



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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The Time Had Fully Come

By Joyce Catherwood

After reading Luke's account, I get the feeling the heavenly realm was bursting at the seams with joy and celebration at the news of the birth of the infant Jesus. It was as though the angelic creation couldn't hold back. The time had fully come and they had to tell someone! As it was by divine design that our Savior be born into poverty and obscurity without fanfare, it makes you wonder if the angels were reduced to singling out a few bedraggled, sleepy shepherds in the middle of a rocky field, far away from anywhere, to share the big announcement.

For sure, they frightened the poor shepherds out of their wits. First, the heavens figuratively broke open and a solitary angel appeared, surrounded by the brilliance and glory of the Lord, who eagerly proclaimed: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:8-15, *NIV* throughout). Then it seemed everyone wanted to get in on the excitement, so a great company of the heavenly host descended, surrounding the first angel. I picture them in their exuberance, benevolently elbowing each other for a spot in the front. The volume of the magnificent sound of angels' voices proclaiming "Glory to God in the highest" penetrated the cold night air, undoubtedly bringing the terrified shepherds to their knees. Suddenly, the angelic crowd left as dramatically as they appeared. I have to wonder, did the Father lovingly pull them all back inside the heavens before they stirred up more attention than planned in the surrounding area?

Yes, the time had fully come when God sent his Son, born of a woman, to redeem the human race (Galatians 4:4). An event intricately planned and highly anticipated by the awesome Tri-

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The Time Had Fully Come



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une God from the foundation of the universe. An event of such magnitude it is woven visibly and invisibly throughout the entire history of mankind.

And the time had fully come for Mary as well. Young Mary had safely carried her child to full term. In the ancient Middle East, infant mortality was so high newborns were not named until a week after birth because many wouldn't live that long. Miscarriage was common and childbirth was dangerous, especially with a firstborn. All of this no doubt troubled Mary at times, particularly during the arduous journey to Bethlehem in the final stages of gestation. Then there was the challenge of coping with the unknown experience of giving birth, and sifting through the often scary tall tales about childbirth by the local gossips.

She must have breathed a gigantic sigh of relief after securely delivering into the world the Messiah, whom she had responsibly and obediently carried in her womb for nine long months. "Be it unto me according to your word," she had told the angel Gabriel when he first appeared to her.

Oh, and was he ever precious, this tiny newborn with his little wrinkled brow, his wispy, raven-colored hair and his enormous questioning eyes. As Mary cuddled and nuzzled her beloved

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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 Nurturennet forum. We highlight women in ministry but are inclusive of the needs of the entire family.

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

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The Time Had Fully Come

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son, tears of joy and expectation for what was and what was yet to come must have trickled tenderly down from her cheeks to his. The Sustainer of the Universe, Creator of every living thing, including Mary herself, was being cradled by his own creation. He willingly experienced the powerlessness of an unborn child and the vulnerability of a suckling infant. He left behind the dazzling splendor of heaven to enter, as an infinitesimal speck, the dark womb of an insignificant Jewish peasant girl to be born of a woman. It all speaks to the astounding humility of God!

When the time had fully come, the humble Son of God “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing,” for you and for me (Philippians 2:6-7). The incarnation is a profound mystery. Searching for clues yields only a fleeting sense of the full depth of its meaning. In its simplest form, it is God’s loving gift to us, a gift to be cherished.

This season of the year, we celebrate the mystery—the Son of God, born of a woman. We celebrate with the angelic hosts who still rejoice over that long anticipated day. We celebrate the unfathomable humility of God. We celebrate the time that had fully come when the Word, who spoke time into being, entered into time, became flesh and made his dwelling among us so that we might live forever with him.



Joyce wonders why, when she sings along with a praise CD, her cat, Lizzy, instantly wakes from her catnap and ostentatiously sashays out of the room. Joyce says she is grateful the Lord loves a joyful noise. You may e-mail her at joyce.catherwood@wgc.org.



• CALIFORNIA • TAM 2 U

Overwhelmed? Overshadowed!

Have you ever been overshadowed by something? I imagine people experiencing hurricanes or tornadoes understand the feeling of being overshadowed. I’ve not been in such storms, but have heard accounts of how scary they can be, with huge, dark clouds blotting out the sun and strong winds tearing up the landscape.

When Jesus was conceived, Mary was overshadowed by the power of the Highest (see Luke 1:35, *KJV*). The *NIV* says the Holy Spirit came upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. In my imagination I see a cloud or fog descending on Mary, perhaps blotting her from view and blinding her as well. Maybe she fainted for a little while. Or maybe like Adam, she went to sleep, although the gospel writers don’t mention any physical effect. I wonder if she felt anything at all or just took it on faith that what the angel told her was true.

At baptism, I remember feeling wet and excited, but not overshadowed. I believed I received the Holy Spirit then, and I enjoyed a bit of euphoria for a few days afterward. I took it on faith that God began living in me that day, but the excitement soon wore off in the work of everyday life. Maybe that’s what Mary felt—a bit of excitement, some trepidation, and then she got on with the pregnancy

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Overwhelmed?

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and all it entailed. But she knew God had come to live in her.

Mary must have been a bit overwhelmed in the difficult days leading up to Jesus' birth. She had to endure Joseph's doubts until he became convinced Mary was telling the truth about her pregnancy. Her parents must have wondered about this whole situation; people gossiped and stared. Then there was the trip to Bethlehem on the back of a donkey. I'm sure that was comfortable—not.

Jill Briscoe's article in the Winter 2009 issue of *Just Between Us* talks about being overwhelmed by life. I can relate, can you? She says God helped her remember that when she felt overwhelmed, she was also overshadowed—by the Holy Spirit. Just as Mary was overshadowed, protected, helped and told not to fear, so we are overshadowed in our difficult times. The Holy Spirit is always there, guiding and helping.

The Comforter wraps us in his loving embrace. Briscoe describes it this way: "Then the wonderful shadow seemed to wrap itself around me and hold me close into God, as if it were a warm, comforting heavenly blanket."

If you're feeling a bit overwhelmed, whether from the effects of the economy, health issues, family problems or just too much to do before Christmas, remember the "safe sweet shadow" surrounds you. He will bring you peace and comfort, with real help and power from the Most High.

Have a peaceful and wonderful Christmas.

Tammy



Be Ye Comforted

By Hannah Knaack

Maybe it's my crazy midlife hormones but when people mention the holidays, I think of food. If I were to ask you to list your top five comfort foods, no doubt you'd discern a common denominator among them—lots of calories! Or am I the only one to admit that?

Is it any wonder we gain a few pounds at holiday time? And is it any wonder why my guilt-o-meter is ringing off the charts as I sit in services mentally drooling over the Cheesy Scalloped Potatoes bubbling in my oven at home?

It's certainly not the amount of calories that comforts us, is it? We all know the comfort comes from the memories imprinted in our minds of mouth-watering scents, the people and activities we love—and the warm glow associated with each comfort food. Perhaps that's why most green veggies aren't near the top of our lists—not much warm glow association there.

Have you enjoyed your favorite comfort foods this season? Maybe you've indulged in an extra serving of rich pecan or spicy pumpkin pie? Perhaps fluffy garlic potatoes with gravy or sage-infused cornbread stuffing are more your style. Or are you the mac-and-cheese type, with crispy fried chicken on the side? Maybe it's all about beverages for you—steaming hot chocolate with marshmallows or seasonal spiked homemade eggnog (our family favorite).

Take it from me—a woman who has contacted the FDA multiple times over the years in an effort to get chocolate included on the pyramid of daily food requirements—

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Be Ye Comforted

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comfort food is a real need, not just a guilty pleasure!

Just to qualify, let me say I am a firm believer in balancing our daily food intake. So if you're considering the large slice of French Silk pie for dessert, by all means do take a bite or two of salad in between the Bacon and Potato Cheddar soup and the Triple Cheese Lasagna. Then maybe a little Baileys Irish Cream™ drizzled over vanilla ice cream. I think it's beginning to dawn on me why my cholesterol is over 300.

I was chiding myself the other day about my relentless cravings when I came up with a simple solution. Our calendars should include a National Comfort Food Day once a

Hormones or not, the holidays are my favorite time with family.

month. That would assuage my conscience for at least one day. Actually, I would not suffer so in the guilt department if I didn't like to cook. Who's to say a firm *no* when my mind begins to tease me with thoughts of warm cornbread slathered in butter and honey, gooey walnut-studded chocolate chip cookies or creamy salmon fettuccini?

As you can see, carbohydrates have entrenched themselves into my psyche to the degree that most of my comfort foods are of

that persuasion. Don't bother to play Dr. Nutrition with me though, because I've tried that route and failed miserably. For a week or so I search out healthy green and orange foods and feel triumphant—until the desperate urge for a comfort food sucks me under.

I've decided the best way to enjoy the holidays (and every other day) is to indulge, but not to the point of bulge. I've learned to be more creative with healthier comfort food options. Now, I stir ground flax seed into the cookie dough and slip chopped broccoli into the Bacon and Potato Cheddar Soup. I leave the skin on potatoes, substitute light olive oil for butter and skip most of the fried foods.

Hormones or not, the holidays are my favorite time with family. These are the times that create so many of our memories. And while holiday foods may be tempting, I'm thankful just to share time with those I love. It doesn't get much better than this!



Hannah says: "This January we'll be moving out of our temporary apartment into a new home. My mom is living with us and we're both anticipating the fun of decorating and making the new place feel like home. By spring, we'll be ready to plant a new flower bed!" You may e-mail Hannah at justmomhlc@gmail.com (new address).

There are some of us... who think to ourselves, "If I had only been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby. I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!" Yes, we would. We say that because we know how great Christ is, but if we had been there at that time, we would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem.... Why don't we do it now? We have Christ in our neighbor.



—Martin Luther

Keep Your Eyes on Christ

By Gail Stoddart

As a school bus driver I have an exciting and eventful life. To drive a bus and look after 40, 50 or 60 kids is to say the least, challenging. But this last school year on one route I had just one girl on my bus.

We got on immediately and I would take her as close to her home as I could. She had a broken home and a troubled life. All year we kept building a closer relationship. I did not say one word about God or any related subjects. You see, we have to keep away from those sorts of subjects as a rule. But you can preach Christ by your attitude, which is what must have happened with my student. She sensed something different about me.

On the last day of school she asked me if I believed in God, and I opened up about him just this one time—about his grace for me. This student felt I was an angel sent from God. She prayed for someone to come along and God had, in his wisdom, sent little 'ole me. She had not believed in God but now she

did. How humbling is that? It brought tears to my eyes. I think of the time God sent a donkey to speak for him and Christ said he could raise up the rocks to witness.

So if you think God is not using you, think again. He uses whom he pleases to do his work.

Don't look now but others are watching you. Just keep your eyes on Christ!



Gail and Ron were in Cornwall, England, for a family reunion last summer. They also drove a bus before and after the reunion for the Boy Scouts in Wyoming. They slept in a tent the whole time. She says it was challenging. They saw lots of wildlife and went to many wild places, but she doesn't plan to do it again unless they can sleep in real beds. You may e-mail Gail at gailbus@msn.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 a message at tammy.tkach@gci.org.

In the Garden

By Norma Thibault

Posted on my fridge is a comic strip I cut out of the newspaper. It is called *Family Circus* and is written by Bill Keene. Three children are telling their dad they know what God's name is. It is "Andy." The next frame shows them singing, "Andy walks with me, Andy talks with me." The little girl says, "This is Mommy's favorite hymn." In the last frame the father whispers, "I thought I was Mommy's favorite him."



This got me thinking about that old hymn "In the Garden." It was one of my dad's favorites and I heard it many times as a child. But only in the last few years have I begun thinking about these beautiful inspired words by C. Austin Miles. When it says, "He walks with me, and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own," it is talking about the personal relationship we can have with God. What is it like to have a personal relationship with God? According to this hymn, it's full of joy.

Lately I find myself looking forward each

morning to spending time with God. In the past my prayers were structured and often I had lists of things I wanted to pray about. Now it is as if I am having a conversation with someone I hold very dear. Words flow from me as things come into my mind. I find most of my thoughts are of gratitude for who he is and what he has done. I feel uplifted and full of joy, ready to take on the day. But it doesn't end there. Throughout the day I am able to spontaneously pray for situations as they develop.

An example of this is one day my husband and I came across an accident scene where a young woman had been hit by a car and was thrown several feet, landing on the roadway. When we arrived on the scene she was being attended by other people as they waited for the ambulance to arrive. The only thing on my mind at that time was to pray and ask God to help her. We didn't know if she would survive or not. We never did find out what happened to her, but I know she was in God's care. We have experienced other situations like this and my first thought is to seek God's help.

Hearing of situations in the news also affords us opportunities to commune with God. We all know of lots of situations around the world where people are suffering. I think it pleases God when others pray for them.

Another interesting thing about having a relationship with God is he puts thoughts and ideas into our minds. The other day my husband and I were out doing some errands and suddenly the thought came into my mind that he had an appointment with an eye specialist for that day. We both had forgotten about it and it was 15 minutes before he was due to be at the office, just enough time for us to get there. If he had missed the appointment he would have been put on a waiting list for a

Man can certainly flee from God... but he cannot escape him. He can certainly hate God and be hateful to God, but he cannot change into its opposite the eternal love of God which triumphs even in his hate.

—Karl Barth



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In the Garden

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later appointment. I really believe God put that idea in my mind.

God is interested in every part of our lives, even the smallest details. Often we bring our major trials and problems to him but we forget about the little things. One time I was having some difficulty with one of my daughters. I was talking to God about it and before I even finished my prayer the phone rang. It was my daughter and the problem was resolved.

Having a personal relationship with God is a wonderful joyous experience. I would recommend everyone get to know him. He loves us all and he loves our gratitude.



Norma says: "We are enjoying spending time with our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. God has blessed us with a wonderful family. In October we traveled, along with our five children and their spouses, to Mexico to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary." You may e-mail Norma at dentbo@shaw.ca.

Jesus' word is the grace-irritant in the oyster of a scorekeeping, judgmental heart.



—Bert Gary

My Facebook Story

By Anne Marie Caristi

"Just another minute, please!" That's me, pleading with myself in the light of my huge workload, to add at least one more minute to my newfound joy, talking to friends on Facebook. These are people I had little hope of ever being in contact with again. That's the joy of Facebook.

How did a 40-something like me come to embrace a social-networking site on the Internet? Six months ago, I gave sites like Facebook, Twitter and the like little thought, if any at all. Then one day at church, my pastor told the congregation he had joined Facebook and wondered why he hadn't joined sooner. He said so many people from his past contacted him that he was overjoyed.

Then, a good friend from my congregation told me she had joined Facebook and found loads of friends from her past, some of whom I knew as well. She's more than age 55, so it helped dispel the myth that Facebook was just for 20-somethings and younger. Then my sister told me over Starbucks coffee one morning she planned to get on Facebook. I thought, If she can do it, so can I—but I'm going to wait until I get back from vacation.

On a vacation to Florida, my family and I visited the GCI congregation of my childhood. After the service, a dear friend told me she was on Facebook and that it would be a great way for us to keep in touch. Later on, the elder in that congregation said his adult children, friends of mine when we were kids, were also on Facebook. After discussing it with my husband and some prayer, I signed

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My Facebook Story

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up. The day after I signed up, I got cold feet. I thought: What if this takes too much of my time? Who will I come into contact with through this and will it be a pleasant interaction? Is this really for me, at my age? The next day, when I checked my e-mail, I saw one from my Floridian friend. She had requested friend status with me on Facebook. Then, in the next few days, Facebook friends of hers who knew me asked me to become their friend. I decided to stay in the Facebook universe.

I was won over by the love and outreach of these wonderful people once in my life who wanted to connect again. But another group, surprisingly, are people I know from my community. Having them as Facebook friends allows us to learn more about each other and communicate even when we don't see each other often. For instance, I'm now connected to some women I knew when my kids were preschool age. Now when I run into these women, we have a basis for an animated conversation, rather than wondering what to say to each other.

It's really all about connecting, which is our gift from our God who is also all about

connections. My favorite Bible verse about friends is in John 15:15 where Jesus said, "Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." And two verses later, Jesus adds, "This is my command: Love each other." To me, Facebook is just one more way to love each other and follow Jesus' example of being a friend. Indeed, I have found every communication I have received to be full of love and encouragement.

Wow! Jesus Christ is my greatest friend. I think I'll write that on my Profile page. Everyone should know that. Happy Facebooking!



Anne Marie graduated from Ambassador College in 1987. She married Joe, assistant pastor for Living Hope Family Fellowship in Middletown, New York, in 1991. They have three children: Michael, 16; James, 13; and Angela, 10. They live in Blairstown, New Jersey, and are moving into a brand new home on their 52-acre farm. You may e-mail Anne Marie at jcaristi@cs.com.

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Shall we talk? We're here for you!

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Zorro and Me

Visiting the Sick

By Barbara Dahlgren

Visiting the sick is a biblical admonition. Our duty as Christians is to show love by comforting those going through rough times. On one such visit to a hospital in West Virginia Zorro talked to a young man whose leg was partly severed in a car accident. Through a surgical procedure he was able to keep his



leg. Praise God! He asked Zorro, “Would you like to see where the blood is draining from my wound?” Zorro was in the process of saying, “No thank you,” but it was too late. As the man

lifted his covers, the sight of the blood made Zorro’s head woozy. The man was aghast as he watched Zorro slip into a dead faint on the cold floor beside his bed. It was Zorro who ended up being comforted.

Having made many hospital visits through the years, Zorro and I have observed visitors first hand. And, unfortunately, some remind me of a line from the movie, *The Bucket List*. Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman portray cancer patients sharing a hospital room. Jack’s character says something I’ve often thought but never voiced. “More people die from visitors than diseases.”

I know what he means. I’ve met some of those people. A list of these people’s Dos and Don’ts:

Don’t

- Don’t even try to call before you come to see if they feel like having visitors. In times of

illness all etiquette should go out the window. Just show up unannounced at any time, night or day. The sick should welcome your visit.

- Don’t let the sniffles or a bad cold keep you from visiting. Don’t bother to wash your hands before and after the visit. Spread your germs around and see if you are contagious. If sick people’s weakened conditions cause them to have a relapse or get an infection from you, then the medical profession didn’t do a good job.

- Don’t bother to bring or send a note, card or small gift. It might lift their spirits, but who has the time to write notes today? Just depend on others to do it. We’re too busy for such trivialities.

- Don’t bother to knock gently if the door is closed. Barge in and loudly announce, “I’m here to brighten your day, you lucky fellow.” It doesn’t matter if they are eating lunch, stripped half naked or sitting on a bedpan. As you are friends, there’s no need to preserve their dignity.

- Don’t bother being considerate of their roommates. Who cares about them? Just ignore them. Too bad for them if they don’t have any visitors. They should have made some friends while they still had their health.

- Don’t bother to leave the room if the doctor comes in. Why shouldn’t you know every detail of what they are going through? That way you have first-hand information you can pass on to others.

- Don’t bother to leave the room if a nurse needs to change an IV or give medication. People don’t mind if you see them getting a shot in their behinds. They are probably too sick to care anyway.

- Don’t think sick people are just being polite if you ask if you should leave and they

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Visiting the Sick

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say, “No,” even though their body language shows they are trying to close their eyes, becoming fidgety or looking as if they are in pain. Be clueless. Even though you should leave and let them rest, you paid for the gas to come over and visit, so they can tough it out until you are ready to leave.

- Don’t be a good listener. Better yet, don’t let them talk at all, even if they want to. Instead, monopolize the conversation so they can conserve their energy.
- Don’t bother to be cheerful if you are depressed. There’s nothing sick people enjoy more than trying to bolster up those full of negative thoughts. It will help them get their minds off themselves.
- Don’t hold in your emotions. If they have a life-threatening illness, go ahead, break down and cry. They will be touched by how much you care. Then they can spend all their time and energy comforting you instead of the other way around.

Do

- Ignore those pesky visiting hour guidelines. They are for everyone else, not you. Your schedule is more important than theirs.
- Wake them up if they are sleeping or resting. Be sure to shout, “Wake up you

The true secret of giving advice is, after you have honestly given it, to be perfectly indifferent whether it is taken or not and never persist in trying to set people right.



—Hannah Whitall Smith

sleepy head! I’m here!”

- Go on in even though the room may overflow with visitors. The more the merrier. This is a good time to catch up with old friends. Who cares if the sick person is exhausted from playing host or introducing people and wants to rest? There’s no need to wait outside until some leave or say: “I see you have lots of company today. I’ll come back a little later.” Hey, you are there, so make the most of it. You might not see these people again until the funeral.
- If there aren’t enough chairs, sit on the bed with them. They won’t mind. So what if they are a little uncomfortable, it will be cozier that way.
- Do bring small children and let them run rampant. Everyone will be impressed with how cute they are.
- Chatter your head off. Everyone knows sick people don’t want to talk, so it’s up to you to keep talking—even if they want silence. Here are some great things to talk about:
 - ◇ Compare your wounds or scars with theirs. Lift up your shirt and show where they cut you open for your surgery and describe every detail.
 - ◇ Tell them you know exactly how they feel even though pain and suffering is an individual matter. What they are going through is probably nothing compared to what you’ve been through. A good lead in, “You big sissy! You have it easy compared to me.”
 - ◇ Diagnose them and let them know how incompetent their doctors are. Say: “Doctors are just quacks! I have a book that shows you how you can perform self-surgery. You could have saved a fortune!”
 - ◇ Share hospital horror stories. They are

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Visiting the Sick

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always good for a laugh. Did you hear how the operating team left a sponge in my Uncle Bob? They gave my Aunt Matilda the wrong medication and she swelled up like a helium balloon. Ha! Ha! Ha!

- ◇ Share bad news. No need to shield them from the world coming to an end. So what if they already feel they don't have anything to live for. Is that your problem? All you are doing is sharing the truth.
- ◇ Clear up any misunderstandings you might be having with sick people. After all, they might die and you wouldn't have the closure you need. Besides, while they are flat on their backs and at a disadvantage is the best time to get your point across. A little disagreement can get a sick person's adrenaline running, which can speed up the healing process—or give them a heart attack. Why should you care as long as you win the argument?
- ◇ Talk about how awful it is to be in a hospital. Talk about the bad hospital food, how difficult it is to sleep, how noisy it is, the reduced staff conditions and how inadequate insurance coverage is.
- Stay as long as you want. Protocol says around 15 minutes is the appropriate time for



a visit, but the sick aren't going anywhere anyway. What else do they have to do except visit with you?

- Do misquote scriptures to make them feel they did some horrible sin and this illness is punishment for it. If they were obedient righteous people, they wouldn't be in this big mess.
- Ask them if they would like for you to pray with them. If they say, "No," do it anyway. No need to respect their wishes. After all, they should want to pray with you. Don't they know God won't bless them unless they pray with you?

Hopefully you are getting the gist (and jest) of this message.

As Christians we should visit the sick. We are admonished to visit those in distress (James 1:27) and bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). Jesus goes so far as to say, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (Matthew 25:34-46). So when we visit the sick we show through our actions that we love one another. However, we don't want to fall into the category of those visitors Nicholson refers to in *The Bucket List*. Better for the person you are visiting to say, "I'm glad you came," and mean it, instead of thinking, I thought they'd never leave!



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 was as much fun as hers. You may contact her at bydahlgren@pacbell.net. © August 2009.

Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired.



—Mother Teresa

Connecting & Bonding

Valor, Honor and Respect

By Jannice May

Escorting the Remains of Lance Corporal Chance Phelps is a documentary that shows how a young man was taken good care of on his final journey home. The focus was not about being for or against the war. This documentary was about valor, honor and respect, and it had a great effect on me.

Lieutenant Colonel Strobl volunteered to escort the remains of Marines killed in Iraq. The military provides a uniformed escort for all casualties of war to ensure they are delivered safely to their families. Colonel Strobl was asked to escort Chance Phelps home to Billings, Montana.

As I watched I was moved by how much love was shown over and over to Chance. Colonel Strobl made sure Chance was never alone as his body was moved from place to place in preparation for his trip home. He treated Chance with the utmost respect and honor. Even the night before Chance's funeral Colonel Strobl stayed the whole night so he would not be left alone.

Colonel Strobl had never met Corporal Chance Phelps, but he felt as long as Chance was being moved from place to place he was

to treat him as though he were still alive. He was always by his side making sure all honor and respect was shown to him. Thank God for men like Colonel Strobl!

Watching this, I could not stop thinking about the Escort we have. Colonel Strobl did not know Chance. Our Escort knows us, died for us, loves us and even likes us. I couldn't stop comparing what our Escort has done for me personally and for *Connecting & Bonding*. I thought about the many miles I have flown, not enjoying any of it because I am afraid to fly. I do it because my Escort has been faithful. The flights haven't always been as smooth as I would have liked but they have been safe.

My Escort has been a rock for me, even when the money is not always there to help one more woman attend a ministers' wives conference or even pay for it. The money has always come and my faith has grown to where I can step out more.

This documentary also inspired me not to become complacent in my spiritual journey. It is so easy to let down spiritually when we let busyness take over our lives. We are being offered so much as we learn more about Trinitarian theology and how our ever-present Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not only with us, but in us. "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20, *NIV* throughout).

Our great Triune God says, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). God is so consistent. I feel his presence in my life and I am sure you can say the same.

At our *Connecting & Bonding* conference in September, Anne Stapleton read a scripture from *The Message* Bible. It spoke to my soul.

Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.



—Oswald Chambers

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Valor, Honor, and Respect

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“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matthew 11:28).

When the storms of life come upon us and ministry gets hard or health issues happen, our escort says, Come to me. I know you. I love you. I like you. I will give you rest. Our Escort will make sure we are never alone. He will always treat us with the utmost valor, honor and respect.



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.

Connecting & Bonding, 2010

Lexington, Kentucky: March 12-14

Los Angeles, California: September 3-6

Applications will be going out the first week in January. Plan now to attend one of these inspiring conferences.

Reaching Through Forgiveness and Finding Love

By Leslie K. Howard

As I sit listening to the rhythmic sounds of the respirator, there appears to be a musical timing to the machine keeping my father alive. Four years ago he had a series of strokes that left him bed ridden. His body is now constricted and weak. No longer able to swallow, he is fed through a tube implanted in his stomach. I can’t help but shed tears for the frail man, a former likeness of himself, lying in the hospital bed. I remember him young, strong, and robust. Dad was a snappy dresser, with his own sense of style. He was a smart, educated man who had an extended knowledge of jazz. Ask him anything about the old masters: Duke, Lionel, Miles and, of course, Lady Day. They were like old friends to him. They were part of his rhythm—his heart beat. To him they were like family.

There are lots of things I don’t know about my dad. All my life we’ve had this on-again, off-again relationship. You see, my dad was a prodigal father. Just like the parable, he wasted his youth on drugs, women and song. He totally neglected his family and lived the life of a bachelor. Instead of spending those precious years with his children, he practically ignored us. He left behind a broken family who pursued his love and attention. We wanted to bask in him. We wanted to feast on him and all we received were crumbs. As a consequence of his neglect, without a father’s guidance my brothers

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Reaching Through Forgiveness

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made terrible choices. They too fell into a life of addictions and crime. Without the protection of a father, I was sexually abused. I became promiscuous and soon found myself a teenage parent and a high school dropout.

Through the years I'd phone Dad to invite him to family outings. He'd either evade the subject or promise to come but never show. During one of our phone conversations I told him he had two wonderful grandchildren who loved him. I asked, "Don't you want to be a part of their lives?" I waited for a response, but he said nothing. The total silence was most difficult to take. Completely shattered, I told my husband, "One day my father is going to need me and I will be there for him." How could I have known the depth of such a promise? I had no idea my father's health would deteriorate. I did not know I would be the one he would have to depend on to care for him.

From that day on, I began to ask God to change my heart from an angry, needy one to a completely joyful heart.

God ministered to me and just like a loving father he comforted me. He healed me and taught me to love Dad unconditionally. After all, didn't he do the same for me? While I was yet in the bondage of sin, our

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

—Ephesians 4:31-32, *KJV*



loving Father forgave me. How awesome! If he did it for me, then he expects me to do the same for others. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15, *KJV*).

Jesus showed me how to look past Dad's faults. He showed me how to maximize even the smallest amount of time we spent together. The few occasions Dad spent with our children became pleasant experiences. I learned not to expect more from my father than he was capable of giving. I learned not to hold his past up in his face. All that mattered was the present. In return God gave me sweet relief. My children did not inherit bitterness and disdain. They simply learned to enjoy Grandpa. What I learned was to forgive him of his wrongs and love him. I think Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it so well: "We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love...."

First published in Extreme Woman Magazine, May 2007.



Leslie is a speaker, playwright, wife, mother and grandmother, whose professional background is youth and family counseling. She speaks at churches, conferences and mentors girls in her group, "Daughters of Imani." Leslie is the host of Sister Circle, a talk show for women. She sells soaps and toiletries through her business, Betty Lou's Bath. Leslie has been married to Franklin K. Howard for 23 years. They've been pastor and first lady at the 24-7 Community Church in Newark, New Jersey, for nine years. Contact Leslie at: www.lesliehowardministries.com or look her up on Facebook.

The Power of a Mother's Prayer

By Sheila Dela Peña

In August, the mother of Philippine democracy, former president Corazon “Cory” Aquino, was laid to rest beside her husband Ninoy. Our nation mourned the loss of a strong, courageous, peaceful and prayerful woman. She was known to pray every single day, several times a day, for her family and for our country. She said:

“So I cannot think of myself as being separate from the good Lord. And my whole day is dedicated to Him. I mean, I say that in the beginning of the day, and at the end of the day, I address myself to the Lord. So I pray that those who do not believe in Him hopefully will be given that grace, to go to Him so that their lives will be that much better, and that they will be able to handle whatever problems or trials come their way.” (Excerpt from her interview with Dr. Shann Ferch, 2007.)

Much has been said about the power of prayer. I live every moment of my life in

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



—Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

constant communication with our Father in heaven. I cannot imagine my life without this prayerful connection to him. He is the reason for my being, my hope and purpose for living. Also, my many prayers would have been for naught without our good Lord answering each and every one of them. I believe many of my answered prayers are ones my mom said for me and my sister.

I had a wonderful conversation with two mothers in one of our congregations. I asked them if they believed in the power of their prayers for their families. They both readily agreed that they did. Many times it could feel as if God was not answering their prayers for their children when, as teenagers, they struggled to find their identities and establish themselves in their world. Young people can make a lot of mistakes that cause them pain and make them take the rebellion road, but they eventually find their way back and realize who brought them there.

One mother was grateful her daughter, whom she prayed for and spent sleepless nights crying over, has realized the error of her ways and has dedicated herself to serving her church through her gifts. Only later did this mother realize she had prayed for this specifically many years ago. She had almost forgotten about it until it came to fruition.

The other mom firmly believes no matter what happens to her children, they will always go back on the right track because God honors all her prayers for them. She is now enjoying the fruit of those prayers as her children remain open with her and also share their faith with their office colleagues and friends. She enjoys a close relationship with them and continues to pray for them.

My mom always prayed for me and my sister. She prayed God would always look

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A Mother's Prayer

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after us, draw us closer to him, protect us from harm, give us good and loving husbands who would faithfully provide for us, and that God's purpose for us would be fulfilled. Many violent storms have passed in our lives since our mom went home to our Lord, but we have weathered them all because our Father honored each and every heartfelt prayer. Some storms left us battered and bruised, but we still stand because of God's goodness and mercy, and his faithfulness to our mom who dedicated her life to him.

I miss my mom. Whenever I begin to wonder if anyone out there is praying for me, I think of her and know her prayer lives in me and sustains me. I pray all mothers will realize how special and powerful their prayers are. In the midst of all our worries and fears, our Lord urges us to pray and he promises his blessed peace.



Sheila is enjoying her newfound passion in baking and sharing her cakes and cookies with her neighbors and friends. Her husband is her No. 1 fan and has thrown his goal to have six-pack abs out the window. You can view her baking website at www.velvetconfections.multiply.com.

Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God.

—Karl Barth

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: 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 your pain*, let your love for God and his love for you be all you 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!*

A Sunday school teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan. She asked the class, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?"

One thoughtful little girl broke the silence, "I think I'd throw up."

—Contributed by Sheila Graham

A new pastor moved into town and went out one Saturday to visit his community. All went well until he came to one house. It was obvious that someone was home, but no one came to the door even after he knocked several times. Finally, he took out his card, wrote on the back "Revelation 3:20" and stuck it in the door. The next day, as he was counting the offering he found his card in the collection plate. Below his message was a notation "Genesis 3:10." Upon opening his Bible to the passage he let out a roar of laughter.

Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and opens the door, I will come into him, and will dine with him, and he with me."

Genesis 3:10: "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked."

Jerry is recovering from day surgery when a nurse asks him how he is feeling.

"I'm OK but I didn't like the four-letter-word the doctor used in surgery," he answered.

"What did he say," asked the nurse.

"OOPS!"

Having lost weight over the past few years, a lady was discarding things from her wardrobe that no longer fit. Her 7-year-old niece was watching as she held up a huge pair of slacks.

"Wow," the lady said, "I must have worn these when I was 183."

Her niece looked puzzled, then asked, "How old are you now?"

Jesus saw a crowd chasing down a woman to stone her and approached them. "What's going on here, anyway?" he asked.

"This woman was found committing adultery, and the law says we should stone her!" one of the crowd responded.

"Wait," yelled Jesus. "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone."

Suddenly, a stone was thrown from out of the sky, knocking the woman on the side of her head. "Aw, c'mon, Dad," Jesus cried. "I'm trying to make a point here!"

—All the above from www.basicjokes.com