



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

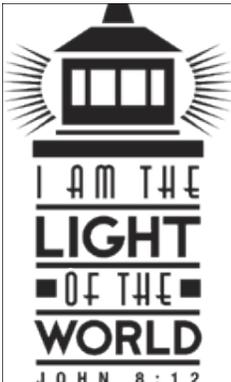
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Color My World

By Cathy Emerson

My engaging nephew is colorblind. I don't know when my sister discovered this, but it must have been a bit of a shock. My mom was an artist as was her mom. My sister makes beautiful quilts so she must see color values and intensities well. My brother is a fine craftsman in wood and he too uses color. I also quilt and do a lot of flower growing and arranging. Color is important in our family.



God made color. He splashed it around this entire world in vivid displays as well as in the vast heavens. The white light we look at is made of innumerable colors, a majority of which we cannot see. Our eyes are capable of registering only a narrow band of color on the color spectrum.

Jesus is called the light of this world, sent down from above. "Jesus said to the people, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life'" (John 8:12, *NLT* throughout). The light we have is from Christ. The deeds we do are from Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4-7, Paul says: "Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

"You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves.

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Color My World

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We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let there be light in the darkness,' has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves."

I wonder how many of the colors we do not see in the light of Jesus? What is the color of thoughtfulness, love or joy? What is the color of fortitude, enthusiasm or peace? We all want to let the colors of Christ's brilliance shine through us. Like my nephew, we may not see all the colors yet. We want Jesus to open our eyes to the true colors. We don't want to see a murky gray in place of a vivid red or green.

Jesus, open our eyes to comprehend your light, to absorb it and reflect it out to others, even if it's a color of the rainbow we've not seen before.



Cathy is busy canning pears and gathering other good things from the garden. You may e-mail her at ceewee@juno.com.

CONNECTIONS

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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 Nurturenent 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

Still Afraid of God?

Are you still a little afraid of God? If you grew up in a church that regularly put the fear in people, you may worry he has something against you. Many preachers claim you can't possibly be forgiven until you repent of every sin you've ever committed. Continuing in a state of forgiveness depends on how often and how deeply you repent of ongoing sins. Even if you've long understood God's grace, you may have lingering fear of not repenting enough. One author uses 1 John 1:9 to back up this assumption: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

I don't doubt this verse is true—I'm sure John was inspired! But I would like to offer another perspective, based on my little bit of understanding of God's loving nature. In Hosea, God told the prophet to marry a prostitute, and he did. Their marriage produced children and Hosea loved his unnamed wife. She eventually went back to her immoral ways. In the same way Hosea didn't stop loving his wife, God never stopped loving his chosen people. They often repented, but repeatedly turned back to idolatry.

The Good Samaritan who stopped to help a Jew in distress also showed one-sided love. In the course of normal, everyday life, the Jew and the Samaritan would have snarled at each other as they passed on the road. The Samaritan laid aside his hatred and prejudice

to help a man who would just as soon spit in his face.

The father of the prodigal son didn't wait for his son to drop to his knees, begging and pleading to be taken back, even as a servant. He ran to his son crying, elated to have him back, before his son had spoken a word.

We tend to think God is like our parents or teachers, peering over reading glasses, looking down his nose, waiting for us to sheepishly or desperately admit our sins and ask for all to be forgiven before giving us the well, OK, but don't do it again condescending nod. And then we may or may not get the ruler on the knuckles before he sends us on our way.

Growing in grace and knowledge means we must put aside our childish notions of an anthropomorphic God who thinks and acts as we do. He is not like us; his thoughts and ways are not like ours. He is not a petty, malicious, self-centered being who gets offended when we sin and then peevishly waits for us to crawl to him on bloody knees. Just as in the examples of Hosea, the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, our God loves and forgives us even while we are sinning! Christ died for the ungodly. His love is not conditional and his forgiveness is ours before we even think to repent.

God does desire our repentance. He wants us to understand our nature and proclivity to evil. But what exactly does repentance mean? It means to change, to turn around, to go a different direction. It doesn't mean drumming up artificial sorrow, especially when half the time, the sin was enjoyable and we're only sorry because we got caught. The only way we can truly change our ways is in the power of the Holy Spirit.



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Still Afraid?

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Through the Holy Spirit, through him who is also God, we are enabled to turn our lives over and surrender to him to live as new creatures in Christ. Through him we can also surrender our fear and even dread of the angry, vengeful God we've been told is waiting to punish us.

God is not mad and he has not turned away from us. He stands at the door, anxiously awaiting our return, though we must return daily or even hourly. He lovingly awaits those who still feed at the pig troughs, no matter how long it takes. His love is un-failing and his grace is never ending.

As ministers of the gospel of grace, we need to let fearful people know—and remind ourselves—who God really is, not a cruelly gleeful, knuckle-rapping schoolmaster, but the loving father of his prodigal sons and daughters.

Tammy



This is what the *Lord* says: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the *Lord*, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the *Lord*.



—Jeremiah 9:23-24, *NIV*

Desperate in the Dressing Room

By Hannah Knaack

If you're like most women, you'll agree one of the loveliest phrases in the English language is *clearance sale*. The higher the number in front of the phrase, the more attractive it is. Bon-Ton's 75 percent off clearance sale put a smile on my face, and I'm headed to the dressing room with my selection of jeans.

Once inside the dressing room I'm reminded of why I don't like shopping for clothing. These full-length mirrors are entirely too honest for my fragile psyche. I'd prefer a mirror revealing just the face and neck, but that would defeat the purpose of fitting rooms. I'm thankful there's just one mirror in this fitting room. Those three-way mirrors would give me nightmares for a week.

My daughter has admitted not wanting to be seen in public with me if I wear mom jeans, so all the jeans I've selected this morning are boot cut, low waist. The boot cut works for me, as it balances out the two bagels and hot chocolate stuffed into the body now stuffed into the upper portion of these jeans. But after trying on all three pair, I feel safe in saying Mr. Levi would turn over in his grave if he knew his jeans were cut low enough to disclose certain birthing scars some of us would prefer to keep hidden.

I peruse the racks for more jeans and while checking sizes, my eye lands on a pair with a size 0 tag. Friends, this is when it's difficult to think like a Christian. The little angel on my right shoulder whispers, *Don't*

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Desperate

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compare—God blesses as he sees fit. The not-so-angelic creature on my left shoulder whispers, *That's disgusting—who could be so lucky—may she be cursed forever!* Suddenly I've lost all desire for trying on more jeans.

I head over to check out the shirts and tops and feel as if I've been abruptly deposited into the middle of a rainbow—a very bright rainbow. The retro styles and prints instantly remove several decades. Suddenly I'm back in my early college days, where polyester was king and paisley was queen.

Before long I'm in front of the mirror again and it's not pretty. These cute, retro

But one thing I can leave this store with today, and that's my dignity.

styles may look great on the average 98-pound teen, but it's definitely scary on a mature model. No woman who possesses wings under the upper portion of her arm should be allowed to leave the dressing room wearing a sleeveless top, no matter how stylish it is, unless accompanied by a matching jacket.

Back on the floor again, I'm searching for something a bit more sophisticated, something that doesn't scream 1970s. I find several shirts I really like, but I'm soon discarding them all for the same reason—too low cut. Since when does one have to display

Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without words and never stops—at all.



—Emily Dickinson

way too much *décolletage* to be considered well dressed? No matching jacket will cover this over-the-top exposure.

So I have no jeans, no tops, much less patience and I'm nearing the end of the last rack of clearance items. That's when I spot the few swimsuits left over from summer. The first one I pull off the rack is a bikini so incredibly tiny my mind refuses to comprehend. Pretty sure I have Band-Aids in my cabinet back home that would cover more than these few flimsy pieces of string and dabs of cloth.

All this time spent in the store and not a thing to show for it. Now I'm telling myself, as I've told my kids for years, to check my attitude. But one thing I can leave this store with today, and that's my dignity. Stepping over to the cashier's counter, I grab one of the How May We Serve You Better? forms and hastily scribble, "Please consider installing automatic dispensers of antidepressant medication in the dressing rooms!"

I'm halfway home, trying to work off a major funk, when I pass the landscape nursery and their large, multicolored 50-percent-off, clearance-sale sign catches my eye. Twenty minutes and three gorgeous hydrangea plants later, I'm a happy woman. No mirrors, no sucking in my stomach, no stretch marks revealed. Like I said, the words *clearance sale* are two of the loveliest words ever to run through a woman's mind.



Hannah says: "Who doesn't love the Farmer's Market? Mom and I have been bringing goodies home all summer, including local honey—yum. Now fall is upon us and it's homemade soup weather. Corn fresh from the market goes into my Corn Tortilla soup served with cheese bread—irresistible!" You may e-mail Hannah at justmomhlc@juno.com.

Come to Papa

By Paul Kurts

But he did not go to church! Those words described my grandfather who died when I was only 4 years old. My grandmother was a dear Christian woman who was there every time the Methodist church doors opened, but my grandfather didn't go to church.

Papa, my grandfather, owned a country wholesale grocery store in a small town in Mississippi. Before the depression of '29 and the stock market crash he regularly gave groceries to needy families on credit, not asking or receiving payment for the goods.

In the evenings when he came home from the store we loved to ride on the running boards of his old Olds, up the steep drive to the carport. Then we would go in and play with what seemed like thousands of silver dollars as we built castles on the living room floor. He rolled around on the floor and played with us.

When it was dark we would often go out back and shoot fire crackers under tin cans and blow them up sky high. We would laugh and have such a wonderful time with my non-churchgoing Papa. He smoked good ci-

gars, drank good liqueur and was known to be the best husband and grandfather anyone could ask for. He was a delightful man, humble, faithful and fun. He and my grandmother raised a wonderful daughter—my mom.

As I look back, I see the light of Jesus and the love of Jesus written all over the life of that man. I know now he was adopted from before the foundation of the world in Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-14) and included in the life of the great Triune God. That's the reason for the joy, love, patience and goodness he exemplified in his short life of 54 years.

I so much look forward to reconnecting with him in the heavenly realm. I know no church could have done for him what Jesus did. I thank God for the truth that is in Jesus and the knowledge my Papa is not lost or being tortured some place, but is with his loving Father in Heaven now and for eternity. Praise God.

Hang on Papa, I will see you soon. I love you.



Paul and Pat live in Madison, Alabama. They have three grown children and two grandsons. Please visit his blog at www.pastorpaulsinteractiveblog.blogspot.com. You may e-mail him at teedup162@knology.net.

Nurturennet

Nurturennet 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.

Sharing My Journey

By Ginny Rice

When my husband Richard died after 46 years of marriage and 40 years of working together in the ministry, my life changed forever. I didn't question God's purpose in taking him home. Richard's work on earth was finished. But I knew mine wasn't yet. I was so thankful that after he retired, Richard encouraged me to find my passions and pursue them.

I've always loved working with children so my first volunteering was helping our son, Anthony, with summer preteen camp. He's not only the pastor but also the camp director. I became involved in women's ministry and prison ministry as well. I had plenty to keep me busy and didn't feel my life ended when Richard's did.

Due to a number of circumstances our attendance dwindled and camp was no longer cost-effective. We realized God was leading us to a new focus—inner-city kids. Through our involvement in prison ministry we learned the inmates' journey to prison usually began when they were children, often neglected and unloved. So Anthony decided to re-vamp our camp concept. We needed lots of training in how to work with these

special kids. We also needed generous financial grants to begin our new mission—bringing kids to camp who hadn't experienced love. Many have a parent or close relative who's incarcerated.

God supplied our needs and he found the kids. It's been incredible! Little did we know this was only a beginning.

Last December some of our church members began to experience health problems from mold in the church building we rented. The mold was the result of hurricane Gustav last September. So we moved into the conference room of a bank. Yes, we're a small congregation.

In January Ted Johnston came to our area and gave the second phase of the Servants Passage seminars. A number of our members attended and were anxious to apply Ted's exhortation to focus all our gifts into one major ministry. Some were involved in the youth camp, some in prison ministry, but most were content to worship and fellowship once a week. God used Servants Passage to stir our hearts and the majority were now eager to find out how we could unite to make a difference. We agreed God was calling us to year-round inner-city youth ministry.

This meant we needed to relocate our church to an inner-city neighborhood. After much prayer and searching we found a place (no, God found the place) we could remodel. It's in an area teeming with children. One of our young women has a degree in Social Services and wants to start an after-school program. We have a huge paved area for outside activities, including water sports. We have all the equipment we use for summer camp. And most of all we have a love for children (God's love) and a desire to show them what it feels like to be loved.

For man's greatest actions are performed in minor struggles. Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment and poverty are battlefields which have their heroes—obscure heroes who are at times greater than illustrious heroes.

—Victor Hugo



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Sharing My Journey

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And we have a new name—Lighthouse Family Fellowship. We already have the logo of a lighthouse beaming light to those in danger. This is the first time our congregation has had our own building to put our name on and to use whenever we want. And it's the first opportunity we've had to worship on Sunday. Our first service was Easter Sunday. We had a full house!

Our attendance had been 20 to 30. Now we have 40 to 45 every Sunday. Only our sanctuary is ready to use, but we began having a youth service every first and third Sunday afternoons. So far we've had more than 20 each time. We have food before youth church and then games afterward. The enthusiasm is fantastic! We are also sponsoring a summer basketball team.

What an incredible journey God is taking us on, and each day he works miracles for us. None of this is what we would have chosen, but we know it's where the Lord wants us to be. And we have so much fun working together on all the various projects.



Ginny lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She enjoys attending Connecting & Bonding conferences. You may e-mail Ginny at ginny.rice@wgc.org.



Be not the first by whom the new are tried, nor yet the last to lay the old aside.



—Alexander Pope

My Ditch Story

By Kaye Kissee

It had been a long day and I was driving home from a business trip. A thunderstorm was brewing ahead. Within a mile of the house I was ready to make a sharp turn toward home (a turn I've made every day for 10 years) when I noticed a car in my rear view mirror, practically on my bumper. At the same time another car darted around the corner coming toward me. I was concerned if I stopped to let that car pass before turning left, the car behind me might rear end my car, so I kept going.

What I didn't know was just around the corner, the weather had shifted and rain was coming down in a torrent. I couldn't see the road. The car behind was still on my bumper. I saw a huge bolt of lightning and heard tornado warning sirens. I could turn toward home on the next road, but the rain was coming so hard I couldn't see where to turn. I saw what I thought was my road and quickly turned only to abruptly land in the ditch just beyond the driveway of a nearby house.

I sat there hardly able to believe what had happened. I was driving a rented car for the first time and felt terrible I had landed in the ditch. I was OK, but thought I'd better get out of the car so another car didn't hit me. I fumbled for my cell phone so I could call my husband Jim and let him know what happened. As I got out of the car a woman and her daughter started yelling at me to get in their car because of the tornado warnings all around us. I wasn't in their car long when I saw Jim coming to my rescue.

Jim called a wrecker service to get my car

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My Ditch Story

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out of the ditch. The car wasn't damaged too badly, but this little incident taught me a big lesson.

As I sat there feeling jolted, I thought about how quickly our lives can change. I thought about Liam Neeson (the actor who lost his wife in a skiing accident) and his children and how quickly and tragically their lives changed. How devastating to lose a wife and mother in the blink of an eye.

I asked Jim what he thought my running off the road into the ditch and coming to a very jolting stop might mean. He said, "The meaning was you ran off the road and came to a very jolting stop." I had to laugh. But at the same time, my life had been a little out of control. With a lot of projects and responsibilities at work I had been running from one to the other.

After the accident, I saw things from a different perspective. My boss was much more concerned that I wasn't hurt than about having a wreck in the rental car. She insisted I go to Urgent Care and have my neck checked because it was showing signs of muscular strain.

My co-workers were also concerned about

me and laughed along with me about my incident. The two projects I wanted to accomplish that day didn't get done. I spent all morning at Urgent Care and had to attend an unexpected meeting in the afternoon. When the office closed at 4:30, I went home to my husband instead of finishing those projects.

Like Jim said, I ran off the road and came to a jolting stop. Maybe that's all there is to it, but I've learned some things. The people in our lives are what's most important. Don't you know Liam Neeson and his sons wish they could have some time back to spend with their wife and mother? Sometimes our friends and co-workers really care for us and we don't even notice. Many projects we think can't wait can wait until tomorrow.

Can you see some lessons you might learn from my little story? I hope so.



Kaye and Jim celebrated their 40th anniversary in June. He is retired but continues to pastor the Springfield and Joplin, Missouri, churches. Kaye was promoted to retail manager over five Girl Scout shops in southwest Missouri. You may e-mail Kaye at kkissee@cebridge.net.



Confidential Peer Listener Line

Shall we talk? We're here for you!

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Zorro and Me

Life Is a Trip

By Barbara Dahlgren

When Zorro was 16 and had just gotten his driver's license, he and his friend, Mitch Knapp, decided to take a trip to Canada. They planned to leave the Los Angeles area, drive up the California coast, stop and see some friends in Oregon, go to Washington and then over into Canada. It was an exciting excursion for two teen boys in the 1960s. Keep in mind, there were no super highways at the time.

Zorro's car was a '50s Nash Ambassador. The trip was a blend of guy humor, radio blasting rock and roll music (the songs we now think of as classics) and that euphoric feeling of independence at being on the road. Two wild and crazy guys off to see the world—well, Canada anyway.

Finally they came to the Puget Sound area in Washington and ferried across the water into Canada. They had reached their destination. Mission accomplished.

The trip home was not without a few adventures. By this time they were running out of money, so they picked berries on the side of the road to eat and painted house numbers on people's curbs to earn money for gas.

They were in the middle of nowhere, with no gas stations around and the car started to overheat. The floor board on the driver's side became quite warm. Smoke started wafting up from the floor board. They had some water and two squirt guns (never leave home without your squirt guns) so they filled the squirt guns with water and shot them at the floor board to cool it down. Eventually they pulled over to the side of the road to survey the situation.

They discovered the engine manifold had broken off and fire from the engine was shooting directly on the floor board, catching the insulation on fire. So they found a tin can and wire, and wired the can to cover the broken manifold. That seemed to solve the problem. The can contained the fire so they didn't need to keep squirting the floor board.

They kept driving. Then the overdrive in the transmission started giving them trouble. The car wouldn't stay in gear so they would accelerate it and coast for a while, then accelerate and coast some more. They finally came to a gas station in a little poke 'n plum town. You know what a poke 'n plum town is? You poke your head out the window and you are plum out of town.

They knew fixing a transmission would cost a fortune and they didn't have much money. So they prayed before going into the gas station. The mechanic examined the car and discovered all they needed was a fuse for the transmission's overdrive. The cost was ten cents.

All went well until they got to the grapevine, that long steep incline coming into the mountains surrounding Los Angeles. The car gradually lost power. It went slower and slower, even in passing gear. They didn't know it, but they had run low on oil and were burning out the front main bearings. So they drove into Los Angeles at a top speed of 30 miles an hour. Needless to say, the Nash Ambassador was laid to rest in the local junk yard.

They returned home safe and sound, triumphant at having survived the journey, which in retrospect may have been a minor miracle.

Much like this story of Zorro's and Mitch's teenage adventures, our lives are a journey. The world recognizes this through



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Life Is a Trip

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books, quotes and songs like the one from the movie *Cars* that says, “Life Is a Highway.” Our life’s journey is like driving down a highway or road.

We ride though hills, mountains and valleys. Sometimes the roads are paved; sometimes they aren’t. Sometimes we don’t know which way to go. There are unexpected curves and bends. We come upon road work that takes us on detours. Sometimes we have an accident because we are going too fast. Sometimes people are honking at us because we are going too slow. Sometimes we mis-read signs. Sometimes the signs mislead us.

As we look back on the roads we’ve traveled we think about what has happened and they become stories. Some stories reflect good things; some bad; some are funny; some are funny now but not funny when they happened. I seem to have a lot of those stories in my life. That’s what happens when you marry a man like Zorro.

It’s amazing most of our stories don’t tell about what happens when we reach our destination. It’s always about what happened on the way there or back. I think that’s because life is not a destination but a trip—a journey.

If we aren’t careful we can live our Christian lives on hold in anticipation of the future

coming of Christ. We miss the fact he is already with us now (Luke 17:20, 21). He isn’t some future destination—he’s with us on the trip. And it’s a good thing he is. No telling where we would end up if he wasn’t.

About 20 years later Zorro and I were assigned to pastor churches in the very Washington area he had traveled to as a teen. He revisited the Puget Sound ferry they had taken into Canada. He noticed two signs at the dock. One read “Ferry to Bremerton” and the other “Ferry to Canada.” Evidently they had taken the ferry to Bremerton, which is in another part of Washington State. All these years they thought they had been to Canada. Lucky for them life is the trip, because they didn’t reach their destination.



Barbara says, “Our family took our 18-month-old granddaughter Sophia to Disneyland this summer. We found that five adults for one 18-month-old was just the right ratio for taking a toddler to visit Mickey Mouse.” She hopes your summer has been as much fun as hers. You may contact her at bydahlgren@pacbell.net. © July 2009.

Learn to enjoy what you do; rather than do what you enjoy. It is not always possible to do things that one enjoys. But if you learn the art of joyful living, even seemingly boring chores can bring you joy.

—Unknown

Have you had a kindness shown?
 Pass it on; ‘Twas not given for thee alone,
 Pass it on;
 Let it travel down the years,
 Let it wipe another’s tears,
 Till in Heaven the deed appears,
 Pass it on.

—Henry Burton



On a First Name Basis

By Joyce Catherwood

OK, you're going to think this is really weird. But when Carn and I were first married, I had difficulty calling him by his first name. Why? I've been in the Worldwide Church of God since age 8. In the early years of the church, WCG ministers were to be shown absolute respect, so they were always addressed as Mr. So-and-So. Authority was a huge, oversized focus in those days. And pastors represented authority.

My dilemma: Carn was a minister; we had a short courtship and didn't know each other well (that's another story); it was drilled into my brain from childhood I should never refer to a pastor by his first name. I wasn't so brainwashed I called him Mr. Catherwood, but I ended up not calling him anything.

Carn finally noticed and asked me why I didn't use his first name. When I told him, he thought my hang-up was absurd. I practiced trying to say his first name, but it always stuck in my throat. It didn't work. To this day, 46 years later, he is still "Hon" to me, not because of bad theology, but because old habits die hard.

When grace washed over the Worldwide Church of God, eventually turning it into Grace Communion International, and Jesus

Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content.

—Helen Keller



became our focus, it might come as no surprise to you I had difficulty calling Jesus by his familiar name. I didn't know him that well, so it's no wonder I was not on a first name basis with him. And it was the authority thing again, as well as the old church teaching that using the name *Jesus* was a little sissified—it's what Protestants did.

I've learned fathoming the depths of grace equals knowing Jesus in a personal way. The conversion of the WCG set me on the path of becoming intimately acquainted with him. What this represents is enormous to me.

I set out on a quest to know Jesus better. I devoured books that spoke of him. Most of you remember reading books and material not written in-house by WCG affiliates was for years highly discouraged and at times prohibited. All this new, fresh, inspiring information felt like gentle rain drops falling on my parched and dried up soul.

I had difficulty calling Jesus by his familiar name.

I was especially taken by books describing Jesus' physical journey as the Son of Man and, in particular, how he broke all the rules when it came to his treatment of women in an uncompromising, excessively male-dominated society. I was so smitten, I started writing articles about these women and how their lives were positively touched by Jesus. This allowed me to dig even deeper into the scriptural and historical accounts of his life and the society in which he was born. It became a passion.

When I finally met Jesus at the foot of the cross, how I wept. I was changed forever. I still find it impossible to shrug off the heart-

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First Name Basis

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rending emotional effect on me every time I enter his suffering. His willing sacrifice on my behalf can only be described as love—unconditional love. And I am tasting it for the first time in my life. Every trip to Calvary chips off another small piece of my legalistic heart of stone.

Now I have no problem calling him by his familiar name. We are on a first name basis. I love to say his name! Truly, the process of becoming personally acquainted with Jesus has become the greatest joy of my life.



Joyce says she and her next-door neighbor are now bona fide garden guerillas, a.k.a. those who take over and beautify an abandoned and deteriorating public landscape. They have tamed the weed-infested, construction-junk-filled easement between their two houses and turned it into a green and colorful spot for birds, bees, butterflies and neighbors. You may e-mail Joyce at joyce.catherwood@wcg.org.



Joyce's Garden

Connecting & Bonding

Holy Uselessness

By Jannice May

In a *Family Circus* cartoon in the *Los Angeles Times* a little boy asked, “When I finish my homework, can I do something useless?” Taking the time to do something useless is not such a bad idea. We all lead busy lives and need a little down time.

Why are our lives so busy? Sometimes we have responsibilities thrust upon us; sometimes we take on more than we need to; sometimes we don’t know when to say yes and when to say no.

I caught part of a Dr. Laura Schlessinger radio show while driving to the Glendora office. A young woman lamented she told a co-worker whom she barely knew that she would be her bridesmaid. Now her own sister was getting married and wanted her to be her bridesmaid as well. The cost of both weddings was too much for her, so she wanted to know what to do.

Dr. Laura told her she had given her word and her word is important. She suggested the woman either borrow the money or charge it. Dr. Laura added, “After the wedding you need to take some time to think about what it is about your personality that keeps you from saying no.” Her answer started me thinking about my personality and why I take on more things than I should.

I know I’m not alone. Having a ministry for ministers’ wives allows me to hear how

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Holy Uselessness

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much some women have on their plates. Along with their family duties, many are leading worship, serving as church treasurers, giving sermons, shopping for church socials, and don't leave out making coffee every week—plus working full time. I wonder if some innate personality gene in ministers' wives prevents us from saying no! It reminds me of the book *When I Say No I Feel Guilty*. Do we think the more we have on our ministers' wives résumés, the better ministers' wives we will be?

At our Delaware *Connecting and Bonding* conference last year author Marilyn Hontz, also a minister's wife, shared how she avoids taking on too much. At the end of each year she prays for God to show her where she should be serving next. This helps her focus on what she should be doing the next year so she won't be all over the place. This idea might help some of us.

Jesus set the example for us for holy uselessness.

Just as important as learning to say no is knowing when to say yes. Ruth Vong, Dean of Students at Fuller Theology, spoke at one of our ministers' wives luncheons. Ruth told us about her busy life and her need to slow down and make some changes. She shared that a good friend invited her to a picnic lunch with her daughter and volunteered to bring the lunch. Ruth was very busy that day and wanted to say no, but decided to say yes. If her friend who also leads a busy life taking care of a physically challenged daughter could take some time off, so could Ruth.

The picnic lunch and walk through the park restored Ruth's soul. She realized she

needed to put more of these breaks in her schedule. Ruth said: "We all need a Sabbath. I'm not talking about a certain day or block of time. It's about taking the time to do something different to restore our souls." Ruth called it "holy uselessness" time.

Jesus set the example for us for holy uselessness. He often sought to get away from the crowds and daily grind. He took time to go to the mountains to be alone and pray (Matthew 14:22). He also enjoyed an occasional nap (Matthew 8:23-25).

Ruth mentioned taking time to savor a cup of coffee while reading the paper can restore our souls. My husband likes to go to the movies and to Starbucks to restore his soul. We have a friend who loves to hike and collect rocks. Maybe you like to read, take a bubble bath, watch ocean waves or just sit in peace and quiet. Holy uselessness is finding out what you enjoy doing and taking time to do it.

Those in ministry will always lead busy lives. Learning when to say no or yes will always be a struggle. And our plates will more than likely always be overflowing a bit. But we must guard against burnout. Holy uselessness can help. I encourage you to take the time needed to restore your soul. It may be 15 or 30 minutes or maybe a whole day—whatever works for you.

I think the boy from the *Family Circus* cartoon may have stumbled upon something profound. Let's all do something useless today.



Jannice and Curtis live in Banning, California. Be sure to check out the C&B website at connectingandbonding.org for coming conference information. You may contact Jannice at conbond@acninc.net.



The Lighthouse

By Phyllis G. Rose

I woke up early one Sunday morning, thinking about my coming performance with my guitar. The song starts with this thought: “There’s a lighthouse on the hilltop that overlooks life’s sea.”* Then it goes on to tell us how the light will continue to guide us on our journey. Being a fisherman’s wife the first half of my life, I can relate to this in so



many ways. From our place, we could see a lighthouse standing in the center of an outlet going into the Atlantic Ocean, not far from Canada, our northern neighbor.

I looked up some scriptures to read to emphasize the point of the song. The first was 1 John 1:4-5: “In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” Darkness of evil never has and never will overcome or extinguish God’s light. He lights the path ahead of us so we can see how to live. We need to let the guiding light of Christ shine into our life.

The second was John 8:12 where Jesus said: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Jesus brings presence, protection and guidance. He is the light of our world.

The lighthouse warned the ships of many large ledges and shoals that could be their end without the light illuminating the dangers. Many times it was foggy and a noisy horn blew every 15 seconds to warn the ships

of the danger. Seamen were a cautious lot and watched ahead for these lighthouses. Their maps showed the layout of the land along the shore. The lighthouses were welcome and plainly marked with many notes and figures to guide them. Then the song relates how the lighthouse saved the ship or it would be no more.

I am sure these sailors were grateful for the lighthouses and placed a great deal of faith in their being there, well lit and in control should a problem arise. The inspiring chorus gives thanks to Jesus for being the lighthouse saving us from sin. The sailors owed their lives to the lighthouse, as we do to Jesus, who shines a light that we might see the way to go. Without it what would become of the ship—or us? The light in the top of the tower swung around in a large circle, illuminating the surrounding area. Whenever I see a lighthouse, I repeat the chorus of this song to myself.

My mother-in-law worked in one of the lighthouses doing housework. She said it was a lonely, hard life but the dedicated men and women who manned the lighthouses knew the safety they offered to all who sailed. Many of the keepers stayed for years, leaving only for supplies and hurrying back. They were not free from occasional catastrophes, but they served faithfully as long as health would allow.

The song continues with how folks changed and suggested a sad fate for the lighthouses. Since things changed with the passing of time and with large ships no longer sailing past as in bygone days, why not tear the lighthouse down? The use of the lighthouses eventually ceased because of modern technology, but they stand like a string of pearls along the coast, reminders of

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The Lighthouse

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the important purpose they served. I have little doubt this was sad for the men and families who gave many hours of care to these stately life-saving devices.

Continuing, the song gives prayerful thanks for the light in the stormy night that saved many ships and for the lighthouse that still stands there on the hill. Many may not see Jesus as their sentinel but it does not extinguish him and his life-saving light.

Now the lighthouses are tourist attractions collecting funds to help keep them in good repair. At times some were sold as homes. I'm sure the tourists enjoy visiting these historic landmarks. I am also sure they cannot begin to imagine what it was like when those tall heroes of the past were performing their life-saving jobs.

I am grateful the Light of one lighthouse can never be extinguished, and we can always invite everyone to let the Light of the world shine into their lives. Those who see it will never again walk alone or forget the experience, no matter how many try to tear that lighthouse down. Jesus is the Light of the world.



You may e-mail Phyllis at momouse@gwi.net.



*The Lighthouse, Ronnie Hinson, © 1971

Failure is the path of least persistence.

—Unknown

Book Review—

Soul Craving

Author: Joel Warne

Reviewed by Tammy Tkach

The tagline for this book is “An invitation to the feast that satisfies.” Author Joel Warne invites the reader to “feast on true spiritual food—essential practices and postures of the heart that help us develop loving intimacy with God and satisfy our longing for him.”

Warne talks about some traditional and a few new (to me) spiritual disciplines, but not in a traditional way. His focus is on learning to let God satisfy us in every way, simply with his presence.

I especially enjoyed the last few chapters on suffering, rest and responsiveness. Warne's insight on resting with God in our troubles struck me as particularly wise. I learned we shouldn't beg and plead for relief, then get mad at God when our prayers aren't answered the way we want.

We would do better to sit with him and let his presence be enough. *In our pain*, we need to let our love for God and his love for us be all we need. We always want God to come to the rescue, which is fine—David often prayed for rescue. But Paul said God's grace is sufficient even while we are not being rescued (my paraphrase).

If you need to take a break from your busyness and remind yourself how to enjoy being with God, this book will be like taking a spiritual bubble bath, complete with candles and chocolate. It can help you discover or rediscover intimacy with God, which is the true craving of our souls. ♥

Being a Light...*has a lighter side!*

The preacher asks, “Does anyone need prayer?” Jake shouts, “Please pray for my hearing.” The preacher puts his hands on Jake’s ears and prays for 10 minutes. Preacher: “Well, Jake, did God answer?” Jake: “I can’t say. The hearing’s not ‘til Thursday.”

—Contributed by Doc Gibbs

How to start your day with a positive outlook:

1. Open a new file in your PC.
2. Name it “Housework.”
3. Send it to the Recycle Bin.
4. Empty the Recycle Bin.
5. Your PC will ask: “Are you sure you want to delete *Housework* permanently?”
6. Calmly answer “yes” and firmly press the enter key.

Have a great day!

A doctor performing a complete physical, including the visual acuity test, placed the patient 20 feet from the eye chart and told him, “Cover your right eye with your hand.” He read the 20/20 line perfectly. “Now your left.” Again, a flawless read. “Now both.” There was silence. The man couldn’t even read the large *E* on the top line. The doctor turned and discovered the patient had done exactly as he’d been told—he was standing there with both eyes covered. The exam was over.

Sign behind an Amish carriage:

“Energy efficient vehicle. Runs on grass and oats. CAUTION: Avoid exhaust!”

Susie’s husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months. Things looked grim, but she was by his bedside every single day. One day as he slipped back into consciousness, he motioned for her to come close to him. She pulled the chair to the bed and leaned her ear close to be able to hear him.

“You know” he whispered, his eyes filling with tears, “you have been with me through all the bad times. When I got fired, you stuck right beside me. When my business went under, there you were. When we lost the house, you were there. When I got shot, you stuck with me. When my health started failing, you were still by my side. And you know what?”

“What, dear?” she asked gently, smiling to herself.

“I think you’re bad luck.”

—www.jokesclean.com