

COLLABORER



September • October 2006

OUR JOURNEY SET YOUR HEARTS TO CARE

STRENGTH FOR
THE JOURNEY

LIVE THE WORD

GUILTY! A PARENT'S
WORST NIGHTMARE

TOWARD TOMORROW:
2006 WNAC CONVENTION

Women Nationally Active for Christ

JESUS SAID



I often chuckle at the story of one of my relatives. A devout Christian in the post-depression era, she constantly read her Bible—but only the red-lettered parts. Those were the words of Jesus; all the rest were words of men.

Though her view of divine inspiration was certainly limited, and her daily inspiration no doubt limited by her view, she got one thing right. She knew what Jesus said. A recent study of the Sermon

on the Mount makes me wonder just how well I do.

Jesus said some radical things. He turned over the tables of more than moneychangers. Prefacing His teachings with *"Ye have heard...but I say,"* His words rocked the religious routines of that day. They shake the comfortable Christianity I know today.

Christ's sayings demand more than a legislative list; they require love. Love my enemies. Go the second mile—not for friends, but for people who demean and despise me. Forgive. Forgive again. Feed the hungry; visit the prisoner; care for the sick. Jesus spoke with the authority of Heaven, addressing the felt needs of men. Those needs still exist. He calls His followers to the crack houses, AIDS clinics and welfare lines. His way demands racial respect and reconciliation.

Jesus' words are not safe. They require risks but they offer reward. Lose your life in order to find it. Give and it shall be given you. He sent His disciples out with nothing, knowing they would return rejoicing that everything is subject to Him.

His teachings defy the American dream I've been taught to pursue. *"Take no thought...what ye shall put on."* *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...."* These statements decry fashion and materialism. They cause me to examine and weigh my purchases in light of the eternal.

Christ's words call for pursuing righteousness. They condemn self-righteousness and pride. Christ tells His followers to pray in closets, fast incognito, and give anonymously. His way requires surrendering all my pseudo rights, trusting Him to protect and defend me.

His teachings are not easy but they are good. People scorned His words; many turned away from following Him. Even His disciples found some of His words, "hard sayings." I find them hard as well—hard to reconcile with my lifestyle, my level of commitment, and my lack of love for both God and others. Yet, I also find them good. I know that His words hold the keys to peace and joy, comfort and strength, power and glory, salvation and eternal life.

Rereading what Jesus said confirms my faith and stretches my limits. I long to live the words of Jesus. I want to be His follower—through the Valley of Baca, into prisons, to the uttermost parts of the earth. How about you?

What He says we will do,
Where He sends we will go,—
Never fear, only trust and obey.

—"Trust and Obey" by James H. Sammis

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FOR CENTRAL ASIA
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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

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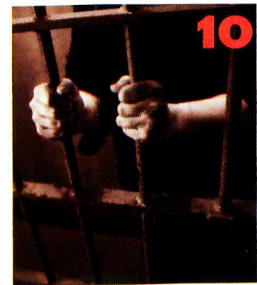
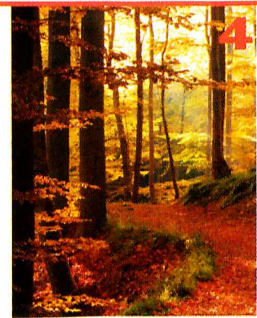
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COVER PHOTO: First place photography entry, 2006 Creative Arts Contest. Rebekah Plunkett.



FEATURE

by Dianne Tippet

Our Journey

A TESTIMONY BASED
ON PSALM 84

HOW AMIABLE ARE THY TABERNACLES, O LORD OF HOSTS! MY SOUL LONGETH, YEA, EVEN FAINTETH FOR THE COURTS OF THE LORD: MY HEART AND MY FLESH CRIETH OUT FOR THE LIVING GOD..

Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

Great Desires

I met Christ at an early age and knew I always wanted to serve Him. One of the greatest desires of my heart was to marry and to be a mother. God gave me a wonderful husband and two of the finest children any parent could ask for. I also have two wonderful children-in-law and five beautiful grandchildren.

As a family, we had our ups and downs, but through it all, we wanted God's will in our lives. We asked God to use our children and to keep them close to Himself.

We prayed for that, knowing God might choose to move our children far from us. As parents, God allows us to be caretakers of our children, and we need to hold them loosely. Throughout our years of work at Free Will Baptist Bible College, my husband Bert and I have encountered parents who would not let their children go. Bert has said many times that he would rather our children live far away from us, serving and living for the Lord, than to live close to us, but out of God's will.

Another love of my life is the Bible. The longer I live, the more precious the Word is to me. It speaks to every need in my life and guides me through difficult times. This is my source of strength and the answers to my problems. I love to begin my day early with Bible reading and prayer. Every day I find God's message of encouragement to help me through the day.

In January 2004, women at my church began the Bible study, *Believing God*, by Beth Moore. I know the timing for that study was not accidental. There were so many scriptures to learn, and my faith was strengthened as I read and hid God's Word in my heart. These women were so faithful to pray for our family. God answered those prayers. I sensed a supernatural strength that I had never before experienced.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

Great Test

In February of 2004, our 40-year-old son, Brian, was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. What a shock! Brian had complained of pains in his neck. His wife, Kimberly, urged him to see a doctor. The nurse who checked Brian's vital signs detected enlarged

NOTHING STRIKES FEAR TO A PARENT'S HEART LIKE THE WORD CANCER. TO THIS DAY, IT IS HARD FOR ME TO WRITE THE "C" WORD, MUCH LESS SAY IT.

glands in his face and neck. A surgeon removed the enlarged glands and ordered biopsies. As we were waiting for results of the biopsies, I read Psalm 25:4-5, *"Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation."*

Then we learned it was cancer.

Nothing strikes fear to a parent's heart like the word cancer. To this day, it is hard for me to write the "c" word, much less say it.

Brian made an appointment with an oncologist. He phoned to tell us that he would be having tests and discussing treatment. Bert and I decided to drive to North Carolina to be there for Brian's bone marrow test since this would be so painful. The afternoon of the test, in spite of his pain, Brian went to the gym to watch his children play their scheduled basketball games. This became typical of Brian's and Kimberly's lifestyle in the days and weeks to come. They permitted as little disruption as possible to their family life.

They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

Great Strength

That evening, as Bert and I lay in bed, I was frightened. So many thoughts raced through my mind. I didn't want to lose my son. And I wanted him to have the best doctors and treatments available for his lymphoma. I knew that I could not travel this road alone. We talked; we cried; we prayed. God gave me peace that Brian was going to be all right and that He would be with Bert and me throughout this journey.

We also drew strength from Brian. In an email, he told us that he knew that his "Captain" was faithful. He commented, "When I was in the hospital before my surgery. . .there I was, by myself with God. Here is the thought that kept being pressed on my mind: 'Don't waste this moment!'"

Brian's brother-in-law, who works with Christian writers, mentioned that Brian had been encouraged by Dr. David Jeremiah's book, *A Bend in The Road*, in which he tells about his own fight with cancer. Dr. Jeremiah inscribed a copy of his book and sent it to Brian. What great kindness and encouragement.

In the weeks that followed, our faith grew as we prayed and read God's Word. So many friends, family, and even people we did not know were praying for us. They flooded us with emails, phone calls and cards.

Brian's chief cheerleader was his sister, Karen. She immediately went online to glean information about lymphoma. She emailed and called him, supporting him with her love and prayers. Her husband—our other Brian—and their children were supportive as well.

Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

WRITE ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY, USING PSALM 84 AS A GUIDE. SHARE THIS TESTIMONY WITH SOMEONE WHO MAY NEED A MESSAGE OF HOPE OR REASSURANCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE TODAY.

Great Opportunities

Our circle of friends grew as we came in contact with many who had also faced a cancer crisis. We will never again take life for granted, and we hold a very special place in our hearts for those who are dealing with cancer.

God was constantly opening new doors for sharing our faith and widening our connections within the body of Christ.

I first met Lou at a meeting. She was wearing a turban. I was certain she'd had chemo. The next time I saw Lou, her head was uncovered and her hair was about 1/4 inch long. "You have had chemo!" I acknowledged. "Yes," she answered then added, "And do you know what really helps? Prayer." Lou asked if she could place Brian's name on her prayer list at church. "Yes, please do," I said. Lou is a Methodist.

We got acquainted with Carlene, Robert, Larry, Angie and Ayo (who is Nigerian) at our neighborhood convenience store where we go every morning for cappuccino. Although some are unsaved, all were sensitive to what we were going through and, in their own way, comforted us with their concern. Several also said they would pray for us.

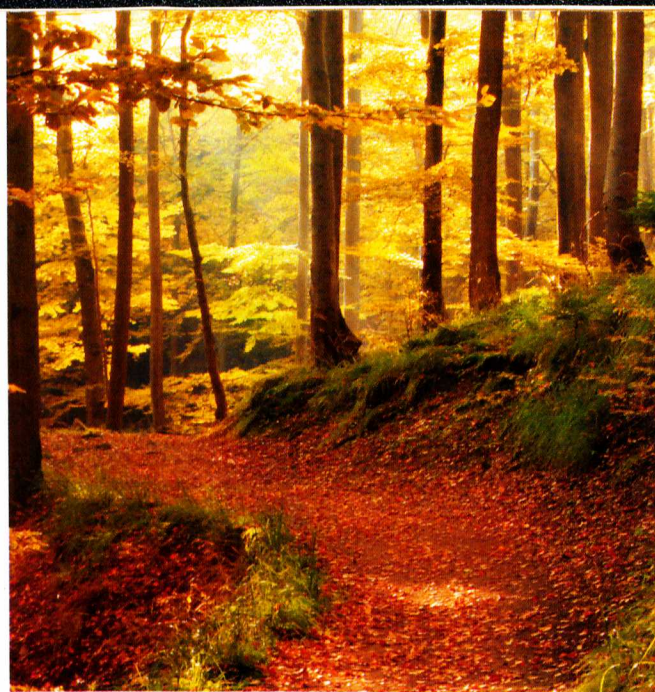
One morning when we arrived at the store, I met a lady who told me her husband was recovering from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He was having tests that day to determine if his cancer was still in remission. This was another assurance that Brian could beat this disease.

My Church of Christ brother asked his congregation to pray for Brian. They prayed for him at every service. Almost weekly he received a note of encouragement from someone in the church. This continued throughout his treatments and afterwards as well.

Diagnosed with breast cancer three years earlier, my friend Diana Harris began corresponding with Brian. Sick as she was, Diana told Brian, "I would take this from you." What compassion! Within a year, Diana would know a glorious home going.

A friend at my grocery store and I love to share stories. We are both doting grandmothers. When I told her about Brian, tears welled in her eyes. She is not a believer.

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.



Great Hope

In September 2004, after eight chemo treatments, Brian went for CT and PET scans. The results revealed that his cancer was in remission. As Dr. Anderson and his nurse Cheryl shared this good news with Brian, he asked our son, "What have you learned from this experience?"

Brian told him:

1. Life is precious. Don't waste these moments, even your valley experi-

ences. Learn from them; be strong in them.

2. Have your support systems firmly in place: Faith, family (physical and spiritual), and friends.

3. Give all the glory to God! He is worthy! Give Him praise!

Dr. Anderson is not a Christian. We are praying that Brian's witness will bring him to the Lord.

One of Brian's emails to us read. "This storm is passing. It started back in January of '04. My Captain was true and trustworthy. He held me close in my darkest times. His presence was reassuring, His hand unchanging, His power limitless! What a Captain!"

Subsequent CT and PET scans in March 2005 showed a continued remission. "Thank you, God, for answering the prayers of your people."

For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Great Lessons

I can truthfully say I do not worry about the future. God knows what lies ahead. He has been with us on this journey and will be with us the rest of the way.

Here's what I have learned along the way:

1. Never take God's Word for granted. What He says, He will do.

2. He is the Source of peace and strength.

3. Our journey on earth is so short. Make each day count for Christ.

4. Be faithful in sharing the Good News that Jesus saves.

5. Never take life for granted.

6. There is peace in the midst of the storm.

7. God answers prayer.

8. We can learn lessons of commitment and dedication from our children.

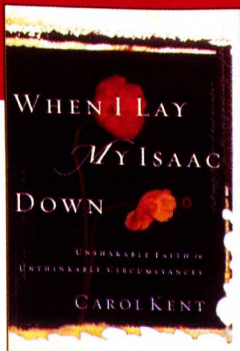
O LORD of hosts, blessed is the [one] that trusteth in thee.

Each pilgrim heart knows a different journey. Yet, all can go from strength to strength through the power and presence of the God of Zion.



A native of North Carolina, Dianne Tippet graduated from Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1962. She and her husband, Bert, returned to FWBBC to work on the staff in 1965. Now semiretired, they continue to work part-time at the college. Dianne has two children, Brian and Karen (Hampton), and five grandchildren.

September program helps and suggestions are found on pp. 54-57 of the 2006 WNAC Program and Plan Book



WHEN I LAY MY ISAAC DOWN

By Carol Kent

As she takes you on a journey through the most heart wrenching experience of her life, Carol Kent brings home to us what it means to "lay our all on the altar." This Christian mother never expected that she would have to endure the trauma of a son charged with murder. Her story teaches about sacrifice as well as how to help those who are going through times of extreme pain. A contagious perspective of God's healing grace pervades the book and invites the reader to walk in full trust of the Lord, much like Abraham. Your heart will be challenged by the question, "What is God asking me to give up in order that He might have full control of my will, my desires, and my life?"

—Angie Outlaw

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THE VALLEY OF BACA

The pilgrim who journeys to Zion
Finds often, with sweetest surprise,
The springs and the palm trees of Elim
And the manna that falls from the skies.

But his feet must not swerve from the
highway,
Though it lead through the desolate lands,
And he walk in the Valley of Baca
With its burning and shelterless sands.

Then blessed is he who has fathomed
The secret of Infinite Love,
And knows that e'en in the desert
There are waters that flow from above.

He has shown the silvery sluices,
Deep hidden, where no water seems;
And he opens a spring of refreshing,
Which is cool as the mountain streams.

He drinks, and grows strong for his journey,
And glad 'mid its perils and pains;
And the well which he makes in the desert,
A blessing forever remains.

It comes from the fathomless fountain,
And perennial flows to the brim,
The weary and fainting may find it,
And fevered lips quaff at its rim.

Ah, happy and blest is the pilgrim
Who knows where the water-spring swells;
Who walks through the Valley of Baca
And opens its life-giving wells!

Mrs. Vienna G. Ramsey
in *A Genser*, copyright 1896
Morning Star Publishing House

Live the Word

By Carrie Wood

AT TIMES WHEN
WE CANNOT
PHYSICALLY GO
TO OUR KNEES IN
PRAYER, WE CAN DO
SO IN OUR MINDS,
PETITIONING
THE LORD WITH
OUR REQUESTS.

Just days ago I had told myself I had no fear of death. *I am so enthralled by the prospect of entering the presence of my Lord that I have shed my earthly shackles*, I thought. I attended the funeral of a dear friend and rejoiced in his "crossing over the finish line" as the Apostle Paul alluded. Watching the news and seeing the sorrow and grief of people who lost loved ones—my heart went out to them, knowing they mourned as those who had no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). I told myself that the people I loved most in the world were saved and their lives were in God's hands, including the conclusion of their time here on earth.

So why now, sitting in the emergency room next to my eleven year old son, was I having a hard time catching my breath for the terror in my heart?

It had started innocently enough. A random headache complaint followed by, "My throat's a little scratchy." Within a day and a half it became a mysterious condition that produced so much pain and neck-stiffness that my son could not turn his head. He walked as if his vertebrae were fused together from the waist up. I was getting nervous; it had happened so suddenly. We went to urgent care and, upon watching him walk, the nurses quickly ushered us into an examining room. Their concerned looks did nothing to ease my nerves. Then the attending doctor examined him and asked him to do some simple movements. With a purposefully calm expression, the

doctor turned to me and said, "I'd like you to have some tests run that I don't have the equipment for. Your best bet would be to go to the ER. Have you ever heard the term, meningitis?" Yes, I had.

At times when we cannot physically go to our knees in prayer, we can do so in our minds, petitioning the Lord with our requests. Sitting in the emergency room, being brave for my boy, I was mentally prostrate, begging *Jehovah Rapha* to allow my son to live a long life of service to Him. I also asked forgiveness for my unbelief, for my prideful heart that inwardly boasted of peace that I did not have. Finally, I prayed that God be glorified as His will was done in our situation, no matter what that meant.

I was reminded that I needed to be a doer of the Word, and not just a hearer...or a talker (James 1:22). We may not even be aware of the ways we express our faith in our everyday lives. God's Word speaks of how we are to be transformed from the inside out, and in doing so we will prove the will of God (Romans 12:2). We are to rejoice always, pray unceasingly, and give thanks for everything (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). We are not to lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:1). We are to go about our business without complaining (Philippians 2:14). Jesus tells us not to worry about life, but to seek the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:25-34), and Paul reminds us to boldly allow Christ to be magnified in our bodies, whether in life or in death (Philippians 1:20).



The Lord gently let me know that I was human, possessing all the weakness that entails. He allowed me to feel fear for my son's health, but showed me that the goals truly were to know the peace that passes all understanding, to be found faithful, and to *live* from the gospel—not just preach it. My gracious Heavenly Father also allowed my son to have a lesser, easily treatable infection, and in no time he was back on his feet. But God's message to me that day was this. In living His Word, no matter the circumstance, I can surrender all to Him, fearlessly.



Carrie Wood is a 35-year-old mother of four. She attends BeaconFWB Church, Raytown, MO, where she teaches Junior and Senior High girls in Sunday school and serves as WAC coordinator.

2006 CREATIVE ARTS CONTEST WINNERS

Art

1. Come O Holy Spirit Come
Kay Brown (AR)
2. A Christmas Snow at the Old Country Church
Janice Jones (NC)
3. Haven of Rest
Kay Brown (AR)

Programs

1. Traveling Light
Amanda Kilgore (TN)
2. God's Good Clouds
Cheryl Akers (FL)
3. God's Makeover
Sue Winchester (MO)

Poetry

1. My Dreams for Isabella
Freedra Lucas (KY)
2. The Juggling Act
Jamie Myers (MO)
3. Seasons of My Soul
Jamie Myers (MO)

Photography

1. The Lord God Made Them All
Rebekah Plunkett (TN)

2. Trees of the Field
Rebekah Plunkett (TN)
3. He Maketh Me Lie Down in Green Pastures
Kay Brown (AR)

Devotionals

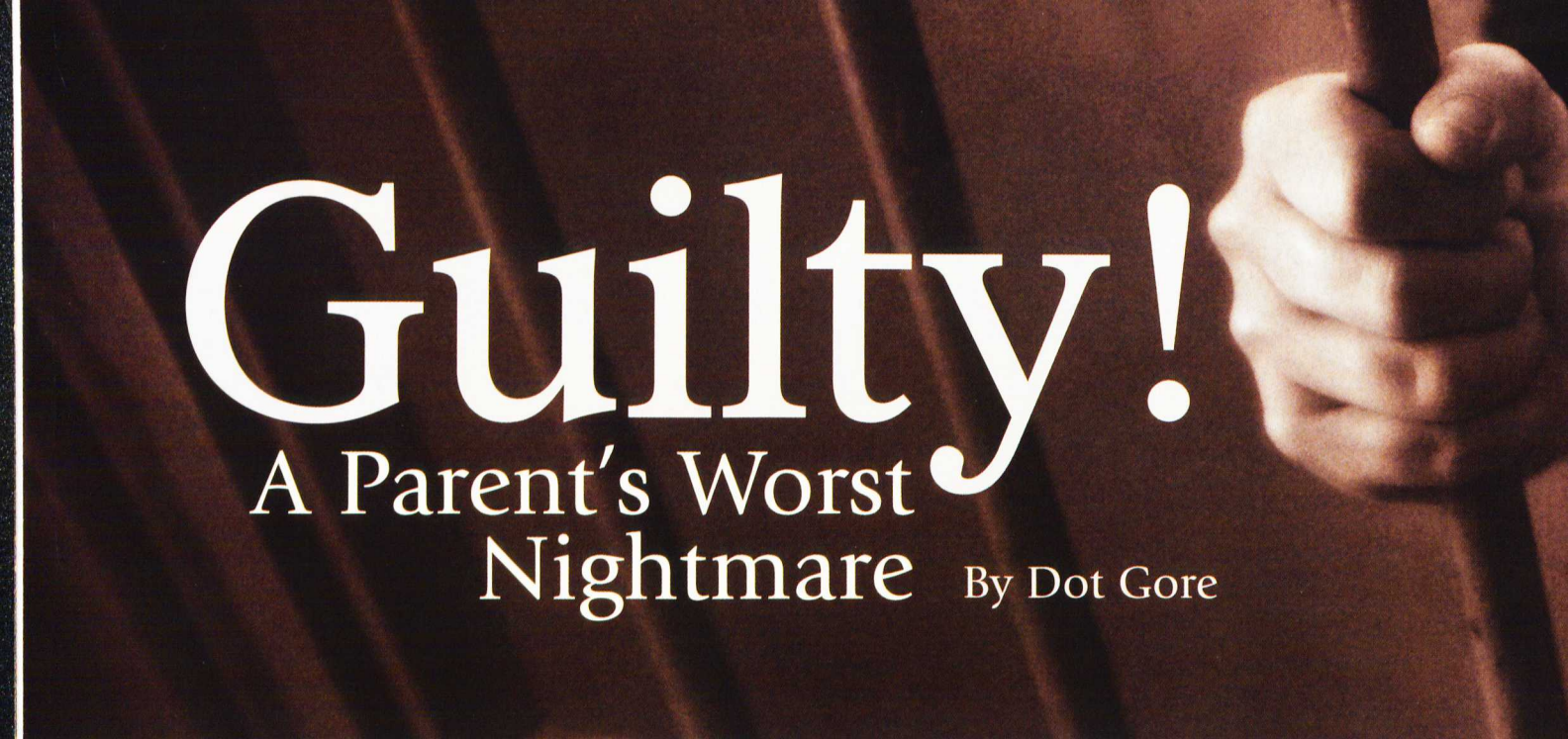
1. I Almost Missed You
Patricia Collins (NC)
2. Intimacy in Worship
Jamie Myers (MO)
3. Spiritual Offspring
Michelle Williams (MO)

Articles

1. Salvation Through the Pig Pen
Pamela S. Hackett (SC)
2. Gold, Silver, Precious Stones
Jean Perry (NC)
3. Pebbles
Charlie Boyd (TN)

Plays/Skits

1. The Cross
Diane Bridgman (NC)
2. Past, Present, Future Fashion Show
Karen Ferguson (TX)
3. Through Miriam's Eyes
Vicki Turner (MO)



Guilty!

A Parent's Worst Nightmare

By Dot Gore

The worst nightmare of our life unfolded as we sat in a courtroom in San Bernardino, California. The room was silent as the judge asked the jury foreman for the verdict. The foreman read slowly and distinctly, "We the jury find the defendant, Sam Gore, guilty of first degree murder!"

Guilty? Our son? Our son whom we had only known to be a devoted husband and father? Our son who had distinguished himself in the

requested that we call her at once. My husband quickly dialed the number and listened to her voice as she told us that her mom, our daughter-in-law, was dead. Later that night would come the shocking news that our son was being questioned concerning her death. Never before had we experienced anything so shattering. Tears and turmoil filled the rest of our night, not knowing what our son was facing. Two thousand miles away

that my redeemer liveth." In order for my family and me to experience peace in the midst of this horrible nightmare, we, too, would have to say, "Yes, our redeemer lives and He will bring us through these difficult days."

It was very hard for me, staying in Mississippi, not knowing what was going on with my son. My husband relayed that our son was being charged with murder. Later we learned the details. Faced with

The foreman read slowly and distinctly, "We the jury find the defendant, Sam Gore, guilty of first degree murder!"

military in Special Forces operations? The reality of what was happening was unbelievable for us.

Sunday, June 2, 2002, began with a wonderful service at our church. Everyone seemed so happy enjoying the blessings of the Lord. Following the evening service, we went out to eat with a visiting missionary family.

After a time of sweet fellowship, we returned home, oblivious to the nightmare that awaited us. This night would change our whole world. A message on our answering machine—an urgent plea from our granddaughter in California—

from Sam, we prayed that God would protect him.

My husband flew to California the next morning to be with our granddaughter and to see what could be done for Sam. I stayed home to receive family and friends who came to offer comfort and encouragement. In those first days, I sat and cried, asking how this could have happened to our family. We were trying to live and serve God with all our heart, mind, and soul. That's also when God brought Job to mind. Job lost his seven sons and three daughters, but did he give up? No. Job 19:25a tells us, *"For I know*

the horrors of a terrible accident, our son panicked and made some bad decisions. Sam was charged with murder in the first degree and held in the county detention center to await trial.

Months dragged into two years of waiting for trial. The hurt continued as we made many trips to California. Disappointments came with each postponement of the trial.

The day finally arrived. February 23, 2004, the trial began. Our hurts deepened as we heard testimony by the prosecutor against the son we had raised. It was a terrible and heartbreaking experience, knowing



in our hearts that this gentle and loving person could not be guilty of the murder for which he was accused.

This nightmare of our life climaxed when we heard the verdict. Guilty! As the impact of that word swept over us, we rested in the calm assurance that Isaiah expressed, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3). The trial ended, we left California and returned home with very heavy hearts, yet still assured that God was in control.

Sam's lawyer sent us the clothes Sam wore during the trial. They arrived the Friday before Mother's Day. I just sat on the sofa crying, hugging his clothes, trying to smell them. Even now I sometimes take out his sport coat and hug it, crying as I try to catch a scent of him.

The nightmare may be ended, but the storm rages on. This storm of life seems to have no end. Indeed, it will not end until we are united with our son when he is acquitted and gains his freedom, or we are united in glory where there are no storms.

We know the only way we can withstand this storm is to keep God first in our lives. Not a day or night goes by that our son is not on our minds and in our prayers.

The hurt we feel each time we look at his picture reminds us that we serve a God who knows our hurts, and, yes, He still answers prayers during our storm. He has answered our prayers so many times these last four years, putting His arms of protection around our Sam.

Presently, we are waiting on his appeal. I just keep trusting my Lord, knowing that when we walk with God and trust Him, He can work all things together for good.

Sam is serving in Wasco State Prison of California. He holds Bible studies with those who want to better their lives. He works in one of the offices, and there they know him as a dedicated Christian. During one of our visits, the facility was placed on lock down due to an outbreak of chicken pox. We were just heart sick that we wouldn't be able to see Sam. Since we had extra time on Sunday, we visited the Shafter Free Will Baptist Church in Shafter, California, where Reverend Dean Long pastors. Brother Long has been a real friend, visiting Sam and upholding him and our family in prayer, both personally and within his congregation. People in the Shafter church who work at the prison informed us that Sam is a Christian influence for so many of

the men there.

Yes, we hurt, but we know God will make a way. He walks by our side even on those days when we are down. Only His love and strength keep us going. We wonder how a person could possibly endure something like this without Christ.

We thank each one who has prayed for our family, called or sent us cards or email. We appreciate the love and kindness of our former congregation, Cross Creek FWB Church in Olive Branch, MS, who stood with us during this time.

Where do we go from here? We will keep praying and trusting God just as we always have. One of our greatest joys is visiting Sam, giving him a big hug, and letting him know how much we love him. We wait and long for him to come home.

Dot Gore is a pastor's wife and former home missionary from Hurley, MS. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, she and her husband J. L. suspended their retirement to minister at the Gulfport FWB Church, which he currently pastors. Dot serves as Mississippi WAC field worker.





SET YOUR HEART TO CARE

MINISTERING TO THOSE
IN PRISON

by Tammy Brinkhoff

Prisons come in different shapes and sizes. Some have concrete walls and steel bars. Others have small rooms and unlocked doors. Still others appear pleasant and nicely decorated, but they're locked down at night. Then there are the prisons no bigger than the sphere on our shoulders. These are the scary ones—the prisons of our minds.

"...Comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14b).

MEET THE PRISONERS

Wham! The television comes flying across the room. The staff responds quietly, yet quickly, removing its shattered pieces, along with a VCR, stereo, and some small knick-knacks from shelves on the wall. There really aren't many things of value left. Every tantrum leaves Carol's room a little barer.

"I hate you!" she screams while flinging clothes, hangers and all, at the staff trying to control her rampage. Carol's mad again. She's angry at one staff member in particular who couldn't take her out for independent time today. Lack of adequate personnel has made it hard to take clients outside the group home.

Outbursts such as these are exactly why the help keeps leaving. At minimum wage, with no benefits, who wants to put up with encounters like this every day? The man on duty looks up just in time to see Carol pull the rod from the closet. Having run out of clothes to throw, she rears back, applying every ounce of her 200 pounds to swing the rod like a club at the employee. He ducks just in time and reaches out to grab the bar. She's so angry she can't see straight anymore. He takes the opportunity to seize the rod, and tosses it into the hallway.

"You need to settle down," he tells her. She turns over her dresser. "Now that's enough! We'll try to go out tomorrow, okay?" She screams, but by this time she's wearing down, her adrenalin finally depleted. Carol slumps down in a fetal position. If only she had family, a friend, someone to come and see her...anyone to reach out and tell her she cares. But no one comes. The staff leaves the room. Making a quick

visual sweep to ensure all things have been removed for her safety, they quietly shut her prison door.

"I got in here, but I don't know how to get back out!" Winnie cries. Void of emotion, her sunken, hollowed eyes stare into space. "Please help me." I hear the same plea each time I visit. The once attractive, now crippled, withered body lies on the bed in front of me. She knows she came here for a reason, but in her mind, she can't understand why she cannot leave. It's almost as if she's forgotten how to get up and go. Winnie used to roam the hallway, I'm told. She used to leave the nursing home and look for her own home in the parking lot. They would have to tie her to her chair to keep her from wandering off. She will never leave this place...at least not until a big black hearse escorts her out. She's now a prisoner.

Boy, was she a sight! Her toothless grin shone from beneath the stocking cap she wore due to the harshness of the winter weather. I can still envision her coming to church, those small, bony legs, pedaling the bike we gave her.

We first met Karla at our church's food pantry one Wednesday night. She walked in and plopped her tiny frame onto the back chair in the sanctuary. After the service, she thanked us, then promised to return some Sunday morning for church. Like most first-time promisers, she didn't show. But as the weeks rolled on, she finally came.

One Sunday, sitting at the back of the church, she opened a new-looking Bible with her name engraved on the cover. She seemed to know how to locate

Scripture references. She wept during the sermon, and when the invitation was given, Karla went forward and rededicated her life to the Lord. She joined our Sunday night women's Bible study. Always there, no matter what, every time the church doors were open, Karla became someone we could count on in our small mission church.

We didn't know much about her. Karla never spoke about herself. We knew she was a recovering drug addict. (We supposed that's how she lost her teeth.) We knew she was brought up in church and she studied her Bible a lot. Karla's thoughtful comments added inspiration to our Bible study. We knew she had a child—one who was taken away many years ago—a child whom she only got to see every couple of years. We knew she was a drifter. If she could not find work, she would move on. Drifters are not uncommon in our ministry. But we never believed Karla would leave like she did.

One Sunday, she didn't show up for church. The bike that served as her transportation just disappeared. We went to her apartment more than once, but found no one. Karla was gone. Yes, a drifter, we knew. But she was different. She'd stayed in one place for a few years. She loved our children. She'd helped hand out food to other needy families. She'd made a decision for Christ and we'd evidenced her spiritual growth.

As the months passed, we thought a lot about Karla, wondering where she'd gone and why she never told us she was leaving. We wanted her to return and see how the church was growing. We wondered how she was doing, and whether she was involved in a church. We didn't go out of our way to inquire, we just wondered.

About a year later, a man came to our pantry. He knew Karla and he knew where she'd gone. Sadly, he told us how she relapsed, decided the struggles of her drug addiction just weren't worth the fight, and in desperation, Karla took her own life. We were devastated. We'd spent a lot of time with Karla, a lot of time on Karla. She was one of our first faithful church members. Having once known freedom, she'd returned to her prison.

BEHIND THESE WALLS

Prisons come in different shapes and sizes. Some have concrete walls and steel bars. Others have small rooms and unlocked doors. Still others appear pleasant and nicely decorated, but they're locked down at night. Then there are the prisons no bigger than the sphere on our shoulders. These are the scary ones—the prisons of our minds.

That's where Charlie is. He's a prisoner of Vietnam. Sure, he came home years ago, but he never came home mentally.

Kristie is a prisoner as well. She doesn't think she

can make it without her drunken, abusive spouse. She swears he never harms the children, but one would have to wonder.

Then there's Jen. She may work with you, shop in the same stores and even share a pew with you. She looks fine. No prison bars, yet, Satan has her locked up all the same. With his lies, he chains her down. "You're ugly." "You're fat." "No one really likes you." "See those two ladies? They're talking and laughing about you." "Your husband wishes he had someone better than you." "Your kids are up to no good." "You're a failure; you'll never amount to anything." "Nobody cares." The lies go on and on.

WILL THE PRISONERS PLEASE STAND UP?

Jesus' words in Matthew 25 confirm the value and validity of prison ministry. Yet how do we help those in prison? The first step is to identify the prisoners.

Some prisoners are obviously recognizable—those in penitentiaries, jails, detention facilities, even those in nursing homes and mental health facilities. But what about the families of the ones in those prisons? They themselves are often prisoners of pain and loss.

Others prisoners are harder to identify. Many are ashamed to mention the prison walls that surround them; some don't even realize they're entrapped. That's where the God-given gifts of discernment, intuition, and observation come into play. (I believe God gives these special gifts to most women. How else do we know the things we know? As women, we are specially made to sense when something is not right.) Is there a woman who is especially quiet? Rude? Angry? Bitter? Jealous? Somber? Take time to care and find out why. We can learn a lot just by talking to those we suspect are prisoners. Sometimes, individuals who are willing and wanting to talk, remain silent, thinking no one will understand or want to listen.

God gave me the opportunity to minister to one woman whom I thought would not want to talk. He placed this lady and her marriage struggles on my heart. She didn't call me for advice, but her friend did. I called her, knowing that I might be pushed away or considered offensive for "butting in." Such bitterness and strife existed in her home; I wasn't sure any advice I would give could help, but God could. He is The Counselor, and He is faithful to prepare the way when He is leading us to do something. Though the conversation was a bit forced at the beginning, soon she was asking me to hold on a minute so she could write down the suggestions I was giving her. I couldn't believe all the verses I was sharing, Scriptures God brought to my mind. Today, her home remains intact; her family is still together. I am confident God used me to penetrate her prison.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Christ calls us to seek out prisoners and minister to them. As Christian women, how do we do this? The Book of Acts offers this plan: *"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'"* (Acts 20:35). It is in giving and supporting the weak that we receive blessings.

Maybe you're thinking, "How can I minister when I feel like a prisoner myself?" If that's truly where you are, I pray that the Father sends a godly woman to encourage you. But if you're like most of us who are prone to feel our world is just a bit harder than everyone else's, then perhaps it's time to claim this promise of Jesus and begin giving to others. I find when I minister to others, I learn more about myself. God actually begins to minister to me. There is no better encourager than the Savior. And as we spend time in God's Word, He will reveal to us the answers others seek.

What are we to give? We can give respect and encouragement. Many life prisoners do not choose their imprisonment. Victims of circumstance, abuse or another's bondage, they know no other way. Others have simply lost hope. Don't blame the prisoners; just be there for them.

We can give time. In today's busy world, this can be difficult. But in giving, we will be blessed. We can give Scriptural advice. We can give compassion. That is, we can realize when someone is hurting and feel their pain. Seeing their needs, we can set our hearts to care. It may be hard and it may hurt when people let us down, but we can trust our faithful God to reward us in due season.

How can we minister to the prisoners around us? Start a women's devotional class. Follow up with baby Christians. Seek out those whom you suspect are hurting. Give positive words of encouragement. Invite them over for lunch. Send a card of support and love. We can minister in so many ways. May each of us discover our special God-given gifts and use them to minister to the prisoners in our world.



Tammi Brinkhoff lives in Stella, Missouri. She enjoys family responsibilities, raising and homeschooling her five children, and ministry opportunities at the Jones Chapel FWB Church where her husband, Brian, pastors. Tammi loves art and writing, and finds great pleasure in trying to meet the needs of others in practical ways.

ARE YOU AFRAID?

Doing volunteer work in prisons may sound scary. I've had big, husky men tell me they could never do prison ministry because it would be too dangerous. Yet I've seen many elderly women who can hardly walk, go into maximum security prisons every week. I've observed young pretty girls working as guards. I asked one girl if she encountered many problems with the inmates. She said, "No, they know they have to behave, and I feel safer here than on the WalMart parking lot."

After my first few visits, I, too, had no fear. I felt God's protection. I knew security at the prison was tight. Most inmates going to church services are not looking for trouble. They are there voluntarily, not by force. Since inmates are no longer on drugs or alcohol, they are often different people than they were on the outside.

The greatest dangers for volunteers are not physical; they are emotional. It's easy to get caught up in caring for inmates. Concerned volunteers risk being used or being conned. However, if the worst happened and a riot broke out, prisoners wouldn't come after volunteers. They'd come after each other or the officers. If inmates respect you, they generally will protect you. In the past, this has actually happened—inmates surrounding and protecting workers. Most likely, you wouldn't be allowed in a facility if there has been unrest or a riot was about to break out. I figure, if I were to die in prison, then God had a reason for my being there. I keep remembering that prison volunteers are not in as much danger as many missionaries and Christian workers around the world.

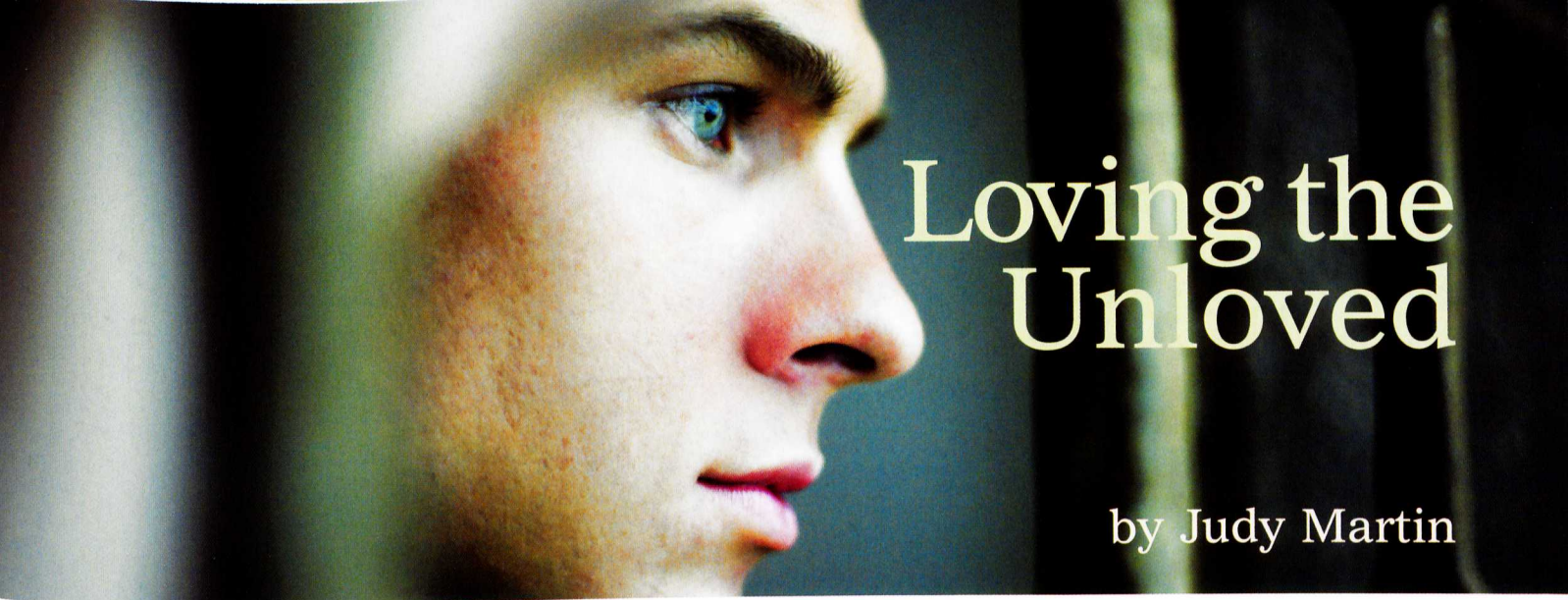
—Judith Martin

HOW TO HELP

- Pray
- Volunteer
- Donate
- Become a pen pal
- Send study Bibles

PRISON MINISTRIES & PROGRAMS

- Quilting
- Soaring Spirit (singing)
- In-prison seminars
- Bible Studies
- Lead prayer meetings
- Impact program
- Mentoring
- Aftercare
- Pen Pals
- Philemon Fellowship
- Community projects
- Network for Life
- Re-entry programs
- Restorative Justice
- Tutoring
- Visiting one-on-one
- Angel Tree



Loving the Unloved

by Judy Martin

One of the biggest mission fields in America lies within our correctional system. God has blessed me, allowing me to work in this field since 1999. In February of that year, I attended the Women Active for Christ meeting at my church. The program that month, "Loving the Unlovable" by Joan Warren made a great impact on my life. That was the start of my jail and prison ministry.

About that same time, A young man named Jerry shot and killed another young man just a few blocks from our church. He'd once attended our church, but he'd dropped out and started hanging with the wrong crowd. I knew he came from a home lacking in love. His father (deceased) had been an alcoholic. His mother had often commented that she didn't want him and wished he'd never been born. He certainly had no support from home.

After the lesson on loving the unlovable, I felt God leading me to write Jerry at the county jail. I asked him if he'd like for me to visit. He wrote back immediately and said yes. I'd never visited anyone in jail before and I was really nervous and unsure of what a 56-year-old woman would say to an 18-year-old boy. I prayed about this. God gave me the words to say because we hit it off right away and became good friends.

Jerry was so grateful to have someone care about him. Under his tough teenage soul was a sweet kid who was eager for someone to love him. I enjoyed visiting him. I discovered he was intelligent, sensitive, very artistic, quite interesting and easy to talk to.

At his sentencing, I was the only one there for him. None of his

family, none of his friends came. He was sentenced to 18 years, which was very lenient. The prosecuting attorney remarked, "It is a very sad case because the victim is guilty, too." Jerry's victim had been harassing and beating up on him over a period of time, and Jerry decided to take matters into his own hands.

What Jerry did was wrong, no doubt about it. Yet, I have been able to tell him that God forgives. At first Jerry thought there was no way God could forgive something that terrible. But there is nothing God won't forgive if we sincerely ask Him. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Jerry surprised me one day at the end of our visit at the county jail. He put his hand on the glass between us and said, "Love you." Then he was led away. Those two words touched my heart.

I have been visiting Jerry in prison for seven years now, and he is like an adopted son. We study the Bible together, pray, and have wonderful discussions. My friendship with him has led me into other jail and prison ministries. It's become the most rewarding thing I've ever done in my life. Loving the unloved isn't hard if we remember God loves them even more.

Judy Martin attends Grace FWB Church, Arnold, MO, where she teaches Junior Church. A retired public school teacher and librarian, Judy volunteers as librarian for the Jefferson County Jail and is involved in other prison ministries. This mother of one son, Justin (26) also enjoys arts and crafts, rock collecting and reading.



Jesus Loves Black Sheep, original art by Jerry Hardesty



Going to Prison

by Jenny Williams

I will never forget the first time I walked into the county jail. The smell, the emptiness, the hopelessness...

As a member of the Gideons Women's Auxiliary, I've been able to participate in prison ministry. I'd always sensed a strong burden and connection with the brokenhearted and less fortunate. When I heard someone speak about Gideons' prison ministry, I felt so led to get involved that I nearly jumped out of my seat. At age 26, I was the youngest member in our local organization. Feeling nervous and intimidated, I told the prison ministry coordinator that I wanted to volunteer my time. I placed myself in God's hands.

I will never forget the first time I walked into the county jail. The smell, the emptiness, the hopelessness overwhelmed me. This was our Gideons auxiliary's first outreach to female inmates in Russellville, Arkansas. Allowed to take only a bag of Bibles into the women's quarters, we knew we were armed with the powerful weapon of God's Word.

The female guard escorted us down a dimly lit hall and opened several large steel doors. I could feel the darkness as I walked down the quiet and uninviting halls. I can still hear the sound of the doors locking behind us as we entered the women's unit.

We were instructed to wear sim-

ple clothing and jewelry so we wouldn't make the inmates feel uncomfortable. When I entered the women's quarters I understood why. These women were stripped of everything we on the outside might consider necessities: make-up, hairspray, hair dryers, shoes, and even bras. There were no doors on the bathrooms, and every aspect of these inmates' lives was exposed. Seeing women in their state of need made me want to wrap my arms around them and show them Christ's amazing love.

Since it was around eight in the morning, most of the inmates were still asleep. We entered each cell and tried to wake the women. Some grabbed their Bibles and willingly came to the beat-up picnic table; others responded by pulling the covers over their heads.

After my first visit to the jail, I knew that going once every 6-8 weeks would not be enough.

Every time I went to the jail I was paired with a different auxiliary member. It was amazing how God used the personality characteristics and gifts of different ladies to truly minister to the inmates. We would take prayer requests, have wonderful prayer time, and just share the

love of Christ with ladies in need.

Following a rotating schedule, each volunteer would return about every six to eight weeks. After that first visit to the jail, I knew that going once every six to eight weeks would not be enough. Before long, I was visiting the jail once or twice a month. This allowed me to really get to know the inmates. I was encouraged when ladies with big smiles would be sitting around the beat-up table, awaiting our arrival.

God gave me great peace each time I talked and prayed with the inmates. I never thought about why they were there; I just wanted to be salt and light. God allowed me to see these women not as criminals, but as they were—His precious children. I felt honored that God used me to minister to women at their point of need. I was amazed at how much these women are just like me—mostly concerned about children and family. I was shocked to find that the majority of inmates were Christians who took the wrong path somewhere along the way. I was thankful that we had the freedom to share God's Word, the only thing that could give hope in such a difficult situation. I often found myself reading Psalm 139 with the women and getting excited about God's grace,

mercy, and constant presence in our lives. Each time I met with the ladies, it was so encouraging to see their faces light up when we began to read God's Word. His word is alive and active.

Since I volunteered often, I sometimes got to see the women on holidays. It just so happened that my scheduled time fell a few days before Christmas. Wrapped up in the holiday hustle and bustle, feeling I was just too busy to visit the jail, I went, but my attitude was not right.

I walked down the long hall and entered the women's unit, only to find the picnic table packed with women ready to dive into the promises that God had for them. I soon discovered another reason for their high level of enthusiasm. The female inmates had worked together decorating their "home" for Christmas and their excitement resembled that of little children eager to show a parent something they had diligently worked on for days. There, propped in the corner of the room, stood a Christmas tree made from empty toilet paper rolls covered with candy wrapper and chip bag ornaments. The sight of this tree caused a huge lump to form in my throat. I could hardly fight back the tears. God showed me that I had displaced Him and His important children by worrying about buying Christmas presents, decorating my house perfectly for the season, and getting caught up in things that don't really matter. With tears in my eyes, we read the Christmas story, and I was truly blessed by the childlike joy these women expressed.

God taught me a huge lesson that day. Oftentimes, leaving the jail, I sensed that I had received a bigger blessing from the women than they'd received from me. Their hope and faith were very powerful.

This past Easter, as my family and I were waiting to be seated at a restaurant, a very excited lady ran up to me. Although she looked like a different person with her hair fixed, wearing make-up and a Sunday dress, I instantly recognized her face. She was one of the inmates I'd been privileged to know. What a powerful blessing to meet her precious children and husband—people I had prayed for on a daily basis. God is so good and so faithful.

Don't miss the opportunities God has just for you. In your weakness He is made strong.



Jenny Williams is a part-time school psychologist and full-time wife and mother (16-month-old daughter and baby on the way). She and her family attend the Russellville FWB Church (AR). Within the past couple years, Jenny has taken a break from prison ministry, adjusting to motherhood. She says, "The

Lord has prompted me to get involved again. I am excited about being His hands and feet to the women in jail."

"Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on another's dream. More serious still, we may forget...that God was there before our arrival."

—Author Unknown

A PRAYER FOR PRISONERS

Loving God,

Give us Your compassion for those in prison. Mend in mercy the broken in mind and memory. Soften the hard of heart, the captives of anger. Free the innocent; parole the trustworthy. Awaken the repentance that restores hope. May prisoners' families persevere in their love. Heal the victims of crime. They live with the scars. Lift to eternal peace those who die. Grant victims' families the forgiveness that heals. Give wisdom to lawmakers and to those who judge. Instill prudence and patience in those who guard. Make those in prison ministry bearers of your light, for all of us are in need of mercy! We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**The National Prison Prayer Crusade
Washington D.C.**

SPRINGBOARD

LEADERSHIP

RESERVE your spot at the upcoming National Retreats. Register for Ridgecrest by calling 1-800-588-7222. To register for Branson, see the ad on p. 19 and follow the steps listed there. Encourage women in your group to attend one or both events.

SHARE the 2006 National Convention news and resolutions (pp. 26-28) with your group. Some of these changes will directly affect your local group.

GIVE generously to WNAC's current national project, Christmas Joy for Central Asia. Just \$15 supplies a gift box for orphaned and special needs children of this region. Take your gifts to Ridgecrest, or mail monies direct to the WNAC office. All funds must be received in the WNAC office by October 15.

PURCHASE the Program and Plan Book for the upcoming season for prayer, January- August 2007. See the ad below for more information. If you've never used the Plan Book, this would be an ideal year to begin since the book includes monthly "Adventures in Praying." These are vital for implementing monthly programs.

PLAN now to observe the 2006 PreThanksgiving Week of Prayer, November 13-17, and support the Lizzie McAdams/ Benjamin Randall offering for FVB Home Missions.

CHECK the WNAC website for updates and info. The site is currently updated with each new issue of the magazine.

finding us on the web
just got easier...
www.wnac.org
Email: info@wnac.org

STUDY

SHARE the book review on p. 7 If any woman in your group can identify, let her share feelings.

CHALLENGE women to write or record the story of their pilgrim journey using Psalm 84 as a guide.

ENCOURAGE women to do the Bonus Word study on p. 30.

SERVICE

EXPLORE opportunities for prison ministry in your area. Share the list on p. 14. Find more ideas at www.wnac.org.

OFFER a woman in your community who is in a "Valley of Baca" some help with finances, transportation, house or yard work.

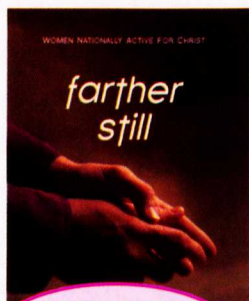
WRITE letters to major networks expressing concern over offensive programming. (See resolutions, p. 28). Addresses are on the WNAC website.

WNAC NEEDS

PROVISION CLOSET. Twin sheet sets, towel sets and coffee makers.

WNAC OFFICE. Three flat-screen computer monitors, small printer. Sufficient finances for daily office expenses.

TAKE YOUR MEETINGS TO A NEW LEVEL



\$8.00

plus shipping and handling

farther still

the new WNAC Program and Plan Book is now available. This book will guide you through the upcoming Season for Prayer, January-August 2007.

Order today by calling 877-767-7662.

Order before Oct. 15 and receive a free copy of *First Fruits*.

MISSIONS

SHARE the Focus story (p. 24) and highlight its truths concerning suffering. Pray for the Bowerman family. CONSULT a source such as www.persecution.com for current information about persecuted Christians in prisons worldwide.

ENCOURAGE women to give to Christmas Joy for Central Asia.

NEED a project? Contact: (IM) Steve Lytle steve@fwbgo 1-877-767-7736. (HM) Richard Atwood richard@nofwb.org 1-877-767-7674.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Email your event name/date/location/contact person to colaborer@wnac.org

- SEPT:** (7-9) GEORGIA MINISTERS WIVES' RETREAT, RED TOP MOUNTAIN STATE PARK
(8-9) WEST VIRGINIA WAC FALL RETREAT, CAMP VIRGIL TATE, CROSS LANES
(9) MISSOURI ST. FRANCOIS DISTRICT WAC MEETING, FARMINGTON FVB
(9) CENTRAL TEXAS WAC MEETING, FELLOWSHIP FVB, BRYAN
(15-16) MISSOURI WAC RETREAT, WINDERMERE RETREAT CENTER
(21-23) WNAC NATIONAL RETREAT, RIDGECREST, NC
(21-23) CALIFORNIA WAC RETREAT, EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE CENTER, OAKHURST
(29-30) ILLINOIS WOMEN'S RETREAT, CAMP HOPE, EWING
- OCT:** (6-7) TEXAS WAC STATE RETREAT, CAMP TEJAS, GIDDINGS
(6-7) ARIZONA WAC RETREAT, SKY HARBOR, PHOENIX
(12) OKLAHOMA STATE WAC MEETING, BETHANY FVB, BROKEN ARROW

PRAYER

PRAY for women in your church or community who may be prisoners. (Have each women focus on a specific person, but do not mention names. This leads to gossip.) Ask God to use you to show them the path to freedom.

DOWNLOAD the skit, "My Name is Christian" from www.wnac.org. Practice and perform in observance of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, November 13.

PLAN now to observe the PreThanksgiving Week of Prayer for Home Missions, November 13-17.

...FEEDBACK...FEEDBACK...FEEDBACK

Dear WNAC,

I just want to let you know I always enjoy CoLaborer, but the May/June 2006 issue is the best thus far! I am truly enjoying the changes and updates that are transforming this magazine into a pertinent source of information and inspiration for FWB women. All of the articles this issue were good, but "Set Your House In Order," in combination with the "Take a Tip" section from missionary women was amazing in my estimation. It was helpful and interesting, and it spoke to me. Congratulations on a fantastic issue!

Carrie Wood
Raytown, MO

Dear WNAC,

Thank you for your support of our ministry through financial gifts through 2005. Without the gifts and prayers of WNAC, we couldn't be in France learning the language and equipping ourselves for future ministry. Thank you for all your work to spread the Gospel to every tribe, tongue and nation.

Darren, Dana, McKenna and McGwire Portell
France

Dear WNAC,

I recently received some goodies from the closet and I wanted to thank you! It's so nice having it available for us. I also received some gift cards, which I'm also very thankful for....You definitely help make the transition back to the states a lot easier. Thanks for all that you do.

Di Keener
France

Dear WNAC,

I just wanted to take the time to tell you how much I am enjoying the May-June issue of CoLaborer. I've always

enjoyed reading it with all its fine features but there were features in this one I couldn't help but want to sit down and write you about. The "tea" features were excellent. A year ago I couldn't have read "Spilling Into the Saucer" without sobbing incessantly because "my cup was empty and broken" as well. With God's help, I am stronger but only because I "work hard on grieving less." Then to include "Set Your House in Order" in that issue—well, it's something needful whether you are a grieving widow, an ultra-busy Mom, or career woman...

Sue Winchester
St. Louis, MO

Dear WNAC,

God bless you for all the wonderful prayers and support—a true blessing to our hearts.

Jerry Rayburn family
Sierra Vista, AZ

Dear WNAC,

I just wanted to say thank you for your continued support in helping me to reach the unreached of Central Asia. I greatly appreciate your prayers and support as I prepare to leave for language school. May God bless each of you.

Angela Emerick
Creative Access

Dear WNAC,

Greetings from France. It is hard to believe, but in only four weeks we will be leaving Albertville to start our second year of language study in Nantes. Please keep us in your prayers as we make this transition. Matt and I are so grateful for your generous support, and we pray God's richest blessings on each one of you. *Merci beaucoup!*

Matt and Cristina Price
France

A STEP FARTHER



Take your prayer life and devotion to Christ to the next level. Go "A Step Farther" at the 2007 WNAC National Retreat, February 22-24, in Branson, MO. Gail MacDonald, nationally acclaimed speaker, and author of several books, including *A Step Farther and Higher*, will lead women into the Word and before the Throne. Wife of well-known Christian leader and author Gordon MacDonald, Gail knows the stresses of ministry and the value of prayer and time alone with God.

Refresh your heart in worship; retreat in the winter beauty of the Ozarks. Pamper yourself at the luxurious Chateau on the Lake Resort and Spa. Enjoy fellowship with hundreds of Women Active for Christ. Browse the book tables and missionary displays. Scout out the sights and shops of Branson. *This is one retreat you won't want to miss.*

FIRST: MAKE ROOM RESERVATIONS DIRECTLY WITH THE CHATEAU RESORT. **1-888-333-LAKE.** YOU MUST ASK FOR WNAC RATES

THEN: COMPLETE FORM AT RIGHT AND MAIL WITH REGISTRATION FEE TO: **WNAC P O BOX 5002 ANTIOCH, TN 37011-5002**

Name _____

Address _____

Amount Enclosed: \$35 (WAC members) \$50 (non-members)

Church (or WAC group) _____

Phone _____ Email address _____

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JANUARY 22, 2007

Make checks payable to WNAC. Retreat Registration fee must accompany this form. Groups may pay with one check, but each person must fill out a form. Fee is non-refundable, but substitutions are allowed.

ROOM RATES

TRADITIONAL/DELUXE two double or one king w/sleeper

1-2 persons \$119 per night+tax
3 persons \$134 per night+tax
4 persons \$149 per night+tax

AMBASSADOR SUITE one king bed and sleeper sofa with sitting area and microwave/minifridge kitchenette

1-2 persons \$144 per night+tax
3 persons \$159 per night+tax
4 persons \$174 per night+tax

Prices are for lodging only and do not include meals or WNAC retreat fee (see below).

LABORS OF LOVE

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father:" 1 Thessalonians 1:2,3



● Oklahoma women met in Tulsa, March 31-April 1 for their annual OWAC retreat. Five talented local women explored the theme, "Winging It." Speakers and topics included Wanda Kellett—Shadow of His Wings; Tracy Payne—Ascending on Wings; Marian Kern—Healing Wings; Judy Puckett—Soaring Wings; and Jennie Blair—Rise on Wings. The 291 women who registered gave over \$2,000 toward their state projects: renovating the president's home at Hillsdale College for a Missionary in Residence and TSP for the Botello family's permanent visas.

● Kentucky Women Active for Christ held their state meeting June 16, at the Brushy Creek FWB Church. Debbie Burden of Tennessee addressed the theme, "A Reaching Heart." Kentucky natives Ledge and Sharon Ferguson, shared about their upcoming missionary venture to France. Kentucky's 2006 State Project involves collecting funds

for the Ferguson's two-year assignment. Each local member group will be given a cup and each WAC a bowl for filling each month. Women also elected and installed officers for 2006-2008.

● Women of the North Valley FWB Church, Phoenix, AZ, recently "Set their Tables for Tea" hosting 43 mothers and daughters. Guests enjoyed chicken fettucine alfredo, salad and chocolate chip cookies at tables decorated with teapots, fancy cups and saucers. "This was a very special mother/daughter tea," said Linda Harvey, WAC leader and pastor's wife.

● Lawnwood FWB WAC, Tulsa, OK, hosted their annual Mother's Day Banquet, May 15. Sixty-three women heard speaker Wanda Phillips. Tammy Loveless provided special music.



Share your
LABORS OF LOVE

Send pictures and
news of your event to

colaborer@wnac.org

or mail to:

P. O. Box 5002
Antioch, TN 37011-5002

WNAC also regularly
spotlights a local group
on its website.

Send information
about your group to
the email address above.



PICTURED: 1. Oklahoma WAC retreat speakers (l-r) Wanda Kellett, Judy Puckett, Marian Kern, Jennie Blair, Tracy Payne and President Belva Mabra.

2. Jonda Patton (KY) displays giving bowl for Ledgel and Sharon Ferguson. 3. Kentucky WAC officers (l-r) Jonda Patton, Linda Smith, Judy Goble, Cindy Justice, Diane Patton, Emogene Chandler, Judy Delong, and Jennifer Sturgill.

4. North Valley (AZ) WAC sponsors a mother/daughter tea. 5. Nadine Hood, Wanda Phillips, and Tammy Loveless participate in Lawnwood (OK) WAC Mother's Day Banquet. 6. Alabama women prepare for WNAC Convention. 7. Leaders celebrate 60 years of WAC in Alabama. 8. State president Carolyn Hendrix (AL) presents convention check to Executive Secretary-Treasurer Marjorie Workman.



● Alabama Women Active for Christ celebrated 60 years at its annual convention, April 29, at Sulphur Springs FWB church. Speakers honored all former state presidents and presidents in attendance gave testimonies. Guest Marjorie Workman noted the contributions of Alabama women to WNAC and shared information about the upcoming convention in Birmingham. Current president, Carolyn Hendrix presented Mrs. Workman with a check for \$12,000 to help cover expenses of this event.

Attendees gave a \$550 love offering to Carolyn Edwards of the Alabama Children's Home who will attend Free Will Baptist Bible College this fall. Members also voted to increase the Jimmy/Janie Aldridge Scholarship from \$800 to

\$1,000 awarded yearly to an Alabama FWBBC student.

Volunteers worked assembling gift bags and making final preparations for the WNAC Fellowship Luncheon. Women also showered the Missionary Provision Closet with gifts totalling \$1,494.59.

● Pleasant Mound FWB L.A.M.B.S., Bellevue, TX, sent \$395 to build a church in Kazakhstan, gave \$100 toward Matt Crosby's missions trip, supported Bud Bivens' walk for the Altimira Bible Institute and children's home, sent monthly support to Texas home missionaries, and bought a storage unit for their church—all in the first six months of 2006. Now this busy WAC group is collecting school supplies for the Seminary in Mexico.





DEBE'S DELIGHTS

Debe Taylor
WNAC President

*"thy commandments
are my delights."*

Psalm 119:143b

Let's Just Praise the Lord

Once at a women's conference I learned a little chorus. I have never forgotten the words.

**Are you humbly grateful
or grumbly hateful?
What's your attitude?
Do you grumble and moan
or let it be known
You're grateful for what
God's done for you.**

What's *your* attitude? By definition, it's our disposition, opinion, or mental set. Attitudes can be adjusted or corrected. They can be infectious, contagious, encouraging, or discouraging.

When I feel (not as often as I should) that my attitude needs a little adjusting, I use two passages of Scripture to check it. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (Philippians 2:14), and "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

Then I ask myself these questions. Is God pleased with my attitude? Do I have an attitude of gratitude? Do I need to confess that I possess a complaining spirit and an ungrateful heart?

Have you ever noticed that when one person begins to complain, everyone has a complaint? Wonder what would happen if, instead of complaining, we would share a blessing. Would that spark a time of rejoicing in others, too?

God has been so good to me. I look back over my life and see blessing after blessing. He has been faithful. I have no reason to complain. A widely-read email illustrates the importance of attitude.

She woke up one morning, looked in the mirror, and noticed she had only three hairs on her head.

"Well," she said, "I think I'll braid my hair today." So she did and she had a wonderful day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror, and saw that she had only two hairs on her head.

"Hmmm," she said, "I think I'll part my hair down the middle today." So she did and she had a grand day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror, and noticed that she had only one hair on her head.

"I think," she said, "that I'm going to wear my hair in a pony tail." So she did and she had a fun, fun day.

The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror, and noticed that there wasn't a single hair on her head.

"Yeah," she exclaimed, "I don't have to fix my hair at all today."

(Author Unknown)

"Attitude is everything," or at least that's what someone has said. I'm not sure it is everything, but it does count for a good amount. Therefore, I want my prayer each morning to be that of the Psalmist David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). A right spirit would be an attitude of gratitude.

Go ahead; ask yourself. Am I humbly grateful or grumbly hateful? What's your attitude?

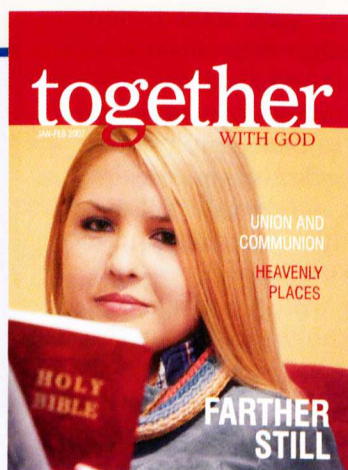
Debe Taylor lives in Hot Springs, AR, with her pastor husband David. Debe has served on WNAC's Executive Committee since 1997.

COMING THIS JANUARY

You loved CoLaborer...

You'll love Together With God

*Still only \$12 a year
(individual subscription rate)*



♦ **INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES**
with monthly/weekly small group options

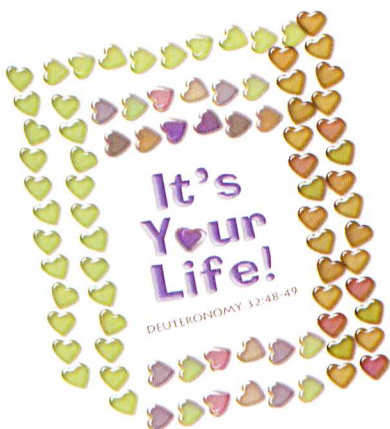
♦ **INSPIRING STORIES**
of people like you

♦ **HELPFUL ARTICLES**

♦ **NEWS OF WOMEN'S EVENTS**
upcoming retreats, conventions and special efforts

♦ **GLOBAL MISSIONS EMPHASIS**
for living as a Great Commission Christian

**TOGETHER WITH GOD WILL BE THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
OF WOMEN NATIONALLY ACTIVE FOR CHRIST**



BY
DANNA
COBBLE

PEER PRESSURE

COMES IN A VARIETY OF FORMS.

Some forms are more problematic, but all peer pressure is challenging. You may not be confronted with all of the following issues, but every teen struggles with at least one of them.

WHAT'S YOUR ISSUE? IS THE PRESSURE ON FOR YOU TO be popular or cool? take illegal drugs? abuse prescription drugs? have sex? drink alcohol? use tobacco? be in style? buy expensive stuff? waste time? be thin? view pornography? cuss? ditch class? perform life-threatening stunts? take dares? own the latest hi-tech gadgets?

Peer pressure, the expressed or implied demand to live your life as the world dictates, is nothing new. In fact if you read the book of Job you'll discover that he, too, suffered from it. However old the practice is, peer pressure can cause problems for even the most dedicated Christian.

Our ever-changing culture makes it more alluring to succumb to peer pressure. We have busy or absent parents, easy credit, cable TV, the Internet, more alone time for teens, boredom, accessibility to illegal substances...and so on.

WHY DO TEENS GIVE IN? WE ALL HAVE A BASIC NEED to belong—to be accepted.

That's why we take that first drink. It's why we buy stuff we can't afford and may not even like. Doing so reinforces the feeling that we belong. Someone accepts us because we are like them. However, being a Christian is a call to an abundant life. A life above and beyond—not like the rest. Jesus said, "I am come that

you may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). On the other hand, peer pressure is a call to a mediocre life. A life that is so much less than it could be. It is relinquishing your right to the abundant life Jesus offers.

PEER PRESSURE IS A CALL to a mediocre life... relinquishing your right to the abundant life Jesus offers.

So how can you resist peer pressure? The answer is found in Jesus Christ. In Him we are never alone to fight the battle. Hebrews 2:17-18 says Jesus knows what it is like to be tempted. For this reason he was "made like unto his brethren...in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to [help] them that are tempted."

Jesus helps you in your time of need, but he also doesn't want you to be unprepared. Teens must be proactive. That means anticipating what could happen and choosing your response ahead of time.

If a friend asks you to ditch, be ready with an answer. "I want to go to the mall, but I can't skip Algebra. Can we go after school?" If you are offered alcohol, drugs, or tobacco, say, "No thanks, I don't need it." (If you are in an emotionally painful situation

right now, drugs, alcohol, or tobacco may temporarily numb the pain, but an addiction to any of these substances only increases pain in the long run.) If you are pressured to have sex, firmly state that you've made a promise to yourself and to God to wait until marriage. Then get out of the situation as quickly as possible and don't be alone with that person again. Instead, go out with a group. Prepare yourself for the possibilities of peer pressure, but more importantly, avoid tempting circumstances and people who will pressure you to do things you know are not pleasing to God.

In addition to being proactive, find an accountability partner—someone who will pray for you and check up on how you are doing. Be honest with this person about your temptations. Your partner may be a parent, Sunday School leader, or good friend. Make sure the person is a growing Christian who is more spiritually mature than you. Your most important accountability partner is Jesus Christ. He is always there for you, and immensely concerned about every aspect of your life. Give Him your pressures and pain and in return he promises to help you and give you an abundant life.

HOW CAN YOU RESIST?

BE ASSURED

Jesus is there to help.

BE PROACTIVE

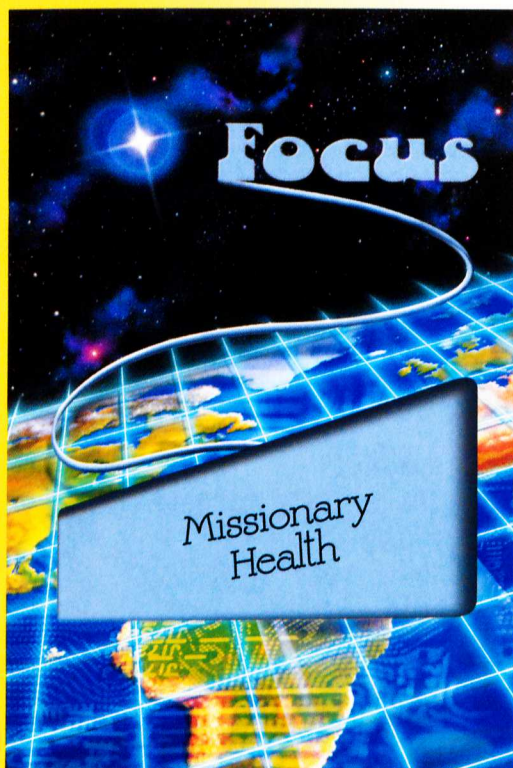
Choose your response ahead of time.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

Find someone to pray and check up on you.



Danna Cobble considers public schools her mission field. Licensed professional counselor for Moore (OK) Youth and Family Services, she provides therapy for junior/senior high students. Danna serves as Life Group Leader for 12th grade girls at First Baptist Church, Moore, OK. Daughter of a FWB preacher, Danna and her husband Kim have three sons and one daughter-in-law.



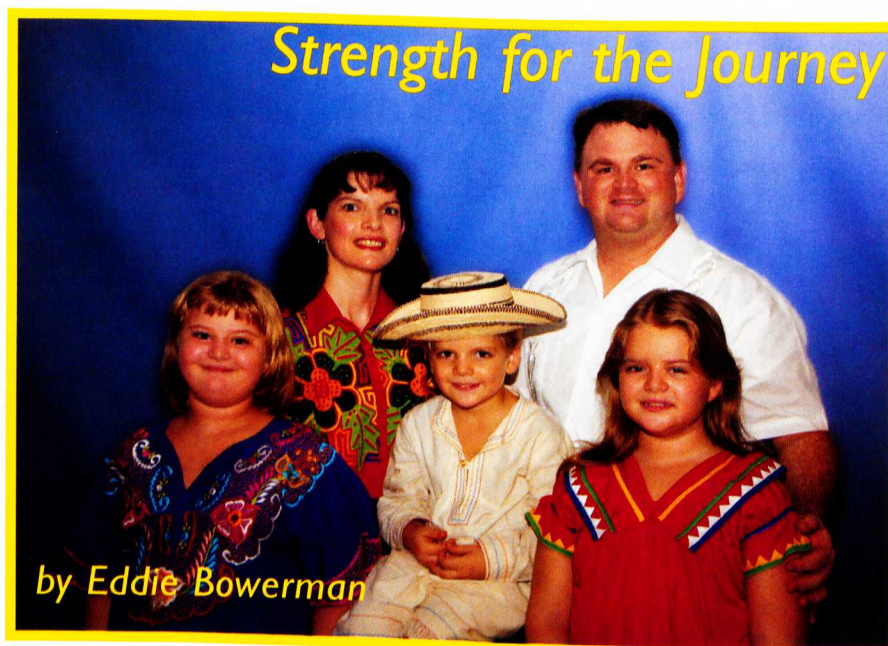
Pray:

—for Eddie's continued improvement and for the Bowermans' intended return to Panama.

—for sufficient funding to establish, build and operate the Panama Seminary.

—for the Bowermans' ministry, that God would continue to help them move from strength to strength.

—for all missionary personnel who are battling chronic health problems.

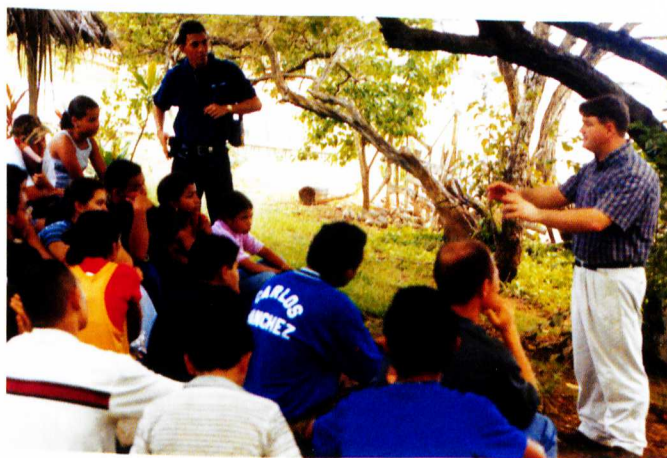


THE DOCTOR'S WORDS turned to a mumble after he said, "You have cirrhosis of the liver." My mind went numb and for the first time I realized the gravity of the situation—this could be an end to everything that we had been working toward in our lives, our ministry, our future. What would become of us? Would I be able to see my children grow up? Would I be able to return to the mission field? I remember thinking, "God, where do I go from here?"

Not Why, but How

I have learned through the years that the *why* isn't so important in life. This fact becomes even more valuable during times of great hardship. Looking back, I realize that many times I couldn't understand the benefits of those

occasions until later. I had often wondered why the Lord even allowed us to start working in a Kuna village only to see it closed to our evangelization efforts. However, when some of the Kuna we had made friends



with in the village, recently came seeking my help for a church in a heavily Kuna populated part of Panama City, I understood more of God's plans.

Occasions like this and others have taught me that *how* God is working is often much more important than *why*. It is a true and simple fact that God lives through us, and although he refuses to bend us to His will forcefully, he uses suffering to reduce and refine our self-will and pride—two great hindrances that keep us from being conduits of His power and love. This

was a secret that God himself shared with Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." God's strength (His presence, person, and power) are made perfect in *our* weakness—our suffering.

After a car accident left me with a steel rod and months of therapy learning to walk again, I quickly discovered that pride and self-will must be forfeited to accomplish anything. It is a humbling experience when you cannot tie your shoes or put on your own undergarments. But it is precisely in those moments that God can use us more fully for His purposes. Perhaps it is not the whole among us who are the more fortunate, but rather the broken, for they know more intimately the depths of God's mastery in their own lives.

Not When, but Where

"How will we fight this?" I asked the doctor, feeling like the words were foreign and estranged in my own mouth. "We can't." His words were simple and to the point. No arguments, no maybes, just a declaration of the facts.

Fortunately for me, I know the God who deals in impossibilities. The same God wants us to understand that there is another reason for our suffering—the *where* is much more important than the *when*. When we suffer, our first reaction is to ask why is this happening and when will it stop. However, a much more important question for us is *where*. Where is God working during these times? Paul knew the value of this lesson. He shared that his sufferings and near death experience had made him quit trusting himself and start trusting God (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).

As I received the news about my cirrhosis, I began to understand some of the areas where God is working in my life—my plans for the future, my concepts of security and safety, and my depth of faith. God has been teaching me that the future belongs to Him. I might have another five minutes or five years, but the most important thing is that He be magnified to the utmost during whatever time I have left in my life. God has been reminding me that our lives are just fleeting shadows and that my choices should reflect the impact He wants to make through me. Finally, He has been increasing my faith—helping me realize that He can use a missionary with cirrhosis just as well, if not better, than one without. The really important factor is *where* we are going together not *when* we will get there.

Longing for Zion

I went the other day for a check-up. My liver specialist told me that I am doing very well and that, with some monitoring, I can return to Panama. I smiled and the doctor remarked, "You knew I would say that, didn't you?" I sheepishly replied, "Yes, because I know that God isn't finished with me yet."

Just as Psalm 84:5-7 describes, we are going "from strength to strength." The anticipation of what God has for us overcomes our weariness in this difficult journey of life, giving us hope and strength for the joyous end of our journey in Zion. There, suffering and trials will end in the glorious presence of our God.

I still have cirrhosis, and, at age 35, I struggle both physically and spiritually, allowing God to use this to mold me in His image. However, I think that eventually, like most experiences in a believer's life, it will become just one more *place of weeping* that God turns into a *place of strength* on this long journey toward Him.



Other Prayer Concerns



—Pray for Angela Emerick (Krosnodar, Russia) as she studies the language and adapts to Russian culture.

—Pray for Matthew and Brooke Turnbough's readjustment in Spain, Brooke's language studies and the safe arrival of their first child in mid-September.

—Pray for Mike and Cathy Corley's quick adjustment to a new culture and ministry in Central Asia.

—Pray for Georgia pastors Wayne Miracle, Len Blanchard and William Smith as they participate in an awareness trip to Japan, September 14-28.

—Pray for Steve Lytle, USA; José Manuel Parrón, Spain (President of the International Fellowship of FWB); and Gerardo Rodriguez, Uruguay (Vice-President) as they meet this October to make final preparations for the 2007 Fellowship meeting in France and Spain.

—Pray for new Home Missionaries: Jeff and Sondra Cates (Canyon County, TX); Chris and Carla Fannin (Prescott, AZ); Howard and Patsy Gwartney (Florence, AZ); and Larry and Sherry Reynolds (Meridian, MS).



Set Your Hearts

OVER 950 REGISTRANTS OF THE 71ST WNAC CONVENTION, JULY 17-18, IN BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, SET THEIR HEARTS TOWARD TOMORROW, FOCUSING ON MINISTRY TO FUTURE GENERATIONS THROUGH WNAC.

Today's Homes *Tomorrow's Missionaries*

Two young mothers challenged Monday seminar attendees to set their hearts toward home and give children a heart for missions.

Jennie Blair, Oklahoma pastor's wife and stay-at-home mother of two preschoolers reminded women of the Scriptural commands of Deuteronomy to set their hearts on all God's Words and teach them to their children. Combining biblical exposition with homespun stories, she carried the audience from laughter to tears.

Mrs. Blair acknowledged, "If we set our hearts on something, it's going to involve every part of our being....It is your life; it is not futile." Citing herself as living proof

**Women
gave
\$8,067 in
offerings
during
the two
days.**

of her mother's commitment to this life, she tearfully shared her passion—that her own children follow the Lord. Mrs. Blair offered practical ways for mothers and grandmothers to talk to children about the Lord. Her own mother, Debbie Burden, concluded the seminar, leading the audience in a hymn of commitment.

Angie Outlaw, missionary appointee and homeschooling mother of five shared her strategies for giving kids a heart for missions. Enlisting coworkers and children from the M & M Club which she established at Heads FWB Church (TN), Mrs. Outlaw

outlined ways women can share their hearts through experiences, projects, stories and relationships. She emphasized that all women have something they can share.

Today's Hope *Tomorrow's Magazine*

Teens from E-TEAM Russia 2005 commenced Tuesday's early morning session with a puppet presentation. Winners of the annual Creative Arts Contest received recognition and awards.

Delegates applauded as Executive Secretary-Treasurer Marjorie Workman announced that WNAC ended its financial year in the black. In a special media presentation, editor Sarah Fletcher cast a vision for future ministry. Concerned about declines and seeking God's direction for effective ministry to younger women, WNAC is designating January-August 2007 as a season for prayer. A special eight-month study by Lorene Miley will instruct women about prayer and guide them into personal practice of these principles.

Attendees grabbed copies of the long-awaited Ministries Guide and got a glimpse of a new magazine. After 46 years of *CoLaborer*, WNAC's official publication will become *Together With God*. Premiering January 2007, the new magazine, will continue to herald WNAC's purpose—helping women understand and fulfill the Great Commission. Many of the columns and features current readers enjoy will remain. However, the hallmark of *Together With God* will be its interactive women's Bible studies with monthly and weekly meeting options.

The new magazine and upcoming season for prayer coincide with a change in the WNAC calendar year. Beginning in 2007, WNAC's program year will run from September to August. The July convention will launch each new year's theme. Delegates also approved moving the WNAC Emphasis month from August to May, with Mothers Day designated as WNAC Emphasis Offering Sunday.

In other business, women voted to give a total of \$4,500 in Cleo Pursell Foreign Student Scholarships to fund the education of Christian workers in Cuba, Cote d'Ivoire, South India, Russia and Mexico. A special offering received in the morning service gleaned over \$1,500 of this amount. Marjorie Workman, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, urged groups to consider giving to this ministry as well as the Provision Closet.

Women agreed to extend the eligibility guidelines of the Missionary Provision Closet to include international Bible Institutes and other needs per request of FWB International and Home Missions directors. A motion for state, district and local groups as well as individuals to contact major TV networks asking them not to air programs containing immorality, nudity, and alternate lifestyles during prime time viewing met with unanimous approval.

**Tuesday's
business
session
was all
about
change.**

toward tomorrow

Today's Focus Tomorrow's World

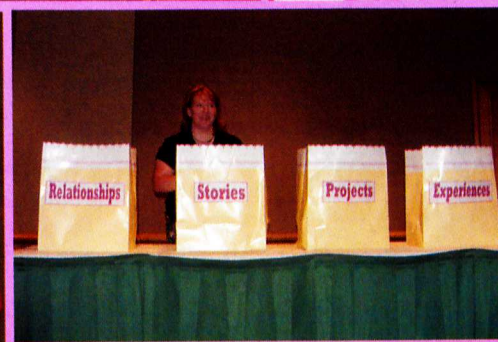
Missionary speakers Steve and Becky Riggs challenged women to enlarge their hearts for the world, recognizing that 94% of spiritual battles occur outside the U.S. Sharing real life obstacles and personal stories from their twenty-year ministry in France, the Riggsses reminded listeners that "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord."

"Genuine passion for Christ has always been the hallmark of those who have done great things for Christ," quoted Brother Riggs. He noted this passion in the five young FWB couples who have recently come to France as missionaries.

Icy Mae Frederick, 87-year-old missionary from Fultondale FWB Church, shared her vision for tomorrow. She won the hearts of Tuesday's Fellowship Luncheon attendees with her humor and amazing accounts of her solo trek to Haiti to share the love of Jesus. The banquet crowd of 400 gave \$1,500 toward her dream for building a hospital on the island.

Throughout the convention, women contributed to the 2006 WNAC National Project: Christmas Joy for Central Asia, hanging money envelopes on a Christmas tree at the WNAC Booth. All Women Active for Christ are strongly encouraged to contribute to this effort. Women can send gifts (\$15 per child) directly to the WNAC office or bring them to the Ridgecrest Retreat, September 21-23. Gifts will be distributed to orphans and special needs children in January 2007, when a team of WNAC leaders will travel to Kazakhstan.

The two-day meeting concluded as presidents and field workers from 14 states gathered Tuesday evening for fellowship, idea-sharing and intercession. Voicing specific requests, leaders prayed that women would embrace changes enacted at the convention and anticipate ways God will enable WNAC to mentor and minister to women, helping them fulfill His Great Commission.





2006 WNAC Convention Resolutions

1. We recommend that scholarships be given from the Cleo Pursell Foreign Student Scholarship Fund as follows:

Cote d'Ivoire: \$750 for training for Pastor Silas and his wife in the area of family counseling.

Cuba: \$750 for students at the Cedars of Lebanon Seminary in Pinar del Rio, Cuba.

South India: \$1000 for students attending the Volena Wilson Bible Institute.

Russia: \$500 for Bible Institute ministries in Chelyabinsk and Krosnodar.

Mexico: \$1500 for student scholarships at Seminary of the Cross in Reynosa.

2. We recommend that the WNAC Emphasis month be changed from August to May with Mother's Day to be designated as WNAC Emphasis Offering Sunday, beginning in May 2007.

3. We recommend that the guidelines listing those eligible to receive items from the Provision Closet be expanded to include our Bible Institutes and other Foreign and National Ministries with disbursements to be made based on requests from the Regional Directors of International Missions or the General Director of Home Missions.

4. We recommend that since TV programming has become so offensive, we contact the networks and ask them not to air programs containing immorality, nudity, and alternate lifestyles, especially during prime time viewing. We recommend that letters be sent not only from our National Agency, but also from State, District, and local women's groups. We also encourage contact be made by individual women.



Convention Stats

Local WNAC Delegates	33
Missionaries	35
WNAC National officers	6
WNAC Staff/Speakers	7
WNAC State Delegates	124
WNAC State Field Workers	10
WNAC State Presidents	11
Visitors	727
Total Attendance	953

THE BOTTOM LINE

What these changes mean for WAC groups

- Together With God replaces CoLaborer beginning January 2007.
- Fund the Cleo Pursell Scholarship as well as the Provision Closet.
- Emphasis month will be May (Mother's Day offering) instead of August.
- Program year will begin in September with a theme preview/kickoff at the July convention. (Financial year and reporting will not change.)



by
Shelly Miller

WORKPLACE WISDOM

The Three-Inch Gift (Give or Take a Little)

Around this time last year, I walked through the streets of Jerusalem. Privileged to see this and many other places in Israel on a tour led by Pastor Rob Morgan, I tell everyone, it was like walking into the pages of the Bible.

One of the most enlightening and most cherished gifts for me personally was the close contact with the peoples of that land. However, one thing I quickly observed was a kind of hopelessness in the faces of the majority of those I encountered. I concluded that, although most were from the direct lineage of Jesus, they didn't know Him as their personal Savior or possess the joy and hope of His return and the coming of the New Jerusalem.

There was such a seriousness among the people. Then it hit me; I knew what was missing. Smiles. That little three-inch grin (*give or take a little*) says I have within me the peace that passes all understanding and the joy of my salvation that never fails regardless of my circumstance.

So what does this have to do with the workplace? Looking back on this experience, I began wondering. What does my countenance say about me, each day, at my place of work (whether home or elsewhere)? What do people see in me? Do I reflect His image?

The absence of smiles in Israel leads me to believe that while smiles and laughter are infectious, so is the lack thereof. Smiles generally reflect what's on the inside; they can quickly spread to the faces of others. We can give one away and it costs us nothing. Sometimes even a forced smile on the outside when we don't feel like smiling can have a way of making us feel more cheerful on the inside.

Thank the Lord for your ability to smile. Choose a day or two this week to give everyone you come in contact with a sincere smile. Take a note of the difference this makes and journal it or share it with a friend or family member.

Granted, we can't smile 100% of the time, but Solomon put it best. *"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven...A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance"* (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4).

In the places we labor, let's challenge ourselves to daily renew our minds so that the reflection of our heart shapes the corners of our mouths, producing a gift that is priceless.

Shelly Miller works as international product manager for AmSouth Bank. She and her family live in Donelson, TN, and attend The Donelson Fellowship FWB church. Active in women's prayer ministry, Shelly enjoys reading, trail walks and gardening.



WNAC NATIONAL RETREAT
SEPTEMBER 21-23, 2006
RIDGECREST, NC

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY September 21

- 3:00-7:00 **Registration**
- 5:30-6:30 **Supper**
- 7:30 **GENERAL SESSION I**
Worship and Praise
Prayer
Welcome and Introductions: Marjorie Workman
Fun Time: Sherri Woolard and Friends
Guest Speaker: Lynette Morgan
- 11:30 **QUIET TIME**

FRIDAY September 22

- 7:15-8:15 **BREAKFAST**
- 9:00 **GENERAL SESSION II**
Praise and Worship
Prayer
Special Music
Speaker: Lynette Morgan
Closing Prayer
- 10:00 **Break**
- 10:30 **GENERAL SESSION III**
Praise and Worship
Prayer
Special Music
Speaker: Lynette Morgan
Closing Prayer

12:00-1:00 LUNCH

1:00-5:30 Free Time

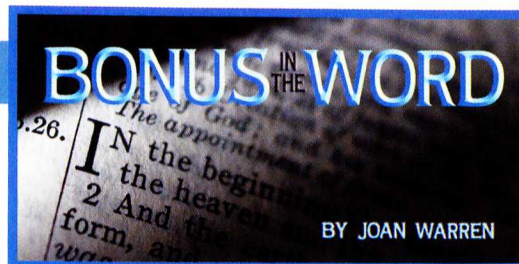
5:30-6:30 SUPPER

- 7:30 **GENERAL SESSION IV**
Praise and Worship
Prayer
Special Music
Drama: "A Winning Army" by Monica Bryan.
Presented by North and South Carolina Women
Missions Offering

SATURDAY September 23

- 7:15-8:15 **BREAKFAST**
- 9:00 **GENERAL SESSION V**
Praise and Worship
Prayer
Special Music
Speaker: Lynette Morgan
Closing Prayer

The Importance of Music



1. What does the Bible say about singing?

Psalm 81:1

Psalm 95:1

Ephesians 5:19

James 5:13

Colossians 3:16

2. What should be the themes of our songs?

Psalm 145:7

Psalm 101:1

Psalm 66:2

2 Chronicles 20:21

3. What major events are recorded in song?

Exodus 15:20, 21

Judges 5

Luke 1:46-55

Luke 1:41-43

4. The Bible mentions at least 12 musical instruments. How many can you name?

2 Samuel 6:5

Daniel 3:5

1 Kings 1:34

Isaiah 5:12

Genesis 4:21

Joan Warren is a longtime WAC leader and Bible teacher from Oilton, OK.

THE PRODIGAL'S MOTHER



Diane Thomas Bridgman

Reader, The Bible does not mention the Prodigal's mother but I could write her story if her son left home today.

Daily she would walk slowly to the mailbox and wonder if this would be the moment that she would hear a word. Any word. Upon every arrival into her house she would hold her breath while she checked the answering machine. She would sigh, and sometimes sob, at the dead silence on the other end. She would search every face in a crowd. The questions would begin. Was the unidentified body in the newspaper her son? Was he hiding in the attic? Had he been in the house while she was away? Was she losing her mind?

The Prodigal's father saw his son "afar off" no doubt, because he had looked down that path every day, anticipating his son's safe return. His mother, surely, was constantly at the doorway, peering down that same path and scanning the horizon for a lone figure.

My own son's marriage did not make it and he believed he had lost everything. He became bitter. Reader, on one September morning, my son vanished without a trace,

and I learned that there are some things worse than death. I had to break into his house. He had taken only clothes and pictures—a picture of his children and one of his dad and me. His Bible and shotgun were also missing. I salvaged his personal belongings, closed up his house and felt like I was walking away from a tomb. No one knew of his whereabouts; even the police could not find him.

I grew very sick and turned to the one place that could hold me. Everyday I crawled to my place of prayer and cried out to my God. God held me very close to Him for two years. He breathed His promises into my body to sustain me. He heard me when I told Him I could take no more.

Two days later the phone rang. It was the voice I hungered for. My prodigal. "I could never run from your teaching," he said. "Mom," he confessed, "I was not running from you but from God." He found that he never could. So he returned his gaze to God and set his heart upon Him.

Reader, I killed the fatted chicken. Prodigals still come home.

Diane Thomas Bridgman lives in Grifton, NC with her husband Richard. A writer and speaker to Christian women, Diane plays an active role in WNAC, serving as local study chairman at her church, Grifton FWB, Palmer District study chairman and NC state field worker. Diane is the mother of two sons, Christopher and Brian, and the proud grandmother of Nathanael and Hannah.

IN THE WORKS



**Marjorie H.
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Executive Secretary-Treasurer

GO WITH ME

"Grandma, will you go with me to ride my tricycle?" my three-year-old granddaughter pleadingly begged. "Yes, Precious. Grandma will be happy to go with you."

Thus began our journey together for a wonderful, delightful, enjoyable half morning. Just the two of us. I didn't know how long it would take. But time didn't matter; we weren't on a schedule. I would go as far and as long as she wanted to go, wherever she chose. She could even cross streets because I'd be there protecting her. She would determine the pace. It was her day and I wanted to share it with her. As we walked (she rode) through the neighborhood that morning, I was reminded of another privileged walk—the walk with my heavenly Father.

My walk with Him is an invited walk. "Behold I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). The Psalmist David said that God has so many thoughts toward me that they cannot be numbered (Psalm 40:5). I want Him to go with me, don't you?

My walk with my granddaughter was unhurried. We took time for everything. We scrutinized ants; watched squirrels play hide-and-seek; admired beautiful flowers; petted neighborhood cats; interpreted dogs' barks as though we were in conversation. We even stopped to blow bubbles from the stash she had carefully packed in her tricycle basket.

God, too, has time for me and takes notice of my goings and comings. He knows me so intimately that he even knows the number of hairs on my head (Matthew 10:30). He desires that I delight in Him and acknowledge Him for what He has done. He is pleased when I take time to admire His natural revelation, *creation*. He paints the sky with beautiful sunrises and sunsets. He intrigues me with the mystery of growing things, the

cycle of the seasons, and the uniqueness of the animals. I yearn to know Him through His special revelation, the Bible. I want to say each day, *"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we [I] will rejoice and be glad in it"* and *"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth"* (Psalm 118:24, 119:103).

Walking with my granddaughter taught me a lesson about speaking to others. She had time for people—no one was excluded. The stranger cleaning his truck who ignored all of our *hi's* and *hello's* and *what are you doing* questions did not deter her from speaking to the lady across the street waiting for a ride to her Bible study. We even found our way into one neighbor's home for a popsicle.

Walking with God will also bring encounters. I am to *"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you [me] a reason of the hope that is in you [me]..."* (1 Peter 3:15). Not everyone will listen but I am to keep on sharing the story of God's love anyway (Psalm 119:16). Sometimes I need to cross the street or get out of my comfort zone to speak hope to someone. And if I take time to build relationships with those around me, I may get invited inside.

For the most part, my granddaughter is very independent. She didn't think she needed a push to get over an uneven sidewalk or onto a curb. And she resisted every time she caught me helping her. I wonder how many times God has given me a push over an obstacle and I didn't know it? And, why do I often resist when I recognize His gentle tug? I'm glad He is walking with me, guiding me along. My prayer is that I will trust Him with all my heart rather than depending on myself, and that I will acknowledge Him and let Him direct my paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Like this grandma, God is ready to go whenever we ask, "Will you go with me?"

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