

*We always thank  
God for all of you  
and continually  
mention you in  
our prayers.*

1 Thessalonians 1:2, NIV

# Connections

◆ A Journal by & for Women in Ministry ◆

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## Our Tree of Life

By Sheila Graham



As I sat waiting to be invited, along with my fellow churchgoers, to take part in the communion service, I realized it was the first time in many years I was going up to the front without Ed. When was the last time we had taken communion together? I couldn't remember, but it was his last time before he succumbed to cancer. We didn't know it then, so many months ago, but it was.

We take communion more often now in our church, and that's good. Taking the elements of bread and wine into our bodies, all together, remind us that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. And that all of us together are one in the body of Christ. How special is that?

All of this made me think of some other important symbols. You may remember when HWA used to talk about the significance of the two trees of Genesis. (Some of you do, I know!) In his last years, he emphasized over and over that they held the key to understanding God's plan. Though he did not have a clear understanding of God's plan for humanity, he wasn't far off when he said the two trees in the Garden of Eden were important symbols.

Adam and Eve were placed in this beautiful garden with all its fruit trees for their food and were given only one stipulation, that they not eat of the tree of good and evil. He did not restrict them from eating of the tree of life. They were free agents; they had freedom of choice. When they were tempted by Satan and chose to eat of the wrong tree, the way of death, only then were they restricted from eating of the tree of life.

Jesus Christ is named by the apostle Paul *the second Adam*. Jesus, fully God and fully man, was also tempted by Satan, but resisted all his temptations and lived the perfect human life in our stead. All of us humans are also free agents. We also can choose death or life. When we choose to follow Jesus, we are choosing life.

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## Our Tree of Life

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Think about it. When we take communion and eat of the bread and drink of the wine, we are eating of the tree of life, our Savior Jesus. He is our Tree of Life. Though we are taking these symbols more often now, we must never take this ceremony lightly. Always keep in mind when you eat that bread and drink that wine, you have turned away from Satan and the tree of death and chosen to eat of the Tree of Life eternal, Jesus Christ. Ed knew that.



*Sheila's husband Ed died last December. She said it was difficult going to church the first time without Ed, but felt better once back among her loving church family. Sheila says she understands even more now why the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter and is amazed at how that comfort comes in so many ways, some expected and some not. You may email her at [grahams@ntin.net](mailto:grahams@ntin.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 Nurturennet forum. We highlight women in ministry but are inclusive of the needs of the entire family.

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

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## • CALIFORNIA • TAM 2 U

### My One Word

We live in an age of distraction. I sure get distracted, don't you? I often start one thing and move on to the next before I've finished the first. And then on top of that, I sometimes forget about the first one altogether. I wonder if we'd be so distracted if it weren't for the plethora of electronic gadgets vying for our attention.

Flitting from one device to another, making sure we don't miss anything and keeping them charged and up to date not only divides our minds but also our hearts. Losing one can raise blood pressure and cause lots of stress.

I don't like living distracted. It makes me feel disorganized and discombobulated. That may be why I settled on *steady* as My One Word for this year. I always thought that tortoise in the story of *The Tortoise and the Hare* was pretty smart. Remember how he won the race by being slow and steady while the rabbit took off like a rocket, stopped for a

nap and lost? The slow and steady trait may not be admired as much as in the past, but it's still a valid *modus operandi*.

I love when my word not only helps me grow in God's grace, but also points me straight at him and helps me get to know him better. Steady is a good way to describe God. When I read the definition of *steady* in the dictionary, I see a glorious picture of a God who is steadfast, fixed in direction, firm in purpose, resolution and attachment. He is unwavering, firmly established, stable and free from fluctuation. The steadiness of God, his unfailing love, unending mercy and limitless grace, is beautiful.

My word comes to mind almost every day and when it does, I think about God and how he has been steady in loving and blessing me, that he is my Rock and refuge, always there and always dependable.

My word reminds me to stay focused, on track and calm, just like Jesus. Just saying the word *steady* steadies me, just as sailors, upon hearing the word from their captain, become calmer and better able to keep their ship on course.

If you're feeling distracted and pulled in many different directions, feel free to use my word this year. If you do, be sure and share your observations with me and our *Connections* readers.

Steady on, sisters!



The best portion of a good man's life:  
his little, nameless, unremembered acts  
of kindness and love.

—William Wordsworth



Tammy



# Smile

By Linda Wheeler

You've seen them around. The people behind the signs that say, "Anything helps, God bless" or "Homeless, please help" or "Hungry." Disheartening. Makes me anxious. Puts me into prayer mode and makes my small troubles shrink away.

I'm blessed with a loving husband, a roof over my head and plenty to eat. So when I tell you about my "small troubles shrinking away" you'll have to bear with me and read to the end to see why.

Life can be stressful, communicating can be difficult and confusion and impatience rear their heads. I was having one of those days and I began to feel depressed and, silly me, to feel sorry for myself.

I tried to talk myself through a couple of ways to help get over being down. I called out the name of Jesus to refocus on the one who helps, keeps promises and reassures me there will be a time when everything is perfect.

Then I remembered when I sing the song, "Smile," by Natalie Cole, at retirement homes, I say right afterward, "Okay, let's see those smiles." Then I give them a great big smile. I know smiles are contagious because

many smile back.

At that moment my journey brought me down an exit to the stoplight and guess what? I saw a white-haired man with a sign. Did it say, "Hungry"? No. "Anything helps, God bless"? No. With a Vanna White wave of his hand he directed my attention to his sign. In large letters it simply and beautifully said, "SMILE."

What a blessing! I felt the loving attention of God. It's true you know, God never leaves us or forsakes us. Thank you God!



*When I give money to people, I ask if they are veterans. Those who receive a couple of dollars as well as a business card from the Veteran's Administration and a magazine. I tell them about Joe, who has the life mission to get all the veterans off of the street and into homes. Then I urge them to call him. You may email Linda at [song1mom@yahoo.com](mailto:song1mom@yahoo.com).*

Don't waste your breath proclaiming what's really important to you.  
How you spend your time says it all.

—Eric Zorn, Author



Believe God's word and power more than you believe your own feelings and experiences.

—Samuel Rutherford  
Scottish minister and theologian



# The Circle of Life

By Anne Gillam

What do you think of when you hear the words, *the circle of life*? For the longest time I was reminded of the music from the movie, *The Lion King*. My daughter used to watch this movie over and over again. The music is melodic and it brought peace into my heart. But when I heard those words, "It is just the circle of life," I wondered what it might really mean, especially when connected to the birth of the king's son.

Often anything out of our control is explained as *the circle of life*. We do not have control over our own birth, when this will be or who our parents are. People like to say life just happens. That is an uncomfortable thought to me.

According to *ask.com*, the circle of life is a symbolic representation of birth, survival and death. These form a loop that continues with the birth of every child. You find this circle in all life on earth, from mankind to the lichen growing in the shady place behind my garage. To me, it seems sterile and empty to downgrade life just to survival and takes away the beauty behind the miracle.

Life seems determined to burst forth on this earth. It is delicately balanced and yet finds a way to come forth as if by command. I am amazed that some hold to the idea that life just happened, that everything acci-

dentally fell into place. But we who believe know life is the artwork of a loving God, who not only rejoiced in it, saying it was very good, but also blessed it. Our maker puts meaning and purpose into life. He commands it to come forth and to continue.

God is not only light and love, God is life. It is his life that embraces and permeates us all, whether we acknowledge him or not. He has given us physical and spiritual life through his Son Jesus and this is the true circle of life: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this life we have hope, purpose and being, because a loving God wanted to share his loving communion.

When I look into the cosmos I cannot help but think that, in us, God is just getting started in a grand adventure to birth many children. As Jesus birthed Adam with the magic and love of his hands, so he births his children again through Jesus in his conception, life, death and resurrection.

Life goes on with conviction and elation as the Father lifts his Son high and glories in the continuation of the circle of life that embodies who he is.

The circle of life will go on as God directs his love in amazing ways we cannot begin to imagine. I look forward to dancing to his music as he directs the tempo and rhythm of the circle of life.

We embrace you, God, and glory in the life you have given us and in your embrace of us in your life.

True wisdom is to know what is best worth knowing, and to do what is best worth doing.

—Edward Humphrey



Anne says she is rejoicing in being a part of the circle of life. "I love hearing from my family as they live out God's plan. Feel free to write me at [anne-gillam48@gmail.com](mailto:anne-gillam48@gmail.com)."



## Zorro and Me

By Barbara Dahlgren

### Don't Be Too Sure

**D**ears ago when we lived in Kentucky I remember arriving home from grocery shopping to find Zorro and a friend of ours cutting down a tree in our front yard. It wasn't a huge tree by tree standards, but sizable enough to do some damage if it fell on something.

This must have been a spur of the moment decision and to be honest I don't remember why these fellows felt the need to cut down this tree. What I do remember is asking: "Are you guys sure you know what you are doing? If that tree falls the wrong way it will land on our porch."

They assured me, as men are prone to do, that they most certainly did know what they were doing. They drew my attention to the cut they were making, muttered something about the aerodynamics of falling trees and pointed in the direction the tree would fall, away from our house.

As I knew nothing about cutting down trees I just said, "Hmmm." Then I went about my business, putting groceries away.

About 15 minutes later I heard a loud crash. When I looked out the window I saw

where the tree had landed, not where the men had pointed but on what used to be our front porch. I was not a happy camper. The interesting part was listening to the men explain why the tree didn't fall the way they thought it should. There were certain factors they had not taken into consideration.

I think there's a life lesson in there somewhere. I like to call it the don't-be-too-sure principle. This principle comes in handy in all aspects of life, not just for cutting down trees.

For example, we might think we know the solution for other people's problems. If others would just do this or just do that, their lives would be so much better. In our zeal to alleviate their dire circumstances we try to fix things, thinking it will help. Well—don't be too sure. Sometimes our solutions can bring other complications we didn't think about.

We might think others have it easier than we do. Well—don't be too sure. We are not always privy to the private lives of others. As Erma Bombeck used to say, "The grass may be greener on the other side of the fence because it's growing over the septic tank."

We might think we would be so much happier with more money, a bigger house or a newer car. Well—don't be too sure. Actor

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## Nurturennet

Nurturennet 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  
mail  
address?

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

## Don't Be Too Sure

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and comedian Jim Carrey once said, "I wish everyone could get rich and famous and have everything they've ever dreamed of, so they will know that is not the answer."

What is the answer? The answer is Jesus. I think Jesus is the answer for everything!

Many might think they know Jesus. Well—don't be too sure. Sometimes we try to make Jesus over into our image. We think he likes what we like and dislikes what we dislike. Well—don't be too sure.

We in ministry must guard against trying to solve everyone's problems. I'm not saying to develop a go-and-be-filled attitude. We should have compassion and serve others. However, sometimes just listening or showing small acts of kindness can accomplish more than "fixing" problems. Partnering with others in prayer may be more valuable than alleviating their circumstances. God is the only one who knows every aspect of a situation and what is best. We may think we have all the facts but—don't be too sure.

Encouraging others to participate in relationship with Jesus, to have constant communication with him, to study his word, and to meditate on how to implement his teachings in their lives can serve others better than any fix-it solution we come up with. Is this approach too simple? Well—don't be too sure. Sticking to the trunk of the tree may be better than trying to make it fall in the direction we think it should go.



*Be sure to check out Barbara's weekly blog at [www.barbdahlgren.com](http://www.barbdahlgren.com). You can email Barbara at [bydahlgren@pacbell.net](mailto:bydahlgren@pacbell.net). She loves hearing from you.*



## The Comfort of My One Word Journey

*By Senior Pulley*

When I began My One Word Journey in 2013, I had no idea I would be learning so much along the way—more than I could imagine.

In the beginning, God showed me a lot about his peace, how that no matter what's going on around me, I can be peaceful, even in the midst of turmoil. Although at times this is difficult, when all is said and done, I've found my mind makes its way back into God's peaceful territory. I've learned I can draw on his peace, for Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you" (John 14:27, *NIV*). When upset comes, I'm learning I should first try to be quiet and consciously hold on to that peace.

On the heels of peace, my journey helped me realize I have everything I need in Christ, that I am one of God's children, and he loves me in a way that I've not yet learned to describe completely in words! In him I have true freedom. I can live and move and just *be*.

Last year, I had (and am still having) extensive lessons on rest. Spiritually, I can rest in Jesus and know he's taken care of everything by his wonderful grace. I can also physically rest in him by taking time off to enjoy some peace and quiet. As well, I can lay my head down on my pillow at night in peace and truly rest. When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I can rest in him mentally and emotionally and can draw on his strength. In other words, I can *rest* assured that he has everything under control.

The number of emails, studies and passages in books on the subject and just the word

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## My One Word Journey

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*rest*, which kept cropping up all through 2015, was remarkable! It was truly inspirational to see the hints God threw to me. So many times it was like a loving nudge that said, I'm here, and I'm reminding you of something important; so, pay attention, my daughter.

Sure enough, near the end of 2015, I had to draw deeply on all three years of my one-word lessons when tragedy struck. My elder brother died suddenly.

My beloved brother became my stand-in dad at age 17 when our parents died and left us orphans. But by some spectacular miracle, we (all minors) were allowed to live without court-appointed supervision or guardians and thrive through the love and selfless sacrifices of my older brother and sister.

On the day of his passing, my heart sank and my mind went back to the time when we lost our parents. I felt much like that sad and helpless child again. For days, it was difficult to think about anything else and I was restless and anxious, to say the least. But after a while, something began to remind me to *just rest*. And later, my thoughts returned to how God wanted me to be peaceful and to realize all I needed I had in him.

It would be God's love that would help me suspend myself in his grace and rest there. I

could rest assured he had everything under control, though I couldn't understand it all, and that it was my work to enter his rest. I was soon able to zero in on all of the encouragement and support and love that came to me and my family.

It came in all shapes and sizes, from people known and unknown, from young and old, from Scripture, from hugs and kisses, from work colleagues, from uplifting music, from our wonderful church family and close friends. It came in the morning and the afternoon and at night, an abundance of love outpoured, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. I am overwhelmed with joy just thinking about it!

In the midst of it all, I was also reminded that my brother was a phenomenal blessing to my life. He had fought the good fight and was at peace. He had (for now and forevermore) everything in Christ and he was at rest.

It's true God never puts more on us than we can handle, because he always makes a way for us to get through those high and low places in life. I am thankful for the time my Heavenly Father spends in inspiring and teaching me about life, and I am appreciative of this powerful tool of my one-word journey and the comfort it has afforded me.

Let all our employment be to know God: the more one knows him, the more one desires to know him.

—Brother Lawrence  
*The Practice of the Presence of God*



*Reflecting on her previous years' experiences, Senior has been inspired by the many seasons of life and the lessons they afford, which always brings change and renewal—hence, her 2016 word, which she looks forward to sharing next time. You may share or email her at: [cjpulley@logic.bm](mailto:cjpulley@logic.bm) or [cec-il.pulley@gci.org](mailto:cec-il.pulley@gci.org).*





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

I was talking with a friend who be-moaned her family's lack of holiday rituals. "My family doesn't have any traditions," she complained. "We just do the same thing year after year after year."

\*\*\*

After browsing the restaurant menu, I had a question for the waitress. "About the salmon entree, is that a steak or a fillet?" "Neither," she said. "It's a fish."

\*\*\*

We had just finished eating a beautiful dinner my mother had prepared for our family. As I glanced up at the chandelier over the table, I was mesmerized by the creative handiwork a spider had woven around the prisms and light bulbs. "Don't look up there!" my mother screamed. "It's the one thing I was too tired to clean!" "Don't look where?" my brother asked. "There!" my mother pointed. "It's my own personal web site!"

\*\*\*

A police officer called the station on his radio. "I have a bit of a problem here. An old lady just shot her husband for stepping on the floor she just mopped." "What's the problem?" came the response. "Have you arrested the woman yet?" "Not yet. The floor's still wet."

\*\*\*

Now that the metric system is in wide use all over the world, we can see why Americans have not adopted it:

A miss is as good as 1.6 kilometers.

Put your best .3 of a meter forward.

Spare the 5.03 meters and spoil the child.

Twenty-eight grams of prevention is worth 454 grams of cure.

Give a man 2.5 centimeters and he'll take 1.6 kilometers.

Peter Piper picked 8.8 liters of pickled peppers.

\*\*\*

The new father ran out of the delivery room and announced to the rest of his family waiting for the news, "We had twins!" The family was so excited, they immediately asked, "Who do they look like?" With a confused look the father said, "Each other!"

—clean laffs



## It's Me, Mummy

By Grace Situtu

I have four children ages 12, 10, 7 and 5 years old. They know me and I know them. When they were younger I could tell from their voices who was who. Lately I cannot tell their voices apart and this is not pleasing to me, especially when I am talking to them on the phone.

I have to ask whom am I talking to and the response is, "It's me, Mummy." Until they say their names, I just have to guess.

This reminds me we have a good shepherd Jesus who knows each one of us by name and voice and all the details about us. We don't have to say who we are but just tell him whatever we want to say. Even though I can't tell my children apart by their voices, I am encouraged that Jesus doesn't have to ask our names because he always knows us.

---

*Grace lives in Lusaka, Zambia. You may connect with her on Facebook.*

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—"

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

—John 10:14 and 27, NIV



## Briefly Speaking...

### I'm Mad!

Sometimes when I get angry, I don't want to let it go. It's not so much when someone does something to me. It's when they hurt one of my loved ones.

I used to tell Ed, I'm mad! Then he reminded me the sun shouldn't go down on my anger, and I'm only hurting myself by being angry. He was right, of course. But I'm not ready to get over my mad spell yet. (For you internationals, that's *mad* in the angry sense not the crazy sense.)

So I go over and over the dirty deed I'm angry about in my mind, and I get madder and madder. I even tell God, I'm not going to be mad forever and I'll forgive eventually, but right now, I'm mad. It's like I enjoy being angry. I'm wallowing in it.

Have you ever felt that way?

Anger is a strong emotion, and it's not wrong to be angry. Sometimes I feel we aren't angry enough about what we should be angry about: the violence, the hunger, the injustice in this world. But Ed was right, some things you can't do much about, and others you know you're going to have to forgive anyway. Help me, Lord!



*Since Sheila wrote this, she has lost Ed to cancer. She appreciates all the expressions of love and concern she's been receiving, and she especially thanks you for your prayers. You may email her at [grahams@ntin.net](mailto:grahams@ntin.net) or [sheila.graham@gci.org](mailto:sheila.graham@gci.org).*



# Eyes Fixed on Jesus (in Spite of Distractions)

By Ginny Rice

As we walk along the pathway of life, we are encouraged to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). This is hard to do when life is full of unexpected difficulties keeping us distracted. It seems at the very times we need to be closest to God our lives are consumed with just making it through another day. Maybe you can identify with some of these.

## Health Problems

The aging process brings many challenges. We can become plagued with aches and pains, or more serious difficulties. After not being sick for more than 40 years I got bronchitis, which left me chronically tired—something I had not experienced before. I always loved getting up in the morning, but now I had to struggle to raise my head off my pillow!

Every few months I would get bronchitis. If I got chilled, down I went. Why was this happening to me? I didn't have time to be sick. I had family depending on me, a house to run and a big yard to keep up, plus church, youth ministry and neighborhood responsibilities. I am host to our family reunion that lasts for a week around Thanksgiving, but last year I was exhausted and very discouraged. I tried to keep my eyes focused on Jesus but so often they were fixed on me.

Our salvation, thank God, depends much more on his love of us than on our love of him.



—Father Andrew

## Family Problems

Perhaps a loved one has drug or alcohol problems. These can be disruptive, causing verbal and even physical fights. Middle-of-the-night episodes interrupt our sleep. Daily life becomes a struggle as we let these issues consume our time and thoughts.

## Marital Problems

Difficulties with a spouse can definitely divert our attention away from God. These sometimes cause life alterations such as separation or even divorce. Children are caught in the middle. Endless battles, whether verbal or legal, can dominate our thoughts.

## Unfilled Plans

Many senior citizens look forward to retirement plans with travel opportunities or to working on long-delayed projects, and especially to having more quiet time to spend with the Lord. Then the unexpected happens and we find ourselves caregivers to aging parents or raising our grandchildren. Instead of quiet time, we are busier than ever.

## Finances

When our economy falters many lose jobs and can't find new ones. Some have to settle for lesser pay or part-time work. This can cause loss of health insurance, loss of homes, loss of vehicles and loss of retirement funds. Many find themselves struggling to feed their families. Some families have to share crowded, multigenerational living arrangements. This means they have little privacy and can lose intimacy with God.

## Unexpected Tragedies

None of us are exempt from life's most difficult surprises. I was brought face to face with multiple tragedies in a single weekend last year. On a Friday night my nephew Nathan's house burned down. They were out of

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## Eyes Fixed on Jesus

*Continued from page 11*

town and neighbors didn't wake up until after it was fully engulfed in flames. Nathan and Rose lost everything.

The next day I was on my way shopping in my 15-month-old Hyundai when a guy driving a pickup in the lane to my right suddenly turned and slammed into the right front side of my car. I was in his blind spot.

My car was totaled but thankfully I was not! No broken bones, but my back and hips were twisted. I had eight months of chiropractic treatments and traction. The time, inconvenience and stress of it all have taken their toll. The car was replaced (with a lot more money than the insurance paid, of course) and I'm still not straight, but that's all that can be done.

Then day after my car wreck, on Sunday morning, I got a call during church from my son, Phillip. His wife Lil had died suddenly and unexpectedly during the night. She was staying with their daughter in California and Melanie found Lil when she got up that morning. So Phillip and I left the next day, shocked, grief-stricken and with a lot of questions.

All in three days! Many lives changed forever. That's the way life is sometimes, full of distractions and out of control. When we are in the midst of these situations, how

can we stay focused on Jesus?

Here are a few thoughts that have helped me:

Look for spiritual lessons in your physical circumstances. When I was going through my illnesses I realized that because I had not been sick, I couldn't empathize with those with chronic health problems.

Yes, I had compassion for those who suffer, especially for my son, Phillip. I've watched him daily struggle with his challenging health conditions, but I never understood what it was like to lack the energy to do the basic chores of life or to push to just keep going each day. Now I get it! And believe me, my prayers for others are far more empathetic.

Count your blessings. When our tragic weekend hit we had no option but to walk through it. So we started counting our blessings. Each one of those tragedies could have been far worse. As we examined each incident looking for the positives, healing began to occur. God was certainly with us.

Realize God is always with you. We were not promised a life without problems or distractions, but Jesus has promised to walk with us no matter what our journey brings. We are not alone. Being aware of that helps us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. He carries us through our difficulties and tragedies. We can learn to live and rest in the awareness of his presence.

Doubt is not always a sign that a man [or woman] is wrong; it may be a sign that he [or she] is thinking.

—Oswald Chambers



Ginny lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, surrounded by family. You may email her at [ginny.rice@gci.org](mailto:ginny.rice@gci.org).



## Book Review

### *A Lineage of Grace*

By Norma Thibault

*A Lineage of Grace* by Francine Rivers is about the five women included in the Bible accounts of Jesus' lineage: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary. By researching the customs and traditions of the times in which these women lived, she has brought the stories of these women's lives alive. Rivers has a wonderful feeling for the emotions they went through as they faced difficult situations.

Tamar, a Canaanite woman who grew up in a pagan culture, was thrust into a situation over which she had no control, sold as a bride into an Israelite family. She was betrayed by the men responsible for her care and struggled for her right to belong to a loving God. The word that comes to my mind about Tamar is *loyalty*.

Rahab also grew up in a pagan society. The details of how she became a prostitute are vague, but the stories of the Israelite God were well known throughout the surrounding areas. Because of her determination to know this God and her perseverance in accomplishing her goal, God blessed her by protecting her and her family from the destruction of the city in which she lived. She was a woman with a past to whom God gave a future.

Ruth was a Moabite woman who married into an Israelite family that fled their homeland because of a famine. She became attached to her mother-in-law Naomi, who taught her about the true God. After a time both Naomi and Ruth became widows. Ruth showed great love and loyalty when she refused to leave her mother-in-law when Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem. They endured many hardships but because Ruth gave up everything, expecting nothing, God honored her by including her as one of the

women in Christ's lineage.

Bathsheba was a woman born into an Israelite family and raised in the knowledge and understanding of the true God. Her family was part of King David's elite advisers and her husband was an officer in the king's army. The story of David and Bathsheba is well known. After being summoned by the king and having an adulterous relationship with him, she became pregnant. Rivers insightfully portrays the emotions and trials Bathsheba must have gone through and how she maintained her faith and trust in God. She was a woman who endured.

Mary is the story of a teenage girl who had a vision from God telling her she was to become pregnant through the Holy Spirit and the child she was to carry was the promised Messiah. Her response was, "May it be as you have said."

Throughout her life Mary believed with all her heart Jesus was the Son of God, but she struggled with emotional issues, including ridicule, criticism and even isolation from her own family. It must have been difficult for her to watch her son suffer and die as he did, yet she never doubted God was fulfilling his plan to do what he had promised. Mary trusted and responded in simple obedience to God to be part of what all eternity had been waiting for.

This was my second reading of this inspiring book. It challenged me to study more into the biblical accounts of these women. It also gave me a new understanding of how God's love is not limited but unconditional and how he chooses seemingly insignificant people to fulfill his purpose.

(*Lineage of Grace* was originally published as five separate books: *Unveiled*, *Unashamed*, *Unshaken*, *Unspoken*, *Unafraid*.)



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