

Mar · Apr 1994

CoLaborer

A Free Will Baptist Magazine for Women



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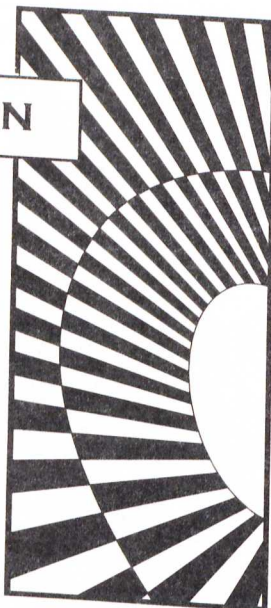
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HORIZON

MELISSA RIDDLE



THE LEAST OF THESE

Not too many years ago, neighbors and strangers alike would go out of their way to help a lost or hurt child. A little boy is crying in the department store--lost from his mommy. A kind old man makes sure he finds her, holding the little one's hand in the meantime. A young girl has a bicycle accident in the front yard. A neighbor rushes out to see how she can help. Time was when people responded to those in need, especially children.

For weeks, I have been following closely the story of the London boys who led a toddler away from a shopping mall, beat him into unconsciousness, and left him to be run over by a train. Over 100 people witnessed the boys dragging the toddler, but very few even bothered to confront them. The grassway by the shopping mall was covered with flowers, teddybears, and tributes . . . after his body had been found.

Not long ago, I read of a little girl who died of starvation after her mother locked her in a room for over a month. Neighbors had seen the little girl staring, hauntingly, out of the upstairs window for several weeks. The whole town showed up . . . for her funeral.

Today, in this city, a young mother admitted she tried to kill her baby. The mother had repeatedly burned and bruised her 2 year-old girl's little body--from her abdomen to the soles of her small feet. The neighbors had suspected abuse for some time but didn't want to get involved. One finally called the police, but not before the mother had time to blacken both the child's eyes.

I watched the arresting officer's lip quiver, his voice breaking, as he described how badly the little girl had been burned. It was the most horrible thing he'd ever seen.

Even in a society as depraved as ours, there is nothing more horrible than the abuse and neglect of precious children.

That's why when I see parents too busy to listen to their child, I want to shake them and say, "What could possibly be more important than him!" That's why I hurt for those who desperately want a child to love but are unable to have one. That's why when I see a grimy little "bus kid," I find myself whispering a prayer that she'll never know the sting of cruel words or a hand across her face. Because children are precious--whether in wedlock or out, fed on food stamps or not, clean or not, clothed or not, wanted or unwanted, healthy or sick, black or white or any color in between. "For such is the kingdom of heaven."

Now, while there is still time, what will we do for them?❖

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Spring cleaning

Hymn: "Cleanse Me"

Scripture: Psalm 51

Aim: To see the necessity of periodic spiritual cleansing in our lives

Ideas for Presentation: Have a different person present each section, dressing the part and using the props as suggested. Each person should share a spring cleaning story/tip and a personal experience in her spiritual life related to her topic.

Just the Thought

Coordinator or Program chair

Just the thought of spring cleaning at my house makes me shudder, but every year I make myself do it. Women generally go through this ritual to get away from the dreariness of winter and make a fresh start for the new spring. Some just can't stand the mess anymore, so they spend a whole week cleaning up a whole year's mess.

Spiritually, we all need times of refreshing, cleansing, and renewal. Some of us may need this several times a year, and some of us may need it everyday. Whenever we need it, we should remember to do the following:

Clearing the Cobwebs

[Props: Broom or dustmop and fly-swatter; bug/spider spray; and hair pushed back with bandanna.]

Cobwebs are the work of spiders, but they only appear when we're not making much of an effort to keep our place clean. In the winter, especially, it's hard to get motivated to do housework, and many of us tend to hibernate, making the excuse, "Well, the big spring cleaning is in a few months, so it can wait." When the sun doesn't shine inside much, the cobwebs don't seem so noticeable. *But* we have to clear them away: they won't go away by themselves.

Sin, indifference, and plain, old laziness are the cobwebs that form in our Christian life. Satan enjoys the time he spends weaving these things around our good intentions. Think about the last few weeks in terms of your service to the Lord. Excluding sitting in a church pew, how much have you done for Him? Have you gradually let other things cloud your mind? Are you becoming entangled with the cares of this life? If so, clear those cobwebs, and make service a priority.



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Dusting Off Valuables

[Props: Duster, dust-rag, Endust spray, perhaps a face mask. Perhaps you'll want to bring something from your house that has accumulated an awful amount of dust on it.]

During your cleaning, you may find that some things only really need a good dusting. Maybe there's a family heirloom or antique that needs attention. Perhaps there's a priceless vase or treasure that simply needs wiping off.

Sadly, many Christians allow their greatest treasure, God's Word, to gather dust. If we are not reading it, we are not maturing spiritually. Don't let your treasure sit and collect dust--use it everyday. It will make a big difference in your life: you'll begin to shine.

Sorting Things Out

[Props: A box of things from closets or drawers that you haven't touched in years; perhaps clothes you were hoping to be able to wear again, but they went out of style. You may want to bring the contents of the "junk drawer" in your house.]

Now it is time to go through those dreaded closets, cabinets, and drawers. It's amazing what we'll find--endless piles of things we've collected. Many drawers are full of things we just didn't take the time to put away properly. Our closets bulge with clothes we haven't worn in years. It takes time, effort, and discipline to sort through our possessions and organize them.

In our Christian lives, our priorities have to be straight. It is so easy to get caught up in collecting things, in our hectic, "grab all you can" world. How often do we try to

cram too much into a day? When we look into our spiritual closet, is there room for Christ to live comfortably?

Concentrated Cleaning

[Props: Mop, pail, various cleaners, toilet brush, steel wool pads, and various polishes. Wear what you'd wear to clean, perhaps even adding humor by wearing wading boots, rubber gloves, and a clothes pin on your nose. If you do, take them off as



you begin making the spiritual application.]

Like no other time of the year, when we spring clean, we deep clean. We scrub walls, woodwork, floors, blinds, curtains, and all those out-of-sight places we neglect year-round. We use products we know will give good results, and we use as much "elbow grease" as we can muster to get it really clean.

Likewise, we need deep cleansing, but we need it *daily*. A concentrated effort takes just that, *concentration*, but in the end, you'll find it is worth the effort. You'll feel refreshed.

And don't forget to clean those dreaded windows. Clean windows not only help us see outside better, but they allow others to see inside. Are the windows of our hearts clean? Can others see the real us--the pure, consecrated us? Let the joy and peace of God make your life free of streaks and smudges.

How Refreshing!

President or Program chair concludes

Now that all is clean and in order, we can relax and enjoy the air of freshness that permeates our homes. The work was hard, but the results are worth it. Even our families appreciate our effort. We are ready to have friends over and are thrilled when they compliment our nice, clean houses.

Whenever we take our burdens to the Lord or ask His forgiveness for sin in our lives, we are allowing Him to do our "spring cleaning" for us. Once He does the work in our hearts and lives, there will be a noticeable difference in the way we look, the way we feel, the way we act--maybe even in the way we smell. We will be refreshed, revived, and ready to share our joy with family and friends. They will see the difference in us.

Spring cleaning doesn't need to be such a back-breaking chore. The key is keeping our lives in order and planning ahead. If we keep Christ in the center of our lives everyday--cleaning a little at a time--when spring rolls around, there won't be much for Him to do. ❖



Sue Winchester and her husband, Don, live in Maplewood, MO, and attend Fourth FWB Church. Sue has worked in CTS, Sunday School, Children's Church, as organist, and has been active in Auxiliary for many years.

Keeping Hope Alive

by Vicki Hubbard

The emergency room doors swing open, and a doctor clad in surgical greens approaches an already tense family. Untying his mask, he sits on the couch close to them and begins to explain, "We've done all we can. Things haven't gone as we had expected. There is no hope."

The Giver of Hope

No hope! That is mankind's situation. Sinful, ungodly, totally unfit to enter into the presence of a holy God. Because we are sinful, we deserve eternal death. There is none righteous . . . not one. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins, no one to forgive us of our failures, no hope of peace.

Bob was a middle-aged man who had fought in two wars during his lifetime. He had held a variety of jobs, moving back and forth across the United States, searching for hope. He had been married several times but found himself alone with no friends except valium and alcohol. Finally, at the end of his rope, he discovered he was incapable of helping himself and turned to Jesus Christ. Bob has been drug and alcohol free for over six years now. He met the Giver of Hope.

In Due Time

Have you ever wondered why Jesus gave his life at age 33? Jesus was aware of his mission on earth, and yet it ended at such a young age. Why 33? Why not 53?

As a 12 year-old, Jesus taught in the temple, going about "his father's

business." Mary and Joseph were concerned for him because he was still a child. The time had not come for his ministry to begin.

At age 30, Jesus went to John the Baptist to be baptized. When John announced, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," the Jews understood its true meaning. They knew of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. But Jesus didn't offer himself at age 30.

Not until age 33, in due time, did Jesus offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins. God the Father chose that time for Jesus to lay down his life. No man took his life. He gave it willingly, according to God's perfect timing.

We can be hopeful because God's timing is perfect. Case in point: The land that had been chosen by the Arkansas State Mission Board was tied up for months in bankruptcy. We had been tempted to suggest another piece of land a few miles away. Miraculously, within the same 24 hours, the land was cleared and our contracts with the mission board were signed. We learned that we'll never be late when we're waiting on God. We can carry this hope with us every day.

From Perfect Sacrifice to High Priest: Hebrews 7:25-27

Jewish law required a perfect sacrifice, a lamb without spot or blemish, every year to cover their sins. This lamb could not be sick, nor could it be "almost the best." It was to be the most perfect lamb, even the most loved. The



High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies with blood to cover the sins of his people, as well as his own. But the atonement was only temporary.

Jesus became the permanent sacrifice, the most perfect, most loved lamb. His blood is enough to cover the sins of the entire world from now throughout eternity. He became our High Priest and now intercedes with God on our behalf.

Tena visited the church on our very first Sunday. She is a young career woman with two small children. She had been raised a Catholic, so her knowledge of the Bible was limited. But when Tena accepted Christ, the High Priest who became her sacrifice, she prayed to Him, and her sins were forgiven.

There is hope in knowing that Jesus' perfect sacrifice covers our sins permanently.

Hope of the Resurrection

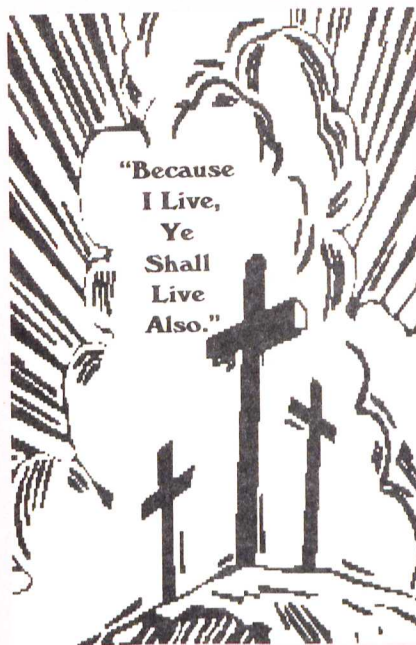
Across town, across time, centuries earlier, the sun grew dark above the trembling earth. Family and followers watched as the only sinless human, the Messiah, hung lifelessly on a splintered cross built for criminals. The soldiers announced, "He's dead now." All hope was gone.

The thought of Christ's death seems hopeless, doesn't it? The fact that his death was caused by sin and was carried out for sinners seems even worse. But Christ's death, then and now, is not hopeless.

Only three days after Jesus spoke his final words, He defied all the laws of death and rose from the tomb. Those who came seeking his body found only burial clothes and a heavenly messenger proclaiming, "He is not here. He is risen. Come and see the place where the Lord lay."

What hope must have sprung up in their hearts as they ran to share the news with others! Can you imagine the joy of knowing that Jesus had conquered death? Hope had become a reality. Because of his victory, their lives would never be the same.

And neither would ours.



Hope of a Helper: John 14:16-18, 26

Jesus did not rise from the dead, ascend to Heaven, and leave His disciples to face life alone. As He had promised, the Holy Spirit came to live within them, to guide them in all things, to teach them all things, and to bring to mind the things Jesus had taught them while on Earth.

This helper, the Holy Spirit, is a hope for every believer today. He is the one who helps us understand scripture, who convicts our hearts of sin, and leads us to repentance. He calls to our mind words of comfort and joy, Jesus' words, when we need them most. Even in our most desolate hour of need, the Holy Spirit is with us. What a glorious hope to know that we are never alone.

Hope of a Heavenly Home: John 14:1-3

Christians across the world live in various kinds of houses: mud huts, tents, apartments, condos, townhouses, houseboats, and trailers. Regardless of why we live where we live, someday, it will all change. We will live in a house that far exceeds our imaginations, even beyond our ideas of a "dream house."

Jesus promised that in heaven there are many mansions, one prepared for those who believe in Him.

Just imagine moving from our earthly house into a mansion prepared by our Lord. He who became our sinless sacrifice, who sent a Comforter to be with us continually, will keep his promises. We can trust Him to do what He said. We have this great hope: He is preparing a home for us.

"Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also."

Medical professionals often say that without the will to live, without hope, seriously ill patients die. When they give up hoping, they give up living.

The same can be said of Christians. Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." If we look only toward what we have in this world, in this life, we will more than likely be miserable. Our greatest hope is in Jesus' promise: "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Easter gives us a great opportunity, like no other during the year, to share our hope, our faith with those who have none. During this Easter season, as we reflect on the death, burial, and resurrection of our Savior, resolve to keep hope alive. ❖



Vicki and her husband, Levan, are home missionaries in Maumelle, AR, at Rolling Hills FWB Church. They have 3 children, Hollie, Heath, and Haylee.

Witnessing for Christ in Word and Deed

by Norma McAlister

Maggie seemed unusually quiet at the company breakfast table and went to her office early. As I passed her desk, I stopped and asked, "Is something wrong? You look so sad." She told me that her mother had been diagnosed with cancer and was to have surgery within the week. From previous conversations, I knew



she had been raised by a Christian mother, even though she had not been living for Christ. Maggie asked, "Will you pray for my mother?" I assured her I would. I sent cards and visited her mother. To this day, Maggie still calls me to share her prayer needs.

The Great Commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 is a command for every Christian to be a witness of the Gospel. What a task! There is no way we could carry out this command in our own power, but only in the power of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

There Is Much To Do

God gives us opportunities everyday to witness to others. We do not have to quote scripture or pass

out tracts to witness. Simply giving God the praise or recognizing His hand in situations can be a good witness of our faith. When someone tells of a near accident in his/her life, responding with "God was certainly watching over you" lets him/her know the importance of our strong faith in God. When the opportunity



arises, we can share how God has blessed us. These responses should not be overdone or insincere, but with a genuine interest in relating to those around you.

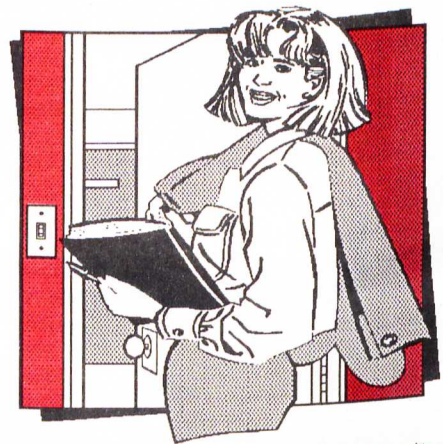
Our actions and reactions to co-workers, salespeople, neighbors and family members speak louder than words. A kind word, slowness to anger, patience, and understanding will exemplify Christ in our lives.

The workplace gives us many opportunities to witness, but we need to be sensitive to the needs around us in order to build bridges to others. Everyday, I ask God to send someone into my path who needs help. And He has never failed to do just that.

A. Establish a reputation of concern and kindness by:

[1] asking, "You look like something is bothering you. Can I help?"

Most times people just need a listening ear. Don't try to solve their problems or address their spiritual need, but listen wholeheart-



edly. You may have an opportunity to share how God gave you peace about a particular burden.

[2] assuring them of your prayers, perhaps offering to pray with them in private.

Even unsaved people acknowledge prayer helps, so they will find it comforting to know someone cares enough to pray for them specifically. Be sure to pray faithfully and remind them that you are doing so. And follow up, asking if the situation has changed.

Katherine had been working with me for sometime, and she knew I went to church faithfully. She was not attending church and was not sending her children. The subject of church had come up in our conversations several times, and Katherine would always say, "But I want us to

go as a family." One day I shared with her how years ago my husband would not attend with me and my girls, but I always made sure we went anyway. I told her how Proverbs 22:6 promises that the things children learn when they are young, they will remember when they are grown. Several months later, she told me she and her children were attending a church regularly--she had thought a lot about our conversation--and she was even in the church choir!

These actions build trust, and once built, will open doors for winning people to Christ. Many times, co-workers have called me or stopped by my desk to ask for prayer. Hardly a day goes by that I cannot praise God and share an answered prayer.

B. Provide resources of encouragement and faith.

On a table outside my office, I keep several *Daily Bread* devotionals. When I pass them each day, I whisper a prayer that they will minister to someone. When I see one has been taken, I simply praise God and bring out another one. One of my Catholic co-workers gets them regularly and has shared with me how it strengthens her. Another co-worker comes to me every week to get her copy.

The people in my church know that I recycle these old devotional guides, so they give them to me when they are done. That way, I keep an abundant supply! Recycling can be good for the soul!

Cards and short notes to those who are sick or in need of encouragement also go a long way toward building relationships with the unsaved. I try to include a scripture verse that fits their individual need in the card or note. People are always surprised that someone took the time and the stamp to show concern.

Sharing the Gospel: In Word

In order to share with them the plan of salvation, we must know the Scriptures well enough to: [1] show God's love for us (John 3:16); [2] explain man's sinful condition (Romans 3:23); [3] tell what Christ did for us (Romans 5:8); and [4] identify the consequences of sin and the importance of accepting God's gift (Romans 6:23, Luke 13:3).

Once the person with whom you are sharing has recognized their need of a Savior, you should make the time to go through the following passages:

Romans 10:9-10--believing and confessing their need of salvation

Romans 10:13--whoever calls upon Him shall be saved: personalizes the invitation

Hebrews 6:18--God cannot lie: His promises are true

Revelation 3:20--Christ is eager to be a part of our lives

Sharing these verses with someone may not be possible at one sitting. You may want to guide them through these verses slowly, making sure they understand the significance of each one.

If she understands and truly believes what Romans 10:9 says, offer to pray with her--explaining a simple prayer of repentance, asking forgiveness, and inviting Jesus to be her Savior.

We can all fulfill our role in the Great Commission and be a witness at home, at work, and wherever we go. Let's share the Good News in both word and deed. ❖



Norma McAlister, a 19-year member of Woodbine FWB in Nashville, is the mother of two daughters and grandmother of one. She is a Payroll/Tax Analyst for Aladdin Industries.



The Nature of Spring

by Lois Anderson

Spring is the celebration of Easter, the resurrection after death. Spring is the season that follows winter with its storms and dormant plant-life. Trees, shrubs, and ground cover--all dead or dying. It looks like the glory of satan, just as the tomb looked like satan had triumphed. Then, slowly and quietly, a crocus bud pops through the snow, assuring me that I can and will overcome the pain and troubles in my life to have a season of joy and spring. Just when it looks like satan's plan has worked, the stone rolls away, and quietly but surely Christ comes forth. He doesn't come with trumpets blaring to announce God's victory, but quietly as a gardener, calling Mary's name. ❖

MISSIONCALL

In 1994, CoLaborer Magazine is focusing on what is often an overlooked group of Free Will Baptist missionaries: our single women. These women work hard to raise their support singlehandedly, and they face unique challenges on the field. To date, there are 11 single missionaries on 6 foreign fields, all making a difference for Christ's Kingdom.



In this interview, Patsy Vanhook and Charolette Tallent share with us some of their insights and experiences while serving in France. Cathy Crawford is another single missionary serving there. Use the information given here to better pray for these women.

When did you feel God's leading you to France?

V: I had felt the call to missions as a young teen, but it wasn't until I went to France with Operation Mobilization in 1968 that I was convinced of the tremendous need there.

T: In 1974, I went to France to help the Haases in Rennes. I was open to missions, but it wasn't until it took us 4 hours before we came to a city with a gospel witness that God began to show me France as a mission field. Also, a little French boy, Serge, a student at the Bible club to whom we'd given his first Bible, told me he hoped I would one day return to France to tell boys and girls about Jesus—it was the sign I had prayed for.

What has been the most frustrating thing about missionary work?

V: Probably the fact of being seen as a cultic group like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, and the consequent problem of gaining confidence and a hearing for the gospel.

T: I love France and the ministry here. It is my life. The most disconcerting part of it is the "solicitation" of financial support. This frustration is felt by missionary singles and couples alike. The burden and pressure of seeking means to fulfill the Great Commission is often embarrassing. This is not a frustration wrapped in pride, but it disturbs me to think that the legitimacy of Christ's command is perhaps being reduced to a sales pitch before the need is considered. Missions involvement should be a very natural part of the Christian life—it is not a choice.

Something surprising about the French people?

V: Their faithfulness in friendship once the barrier of suspicion is passed.

T: Even though France is considered the fashion center of the world, most people cannot afford designer clothes. The fashion of the street has little variety and individuality. It is not uncommon for someone to wear the same outfit for several days.

How do you handle loneliness on the field?

V: I don't experience loneliness as much now as when I was a new missionary because I have more friends and feel more a part of society. When I am lonely, I try to find someone to visit or invite over. I walk downtown. Or I call

Cathy Crawford or Charolette Tallent.

T: When I experience loneliness, it is usually because I am thinking too much about myself. When that happens, I try to tune into a student who may need a cup of coffee or tea and a chat.

Are you treated differently by the French because of your singleness?

V: Being single means it's easier to get an invitation to eat—it's not so daunting to feed one as it is to feed a family. It also makes it easier for people to ask favors. They don't feel like they're encroaching on family time.

T: When I came in 1978, singles were looked upon as an oddity and leadership roles were not given to people in their twenties, especially single women. Now that I am older, I have earned the credibility and trust needed to minister here.

Who encourages you?

V: Encouragement can be a problem, especially when I don't let people know I need it! But the Gibbs family with whom I work, Cathy and Charolette, and other missionaries come in handy. There are also two or three women in the church who are good to notice when I seem down.

T: Of course, my parents and brothers and their wives have always believed in my overseas ministry. I have claimed Mark 10:29-30 as God's promise to me that He would place in my life those who would become family. My co-workers here in France have been like family. Their words have been the balm of comfort and/or prodding I've needed to get on with the work. Also, many of my students have been "Barnabas" in my life.

What are some of the most exciting experiences you've had sharing the gospel in France?

V: Recently I have been able to share Christ with the director of a small bilingual school in our area. I first contacted them when I heard they were looking for an English teacher. Then I invited them for coffee. They soon invited me to their home twice to talk with them about the Bible, my faith, and spiritual questions in general. The wife is a Christian, but the husband considers himself an agnostic. He is, however, very open, searching for spiritual roots, and I have enjoyed sharing with them. He has not yet come to the Lord.

T: For many weeks we have prayed for Tracy, a Canadian student who has been regularly attending our Tuesday evening Bible study. Finally, when she asked me "if I had always been religious," I was able to share with her my own faith and relationship with Christ. The look on her face was priceless—she had never heard of such a thing. She has not accepted Him yet, but I look forward to another opportunity to share with her.

Have you ever been embarrassed struggling with the French language? Give a phrase you use often.

V: I once asked a garage man how often I needed to change the "essence" (gas) in my car, when I meant to ask about "lubrifiant" (oil). I use "pardon" (excuse me) often out in public and "comment," which is a way of asking someone to repeat what I don't understand. And of course, "ca va?" is "how are you?"

T: One time Ramona Miley and I thought we had found a lost black poodle that had been announced

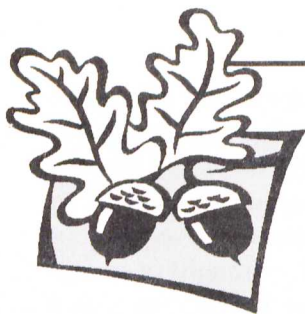
in the newspaper. She asked me to call the owners and tell them, and when I did, I told them we had their "black cornichon (pickle)" in the laundry room. I was so consumed with the thought of speaking French on the phone that I didn't notice their bewilderment, neither did I hear Ramona whispering "caniche (poodle) not cornichon!" Even more embarrassing was the fact that the dog was not theirs.

How can FWB women best pray for you?

V: You can pray for me just like you would pray for anyone—for encouragement when I'm down, for wisdom to know what to say, for opportunities to witness and sensitivity to know when those opportunities come, for physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health to meet the challenges of each day, and for victory over the attacks of Satan.

T: Pray that my heart, mind, and life will be focused on Christ; that the Lord will give me discernment into the needs and hurts of my students and the opportunity to share Him with them; for the salvation of French students and international students; that the Christian students here would have a burden for the lostness of man.❖

Editor's Note: Patsy's birthday was inadvertently left off of the *Missionary Birthday Calendar* in the Nov/Dec CoLaborer. Hers is November 14th. Take a minute to send her a belated card, or a care package, and remind her of your prayer support. Her address is: 58, Blvd. Albert Premier, 44600 St. Nazaire, France.



WNAC's National Retreat

at Ridgecrest, North Carolina

September 15-17, 1994

Ridgecrest Conference Center



1994 Theme:

Back To The Basics: Prayer and Bible Study

RESERVATION FORM

Enclosed is my deposit* of \$ 25.50 (per person) made out to
Ridgecrest Conference Center.

Tel. (704) 669-8022 Fax. (704) 669-9721

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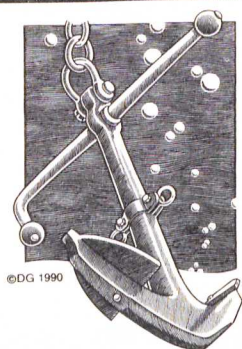
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Behold the Beauty: The Women Jesus Touched

Introduction

I Samuel 16:7 reminds us of God's infinite wisdom in recognizing the beauty in others. God told Samuel: "The Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." We can learn to find beauty in the lost souls we seek to win by following Christ's example.

Read John 4:1-43

Jesus saw beauty in a sinful woman, obviously shunned by most in the city, including the religious community. He saw what was in her heart, the evil and the good. What did he find? (answers may vary)

1. She was not _____.

In verse 9, she reminds Jesus that Jews do not associate with Samaritans, and yet she continues her conversation with him.

2. She told the _____.

In verse 17, she answers Jesus honestly.

Notice: Jesus did not use this as a springboard to condemn her adulterous living, but He used it as a means of keeping the conversation open.

3. She displayed a _____ spirit.

When, in verse 18, Jesus pointed out her sin, she did not become angry or defensive. She did not try to justify her sin.

4. She had a sincere thirst for _____.

Perhaps the most important virtue she possessed was her desire for spiritual knowledge (verse 25). She wanted to know the Source of truth--the Messiah.

5. She wanted to _____ what she had witnessed.

In verse 28, she hurries to the city to share what Christ had done for her.

Consider This: Verse 27--Upon returning, the disciples react first to the Samaritan woman and then question Jesus for speaking to her. Given what you know about this woman, how do you think she responded to the disciples? What is Jesus' response (see vs. 31-38).

Questions:

1. In what city does Jesus meet this woman?
2. How long does Jesus stay with the Samaritans?

Read Mark 5:25-34

Mark gives the account of a woman who had suffered tremendously for many years. Her pain was not only physical, but spiritual. She was condemned unclean according to the custom of the day, which meant that anyone who touched her would also be considered unclean. She was not even allowed into the temple to offer sacrifices and pray.

Jesus recognized these virtues in her: [Unscramble the words]

1. R G A E O C U --to make her way through the crowd. She had faith to believe the desire of her heart would be granted by His touch. The witness of His life had made a believer out of her long before she saw Him.
2. D T E E N I A M T R O N I --to get to Jesus. She had spent all she had trying to be healed, and nothing was going to stop her this time, now that she knew Jesus was there.
3. T E N N P A R E T T R I P I S --falling on her knees at the feet of Him who healed her. There she heard the most beautiful words ever uttered to a suffering soul, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

Consider This: Jesus knew, even with all the noise and confusion, that she was there. He did not need to ask "Who touched me?" But he did . . . Why?

What causes sufferers to miss hearing those words, "Thy faith has made thee whole"?

Questions:

1. How did she know she was healed?
2. How did Jesus acknowledge her spiritually? He called her _____.
3. Leviticus 15:25-33 tells about the "issue of blood" and the customary response to it. How many days did a woman have to wait after being healed to be declared clean? ❖



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When a product becomes overwhelmingly popular—perhaps because it is the first available—its name becomes the name by which we identify all similar products. What do we call gelatin, steel wool, adhesive bandages, and petroleum jelly? Jell-O, Brillo Pads, Band-Aids, and Vaseline, of course. And what about flavored ice treats, cotton swabs, tissue, and photocopies? Popsicles, Q-tips, Kleenex, and Xerox. All of these brandnames are registered trademarks, and companies will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees to protect them from falling into the hands of competitors. Why? These products represent the very best on the market. Their consistently good reputation and performance attract and keep loyal customers.

How much care do we Christians take in protecting our good name? Do we work hard, sparing no expense, to be the very best we can be?

He spared no expense to protect us from ultimate destruction in the hands of Satan. The very least we can do is live up to our name.

Proverbs 22:1

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.❖

Poet's Corner

Never Failed Me Yet

Judy Delong

Whenever I am called upon
To fulfill any task,
I find a quiet place somewhere
And there is where I ask
For God to send His guiding hand
To this poor, seeking soul
Show me what He'd have me do:
His will I want to know.

Sometimes He answers quickly,
The answer comes so clear,
I move ahead to the task
Without a doubt or fear.
But other times He asks that I
Continue much in prayer,
And tho' I seek His face each day,
No answer do I hear.

The time grows short, the day is near
For the task that I must do
And the only answer I have had
Is just a thought or two.
But I'll go on, attempt the task
In faith, I'll not forget:
In all that He has asked of me
He's never failed me yet.

Lilies

Michelle Langenburg

Ah, the lilies of the field
and birds who fly above!
'Though they have no concrete
worth,
they show the Master's love.

They are of little consequence;
they live a short timespan.
But beautiful and free and fine,
they're part of God's great plan.

So when you're feeling lonely,
just hold this thought as true,
that our Father knows your
name;
He's not forgotten you.

He values you for what He sees,
that which you might not know,
the good and everlasting spark
He placed within your soul.

Ah, the lilies of the field,
and men who live on land!
Each beautiful and free and fine,
we're part of God's great plan.

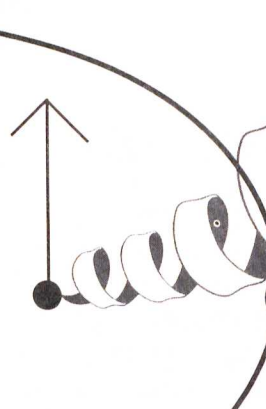
My Quest

Loree Medley

Yesterday I walked with Sorrow and not a word said she;
Silence was her companion, she had no need of me.
But oh, the things I learned from her, walking toward today.

Today I walked with Laughter and marveled at her merry-making;
Everything to her was amusing and life, a festive party.
But oh, the things I learned from her, walking toward tomorrow.

Tomorrow I will walk alone in silent meditation;
Discerning that Sorrow's solitude and Laughter's merry-making
are but two special ingredients that balance yesterday, today, and tomorrow.❖



Springboard:

Innovative Ideas for Auxiliary Officers

A Statement from the WNAC Executive Committee

December 8, 1993

The WNAC Executive Committee prayerfully acknowledges that the July/August *CoLaborer* magazine article referring to *Of Mice and Men* has caused us much concern and grief, and we feel that a public apology is necessary.

We believe we have learned from this mistake and now look forward to moving on with the Lord's work. We lovingly ask our denomination to move past this stumbling block with us and together join toward the tasks and challenges ahead.

The WNAC Executive Committee

Mary Neal Everyl Getz Diane Thomas Jo Ann Wood
Marjorie Workman Barbara Fletcher Mary R. Wischart

Coordinator:

March 1st is the deadline for WNAC's Creative Arts Contest. This is an excellent opportunity to showcase the talents of your women, so encourage them to enter.

Also, plan ahead with your Missions Chairman for the Pre-Easter Week of Prayer and Missions Service. Talk to your pastor about scheduling it on a Sunday or Wednesday night, so the whole church can get involved. Perhaps you could plan a time of fellowship with various international foods for after the service. Set a goal for your Easter offering, and encourage 100% participation.

An Good Friday/Easter program is available, entitled, "Prayers of the Women Who Loved Him, After His Death" for \$3.00 incl. p&h. Write or call WNAC for a copy, along with a suggested schedule and cover: P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN. 37011-5002, 615-731-6812. Or you could use the April program, "Keeping Hope Alive" by Vicki Hubbard, for your PreEaster Week of Prayer service. (If you do so, you could use the MissionCall interview about the work in France on page 10 for your monthly women's meeting.)

DEVOTION OUTLINE

Variables on the Word "Mission"

adapted from a program by Lottie Campbell

Scripture: Matthew 9:37-38

Song: "Send the Light"

Intro: Mission is the root word for many different words, all of which are related to the work we have been called to do for Christ--sharing the good news of the gospel.

We have a COMMISSION: "the act of committing to a task." Exodus 3 tells of Moses and how he thought he couldn't do the task God had given him. But God knew he could, so Moses committed himself to deliver his people. If we will commit as Moses did, we will please God.

We must be in SUBMISSION: "the act of humility, meekness--obedient." Before we can begin the work He has called us to, we must rid ourselves of self (Matthew 16:24). We must humble ourselves before God. What are some things that keep us from submitting? If we put God's work first, He will take care of the rest.

We are then ready for TRANSMISSION: "the act of sending from one place to another." Being ready to go or send another is not as easy as it sounds. But He provides what we will be missing once we go where He leads.

We are official MISSIONARIES: "one sent to preach in a foreign land; the duty of one who is sent." Even if we

[Devotion cont. from page 15]

never set foot on foreign soil, we do have a field in which to minister. Our field is our community. We are called to "bloom where we are planted," while being open to His call to go elsewhere. Let's be faithful in this calling.

We shouldn't be guilty of OMISSION: "the act of leaving undone." If we have committed, submitted, transmitted, and become missionaries, we must be conscientious and faithful, or we risk laying down His cross. We must not leave the work undone or half-way done. ❖



Good Friday Program Available

If you choose to close the
Pre-Easter
Week of Prayer
with a Good Friday
service,

or

if you want another option
for your Easter service, a
program is available.

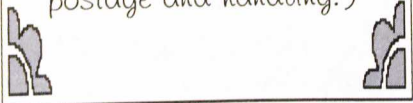
The play, "Prayers of the
Women Who Loved Him"
is available, along with a
program schedule and
cover.

To order, write or call
WNAC,

P.O. Box 5002

Antioch, TN 37011-5002.

(The cost is \$3, including
postage and handling.)



Assistant Coordinator:

Easter is a special time of recognition of the price Jesus paid for our redemption. It is also the time of year Free Will Baptists concentrate their efforts on giving to foreign missions. This year is a very critical one for FWB Foreign Missions. Many missionaries' accounts are seriously in the red. WNAC women can make a big impact for the cause of Christ this year. Plan ahead with your Coordinator to maximize participation among your women and in your church. Get the word out that this year's Laura Belle Barnard Offering needs to be the best ever.

And after all your plans for Easter are in place, you'll want to begin thinking about Mother's Day. WNAC's Volume 10 playbook, *Fresh Air*, has a wonderful Mother's Day play that would be enjoyed by mothers and daughters of all ages. Perhaps you'll want to consider making this year's banquet totally different by making it a churchwide event, including tributes by sons and daughters. It could be a combination Mother's-Father's Day banquet.

Secretary/Treasurer:

What kind of record-keeping system are you using to keep up with your women's group? Does it work well, or are you always missing something? Are the necessary WNAC forms being filled out and turned in in a timely manner? Or are things piling up on you? Needing a refresher course in the duties of your office is not something to be embarrassed about. A lot of people depend on you to keep everything straight, so having a solid grasp of the requirements of your office is important. Here are a few hints to steer you through this year with all your ducks in a row:

[1] Read the WNAC Secretary/Treasurer's Guide again; [2] Streamline all your recordkeeping, minutes, etc. into one, easy to carry file or notebook; [3] Don't put off doing quickly after one meeting what will take hours after several meetings; [4] Know the name, address, and phone number of your district and state secretary/treasurers, and ask questions if you are unsure about proper procedures; [5] Write out your monthly reports, make copies, and hand them out at meetings instead of reading them aloud--seeing something in writing usually makes it easier to understand; [6] Send money regularly and through the proper channels (local to district, district to state, state to national); [7] Have ideas? Share them. Need Help? Ask.

Missions Chairman:

To draw attention to the missions emphasis at Easter, perhaps you'll want to create a display table in the foyer (or some other prominent place) using a candle motif and the words "Together We Light the World." A large candle can be drawn using poster board or bulletinboard paper, and the flame can be constructed out of gold foil or yellow construction paper. You can use candles of varied shapes and sizes on the display table, along with scripture verses related to light and salvation. International flags would also be a nice touch. Provide prayer guides, cards, maps, directories, and other useful information there for the taking, as well as a large announcement about the upcoming Easter service.

Be sure to utilize the MissionCall article (page 10) about the work in France during March or April. Our focus this year on single female missionaries is to help FWB women understand the unique struggles and opportunities these women have in serving Christ on a foreign field. Perhaps you could suggest making one of these women your Missions project this year. Perhaps you could ask your pastor to have one of them come speak to your church when on furlough. However you choose to emphasize them and their ministries, you will be furthering the cause.

Prayer Chairman:

The PreEaster Week of Prayer Guide is located on pp. 19-20 of this issue. You may copy it or request free copies by writing to FWB Foreign Missions Department, P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002, 615-731-6812. Allow 2 weeks for delivery. The guide is set up for each day of the week, including Saturday and Sunday, and it includes a "get you thinking" mini-devotional, a scripture-prayer focus, a list of missionaries, and some special requests. Each day focuses on a different country, so use a map and provide facts about these countries, as well as the FWB work there. Remind your women that missionaries are just common folks with the same struggles, hurts, disappointments, and temptations as we have. Pray for them just as we pray for ourselves--for strength, for wisdom, for patience, for good health, and for daily opportunities for personal growth and outreach. Plan ahead as to how you want to set up special prayer times, partners, chains, groups, etc. A Good Friday prayer and worship time would be a good idea, a culmination of a week of prayer and a springboard to the Easter Missions emphasis service.

Study Chairman:

The 1994 Theme is "The Bible: Light on the Way." On pp. 28-29, Pam Wood shares with us "How To Start a Bible Study Group." Often our first reaction to this suggestion is "I simply don't have time," but if we consider the benefits of Bible study, no one can argue that it isn't worth it. Prayerfully read Pam's article, and allow God to speak to you about the possibilities.

How up-to-date are your women on FWB Foreign Missions? Do they have: prayer cards, profile sheets, directories, and maps? Have they seen the missions videos available for rental? If not, write or call the FWB Foreign Missions Department and request an order form.

Service Chairman:

Since the PreEaster Week of Prayer is so critical to the foreign missions effort, encourage your women to make sacrificial giving a part of every day by doing without a want or a need and setting aside that money for missions. One way to do this is to provide for them (or make together) a container--a small gift bag, basket, or wrapped box with the words "Together We Light the World"--in which to keep their daily offerings.

Is there a ministry to children in your church? If so, does this ministry directly reach out to unchurched, disadvantaged children in your area? If not, are you willing to ask God to give you a burden for them? Find out what the needs are in your community, and talk to your women about helping. Even a small step toward them this year can make a real difference in their lives. ❖

Lucy and Marge and the Wake-Up Call

M: [Sleepily] Oh hi, Lucy, I was just about to call you.

L: You sound asleep. Did I catch you in a nap?

M: Not exactly--I was just about to start dinner. [Yawning]

L: Speaking of naps, did you see Ethel Furgeson dozing off last Sunday at church?

M: [Trying to stay awake] No, I was in the nursery, what happened?

L: Well, about the time Preacher Greene started his final point, Ethel's head started bobbin' till it finally fell forward and stayed. I started to nudge her, poor thing . . .

M: [More alert] Yes, nobody I know is as dedicated as Ethel Furgeson. If I did half as much as she does, I'd probably be out cold in the floor.

L: So, anyway, she stayed that way for awhile but then when the piano started playing the invitational hymn and we stood to sing, she jolted out of the pew and began singing her loud alto version of *Just As I Am*.

M: [Sleepily] She does have a wonderful alto voice, doesn't she?

L: Yes, but we weren't singing *Just As I Am*. We were singing *Is Your All on the Altar!*

M: [Half asleep] It really doesn't matter what she was singing, does it? I'm sure all of hers was, anyway.

L: All of hers was what?

M: [Waking up now] On the altar, Lucy, on the altar. Ethel is one of the godliest women I know. There isn't anything she wouldn't do to help others.

L: Well, she was more than a little embarrassed, and I told her, "Ethel, it happens to everybody--you just need to get more rest." She agreed, but then she said something that made me feel downright shameful.

M: What was that?

L: She said that our Auxiliary fellowship and Bible study is like fuel in her life--it keeps her going. She said it's one of the few things she does for herself, and without it, she didn't think she'd accomplish as much.

M: [Awake and ashamed] Would that we all could see at Auxiliary like she does.

L: Yeah, we might all be a little sleepier, but just think about it! No more "I simply cannot make it--I've got too much to do!"

M: We might even hear someone say, "I can't wait for the meeting tonight. Our prayertime means so much to me!"

L: I think I'd faint dead away.

M: Instead of doing that, why don't you ask Ethel to share what Auxiliary means to her during our next meeting, or maybe in front of the whole church!

L: That's a great idea, Marge. I'll call her right now.

M: And thanks, Lucy.

L: For what?

M: Thanks for the wake-up call. I needed it. ♦

Springboard Illustrated: Stories to Grow By Volume 34/ No. 2

GOD'S WAITING ROOM by Becky Gwartney

Waiting rooms . . . not our favorite places to be, are they? One of the most unpleasant things about a hospital or doctor's office is the waiting. The receptionist seats us in a room, sometimes crowded with many people--all waiting.

We're only in that room for a certain period of time, then we see the doctor. The doctor knows what we need. If we didn't believe that he knows best, wouldn't be there in the first place.

What do you do in those waiting rooms? Do you run frantically back and forth to the receptionist, checking on your appointment time, or flip wildly through magazines and books to settle yourself? Or do you sit quietly, waiting to hear your name.

God also has a waiting room. No, it's not one of the more pleasant places to be. In fact, if you're impatient like me, you'll find it very nerve-wracking. In her book, *Stick a Geranium in Your Hat and Be Happy*, Barbara Johnson says, "Many are in God's waiting room for what seems like forever, learning lessons, suffering pain, and growing." So *that's* what we are doing while in God's waiting room--learning, suffering, growing. Sometimes the only way God can teach us is by setting us down (maybe even forcefully), stirring our innermost being, and changing us.

God's waiting room is a place for us to be still and know Him. Instead, some of us run frantically to Him always asking about the time: "When will I get out of here?" "How much longer do I have to wait?" We, like children, want an answer now, but I believe God wants, more than anything else, to hear us say: Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way.

The psalmist, David, said it well: "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart (Ps. 27:14).

No matter how long we have to wait, we should never lose heart. God is with us, and He will always be with us. He's just wanting to teach you to be more like him through "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Phil. 3:10b). He is there for us--leading us, guiding us. Can you hear His still, small voice?

MISSIONARY PRAYER CALENDAR

Missionaries supported by both Foreign and Home Missions departments are listed here by birthdays in March & April. Brighten their special days with your cards and prayers. Missionaries on furlough are indicated by *. Please send all cards and letters direct to the field unless the missionary is on furlough.

MARCH

5 Willie Booth (OH)
5 Vonda Johnson (WY)
7 Patty McCullough (France)*
13 Charolette Talent (France)
14 Allan Crowson (France)
15 Lynda Hunt (WA)
15 Linda Moore (CI)
20 Trina Owens (Spain)
21 David Potete (IL)
23 Margaret Lloyd (WI)
24 Gelaine Langford (IN)
25 Howard Gwartney (AZ)
25 Pam Potete (IL)
27 Olena McClain (Japan)

29 Lois Reagan (Canada)

APRIL

2 James Childers, Jr. (SC)
4 Dorothy Bevill (SC)
8 Karon Barber (SC)
9 Marie Hanna (India)
9 Betty Bishop (OK)
13 Miguel Vera (Puerto Rico)
18 Ramona VanWinkle (KS)
24 Tim Coats (SD)
27 Mike Criswell (OR)
27 Marvis Eagleton (Brazil)



JAPAN



FOREIGN MISSIONS

Saturday:

Read Luke 19:1-10. Over lunch with Zaccheus, Jesus didn't have to say, "Zack, have you had a life-changing experience today? If so, you should give" Apparently unprompted, Zaccheus decided to donate more than half his income to the poor. His cheerful giving was a demonstration of his belief in Jesus Christ as Lord.

How do your giving patterns reveal a changed life?

Prayer Focus-- *Encouragement:* Thank God that, according to Isaiah 42:5-6, He gives breath to these missionaries. Pray that they will know His life and shine forth His righteousness.

JAPAN

Ken and Judy Bailey: *Pray for someone to take the Inso church when the Bailey's leave for furlough in June, and pray for their financial needs*

Dale and Sandra Bishop

Mirial Gainer: *pray for her fundraising efforts*

Debbie Griffin

Fred Hersey

Don and Ruth McDonald: *Don is ministering to two congregations. Pray for his continued good health and for Ruth as she is expecting their third child in May.*

Jim and Olena McLain

Nathan and Linda Snow

Sunday:

What happens when Christians give with willing hearts? Great joy. Read Exodus 36:2-7 and imagine the scene at the Tabernacle: People with with happy smiles on their faces, cheerfully bringing their jewels, precious metals, expensive linens, oils, spices, and wood, until finally someone yells, "Stop!"

Now imagine being at the National Convention and hearing the announcement: "Please stop giving. We have far surpassed our goal, and have more than enough to meet every need." Impossible? Not if 240,000 Free Will Baptists became cheerful givers.

Ask God to reveal and remove any barriers that keep you from giving with a joyful heart.

Prayer Focus-- *Wisdom:* Ask God to give these leaders Spirit-led insight as described in Job 32:8.

FOREIGN MISSIONS STAFF

Eugene Waddell, *General Director*

Don Robirds, *Dir. of Communications*

Jimmy Aldridge, *Overseas Secretary*

Fred Warner, *Dir. of Missionary/Church Rel.*

Michael Johnston, *Treasurer*

Shirley Lauthern

Carole Ragan

Barbara Nicholson

June Wilkinson

Nancy Jones

Doug Kite

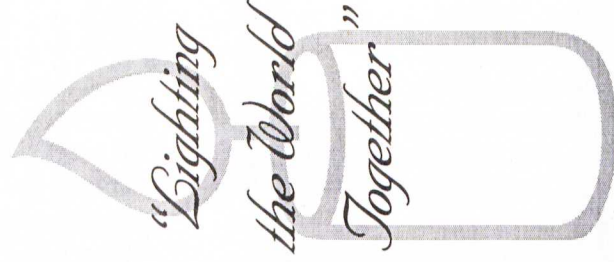
Tammy Strickland

**FOR UP-TO-THE-MINUTE PRAYER NEEDS,
CALL THE MISSIONS HOTLINE
615-731-3839**

PRE-EASTER

WEEK OF PRAYER

FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS



SPAIN, PANAMA,
& URUGUAY

Monday:

The Corinthians had pledged to give with the best of intentions. But a year later, they still had not given. In II Corinthians 8:6-11, the believers were really close to compromising their integrity. They did not realize that God honors honorable givers.

Have you made a pledge to give at some time and did not follow through? Now is a good time to excel in giving by following through and giving. It's never too late to make good on a commitment to give.

Prayer Focus-- *Strength:* Based on Psalm 127:2 and Psalm 68:35, ask God to give these missionaries much needed rest and strength and to provide for their needs even while they sleep.

SPAIN

Ron and Linda Callaway

Dwain and Debbie Crosby, Lynn Midgett, & Steve and Linda Reeves: *Pray for their fundraising efforts while on furlough.*

Jeff and Susan Turnbough: *Pray for them as they build a church in this unevangelized suburb of Madrid.*

PANAMA

Stan and Brenda Bunch

Steve and Judy Lytle: *Pray for Steve as he coordinates the Bible institute and counsels with pastors.*

URUGUAY

Molly Barker

Walter and Marcia Ellison: *Ask the Lord to bless their work with the Bible institute in Montevideo.*

Dave Jr. and Becky Franks: *Pray for their family and the work in Malvin Alto.*

Dennis and Trena Owen

FRANCE

Tuesday:

Read Mark 12:41-44. The poor widow gave to God what the rich young ruler would not: everything. No doubt others would have counseled her to keep her coins. Those pennies could've prevented her from starving, but they could do little to carry forward God's work. However, Jesus commended the widow for her gift.

Have you given a gift lately that really came from your heart, but seemed embarrassingly silly or inadequate? Never forget that the Lord delights in any gift of love and sacrifice, even if it seems small. **Prayer Focus--Kindness and Love:** Pray that these missionaries will live lives of love as described in Ephesians 5:2.

FRANCE

Cathy Crawford

Allan and LaRue Crowson

Jerry and Barbara Gibbs

Tom and Patty McCullough: *Pray for their fundraising efforts while on furlough and for Patty's continued good health.*

Steve and Becky Riggs

Charolette Tallent: *Pray for her Bible studies with University students, that she may win many of them to Christ.*

Dennis and Carol Teague: *Pray for their outreach in St. Sebastien.*

Patsy Vanhook: *Pray for her protection, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and for opportunities to witness.*

GERMANY & INDIA

Wednesday:

In times of distress and darkness, when you've prayed, but God seems to be delaying the answer, what do you do? In Isaiah 58, there is a surprising answer. God's people accuse Him of not caring that they're going through hard times. He shows them that they hold the key to their own problems.

As you read Isaiah 58:6-11, mark the lines in which God declares: "If you want to see a breakthrough, give."

Prayer Focus--Perseverance: Based on I Corinthians 16:8-9, pray that God will allow these missionaries to stay where they are and that they will see more doors open for effective ministries.

GERMANY

Dennis and Mary Heath: *They are now conducting both German and English services. Pray that God will bless them with fruit in these services.*

Kim Zegellen: *Pray for her ministry with the German youth.*

INDIA

Carlisle and Marie Hanna: *Ask the Lord to watch over them and strengthen them.*

COTE D'IVOIRE

Thursday:

Have you ever felt like God was asking you to give something you couldn't afford to? Read Mark 6:32-44, and put yourself in the disciples' place. Jesus is telling you to feed a crowd of 5,000.

Impossible! To feed that many people would take my salary from now till Christmas! Yet when the disciples gave Jesus the little they had, He gave back in abundance to feed the hungry crowd.

When God helps you see a need, reexamine your resources. See what you have, not in light of what you can do with it, but in light of what He can do with it. **Prayer Focus--Compassion:** Pray that these missionaries will experience the blessing of helping the weak (Acts 20:35).

COTE D'IVOIRE

Robert and Judy Bryan

Mike and Deleen Cousineau

Paul and Rhoda Creech

Kenneth and Rejane Eagleton

Ledgel and Sharon Ferguson

Paul and Tammy Gentuso

Ernest and Elaine Holland

Glennnda Leatherbury

Jalayn Martens

Ron and Linda Moore

Clint and Lynette Morgan

Darrel and Lila Nichols

Mark and Kathy Paschall

Jerry and Carol Pinkerton

Lloyd and Betty Plunkett

Norman and Bessie Richards

Randal and Carolyn Richards

Alice Smith

Robert and Pam West

Ken and Marvis Eagleton

BRAZIL

Friday:

The early believers gave until it helped. They gave with integrity. Read Acts 4:32-37. Their giving was prompted by unity. And just look at the results: every need was met, generosity abounded, and their witness increased. Pray for unity of heart in your church, and for the kind of giving that testifies powerfully to the reality of Christ.

Prayer Focus--Integrity: Pray that, as these missionaries walk with integrity, God will give them the good things Psalm 84:11 promises.

BRAZIL

Bobby and Sue Aycock

Jim and Shirley Combs

Jim and Karen Cowart

Earnest and Jean Deeds

Dave and Pat Franks: *Pray for their fundraising efforts while on furlough.*

Curt and Mary Holland

Tommy and Nancy Hughes: *Nancy has begun a Bible study class on Wednesdays for the women in the community. Pray for this outreach ministry.*

Norman and Laua McFall: *The McFalls are ministering in Belo Horizonte. Pray that God will give them new contacts.*

Bobby and Geneva Poole

Jim and Vicki Sturgill: *Pray for their fundraising efforts while on furlough.*

When requesting material from the Foreign Missions office, allow 2-3 weeks for delivery. UPS requires the street address for delivery here: 5233 Mt. View Road, Antioch, Tn. 37011-5002.

MY MISSIONARY IN PANAMA

BARB EUBANKS

Isaiah 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

Even the experienced news reporter could not adequately describe the conditions in Panama. The camera made the devastation and brutalities seem more hideously real. Still I knew, as I sat and watched the TV reports from the safety of my home, that even the frightening scenes were only a shadow of the real horrors. I whispered a prayer for the people in Panama, especially our missionaries.

Hundreds had been killed. The thousands seeking shelter in a refugee camp were wounded, if not in body, in soul and spirit. Their homes were left smoldering, destroyed, and with them the sense of security of their daily routines. They had no privacy, as television cameras recorded their pain and loss for the world to see. The cameras captured the weeping and moaning of those lamenting the dead, the struggle of a young boy learning to walk again without the two strong legs he used to have, the expressionless faces of the helpless.

Then I saw her. The camera focused on a woman, staring out from a crowd of faces filled with anger, fear, and hatred. Contentment was on her face, as she bent over a tub, washing clothes by hand. Her words, though in beautiful Spanish, formed a familiar melody that I understood: "Glory, glory, hallelujah . . ." The depth of her faith shined remarkably from a face marked by time and pain, from the midst of a refugee camp. From the devastation of war, it shined into my home and my heart.

I had heard stories of faithful

men and women living victoriously in the face of great adversity, but I gained a whole new perspective that day. Her faith made it possible for her to praise God regardless of her circumstances. The result was a special kind of peace and contentment rarely seen.

I marveled at the way God was meeting her needs. If He could fulfill her needs and bring her such joy, surely He could do the same for me. Nothing in my life ever began to compare with the conditions she faced. Why was I worrying? Why didn't I have the contentment so obviously in her life? Could it be that my mind was set on the circumstances around me and not on praising God? Seeing this Panamanian woman's example, all of my concerns seemed trivial.

Again I prayed for the people in Panama and our missionaries there. Then I prayed for my missionary--the woman whose example of faith had ministered to me. I thanked Him for satisfying her needs and mine. I thanked Him for sending her testimony of faith, peace, and contentment into my home and heart. I even thanked Him for CBS news, who had financed the missionary endeavor. Our God is truly a remarkable God.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.



Barb Eubanks is an avid writer who lives in Sesser, Illinois. Her article, "Keep Practicing," won first place in the 1993 Creative Arts Contest.

Women In Action



A. Mountain Home Women Host Dinner for Provision Closet

The Woman's Auxiliary of Harmony FWB in Mountain Home, AR, hosted an Italian Dinner and Pie Auction to benefit WNAC's Missionary Provision Closet and to help remodel the church kitchen. Pictured are: [back row from left] Carol Dover, Elaine Moody; [middle row from left] Rachel Seehusen, Jodi Seehusen, Angie Wilhite, Willa Pruitt, Hazel Cody, Rose Johnson, Lena Rieck, Betty Wilhite; [seated] Rosine Webber and Maxine Partee.

B. Home Mission Church Gives Generously

The West Knoxville, TN, home mission church women know how important the provision closet is to FWB missionaries. Their Tupperware party for the closet was a big success. Pictured are: (l to r) Helen Joyce, Veronica Grant, Paula Kirk, Virginia Helms, Jennifer Oakes, Phyllis Degges, and Gail Fender, the pastor's wife.



C. Harvest Dinner is Scary Affair for Liberty Auxiliary

Thirty-five women attended the Auxiliary's Harvest Dinner at Liberty FWB in Sapulpa, OK, and the three course meal was quite frightening. The menu included: ghost cover, graveyard gravel, jack's ripper, bat's eyes, slimy slus, pumpkin poison, and dracula teeth. Louise Richmond of Stillwater FWB, along with Lavina Bingham, the pastor's wife, provided the entertainment. Pictured are: Sue Jenkins, Nadeen Wheeler, Ladonna Byard, Peg Matherly, and Lavina Bingham.



D/E. Alabama State Woman's Auxiliary Convention Draws Large Crowd

On May 1st, 1993, the Alabama State Auxiliary Convention was held at Harvest FWB Church in Ozark, AL. The women enjoyed speaker Sherry Reynolds, home missionary to Chandler, AZ, and the special music by her daughter, Tiffany. Over 160 attended, and gave an offering of \$3,166.96 toward the Chandler (AZ) Land Fund and the Fred Jones account. The Cahaba District was recognized for the largest offering, and the East Alabama District was recognized for having the largest number of members present. Mrs. Rhett Butler presented a special tribute to Shirley Kennedy, a former Auxiliary member-at-large who passed away in September, 1992. Pictured are: (D) President Paulette Scott presenting love gift to Sherry Reynolds, while daughter Tiffany looks on; (E) crowd listens to Kennedy tribute. ♦

Letters to WNAC

Dear WNAC,

On behalf of Free Will Baptist Bible College, and in particular our Welch Library, I want to express our appreciation for adopting us as one of your projects this year. As you know, the library is one of the critical areas of need as we seek to improve it and increase our volumes. Please express our gratitude to the women of WNAC for their encouragement and support.

In Christ,
Tom Malone
President

Dear WNAC,

Recently when two issues of *CoLaborer* Magazine arrived, I was about to sit down to eat, but I didn't eat until I read both of them. One feature I always enjoy is "A Woman God is Using." It really is good to receive them and keep up with what is happening among FWB women.

In Christian love,
Olena McLain, Japan

Dear WNAC,

Thank you to all the ladies who have recently given to our account gifts totaling \$387. Please continue to pray for the work in Spain and for us.

Partners together,
Ronald, Linda, and Rachel Callaway

Dear WNAC,

Thank you so much for your prayers and your gift of \$8,371.59. May God's richest blessings be upon you as we labor together to reach a world for whom Christ died.

In His service,
Ron and Linda Moore

COMMUNICATOR

BY MARY RUTH WISEHART

April is Foreign Missions Month

The emphasis in April for women's groups and our churches is *Foreign Missions*. The week of prayer for women begins March 28 and continues until April 1, Good Friday. See suggestions in Springboard and the Pre-Easter Prayer Guide. Pray during the week that the Lord will bless our people to give so that the needs of our Foreign Missions Department will be supplied. Offerings during the week of prayer should supplement the offerings from the church during April. The funds given in this offering will benefit all foreign missionaries. April is a good time to help your women and your church get to know our missionaries and learn to support them and the foreign missions office.

State Leaders Attend the Leadership Conference

A few presidents and field workers joined the WNAC Executive Committee for the Leadership Conference, December 6-7 in Nashville. The theme was *The Challenge of Change*. Attendees heard Grigori Komendant, president of the Baptist Union for the Commonwealth of Independent States (Russia) speak about changes in his country. Six speakers then addressed changes in education, laity, location of our churches, leadership, methods and the reality of constant change. All state presidents and field workers are invited to the Leadership Conference, along with the promotional workers and moderators from each state association. State conventions should see that their presidents and field workers represent them at these meetings.

Executive Committee Met in December

Barbara Fletcher (MS), Diane Thomas (NC), and Marjorie Workman (TN), new members of the WNAC Executive Committee, joined Mary Neal (IN), Everyl Getz (TX), and Jo Ann Wood (OK) for the Executive Committee meeting, December 8. The committee met in the WNAC Conference Room at the National Office Building in Nashville. (See the statement issued by the committee at the December meeting on page 15.) Plans were completed for the 1994 convention and retreat. The committee also worked on the 1995 budget to be approved at the convention in July.

Dues in 1994 are \$10

States seating delegates at the 1994 convention in Little Rock should have \$10 per member reported. The convention delegates approved the \$10 fee July 1993 to begin January 1994.

Back to Basics

Back to Basics is the theme for the 1994 retreat at Ridgecrest, September 15-17. The pricing structure for rooms is different this year. Check the registration blank on page 21. If you have questions, call WNAC, 615/731-6812 between the hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. CST, Monday through Friday. You may also call Ridgecrest at the number on the registration form.❖

Provision Closet Needs:

Bedspreads, all sizes

SHEET SETS, all sizes
(we are almost out of
twin and full sheet sets)

Food Processors

Coffee Makers

Irons

Mixers

*Please see note below.

Did You Know????

--that we can save time and money if you send a list of the items you are donating, as well as the estimated value of each item, along with your donations. Or simply leave the price tags on so we can more easily estimate value.

--it is important to include the church Auxiliary's full address and phone number, as well as the name of a contact person and her phone number, in the packages you send to the Closet.

--that the Provision Closet is stocked full of Tupperware® and towels of all kinds. Please discontinue sending these until further notice.

--the Provision Closet accepts money for special purchases the missionaries need.

Spilled Milk



From the time I was old enough to know my name to this day, I have been Gwen's sister. A picture taken when I was three and Gwen was six says it all. In it, there are three girls at a table in the yard; the two older girls are drinking tea from little plastic cups with saucers. From the looks on the tea-drinkers' faces and the spilled milk running all over the table, I--the kid with milk--was not welcome at their party. That's the way it is growing up with brothers or sisters: they are rarely happy at the same time because each one sees the other as the reason for her misery.

Remember the story of the prodigal son? Cain and Abel? Joseph and his brothers? In all of these stories, someone is upset because the other is given more attention. Pretty typical of brothers and sisters, huh?

Wherever I go, it seems Gwen has been there . . . three years before. And she didn't just go there and leave. She was very popular, made excellent grades and was known as a gracious, wonderful person. By the time I arrived just about anywhere, I was already known as "Gwen's little sister." However, the thought of being jealous of her or wishing she wasn't my sister never seriously crossed my mind. Because by then I understood that for every good thing she does, she is *my* sister. And unlike anyone else in the world, we are made of the same stuff, and we were meant to compliment each other.

Appreciating the unique bond of brothers and sisters is something that happens as we mature. We grow to recognize the magic that makes them special. We grow to recognize what we've taught each other--the value of the times we didn't like each other. We grow to see their potential and share their dreams. The little jealousies that kept us on opposite sides give way to a new friendship--between young adults.

You have life's most important elements in common with your brother or sister. God planned it that way, and His plans are always perfect.

So, when your brother teases you without mercy, when your younger sister borrows your favorite shirt without asking, when your sibling gets more attention than you do: Try to think ahead to the time when you'll understand them better. Think ahead to the time when they'll know just how special *you* are. And in the meantime, when they spill their milk and ruin your tea-party, close your eyes, grit your teeth, and say a little prayer for patience.

A Note From the Editor: Hey Actionettes (or any teenage readers), this page is for you—to help you grow in Christ and to let readers of *CoLaborer* know about the great ways you serve God. I invite you to send in material or topics you want to see talked about on this page, and pictures—we love seeing your fabulous smiles! Mail your ideas, etc., to *CoLaborer* Magazine, P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, Tennessee, 37011-5002 ❖

Conflict in the Church

by Sandra Atwood

A man walked into a church with a semi-automatic weapon and began shooting. He wounded a child in the foyer and two adults before being apprehended by two deacons. Tragically, the same thing is happening in churches all across this country. Physical lives, however, are not being threatened. The damage is far worse. Spiritual casualties are the result of conflict. Harsh, angry words spoken in haste. Malicious acts of revenge destroying individuals and any hope of unity. Careless gossip ruining reputations.

What can we do about conflict in the church? What can we do to stop the casualties?

A pastor and his wife set the tone in a church. If they are loving and accepting of others, then members in the church will be also. If they show appreciation for others' efforts and encourage them, the atmosphere will be positive, with little room for criticism. However, if the pastor or his wife are critical, often pointing out the faults of others or complaining about this or that, the congregation will follow suit.

A now unchurched preacher's kid told me that he hated to go home after church on Sundays because his father aired all his grievances and criticisms about the church members. Love covers the faults and petty things that should be overlooked—not emphasized. Don't make cutting remarks, even in jest, or talk about them behind their backs. If it's something serious, talk to that person directly.

Gossip is often the beginning of conflict. We talk too much about other people. We're almost glad to be "in" on the important information going around. We feel much better about ourselves if we can point out others' faults. Sometimes if a church is not growing, it's easier to blame and nitpick at someone else because things aren't as they should

be. We magnify small things, instead of praying for revival in our church.

Just Don't Do It

The best way to handle gossip is just not to do it: "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile." (Psalm 34:13) Say something good about the person being gossiped about. Suggest to those gossiping, in a gentle tone, that you stop and pray right there for that person. (You will be amazed at how quickly this ends the gossip session.)

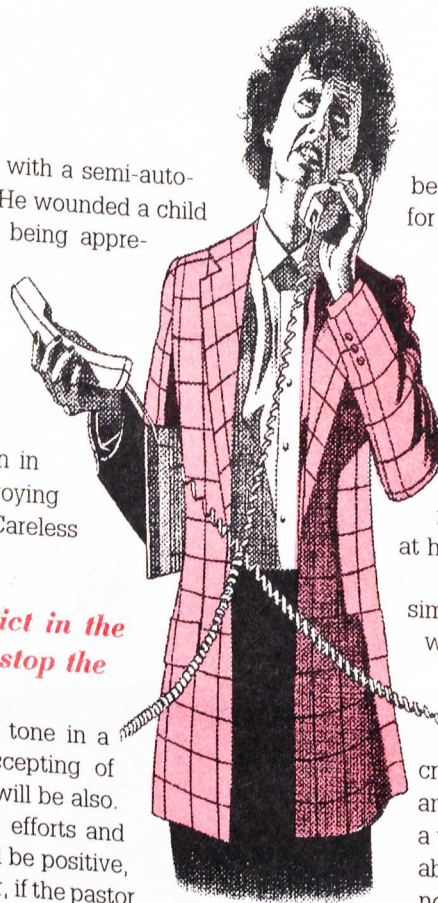
Many conflicts could be headed off if we simply keep our mouths closed more or at least if we think more before we speak. But how do we handle those who don't? How do we handle the criticism of those who voice their criticism loudly and often? If the person is critical of most everything, pray for her everyday and then talk to her privately. If the person has a valid criticism, be thankful when she tells you about it, instead of talking behind your back. Try not to be so defensive that people are afraid to approach you.

How we handle criticism determines how big the conflict becomes. Arguing back in anger or frustration, carrying grudges and looking for revenge, and spreading our side of the story only escalates the conflict. Bad becomes worse. But if we thank the person who has been critical and pray for God's help with the problem, we can grow.

Should I Get Involved?

What if the conflict is between others? Should we get involved? Personally, this pastor's wife does not feel obligated to play the role of peacemaker, although I am, by nature, a peace-loving person. However, some conflicts should not be ignored.

Whatever you do, precede any action with much prayer. Even Paul had to chide Euodias and Syntyche to get along. (No doubt, had they known they were going to be



recorded in the Holy Bible as being in conflict, they would have made a greater effort to get along.)

I often ask people if they will commit to pray five minutes a day for the person with whom they're in conflict. It's surprising the changes the Lord will make when we yield to Him and His will.

More people have left good churches because they couldn't get along with others than because of doctrine. People have faults--add to that stress, emotional weaknesses, poor communication skills, and you will have a full-blown conflict. How we handle it will determine whether there are casualties or a greater bond of love through meekness, forgiveness, and healing.

Know Your Enemy

Conflicts will come, and not just in our churches. How we handle them defines how well we model true Christianity. We can't get sidetracked into misinterpreting the enemy. It is not the man who criticizes your husband's lengthy sermon. It is not the dear lady who has something negative to say about every teenager who walks through the church door. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness" (Eph. 6:12). We must never forget that the devil wants to destroy us, our families, and our churches. He is the enemy. He is the source of conflict. Don't get confused and shoot the wrong person. ❖



Sandra Atwood lives in Townsend, DE, where she and husband Richard minister at the Townsend FWB Mission.

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tender thoughts

by pearl mitchell

Who knocked?

Someone rang my doorbell.
Cautiously, I cracked the door,
and looked critically around.
No one or nothing stood there.
Who had rung my bell?
With my short-sighted vision,
I saw nothing, and
I very angrily closed the door
in the face of Opportunity.

How often do we let opportunity to slide without claiming the moment? There are so many things we really mean to do, but we never seem to take the time--time with our children, aging parents, or spouses, time to work on various projects, time to learn something new.

Seizing the moment can be rewarding emotionally. Opportunity comes in many forms: cancelled appointments, days off from work, unexpected visits, the turned off television--bits and pieces of free time in our lives.

Many people use the old excuse, "I just haven't had the time." The reality is the time is there, we just don't see it as usable.

The illustration is given of a glass gallon jug full of large stones. The jug is full--just as our schedules are. Then a sack of colorful marbles are poured into the gallon jug, filling up the gaps in between the stones. There was so much room--all the marbles fit in the jug. Then rice was poured into the jug, filling up the space between the stones and the marbles. So much space left to fill. Even when you'd think the jug had no more space to fill, there is room for water.

The point is that even though we think that our time is filled, there are always extra moments--marbles or grains of rice--to be used--opportunities to build relationships, learn, and grow. So seize the opportunity and do something satisfying, something you've been meaning to do. Opportunities abound. ❖



Pearl Mitchell is an elementary school teacher from Columbus, Georgia.

How To Start a Successful Bible Study Group

by Pam Wood



In II Timothy 2:15, Paul urged Timothy to spend time in the study of God's Word. He explained that this is pleasing to God. If our desire is also to please God, we need to follow the same command. Knowing what we need to do is easy. Being able to do it is another thing entirely.

I'm sure we would all agree that there is a trilogy of essentials for maturing in Christ: prayer, Bible study, and fellowship. If any one element is neglected, the maturing process suffers.

Where Do We Begin?

Before starting any ministry for God, we need to spend time in prayer. When we come before Him, seeking His will and guidance, He will direct us. Allowing Him to lead is essential to seeing the need, capturing His vision, and structuring a group study of the Bible.

Seeing the Need

I am always amazed at the way God allows me to see a need. I just happen to be at a soccer game, sitting next to a mom who begins talking about a family problem. Or I run into an old friend who tells me her husband recently died after a struggle with cancer. The hope and promise of God's Word is exactly what these people need.

When we ask Him to show us who we can minister to, we'd better be ready to do just that. He will give us the opportunities, but we have to keep our eyes and ears open to the Holy Spirit's leading.

Getting a Vision

God's vision, His intention, may be very different from your own preconceived ideas about Bible study groups. As believers, it is easier and more comfortable

to meet only with those from our own church family. However, we need to be careful to avoid tunnel vision, instead keeping ourselves open to the possibilities of God's calling. He may want you to begin a Bible study to introduce unbelievers to Christ. He may want you to gear your Bible study toward helping women deepen their relationship with Him. Christ's desire is for all to come to know Him and the fullness of His grace, not just those sitting next to us in the pew.

What is the scope of your vision? What is the scope of God's?

The Necessity of Structure

One of the most important elements of getting a Bible study group up and running is structure. It has to be organized, and to get organized, you must answer these questions: Who? What? When? Where? and How? will we study.

Who? As the leader of the group, you can invite those women God has given you a burden and vision for. Remember, because you are being obedient to God by leading the study, He will provide the women He wants to be there. It may only be one neighbor, or it may be a group of ten. Numbers are unimportant: getting into God's Word is the only goal.

What? The focus should be on studying the Bible. There are many helpful materials on every aspect of the Christian life, but they may not be necessary. God's Word is sufficient for all circumstances. The barrier of cost, therefore, does not exist.

When? The meeting time of the study depends on the target audience. If you are targeting working women, an evening or weekend Bible study is best. After deciding on the day and time, you must decide how long each session will last. The time allotted must be enough to encourage interaction and enthusiasm, but should not drag on and on. For one-on-one study, an hour is probably sufficient. For groups, an additional 30 minutes to an hour may be necessary.

Also, you should consider the length of time to commit to the study. The school schedule may be ideal for moms of school-aged children. Or if you want to study a particular book in the Bible, you may choose to devote a week to each chapter. Planning an exact time for completing the study will allow you and those in your group to be open to God's leading in other directions.

Where? The place chosen should be quiet and free from distractions. A home is an ideal, intimate setting, and it may be easier for you to have a group study in your

home. However, varying meeting places may be advantageous. Plan ahead and avoid distractions from children, telephone, and visitors during this time.

How? A study of God's Word is more than simply reading the passage. Each participant should pray for the Holy Spirit to teach them what He would from the Bible study. (I Cor. 2:10) This can be done individually before arriving or at the beginning of every session. Growth comes from applying God's words to everyday life. Because God's Word is living and active, it touches each person in a unique way.

All participants should have read the passage to be covered before the session. Some of the questions each person should be ready to answer are:

- what is the purpose of this writing?
- who are the people involved?
- what is the primary verse?
- what are the problems discussed?
- what are the practical applications of this passage?

Focusing on the passage and having specific topics to be covered each week will guard against wasting time, "rabbit chasing," and recipe sharing. Efficiency and planning ahead will enhance the learning process and be more rewarding for the participants.

The Greatest Advantage

There are many advantages to studying the Bible with others. For me, in the beginning, the accountability to other women in my study group was what kept me in the Word. Then I began to see how God was working specifically and uniquely in others' lives, as well as in my own. The result has been an increase in my faith and an ever-deepening love for God and His Word. But the greatest advantage is that I know this is pleasing to God. ❖



Pam Wood is the wife of pastor Tim Wood in Campbell, CA, mother of Alison, 14, and Brian, 12. She is also the class administrator of Bible Study Fellowship International in San Jose and Area Coordinator for Moms-In-Touch, a weekly prayer group for children and their schools.



MISSION ALERT:

Evangelism News from Around the World

Sapporo, Japan

The Don McDonald family writes: "We face the same struggles as you--our community is bombarded with cultists going door-to-door almost daily. And now there is a new Mormon church opening in our community. They've brought in four American young men who will begin the work by--what else?--teaching free English lessons to adults! We are praying that seeking hearts will continue to be directed to our church and the true message of salvation." Also, the McDonalds ask that you pray for their financial situation. Because of a decrease in giving and the plummet of the American dollar against the Japanese yen, their living expenses are up 30%, and their account is declining by \$2,000 every month.

Barbacena, Brazil

According to Bobby and Sue Aycock, over 120 people from Belo Horizonte, Lafaiete, and Barbacena met on November 2 for a time of fellowship and worship, the theme of which was "The Powerful, Living Word." The message, from Hebrews 4:12, was about the authority of the Bible and how to study it. They also request prayer for the following: New Christians--Jose Carlos and wife, Elza, who have four unsaved children; Hortencia and her unsaved husband and children; Helienis and his unsaved wife, Leila. And the unsaved--Vera, Osmar and Angela, Vicente, and Ivone.

Nashville, Tennessee

Paul and Rhoda Creech began furlough in September: "This furlough year presents a major challenge. We must raise funds to enlarge our one-bedroom apartment to include two bedrooms for the children--the cost is \$25,000. Our other major expense is French language school. We have chosen the most economical package--a university in Quebec, Canada-- at \$10,000." Continue to pray for the Creechs about these financial needs and especially for Rhoda, who is expecting their second child in March.

St. Croix, Virgin Islands

Ron and Barbara Dail report that the school year is off to a smooth start, and four new staffmembers have been added: Katrina Kruizinga; Eugene and Shannon Joseph; and Erika Coad. A new science lab is under construction there. Donations for the St. Croix Science Lab Fund are being accepted through the National Home Missions Department. Meanwhile, the church has recovered from the summer slump, averaging over 100 in Sunday school and 140-150 in church. Some new faces are the result of the Fall Revival conducted by an evangelist from St. Vincent, a sister island to the south. The Dail family also asks that you pray for their sister-in-law, Judy, and her four sons. Ron's brother, Jimmy, went to be with the Lord on August 29th after a long illness. He was 48.

Rapid City, South Dakota

"The Lord has been very busy blessing us here in Rapid City," writes Tim Coats. Tim recently had the privilege of leading three men to Christ: Daniel, 19, a Native American with whom the Coats have been working for about a year; Clayton, 28, who accepted Christ after a hospital visit; and Reid, 70, whose bout with lung cancer prepared his heart to receive the Lord. Tim asks that we pray for these men that they would grow in Christ, and he thanks his supporters for praying and giving so that men like these can be saved. The Coats' account has a deficit of \$1,600. Pray about this need.

Shreveport, Louisiana

The Parker's new Door Knocking/Visitation program is already seeing glorious results. On the first Saturday of September, Ron visited with four separated or divorced fathers. Phil rededicated his life to Christ the very next day. Robert, who has two daughters, also came and eventually rededicated his life to Christ. David has also started attending regularly with his two girls. And Hal came with his four children. Just four contacts, but many lives are being changed. Pray for these men and for others in the church who are new believers or are still struggling with decisions. ❖



*Mary
Ruth
Wischart*

Words for Women

- ◆ Is Worship A Lost Art?
- ◆ The World of A Widow
- ◆ MissionCall: Ivory Coast
- ◆ Preacher's Kid Syndrome

"You can't take that with you," my brother-in-law said. "It will break in a thousand pieces before you get it home." I had just bought a clay vase in Mexico. I knew it was not really sturdy, but I thought it would look just right with some cattails and sea oats I had in an arrangement. And being a hard-headed person, I insisted on trying to get it home. It didn't cost that much. It was worth trying.

We packed it carefully, and I carried it from South Texas to Tennessee.

Felix was right. When I unpacked it, it was in pieces. But the pieces were large enough to glue back together. Now it has held that arrangement of cattails and sea oats for about twelve years, perhaps sturdier than it was before I "remade" it.

Tears filled my eyes suddenly as we finished a tour of a pottery factory in Brazil. No one mentioned them, but in a far corner I noticed broken pieces of pottery. They were useless, waiting to be carried to the trash pile.

The factory made large decorated bowls, flower pots, vases, and water purifiers. I saw the workman toiling over his wheel. He carefully shaped and molded each piece. Then the piece had to be fired, and finally it was ready to be admired and sold to a customer. By that time hours of hard work had gone into it.

Now in a corner of the shop lay the bits and pieces, pieces that the potters had toiled over. They lay unnoticed on the trash heap. Somewhere along the way, after it had been shaped and decorated with care, the pottery cracked and broke into pieces. Now it was counted useless and thrown into a corner to be carted away as junk. And even after all that work, the potter didn't seem to care.

My eyes filled with tears because I thought of God's way with the broken clay vessel. He gave Jeremiah an object lesson at the potter's house. These pieces lay there marred and useless. But God said to Jeremiah that He, the Master Potter, would take the marred vessel and make it again. All He asked was that the people turn away from their evil ways.

My eyes filled with tears as I thought of how often I had marred the vessel and how many times God had taken the marred vessel and shaped and made it again to His pleasing.

My eyes filled with tears as I thought of lives marred and lying useless on the trash heap of life. Some lives seem so hopeless. They are so marred by sin. We're tempted to toss them away as trash. But then Jesus comes. He redeems the trash and makes it a vessel fit for His use.

His power is unlimited. His grace is boundless. His love and mercy can remake the most marred and broken among us.

Wonderful thought. God is still in the business of changing lives, reshaping them, picking them up from the trash pile, and making them vessels fit for His service. That remade vessel may be even stronger, more fitted for the Master's use.

I'm glad He doesn't give up on the marred clay pot.❖



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