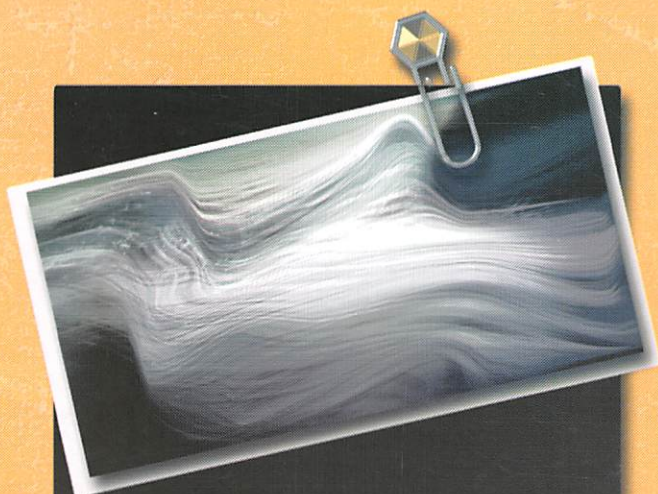




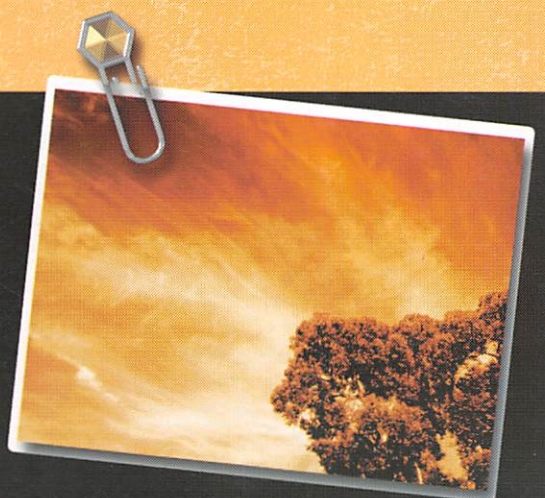
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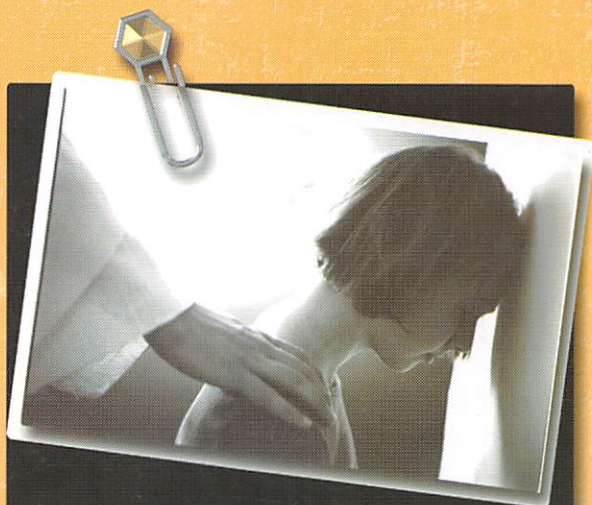
"but the Lord was not in the wind"



"but the Lord was not in the earthquake"



"but the Lord was not in the fire"



"... and after ... came a gentle whisper"

I Heard God Today

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From the Editor's Desk:

Many years ago someone said to me in a nasty tone, "You think you have a personal line with God don't you?" To be truthful I was so taken aback at the time, I could not answer, however I remember thinking "but I have and so can you if you would only desire it!" How we would all love to hear His voice, to see Him, to know in our innermost hearts that He is God and that in spite of all the troubles and trials we face and will face, we can simply look to Him and know without doubt, that He can handle it. Oh the bliss and peace and joy we would feel! It is our prayer that as you read, you too will be able to see with us, that without a doubt—this is not just a pipe dream, but is truly a reality for all those who seek Him with all their hearts and desire to please Him in their lives. Of course to hear Him, He must first hear from us, so our daily challenge is to learn to talk to Him about everything. The cakes we are cooking, our children's disobedience or problems; learning to say thank you for all we have and can do—no matter how small. Our husbands' lives and our own, be they little or big in laughter or sadness, whether we are alone or have company—truly our Lord wants and waits to hear from us in all these things. It is only then that the Bible guarantees that we too can say "I Heard God Today!"

This issue we have great pleasure in introducing three new writers.



Priscilla Gaston is the wife of Barry and they have three children and 6 grandchildren. However God has also given them 26 grandchildren to share with others, not by birth, but by grace. She has a deep abiding faith in the Lord and delights to worship and serve Him in any way she can. Her fields have been as a SS teacher for 10 years, not only teaching RE, but also working as a co-ordinator, a MOPS carer and working on Christian Radio as a speaker and sometimes called upon to speak at women's fellowships. God has used her greatly to come alongside women, couples and the elderly encouraging them and mentoring where necessary. Priscilla loves to write, arrange flowers, loves animals, crocheting, cluewords (crosswords) and reading. She delights in old style preserving, sunsets and God's creation.



Glenda Rosser has come from a family of faith, the youngest of 7 girls. So giving her life to Christ at age 7 was not surprising. She is married and assists her husband in his Church Pastor's role. They have three children and 11 grandchildren. Glenda and Allan were trained at QBI, from there they soon moved into Missionary work with the Aborigines Inland Mission. She is a freelance writer and although legally blind, her books, articles and poems have gone world wide. God has blessed her with the ability to comfort the grieving and in this she is supported by her large family who are all very close in heart.



Also joining our team is **Barbara Wilson**. Barbara was a missionary nurse with international radio station HCJB in Ecuador, South America for 12 years, working in the main hospital as well as at the one on the edge of the eastern jungle. She also spent time nursing with the Shuar Indians deeper in the eastern jungle, and several months as a community nurse working out from the transmitter site at Pifo. She served for some of that time as Director of Nurses in their two hospitals (not simultaneously)! Increasing spinal problems eventually forced her to leave the high altitude of Ecuador and return to Australia where she became Dean of Students at the Bible College of Victoria for the next twenty years. In 1996 she married Dr. Cliff Wilson and these last ten years have been a real blessing as they have served together in Christian ministry by radio or by sharing in Bible teaching. She has been on several archaeological digs in Israel during these years, the latest being in June 2005 sharing in digging at the newly discovered Pool of Siloam. Cliff and Barbara have written several books together, have ministered in other countries as God opened doors and they both enjoy their growing family of great grandchildren—19 at the moment!

We wish to welcome these ladies to the team and ask that you add them to your list of prayers with all our other writers. If you wish to have a prayer cell in your area for "The Heart of a Woman Inc.", please contact us for further details.

Yours in Christ Jesus
Wendy Davie

Jesus Shows The Way

- ☞ There are some who believe in evolution and therefore there is no God!
- ☞ There are some who believe that there is a God and He created all things, but now is too busy to deal with the everyday trials we face, so He stepped back from His creation and lets it all go in its own way!
- ☞ There are some who believe in God and believe that He wants to save us and have even asked Him into their lives, yet they still continue to live their lives as if nothing had changed!
- ☞ There are some who believe that our Almighty God created us, redeems us, and is very much concerned with our daily lives. He longs to hear from us, and He longs to direct our paths!

Which category do you fall into?

How can we know what the perfect order should be if we do not believe the truth in the first place?

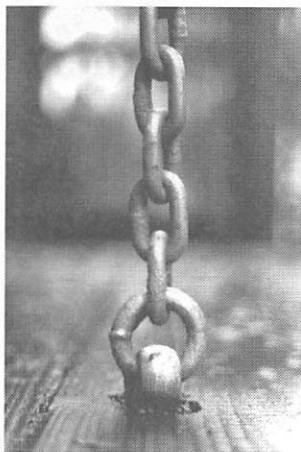
One thing I know, no matter which of these positions we align ourselves with, when death nears our door, or fear unspeakable assails us, we all tend to call out to God—for deep down we know there is no one else we can turn to.

Therefore moving forward from the presupposition that there is a God who created us and that He cares about our everyday lives, how can we know what is expected of us? The only safe and sound place to begin is with the Word of God. It tells us that there was a first Adam, that he started off as very good, however because of a personal choice to disobey, he lost the ability to talk and walk with Almighty God and both he and Eve (for his wife also sinned when she was deceived), were removed from the beautiful Garden of Eden. It then tells us that the ability to sin — and the desire to do so — has been passed down from generation to generation and that not one of us can honestly say our lives are holy and pure before God.

We have all heard of the Ten Commandments, many of us had to learn them in our younger years. Let's think over them—can any of us say we have obeyed? Remember God's Word also says that if we fail in one then we will fail in all. As for me—I am fully aware that I cannot even get past the first one which is ***"I am the Lord thy God...thou shalt have no other gods before me."***¹

The beauty of the Word of God is that it does not leave us there in a lost position, without hope, no peace, no joy and condemned both by physical and spiritual death with the

judgement of God's wrath, being all that we can look forward to. One theme throughout the whole of both the Old and New Testaments is that one day a Saviour would come. He would be Holy and Pure, He would be the Son of God, and He would take our punishment in order that we would be freed from the chains of sin and death. He is described at one point as the second Adam and when we compare both the first and the second it reveals to us how wonderful it is to have as our goal — "To hear God Today".



We are told in Hebrews 1:2-3, that Jesus Christ is the exact representation of who God is; He is not just a reflection of Him, but He is God. 1 John 4:2-3 explains that if we do not believe this and that He came in the flesh, then we do not have the Spirit of God in us. We know He was a man, that He was the son of Mary. We are told she was a virgin and that the Spirit of God touched her womb and she became pregnant. Therefore Jesus was all of man, yet all of God. He had all the frailties of living in the flesh, yet He had all the power of God. This hits us with a thud when we read the simple words of Hebrews 4:15 (NASB): ***"For we do not have a high***

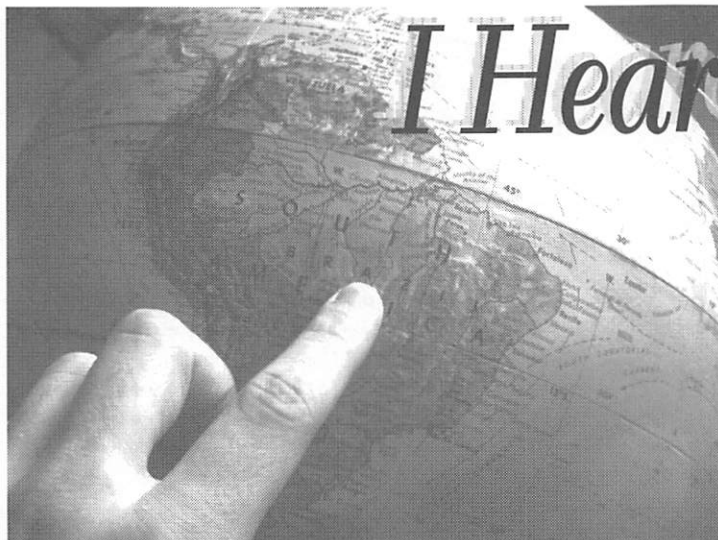
priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin". The amazing thing about this is that Jesus put aside some of His godly attributes. He did not remove them - He simply chose not to use them unless the Father told Him to do so.

Jesus Christ was tested by Satan and tempted in ways we can never imagine, yet in each and every one, He never sinned. Besides being all of God, how did He do it?—By constantly communing with the Father and by choosing to live a life of righteousness, obeying God's will in all things.

Yes, our goal is achievable—the example has been given. However it is only achievable as we strive to please the Almighty God even as His Son did. Then we too can say "I heard God today! In a melody sweet; through His Word and prayer; possibly by dreams, visions or miracles; certainly in a still small voice; through other people and our own conscience and even during the hardest of all — death and sorrows." For truly He delights to speak to our hearts, even as He did to the Son.

¹ Deuteronomy 5:6-7 (KJV)

By Ruth-Maree



I Heard God Today

What Does The Bible Teach About God Speaking To His Children?

"Ecuador! Is that what You're saying, Lord? Do You really mean that You want me to leave Australia, and my family, and go to serve You in Ecuador?"

I had been listening to a missionary speaking of the medical needs in that small country that straddled the equator on the north-west coast of South America. As I listened and watched his film I had the very clear impression that that was where I was to spend my life of active service as a missionary nurse.

Was I Really Hearing The Voice of God?

Then the questions came thick and fast. It didn't seem possible that God could speak like that in our time. An Australian nurse working with American and Canadian nurses? Would they even accept me?—and then there was the whole question of financial support. Their method of support was new to Australia in those days—could God raise up a team who would pray regularly for me and give regularly towards my needed support?

These were the questions that came readily to mind. Doubts—was this God challenging my faith or was it the evil one seeking to turn me away from God's will? Did God still speak to His people today? Then came that special morning reading from the Bible:

"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."¹

That was God speaking to Abraham calling him to leave the northern town of Haran and to move south-west to Canaan. As I read those words it was just as if God was speaking them to me. It seemed so clear. Yes, I could trust God and leave Australia, my people and my family and go to this land that God had already shown me.

So it was that God spoke to me through His Word the Bible, and through that inner conviction of His Holy Spirit, impressing on my mind what I should do. The more I prayed about it the deeper was the assurance that this was the right direction for me.

I believe I heard God speak to me that morning and as I moved forward in the direction I believed He had told me; I found that He supplied all I needed financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Yes, there were times of very real difficulty and even danger while I worked in Ecuador, but there was also a great sense of God walking with me and being all I needed.

Firstly, we must be in a relationship with God. We must know Him and be in tune with Him. The Bible shows us very clearly that God so loved the world that He sent the Lord Jesus to this earth. Born as a babe in Bethlehem, He grew up in Nazareth, taught God's ways to all who would listen, and healed the sick. The more we spend time in speaking to God and listening to Him the more we understand Who He is and how He works in the world. The more time we spend in prayer and searching God's Word, the sooner we will sense God saying, "This is the way I want you to go". Or He may say, "No. Stay put. Just continue as you are." Sometimes it's as if God simply says, "Not yet, the time is not right". He may even say, "No, that's not the best way for you".

As I began to think more about the possibility of hearing God speak today several incidents recorded in the Bible came to mind. These showed how our unchanging God spoke in the past and continues to speak even today.

Right back in the Garden of Eden we hear God speaking to Adam and then to Eve.² The communication was very clear, very simple, and very relevant. God provided beautifully for them, and gave them directions for healthy, happy living. He showed how much He loved them. He provided a soul mate for Adam and food for each day.

God really did speak to Adam and Eve. The one requirement for them to continue in this rich relationship was to obey God and not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for as God told them, ***"When you eat it you will surely die"***. That was the very point where the evil one tempted Eve and then Adam. ***"Did God really say ..."***³

Through those early chapters of the Bible God spoke frequently and personally to those whom He chose to be His children. In spite of their human frailty, God is all-powerful and He will speak to those who humbly seek to live as He would have them live. I have frequently said, "If only God would speak as clearly today as He did to Abraham or to Joshua". Because of being so human, I frequently am unsure as to whether I am hearing God clearly—and I don't want to make a mistake, or disobey Him.

How Can I Tune In To God?

Our personal relationship with God must be one that is growing day by day. That happens as we read His Word the Bible, and understand the guidelines He has given there for daily life and relationships. Ephesians chapters 4, 5 and the first part of 6 have much to say about relationships. That is a long reading, but it very clearly shows us how God want us to be living day by day. We are to put off falsehood, and to speak truthfully to one another, to guard against anger that leads us to sin, to work and not to steal, and even to share with others what we receive. Our words are to build up people, not knock them down. In fact we are to live like Christ lived. Sexual immorality is to have no place in our thinking or actions. Rather, our words and deeds should reflect the wholeness that is within.

Our lifestyle should be summarised by doing to others what we would want them to do to us, and asking ourselves, "What would Jesus do here?" As we

(Continued on page 5)

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put these principles into action we are in a position for God to guide us further. He will never guide us in a way that cuts across any of the right principles He has written down in the Bible.

John 16:15 reminds us that the Holy Spirit will never leave God's children and He will guide us into truth. That's a great promise — and a very practical one for us to accept as a personal promise.

God's Peace Ruling In Our Hearts

I find the letters the Apostle Paul wrote to those early churches to be most helpful as I seek to grow as a Christian. He was writing to new Christians who had come out of a pagan way of life. Their values and their entire world had been turned upside down, and Paul gave them guidelines as to how they should live as Christians. We need to absorb those same principles in our own lives in 2006 — or in whatever year it is.

Philippians 4:7 says ***"and the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"***. The peace of God is quite a key in knowing if you have heard God speaking or not. If there is uncertainty, continue to wait and pray. Don't move forward until God's peace is very real to you. Re-evaluate where you are. Check and see if you have moved in the wrong direction. Where necessary, ask God for His forgiveness, and for His Holy Spirit to guide you into truth. That brings you back into a right relationship with God.

That Pillar Of Cloud

Another experience the children of Israel had as they were leaving Egypt and following God towards the Promised Land of Canaan, was for a pillar of cloud

to go before them by day and a pillar of fire by night. Wouldn't it be great to have such a physical experience? The people learned to move when the cloud moved, and to stay when it stayed. We may not have such a physical means of guidance today, but God is the same today. Psalm 48:14 reminds us that ***"This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end"***. His promise is that He will never leave us or forsake us. Yes, this is our God who guides us in the way of truth.⁴

I heard God today as I read in Mark 14 of the way Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane by one of His own disciples, Judas. What hurt that caused to Jesus, yet He pressed forward, knowing that He had come to earth to be betrayed and to die on a Cross shedding His blood so that I might know that my sins are forgiven and that I am a child of God.

I heard God speak today—not to tell me what I should do, but to tell me what He has already done. "Thank you, my Father. I renew my vow to live for you this day", was my response.

I wonder what your response is? Have you received Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord? Do you want the Holy Spirit to lead you into God's way of truth?

We have seen that God may speak from the Bible—He may also give us a deep sense within that this is what we should be doing. As we move forward in that direction, that conviction is either confirmed and the way opens for us, or the way may close and a real uneasiness come over us. This is the Holy Spirit, Who has promised to guide us into truth, now leading us in the right way. What a privilege is ours to listen to God, to hear Him speaking to us, and to serve Him!

¹ Genesis 12:1 ² Genesis 2:15-25 ³ Genesis 3:1

⁴ Hebrews 13:5B (NIV)



By
Barbara Wilson

THE NEW YEAR

As we step into a brand new year
We have no idea what awaits us there,
But is it not the same with a brand new day?
For we have no idea what will come our way.
Many long to know what the future holds,
To plan their days as the year unfolds;
But our God would have us without anxious care,
He wants us to trust him,
for He knows what's out there.
His strength is sufficient, whether stormy or fine,
And He'll help us and guide us,
one day at a time!

By Barbara Holmes

"My times are in Your Hands."

Psalms 31:15a (NKJV)

*"Casting all your care upon
Him, for He cares for you."*

1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV)





*I heard God today,
In the whispering trees,
His voice speaking tenderly.
Telling me of His wonderful love
Whispering these words to me.*

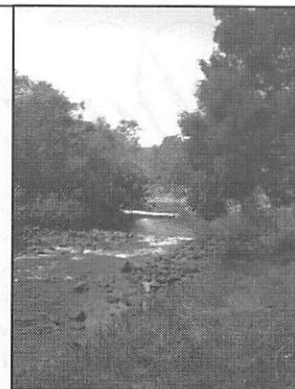
(Chorus)

*I love you; I love you,
I want you to know -
I'm with you; I'm with you
Wherever you go.
These are the words that I heard God say-
Beneath the trees,
Beside the stream, today.*

*I heard God today
In a melody sweet-
The sound of a bird in a tree.
Each little note, that poured from its throat,
Told of His love for me.*

(Chorus)

This hymn we think was sung by George Beverly-Shea from the Billy Graham Crusade many years ago. We did our best to get Copyright permission, but in the end can only thank God for the person/s He used to write and perform it.



He Touched Me

I love to be out whilst the dew is still on the beautiful flowers. "Thank you God for all your beauty, the colours and perfumes and sweet birds singing to greet the day."

God speaks to us in many places and ways, if we but take time to look and listen. We really do need to smell the roses—it is good for our souls. It gives us time to commune with God in the quiet and stillness of the early morning before the world starts to rush into the day and we take all His amazing creation for granted. I feel really blest to have felt close to God many times in our travels. He has used many varied tools for His displays. I have seen them in the sunrises, sunsets, raindrops, storm clouds, moonbeams, native trees and flowers. A ripe crop in the western fields, babies' faces, elderly people, children, grandchildren and the hug of a special little boy.

I saw it this morning on my walk. Right there in a suburban garden, standing tall amongst the usual flowers that you expect—out of place, but standing proud in colours of green through to pale yellow—not yet mature—not ready for

harvest, were two sorghum Milo plants! God spoke to me as I looked in awe at them. My mind ran on to think about the owners of the home. What was their history and were they maybe trying to hold on to a previous life on the land? "But then Lord I thought about us—we can be out-of-place here, but can stand tall and beautiful witnessing for you wherever we are. 'Bloom where you plant us'—'Brighten the corner where we are'. As we pray you do speak to us each day, helping us to keep our hearts in tune with you. To keep our eyes wide open and our ears peeled to hear your voice."

Our God is persistent, but not pushy. If you listen you may just hear Him during the day. Take the challenge — you have nothing to lose and a whole lot of blessing to gain.



By
Priscilla Gaston

David The Minstrel

David was born in 1040 BC and was the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem. He took care of his father's sheep and it was during this time that he learned to trust God and played his harp in constant worship. At this time Samuel the Prophet anointed him as the future king. He played harp for King Saul, killed Goliath placing him in the hearts of the people as a great warrior, and became a beloved friend of Jonathan, Saul's son. Saul became jealous of him and tried to kill him, this sent him into outlawry. He fled to the Philistine Gath and lived in the wilderness cave of Adullam. Many joined him there and in the meantime Saul continued his pursuit. However after Saul's death, David was declared king over Judah. During his reign he made Jerusalem his City and organized worship of the Living God. The majority of the Book of Psalms is made up of his songs or poems, which were written and sung throughout his entire life. He is proclaimed a man after God's own heart, in spite of his sins. The Psalms show the highs and lows of his life even to the point of expressing deep sorrow over his sin and repentance or determination to turn from them and to turn unto God to obey His will.



Praying Through David's Prayers

(Written at the WALGETT MISSION STATION 1982—1986 during our five years of missionary service with the Aborigines Inland Mission (now Australian Indigenous Ministries).)

LORD...Thank You that You will give strength to Your people; You will bless Your people (me) with peace. LORD...I will lift You up on high, because You have lifted me up. O LORD, MY GOD...I cried out to You, and You healed me (many times—and in every way.)

O LORD...You brought my soul up from the grave; (saved me from death). You have kept me alive, and You have delivered me from the pits of depression. Along with Your saints Lord, I will sing praises to You and will give thanks at the remembrance of Your holy Name. You have turned my mourning (sorrow—trials—depression—sickness)—every kind of mourning, into dancing (a dancing heart), and You have taken away my sorrows and my heavy heart, and clothed me with gladness, and given a spirit of praise. I will sing praises to You and not be silent, to the very end.

O LORD, MY GOD...I will give thanks to You forever!! LORD...You are my Rock and my fortress; therefore, for Your Name's sake lead me and guide me. (Thank You that You do!) For You are my strength, and into Your hand I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth, thank You.

LORD...I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, for You have considered my troubles...Oh how great is Your goodness, which You give those who fear You, and which You have prepared in abundance for those who trust in You. LORD...I bless You for You have shown me Your marvelous kindness in a strong city (the dangers of Walgett)! LORD...Along with Your saints, I love You, for You preserve the faithful...

LORD...I want to 'BE OF GOOD COURAGE AND I KNOW YOU WILL

STRENGTHEN MY HEART IF I HOPE IN YOU.' BUT LORD...So often I'm afraid! LORD...You are my hiding place. In my times of trouble I run and hide in You. You surround me with songs of deliverance. You have promised me that "YOU WILL INSTRUCT ME AND TEACH ME IN THE WAY THAT I SHOULD GO". LORD...Thank You for the many times You have. If Your eye had not guided me, I shudder to think where I may have been today. I will be glad to rejoice in You Lord, and along with the righteous I shout for joy. Lord, keep me upright in heart!

LORD...I want to rejoice in You along with the righteous, but sometimes it isn't easy. I know praise from the upright is beautiful. LORD...Teach me to re-a-l-l-y praise You! I will praise You with my harp, my organ and the other instruments You have given me the ability to play. I will make melody to You with these instruments. I will sing to You a new song (a song of gratitude) LORD...I can't play skillfully like David, but I can play with Your joy in my heart. For the word of the Lord is right, and all Your work is done in truth. You love righteousness and justice. Lord, the earth is full of Your goodness. My soul waits for You, Lord. You are my help and my shield. My heart shall rejoice in You, because I have trusted in Your holy Name. LORD...Let Your mercy be upon me (and Your servants everywhere) just as we hope in You.

LORD...I will bless You at all times. Your praises shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall boast about You. Everyone! Magnify the Lord with me, and let us praise His Name together.

LORD...I looked for You and found You. I'd called to You and You heard me, and delivered me from many of my fears (not quite all yet, Lord!). Lord I want to look to You and be radiant. For Your glorious Name, I want people to know I have been with Jesus. (I mean I want people to see that I have been with Jesus.) As I look to You LORD...I know I shall not be ashamed. This poor man (me) cried out to You, and You heard me, and saved me out of my troubles. Your angel Lord,

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encamps around me and those who fear You and delivers us.

LORD...I have tasted and seen that You are good; Thank You that we are blessed when we trust in You! Young lions may lack and suffer hunger; but if we seek the Lord we shall not lack anything. Your eyes are forever on us and Your ears are open (listening) to our cries. Thank You Lord, that when we cry out, You hear and deliver us out of all our troubles (not from them but out of them).

LORD...When I have a broken heart, You are near me, and You save us when we deeply sorrow for our wrong doings. LORD...The righteous may have many afflictions, but You deliver us out of them all. THANK YOU!

LORD...I will give thanks to You in Church, during my quiet times, and all day long and in the night hours when I can't sleep!! I will praise You when I am among people. You have pleasure in the prosperity of Your servants...LET THE LORD BE MAGNIFIED!! My tongue shall speak of You and praise You all the day long. How precious You are to me! And how precious is Your loving-kindness O God, therefore we put our trust under the shadow of Your wings. Thank You for being my eagle! Under Your wings, I'm safely abiding! With You is the fountain of life and in Your light I see light.

OH LORD...Continue Your loving-kindness to me and to those who know You, and Your righteousness to those of us who want to be upright in heart. LORD...I want to trust in You and do good. I want to dwell in Your land and feed on Your Word and Your faithfulness. I want to delight myself in You because I know that if I do these things, You will give me the desires of my heart!

LORD...Help me to commit my way to You, and to trust also in You, so You can bring all the desires of my heart to pass. THANK YOU LORD that You have many times!!

LORD...Thank You for reminding me that the little a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. I am so thankful Lord, that You order my steps and delight in my way and that though I may fall, You will make sure I will not be utterly cast down; for once again You uphold me with Your right hand. Truly, our salvation is from You, You are my strength in times of trouble. You help me every time and deliver me. You also deliver Your servants from the wicked and save them, because they trust in You. LORD...THANK YOU!



By
Glenda Rosser



Did you know that an eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks? The eagle will fly to some high spot and wait for the winds to come. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. While the storm rages below, the eagle is soaring above it. The eagle does not escape the storm. It simply uses the storm to lift it higher. It rises on the winds that bring the storm. When the storms of life come upon us (and all of us will experience them), we can rise above them by setting our minds and our belief toward God. The storms do not have to overcome us. We can allow God's power to lift us above them. God enables us to ride the winds of the storms that bring sickness, tragedy, failure and disappointment in our lives. We can soar above the storm. Remember, it is not the burdens of life that weigh us down, it is how we handle those burdens.

"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles."...Isaiah 40:31a (NIV)

I'm In His Hands

Have you ever woken one morning, to find the words of a certain hymn or chorus running around and around in your mind? It is quite possible that it is one you haven't even thought of for ages. This happened to me about three months ago. Out of the blue the chorus "I'm in His Hands" went around and around in my head for weeks. I couldn't figure out why. I tried to listen to other music, but still this chorus persisted.

It wasn't until I was called to Sydney to sit beside my daughter's bed after she had undergone surgery for breast cancer and that same chorus was on my mind, that I realised God was preparing and assuring myself and Debbie for the days that lay ahead. After she came home, that particular chorus left my mind and another filled its place. It is wonderful to know that God speaks to each of us in many different ways. (Maybe you have had a similar experience like mine - write and share with us.)

If you are unfamiliar with this chorus, the words are: -

"I'm in His Hands, I'm in His Hands;
Whate'er the future holds, I'm in His Hands.
The days I cannot see, have all been planned for me-
His way is best you see, I'm in HIS HANDS."

Written by Maureen Chamberlain in 2005

The Story of God's Love

Our God, Who is Eternal, had a very unique plan
To create the earth, the sky and sea,
the animals and man.

He worked six days, then had a rest,
and quickly understood

That all of His creation was so very, very good.
He made a lovely garden where His first young pair
could stay

And He'd visit them quite often as they
frolicked and they'd play.

But sadly, Satan came one day and showed Eve
how to sin.

Which meant they lost their garden and
were not allowed within.

But God still loved the creatures
that so wondrously

He'd made,

And as they multiplied and grew,
this loving did not fade.

He chose a man called Abram
who was

faithful and was true

'Cause he lived a life of
righteousness as God knew that
he would do.

His grandson Jacob then God
chose to head a special clan, To show God's loving
kindness was

for every single man.

He nurtured them through famine and through slavery's
harsh hand,

And He brought them safely through all trials to His
fertile Promised Land.

He gave them laws to live by, so they'd
not defile His Name,

And with sacrificial blood of beasts,
forgiveness they could claim.

But being mere mortals, very soon they sinned
and strayed,

And God, their own Creator, was so grieved
they'd disobeyed.

So He sent them into exile where they were
for many years,

But still He cared and loved them dearly and was
softened by their tears.

So He brought them back to Zion,
to rebuild their lives anew,

As well as His Own temple that He'd ordered them to
do.

Then once again God had a plan
to save these mortal men,

Isaiah was the prophet sent with messages to them;
That God would not forget them, He'd engraved them on
His Palms,

He'd go before, He'd go behind and He'd hold them in
His Arms.

He sent His Son, Lord Jesus, as a
Babe in Mary's care,

And when He grew, He travelled
much, with Good News everywhere;

That He would die and rise again,
and take our load of sin,

So we'd be pure enough for God,
if we believed in Him.

This gift of God to save our souls
shows pure unchanging love,

So we can go and live with Him
in Blessed Heaven above.

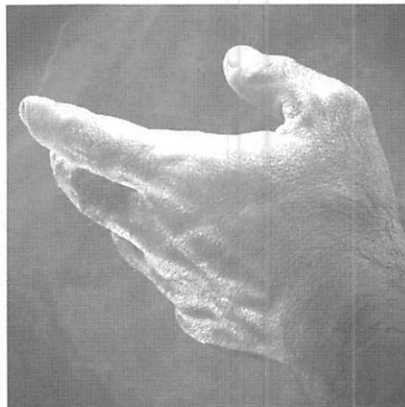
And we're to share this Gospel News
with those who do not know,

So all the folk in all the lands are saved
down here below.

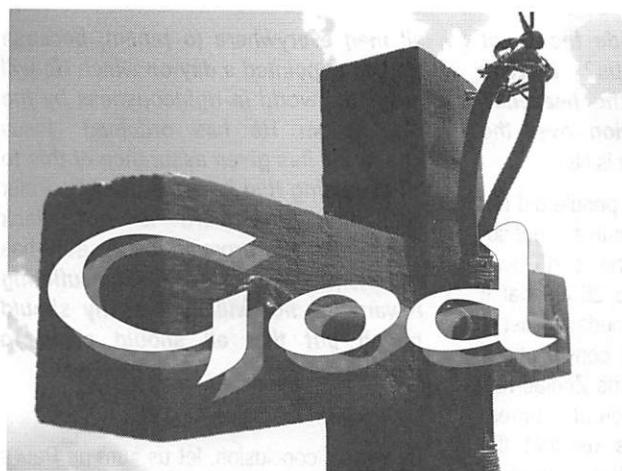
And each can live with confidence and
patient trust as well;

That God's loving, caring, guarding,
will all their fears dispel.

So in the end God's Glory will be seen by every man
Who'll sing praises to our Mighty God for His most
successful plan.



By Pam Templeman



Has Made Himself Known

"What may be known of God is evident among them, for God has shown it to them..."

Romans 1:19 (NKJV)

How can finite human beings know an infinite God? This is only possible if that infinite God reveals Himself to the human race in a way that they can understand—and that is exactly what God has done. He has revealed Himself and His divine attributes in three different forms:

- ◇ In a general way through the things He has created (nature),
- ◇ In a specific way through His written Word, the Scriptures,
- ◇ And as the Living Word in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, God spoke with the man and woman in person. But sin entered this perfect union and the privilege of intimate communication was lost. What remained was a reflection of the divine Creator in what He had made. But God did not desert the people He had created. He spoke to them repeatedly through the prophets, and in His sovereignty directed the writing of Scripture, saying exactly what He wanted them to know. **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the person of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."**¹ Paul's letter to the Romans is a wonderful example, providing us with a large amount of systematically presented theological insights.

Paul had only one mission in life after meeting Jesus as God and Saviour on the

road to Damascus—to preach the gospel of Christ. The word 'gospel' simply means 'good news', and Paul understood very well just how precious that news was. He was a man who had been highly educated, a man of great intellect, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and someone who was proud of his heritage and achievements. But when he came face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ, he realised that all of his achievements were totally worthless compared to the good news he had been given to broadcast. Why? Because this news was able to save souls—and still does!

Paul explains this good news in his first letter to the Corinthian church: **"...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures [Old Testament prophetic writings], and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas [Peter], then by the twelve [apostles]. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time"**.² Christ's resurrection had more than 500 witnesses, and most of them were still alive at the time of Paul's writing (around AD 56). What an awesome amount of eyewitnesses! Old Testament law required only three testimonies to settle a case, and here we have more than 500! Any court, even today, would declare this matter settled.

But people would say, "So what? Why is the death and resurrection of this man called 'good news'?" Paul answers these questions in the first 3 chapters of his letter to the Romans. He explains why all men (Jews and non-Jews alike) are guilty before God, that Christ died for their sins because of God's great love for mankind, and that every person who believes this good news is forgiven and set free from the penalty of eternal separation from God. They are set free by God's grace, not because of any works they may have done. But before this

news can be perceived as being good, people must first be confronted with the inescapable truth of bad news, i.e. that they are sinners.

When reading Romans Chapters 1 to 3, one feels like being in a courtroom and hearing the judge hand down his GUILTY verdict on all of mankind—both Jews and non-Jews alike. In chapter 1 he first deals with the non-Jews called Gentiles and pronounces them guilty. Why? Because they knew God in the beginning, but then became unthankful and followed their own desires. They began worshipping images such as man, birds, four-footed beasts and creeping things, and exchanged the glory of the eternal and incorruptible God for images from their own corruptible realm. Nonetheless, God's invisible attributes have always been observable since the world began, because His eternal power and divine nature are revealed through the things He has made, so that His creatures can see and understand that there is a God.

And what is the result of this wilful turning away from God? He gave them up. What an awful sentence. Mankind was left to their own devices. They perceived their rebellion as gaining freedom, but in reality they became slaves to unrighteousness and evoked God's wrath. They followed the evil lusts of their hearts, and their minds became debased. They dishonoured their bodies with same-sex partners, and their hearts were filled with all sorts of **"unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness [greed], maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and evil-mindedness"**.³ Therefore they became **"backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful"**.⁴ And worse still, they not only practised these things themselves, but also approved of and applauded others who did likewise, despite the knowledge that God's righteous judgement on these things is death. What a sad story! Abandoning God despite their knowledge of Him resulted in God abandoning them instead. Because of this,

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

their foolish minds were darkened, and idolatry caused them to fall into self-indulgence and a host of sinful activities.

You may now ask how God's divinity can be understood by observing the world around us, and the answer is simple. Genesis 1:26 states that mankind is made in the image and likeness of God, and we too design our own creations and appreciate their beauty. The Sydney Harbour Bridge did not emerge from chaos; it was the result of careful planning and consideration of aesthetics. The difference is that it takes us great effort to do such little things, while God has the power to speak the universe into existence, and He makes no mistakes! In fact, the more closely we look at the things and events of nature, the more obvious it becomes that they are the result of a perfect plan—and a plan requires a planner, a master designer, whom the Bible declares to be God.

Being made in His image, we can also appreciate the concept of beauty—the physical beauty of people (just think of our huge beauty industry!), and the beauty of nature. King Solomon, the wisest man on earth, once said that, **"God has made everything beautiful in its time"**.⁵ When we look at snow-capped mountains, the vast expanse of the Australian outback, the rolling sea, blue skies, or even a thunderstorm, we can see beauty in all of these things. Then there are magnificent trees, beautiful flowers and amazing animals. Considering these things around us, we would have to agree with King Solomon's observation of the beauty of nature, reminding us of a Creator Who also appreciates beauty.

Kind David pointed to another witness of God in nature—the star-studded sky. He announced that **"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament declares His handiwork"**.⁶ As the earth spins, it reveals an ever-changing view of the sky as constellations appear and disappear during the night and throughout the seasons. Furthermore, Psalm 147:4 and Isaiah 40:26 assert that God not only created the heavenly host, but that He named them as well and designated their movements in the universe. As far back as the time of the patriarchs, Job knew that **"By His Spirit He adorned the heavens,"** and God pointed out man's inability to control the universe when he questioned Job: **"Can you bind the cluster of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth [Lit. Constellations] in its**

season? Or can you guide the Great Bear [Arcturus] with its cubs? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?"⁷ The obvious answer is NO.

We tend to think that ancient people did not have much understanding, but this is not so. Job obviously knew that the earth was situated freely in space (Job 26:7), that it was circular (v10), and that clouds consist of water (v8). He also knew the constellations by name, which shows that the Zodiac has been known from ancient times. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that the heavenly host are there for the purpose of signs. At the very beginning of mankind's history, God promised a deliverer in a veiled prophecy: **"And I will put enmity between you [the serpent = Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed [Jesus Christ]; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."**⁸ Satan (symbolised by the serpent) would be opposed by the woman's Seed (the promised deliverer, Jesus Christ), Who would bruise the serpent's head and destroy him, but not without being afflicted by Satan temporarily. This hope of future deliverance is as old as mankind. Not only do the mythologies of ancient tribes bear witness to it in distorted form, but also God has purposely placed a witness to His promise in the heavens.

Most people today see the Zodiac as star signs determining the character and fate of human beings. This is one of humanity's many perversions, drawing attention to self rather than God. In reality, the Zodiac has a very different function—that of telling a story. In ancient times, Zodiac charts began the circle with Virgo (the woman and child) and ended it with Leo (the deliverer), which is exactly what God intended.¹⁰ The circle then tells the story of a coming deliverer that will conquer the power of Satan (by bruising his head) through His own suffering (Satan bruising by His heel). What an awesome story to be displayed in the sky as a witness to God's faithfulness.

God reveals Himself not only through the things He has created, but also through His guiding hand in history. When Paul speaks to the Athenians in Acts 17:24-31, he tells them that God had a purpose when he made every nation on earth from one blood, when He determined their preappointed times, and even established the borders of their habitation. God desired that people should see His hand in these things so that they would seek Him and find Him! Paul further explains that God **"now commands**

all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained [Jesus Christ]; He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."¹¹ Peter adds that **"the Lord is not slack concerning His promise [because He has not returned as yet], but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."**¹²

By way of conclusion, let us sum up Paul's arguments: God left rebellious humanity to its own devices, but He did not give them up entirely. He promised a deliverer and repeatedly called men and women to repentance through His prophets. Finally, He demonstrated His love toward them in that He gave His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for their sins—the godly for the ungodly, the just for the unjust—so that they may be pardoned if they believe the gospel. He wants them to know that **"He [every person] who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he [every person] who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him [or her]."**¹³ This is a fact, because **"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord"**.¹⁴ And what a wonderful privilege it is to receive this gift! Have you heard God's voice of invitation through someone telling you of this good news? Have you believed?

¹ 2 Timothy 3: 16-17; ² 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

³ Romans 1:29; ⁴ Romans 1:30-31

⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:11; ⁶ Psalm 19:1

⁷ Job 26:13; ⁸ Job 38:31-33

⁹ Genesis 3:15;

¹⁰ Kenneth C. Fleming, God's Voice in the Stars: Zodiac Signs and Bible Truth, Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, New Jersey, 1987 & Jonathan Gray, Sting of the Scorpion: The Truth Behind Star Signs, Swift Printing Services P/L, SA, Australia, 1997. Jonathan Gray, PO Box 3370, Rundle Mail, Adelaide, SA 5000

¹¹ Acts 17:30b-31; ¹² 2 Peter 3:9;

¹³ John 3:36; ¹⁴ Romans 6:23

(All references NKJV.)

By Margaret Lepke



Check your knowledge of the books of the Bible. In this following story there are 16 of them.



I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu: kept people looking so hard for facts...and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam. Especially since the names of the books were not capitalized.



But the truth finally struck home to numbers of our readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you.



Yes, there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of them, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better. See how well you can complete. Relax now, for there really are sixteen names of books of the Bible in these paragraphs.

See page 19 for the answers

RECIPES ... FOR THE SWEET TOOTH ...

APRICOT SLICE

Base:

1 packet Malt biscuits
1/4 cup Malted Milk Powder
1/2 cup Condensed Milk
60 gms melted Butter

Topping:

1 cup dried Apricots finely chopped
1 cup Sultanas
1-1/2 cups Shredded Coconut
1/2 cup Condensed Milk

Combine all ingredients together.
Spread over base.
Cover with foil and place in fridge overnight to set.

This slice is better when made the day before required and will keep for up to 2 weeks stored in airtight container in fridge.

CARAMEL HEDGEHOG SLICE

125 g Butter
250 g (1packet) Marie Biscuits
3 tablespoons Brown Sugar
1 tablespoon Golden Syrup
3 tablespoons Condensed Milk
1 teaspoon Vanilla Essence

Break biscuits into pieces (do not crush)
Put all other ingredients into saucepan and stir over low heat until sugar has dissolved.
Bring to boil and simmer for 1 minute.
Stir mixture constantly as it will burn easily.
Pour over broken biscuits and mix lightly.
Press into slice tray that has been lined with baking paper.
Allow to set in fridge.
When firm, cut into squares.

Have you got a favourite recipe to share?

Please post or email to us at the address on the back page.



Saved to Serve In Prayer

We have these dear friends. Actually the wife lived with us for a short time and it was then that the Lord really began to speak to her heart. Quite some years later she met her husband to be, and they both felt the Lord's guidance in going to "Cornerstone" for study of God's Word. They had been trying to have a baby for some time and eventually they began to pray, "Lord if you would give us a child, we pray that he or she might bring glory to you throughout the whole of life, we commit it to you." It didn't seem too long after that when she fell pregnant. Of course we were all very excited and praised God for answering their prayers.

As time went on a little girl was born. Two weeks later we had the privilege of visiting and she was immediately placed in my welcoming arms. As I cradled her in my arms and began quietly praying for her, the Lord seemed to begin speaking to me, but what was coming into my heart I neither wanted to hear nor could possibly believe. It shocked me so much I had to hand her back to her mother and for the rest of the visit I sat grieving in my soul, not wanting to let on that something was wrong.

Later when we got out into the car, I couldn't hold it back and immediately told my husband what happened. "I think God just told me that little Emma is not long for this world. I think He is going to take her home." I said, bursting into tears. He said, "Oh my goodness, you can't tell anyone that!" He was shocked and so was I.

At the end of two weeks she was due for her normal check-up, it was then that the doctor led by the Spirit of God (we have no idea now if he was a Christian or not), discovered that she had no pulse in the groin. This led to further tests, which told of the aorta not being wide enough to allow blood to flow as it should. She needed an operation, but they decided to hold off for another month. By the time it was to be done her little body was racked with the struggle to breathe. Of course they rang and kept me in touch and as soon as they knew what was wrong I set up a prayer chain reaching from Far North Queensland down to people in New South Wales and Victoria. Still I did not mention what God had spoken into my heart.

The specialists who did the operation told the parents that God must have been guiding them as the operation went smoother than they could have imagined. The parents had previously witnessed to them and at this stage they were not Christians.

After the operation and when all was clear, I felt the Lord's leading to confide in her grandmother, a personal friend of mine. Much later she told her daughter of how God had been directing Emma's path all along.

I felt such assurance of God's love and presence, but at the same time grieved saying to Him, "Father, how could You give me such assurance through the most awful grief of someone we love so much!" The only answer I received was peace. It is better now that they know.

Emma has grown into a beautiful young lady and has certainly blessed many people. She has a strong faith in God and in spite of the ups and downs of normal growing years, she is a teen to be proud of. She still has her regular tests, sometimes they do not look too good, then God steps in again and strengthens her up. Truly, her life and health brings daily glory to God. How He loves. How He heals. How He answers prayers, and how He calls us to serve in prayer.

Thank You, Father, for Your assurance and love.

I am withholding my name purely and simply that the Lord Himself might receive all the glory. Truly those who were involved in this all know of its truth. We love you all for sharing grief and pains with us and allowing us to fulfil our role, when we are "saved to serve in prayer".



For the next two weeks I found myself praying constantly for the parents, Emma and the doctors. I pleaded for healing for this little child, if that was in accordance with God's will. During the night I awoke often and found I had been praying even then, and simply continued as I woke.

"Our praying needs to be pressed and pursued with an energy that never tires, a persistency which will not be denied, and a courage which never fails." E.M. Bounds

Be Still My Child

Poem and music written 17th March, 1987 during a spell in bed once again. "Be still and know..." kept coming to me from different sources. Then when my dear son wrote off his car a couple of days later, and went into the depths of despair, I knew why the Lord had laid me aside and implanted these precious words in my heart once more. I still need these words in 2006.

By Glenda D Rosser



"Be still my child...Don't fret about today,
Today with all its cares and woes
Trust me—trust me for today.

"Be still my child, And rest in me today,
Be still and hear my word,
Be still...be still today.

"Be still my child, Be still though trials remain,
Be still—be still, my child,
Be still—let my peace reign.

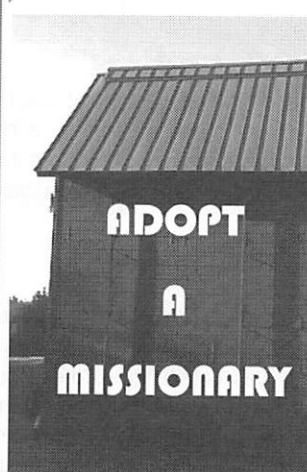
"Be still my child, And know that I am God,
Be still—be still, my child,
Remember the path I trod."

Lord, in my times of great unrest,
When I need your peace to fill,
Help me, dear Lord, to hear you say;
"Be still my child, be still!"

You Prayed For Me

*You did not know my need,
Or that my heart was sore indeed,
Or that my fears I could not quell;
But you sensed that something wasn't well,
And so you prayed for me.
My path had turned from light to black,
There seemed to be no turning back,
Then in my loneliness I felt God near,
And down the road a light dawned clear
Because you prayed for me.
And as your prayer to heaven soared,
God did on me a blessing pour;
The day you prayed for me.*

Unknown Writer



PLEASE HELP!!

The Heart of a Woman is sent to a number of missionaries and we know many more could benefit. This is where you come in! Would you and/or your family Adopt-a-Missionary? Adopt-a-Missionary is a \$20 annual investment. This covers the annual printing and postage costs for *The Heart of a Woman* to be sent to a missionary overseas.

If you would like to support *'The Heart of a Woman Inc.'* in this way please complete your details on the tear-off section on page 20.

MISSIONARIES ARE WAITING!!

How Valid Are Dreams, Visions & Miracles For Today?

"Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Father God it is my prayer that just as You have led my thoughts and studies, so You will also lead those who read. Protect us all from quenching the Spirit through fear, but Father protect us also from neglecting to hold firmly to Your Word, which is the only truth we can be assured of. If we have a tendency Lord to neglect Your truth and base our belief systems on our experiences or emotions, then Father bring us back to the foot of the cross and Your truth. In Jesus Christ's Precious Name"

Amen

"For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour (9 AM) of the day. But this is that which was spoken through the prophet, Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy; And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come; And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'" (Acts 2:15-21 KJV)

All Christians, no matter what their basic belief system, seem to turn to these verses to either prove or disprove their belief system. Therefore it is imperative that we are able to seek the Lord's guidance when reading it.

Note that Peter refers to Joel the prophet and says that through the Lord's inspiration Joel says "In the last days". What was happening to these people on the Day of Pentecost, Peter explains, was to happen in the last days. Therefore the last days had already begun. They began from the moment Christ Jesus ascended into Heaven. These Jews were living when these days began. We have had a tendency to refer to the here and now as the last days, but I believe we have fallen short of the truth in doing so. (In much the same way that we are made perfect when we are saved, we are being made perfect in Christ Jesus day by day and will be perfected when either raptured or through death we go to be with the Lord.) So also the last days have divisions of time. On the Day of Pentecost the last days began and certain gifts were given to the

believers. In this section we are dealing with only three of these gifts: Dreams, Visions and Miracles.

In Australia we are very comfortable in our Christian lives. Some of us suffer a little with the taunts of unbelievers, but we certainly do not suffer persecution as do others in many other countries. My husband and I have just had the privilege of reading a book called "The Heavenly Man" written by Brother Yun with the assistance of Paul Hattaway. It is the testimony of Brother Yun and other Christians in China and the persecution they lived through was well and truly overshadowed by the way the Lord spoke to them in dreams, visions and miracles. To read this book is in fact like reading a modern-day book of Acts. Of course they did not have the Word of God on hand and needed to pray constantly that all their needs like this be met. At one stage Brother Yun who had been ill-treated and imprisoned for his faith, walked free from



the jail, whilst others looked on as if in a trance. We were reminded of Peter when the angel of the Lord told him to do the same. I am convinced that if we had to live as dependently upon the Lord as they did and as the early Christians did, then we too would be constantly praising God for the miracles He did for us.

What is a miracle? It is an extraordinary event unable to be explained in the terms of natural forces. It can't even be explained by some super-human cause. It constitutes a sign of some kind and will always implicate something much wider than the event itself. They are absolutely essential to our Christian faith. For example 'If Jesus Christ is not God come in the flesh, our faith is a silly myth. If He didn't rise from the grave, revealing Himself in a bodily form and leaving the grave empty, then as the Bible says we are still in our sins and of all men most miserable? The purpose of miracles is to reveal to us the power, glory and might of God and His Son Jesus Christ, but they are also for our teaching and encouragement, guidance and sometimes protection.

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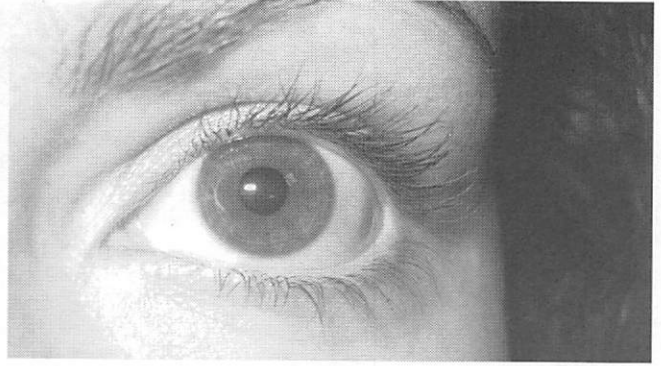
Therefore when dealing with miracles we should always ensure that we are not seeking our own selfish ambitions, but indeed the Lord's Will in all things. Remember He and He alone must receive all the glory.

Since the Canon of Scripture was completed, its availability to many within our culture, and the tendency of Christians to constantly fall short by walking independent upon the Holy Spirit, causes many to miss out on the joy of watching God work in miraculous ways in their lives. How thrilling it is to know His presence and to have our faith strengthened, when we pray and watch the many ways He answers our prayers. Ask missionaries if they have seen miracles, and they will all say "indeed we have".

Visions and Dreams also come into a similar category. Whilst visions are pictures that come to the mind, often whilst awake, dreams are sent to us at night, or whilst asleep. They too must give God glory and are sent for wisdom, teaching and guidance. Visions may seldom be heard of in our country, and some may listen to testimonies of them with fear and trepidation, however this does not make them any less valid. It is important that we seek the Lord's assurance that they are from Him.

Note the second time that "days" is mentioned. It is found in verse 18 and the terminology is "in those days". Now the time slot has changed. It is interesting to note that during the Old Testament God dealt mainly with the Jews (or Israel, as we know them), with the occasional Gentile receiving a blessing and being adopted into Israel, eg Ruth. Now though, we are in the time of Grace and during this time God is dealing mostly with the Gentiles, however there are still many Jews coming to salvation by faith, even as we do. In the verses leading up to verse 18 we find they cover this time of Grace.

The Tribulation is a seven-year time period, when God once again returns to dealing with the nation of Israel. Romans 11 tells us that the Jews were broken off temporarily because of unbelief. Therefore we should not be proud of where we are, because if God would break off the Jews for this reason, then we should fear for how much more severely He would deal with us. The wonder of it all is that He has adopted us into Christ by faith at all. Romans 11:25 explains that this change, (that is from Grace into the Tribulation), comes about when the full number of Gentiles has been brought into the Kingdom. When we return to Acts 2:18-21 we quickly discover



that this section of "days" will be the Tribulation time, the time when God is bringing Israel back unto Himself as a nation. It comes to a final time when **"that great and notable day of the Lord come"** (v20b) — it is His glorious appearing and final judgement.

It is therefore evident that as we grow in perfection, these gifts of dreams, visions and miracles will also increase. After the Rapture of the Church they will culminate during the Tribulation period. Yes, they are still as valid today as they were in the book of Acts, however our ability to abide in Christ will affect how much they may be visible in our lives. What then prevents the Holy Spirit working in our lives in this way?

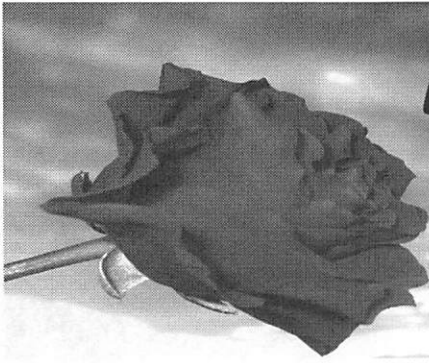
- ◇ Allowing unbelief to dwell in our hearts.
- ◇ Living in fear and therefore quenching the Spirit.
- ◇ Not living dependent upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- ◇ Living out our Christian lives on feelings instead of faith.
- ◇ Neglecting to abide in the True Vine (Christ).
- ◇ And allowing sin of any kind in our lives.

We must always remember that God is Almighty and that we are in a spiritual battle. It is a mistake for us to put our belief system of Him in such a tight box that we restrict His working within our lives. Surely when the Bible tells us that **"He is the same yesterday, today and forever"** (Hebrews 13:8)—we need to heed this truth. We are also told **"I am the Lord and I change not"** (Malachi 3:6a). Let us draw near unto Him with all our hearts and allow Him to work in us as He wills, but let us also test any dreams, visions and miracles also, in order that He and He alone receives all the glory and that we might grow daily in Christ Jesus who has redeemed us.



By
Wendy Davie

*"Many people quench the Spirit
by being down in the mouth rather than rejoicing,
by planning rather than praying,
by murmuring rather than giving thanks,
and by worrying instead of trusting Him Who is faithful."*



My Testimony of a Special Dream

For some reason I had been overwhelmed by a dreadful fear of demons. It had only been made worse by a dream of wicked faces flying towards me, they were so dreadful that I awoke trembling and too frightened to even move. At the time we lived in a caravan park and to get to the amenities we needed to walk through a grove of pine trees. I was so frightened to go there at night by myself, I asked my husband to come with me. Unfortunately I could not tell him what I was frightened of, as I felt he would think me silly, so he simply told me I had to do it on my own. "You have the Lord with you," he said. "Ask Him to keep you safe and sing hymns or choruses if necessary." Having grown up in the bush and never experiencing a fear of the dark himself, it just didn't make sense to him, and he maintained that there was nothing out there that could hurt me. So for six nights I did try to talk to the Lord and sing as I went, trembling all the way and forcing myself not to run. Each night as I neared the last tree, there were two white doves sitting on a branch quietly looking at me—and a peace would enter my soul and allow me the strength to return home. On the sixth night I had this dream.

"We apparently had no where to live, and so we asked my Aunt and Uncle if we could live in their now empty farm house. They agreed and we drove out there with all our furniture, however when we walked in the back door, all their furniture still remained. In fact, it looked exactly as it had throughout the years of our youth. I asked where we would put all our furniture as there just didn't seem room and Uncle told me there was plenty of room upstairs. I was surprised as they had never had an upstairs section before. However he told me that they had built it over the years.

Suddenly we found ourselves on a spiral staircase. I had no idea where it began and therefore pondered over whether it began between the two existing bedrooms. I could think of nowhere else where it could have begun; but on it we were. When we reached the top, to the right there was a huge beam, almost too big to climb over. Ewan and Uncle were on the other side of it already, whilst Auntie, the children and I began walking to the left. The floor seemed never ending and was like the waves of the sea. Some of the floor was made with canite (a very old soft building material, which has now been banned), and other sections were constructed of different strengths of flooring. When we finally reached the end the whole wall, except a door leading out into blackness, was filled with bookcases. The books were all Christian. I remember asking Auntie where she had got them, as I didn't think she liked to read this sort of literature. She told me that she had just gathered them over the years. Michael went to go out the door and although some of the Christian books were strewn on the floor leading out, something told me to stop him, that danger lurked. I remember grabbing him and telling him 'no' very firmly and then we headed back up towards the men. It seemed a long way and whilst we walked some strange woman fell through the floor and was left hanging by her arms and shoulders. I stopped and helped her back up into the safety of the open room with the wavy floor. Again as we walked I noticed to my right and above our level there was a beautiful bedroom. It was decked out with antique furniture and a lovely four poster bed. I recall thinking to myself, that is where I want to eventually end up, however to reach it I

knew we would need to climb over the big beam, go through some rooms there (which I thought would make good work rooms—I love to sew), mount some steps and walk along a verandah to the open door of the room. I began to climb over the beam and this same dreadful fear of demons came over me, I screamed out for help and Ewan placed his hand in mine and suddenly I was over it, as if by magic. It was then I woke up.

I knew I had to ask the Lord to tell me what it all meant, so I prayed "Lord if this dream was from you, please give me the interpretation?" I immediately slipped back into a deep sleep and the dream was replayed in my sleep. Only this time I heard the Lord saying to me.

- "You didn't know where the steps began, because I am the only one who really knows when a person begins to turn toward Me and their salvation journey starts. From birth to death My Spirit deals with each one."
- "The floor that was wavy and of different strengths is your Christian life. It is never smooth going and sometimes some will nearly fall through, but other Christians have the responsibility of lifting them up and strengthening them in the faith. For they cannot be lost!"
- "Christian books are available to the wicked one also, and he will use them to his advantage wherever possible. It is imperative that you always seek the Lord's wisdom and check what is written, comparing it with the Scriptures. That is why some lay on the floor leading out into outer darkness. It was wise to stop your son, as the door was not opening to hope and life, but to death and destruction."
- "The beam—well, there will be many of these in your Christian walk and each one you must climb over for victory. The hand was not your husband's but Mine. That is why you were over the beam so quickly. My hand and strength will always be there for you, all you need to do is call out in all earnestness."
- "The beautiful room you saw is your home in glory which I am already preparing for you. That is why you knew you wanted to end up there eventually."

The next day thinking over it, I remembered when I was only about 2 or 3, asking Mum where my skin came from and her telling me that God made it to keep all my organs safe—I believed from that time on and the experience was so vivid I have never forgotten it. Then when needing to go to the amenities that night (the 7th night), the fear had gone completely, peace now dwelt within and somehow I knew those beautiful doves would not be there. I looked, but only as an assurance and my heart sang with praise, for the Almighty cared enough about me—who was nothing—to remind me of His love, truths, hope in eternity and the strength to carry me through till then.

By Wendy Davie

"TODAY I SEE THE LORD!"

Written July 1987 while reflecting on Isaiah 6:1-8. During this time I was quite sick and conscious of the Lord's presence beside my bed and also in church. I felt so unworthy and turned away my head—yet I longed to reach out and embrace Him...

"I saw the Lord!" Isaiah said
"Lifted up on high,
And His train did fill the temple,
And seraphim drew near by.

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY -
The Lord of hosts is nigh!
The whole earth is full of His glory,"
The seraphim did cry.

Then said Isaiah, that great man of God,
As he listened to the seraphim sing,
"I am so unclean and unworthy -
For I have seen the King!"

A seraphim flew to Isaiah,
And touched his mouth with a live coal,
"Behold, your iniquity is taken away,
You're clean, you've been made whole."

Also, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord,
In the awesomeness of that hour,
"Whom shall I send, and who will go?
Who will go in My power?"

"Here am I Lord!" the prophet cried,
"I give myself to thee.
I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Here am I Lord, send me!"



And as I considered Isaiah,
And the vision he did see,
I remembered the times I thought to myself -
"Here am I Lord, - BUT DON'T SEND ME!"

Many years have passed since then, dear Lord,
And I'm so thankful to thee,
For lovingly teaching me to pray,
"Here am I, Lord, send me!"

Then - as I re-read the story,
Of Isaiah, and the vision he saw,
I was conscious of your presence, Lord,
And I loved you more and more.

For I too did see like a vision,
You - standing beside my bed,
And I felt so very unworthy,
That I turned away my head.

But 'twas as if you reached out and touched me,
And I felt so close to you,
You touched my very being,
And cleansed me through and through.

When you come again, dear Lord,
In clouds of silver cord,
I'll rise up to meet you and shout with my voice -
"TODAY I SEE THE LORD!!"

**"But we know that, when He shall appear
we shall be like Him..."**

1 John 3:2

By Glenda Rosser

Answers to quiz: (from page 13)

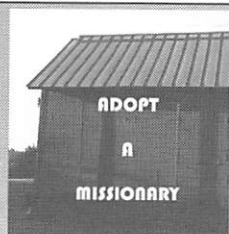
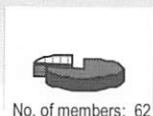
Mark ** Amos ** Luke ** Esther ** Acts ** Judges ** Revelation ** Titus ** James ** Lamentations ** Ruth ** Hebrews **
Numbers ** Peter ** Job ** Kings

PROJECT 200

'The Heart of a Woman Inc.' is a not-for-profit organisation, which is legally required to have members.

Our goal is to have 200 financial members (@ \$25 each per year) to cover the current postage costs (not printing).

PROGRESS UPDATE:



A \$20 annual investment covers the cost for
'The Heart of a Woman'
to be sent to a missionary overseas.

MISSIONARIES ARE WAITING!!

GIFTS

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Thank You

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A Little Girl's Miracle

A little girl went to her bedroom and pulled a glass jelly jar from its hiding place in the closet. She poured all the change out on the floor and counted it carefully. Three times, even. The total had to be exactly perfect. No chance here for mistakes. Carefully placing the coins back in the jar and twisting on the cap, she slipped out the back door and made her way six blocks to Rexall's Drug Store with

"We don't sell miracles here, little girl. I'm sorry but I can't help you," the pharmacist said, softening a little. "Listen, I have the money to pay for it. If it isn't enough, I will get the rest. Just tell me how much it costs."

The pharmacist's brother was a well dressed man. He stooped down and asked the little girl, "What kind of a miracle does your brother need?" "I don't know," Tess replied with her eyes welling up. "I just know he's really sick and Mummy says he needs an operation, but my Daddy can't pay for it, so I want to use my money."

"How much do you have?" asked the man from Chicago. "One dollar and eleven cents," Tess answered barely audible. "And it's all the money I have, but I can get some more if I need to."

"Well, what a coincidence," smiled the man. "A dollar and eleven cents—the exact price of a miracle for little brothers." He took her money in one hand and with the other hand he grasped her mitten and said, "Take me to where you live. I want to see your brother and meet your parents. Let's see if I have the kind of miracle you need."

That well dressed man was Dr. Carlton Armstrong, a surgeon, specializing in neurosurgery. The operation was completed without charge and it wasn't long before Andrew was home again and doing well. Mum and Dad were happily talking about the chain of events that had led them to this place.

"That surgery," her Mum whispered, "was a real miracle. I wonder how much it would have cost?" Tess smiled. She knew exactly how much a miracle cost...one dollar and eleven cents...plus the faith of a little child.

the big red Indian Chief sign above the door.

She waited patiently for the pharmacist to give her some attention, but he was too busy at this moment. Tess twisted her feet to make a scuffing noise. Nothing. She cleared her throat with the most disgusting sound she could muster. No good. Finally she took a quarter from her jar and banged it on the glass counter. That did it.

"And what do you want?" the pharmacist asked in an annoyed tone of voice. "I'm talking to my brother from Chicago whom I haven't seen in ages," he said while waiting for a reply to his question.

"Well, I want to talk to you about my brother," Tess answered back in the same annoyed tone. "He's really, really sick...and I want to buy a miracle."

"I beg your pardon?" said the pharmacist. "His name is Andrew and he has something bad growing inside his head and my Daddy says only a miracle can save him now. So how much does a miracle cost?"

A True Story sent in by Pam

✂

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A Tender Plant

A Personal Testimony
by Glenda Rosser

MIRACLES HAPPEN EVERY DAY...

IT HADN'T BEEN EASY FOR A LONG TIME, but 1987 had been an extra hard year. Our son had turned his back on our Christian upbringing and the tension in the home was at times unbearable for me. And—here it was two days before Mother's Day, 1988 and my one and only beloved son was about to leave home—at the tender age of 18 years.

I was doing my best not to "crack" up but I was grieving. I felt as if he was dying. Well—he was spiritually! It was Friday the 6th May and what made it worse was the fact that it was the time many years ago when two loved ones had died suddenly a couple of years apart.

Well, the next day Saturday, was a day I wouldn't like to go through again. In the midst of our sorrow over our son packing up all his gear to leave, our daughter's beloved guinea pig "Snowy" died and her tears and mine just flowed. "Snowy" had been a real friend to her—not just a dumb old white guinea pig!

As my son's things left the house one by one I wanted to voice out loud to him: "How can you do this to your mother?" I went to my room and shut the door. I didn't want to see his clothes get carried out. I longed for my son to hug me and thank me for being his Mum or something—or to say he was sorry for all the trouble he had caused—but at least I got a pat on the shoulder! I could see he was not in the mood for a "big bear hug" from me, so I constrained myself. It sure was hard. I patted his shoulder and said "Take care..." and then he was gone!

I couldn't believe this was happening to me. After all, weren't we Christians? And—hadn't we trained our son in the things of the Lord since he was a tiny child? I wondered why God was allowing our child to be a "prodigal". His lifestyle had become so different to the one he had known through the years. At times I found it so hard to forgive my son for some of the things he had done. I also found it hard to forgive myself and my husband for things we had done and said. I went on the usual "guilt" trip. "If only I'd done this. Or if only I'd not done that." Or "Why did so-and-so do that or why didn't they do this?" The

questions remained unanswered. Could I forgive my son for the hurt he had caused not only in the past year, but for years and years! I knew he was hurting, but so was I! The moments seemed to tick so slowly as I lay on my bed crying my heart out to the Lord:

*"Lord, it doesn't seem fair that this boy of mine has up and said 'goodbye',
And left the nest to do his own thing,
While I sit at home and cry!"*

I told the Lord how lonely my son was and that it didn't seem to make any difference to him when I told him I loved him. Even when I felt the least bit like it, I sought to assure him I loved him. But he didn't seem to take it in; he was in his own little 'teen' world. The teen years are certainly the 'hurting' years, when parents and teens hurt together!

Some days the forgiveness just wasn't there. The Lord had to deal with me over and over again. I expected God to forgive me, what right did I have to not want to forgive my son? I cried again:

*"Lord, he's going it alone, in this cruel world,
His mind is in a whirl,
Oh, Lord, I'm sad and sick at heart—
Please bless my boy I pray,
And heal my hurt just now, dear Lord,
for TOMORROW'S MOTHER'S DAY!"*

All I could think of was—"What a wonderful (shocking) Mother's Day present!

On the Saturday I had to be the "funny" lady as it were and recite a silly poem "Rinderella" for a Mother and daughter night at the church. But, this night was ONE night when I didn't want to be any "funny" lady! I felt as if I was going through "the valley of the shadow" all over again.

But I went and was greatly encouraged by the singing of a solo about "Happiness and tears" and another one on "I forgive.." (I sure needed that!) The pieces were just for me. I may have failed my son in some ways, but the Lord would forgive me and with God's help I would be able to forgive my son for my hurting...and when my son returned to the Father, he would be forgiven by Him.

At the end of the evening I was given a text as a thank you gift for my part in the Mother/Daughter night. ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me..."***¹ I could go through this separation...I could forgive—the Lord would help me!

I had been counselling a lady during the previous week and gave her some verses to encourage her and they ended up being just what I needed myself. ***"I know thy sorrows...and now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest..."*** And ***"He gives beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning and a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness..."***² And my spirit was sure heavy!

Before I went to sleep I wanted to ask the Lord to do something special for me tomorrow for Mother's day, to encourage me amid my heartache. But, I thought, 'Oh Lord, I couldn't! You are always doing something special for me.'

I had a wonderful sleep that night (something I have rarely been able to do over the years). I felt as if the Lord put a deep sleep on me for I was so emotionally exhausted. When I woke the next morning on Mother's Day, the Lord ministered to me with choruses, hymns, poems and Scripture and I couldn't praise Him enough.

Unbeknown to me, this Mother's day was going to be "extra" special. There was a knock at the front door. My husband and daughter were preoccupied so I had no choice but to open the door. I was still in

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 21)

my nightie and my hair was everywhere. I opened the door and there was my son: "HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY MUM!" He pulled the most beautiful bunch of flowers from behind his back and then handed me a lovely blue dried arrangement to "remember him by!" I threw my arms around his neck and kissed and kissed him. And he kissed and hugged me too.

I cried with happiness. I could hardly believe my eyes at what was happening. I felt like pinching myself to see if I was dreaming! It appeared to me that the relationship between myself and my son was okay deep down. And I felt as if the Lord was saying to me: "All will be well my child..." And I could say in my heart "I forgive you son!"

Truly, there was "Happiness amidst tears" as the song had said the night before. And a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness as one of the verses had said. And—the Lord had done something very special for me—just as I had wanted to ask Him to do for this Mother's Day. My joy was FULL...

I went to church on Mother's Day and someone sang "I've found a friend in Jesus..." I said AMEN! to that. The hymns were: "Be still my soul" and the other ones and the readings fitted in perfectly with my need. MY heart cry for my son was that of the reading from Proverbs chapter 3:

"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days and long life and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all

thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths."³ The Lord encouraged me over and over again with verses like: ***"Lo I am with you always..."***⁴

Two days later as I went into what had been our son's room. I looked around at the emptiness—it seemed all wrong. I talked to the Lord and poured out my heart to Him. I looked at the plants my son had left behind for me to look after—beautiful—growing so healthy and tall. (His plants thrived on rock music—I played hymns to mine and they died!!) - Well, it seemed like that sometimes. All of a sudden I heard the still small voice of my Lord with the following verses: ***"...He shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground..."***⁵ ***"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season..."***⁶ You can imagine how encouraged I was. I felt kind of "all patched up!" The Lord had healed my hurting... The Lord has miraculously spared my son from numerous accidents—some could have been fatal...I thank and praise my Heavenly Father for keeping His hand on my boy. I often whisper to my Lord: "Please care for my 'tender plant!'"

I still shed tears over my boy. I have had to learn that "God is sovereign" no matter what happens. Even if my son doesn't return to the Father as the prodigal son did—God doeth all things well. I felt like Abraham laying Isaac on the altar.

But God gave Isaac back to Abraham, so I reminded the Lord of this. I felt the Lord owed me my son because we had trained him in the things of God. The Lord seemed to say to me: "My child, what if I don't give him back? What if he never returns to me?

What if he should die outside of me? What then? Will you still love me?"

I cried and cried for what seemed like hours, till in utter exhaustion I laid my son before my Lord and Master. Having been ill the major part of my life, I have often longed to go to be with my Lord. I spent some time asking the Lord

whether it was wrong to want to be with Him? When I fell asleep that night I had a dream. In the dream, the Lord gave me three chances to go to heaven. Every time I ran back to my husband and clung to him. After the third time I said through my tears: "I can't go to be with the Lord yet, I can't go until I see my son returns to His Heavenly Father!"

And I am standing on the promises the Lord gave me and I am trusting my Lord to bring my son back, and that he will be a man for God, and of Him nothing lack!

My son settled down considerably. He married and had two beautiful-looking children.

MOTHER'S DAY 1993

TO MY MUM...

I have a few things I would like to say to you—that is from the heart. When I was at school I used to envy my other friends' mums because they were not as big as you were, able to run around like they could, were not in bed when they got home from school, or when they left for school.

But Mum you were always there for me, giving me help and encouragement with everything I've done and loved me heaps. That's a lot more than any of them ever got. I love you for that. Mum, you cook the best meals, and you're my ideal mum now.

I'm sorry I haven't followed in your footsteps, and I hope you can forgive me for that. It must really upset and embarrass you in front of your friends and family. I'm glad you lived all these years so I could realise how much I love you and appreciate you, and appreciate what you've done for me. Remember it's the mum inside you that counts, more than anything.

I love you Mum. It's your day—enjoy it!! Lots of love, Sonny Boy (my endearing term for him).

PPS—It is now 2006 and my son and I have a wonderful relationship. On Valentine's Day 2005, he called in just to say he loved me! I was over the moon with joy. He hasn't returned to the Father yet...but I believe, that in God's time, he will!

¹ Philipians 4:13

² Ruth 3:11a

³ Isaiah 61:3b

⁴ Proverbs 3:1-6

⁵ Matthew 28:20b

⁶ Isaiah. 53:2a

⁷ Psalm 1:3a (NKJV)



Moments With Melissa



"When God lays someone special on our hearts, we obviously need to pray for them. But if we can, we need to do even more. We need to call them or write them or visit them. Whatever God leads us to do, we need to be obedient. We must not only be hearers of the Word, but doers. When God brings someone to your mind, be sure to follow through with what He tells you to do in that person's life."

(The Way of Agape, by Nancy Missler)

When I read this statement, it touched me so much that I wrote it down in my journal, which I keep for writing down promises and discoveries God shows me in my quiet times. Little did I know at the time, that I would put this statement into practice the very next week!

The following week my neighbour kept coming to my mind. I started praying for her every day and at every moment I thought of her. She had just suffered the loss of her Step Dad and was not handling it well.

A few weeks later, on a Saturday morning, she came to mind constantly. I remembered the paragraph I had written in my journal and prayed about what I could do for her, since I had only spoken to her twice before and didn't know her all that well.

I thought of a few ideas of what I could do for her and decided to bake a batch of chocolate chip cookies. I asked her over for afternoon tea and we enjoyed getting to know each other a little better. Before she went home I gave her all the cookies!

On the following Monday afternoon she came over to ask me for afternoon tea that Wednesday. She had had a terrible day and was in no hurry to get home. I could see she was upset and wanted to talk.

After talking for a while about everyday things and listening to her tell me about her day, I heard the gentle whisper of God. It's not the first time God has

spoken to me, so I recognized His voice immediately. He told me to tell her that I pray for her! At this point my heart was beating fast and I started to get really nervous! I knew what I had to do, but could I really open my mouth and obey?

I prayed for God to give me courage and that He would speak through me, then I said it! At first she looked at me strangely and then she burst into tears! She came over and hugged me for ages. The whole time she was hugging me she was crying and telling me that no one has ever prayed for her before.

That afternoon she ended up spending three hours with me, telling me everything that had happened in her life so far. During that time, I prayed constantly for God's guidance and strength. Usually when someone cries, I cry too and turn into a complete mess! But the whole time she was there, telling me of all she had been through, I felt an unnatural calm. (It was wholly God because as soon as she left I cried for hours!)

The whole time she kept looking at me like a lost little girl. She couldn't believe that someone who didn't know her, prayed for her. At that moment, I can truly say that I saw her as God sees her—a lost soul that needed love and a Saviour. God filled me with His unconditional love for her.

Those three hours were wonderful, an experience I will never forget. We talked about God and I had the opportunity to tell her about my life and how God has helped me and been there for me. She has not yet made a decision to accept Christ as her Saviour, but I hope and pray she will soon. She has come to a couple of church functions with me which she enjoyed. She is very open to hearing about Jesus.

When I look back on this amazing experience, I can see God's hand in everything! It was Him preparing me and guiding me through it. Because I was obedient to God's Will, I was able, with God guiding me every step of the way, to open up a whole new level of friendship to my neighbour. New doors have been opened and I can talk to her freely about Him Who loves her so much!



By Melissa Walmsley

The Asian Tsunami ~

Boxing Day, 2004



"How can there be a God," I hear you say,
"When such dreadful things have come our way."
The earth wobbled on its axis on that momentous day;
Thousands died upon the beaches, or were swept away;
Thirty years ago in Darwin, Tracey blew the town away;
And many such calamities have happened in our day;
God speaks to us in many ways, if we have ears to hear,
'The Still Small Voice', or thunderous roar
which fills our hearts with fear,
So great and awesome is our God in fearful majesty,
Yet He's a strong and mighty tower if to Him we will flee.
For He alone, is our refuge and strength
when trouble comes our way;
Oh, may we seek Him in the good times
and trust Him come what may,
Then peace-surpassing understanding will sustain us
in the dark and fearful day.

Barbara Holmes (January, 2005)

MY OATH TO YOU

*When you are sad...I will dry your tears.
When you are scared...I will comfort your fears.
When you are worried...I will give you hope.
When you are confused...I will help you cope.
And when you are lost...And can't see the light—
I shall be your beacon...Shining ever so bright.
This is my oath...I pledge till the end.
Why you may ask?...Because you're my friend*

Signed: GOD

PROJECT 200

In past editions we have asked you to prayerfully consider becoming a member of 'The Heart of a Woman Inc.' We mentioned that 200 financial members (@ \$25 each per year) would cover the current postage costs (not printing).

This edition we are continuing **PROJECT 200** - to have 200 people become members. 'The Heart of a Woman Inc.' is an incorporated "not-for-profit" organisation, which is legally required to have members.

If you would like to support 'The Heart of a Woman Inc.' in this way, please complete your details on the tear-off section on page 20.

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WHISPER

I hear a soft whisper inside of my soul,
When nothing makes sense in a world—so cold,
Suppressed by confusion in this place of uncertainty,
Yet refreshed by His gift of heaven's eternity...

Too often I stumble hanging on by a finger,
"Reach out...hold my hand," I hear the soft whisper,
"I love you my child I've covered the cost",
"Redemption was paid that day on the cross"...

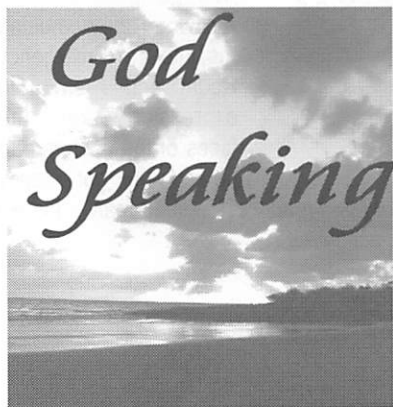
We live in a world with so many tears,
So many heartaches...so many fears,
But in His great wisdom He has everything planned,
So often I feel we just don't understand...

In times of confusion, frustration or dismay,
Turn to the Lord—He'll show you the way,
We only see parts of the picture He's painting,
And still He sits back—patiently waiting...

His lingering presence quenches my soul,
With a nail pierced hand for me to hold,
"Gather your wings and together we'll soar",
This whisper brings peace I cannot ignore...

I shall soar through the sky over mountains and plains,
I shall dive into the arms of the oceans waves,
I will kiss the horizon and sing with the birds,
He'll guide my way for these are His words...

Angela Schneider 2004



God speaks to me in many ways. The beauty of the sunrise and sunset, the smell of rain on the breeze, the cool dampness of the dew underfoot, the song of the birds, the full moon, a lizard on a rock, a cow ruminating in the paddock, a rippling stream. The imagery is endless! Look up and you see the blue sky, maybe a few fair-weather clouds or dark stormy ones. Look around and we see flowers, trees, and

butterflies. Look on the ground and we see ants, stones, grass, and creeks. All part of His wonderful creation! But what if we are blind? Then we have our other senses with which to appreciate it all. We can *hear* the birds singing, we *smell* the flowers, *feel* the warmth of the sun on our skin, we can *taste* the sweetness of an apple

God speaks to me personally and it is not always what I would like to hear. He speaks to me to correct me, to show me where I have gone wrong. It may be a critical attitude, a touch of impatience, and an unkind thought. It may be something I've left undone. Whatever it is, I lose my peace. It is hard to pray and everything is out of kilter. This situation lasts until I hear what He is saying to me and confess my sin. Joy and peace come flooding back. I rest on His promise that **"if I say that I am without sin, I deceive myself, but if I confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness"**.¹

He uses people, circumstances, His Word, to speak to my heart. His timing is perfect! It can be very humiliating. He allows awkward things to happen to me at seemingly inconvenient times. But it is all for my good. I am His

child, and He disciplines me as a loving Father to keep me on the right track.²

If I think I can make it on my own, I'm sadly mistaken. In fact, left to myself I would soon backslide. How dark and miserable life is without Him. It is He Who puts a song in my heart and a spring in my step. He is the source of all my joy, and hope, and peace. He lightens my eyes, easing the burden of life, allowing me to see beauty in little things going on around me. He makes me pause in the middle of the busyness of life to hear the soft call of a Butcherbird trying out his notes in the canopy above my head! He quietsens my heart and calms my spirit. He says, **"I am come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly"**.³ Everything I need for this little moment here on earth and in the life to come, is found in Him. He speaks words of encouragement and comfort, just when I need them most. He may speak through a friend, a stranger or through a Psalm of David. Who was it who said:

"David's harp had ne'er been strung,
had David's heart ne'er been rung?"

At the back of an old Bible, I've written a quotation from somewhere:

*"Occupation with self brings distress,
Occupation with others brings discouragement,
Occupation with Christ brings delight."*

Beneath it is a quotation from elsewhere:

*"Satan would have us occupied with self and with sin,
Christ would have us occupied with Him!"*

¹ 1 John 1:8-10

² Hebrews 12:7

³ John 10:10b (NKJ)

By Barbara Holmes

A Beautiful Story

Jerry is the manager of a restaurant in America. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would always reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

Many of the waiters at his restaurant quit their jobs when he changed jobs, so they could follow him around from restaurant to restaurant. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was because of his attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was always there, telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, "I don't get it! No one can be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, I have two choices today. I can choose to be in a good mood or I can choose to be in a bad mood. I always choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I always choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I always choose the positive side of life."

"But it's not always that easy," I protested.

"Yes, it is," Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. It's your choice how you live your life."

Several years later, I heard that Jerry accidentally did something you are never supposed to do in the restaurant business: he left the back door of his restaurant open one morning and was robbed by three armed men. While trying to open the safe his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found quickly and rushed to the hospital. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets

still in his body.

I saw Jerry about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Want to see my scars?" I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place.

"The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door," Jerry replied. "Then, after they shot me, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or choose to die. I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared?" I asked.

Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the Emergency Room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really

scared. In their eyes, I read 'He's a dead man.'. I knew I needed to take action.

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, there was a big nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything." "Yes", I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, "Bullets"! Over their laughter, I told them, "I am choosing to live. Please operate on me as if I am alive, not dead".

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day you have the choice to either enjoy your life or to hate it. The only thing that is truly yours—that no one can control or take from you—is your attitude, so if you can take care of that, everything else in life becomes much easier.

Author unknown



Folk inga www.sxc.hu

WORDS

Proverbs 25:11

By Doris A. Rulton

A Word—just a little Word
Yet think what it can do.
It can bring—Joy or Peace,
Or maybe Sadness—near to you.
A little Word has so much Power
To wound and hurt—or bless
It may fill us full of grief
Or bring much happiness.
So then we must be careful
To choose our Words with care
Don't speak in haste or anger,
Frustration or despair.
Try to follow all God says
Be guided by His Word,
A Word that's fitly spoken
Is one that should be heard.
So choose your Words with Godly
grace,
Let Jesus be your guide.
Show God's love in all you say,
And in God's grace abide.

My Testimony

For thirty-seven years on the Broad Way I had been,
But something deep inside me, which I did not understand
Unsettled me and called me to things as yet unseen.
I longed to find the way to walk as my Father God had planned,
I knew I was a sinner, yes that was plain to see,
But though I tried my best to change my thoughts and words and deeds,
I did not have the staying power.
I did not have the key.
My life was like a garden overcome with rampant weeds,
The more I tried to pull them up, the more they seemed to grow,
Until at last in deep distress, I doubted God above,
Where could He be of Whom 'twas said "All blessings flow?"
"It's a myth," the tempter cried, "There is no God of Love."
Was it by chance I saw one day in a quiet corner of a room—an open Book?
Perhaps the owner of that Book would know the Way I sought,
And so it was some Christians prayed around that open Book
That one lost sheep would find the Way and know without doubt
what God has wrought,
For that's the reason Jesus came, and why He had to die,
To save us from the power of sin, and keep us by His power.
Full twenty years have past since then and I can testify
That without Him I am lost—I cannot stand alone,
I must have my Saviour close to me, to know His saving power.

April 1996

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled Thee, and He suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

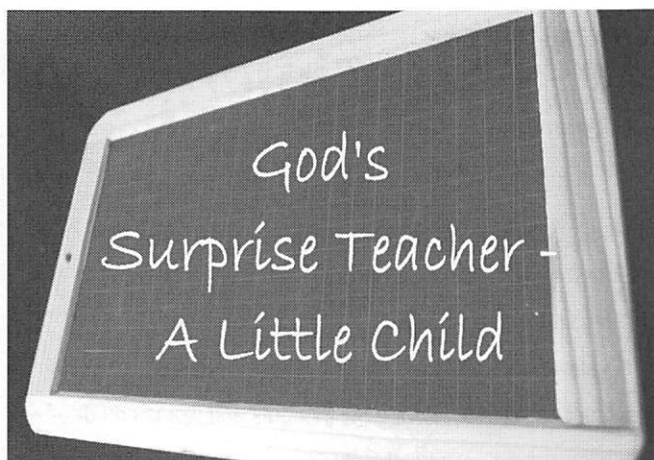
Deuteronomy 8:2-3

By Barbara Holmes

My dear friends, don't let public opinion influence how you live out our glorious, Christ-originated faith. If a man enters your church wearing an expensive suit, and a street person wearing rags comes in right after him, and you say to the man in the suit, "Sit here, sir: this is the best seat in the house!" and either ignore the street person or say, "Better sit here in the back row," haven't you segregated God's children and proved that you are judges who can't be trusted?" *James 2:1-4 (Message)*

"Therefore all things whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"... *Matthew 7:12a (KJV)*

..."Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." *Luke 10:27 (KJV)*



As she stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. But that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs. Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. And Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, marking bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his paper.

At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise. Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners...he is a joy to be around." His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle." His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken." Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class."

By now, Mrs. Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs. Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents.

Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day just long enough to say, "Mrs. Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mum used to".

After the children left she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, and writing, and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children.

Mrs. Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite her lie "that she would love all the children the same", Teddy became one of her "teacher's pets".

A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honours. He assured Mrs. Thompson that she was still the best and favourite teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favourite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer – the letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story doesn't end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he'd met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs. Thompson might agree to sit in the place at the wedding that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom.

Of course, Mrs. Thompson did.

And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. And she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.

They hugged each other, and Dr. Stoddard whispered in Mrs. Thompson's ear, "Thank you Mrs. Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference." Mrs. Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you."

Anonymous



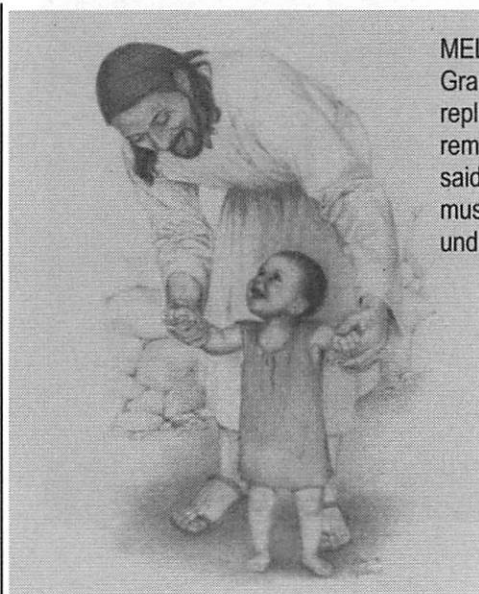


At the end of World War 2 a young associate pastor named Cliff and his fiancée Billie were anxious to be married, but had little money. They managed to scrape together enough for a simple wedding and two train tickets to a city where he had been invited to hold a revival with a friend. By combining with this they could make it a honeymoon and that way could afford it. They planned to stay at a nearby resort hotel. The couple got off the train and took a bus to

the resort only to find it had been taken over by the military for a rehabilitation centre. Stranded in an unfamiliar city they had only a few dollars. They decided to attempt to hitch a ride on a nearby highway. Soon a car pulled over, and the driver asked them where they wanted to go. "We don't know," they replied and explained their situation. The driver said he knew a woman a few miles away who had a grocery store with a couple of empty rooms upstairs and she may let them stay there cheaply. The woman rented them a room for \$5. There was a piano in the house, and the bride asked the woman if she could play it as practice for the assignment they had. The lady sat in a rocking chair listening to the music and when she realised they were Christians she referred them to a friend who invited them to stay at his home while they were in that city. Several days later the host told them there was a young evangelist speaking at a nearby Christian conference, and invited them to attend. That night the regular song leader was ill, and they asked could anyone help out. The man immediately said Cliff could do it, and so he was asked to take charge of the music. It was an historic occasion. The evangelist was a very young Billy Graham. The groom was Cliff Barrows. That evening a life-long friendship was formed and Cliff and his wife Billie have been members of the Billy Graham Association and have been used in thousands of Crusades around the world.

Thankyou Heather Driver for this piece of history.

*You may be only one person in the world,
but you may also be the world to one person.*



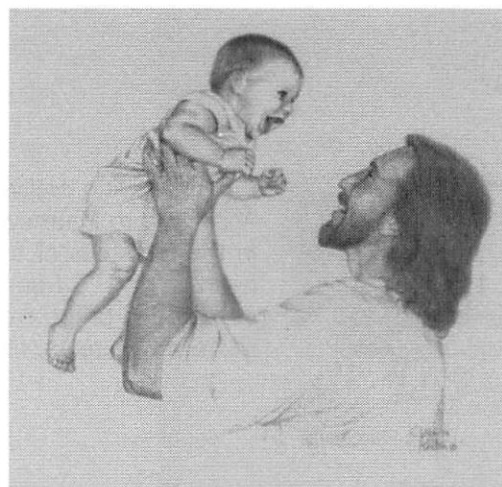
MELANIE (age 5) asked her Granny how old she was. Granny replied she was so old she didn't remember any more. Melanie said, "If you don't remember you must look in the back of your undies. Mine say five to six."

STEVEN (age 3) hugged and kissed his Mum goodnight. "I love you so much, that when you die I'm going to bury you outside my bedroom window."

SUSAN (age 4) was drinking juice when she got the hiccups. "Please don't give me this juice again," she said, "It makes my teeth cough."

MARC (age 4) was engrossed in a young couple that were hugging and kissing in a restaurant. Without taking his eyes off them, he asked his dad: "Why is he whispering in her mouth?"

JAMES (age 4) was listening to a Bible story. His dad read: "The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee out of the city but his wife looked back and was turned to salt". Concerned, James asked: "What happened to the flea?"



Jesus Laughing! When friends went to a seminary in Florida last March, they saw an artist paint huge works (the size of a door) in 30-45 mins. The artist prefers anonymity and says he wants the works to speak for themselves.

HANDY HINTS

TENNIS BALLS:

Store valuables. Make a two-inch slit along one seam of a tennis ball, then place valuables inside.

Make parking cars in garage easier. Hang a tennis ball on a string from the garage ceiling so it will hit the windshield at the spot where you should stop your car.

Give yourself a foot massage. Roll your foot over a tennis ball.

Remove cobwebs from unreachable places. Wrap a tennis ball inside a dust cloth secured with a few rubber bands and toss at the distant cobweb.

Keep your car door open without wasting the battery. Wedge a tennis ball into the doorjamb to depress the interior light switch.

*"That is the best—to laugh with someone
because you think the same things are funny."* Gloria Vanderbilt

Book Review

by Beryl Dick

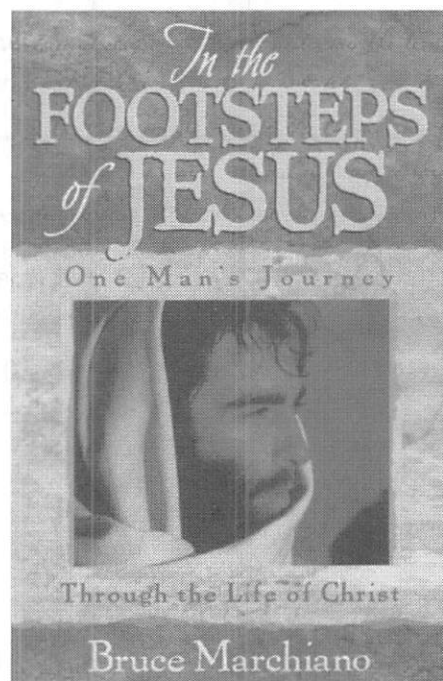
One man's journey through the life of Christ.

"Jesus' sweat...glistening on the brow...gentle eyes that look deep into your soul and inescapably breathe 'I love you' with every glance.

And a smile as big as the sun, beaming at you and you alone as if you're the only person on the planet..."

Jesus.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords.



Bruce Marchiano

When aspiring Hollywood actor Bruce Marchiano landed the role of Jesus in *The Gospel According to Matthew*, he could never have imagined the awe-inspiring experience of walking in the footsteps of the Saviour. Come with Bruce on an intensely personal journey into the heart of God - from the joy of healing a beloved child to the emotional isolation and physical devastation of the cross to the joyous reunion of the resurrection. The Jesus you discover will move you to tears, fill your heart with joyous victory, and astound you with His amazing love.

Harvest House (Publisher)

Price: \$17.95

Our Conscience ... Nature or Nurture?

The involvement of conscience in the affairs of men throughout history is enormous. Many men and women suffered for what they considered to be right, rather than taking the easy way out. They fought for justice and sought to help the oppressed. They stood against what they considered to be wrong and influenced the laws of their land, some even giving their lives. Then there is each one of us, don't we expect our brothers and sisters in Christ to have a conscience when dealing with one another? After all, we are supposed to have the mind of Christ. Just imagine what the world would be like, if there was no such thing as a conscience! But then, what exactly is the conscience? Do all people have it, or only some? Is it a part of us from birth (nature), or is it acquired through our upbringing (nurture)? Why do some people have extremely sensitive consciences while others seem to have no conscience at all? These are interesting questions.

Psychologists vary in their theories regarding the concept of conscience. Allport¹ for example, wrote of a generic conscience that enhances one's life; Freud² paralleled it with his idea of superego (a source of morality and moral judgement); and Fromm³ distinguished between two different types of conscience: a fear-based, authoritarian infantile sense of right and wrong, and a more mature, rational, sensitive, humanistic one. But despite their differences, psychologists would agree that everyone is born with the capacity to develop a moral character, which influences our conscience, and which progressively takes on shape as our cognitive capacities develop from infancy to adulthood and beyond. This capacity, which enables us to make judgements based on values, develops as a result of interactions between our own desires to earn acceptance and avoid punishment, and the influence of socialising agents such as parents, peers and wider society.

The Bible gives a more definite explanation as to the origin of our conscience. At the very beginning of mankind's history, God gave Adam the following command: "... of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." ⁴ And Satan added "...God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁵ Adam and Eve may have believed that God wanted to deprive them of something good, that he wanted to withhold knowledge from them, but in reality His prohibition was meant for their protection. Why? Because once they knew both good and evil, they would not be able to abstain from doing evil. Contrary to what Satan had said, they would not be like God, because He alone is capable of doing good only and not evil. Jesus confirmed this by saying that "**No one is good but One, that is, God**". ⁶

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, their conscience was activated immediately: **"...the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings."** ⁷ Their conscience told them that they had done wrong, and they **"hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God"**. ⁸ Ever since then, mankind has been hiding from God. After all, who likes to have their wrongdoings exposed? It's so much easier to blame others, just as Eve blamed the serpent (Satan), and Adam blamed Eve and ultimately God by referring to **"the woman whom YOU gave to be with me"**. ⁹

Our conscience is therefore the inbuilt knowledge that some behaviour is good and other behaviour is evil. It is a God-given moral potential rooted in the image of God, which progressively unfolds as our cognitive capacities develop. We cannot escape the fact that we are moral beings, and the Bible is clear on this point: **"...when Gentiles, who do not have the [Jewish] law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my [Paul's] gospel."** ¹⁰

But here is an interesting phenomenon: although everyone has this faculty called conscience, the judgements determined by it can vary greatly. A native person might be honoured for being a head-hunter, but severely punished for something we would consider a small offence, or no offence at all. Another tribal person may be honoured for being utterly deceitful, but may be despised when being honest (I once saw a missionary documentary concerning such a tribe). This proves that all human beings distinguish between good and evil, but that their perception of what is good and what is evil can vary greatly. Even gangs and outlaws have a set of values and their own code of conduct.

Our conscience is therefore a moral capacity we are born with. It only develops into specific values and ideas as we grow up and are influenced by people and culture. This learning takes place as we socialise with persons that are important to us. We internalise their expectations (standards, ideals) and merge them with our own individual desires and innate moral consciousness, until we finally end up with our own perceptions of right and wrong. But these are

(Continued on page 32)

(Continued from page 31)

by no means fixed. If the impact of external factors is strong enough, and a person has the necessary internal motivation to change, their moral code can be adjusted.

Why is it that the shaping of our conscience is so dependent on our surroundings? Two strong motivators make us take in parental ideals and expectations from an early age: love and fear. We love and admire our parents (or some other significant person), and we fear their punishment or rejection if we fall short. But as we grow older, we will increasingly look to other sources for our values and tend to take on board the standards of our peers and broader society. We normally experience a good conscience when we do what we have learnt to be right, and a bad conscience when we have done something that is considered to be wrong.

Unfortunately, people can also develop a false bad conscience, which is unhealthy. Therapists are all too aware that angry, unloving and punitive environments are likely to foster emotions of false guilt. When people that are important to a child display unloving, punishment driven attitudes, the child takes these on board and merges them with its own inherent sense of moral justice. As a result, the child then develops inappropriate corrective attitudes and emotions. Severe false guilt feelings, for example, are often found in depressive and obsessive compulsive personalities. When child education focuses on loving disciplinary actions, on the other hand, it will produce a love-based set of corrective attitudes in the child and enable him or her to experience true guilt when he/she has done something to hurt another person. Problems of conscience are usually the result of developmental disturbances, as people fail to internalise acceptable standards, or as they repress their inherent moral nature and develop antisocial or sociopathic personality styles because of inappropriate values.

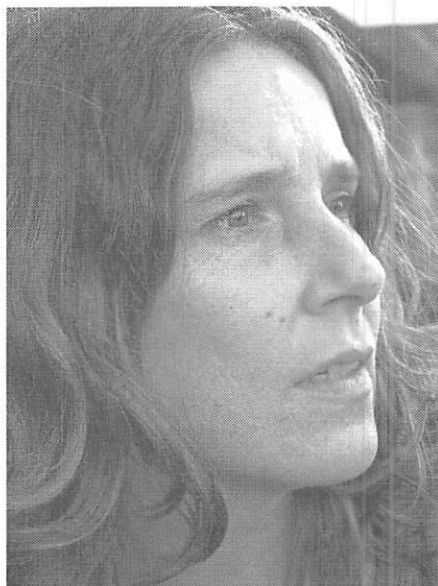
The attitudes of our conscience are therefore shaped by upbringing, education, and other external influences. Unfortunately, this also means that the media, advertising and associated peer pressure easily exploits children, teens, and even adults. How important it is to be selective in what we allow to enter our minds and affections, so that our conscience can be shaped according to Godly values instead of the values of secular society!

The Bible emphasises the upbringing of children. The Old Testament advises parents to teach them the Law of God in and through all of life's circumstances¹¹, and the New Testament entreats God's children not to be conformed to this world, but to be conformed instead to God's standards. This requires a renewing of the mind in accordance with Scripture¹² and a focus on those things that are true, noble, just, lovely and praiseworthy¹³. It is in following this advice, and by having their conscience directed by Him, that His children could prove what is that good and acceptable and

perfect will of God.

The Bible also teaches that the functions of conscience are to convict us of wrongdoing¹⁴ and to bear witness to our doing right¹⁵, thus guiding our behaviour. However, some people may have a weaker conscience than others due to a lack of understanding. We find an example of this where the eating of meat offered to idols is seen as unlawful by some, but not by others¹⁶. Paul understood that this is not a problem before God because idols have no power¹⁷, but he insisted that love would not force this understanding on another brother or sister to make them act against their own conscience, which would be sin.

But best of all, the Bible teaches that when we put our faith in Christ, our conscience is cleansed from (our own) dead works by His blood¹⁸, so that we can serve God in full assurance of faith with a CLEAR CONSCIENCE¹⁹. This is our positional standing before God when we are His children! He no longer sees us as a person who has done a whole lot of wrongs and needs to pay the penalty, but as a person who is NO LONGER GUILTY, because God's own Son has paid the penalty for us. And when we sin afterwards by doing something that offends our conscience, and we are not remorseful, God will lovingly chastise us with the aim of conforming us to the image of His Son.



And finally, we reach a conclusion: We cannot escape the fact that God has placed in our hearts the capacity to differentiate between good and evil. Every one of us is born with this moral nature, our conscience, which makes us choose between right and wrong. It is that inner voice telling us what we should or should not be doing. However, the content of our moral code is influenced by the world around us, and since we live in a sin-sick world, Godly standards are not the norm. Let us be thankful, therefore, that as God's children we can look to Jesus for our values and feed on God's Word.

Let us fine-tune our consciences so that we will be better able to honour Him in all that we do.

¹ Allport, G (1955), *Becoming: Basic considerations for a psychology of personality*, Yale University Press, New Haven;

² Freud, S (1923), *The ego and the id*, Hogarth Press, London;

³ Fromm, E (1947), *Man for himself*, Rinehart, New York;

⁴ Genesis 2:17; ⁵ Genesis 3:5; ⁶ Matthew 19:17; ⁷ Genesis 3:7;

⁸ Genesis 3:8; ⁹ Genesis 3:12-13, (emphasis mine);

¹⁰ Romans 2:14-15; ¹¹ Deuteronomy 11:18-21; ¹² Romans 12:1-2;

¹³ Philippians 4:8; ⁴ John 8:9; ¹⁵ Romans 9:1; ¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 8:7-12;

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; ¹⁸ Hebrews 9:14; ¹⁹ Hebrews 10:22.

All references are in the NKJV.



Hope & Hope Again

I opened the screen door, rubbed my eyes and thought another day—what will it bring? I found myself saying to the Lord “please not so many challenges and struggles—I am tired!” How can we go on? As I looked out to the east there were a few big puffy cloud formations, they looked very dull and ordinary to me just then and didn’t seem to offer me any joy or beauty at all. Then it happened, I saw His amazing beauty, His creation such that only He could make—right there before me. Lined with gold and shining in all its glory. God said to me, “Listen my child, what a difference I can make! Your life could be like that grey cloud or if you keep trusting Me and keep your eyes on Me, you will hear my Words and your life will shine with My light and love. You are My child and I care! Hope, hope again.” Thank you Lord.

“To get a touch from the Lord is so real

To get a touch from the Lord is so real.

If you draw nigh to Him

He will draw nigh to you,

To get a touch from the Lord is so real

Hallelujah, hallelujah

Jesus is coming, is coming again

Hallelujah, hallelujah

Jesus is coming again.”

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By Priscilla Gaston

He Took My Fear of Death

Numbers of years ago, I found myself in dreadful pain. Actually the pain had been increasing for days and it seemed to be in the lower back. As it increased, the ability to walk, stand and sit also became a little harder. We were in the midst of preparing a display for the local branch of the “Queensland Cake Decorators’ Association” and as was normal for me I was putting my heart and soul into what I was doing. When we stood back and looked at the finished display, I felt myself relax and tension ease. The trouble was that I had been holding myself together in order to complete a job, so that when that job was finished and I went to bed that night, nature took its course and I awoke at 2am sitting on the side of the bed whilst screaming with pain. My husband gave me painkillers and I went back to sleep, however at 6am when I woke I could not sit or stand and the screaming continued. The ambulance came, drugged me to get me out of our flat and to hospital and within two days I found myself being flown to Brisbane for an emergency operation. Apparently I was in intensive care for nearly a week, however for the first few days I was *non compos mentis*. The amazing thing was that in spite of not knowing who was around me or what treatment I was undergoing, I could hear sounds around me, which as an old nurse were very recognizable. I knew someone died, and I found myself talking to the Lord. The most beautiful thing is that I also found Him talking to me. I knew His presence and absolute peace filled my soul.

Prior to this incident I had always felt a little unsure when the thought of death came to my mind. Oh yes, I believed that God would take me home to be with Him - and that would be lovely; but it was the getting there

that always seemed to be a problem. I have watched many a person die, family included. Some definitely at peace; others torn with a torture within their souls. Then there has been the absolute beauty of watching those who already see the Lord and reach out to Him. Once I actually prayed, “Lord show me what you would like me to sing and any Scriptures you want me to read and Lord, please give him a vision of yourself, that he will not be afraid.” Then the man, who was a faithful Elder of our Church, began reaching up as I sang hymns and read Romans 8 to him. It stressed me to watch what I thought was a man in stress—and eventually I asked him if he wanted me to leave. He quietly nodded his head. A couple of days later his family asked me what I had said or done whilst there, when I told them—they expressed the change in him and wondered how I knew what hymns to sing and what verses to read. It was then that my faithless heart realised that the Lord of Glory had answered all my prayers. At the time I recalled, over my years of nursing, the many who did the same thing and then God spoke to my heart of the first Christian Martyr Stephen. He spoke of seeing the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. This offended his listeners to such a degree they stoned him, however even as the harshness of stones hit him and death neared, this godly man called out **“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”**¹ My prayer is that the wicked one will never again be able to place fear in my heart and the sweet memory of Jesus and I talking together will forever remain with me.

¹ Acts 7:60b (KJV)

By Wendy Davie

Words in the DARKNESS

He lay face down on the rotor bed, the sides of his face pressed heavily against the padded edges of the steel frame of the headpiece, extending out from the narrow mattress that finished at his shoulders. His eyes, nose and mouth protruded painfully through the small "window" frame as he gazed vacantly at the green vinyl floor four feet below him. His arms hung over the sides of the bed, with hands resting on either side of the cassette player sitting on the steel shelf below.

The wardsmen had put in the ear plug, covered his naked body with a sheet and left him for the two hour face-down turn that he and the twenty other young men around him dreaded so much. They moved on to his neighbour. The familiar agony began to resound through his head, held poker-still by relentless tongs consisting of two metal pins drilled into his skull on either side with weights running through a pulley holding his head in traction. His hair, unwashed and still matted with blood and cane trash, fell neglected over his once strong neck.

He tentatively moved the third finger on his right hand. The flickers were still there. At least that hadn't changed. He still was unused to having others tell him about his body, still surprised that it was doing things he knew nothing about. Prue, the physio worked his legs three times a day. Bill, the specialist physician, had informed him the muscles were "ossifying into bone". The thought made him shudder. Where would it end?

Today they had informed him he had elephantitis in his left leg. He knew that was true when he peered through the prismatic glasses that enabled him to see down his body, though his eyes could only look up at the ceiling for the four hour back turn. That was after Lindsay, the OT, had strapped velcro to his wrist, slipped a bent spoon in and guided his semi-lifeless arm to scoop vegies from the bowl on his belly. Through prismatic glasses he saw bowl and food, distant and impossible. They had laughed at the mess but both knew that underneath was a current whirling away all of "real-life" and leaving this struggle with a body no one yet knew, not even him... especially not him...a body with a will of its own.

He saw one of his Dad's hairs on the floor below. He had visited that day, willingly edged under the bed to lie below him so they could talk. He hated that they had to do this, but for those times he and family and friends had eye contact. Those who couldn't crawl under, conversed using the mirrors Trevor had so cleverly designed, resting on lacquered hinged handles, tilted at just the right angle so that his eyes could meet theirs as they sat on uncomfortable chairs beside him. He wished he could feel the smoothness of the curved handles as they rested on the floor a lifetime away.

He heard the movements of a top mattress sandwich going on and the big leather strap being hitched. He tensed waiting for what was to come. His neighbour screamed as the wardsmen spun him and anger seethed within him at their mocking laughter. He could see the young one's boots, strutting cowboy boots, tapping beside the bed. It horrified him that all of them, so helpless, were left at the mercy of these men who took delight in spinning them two or three times when it came time for the turn, relishing when some screamed in fear. The boots moved on to another part of the ward and he let out his breath. The night before, his neighbour had been punched again and again. No one came to his aid.

Here was the cruel underlining of their real state...total helplessness. Twenty-one seventeen to twenty-three year olds crowded into a sixteen bed

ward, in the prime of life in mind, but bodies cemented to bed frames, unable to move to defend self, let alone another. **"Vengeance is mine. I will repay. In due time their foot will slip."**¹ God's words to Moses broke into his mind and his tension eased. His twenty year old ego "back in real life" had arrogantly slipped over these words, accepting their truth but certain they would never be needed. Now, they took on new meaning.

The room darkened as another light went off. He concentrated on getting that flicker in the third finger to do its work. Strange how it gave him a sense of elation to be able to turn on the cassette player, he who had brandished cane knives with vigour through thick stools of lodged cane, racing against the harvester as it thundered its way beside him. The deep reassuring voice of the English evangelist began to speak.

Somehow the words sounding in his ear through the plug, made it more personal. The agony in his face faded as the soothing rhythm of words washed over him. He pictured the English rose beds the man spoke of, waiting for winter; saw the gardener bending over each rosebush, carefully pruning away the branches. He saw bushes, "naked and bare, exposed to the cold". The speaker's words hammered at his mind and it was him, not the rose stumps, naked and bare...exposed.

The changed voice tone refocused his attention "...but in the spring they shot forth a greater abundance of flowers". His mind swam with swirls of roses springing out in splendour on a background of green, and then sank in murky depths as the contrast hit him. Was there a spring for him? Bill had said not, not enough early movement there.

But the voice drew him again, **"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser"**.² The words came crystal clear, precise and his whole being was suddenly alert to them. They came from the speaker and yet God's presence was there. He knew it was God but he couldn't have explained how he knew. A flash-flood of feeling rose within him, unexpected, poignant, powerful. **"Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."**³

The words leapt in his mind, alive with meaning. He knew they were for him and hope prised through the blank layers of long ward days. Then, clear, precise and loud came a voice, not the voice of the speaker, another voice, close, within him, addressing him alone: **"This is what I am doing to you, my son. I am pruning you that you may bear more fruit."** And the tears came, not of pain, not of grief for muscled limbs now still, tears of joy that washed away the broken dreams and left instead a sense of being new.

He lay face down on the rotor bed, the sides of his face pressed heavily against the padded edges of the steel frame of the headpiece, extending out from the narrow mattress that finished at his shoulders. His arms hung over the sides of the bed as they had day after day, with hands resting on either side of the cassette player sitting on the steel shelf below. He knew the orderly would be back soon. He knew the rotor bed would spin and spin. But the camera angle had changed, the close-ups gone and in their place an eternal perspective, a Father lovingly holding His child.



By
Jane Cruickshank

¹Deuteronomy 32:35; ²John 15:1; ³John 15:2b

Knowing Who Is Calling

Last weekend we had an unusual phone call. The caller was someone we had not met. The line was terrible, we were communicating in Nepali, and I got myself seriously mixed up. The problem was that I didn't know I was mixed up until he told me their church baked bread every Saturday and I was most welcome to join in. Up till then I thought I was talking to a very mixed up office man from the courier company. But his request seemed so completely ridiculous that I had to rethink what I had heard, who I thought I was listening to. Embarrassingly, the Courier Company turned out to be South Korea. (That explained the raucous laughter in the back ground when I asked "Which Courier?") The caller was actually a missionary from South Korea working with some churches in Kathmandu. And the bread baking? He was kindly inviting us to attend their fellowship next time we were in the capital and remember our Saviour together. I apologised profusely, felt suitably humiliated and hung up the phone.

Listening is a lot harder than you think.

I don't know about you, but I often approach God's word wanting to hear a clear-cut personalised message from God. You know, something like "Go ye therefore and do this wonderful and marvellous task...". I imagine that my "calling" from God would entail something along those lines. Then I could happily say to everyone, "I'm sorry I can't do that today because I am preparing to fulfil the call God has given me".



One thing that makes this type of thinking easier is that a lot of the people we meet here in Nepal have had such clear-cut callings. Some people come out here because God has specifically called them to this country in this time. They can recount for you the exact time and place when God placed Nepal in their hearts and told them to "Go."

Our calling to be in Nepal was not as clear-cut. We believe that God is interested in the needs of the poor, so we applied to work cross-culturally. Nepal, it sometimes seems, is where we ended up. Although God has given us a heart for the nation and its people, compared to others around us, our "calling" can feel a little fuzzy...especially when we are seeking His will for the next step in the journey.

"Come on God, spell it out to me nice and clear like you do for so and so..." But the boom doesn't come. The words that jump out of the page are not the "Go ye" type. They are simple, plain, ordinary ones about loving my neighbour, or being salty, or seeking God's kingdom first of all. I think I would prefer the booming command. It would be much easier. It would be very clearly defined. I would know when I am supposed to be doing what God wants and when I can relax. I would be able to tick off each day how much closer I am to achieving my God-given goal.

But I didn't get the big boom. I keep getting verses like Micah 6:8, "**He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**" And this doesn't let me tick off the boxes so easily. I close my Bible and hope that tomorrow's reading will be clearer. But Micah 6:8 is pretty clear. Maybe I am not getting it because I am not really listening to the Speaker? Maybe I am just trying to hear what I want to hear?

What God desires from our lives is clear cut. It might not be delivered with an impressive boom in the middle of the night to us, but it was once. How comfortable do you think James was, writing to his friends and telling them how dangerous their tongues were? How comfortable were the initial hearers of Hosea's message? To be told that God wasn't impressed with their offerings would have been quite dramatic, especially by someone married to a prostitute! But relevance of such messages is the same today as it was then. God said, "**I**

desire mercy, not sacrifice".¹ Why? Because obedience draws us closer to Himself. And obedience cannot happen unless we are listening.

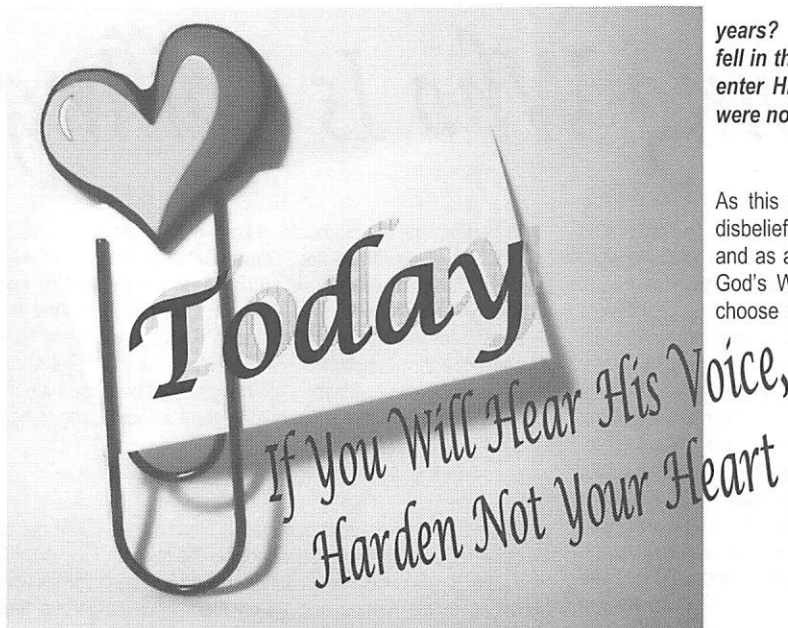
In the main dining room of my parents-in-law's home there is a large wooden beam hung on one of the walls. Chiselled into the timber are the words of Psalm 46:10, "**Be still, and know that I am God**". Being still is part of listening. Have you ever done that activity where

you have to practise listening to someone? You set a timer and for five minutes exactly your partner has to talk to you. You are not allowed to comment other than the occasional "uh-huh," or "mmm-hmm" until the five minutes are up. Those five minutes go for a very long time. But you are actually listening. You are watching the expressions of your partner, you hear the tone of voice, you hear the hesitation as they delve a little deeper than they would normally, and you feel what they feel. You are no longer just listening to a voice, you are listening to a person.

The rest of Psalm 46:10 goes on like this: "**I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth**". Our God is a Holy God. Every word from His mouth is truth. He is awesome far beyond our ability to explain. And it is this God, this powerful, mighty God that asks us, just for a moment, to be still. To stop for five minutes as we search His Word and listen to Him. So let us begin our obedience today and listen. Honestly, humbly listen, and in listening may we come to know our Caller even more.

¹ Hosea 6:6a

By Penny Reeves



**"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.."**

Psalm 95:7b,8a

This beautiful Psalm begins with it, a call to jubilant and enthusiastic worship. A call to worship the LORD and the Rock of our salvation (v1), the great God and the great King above all gods (v3), the LORD our Maker (v6) and our God (v7). The Psalm reminds us of two things; firstly that God is YAHWEH—Jehovah (the "I AM", the Uncaused One), that He saves, He is great—the greatest Sovereign Being, also that He made everything and that He is ours. The second great truth is contained in (v7) that **"we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care"**.

The psalmist then continues with a warning, our text from vs 7 & 8, **"Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts"** and follows with a very specific reference to an incident that occurred after the children of Israel had been rescued from Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land. The people were thirsty for water and started to quarrel with Moses asking, **"Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and our livestock die of thirst?"** In saying this they put the LORD to the test asking, **"Is the LORD among us or not?"**²

There was *division* among the people, *dissension* against Moses and *doubt* that the LORD would or could provide for their needs. They were testing the LORD instead of trusting Him. According to Warren Wiersbe, "Israel's real problem was unbelief and a desire to go back to the old life"³.

The writer to the Hebrews referring to this incident puts it this way, **"See to it brothers that none of you has a sinful unbelieving heart that turns away from the Living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called TODAY, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has first been said:**

**'Today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion.'**

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was He angry for forty

years? Was it not with those who sinned, with those whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter His rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief."⁴

As this passage reveals, sin in the form of rebellion, disobedience and disbelief characterized the thoughts and attitudes of the children of Israel and as a result their hearts were hardened by the lies that come from sin. God's Word is clear; if we hear His voice we have a choice. We can choose to submit or rebel, to obey or disobey, to believe or disbelieve.

One choice gives a soft heart able to be used by God. The other brings about a hard heart. (Refer also to Zechariah 7:8-12)

God's voice speaks to us in many ways every day. One of these ways is through His Word. The Spirit-inspired Scriptures are alive and active and able to teach, rebuke, correct and train us, changing our hearts and equipping us for useful service to God⁵. This can only happen if we read His Word humbly and expectantly, without hardening our hearts against its message.

God also speaks to our spirits directly by His Spirit; warning and convicting us when we are doing the wrong thing and helping us to know the right thing to do⁶. For example, He uses circumstances in our lives and conversations with others for His Spirit to speak to us. We could each recall times when we have been challenged and reminded of His will and way by things that happen or are said to us. We need to be ready and sensitive to hear His voice, quick to listen and obey!

The Lord has challenged me the past couple of weeks with the words of Psalm 19, which reminded me that He has provided another way to speak to everyone, including those who may not have a Bible to read or Christian friends to speak to. This way transcends all barriers. **"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."** God's wonderful creation shouts His praise and announces His glory! God speaks so eloquently that there is no excuse for not hearing His voice.

God wants us to listen to Him with a soft heart. The trouble is God's voice isn't always the voice we want to hear, especially if we are doing the wrong thing. It may mean a change in our thinking or actions that isn't palatable. If we are honest with ourselves, we don't always *want* to hear His voice!

Read Psalm 19 through to recall again the beauty and power of "God-speak" in our lives. If our hearts are right our response will be that of the writer David. He asks for forgiveness and cleansing as the LORD reveals both the wrong things he was doing that he didn't know about, as well as the wrong things he did wilfully and knowingly (v12, 13). David finishes his psalm with a poignant plea from an appropriately softened heart. **"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer"** (v 14).

As for us, as we begin another year let us each contract with the LORD to endeavour to keep our hearts soft, to be listening for His voice and to obey His call.

¹Exodus 17:3 ; ²Exodus 17:7; ³Ref: Warren W. Wiersbe, "With the Word", 1992, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

⁴Hebrews 3:12-19; ⁵2 Timothy 3:16; ⁶John 16:8,13;

⁷Psalm 19:1-4



By
Liz Lennox

LISTEN TO THE WHISPER OR WAIT FOR THE BRICK!

A young and successful executive was travelling down a neighbourhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and drove the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?"

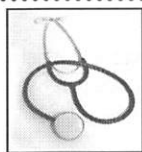
The young boy was apologetic. "Please mister...please, I'm sorry...I didn't know what else to do," he pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop..." With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out his fancy handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay. "Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger. Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the little boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home.

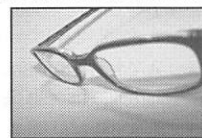
It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message: **"Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention! God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice: Listen to the whisper...or wait for the brick!"**

Anonymous.

Thanks Heather Driver for your contribution



Your Doctor's Insights



Many Causes For Hearing Loss

About one-third of people between age 65 and 74 and one-half of those age 85 and older have hearing problems. They may mistake words in a conversation, miss musical notes at a concert, or leave a ringing doorbell answered. Hearing problems can be small (missing certain sounds) or large (involving total deafness).

Many people don't like to admit they are having trouble hearing. But, if ignored or untreated, these problems can get worse. Older people who can't hear well may become depressed or withdraw from others to avoid the frustration or embarrassment of not understanding what is being said.

Some will become suspicious of relatives or friends and think they are mumbling, or not speaking up, on purpose. It's easy to think older people are confused, unresponsive, or uncooperative just because they don't hear well.

There are several causes of hearing loss:

Presbycusis (prez-bee-KU-sis) is the most common hearing problem in older people. Everyone over age 50 is likely to lose some of their hearing each year. Presbycusis is an ongoing loss of hearing linked to changes in the inner ear. People with this kind of hearing loss may have a hard time hearing what others are saying or may be unable to stand loud sounds. The decline is slow. Just as hair turns gray at different rates, presbycusis develops at different rates.

Tinnitus is also common in older people. Tinnitus is a symptom associated with a variety

of hearing diseases and disorders. People with tinnitus have a ringing, roaring, or hear other sounds inside the ears. It may be caused by earwax, an ear infection, the use of too much aspirin or certain antibiotics, or a nerve disorder. Often, the reason for the ringing cannot be found. Tinnitus can come and go. It may stop altogether.

Conductive hearing loss happens in some older people when the sounds that are carried from eardrums to the inner ear are blocked. Earwax, fluid in the middle ear, abnormal bone growth, or a middle ear infection can cause this loss.

Sensorineural hearing loss happens when there is damage to parts of the inner ear or auditory nerve. The degree of hearing loss can vary from person to person. Birth defects, head injury, tumours, illness, certain prescription drugs, poor blood circulation, high blood pressure, or stroke may cause sensorineural hearing loss.

If you have a hearing problem, you can get help. See your doctor. Special training, hearing aids, certain medicines, and surgery are some of the choices that can help people with hearing problems.

Hearing Aids

If you are having trouble hearing, the doctor may suggest using a hearing aid. This is a small device that you put in your ear to make sounds louder. Before buying a hearing, you should have a medical evaluation of your hearing problem.

There are many kinds of hearing aid. The choice will depend on your hearing level, ability to understand speech, comfort in using the controls, and concern for how it looks.

Be sure to buy a hearing aid that has only the features you need. The most costly product may not be the best one for you.

Your Doctor's Insights

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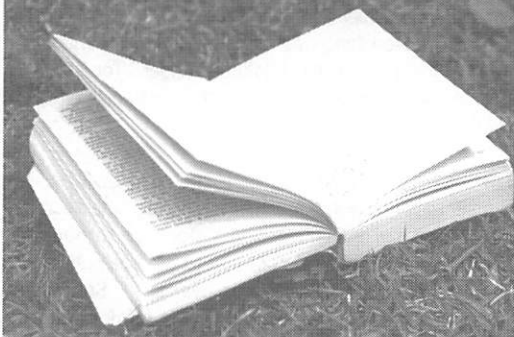
"Evans Street Surgery"

Inverell, NSW

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Unfortunately these Doctors will be unable to answer any questions, but if you feel after reading their items, that you need to seek medical attention, we suggest that you visit your own Practitioner.

Lessons From: Samuel



What is the picture in your mind when you think of Samuel from the Old Testament?

- * A young boy, deeply loved by his mother, given back to serve God at a young age under the prophet Eli?
- * A prophet who conveyed correctly God's Word to the Israelite nation?
- * A priest who anointed the handsome Saul to be king because the Israelite people demanded a king to be like the nations around them?
- * A priest who later anointed the young shepherd David to be the second king of Israel?

You will remember that 1 Samuel tells of the long prayed-for child of a previously barren mother, Hannah, who cried out to God for a child. In her heartache, she promised God that the child given her would be given unreservedly to Him (1:11). God answered her plea and Samuel was born (1:25).

Hannah kept her promise to God and brought Samuel to the temple to serve God (1:24-28) under the prophet Eli, a very old man.

Samuel was well regarded by the people and Eli, as well as being blessed by God (1:26). Each year when Samuel's parents visited the temple, Eli blessed them and asked that God replace Samuel with another child. This God did, with Hannah blessed five times (2:21).

In serving God, Eli may have neglected his sons' upbringing because 1 Samuel 2 tells of the bad reports he kept receiving about his sons' wicked behaviour, particularly in their role as priests. When he confronted them and told them they were sinning directly against God, they refused to listen because they were so far gone in their disobedience to God that it was God's will to put them to death (2:25).

What was young Samuel's first recollection of God speaking to him? 1 Samuel Chapter 3 describes this occasion to us.

Picture a young child, fast asleep in his bed.
"Samuel!" called the voice (3:4a).

The Bible tells us this was God's voice, but Samuel didn't recognize it so it seems God had not spoken directly to him until then.

He called out, "I heard you call. Here I am." And he quickly ran to Eli's bedside (3:4b, 5a).

Eli said, "I didn't call you. Go back to bed." And Samuel did.

The voice called again, "Samuel!" And the same sequence happened again.

Then the voice called a third time, "Samuel!" Again, Samuel ran to Eli's bedside saying, "I heard you call. Here I am."

This time Eli realized that it was God calling Samuel (3:8b). He told Samuel, when the voice came again, to say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening". And Samuel went back to bed to await God's call. (I wonder how wide awake he was by this time!)

The Bible tells us that the next time God called to Samuel, he answered as Eli had instructed him (3:10). And God spoke to Samuel in what was God's first revelation to him, thereby making Samuel both a prophet and priest.

What was the prophecy? It warned of God's judgement upon Eli's family, that Eli knew what his sons were doing but did not try to stop them. Furthermore, God said that the evil of Eli's family could never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering (3:14). (Interestingly, we are later told in 1 Samuel 8:1-2 that Samuel's sons were also corrupt.)

The Bible tells us that Samuel stayed in bed until early in the morning, that he got up to go about his duties, and that he dreaded telling Eli the content of his vision. But Eli wanted to know everything he had been told, and this Samuel did. He repeated everything that God had told him. And Eli accepted God's judgement (3:18).

There is a small note to say that Samuel grew up and had a perfect prophetic record. Everyone in Israel recognized Samuel as a true prophet of God. So God continued to reveal himself to Samuel at Shiloh (3:20, 21).

What can we learn from this passage?

1. Samuel did not automatically recognize God's voice. Eli taught him to do so. In the same way, we need to learn when God is speaking to us.
2. God called Samuel more than once. God may call us more than once to get our attention but He may not continue to call us if we deliberately ignore Him. 1 Samuel 16:14 tells us that the Spirit of God departed from King Saul because of his deliberate disobedience. We are to listen intently to God's message, as Samuel did. God's message—nothing more, nothing less—is to be conveyed accurately to others. Note that Samuel was able to tell Eli God's message word for word. Thus Samuel gained a reputation as a true prophet of God.
3. What do we hear from God? In our day, God speaks primarily through His Word, the Bible. The message He gives us is to be read and understood in its context, and is to be conveyed to others in the same manner.
4. God also speaks to us through prayer. As we interact regularly with our own fathers, so we are to talk with our Heavenly Father. As we constantly ask him to cleanse our hearts and lives of the sins He finds there through our daily living, He is able to renew our hearts with His message which we in turn convey to those around us. We may encourage other Christians, or perhaps give a cheerful word or smile to someone we pass in the street or meet in the shop.
5. God may speak to us through circumstances which help us to determine His Will. *Please remember that God will never ask us to do anything which is contrary to His Word.*
6. We need to test the Word of God, to know that it is He Who is speaking to us. Satan is the great pretender, expert at presenting himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), but in reality he "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Be sure it is God's voice to which you listen and respond.
7. Other Christians may be used by God to share His Word. Always confirm God's children are true to His Word. The Berean Christians checked daily that the apostle Paul preached to them in line with God's Word (Acts 17:11).
8. Re-reading this passage, I also note that Samuel was quiet. Initially he was asleep, but by the time he told God he was ready and willing to listen, I am sure he was completely awake and alert. It is important that the "ears of our heart" are always listening for God to speak to us.

Am I listening?



By
Annette Lawson

Deborah Listens To God

I love to look up the meaning of names in the Bible and am often touched by the symbolism throughout its books.

I have also heard many times, that Deborah was only used as a prophetess simply because there were no men willing to do the job. Of course this tends to make one think that God is happy with second best, and I know that is not the case. My heart tells me she was a prophetess because she was available and God chose to use her.

In studying the story of Deborah, which we find in Judges 4 and 5, I have discovered some very interesting things. Judges is a book that expresses these words: - ***"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes"***¹. This simply means that they did not talk to God about their lives nor did the majority of them try to follow His commandments. They had become just as wicked as those surrounding them. Therefore God often sells them into slavery in order that they might be convicted of their sin and return unto Him.

At the time of Deborah, they were sold into slavery to Jabin, who was king of Canaan and he reigned in Hazor. What is interesting about this is, that he was the great grandson of an old enemy, one whom Joshua had gotten rid of many years before. His name means *"discerning or understanding"*. He represents human intellect and the understanding of the natural man which, of course, is corrupt and opposed to God and His righteousness. It is the wisdom of the world. Now Hazor means *"enclosure"* - How interesting that this was a place that rejected God and excludes what God has given. They were not open to God and His grace and delighted in persecuting God's chosen people.

After the children of Israel cried unto God for help, He tells Deborah what to do. Her name means *"the Word"* and her husband's name Lapidoth means *"firebrands"*. Have we considered that God sits and waits till we cry out and then it is His Word and the Spirit of the Word, which brings victory and deliverance?

Now Deborah sat under a palm tree. She was not enclosed by worldly wisdom, but had been set free. The palm tree symbolises the spiritual freedom of the believer. It is between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim. How interesting that Ramah means *"heights"*; this can be seen in believers as the *'breadth and length, and depth and height that we have in Christ Jesus'*². Bethel on the other side, means *"House of God"*. It is only as we *'come boldly into the throne of grace'*³ that we know true fellowship with Him.

Deborah calls for Barak and his name means *"lightning"* and this will always point us to judgement.

So what does all this mean to us, especially when it comes to the section of 'Have We Got Our Ears On?'

Some of us suffer with deafness and need the assistance of hearing aids. In spite of the difficulties these bring, it is still much more beneficial to wear them. At least then we can hear what is going on in the world around us. However, to receive the benefits we must make sure that daily they are

cleaned and that we put them on.

Deborah had her spiritual ears on. She had trained herself to listen to the Almighty and so was able to be a prophetess for Him.



- ◆ Have we too made sure our spiritual ears are cleaned and on, ready for use?
- ◆ Do we practise listening and talking with God in our daily lives? Training ourselves to hear His voice?
- ◆ Are we living under our palm tree between the heights of spiritual freedom in Christ and His House, thus enjoying the sweet fellowship with Him day by day?
- ◆ Or have we too been entangled, as the children of Israel were, with sins that had once been forgiven and removed; only to allow them back into our lives in full force at a later date?
- ◆ Have we, like Israel, no King in our hearts and simply do that which is right in our own eyes (lives)?

If you have not asked Jesus Christ into your heart, then this is the exact position you are in!

However if you have, but still do not live for Him and allow Him to be Lord and King of our lives, it is still the position we are in! Whichever way it may be, those in this state would still be enslaved by the wicked one and are enclosed in his wretchedness instead of being free in Christ.

Take heart, if you are the Lord's— ***'then you are seated with Him in Heavenly places', 'clothed in His righteousness', 'you have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life' and 'are thoroughly furnished ready to do His will'.*** In fact ***'we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for those good works'. 'You are forgiven and cleansed and your sins are as far away as the east is from the west' and 'have been cast into the depths of the sea, never to be remembered again'.*** We have the joy of being ***'able to come boldly into His throne of grace'*** and the assurance that when we sin—as we all do, ***'Jesus is interceding for us'*** and all we need to do ***'is to confess our sin and He is faithful and just and promises to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'.***

Therefore dear sisters, I encourage you to put your spiritual ears on and listen to Him. He will sometimes talk to you in a melody sweet; sometimes through His Word, or in prayer; maybe in dreams, visions or miracles; possibly in a still small voice; sometimes through other people or your conscience and at times during death or sorrow. However, certainly if you remember to constantly wear those spiritual ears—then you truly will hear God each and every day of your lives even as Deborah did.

Notes from Gaebelin's Concise Commentary.

¹Judges 21:25; ²Ephesians 3:18; ³Hebrews 4:16

By Ruth-Maree

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Our Vision:

*To share God's truth and
encourage each other
in our Christian faith.*

What we believe:

- The Bible is the inspired Word of God. We seek to follow its doctrine.
- In the trinity of the Godhead.
- Christ, Himself as our sinless Lord.
- Filled with all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, indeed, being God come in the flesh.
- The personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit.
- The creation and fall of man.
- Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
- The need for all to be born again in Him.
- That we were created in Christ unto good works.
- The resurrection of the body.
- The judgement of both the living and the dead
- The eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked.
- That Satan is real and so is hell.
- That Jesus Christ will return as He has promised.

Upcoming Magazine Themes:

Winter 2006 ... *"My New Life In Christ"* ... Closing Date: 18 April 2006
Spring 2006 ... *"Forgetting The Past"* ... Closing Date: 18 July 2006
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If you feel the need for personal contact with any queries concerning your spiritual life, or burdens you bear, please feel free to either contact the church above or write to us at 'The Heart of a Woman Inc.'