



# Connections

◆ A JOURNAL BY & FOR WOMEN IN MINISTRY ◆

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## Night Hike

By Vicki Hart

At a women's retreat in Columbus one of the activities was a night hike through the woods led by a trained guide. So many women wanted to go they divided us into two groups. I was in the second group and as we headed into the woods we passed the first group coming back out. They informed us it was pitch black in the woods, and we would need to go single file and stay connected to each other. In one area, we would encounter quite a drop off so it was especially important to listen to instructions and stay connected.



As I like to be in control, I found myself becoming fearful and unsure of this whole adventure. I decided to head back with the first group and skip the whole thing. One of my friends with the first group said: "Oh you've got to do it. You'll regret it if you don't. You've got to overcome your fear—it's quite a faith experience." So I proceeded on with the group.

But I was growing more and more uncomfortable and at the last minute decided I would head back. The first group had disappeared and I stared into blackness. Someone said, "You can't go back by yourself; you'll get lost." She was right. I was committed. Another friend assured me she would hold on to me while my daughter held on behind me.

We couldn't see anything and I gripped both women tightly as about 30 of us headed into the woods. The woods at night can be a scary place. We made a few jokes and I began to relax. Being together was comforting. Our guide didn't have a light but felt her way along. We knew she was familiar with the trail, and we followed her instructions to the letter. It took us about 30 minutes to finish the course and then we headed back to a campfire and light.

Through this adventure, a couple of profound thoughts came to mind. First was how much we need a guide in life. We need someone who has gone before us and who knows the trail and who will lead us through unknown territory. The second was how much we need each other. Because of fear many times I try to face my situations alone and wander around

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## Night Hike

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in the darkness. I know when life gets dark I need the support of friends and sisters to walk with me and hold on to me.

As I journey on this hike of life I want to stay connected to Jesus, the incarnational God who came into the darkness and became the Truth, the Light and the Way. He has conquered the ultimate darkness, which is death. I also want to stay connected to others in community. When the dark times come, these two things will get me through. I wouldn't consider going into the dark woods alone and I am not going through this journey of life alone either.



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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 WCG ministry families.

Three primary means of serving are the *Connections* journal, the "Connections for a Successful Ministry and Life" web pages, and the Nurturernet 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.



## Worshipful Teaching

Movie preachers really know how to preach. Reverend Ford in the movie *Pollyanna* was good at making his parishioners squirm in their pews, with talk of hellfire and punishment for sins. He could put the fear in the whole town, from grumpy old Mrs. Snow to little Jimmy. He was an old-fashioned, small-town preacher who believed his responsibility was to look after the salvation of every man, woman and child.

Styles have changed, and some now refer to themselves as teachers rather than preachers. Sin and moral responsibility aren't discussed much and hellfire and brimstone have been replaced by admonitions to walk in God's favor. I'm not sure brimstone (whatever that is) was effective anyway.

Paul was an effective preacher, even though he didn't go to seminary. One could say his seminary training came from Jesus himself. Perhaps that's why I don't feel I'm being preached at when I read his words. Paul comes from a position of humility and authority, with no brimstone and no self-righteousness. He does lay it on the line. The reader is left with no doubt as to his or her place in life—a sinner who has received redemption from the Savior of the world.

Teaching people from God's Word is a big responsibility and isn't to be taken lightly. In James 3:1, James writes that teachers will be judged more strictly. I'm sure any of you who have ventured up to a podium have felt the weight of the responsibility and the seriousness of those words. I know I do and I pray each time for help, strength and grace to live up to the high calling of



sharing God's Word with others.

I found something in the *Intervarsity Press New Testament Commentary*, which I access through [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), that helped me overcome the fear of the great responsibility of teaching. The author, writing about Colossians 1, said: "Paul's purpose in thanking God with profound prayer and praise is to locate his instruction in a setting of worship."

In the same way, by thanking and praising God, I put myself in the position or location of worship when writing or preparing to speak. This means I will not be coming from a place of self-righteousness, arrogance, I'm better than you or know more than you. Paul called himself the worst of sinners, and when I read his words, I know he means that. I identify with what he says and feel we are in this together.

Worshiping God puts me on the same level as those to whom I am writing or speaking. To not do so would elevate myself and would dishonor the Lord.

Preachers or teachers who have an attitude of worship while preparing to teach lay themselves at the foot of the cross and understand what ministering to others really means. As ministers—priests in the kingdom of God here on earth—may we all learn to worship as we prepare and as we minister to others.

Tammy

Study and worship should flow together. Students of God remain humble when they worship, and worshippers who also study, worship with substance and truth instead of sentimentality.

—Dallas Willard & Jan Johnson,  
*Renovation of the Heart  
in Daily Practice*



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# Watching Over the Widow



## Mom and the Close Calls

By Bill Miller

God says he watches out for all of us, particularly the widow and the fatherless. I firmly believe he does. Two incidents my mother experienced helped solidify that conviction.

### Mom and the Fall

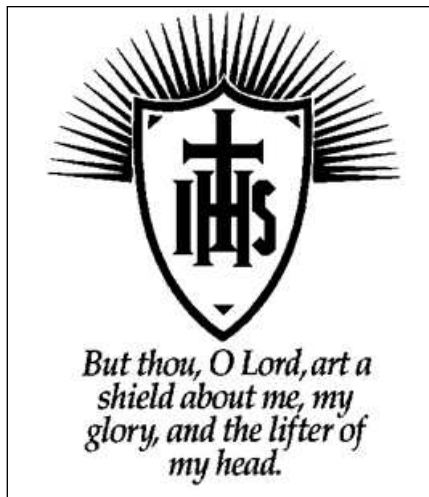
One day Mom was going through her usual morning routine, which included putting seed in the bird feeders, filling the hummingbird feeders with sweet nectar and hanging them up on their holders. A hummingbird feeder hung just outside Mom's kitchen window from a support attached to the garage. It was great entertainment for her to watch these birds and their blur of wings as she washed the dishes. One morning Mom veered from her usual method of hanging the hummingbird feeder. She usually reached over from the garage steps and hung the feeder on the attached hook.

On this morning, for some reason, she was not able to reach the hook. Under the feeder was a flowerbed made with three stacked railroad ties, one upon the other. She decided to step over onto the top rail-

road tie under the feeder, about 30 inches off the ground. As she stepped onto the railroad tie, her feet flew out from under her. She later said all she could remember was the feeling of twisting and turning in midair, all in a split second. She landed on concrete and crushed stone. As soon as she hit ground, she popped right up, realized she was OK, and said, "Thank you, God!" She couldn't figure out how she landed on her left side in the position in which she found herself.

I surmise her guardian angel flipped her around so damage from the fall would be minimal. She was a little sore, with a few small bruises on her hip, but that was all.

For a 76-year-old woman, suffering from osteoporosis, fibromyalgia, serious back problems and arthritis, going through that fall with only a few bruises indicates godly intervention. What do you think?



### Mom and the Fire

For quite a few years, Mom complained about the oven unit of her stove. The actual temperature didn't coincide with the setting, causing her frustration during baking. Many times, she threatened to replace the unit, but didn't do it.

One morning, Mom smelled smoke. She looked into the kitchen and saw flames coming up from behind the stove, which was only a few inches from the wall. She lived many miles from the nearest fire department, so her first thought was to call a neighbor for help. After many long minutes,

Speak in anger and you'll give the  
greatest speech you'll ever regret.

—Anonymous

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## The Widow

(Continued from page 4)



the neighbor came over. They were able to find and turn off the circuit breaker that powered the stove. Expecting a serious fire to develop, they were relieved to find there was no longer any smoke. Neither was strong enough to pull the stove away from the wall, so Mom had to wait until her neighbor's husband came by. He pulled the stove away from the wall and found melted wiring and other signs of intense heat. Even though Mom had seen flames coming up from behind the stove, the wall showed no heat damage whatsoever, not even a black smudge.

Coincidence? Good fortune? Lucky? Scientific explanation? I don't think so! The most logical conclusion is: God watching over Mom.

I hope when we read or hear about such accounts, we realize asking for God's protection upon ourselves and our loved ones should be a regular part of our daily prayers. When I think about what could have happened to Mom in these incidents, I thank God profusely for being there to take care of her. How many times has God delivered us and our loved ones without our even being aware?

Let's thank God daily for watching over us, and never take his loving care for granted.



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*Bill and Kathy live in Everett, Washington. He pastors the Everett and Bellevue churches. Bill grew up in Chicago. He enjoys fishing, softball, golfing and gardening. He's looking forward to an ice fishing trip in February. E-mail him at [bill-miller@verizon.net](mailto:bill-miller@verizon.net).*



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## Forgive—and Forget?

By Dixie Marino

Along back my husband and I took a weekend. A friend came days to visit Maggie, but it was the first time she had been alone at night since Littleboy died. When we got home I could hear her displeasure before we got to the door. She fussed and mewed at the same time. Of course I picked her up and loved on her. Then she wanted all her favorite treats and more petting and finally she settled down.



I unpacked and decided to lie down to read the newspaper. Our usual routine is that I try to read and she pokes her head under the paper. She finally ends up sitting on it staring wide eyed with a what's-your-problem look. When that didn't happen I looked for

her. She was lying at the foot of the bed.

I thought, well at least she has forgiven me and I reached out to rub her on her belly. Faster than I could see, she had fastened all four paws around my arm, claws unsheathed and would not let go! Then she reared her head back and clamped down on my hand. Her eyes were dark and wild. I couldn't pry her off. I called for my husband. When she heard him coming, she let go and ran. No blood was involved. She was punishing me. I thought, well so much for forgiving and forgetting!

Maggie has long since forgotten the incident, but I have reflected on it—that is, the human version of forgiving and forgetting. We know God forgives perfectly and he can perfectly forget. Through his Son Jesus, we have the ability to forgive. Jesus teaches us to forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15).

God gives that ability to forgive, but the complete forgetting part is not yet ours. We need to forget. We want to, but what people have done to hurt us keeps popping up in our minds, uncalled, unwanted—unforgotten.

But does this mean we haven't forgiven someone? I think not. It means we still have our carnal self to deal with as we become more spiritually dependent on God.

So where do we find help? In Romans 12:1-2 we learn we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices, but we are also to be aware our minds are being transformed daily. This is a renewal process—ongoing and Holy Spirit powered. Throughout the book of Romans the apostle Paul reveals this as a struggle for him and for us. In Romans 7:18-25 he agonizes over the pull of the carnal mind, “In my flesh dwells no good thing.” Romans 8:1 tells us there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. We remember we are forgiven and God has forgotten our sin. We set our minds on the things of the Spirit that bring peace and delight (Romans 8:5-6).

Reading on in Romans 8:31-39, we come to the rejoicing and assurance that is ours in Christ Jesus. If God is for us, who can be against us? Nothing can separate us from the love of God. We are more than conquerors through him who loves us.

Maggie has forgotten because, well, she's a cat—an exceptional cat for sure, but a cat nonetheless. We forgive and keep forgetting because we're God's children, and he has freely given all things that will bring us to joy and peace (Romans 8:32).



*Dixie and Charles just celebrated their great granddaughter's first birthday. They are looking forward to her first Christmas.* E-mail her at [CMARINO001@ec.rr.com](mailto:CMARINO001@ec.rr.com).



# Oh, the Wonders of Winter!

By Hannah Knaack

As I put together my youngest child's memory book, images of yesteryear came alive for me. We've lived in northern climates all his life, so I couldn't help but notice the number of winter scenes showing all the fun he'd had in the snow. Anyone



who has lived with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), as I have, will tell you there are only three good seasons. But I had to ask myself—when did I lose the wonder of winter I felt as a child? Slowly, a few of those winter memories began to drift into my mind.

It was early winter many years ago and my mom was making my sisters and me new winter nightgowns of the softest flannel dotted with tiny pink roses. I was thrilled to receive something new this time—not my sister's hand-me-downs. As I headed off to bed, Mama was just beginning to sew my nightgown.

Imagine my surprise upon waking the next morning and discovering my new nightgown laid carefully across my bed. I had to wonder—are there elves that come out at night to help mothers work so quickly? (I've also wondered if enough of us

mothers and grandmothers arrived at the local lingerie shop with flannel gowns in hand, would they kindly cover those scantily clad mannequins so we won't have to shield our child's eyes as we pass by?)

School mornings come early and in winter that means cold, cold, cold. So when school was canceled because of weather conditions, it was the best of days. And if Mom chose to use that early morning time to make gooey, sweet and buttery cinnamon rolls—well, life just didn't get any better for kids!

I remember wondering—if we all carefully unrolled our cinnamon rolls and touched them end to end just how long the roll would be. In the rare event that any such culinary delicacy should pass my lips these days, I'd wonder which would take me to my final resting place first—the half pound of butter or the half pound of sugar oozing all over.

When my youngest son was 4 or 5 he discovered the elusive magic and mystery of Jack Frost's artistry. Oh, the lovely swirls and frosty one-of-a-kind designs that covered the windows from side to side. He'd trace the designs with his chubby little finger and giggle as the melting process changed it into something unrecognizable. Wondering aloud, he asked, "Mom, is there really a real Jack Frost?" Meanwhile, I was wondering—should I get the weather-stripping kit on sale at Kmart, or should we cover the windows in heat-conserving plastic?

One of winter's highlights for my children was the challenge to create the perfect snowman. It's difficult for tiny hands to roll and roll, then lift and carefully place just so. Sometimes dads and moms are called to help.

My son and I had made one small snowman and, silly me, I thought we were done!

Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.

—Mark Twain

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**Winter!**

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“Now it’s your turn, Mom,” my son said, covered in snow from top to bottom, “and I was wondering—if we make one that looks just like you, could we use your hat and scarf?” I was doing some wondering of my own—just how does one go about making cellulite on a snowman?

So, you can see that along the way and through the years, my wondering has become just a bit too realistic. Where is the fun in that? Oh, to be a child again and see the wonders of winter through innocent eyes—making soft snow angels just our size, sucking the frosty ice off of fuzzy mittens, delighting in the magic of sparkling diamonds on snow and hearing the swish of skates on ice. I’m just wondering—if it snows tomorrow, would you like to make snow angels with me?



*Hannah says: “I can’t believe it but this year I am actually anticipating winter! I’m eager for our daughter’s visit in December and now that the fall house repairs are done, I get to rest a bit. The local library just received a big shipment of Christian books, so I’ll pair those up with a cup of hot chocolate and I’m ready to go. Spring will be here before I know it!” E-mail Hannah at justmomhkl@juno.com.*



The happiest people don’t necessarily have the best of everything. They just make the best of everything.

—Anonymous




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**Zorro and Me**
**The VIP Cometh**

*By Barbara Dahlgren*

We had just moved to Michigan when we were informed Zorro would be the coordinator of a visit from our denominational leader at the time, Joseph Tkach Sr. Surrounding churches were invited to Detroit for a combined church service, and in a gesture of appreciation to the ministry, Mr. Tkach would be host to an elegant dinner that evening. Mr. Tkach had made a number of these trips, so to help answer procedural questions, those making arrangements from our denominational headquarters compiled a book of instructions to aid the local coordinator. We thought this was a great idea—until we received it.



Now when I say book, I do not mean pamphlet. This book contained everything you needed to know about a VIP’s visit to your area, from the air pressure in the tires of the specific rental vehicle designated to pick him up at the airport to the fresh squeezed mango juice to be waiting in his room when he arrived. Nothing was left to chance.

As a side note, knowing Mr. Tkach Sr., he probably would have been happier with a diet Coke than with an exotic juice, but those surrounding him wanted him well cared for.

As extreme as this book may seem, it was easier to have a plan to follow. And it came in mighty handy when other ministers asked us why we didn’t do something differently. We’d just smile and say, “It’s not in the book.”

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## Zorro and Me

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In those days, Mr. Tkach traveled in a private jet. Zorro and I were assigned to greet him at the airport. Our 6-year-old son Matthew accompanied us. My instructions to Matthew were specific: Do not speak unless you are spoken to! Keep your mouth shut! Zip up your lips! I asked him if he understood what I meant. He nodded in complete understanding.

At the airport we exchanged pleasantries with Mr. Tkach and he invited us aboard the jet for a private tour. A grin spread across Matthew's face and his eyes sparkled. I could tell he was excited. Mr. T was showing us the cockpit when he made the fatal mistake of asking Matthew some obscure question. Perceiving this as permission to speak, Matthew proceeded to talk his little head off in spite of my best I'm-gonna-kill-you-when-I-get-you-home look. What a joy children are!

We got Mr. T and his entourage all settled for the night, while we proceeded with the final preparations for the church service and dinner the next day. With about all of Michigan coming, there was much to do. A combined preteen choir from all the churches planned to sing one of Mr. Tkach's favorite songs, "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," so rehearsal time was arranged. We needed a final meeting with the Renaissance Center where the service would take place. There were endless details to attend to and in all honesty, if we hadn't

had the help of the other three full-time ministers in the Detroit area (the Mounts, the Washingtons and the Symkowiaks), we would still be trying to sort everything out.

Finally, the day of the event dawned. At least I think it dawned. I wasn't sure because of the rain.

As coordinator, Zorro's job was to ride with Mr. Tkach to the Renaissance Center. Accompanying Mr. Tkach was his dear friend Joe Locke. Mr. T shared with Joe some of the stories he had heard about Zorro. The conversation went something like this:

Mr. T, speaking to Zorro: "Now aren't you the one who left his wife at the gas station for six hours?"

Zorro, looking a little embarrassed: "Well, yes, that was me."

Joe L: "I don't believe it!"

Mr. T: "And didn't your car get stolen one time when you were dressed up like Zorro?"

Zorro, kind of lowering his head: "Well, yes, that was me."

Joe L: "I don't believe it!"

Mr. T: "And didn't you blow a balloon up at church and it flew out over the audience and it came back and landed on your head?"

Zorro, looking sheepish: "Well, yes, that was me, too."

Joe L: "I just don't believe it!"

Zorro felt relieved when the conversation was cut short by their arrival at the Renaissance Center. Zorro, being well prepared, hopped out of the car with a huge umbrella to shield Mr. Tkach from the pouring rain. Just as Mr. T got out of the car a big gust of wind blew the umbrella inside out. There was our VIP and his friend, standing in the rain. What were the odds? Mr. Tkach just grinned. Our instruction book didn't cover what to do when you've just drenched

Whatever you love most, be it  
sports, pleasure, business,  
or God, that is your god!



—Billy Graham

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## Zorro and Me

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## Accepting the Differences

By Kathy Miller

your denominational leader. Joe Locke turned to Zorro and said, “I believe all that stuff really did happen to you!”

Proving once again that it rains on the lowly and the VIPs in the world—and God does have a sense of humor!



Barbara works part time as chiropractic assistant (CA) and likes to read, write and watch old movies. She loves recommending movies to people whom she thinks would enjoy them—sort of like choosing a fine wine for the right occasion. For Christmas she suggests seeing *Christmas in Connecticut* (with Barbara Stanwyck) if you want humor; *White Christmas* if you like music, or the classic *It's a Wonderful Life* if you want to be glad you're alive. They'll help make your holidays merry and bright. E-mail her at [bydahlgren@pacbell.net](mailto:bydahlgren@pacbell.net). Copyright September, 2007.

Patience serves us against insults precisely as clothes do against the cold.

For if you multiply your garments as the cold increases, that cold cannot hurt you; in the same way increase your patience under great offenses, and they cannot hurt your feelings.

—From the Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci



I grew up in a family of extroverted people and was often referred to as the shy, quiet one. Although I could respond enthusiastically to the friendliness of others, it was difficult for me to approach someone I didn't know and start a conversation. I married an outgoing man and produced two gregarious children so I happily let them take center stage. Sometimes I've felt I was on the outside looking in. Well-meaning people have told me this trait was a sign of selfishness and I should pray and fast to overcome it.

Years after my college days, I came across a book titled *Please Understand Me*, about understanding personality types and learning styles. The book was life changing for me. I learned people are born with certain personality traits, learning styles and abilities. Not only did I begin to accept and validate my own slightly shy nature, but also I began to look at other people through a different lens. So often, society seems to dictate that certain looks are acceptable and others aren't. Those judgments go far beyond appearance into personality and talents that are valued or deemed not as valuable. It is easy to negatively judge ourselves and others based on those standards.

During the Renaissance, those we now consider portly or obese were voluptuous and desirable. Skinny or slender people were viewed as unhealthy, poor and undesirable. Forward and imaginative thinkers were scoffed at and in some cases burned at the stake for being witches.

As a big fan of God's creation, I often marvel at the incredible variety he has made in every species. In the dog family, you find short, tall, chunky, slender, hairy, hairless,

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## Accepting

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# 11

high pitched voices, low rumbling barks and many more characteristics. None of us would expect a greyhound to be portly. We'd wonder what sort of thyroid imbalance the poor thing suffered from. On the other hand, if we saw a skinny bulldog, we'd suspect it had worms or failing health. We don't expect the varieties to look, sound or act the same.



So why on earth would we think God intended humans to look and act the same? And why would we criticize or judge our differences negatively? I confess to having done just that, not only toward others but also most especially toward myself. Little by little, I'm finding I appreciate the differences in my fellow human beings as much as I appreciate seeing differences in nature. Some folks worship with arms outstretched, dancing, shouting and singing. Other folks worship quietly, eyes averted, hearts swelling with feelings they cannot find words to utter. Some of my fellow Homo sapiens enter a room with hearty greetings and outstretched hands, moving from one person to another and making everyone feel welcome. Others visit with a small group of people for longer periods of time. Each approach serves a purpose and one isn't better or more valuable than the other.

Lord, give me the strength to accomplish what You've given me to do and the faith to trust You that what I haven't been able to accomplish You've already assigned to someone else.



—Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The variety of physical appearances is also endless. Just the colors of eyes, hair and skin are fascinating and beautiful. The timbre of voice, physical stature, aptitude, personality, ad infinitum, are tributes to the creative genius of our God.

The more I embrace the endless variety within our own species, the more I appreciate those differences and a wonderful thing is happening. I'm beginning to see my brothers and sisters as special, unique and purposefully created individuals God loves and appreciates. I'm beginning to love them (and me) for who and what we are. My expectations for uniformity have melted away.

When a particular difference annoys me I say to myself: This is a child God loves and he expects me to love this sister or brother too. I confess sometimes I have to ask God to help me appreciate the uniqueness of some of his children, and the wonderful thing is that God answers those prayers. I find myself truly loving folks who used to annoy me. How awesome is the God who loves each of us and only asks that we love each other too.

No doubt my emerging awareness is just the beginning of what God wants me to understand about love and acceptance. No doubt I will struggle with loving with a pure heart. But no doubt God will continue to guide me in this pursuit for it is his will that all mankind learn to love the precious creation he so deeply loves, with an unconditional love.



*Kathy teaches special education children, which keeps her really busy. She's looking forward to a Mexican Riviera cruise during Christmas break. E-mail her at [kathym2u@hotmail.com](mailto:kathym2u@hotmail.com).*



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# Marriage and Family Customs in Bangladesh

By John N. Biswas

The marriage and family customs and cultural patterns of Muslim Bangladesh are fascinating subjects. The rules and customs of living exercise great influence over every facet of personal life among the people. This affects our Christian brethren as well.

The life of a woman in Bangladesh is usually centered in the home as the mother of the family, and a girl's training is directed toward this role. For the average family it is hard enough to give the sons an academic education, so the daughter's schooling must often be curtailed.

Traditionally, Muslim women are permitted to show their faces only to their husbands and immediate family members. Their veiling outer garment is called a *burka*. The practice of secluding women is known as *Purdah*, meaning "veil." Some families are more conservative than others about this tradition, while other families do not observe it at all.

Muslim and Christian parents consider it their right and duty to arrange the marriages of their children. In general, economic and practical advantages are paramount factors. A daughter is usually married off as early as

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# 12

possible. A marriage may be arranged for a son when his aging parents require a daughter-in-law to take care of them.

Christian families still give dowry, which is reciprocal. Before the wedding, the groom's family takes gifts to the bride's house. After the wedding, the bride's family takes gifts to the groom's house.

For the marriage ceremony, the bride's family brings the groom to meet in the church, where a priest or minister officiates at the traditional Christian rites. The marriage ceremonies are preceded by feasts and various celebrations. The budget is stretched to the limit or beyond because custom demands. The social prestige outweighs the consideration of expense. As many guests as possible are invited.

When a husband and wife attend a wedding party as guests, the husband will usually remain in one room with the men, while the wife stays in another with the women. The bride is traditionally shy and tearful during the wedding.

The rituals that attend birth, marriage and death as well as prayer, habits and dietary prohibitions, tend to distinguish the customs of one religious community from another. In some localities, they may be mixed or modified. They are described here according to the basic Muslim orthodox patterns traditionally followed in the villages. All village weddings including Christian are accompanied by music, drums and horns and are decorated with flowers and colored papers. In the cities, you will find *Shamiyana* (overhead large coarse cloth covering the premises) and colored lights, which indicate a wedding.

As in most of the world, meal times form the most popular occasions for social gatherings. Bangladeshis have breakfast early

God must be very great to have created a world that leaves a mystery as to whether he created it.



—Richard Wurmbrand

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## Bangladesh

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## Consider It Pure Joy

By Anne Gillam

and eat their lunch in the afternoon. Dinner is usually quite late in the evening. The long spans between meals are broken by the custom of drinking tea and eating some solid food in the late afternoon, which also serves as a convenient time for entertaining and visiting.

People use the right hand for eating and left hand for personal hygiene. They associate bodily cleanliness with spiritual health. Customarily they bathe completely at least once a day, wash their hands before and after eating and if possible before prayers.

Finally, the family is very much the primary unit of the social and economic life in Bangladesh. Loyalty to parents and relatives is intense, and it is the uppermost influence in decisions about marriages. Seniority confers authority. Members of the family are expected to share their earnings with each other, and you will find one man supporting many relatives outside the immediate family. For most Bangladeshis the family is still a tightly knit group, not only for economic and protective reasons, but also as a major center of recreational and social activity.

Christian families must be careful not to offend or cause needless persecution from their neighbors. So we advise discretion and wisdom in exercising their freedom in the Lord.



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Connections

I was blessed to be present at the birth of my two grandsons. Both came into this world after very hard labor. Like parents and grandparents everywhere, we were relieved they had all their toes and fingers and were given a clean bill of health.

But it was not long before the youngest began to show signs of being different. I said to myself, you are just letting your pride—the pride we all have in our children—take over.

I noticed he had a strong compulsion to line up his blocks. This was not in any order but the tall yellow blocks followed by the short purple blocks and so on. The blocks had to touch and line up perfectly. If you moved one of the blocks he would quickly replace them in a huff.

It was not until after his second birthday that I was sure something was out of order. He began to lose his language skills. He had communicated in a few words but now he did not talk at all. He would no longer look at you except out of the corner of his eye. He did not want to be touched or hugged, and the items on the list of what he would eat began to shrink.

I began a search on the Internet for an answer. It was not long before the symptoms pointed to autism. How was I going to tell my daughter? This information would crush her. She did not want to believe, and I did not want to push the truth because I also wanted to be wrong.

As the months went by his symptoms grew steadily worse. Even the doctor seemed to skirt around the truth until I couldn't stand it any longer. I pushed for an

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## Pure Joy

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# 14

answer and the doctor finally admitted he had the same suspicions. Now that we had a diagnosis we looked for a cure—a miracle.

My daughter reminded me of the verse in 1 Corinthians 10:13. She said, “God said he would not give us more than we could bear, but I really think he made a mistake this time.” I remembered



the verse also talked about God giving us the help we need, that he would “provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” The pressure seemed unbearable,

but I trusted God to help us stand up under it and help us find the help we needed for my grandson. I was tempted to give up and fold under the pressure. There was not a day I did not plead with the Lord for help.

The more I read about autism the more I began to see the need for a special diet for my grandson. He had a lot of digestive problems so we began by taking away all traces of dairy. This in itself is a monumental task. I was shocked to find dairy in most things we ate. After the dairy we took away

all gluten. This took months but we finally began to see positive results.

God was true to his promises and we began to see a way to “stand up under it.” I could see a blessing in all our trials. How do you see a blessing in autism, you may ask? I see how I was drawn to rely more on God for the help I needed. I was forced to grow under extreme stress and to become more patient and more serving. I surely would not have chosen this path, but God knows best.

My grandson is now 4 years old. Not long ago I saw him struggling to get a toy. Not expecting a request for help, I automatically reached out, when he, in very strained but audible words, asked, “Can you help me?” I looked at him and said, “Yes, yes I can; with God’s help I can.”



*Autism affects more boys than girls. Digestive problems, lost social skills and seizures are some of the symptoms. A helpful web site is [www.talk-aboutcuringautism.org](http://www.talk-aboutcuringautism.org). Autism is increasing every year and there is no known cause. E-mail Anne at [WEBEBASS@aol.com](mailto:WEBEBASS@aol.com).*



## 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 Tkach a message at [tammy.tkach@wgc.org](mailto:tammy.tkach@wgc.org).

## We're in It Together

By *Denys Fell*

I'm writing this article a few days after completing the New York marathon on Sunday, November 4, 2007. After running such a demanding distance the one lesson that stands out, somewhat surprisingly, is the importance of Christians working together.

I started my running career last year at the age of 56. A friend challenged me to run a half marathon—an undertaking I accepted (I'd probably drunk too much wine at the time).

A few days later I began my first training run of two to three miles. Like trying to start a car when the battery is flat, that was me on that run, thinking, What have I done, and struggling to get going.

Worst of all was meeting other people on the disused railway line where I had my training runs. They were walking their dogs or enjoying a leisurely stroll. Most didn't voice anything but the look on their faces said: Who is this madman with tousled hair, dripping with sweat and a look of agony on his face? I felt out of place.

Throughout several months of building up my distance to 20 miles, I tried to run early in the day to avoid that many people seeing me.

I persevered and was asked to consider running the London marathon. This was a big ask so I decided to see my doctor for a check-up and advice. "Good to see you're up to 20 miles," she said. "That's enough. There's no need to train up to marathon distance (26.2 miles) as the support from the crowd will get you through the extra six miles."

This was something I'd not envisioned. The crowd I'd been trying to avoid on my training days was now going to be a major means of support on race day. Come the day, it wasn't long into the London marathon before I understood

what my doctor meant.

"Come on, Denys, you can do it!" a voice rang out (my name was on my running vest). I looked up to see a woman—a perfect stranger—looking me in the eye and bellowing those encouraging words. Shouts of support steeled me all along the route. At times, it was very emotional. In New York the same much-needed and much-appreciated rallying of the runners occurred.

The apostle Paul in his epistles was fond of depicting the Christian life as a race. It is a race where we could do with all the support and encouragement we can muster. We're running in a world that can make us feel out of place and rather odd, a target for jokes and persecution.

But when we're with other Christians, with mutual support it seems like the most natural path in the world to follow. Like me and my fellow runners in London and New York we can feel like heroes.

In my part of the world we have a newsletter that goes to some 530 churches with varying traditions. It's called KEY (Kingston-upon-Hull and East Yorkshire) church news. You



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**Together**

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can view it on the web at the [www.keyct.org.uk](http://www.keyct.org.uk) download page. I have the privilege to be editor. My team feels it is so important that churches communicate and support one another. Successful marathon running teaches you that. Most important, Jesus prayed for unity and commands us to love one another and to be one.

On the plane going over to New York I sat between two other runners. One was running for Great Ormond Street Hospital, the other for SENSE, a charity for the deaf and blind. I was running for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

Did we get into an argument about which was the best charity and look down on the others? Of course not. We each had our reasons for our particular choice and easily developed a team spirit as we compared experiences. I was saddened when one of the runners, who was running in his full fireman's kit, tripped half way through and struggled to finish the race. We were in it together.

We Christians are in it together as well, and it's especially important as our race has eternal consequences.



*Denys and his wife Mary live in Hull, England. They have two sons and two daughters. He earns his living on his organic farm in Yorkshire. As well as planting corn he is interested in church planting. He is a regular writer for the British Plain Truth magazine. E-mail him at [denys\\_fell@wgc.org.uk](mailto:denys_fell@wgc.org.uk).*

*Connections*

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**Joy to the World?**

*By Sheila Graham*

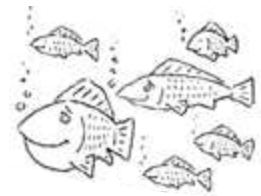
Do you remember the words to “Joy to the World”? “Joy to the world. Joy to the fishes and ...” Oops, no, not the one made famous by Three Dog Night, but the traditional Christmas carol, “Joy to the World,” with lyrics by Isaac Watts? If not, why not look them up? They celebrate a most, if not the most, significant event ever to happen in the history of this world—the birth of our Savior.

This is a joyful time of year, a time to celebrate the incarnation of God in the human form of Jesus. Even though we sing that beautiful old hymn, can we even comprehend how joyful we should be and how thankful for the mercy and graciousness of our God?

Maybe I can't fully grasp that now, but when I think of God's greatest gift to humanity, I am joyful. As for Christmas, well, it wasn't always so joyful for me. Even though I appreciated God's gift of his Son and his sacrifice, Christmas wasn't a time I looked forward to.

But, I have to ask myself, is that still true? When I first saw the decorations going up in the stores and around town and when the gift catalogs started arriving, I caught myself thinking, Oh no, not Christmas already. Of course, the decorations go up even before Halloween and Thanksgiving these days.

It made me stop and think, and make a decision. I will not let the commercialism and the hustle and bustle surrounding this time of year take away my joy. That's it. No way. Christmas, the celebration of the incar-




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## Joy to the World

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nation, is too important and too wonderful. When I get negative about the junk we humans have attached to the observance of this miraculous event, I'm going to say to myself, Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Or maybe I'll say it out loud.

"Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room, And Heaven and nature sing...." Yes, joy to the world and to you and me—and to the fishes!



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Sheila and Ed celebrate the holidays with family in Texas this year. She says she's not a scrooge about Christmas, but enough is enough! She can be reached at [sheila.graham@wcg.org](mailto:sheila.graham@wcg.org).



## Merry Christmas!



### ◆ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ◆

*I love the change in the subtitle: "by and for women in ministry." The previous title, "By and for Elders Wives," by no fault of its own, excluded many wonderful women who were ministers and now elders in their own right. As more women stand up and answer the call to ministry, we may see a day where there will be a publication for those*

*poor "Elder's husbands."*

*Being nurtured and mentored by several powerful women in ministry, I deeply appreciate this ministry-affirming change.*

—Steve Ramos  
Tulsa, OK

*Great issue! And a host of fresh writers! Yeah!*

—Sue Berger  
Georgetown, TX

*My e-mail address has changed. I want to continue receiving Connections. It is extremely informative and to the point. Thank you very much.*

—Reba McDuffie  
Athens, GA

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

Two men were talking. The first says, "My wife has the worst memory I ever heard of."

The second man replies, "Forgets everything, eh?"

"No, she remembers everything."

A burglar broke into a minister's house and told the pastor, "One move and you're dead. I'm looking for money."

The vicar replied, "Hang on, let me get a light and I'll help you."

Knowledge is free, but you have to bring your own container.

A young minister, in the first days of his first parish, was obliged to call upon the widow of an eccentric man who had just died.

Standing before the open casket and consoling the widow, he said, "I know this must be a very hard blow, Mrs. Vernon. But we must remember that what we see here is the husk only, the shell.

"The nut has gone to heaven."

—All of the above from [www.cybersalt.com](http://www.cybersalt.com)

Connie told her 4-year-old grandson, Dean, not to jump on the beds. After several warnings she punished him, explaining that should he fall, he would hurt himself badly.

Several minutes passed and he was back to jumping on the beds.

Connie said, "Dean, you weren't jumping on the beds again, were you?"

He stood with his little head dropped low and said, "I'm trying, but it's so hard to quit."

—Submitted by Nelson Haas

A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!"

His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you know what the Bible means?"

The son replied, "I do know!"

"Okay," said his father. "What does the Bible mean?"

"That's easy, Daddy." The young boy replied excitedly, "It stands for Basic Information Before Leaving Earth."

—Submitted by Shelba Stanley