name. Jesus is like the missing piece in a puzzle—the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together. Beautifully written and illustrated, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* invites children to discover for themselves that Jesus is at the center of God's great Story of salvation—and at the center of their story, too."

"Every story whispers his name." Each chapter gives a clear hint of God's Son, the Lamb, the Prince, the Rescuer to come. Even with all man's disobedience and God's disappointment recounted in the Bible stories, the author repeats the refrain of the "Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking,

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Always and Forever Love” of God.

As Adam and Eve left the garden after sinning, God whispered a promise: “It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I’m going to do battle against the snake. I’ll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I’m coming back for you!” And he would. One day, God himself would come.”

The book is recommended for ages 4 to 7, but I believe adolescents, teens, middle-aged and senior adults will appreciate the simple

but profound telling of the story in a fresh way. This is a great book for parents, grandparents, Sunday school teachers and youth ministers to read to young people, and it makes a great gift for anyone who has or interacts with children. I’ve read some of the stories (three to four minutes long) in worship services, and everyone relates to the beautiful narrative of God’s wonderful story in Jesus.



E m a i l L e e a t
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Being a Light...has a lighter side!

I pulled up to the drive-thru of a fast-food restaurant and ordered coffee. I asked the clerk to put some ice cubes into the cup so that I could drink the cool coffee quickly. At the window, there was a delay. Finally, the clerk came to the window looking frustrated, and announced, “I’m having a problem. The ice keeps melting.”

The bride was anything but a tidy housekeeper. It didn’t bother her much until one evening when her husband called from the hall, somewhat dismayed: “Honey, what happened to the dust on this table? I had a phone number written on it.”

Dangling Participles (culled from newspapers)

—The burglar was about 30 years old, white, 5’ 10”, with wavy hair weighing about 150 pounds.

—The family lawyer will read the will tomorrow at the residence of Mr. Hannon, who died June 19 to accommodate his relatives.

—Mrs. Shirley Baxter, who went deer hunting with her husband, is very proud that she was able to shoot a fine buck as well as her husband.

—Organ donations from the living reached a record high last year, outnumbering donors who are dead for the first time.

—The dog was hungry and made the mistake of nipping a 2-year-old that was trying to force feed it in his ear.

—We spent most of our time sitting on the back porch watching the cows playing Scrabble and reading.

—Hunting can also be dangerous, as in the case of pygmies hunting elephants armed only with spears.