



Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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Celebrating No Sugar and Fewer Pounds

By Lila Millhuff

I dislike addictions. Anything negative that has control over me is a problem and for me, sugar can be an addiction. The first step is recognizing the problem and then comes the struggle. I have given up sugar many times and benefited from losing weight while gaining a healthier body. It feels good when you know you have made the right choice.

Once again I found myself back in the middle of my sugar addiction. How did I get into this situation? I made sure I ate balanced meals, but then came the reward: something with sugar.

Soon, I found myself rushing through the meal so I could get to the reward. It started with a small slice of pie, with very little sugar. Then I noticed the pie was all gone so as an alternative I ate ice cream (just this once, right!).



Then, I threw all caution to the wind and just reached for the ice cream—my favorite, mint chocolate chip. One scoop, then two. The results began to show up on my body and my clothes became too tight. I felt tired with no energy to exercise. Reality struck, and I realized it was time for a change. I didn't want to let sugar rule my life!

So I gave it up again. The first three days were the hardest, but before I knew it, I saw results—positive results. As I began to lose weight I knew the struggle was worth it. I was feeling good, feeling healthy, and I actually needed to replace my clothes with a smaller size.

It was time to ask myself: where do I go from here? What am I waiting for? It was time to get out that special outfit, the dress hanging in my closet waiting for the right time. It was time to celebrate slimming down, doing something good for my health, looking and feeling better.

Giving up my sugar addiction and being able to wear the nice clothes I couldn't fit into made me realize we shouldn't wait, we should wear that special outfit before it's used for our funeral! Celebrate life now; don't put off enjoying the blessings we have each day!

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Celebrating

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Sometimes we become so distracted we don't use the resources and blessings God gives to us. He wants us to live our lives to the full—every day. He wants us to honor him in what we say and do. If we are not enjoying our lives to the full, when we have every reason to do so, what happened?

It's easy to listen to the negative voices of others and the negatives we tell ourselves. But we need to tune out those voices and go forward with the positives. That's what life is all about—going forward positively.

Enjoy the blessings, use the special gifts now. Give away what you don't need—and what no longer fits. You'll be happier; you'll be making a difference for others; you'll be sharing what you no longer need and you'll be honoring God with your life every day! Let's do this together—celebrate the positives! But not with an extra helping of ice cream!



Lila says: "From the farmlands of Canton, Texas, to the USN Air Traffic Control World in Norfolk, Virginia, to becoming a wife and mother of three sons, raising them in Seattle, Washington, then retiring to Tucson, Arizona, life has been both a challenge and an adventure. I'm thankful for the journey and the lessons learned along the way." You may email her at lmillhuff@att.net.

CONNECTIONS

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Connections

Mission Statement

Primary: The Connections for Clergy Support Department provides intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual support and encouragement in the personal lives of GCI ministry families.

Three primary means of serving are the *Connections* journal, the Connections for a Successful Ministry and Life web pages, and the Nurturernet forum. We highlight women in ministry but are inclusive of the needs of the entire family.

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

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• CALIFORNIA •
TAM 2 U

A Full Cup

I like a nice, hot cup of tea, so much that I dream of a cup that never empties and never cools. Hey, if it worked for the widow in 1 Kings 17, why not for me? Just kidding. But there is something comforting about a full cup. Empty cups make me sad.

I learned a new song at a women's retreat in Newfoundland, Canada, called *Fill My Cup, Lord*. The retreat was several years ago but the lyrics and melody have stuck with me. It's a prayer for the Lord to quench the thirsting of my soul, to fill my cup and make me whole.



In ministry, we often say we can only be effective if we're working from a full tank. I think this is especially true of introverts, but none of us can pull up water from an empty well. A relationship with God that is alive and growing is the best way to keep ourselves ready for ministry.

Sometimes my cup gets a little empty. When I get low on spiritual energy, and if I'm low on physical or emotional energy at the same time, it can be difficult to bring the level back up to full. I'm not alone in this. As I'm sure you can attest, those in ministry often have to take a little time to recharge after

the weekly church service or any ministry opportunity. I'm always in need of down time after speaking at conferences.

So how do we fill up the cup? Besides vegging out a little, the best thing is to spend some quiet time with God: a little scripture reading, meditation, solitude and especially prayer. It's easy to let life crowd out these disciplines, but we all know they are essential to enjoying and nurturing our relationships with God.

Nurture and enjoy—that's how I've started thinking of staying close to God. I used to stress about my relationship with him. I wondered if I even knew what one was supposed to look like. I worried I didn't know how to have a relationship with someone who's invisible. During a silent retreat, I stumbled upon a timeless truth, one practiced from the beginning of the early church and one the significance of which I had not fully realized. That truth: prayer is a gift of God to help us discover, uncover and recover the relationship Jesus has always had with the Father, and which he now shares with us.

I felt as if the proverbial light bulb had switched on over my head. I realized I had been looking for something more dramatic, more romantic and certainly more exciting than prayer as the way to be in relationship with God. Of course I already knew this, and so did you. But don't we all sometimes take prayer for granted? And it's easy to let it become the time we bring our list of needs to him, rather than a time of nurturing the relationship and enjoying his presence.

Filling our cups isn't only about being ready for ministry. It's about letting God fill our souls with himself and his never ending supply of Living Water.

This article was originally published in the June 2010 issue of *Connections*. Sorry for the rerun, but typing is difficult with a broken arm. I hope to be back to typing by the next issue.



Tammy



Buttons Come and Buttons Go

By Anne Gillam

I remember the first television set my family had. I was around 5 years old when it magically appeared in the front room. What a draw it was for us—a wonder of electronics. We were allowed one short program each during the week, and we had to take turns choosing. It wasn't long before we each had our favorites: my oldest brother *Buster Brown*, my youngest brother *Bozo the Clown* and my favorite was *Garfield Goose*. The shows are still fresh in my mind and I can remember exactly where the television sat in the room.

The years since have added one invention after another. We learn to embrace them and make them a vital part of our lives. The record made way for the eight-track tape, the eight-track for the cassette tape, then came the CD and now music can be downloaded from the Internet. As these new inventions come along we seem to become more dependent on them. I almost hate to say it, but for many, electronics are an addiction.

I was talking to someone on my cell phone when I heard that familiar beep. My phone had begun to need charging more often, but now I was not able to finish a conversation before it powered down. I was horrified, thinking the other person might believe I had hung up. I was able to get out the words, "Is that beep my phone or yours?" before it went dead.

Mom, my daughter said, you really need to get a new phone. I had been denying it for some time, but now I had no choice. So to the store I went with my old phone to see what they could do for me.

As I sat in the car waiting for the store to open, I watched people gather in front of the door. Some pounded on their phones as if trying to give them CPR, searching for some

sign of life. I never saw so many unhappy people in one place. I decided to join the crowd for the final minutes of the countdown, and while waiting I heard one story after another of people crying out in pain as if their life were now over. How silly, I thought.

Soon my laptop computer began to stutter and pause, taking forever to complete a task. It was only a year old, so I put it out of my mind as an oddity. But the stuttering and pausing quickly escalated to nonperformance. I had begun to think I was jinxed. I took it in for an evaluation, and waited impatiently for the phone to ring. I was not sure what to do with myself. Could it be I was acting like those people in front of the phone store?

The verdict came: the hard drive had crashed, one week after the warranty expired. It could be fixed, but I would have to start all over. I suddenly realized I had lost all my documents. I felt that unsteady feeling again. What was I going to do?

One week later I had my computer back, but as I tried to download my programs, I started to see crazy pop-ups everywhere. My computer had been hijacked. Somehow a virus had made it past my protection software. I frantically called the provider. Here I was, with the phone to my ear, trying to make the step-by-step changes so they could take over

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Having the answers is not essential to living. What is essential is the sense of God's presence during dark seasons of questioning.

—Ravi Zacharias



Buttons

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and clean my PC.

Meanwhile the cat is trying to climb my back to get my attention, the dog begins to whine, my grandson comes home from school and the dogs erupt into howling. Then I realize my husband is standing behind me asking me a question. Through all of this I remain calm, but they are not able to make the right changes. I will need to take my computer back to the store. I am feeling unsteady again.

The technicians find more than 500 issues and more than 300 of them are viruses. Apparently the first one held the door open for more to enter. I can see it now, this little comical bug holding the door and waving more in. In my mind they are having a rip-roaring party; there are streamers, balloons, flashing lights and cake. They are having a wonderful time at my expense, but somehow all I can do is laugh. I begin to see that nothing I had lost really matters, because I still have Jesus.

Later that week I was reading a book to one of the children at school. This cat has a shirt he loves with four groovy buttons and he sings a song about how much he loves his buttons. They begin to pop off one by one, but each time he adjusts his song and he keeps singing about his love for his buttons. When they all pop off, he is not sad, he says, "Buttons come and buttons go, all is well."

Things in this life may come and go, but they can never take away our Savior. I have made that my saying: Buttons come and buttons go, but I still have Jesus and all is well.



You may email Anne at [we-
beass@aol.com](mailto:webass@aol.com).



Briefly Speaking...

Are You That Person?

Do you feel loved? I mean really cared about? Have you ever felt real all-encompassing love? I hope so.

Many grow up without a deep sense of being loved. I'm not just talking about those who have been abandoned or abused as children, but it could be any of us who have suffered some kind of traumatic event as we grew up. An event that robbed us of that confidence that we are truly loved, that we are even worthy of being loved.

When people don't feel they are worthy of love, they either give up in desperation or bury themselves in works to prove they are worthy. Some of the greatest service to others can be done out of a sense of unworthiness.

Have you known people like that? Do you know people like that? *Are you that person?* Though always serving others, it's difficult to accept help from others.

If you are feeling out of touch with God, unloved, unworthy, ask God to renew that sense of his love within your heart. He will, you know. He has a great abiding eternal unconditional love for you. He loves you at your worst and at your best. You are his. You are his beloved child. He loves you now and forever more.



You may email Sheila Graham at grahams@ntin.net.



All my theology is reduced to this narrow compass—Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.



—Archibald Alexander

I Doubt It!

By Joyce Catherwood

It's taken me years to accept that there is room for doubt in my life and it can turn out to be a good thing. At one time I felt I had all the answers, tied up in a neat little package. Not just answers to the big questions of life and death, but solid answers to all the in-between questions as well. This gave me a feeling of security and control over my existence, but it left no space for dealing satisfactorily with doubt, mystery, time and chance, miscalculations or the unexpected sharp curves life tends to throw at us.

I didn't see the need to question the answers provided dogmatically and authoritatively by others in whom I had put all my trust. This is not uncommon as many people automatically accept the belief system of their childhood.

And then one day I began to ask questions, and discovered my cherished answers were seriously lacking. The bottom of my neat, organized, knowledge package came apart in the asking and everything fell out. I was left to pick up the pieces, some broken beyond repair, and realized they would never

[To have Faith in Christ] means, of course, trying to do all that he says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to him, it must follow that you are trying to obey him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because he has begun to save you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.



—C.S. Lewis

fit together perfectly again. It was like starting all over and I felt very vulnerable, yet the process was so necessary.

Here's the thing. We can't presume to spell out what God himself has not spelled out. To quote author Philip Yancey, speaking of his own personal experience, which closely resembled mine: "The church environment I grew up in had no room for doubt.... Anyone who strayed from the defined truth risked punishment as a deviant."

It shouldn't come as a surprise—no matter how many rules we follow or who we are, life with all its highs, joys and triumphs, and its lows with loss and pain, happens to all of us.

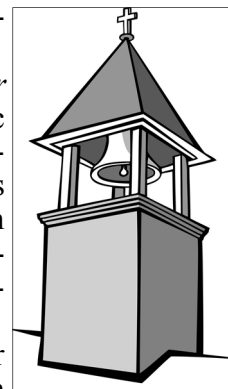
Yancey's book, *Reaching for the Invisible God*, has a basic premise: God's invisibility guarantees we will experience times of doubt. A relationship between an invisible God and visible humans will always involve an element of uncertainty.

To pretend doubting never happens or is an indication something is wrong with us isn't necessary. Unavoidable, seemingly unanswerable questions will arise from time to time, especially in seasons of sore trial. Some answers will be opaque. So do be prepared for mystery.

A finite mind will never be capable of completely grasping the infinite. We often see through a glass darkly. Life is not destined to always be easy or predictable.

Quoting Yancey again, "The only thing more difficult than having a relationship with an invisible God is having no such relationship." And strangely enough, the closer our relationship, the more questions we may have about his involvement in our lives.

Though some things may remain clouded, that which is absolutely crucial for us to be able to establish a deep and lasting relationship with God can be clearly seen and under-



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I Doubt It!

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stood. During times of uncertainty, we have only to open our eyes wider to *see* the invisible God in the marvels and intricacies of his creation, nature and the cosmos.

Goodness, which comes only from God, is all around us if we would only look for it. Miraculous interventions of all shapes and size surround us. And knowing in advance how perplexing his invisibility would be for us, the Son of God came to earth in visible flesh to live with us to show us who God is and what he is like.

Maybe it's just me, but it has been stimulating and liberating to ask questions, ponder and meditate on life's penetrating issues such as death, eternity, suffering, the existence of God. I am no longer reluctant to doubt and question and I am not afraid of the obscure. Even though I don't have all the answers as I once thought, I do have a more profound certainty than ever before.

You would think it would be the opposite. Having all the answers is not a requirement nor is it meant to be. I have found seeking to personally connect and bond with the Creator of life and the universe is what counts. Of that, I have no doubt.



Joyce says: "I just purchased a new camera with more zoom and am absolutely loving capturing the beauty of God through his creation. The tiniest elements of nature can go completely unnoticed unless they are magnified, revealing startling detail and vivid color that fill us with wonder." You may email her at joyce.catherwood@gci.org.



Nurturenet

Nurturenet is a computer forum for women in ministry. Its purpose is to help you stay connected through digest-mode communication (each day's messages compiled into one email). You may use it for requests for information, prayer requests, to share ideas and resources, to receive updates on *Connections* news or just to stay connected!



**Do we
have
your
email
address?**

To join or update your email address, please send Tammy a message at tammy.tkach@gci.org. Please do not reply to a post unless you want to address the entire list.

Zorro and Me

By Barbara Dahlgren

God's GPS

GPS stands for Global Positioning System and has become synonymous with any handheld computerized gizmo that helps us find our way in unfamiliar territory. These devices are great, especially for someone like me who has no sense of direction. Although these satellite-generated devices have greatly improved through the years, they are still not infallible.

Just like a cell phone, a GPS won't always get good reception. Plus there are documented cases where a few travelers were misled by a GPS and ended up in some strange places, not their intended destination.

Even though mishaps occur, GPS devices are still wonderful gadgets. A good GPS lets us know where we are and helps us get to our desired destination without getting lost. A good GPS will tell us "Turn right. Turn left. Make a U-turn." And though it may not appear we know where we are going, a good GPS will get us there. Of course it works better if we actually listen to it and do what it says.

I'm reminded of a trip Zorro and I took a year or so ago. Driving from Alabama to Missouri in unfamiliar territory, our GPS kept telling us to turn around. However, Zorro has a keen sense of direction. He really does.

According to Zorro the GPS was telling us to go the wrong way. As I trust Zorro with little details like right, left, north, south, east or west, I thought nothing of it when he got so frustrated with the GPS sending us the wrong way he finally turned it off.

Well—about an hour or so later we discovered the GPS was right. So Zorro

switched it back on and we decided to listen more intently this time. Even the best of us can't always trust our keen sense of direction. Therefore a good GPS can be a valuable tool on a journey.

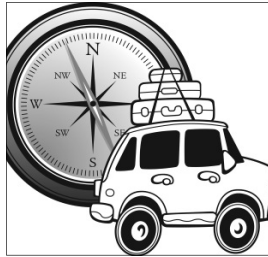
We as Christians are on a journey. We need a good GPS with lots of power. We need a GPS that will never leave us stranded in the middle of nowhere. We need a GPS that will never get us lost. We need a GPS that will never take us to the wrong destination. We need God's GPS.

God's GPS gives us the Bible to keep us on the right road. His GPS lets the Holy Spirit nudge us in the right direction. God's GPS allows us to have direct contact with our creator 24/7. That means we are never disconnected from the server. And God's GPS is infallible. As long as we walk with God, talk with God and build a relationship with him, we are assured of arriving at our final destination.

There's a story about a father who takes his son on a walk in the woods. As they walked he asked the boy, "Do you know where you are? Are you lost?"

The boy looked up at him and said, "How can I be lost? I am with you."

As long as we stay close to God our Father we will never be lost. God says: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you" (Psalm 32:8). Now that's a GPS we can always count on!



Zorro and Barbara send you greetings from lovely San Jose, California. Be sure to check out Barbara's weekly blog: Barbara's Banter. Just Google Barbara's Banter or go to www.barbdahlgren.com. You can email Barbara at bydahlgren@pacbell.net. She loves hearing from you.

Get the Point!

By Susi Albrecht

We share our small townhome with two dogs, a cat and a fish. I always say the fish doesn't count, but our daughter Hannah thinks Spike is an important part of the family. We have also been home to a couple of rabbits, Bobby Joe the hamster, two other cats and numerous finches. We have L.A. Zoo memberships. So it's fair to say we love animals. They make us laugh every day, and to us, they are worth the trouble, mostly.

So what is one to do when a little mouse moves in on your patio, gnaws through a bag of wild bird seeds and then decides to make the grill its new crib? I'm not lying when I say I had never before heard my husband scream like he did when, plate of marinated chicken in hand, he opened the grill and the tiny mouse stuck its tongue out at him. (OK, I made up the last part.)



Killing the little critter was out of the question, so we looked for a more humane solution. We found a no-kill trap at Home Depot, which claims to gently catch the mouse while it feasts on peanut butter. We set the trap and sure enough, the next morning the mouse was caught.

Of course, our kids automatically assumed we had added yet another pet to the Albrecht petting zoo, and it took some convincing to break the news. I agreed to an overnighter, but first thing in the morning the rodent would be chauffeured into the nearby mountains where it would experience freedom and fresh air. All that day, the mouse enjoyed gourmet meals, first-class lodging and lots of attention (especially from the cat) in its make-shift Tupperware home. Then it was time to say good-bye.

As I drove my little passenger up the winding mountain road into the nearby foothills, I felt happy and satisfied. Many spiritual

thoughts came to mind, such as how God cares for the smallest of creatures and how we should take care of his creation. I felt righteous; I felt good. I was doing my part.

After a quick prayer and more fuzzy thoughts, I opened the lid of the container. I had to encourage the mouse to taste sweet freedom. I think rain didn't help; who wants to leave behind a soft cotton nest and free food? Finally, it scurried off into the bushes and it was time for me to make my way down the hill, hoping to make my Bible Study group on time. I was looking forward to sharing my good deed with my friends, and maybe say a word or two about God's love, which includes all of his creation, even the mouse I just saved.

I drove slowly as it was raining pretty hard by this time when out of nowhere a squirrel jumped onto the road. I tried to stop, but I felt the sickening thump under my wheels. I pulled over and jumped out of the car. Here lay a big dead squirrel. Did I mention it was very dead—because I killed it? I was horrified!

How can this be? Here I was, saving a mouse, feeling righteous and then I promptly flatten an innocent squirrel! You couldn't make this stuff up if you tried.

Crying, I jumped back in the car and left the grisly scene. But soon, the tears of horror turned into tears of laughter. I had to pull over because the absurdity of the situation got to me, and I was laughing so hard I was in danger of running over something else.

Do you ever wonder if God has a sense of humor? I don't. He is one of the funniest "people" I know. He created laughter and he often uses it to teach us valuable lessons. He knows how to deal with our self-righteousness, arrogance, doubts, fears, disbelief and weaknesses. He corrects us not by a uniform one-size-fits-all method, but kindly deals with each of us in a personal way

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Get the Point!

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because he knows we all are wired differently.

The God of my childhood was stern, strict, intimidating and not one to mess around with. I had more of a fear-based relationship with him. I am thankful that today I know God to be kind, loving, humorous and never exasperated by my foolishness. Sometimes he teaches me with a firm hand and sometimes with a laugh. He is a loving parent who has a balanced approach to discipline, never goes overboard in either direction and always boldly underlines all forms of correction with love.

How I wish I could be that kind of parent. I have read many books on how to communicate love to my children in ways they can understand and believe. Sometimes I get it right and other times I fail miserably. But more than anything, I want my children to know how much God loves them, and that he will never fail them, even when they stumble. And he speaks their perfect love language.

Sometimes my loving Lord deems it necessary to teach me in a way that stings, even sacrificing a squirrel to make his point!



You may email Susi at susi.albrecht@gci.org.



Grant me, O God, the power to see
 In every rose, eternity.
 In every bud, the coming day;
 In every snow, the promised May.
 In every storm the legacy
 Of rainbows smiling down at me!



—Virginia Wuerfel

Hardships Don't Define Us

By Kathy Miller

It seems as though some people go through life with a minimum of difficulties and others seem plagued by trials. I have wondered about this from time to time.

For example: a couple we know have been showered with blessings for generations. Harry and Carrie Awn both came from Christian families who valued God, honesty, family and hard work. They met in college and had a storybook courtship. They married after college, settled down and had a family of healthy, happy children.

Harry did well in his career and received several promotions. The children grew to be happy, active and likeable. All the children embraced Jesus as their personal Savior, graduated from college, found wonderful Christian life-mates and settled into homes of their own.

Harry and Carrie eventually became the happy grandparents of darling, healthy grandchildren. Their family has always lived in comfort, traveled overseas—having all their needs and most of their wants. It doesn't seem to get better than this.

On the other hand, during the same time we were acquainted with the Awn family, a couple we knew had this story. She grew up knowing a lot of poverty and her family was peppered with alcoholics, including her live-in grandmother. Many hardships were endured. He grew up with a severe workaholic father. His father never uttered the words, *I love you*, to anyone.

In spite of their difficulties in childhood, these two managed to meet in college. She struggled academically in several classes.

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Hardships

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Some misbehavior had him in the dean's office a few times. For separate reasons, they both came close to being kicked out of college before graduation.

Eventually they married and although he made enough money for their needs, there wasn't much more the first few years. She had two difficult pregnancies followed by six miscarriages. They moved from state to state (four in all) and so their children were uprooted to several different schools.

Money was never abundant but they always had enough for their basic needs. She took on odd jobs to supplement for any extras. At age 30, she suffered a crippling condition because of a birth defect. At 40 the pain and deterioration became so severe she had an artificial hip implant.

Both suffered from periodic clinical depression—no doubt from high levels of stress. Their marriage had several bumpy times and she nearly left him twice. Her mother took years to waste away and die from Alzheimer's disease. His father died of cancer and his mother from the debilitation of two strokes. The children all married and left home and had some significant challenges in those relationships. It seems this couple careens from one trial to another. Their first two grandchildren were stillborn and the list goes on and on.

Both those stories are about the same couple and all the details are true. How can this be? Here's the point: every obviously blessed and happy person you meet has more to their story. Everyone goes through difficulty and trial at several points in their lives. Often blessings are happening at the same time as hardships. Life is like that. There is a mixture of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, agony and ecstasy, turmoil and peace.

Everyone has a story. Often we think no one else has gone through what we're going through or could possibly understand. When

I share with others (good and bad), I never cease to be amazed at how many experiences we have in common. When that happens, we can rejoice and sorrow with each other.

Even more important, we have Jesus Christ to praise and dance with and who will gather us up in his arms as he dries our tears and leads us through the valleys. The Holy Spirit helps us to endure and to recognize the blessings even in the difficult times. Thanks to all the tools God gives us, we can recognize the trials and deal with them and then focus on the blessings and rejoice in them.

That couple at the beginning of this story is not only the same couple but it is my husband and me. We appear to have been wonderfully blessed—and we *are!* Our lives have not been without significant challenges and we are stronger for them. Difficulties also furnish us with empathy, compassion and humility. We have no doubt of our imperfection and total dependence on God. Blessings remind us that God provides us with more than we deserve because he loves us.

The rest of the story of this couple has so many more details and experiences and so does the story of every person you meet. No doubt this is why God instructs us to refrain from judging others.

God's the only one who knows the whole story. He also encourages us to get to know each other and to love all. It's so much easier to love people when you really know them. Don't be surprised by imperfection or envious of their blessings—just love them.



Kathy lives in Everett, Washington. She and Bill are enjoying retirement and their grandchildren, but not necessarily in that order! You may email her at kathym2u@hotmail.com.

My Two Words

By Senior Pulley

Last year, I was so moved by Tammy’s article, “My One Word,” I was inspired to have a 2013 word of my own and to make this a personal annual exercise.

I had so many things to cope with last year, but often in the midst of those issues I “heard” these words: “But that doesn’t have anything to do with you...you be peaceful.” And then the verse, “cast all your cares on him, for he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7), kept coming to mind. I knew it was God’s Spirit reminding me of my one word—*peaceful*. He has been showing me that as I continuously learn how to commit my life to him, he is right here with me—in me—caring for me, alleviating the fear, the pain, the stress, and that makes me feel peaceful.

Two of my coworkers commented on how calm I was during some troublesome days at the office. Without missing a beat, I said, “I’m at a stage in my life where I’m learning how not to worry!” Later on, thinking about what I had said, I realized this as God’s peacefulness inside me and as the understanding that as I cast my cares on him, he cares for me and takes care of the things I can’t handle. Therefore, it doesn’t matter what might be going on around me—it *really* has nothing to do with me (as I’m leaving it to him)—I am to be peaceful.

Two other valuable points have come to mind: (1) when going through a trial “suspend yourself in God’s grace and *rest* there” and (2), when you’re really tense and your hands are clenched as if you’re trying to hold on to something, tell yourself, “Just let go—*just let go*—and then let God.”

While continuing on my amazing peaceful journey and nearing the end of 2013, I started discussing with God what my 2014 word should be. Then one Sunday, my husband gave a sermon on Ephesians 1:3-14, empha-

sizing how we have every spiritual blessing in Christ.

As he led the congregation through those few short verses, I was amazed at how many times the words *in him* or *in Christ* appeared along with the list of spiritual blessings given to us *in him*. Soon afterward, I felt that *in him* should be my *one* word for 2014. But then I gently chided myself, “But that’s *two* words!”

The next week, we were handed a homework sheet that contained the same passage of scripture in Ephesians, double spaced. The assignment was to mark up, write notes and list interesting points on anything in those verses that touched or inspired us. We could discuss and share those points the following Sunday during our monthly interactive service.

When I began to study that passage, *Wow!* Although I had read those words many times, I discovered I had been snacking on those verses, but now I was enjoying a banquet! I was excited and inspired by this passage of praise spelling out the vast and deep love our Father has for us, shown through what he has given in Christ. A few points that jumped out to me:

- The words *he*, *his* and *him* appear more than 25 times! This tells me when it comes to the spiritual, it is indeed all about him!
- The remarkable verbs in this passage: Christ has blessed, chosen, predestined, lavished, redeemed, forgiven, made known, included, marked us, making us holy and blameless!

And what awed me the most (as if that were possible), because we believe, we are sealed *in him* through the Holy Spirit—*guaranteeing* our inheritance!

After studying this passage and realizing I have everything I need to understand, help, appreciate, love, give, grow, serve, forgive, rejuvenate and live *in him*, it was confirmed

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My Two Words

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that I should focus my thoughts and energies for the rest of this year on these important two words.

I must confess it bothered me at first that my one word for 2014 was two words. I quickly remembered I am to be peaceful and to appreciate another lesson he is teaching me—I lack nothing and I have every spiritual blessing *in him*—two words that again remind me of the vast love of our one and only Great God—our One *Word*, holy and true—Jesus Christ!



Senior is part of the warm and loving GCI Bermuda congregation, where her husband Cecil is pastor and their handsome son Seth is PA provider. Senior is spending more time doing the things she loves: writing, singing, worship leading, studying the Lord's beautiful heavens and butterfly gazing! You can email her at cjpuley@logic.bm.



Only God can take the broken pieces of your life and make something beautiful out of each one. He is waiting for you to let go of your pain and trust him. And you really can. No one loves you like he does. You may not always understand or even like his process, but you can always trust his heart of love for you.



—Mary Southerland

Be Still

By Tamar Gray

God is amazing! Not just because of who he is or what he does but for the way he has done things in my life.

Last year, on September 8, I was ordained an assistant pastor at Edgehill Community Church (GCI) here in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. As I look back on the year of 2013 I realize how God was using the peaks and the valleys in my life to prepare me for the road he wanted me to travel.

I have had many responsibilities in my church. When we did not have a pastor, I was part of the triad team that served the congregation for a year as we waited for God to provide the leadership he would choose. He brought us pastor David Botha. The triad stepped back into the supportive role. Praise God! We have not looked back and have moved forward as a church with fresh vision of missions and discipleship.

I was worship director and served in that capacity for many years. Now someone else is in that position and I serve on the team as one of the worship leaders and keyboardist. I was one of the directors of our women's ministry team (LiLY Women's Ministry). One of my dear friends was made director and I assist her in her leadership role.

As the positions were stripped away, it was humbling and extremely revealing. I learned a lot about myself. I saw pride rear its ugly head. I felt as if I was not needed. When I would pray and ask God, "What is it you want me to do?" I would hear silence. In the silence I would hear, Wait and continue to serve.

All kinds of things went through my mind. I heard, Go to another church where

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Be Still

Continued from page 13

they would appreciate you more, and other echoes such as, You are not needed here, move on! It is amazing what pops into your head when you let your heart forget God is in charge and knows what he is doing.

Praise God he gave me reminders about who he is and how he works for his purposes. He sent people and true friends across my path at just the right time to encourage me. He reminded me he is God all by himself. He also reminded me of my favorite scripture of that season, Psalms 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.”

Why am I sharing this with you? I want to remind you whatever season you are going through, the peaks or the valleys, God is preparing you for what is to come. He has a plan for your life and will work with you until it is complete. Place yourself in his capable hands. Continue to wait on his timing because it is perfect, and above all else be still and know that he is God.



Tamar is the assistant pastor at Edgehill Community Church. You may contact her at Lgraybass@roadrunner.com.



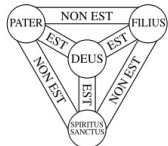
The Women of LiLY Women's Ministry was host to a women's conference in April in Beachwood, Ohio. Go to www.edgehillcc.org/lily for more information on the ministry.

If College Students Wrote The Bible:

- The Last Supper would have been eaten the next morning—cold.
- The Ten Commandments would actually be only five, double spaced and written in large font.
- A new edition would be published every two years in order to limit reselling.
- Forbidden fruit would have been eaten because it wasn't cafeteria food.
- Paul's letter to the Romans would become Paul's email to abuse@romans.gov.
- The reason Cain killed Abel: they were roommates.
- The reason why Moses and his followers walked the desert for 40 years: they didn't want to ask directions and look like freshmen.
- Instead of God creating the world in six days and resting on the seventh, he would have put it off until the night before it was due and then pulled an all-nighter.

—Clean Laffs

We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons; nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son uncreated; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son unlimited; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son eternal; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternal; but one eternal. So the Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God.



—Excerpt from the Athanasian Creed

Ministers' Wives Conferences 2014

Registration Information

Full Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Phone	
Email	

Please mark the type of room you need.
The following prices are for accommodations, meals and registration fees.

ONTARIO, CA
Ontario Airport Hotel
August 29 to September 1, 2014

- Double (\$417 per person)
or 3 payments* of \$139
- Single (\$555 per person)
or 3 payments* of \$185

If you should cancel, the registration fee of \$150 is not refundable.

*If you are making 3 payments the last due date is:
3rd payment—August 2, 2014

If final payment is not received by August 2, there will be an additional charge of \$50.

I plan to share accommodations with the following person or people: (No need to send forms together.)

- 1.
- 2.

Please indicate if you have any physical limitations that would require wheelchair accessibility or limit your stair use:

Yes No (If yes, please explain in comments below)

Please indicate if you have any dietary needs:

Yes No (If yes, please explain in comments below)

Comments:

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