



MARRIAGE AND FAMILY MINISTRY

# Family Devotional



May 12-June 15, 2008

Monmouth Worship Center

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Geographics

May 11, 2008

Dear church family,

The Marriage and Family Ministry is bringing back the MWC Family Devotional. Once again it features devotions written by members of our very own church family. You have responded so positively to last year's devotional and we received requests to have one published again so here we are launching this year's devotional today, Mother's Day. This devotional will start tomorrow, May 12 until Sunday, June 15 (Father's Day). We wish to thank our brothers and sisters in Christ, who so lovingly and painstakingly took time out of their busy schedules to write one, sometimes even more than one, devotion.

"But just what is a devotional," some people have asked, "and why use one?" According to Kelli Mahoney, a published Christian writer, "devotion" is a big clue to a devotional's use. She continues, "It shows your devotion to God by reading the passage and praying on it every day. So the collection of readings is then known as a devotional. So why would you want to use a devotional? What will it actually do? Well, Christians use their devotionals as a way to grow closer to God and learn more about the Christian life. By praying every day, Christians develop a stronger relationship with God."

As you know, one of our ministry's mission statements is to help build prayerful marriages and families that acknowledge and believe that prayer is the first line of defense and not the court of last resort against the evil attacks of the enemy. We know the times that we live in necessitate a shield of protection against the wiles and evil schemes of the enemy. What more effective weapon can we use to effect this protection than prayer! A family focused on praying to the Lord Jesus Christ has a foundation that may be shaken at times, but will always withstand anything that comes against it.

We hope that this family devotional will be the springboard for MWC singles, couples and families to develop devotional times. It is important for parents in particular to have their children involved in family devotions, which help build children's relationship with the Lord and also teaches them the importance of prayer. If you have young children, we leave it up to you parents to determine which devotion is appropriate to pray with them and tailor it to your child's level of understanding and age level.

We suggest that you combine these prayer times with fasting in the way the Lord leads you. For Jesus it was not a case of *if* we would fast but *when* we fast (Matthew 6:16-18). John Maxwell wrote in his book *Partners in Prayer* that "combining fasting with prayer can result in a spiritual atomic bomb that pulls down spiritual strongholds and releases the power of God in your life."

We claim and expect the mighty power of prayer, fasting and agreement to be manifested through marriages being restored, families being strengthened, prodigal sons and daughters returning to the Lord, and physical and financial healings – all for the glory of the Lord!

C.H. Spurgeon said, "Whenever God determines to do a great work, He first sets His people to pray." Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace expecting and believing the mighty work of God in our marriages and families!

In His service,  
Efren and Benilda Salvador  
Marriage and Family Ministry Leaders

Monday, May 12, 2008

### The True Source of Joy

**Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather, rejoice because your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20**

What is the right and wrong source of joy? Scripture tells us that we shouldn't rejoice that the spirits are subject to us (the wrong source) but rather we should rejoice because OUR NAMES are written in heaven (the true source)!

Sometimes we take for granted the awful price exacted by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to bring salvation to the world. This perfect, sinless, Lamb of God BECAME sin for us and in so doing was rejected by the Father, who in His Holiness could not look upon sin.

As the redeemed, we know the Joy-Giver AND THE TRUE SOURCE OF JOY! That consistent joy in our lives is directly commensurate with our ability to trust Him completely, sometimes because of day to day circumstances and even with "a defiant nevertheless," we WILL ourselves to be joyful. Thanksgiving is the highest form of giving and our joy increases by giving thanks to the One who blesses us so much!

Rosann Abbott

Prayer: Father, thank you that you are our complete source! Help me to will to JOY in You in spite of my circumstances and to trust you more completely. Amen.

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

### A Long and Happy Marriage

Spring house cleaning 2008 uncovered a card filled with my father's and mother's wisdom written to us the week after our marriage, February 1983; a precious present re-revealed 25 years later. It is an honor to share the message John and Stella Abbott (Dad and Mother) shared with their son and daughter-in-law and for us to share it with you with their heavenly blessing. There are three things that tend toward a long and happy marriage:

1. **Kiss me:** *"May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine."* **Song of Solomon 1:2.** Dad's words to us: "Let every kiss be an impartation of your spirit into the life of your beloved. God imparted life to Adam that way."
2. **Draw me:** *"Draw me after you and let us run together..."* (**Song of Solomon 1:4**) Again: "Never lose interest in improving yourself (body, soul, spirit)...it will cause you to rejoice in each other."
3. **Tell me:** *"Tell me, O you, whom my soul loves, where do you pasture your flock, where do you make it to lie down at noon? For why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flocks of your companion?"* (**Song of Solomon 1:7**) The lesson: Never cease communicating; it takes two to tango or tangle. Communicate with a whisper or a shout, a secret sign or raised eyebrow; express it with body language; delight in exposing your secrets to your love. It is surprising how it removes undue interest in the flocks of your companions.

David Abbott

Prayer: Father, teach us to love as you love and behave towards our spouses as you have directed; in this is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore! Amen.

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Bone of My Bones and Flesh of My Flesh

**Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Genesis 2:22-24**

I remember this scripture so vividly from the MWC men's retreat two years ago. I was a new Christian, eagerly soaking up the message being taught by our guest speaker (and Pastor Joe's good friend), Pastor Ron. He emphasized this scripture over and over during the weekend, and how all of the lessons on marriage in the New Testament could relate back to this early Old Testament passage. For this was truly the FIRST marriage, no? And note how wise Adam was when he realized how important a wife would be to a man; that he knew they would become as one flesh! And this is as it should be in **every** marriage: both the husband and wife, centered on God, praying together, united in one flesh in their spiritual, mental and physical relationships. God is using this scripture to remind us that a man and a woman in a holy marriage "complete" each other in His eyes. That marriages (and the spouses in the marriage) are much stronger "as one flesh" than apart!

Ken Schulte

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for every day spent with You and my wife in my life. I know I am personally so much better with You at the center of my marriage and my family life. Thank you for creating such a wonderful woman to love me, and for the precepts of a good Christian marriage. Thank you for your Word that reminds ALL married couples that spiritually we are indeed 'one flesh,' and that we should be united together in You. I pray that You would bless and protect all marriages, and strengthen every spouse to continue to seek You in their marriages. In Your holy and precious name, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Love your Neighbor

**Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8**

Meditate on these words. He paid a debt and I owe one. Thank God I don't owe the debt for my sin, but I owe others the same love, respect and grace with which God has treated me! We can ask ourselves where the showing of love begins – at home! So let us bring that same love to the sick, the lonely, the unwanted, and the shut-in, for people do not go hungry only for bread. They hunger for love. They hunger to be somebody and they hunger for the love of God.

To sum it up, we can see that love is patient, kind, not envious, does not boast, not proud and is a truth seeker. Love protects, preserves and hopes for the positive aspects of life.

Charmayne Fredericks

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to pray for each other so that we will grow in your tender love and allow others to love. Amen.

## When We Think God Has Forgotten Us

**“You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God; what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked as mourners before the Lord of hosts.’ . . . Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.”**

**Malachi 3:14,18**

Sometimes we feel as if God has forgotten us, as if our life has not amounted to anything for Him, like we haven't really accomplished or achieved anything. We go through the motions without seeing the meaning of our lives. Naomi felt that way. Her husband and both her sons had died. She was starving in a foreign land. She told her daughter-in-law Ruth, “The Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty . . . The Lord has afflicted me, the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.” (Ruth 1:13, 20-21).

Naomi had no idea that God would bless her because of how she cared for her family. Naomi was such a devoted and loving mother-in-law to Ruth that Ruth preferred to go with her to Israel, a land far from Ruth's own people. If it wasn't for Naomi's faithful commitment to her family, Ruth would never have followed her back to Bethlehem, Ruth would not have met Boaz, and Boaz and Ruth would not have become the great-grandparents of King David and ancestors in the family line of our Lord Jesus. By wonderfully expressing her love for her family, Naomi played a central role in God's plan of salvation!

So even when it seems as if nothing is working out and that God has overlooked you, remember that he sees the love you express every day to your family, remember that he will take your loving actions and create something meaningful and important in the lives of others. Expect him to do great things beyond what you could ask or imagine, like He did through the life of Naomi.

Tony Wilkinson

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, may we always remember that you see all the love we express to others in the name of Jesus, and that you will bless us and the works of our hands because you are faithful. Even when things look bleak, let faith, hope and love overflow in our families. May your comfort and encouragement sustain us. May we experience abundant joy, like Naomi, as we see your wonderful plans for us unfold. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

## Trust, Delight and Commit - The TDC Formula

**Trust in the Lord and do well, dwell in the Land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your ways to the Lord and He will do this. Psalm 37: 3, 4, 5**

I was given this scripture many years ago, it was presented to me as a formula, so over the years I've come to know it as the TDC formula, found in Psalm 37. It always works for me. God word is true. If we place our trust in the Lord and not in other things, as we all too often do, we would experience God's peace and be blessed. We are given the command to **trust** in the Lord and do good. What are we trusting today- our wealth, the stock market, our appearance or popularity, just to list a few? These things are forever changing and sad to say that often it's not for the better. We who are God's children need to trust and rely on Him, if we **delight** ourselves in Him and be happy just because we know God personally and intimately and that He loves us, then we will be given the desires of our heart, desires are wants. Isn't that exciting? We already know that God will supply our needs, now he is promising to give us our desires. **Commit** your ways, give Him your plans and dreams, and pour them on Him. The Lord can perfect our plans. He can lead and make it happen in the correct way and time. This way it's not so weighty for us. We were not made to carry life's heavy loads or to go ahead of God. **We are to trust, delight and commit!**

Roz Rivers

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help us to trust in you more, help us to delight ourselves in you and in the things of you so that we may live in peace, standing firm. Lord, we confess that we need you to help us to commit all of our ways and plans to you, we want to do good. Help us, in Jesus' name, we ask. Amen.

Sunday, May 18, 2008

### Gold Medal Fathers

**“When you pray, pray this way, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven.’” (Jesus)  
Matthew 6:9**

The fact that fathers are important to the spiritual and mental growth of a child is something I have never questioned. So I was more than a little surprised when I visited the excellent web site of the National Fatherhood Initiative recently (this group’s goal is to promote responsible fatherhood in society).

After all, fatherhood seems as American as apple pie and motherhood, right? (Maybe I am a little biased, since I am father to three children). And Jesus here clearly told us to relate to God as a father. I learned that many other prominent groups are not so excited about fatherhood, and don’t appreciate the Fatherhood Initiative in the least.

Some lesbians think that fathers are unnecessary, and even a hindrance to children growing up politically correct. Several said that absentee fathers are becoming the norm, especially in our cities. Others say that some fathers are so abusive and poor as role models that children would be better off with no father role model than a bad one. Feminists see an emphasis on fatherhood as devaluing mothers and women, and exalting male superiority.

Wow, was I surprised! But let’s remember that God set up the family as the unit, which trains children to become responsible adults. Dads are essential to the proper growth of a child into adulthood. Regardless of the shortcomings of our fathers, we can do better in our fathering. Men, let’s believe God that we will be gold medal fathers!

Pastor Ken Jasko

Prayer: Father, help me to be a father who models your love and protection. Help me to be a father like you!

Monday, May 19, 2008

God's Timing is the Right Time

**There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.**  
**Ecclesiastes 3:1**

We read the promises of the Word and believe that they are for us today. We hear preachers speak about the plans that God has for each one of us. We pray, and God drops desires in our hearts that we know are from Him. The question that we find ourselves asking is when will all this take place?

We live in a world of instant gratification, and if something does not happen quickly we begin to doubt. We have to understand that the promises of God are true, and they will come to pass when the time is perfect. God knows our hearts and the place where we are in our walk with Him. There are times that God delays, so that our faith can grow and we can fully commit to relying on Him alone. There are times that He must prepare us even more, so that we can fulfill the plans that He has for us. There are times that He is going to use our blessing to teach someone else. God works His plan for all mankind through His servants, and we have to trust Him and fulfill our part in His plan. When we find ourselves questioning why God has not acted, we should take the time to ask God to show us what He wants us to learn, as we prepare for His promises to be fulfilled.

Charles Basden

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me today to understand your plan and promises for my life. Help me to understand that your timing is not always my timing. I repent before you for doubting you and commit to learn and grow in my knowledge of your Word and the plans that you have for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

Lacking Nothing

**Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.**  
**Psalms 34:9**

Wow! Can you imagine lacking nothing? It's God's desire for us. How often do you go through a day, a week, a month and wonder how you will possibly get something done, get something paid for, make extra time for something you know you should do? We all do. Yet, God says that those who fear Him, lack nothing. How can we attain this?

Fear is often thought of as a negative emotion. However, to truly fear God means to revere God to the point that we fear letting Him down and we fear not following His ways. Picture it like you would a child who loves and adores a parent, yet fears crossing the line and disappointing that parent. When we truly fear our God to that level, we will lack nothing, because we will be walking in line with His will and He will be guiding our steps.

He wants more for us, but do we want more of Him and all that means? Fearing the Lord is so essential to a stronger walk with Him. It's the key to how we can live a life where we lack nothing. It's His desire for you. Is it your desire for yourself?

Rachel Basden

Prayer: Lord, I desire a deeper walk with you. There may be problems in my life, but I know you want more for me. I want to not only understand you better, but truly understand what it means to fear you. You desire so much for my life. Help me to learn how to lack for nothing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

Absolute Trust In Him

**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

**James 1: 2-4**

The Lord blessed our family when Talia came into our lives one snowy evening back on February 24, 2005. You see, Talia was only 22 days old when DYFS had called a few hours earlier expressing a need for a family to take care of her. When she arrived at our house, she was literally almost gray in color since no one ever showed her any love. As I walked by her I held her tiny hand and said to my daughter, "You're safe now."

From that point forward, Talia has brought nothing but joy and happiness to everyone in our family. We have a 15 year-old son, who unconditionally loves her along with her parents and extended family that constantly show unending love toward her. It has been a struggle since we've had her due to all the red tape DYFS imposes. Never once have we wavered in our faith that God would trump anything and everything the enemy would put before us.

We've asked for your prayers constantly since day one and on Friday, April 25 we received great news. The trial to sever parental rights had gone on for three weeks with the closing arguments occurring on April 18. The judge was supposed to render his decision on Monday, April 28. When our caseworker called my wife on Friday the 25<sup>th</sup>, she stated that the judge felt *compelled* to render his decision early.

My brothers and sisters, God moved into the heart of this judge and through your prayers and ours the obstacles were removed. We humbly thank you from the bottom of our hearts. The only caveat to his decision was that the birth mother has 45 days to appeal the decision. We've claimed her and continue to leave everything in God's hands. God is always at work as long we continue to "persevere" in His faith and glory.

Art Torrens

Prayer: God, we ask that this testimony reassure anyone who has had doubts or have had major obstacles put before them that perseverance in You will conquer all. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Thursday, May 22, 2008

### The Power of Prayer

**Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. For each one who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, if his son asks a loaf, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks a fish, will he give him a snake? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him?**

**Matthew 7:7-11**

Jesus knew the importance of prayer. He often slipped away by himself and pray to the father. In teaching about the power of prayer, Jesus promised that God will answer. He used three words to help us: ASK, SEEK and KNOCK.

**Ask** - we are to come to God with our request and in doing so, we are acknowledging our need and God's ability to meet it.

**Seek** - we may be petitioning him to help us but he wants us to obey the direction he is guiding us.

**Knock** - for us to overcome, praying without ceasing is required. We are to keep on praying until the door is open.

Phyllis Esposito

Prayer: Thank you, Father, that you enable us to experience oneness with you. Thank you for your goodness and your grace. Amen.

Friday, May 23, 2008

### Planted Seed

**Train up a child in the way you would want him to go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.**  
**Proverbs 22:6**

As a little boy, I can remember being in church it seems from sunrise to sunset. It seemed as if we lived at the church. As I became a teenager and then a grown man of 18, I found myself saying to my parents, "Why do I have to go to church so often? Was there a need to be there all the time?"

Needless to say, like most of us, I strayed away. I spent my Sundays recovering from late nights at dance clubs and hanging out with my "so called" friends. I was heading down a dead end street. My parents, being the prayer warriors that they are, spent endless hours on their knees crying out to God on my behalf. Many times I came home late and found my father in the living room praying at the window, thinking to myself that he was watching me. My mom was in their room praying and as she heard my footsteps began thanking the Lord for my safe return. As they both prayed, I couldn't shake this feeling of shame. At the time I thought that it was the shame that I brought to them, but I then realized that it was not shame that I brought on them but shame to the Lord. At that very moment I realized that there was a void in my life. There was something missing, a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I realized that no matter how much I complained, ran and rebelled, the seed of life had already been planted.

I am who I am in the Lord because of the "training" that my parents gave me and from that training I can give that to my son and my daughter. Parents, even though it may seem that your child is not walking in the way of the Lord that you have trained them to do so and as if they are not listening, the seeds have been planted. My parents can tell you that your children **will** come to serve the Lord. Proverbs 22:6 guarantees that!

Corey Jester

Prayer: Lord, I pray that you would quicken the spirit of my children that they may come to know you more on a personal and intimate level.

Saturday, May 24, 2008

Lessons from the Vinedresser

**“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**

**John 15: 1-8**

I have been reflecting on the Easter play this year and the events that took place during the development and presentation of the play. John Chapter 15 speaks about the branches and their relationship to the vine and the vinedresser. The first few verses parallel the challenges that many of us went through during our recent times of crisis and the consequent growing pains leading up to the Easter play.

Every one of us was created within a context, that is, to have a personal connection to the vine. As the branches stay connected to the vine, the branches receive nourishment and the vinedresser continues to work on us in many different ways. Some of us unproductive (unfruitful) branches may have fallen into the dirt and the vinedresser may need to take us away, or lift us up, from the dirt. As we get lifted up into our proper environment for productivity, we began to produce results (fruit). A few of us were lifted up from where we were a few months ago; the Father’s caring touch has rescued us again.

On the other hand, some branches may have been bearing fruit but our level of productivity was not high enough. For these branches, we went through the painful process of pruning – trimming away things that were tightly connected to us but made us unproductive. Cutting the hurts left us bleeding at first, but after the surgery, we did heal and then continued to grow even more as we began to bear at the next level of production (more fruit). At the next level we are required to stay connected to the vine. If the connection is not maintained, we are eventually cast out (cut down and thrown into the fire) - another painful process. When we truly learn how to live (abide) in Him and have Him live (abide) in us, we stay connected to our source. When we have this relationship with our source, we grow to the highest possible level of productivity (much fruit). As our output increases, the Father’s true value (glory) is realized. God is an investor and he requires the maximum possible return, in due time, on his investment in our lives. Productivity (fruitfulness) has been God’s command to Adam when he was first created and continues to be our own current mandate.

Andrew Edwards

Prayer: Lord, I pray that I learn how to cooperate with your will for my life. As I grow, teach me to appreciate the growing pains I experience as I grow to appreciate the value of your investment. Help me to stay connected to you! In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Sunday, May 25, 2008

## Be Still

**Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Mark 4:36-40**

I think this scripture describes our lives sometimes. Something comes up and we just panic. We forget that Jesus is there with us. We allow what we see in the natural to take over our emotions and how we react to the situations. THEN WE PANIC! I want you to look at verse 40 when He asks, "Why do you have no faith?" Let's think about the fact that the disciples saw Jesus heal people, cast demons out of people and still had no faith. Think of all the things God has done in your life. Why do you still have no faith? It doesn't make sense for the disciples to have no faith and it doesn't make sense for us to have no faith either. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:7, "for we walk by faith, not by sight." It doesn't matter what our circumstances are because our God is bigger. We need to realize that Jesus is with us in our problems and all we have to do is have faith enough to BE STILL! Today no matter what is going on realize that Jesus is with you and all you have to do is to have faith in him and BE STILL!

Pastor Obadiah Clark

Prayer: Jesus, I pray that when things come up in my life I will trust in you. I will remember you have always been there for me. Even today when things come up help me not to panic. Let my heart and my emotions be still. So that I will allow you to work like you always do. Jesus, I give you all my worries, problems, and wants. I ask you to have your way with them. Let me not fear in the midst of the storms of my life but remember you are there with me. I will say to the storm, "Be still". Thank you, Jesus, for all that you are doing and have done. Amen.

Monday, May 26, 2008

### Persevering Through Life's Trials

**Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.**

**James 1:2-3**

Burglars recently broke into our home. They made off with two laptops, and a 400-lb. safe containing some valuables and all of our personal documents - passports, birth certificates, etc.

Obviously, my initial reaction wasn't one of joy... rather, I felt shock, fear, and anger.

As time wore on, however, I was able to look at this tragedy in a different light. I realized that God protected us, by having us stay out later than we had intended to. My wife heard footsteps outside her window, before we realized that we had been robbed. Who knows what the outcome might have been had we walked in while the robbers were still casing our home?

Things could have been worse also. At first, we thought more items were stolen, only to find certain things, like our video camera, were still in our possession. And the thieves were very neat... our house was not trashed... there wasn't any knocked over furniture or broken glass.

I could have reacted to this differently. I could have cursed God, or screamed "How could You have let this happen to us?" and turned my back on Him. I'm sure Satan was hoping this would happen.

Instead, I counted my blessings, and asked God to draw the thieves closer to His heart, that they might find Him and repent before it's too late. I asked Him to give me the grace so that I would be able to forgive them as well. I thanked Him for keeping us safe. I thanked Him that it wasn't worse than it was.

Weeks later, I can honestly say that this event, though traumatic and testing, has further developed my faith in God.

Art Hannah

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for holding tightly onto us, even as we are going through difficult circumstances. Please give us grace and understanding to deal with hardships in a mature manner. Help us to persevere through trials and suffering, all while keeping our hearts and minds focused on You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

### Overcoming Temptation Through Prayer

**Pray, lest you enter temptation.**  
**Luke 22:46**

Jesus faced trials of temptation, yet He overcame by standing firm on His Word and prayer. Nothing is beyond the power of prayer except that which is outside the will of God.

The false idea of, "**the now**" can bring much temptation into one's life. Proverbs 4:25 "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." I have to remember these wise words, especially when I go shopping. Sometimes my tendency is to shop till I drop.

A person's ego can tempt his mind with desire. Daily devotional time in prayer, with faith in Jesus Christ will transform us. We transform our dependency, by practicing Christ-honoring habits, one day at a time, bringing us into an intimate relationship with Christ. Prayer changes our attitude, which leads to more positive actions, especially when facing trials, thus giving us freedom to make wise decisions.

Appreciating God's forgiveness helps us to learn to forgive others. Even when it's hard to forgive, prayer softens our heart. (Luke 11:4 "... and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us, and lead us not into temptation.)

The Apostle Paul speaks to the Corinthians on how temptation can be overcome, through Jesus Christ, who gives us the strength to break its hold. (1Corinthians 10:31 "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.)

Janet Brunie

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your tender love, mercy and healing power. Lord, help us to overcome our temptations through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

Focus Your Life on the Lord

**For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray that in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. Colossians 1:9-12**

**You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26:3**  
**Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Ephesians 4:17**

The Lord placed a recurring theme of "His will" in my life, and I have been on a journey seeking His perfect will. I have been more conscious of this desire more than ever in the past year, although this began probably in earnest for me around April of 2005. That's when the trauma and challenges of trying to keep what's known as a traditional family came full force and were manifested in the police powers of the State of New Jersey mandating that I had to leave the home that day with time to take only the bare essentials. This is but a snippet of a small chapter of my life but I am sure it is not unique!

The point is although we Christians are going to church and baptized, attend prayer groups and retreats, tithe and seem outwardly doing God's will, perhaps we are not. Sometimes "idols" come into our lives even unknowingly, which we keep in our "junk drawer", just in case we may need them. But our God is a jealous God. He does not need us. We need Him. If our eyes are not 100% focused on Him, we cannot expect the desires of our heart to be fulfilled. Still, He is all-knowing, and like the heavenly Father that He is, gives us what we need, since what we in the flesh desire, is not always in God's will. God sees through a different set of lens than man.

Earnestly seeking the Lord daily, and wanting to do His will, pleases God. I have personally seen the Lord show up, as I devote myself to seek and do His will. Like a child waiting for his father to instruct him in what to do, he is never late or disappoints. Even when we fail Him and we cry out for genuine repentance, He never turns His back on us, but chastises us as only a loving father can. Keeping our eyes and focus on Jesus is a minute-by minute, hourly and daily walk! If it were easy, everyone would do it! We are not perfect, but the Lord knows our hearts! When we fall, let's get up, dust ourselves off, and re-commit ourselves to the Lord!

Ron Swaby

Prayer: Father, I pray that all my brothers and sisters in Christ, and whoever reads this devotional, saved or not, will find some inspiration from it, and make you the focus of their lives. Please make it abundantly clear, Lord, that all the Glory belongs to you. Amen.

Thursday, May 29, 2008

## Light and Easy

### **For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:30**

Christians often struggle in their walk with the Lord, but it should not be so. Have you ever thought, "It's so hard to be a Christian!" I have.

At one time I believed it was so difficult being a Christian that I had no motivation to tell others about the Lord. Living for Jesus just seemed too hard for normal people. How wrong and deceived I was! Never forget that the message about Jesus Christ is the gospel, which means good news!

If you are struggling, it's not because of what the Lord is requiring of you. The problem lies with yourself -- in pride and unbelief, which the Lord will help you overcome.

Walking with the Lord is meant to be a joy, not a burden. Yes, there are trials and difficulties. But the Lord always helps us and delivers us. (Even if it results in martyrdom, we will be delivered!) Therefore, we can always trust in the Lord and rejoice in Him. When we do that, every day can be a joyful day. Living the Christian life is not supposed to be just a matter of our willpower, but a matter of trust -- faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who carries the load. We are not qualified and capable of saving ourselves by our own effort. That's why we need a Savior. Too many people are trying to save themselves, instead of trusting in Jesus to save them and make them into what He wants them to be.

"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Philippians 2:13

We do need to change -- to do better and be better. But our focus needs to be on Jesus and not on ourselves. We need to ask Him and expect Him to work in us and change us. The Christian life is meant to be a constant fellowship with Jesus and looking to Him in faith. Otherwise, in our own ability, it is impossible. Remember, Jesus is not out to condemn us, but to help us. He loves us, and proved it by dying in our place.

Jeanette Ingrassia

Prayer: Thank you, Father, that life is made easier when I remember that Jesus is my helper and the One who directs my path. Father, help me to stay focused on You and trust You daily. Amen.

Friday, May 30, 2008

Remembering What God Has Done

**I remember the days of old; I meditate on all your doings; I muse on the work of Your hands.  
Psalm 143:5**

We have all heard people talk about the “good old days,” the days when they did something great or they had a great experience. When we are facing trials in our lives, we should think back to the days that God answered prayers in our lives.

The Bible tells us that we should encourage ourselves. One way that we can do that is to meditate on the works that God has done for each one of us. We can all think of a time that God provided for us, healed us, or provided something that we needed exactly when we needed it. We should always begin with the ultimate act of love on the cross, the death of Jesus and our acceptance of the gift of salvation, which began our journey and the starting point of God’s blessings for us.

Are you facing a problem that seems to have no answer or end? Do you feel like you are at the end of your rope? If this is you, take time to think back on the blessings that God has provided, and encourage yourself by remembering the works He has done in your own life.

Charles Basden

Prayer: Dear Father, thank you for all that you have done in my life. I thank you that I can think back in my life and see the times that you truly answered prayers. I thank you that I can encourage myself in your works and blessings. I know that when I am facing trials in my life, that I can build my faith and know that you care for me, just as much today as you did yesterday. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Saturday, May 31, 2008

Watchful Eyes

**The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant. “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’?”  
Matthew 21:14-16**

As adults, we are ever mindful of little eyes watching us, seeing what we do and say. Children are like sponges, soaking in everything. Yet, let us not forget that there is much we can learn from them as well. Jesus reminded the chief priests and the teachers of the law “have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?’” When trials are going on, we often think that children are blissfully unaware. Often times they are, but the Lord has placed these children in our lives to remind us that in all circumstances we are to praise Him.

When was the last time you watched and learned from the children God has placed in your life? When they smile, raise their hands and sing to the One they love, are you taking notice? Become as a child again, no matter your circumstance, and simply praise Him. In His praises, you will find Him. Remember, the children are watching.

Rachel Basden

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the children you have placed in my life. Thank you for all that you have shown me about you by watching them. I choose to praise you, in all my circumstances. I may not be blissfully unaware of my problems, but I know that in praising you, I will stop looking at my problems and I can begin looking to you instead. Help me to remember that the children are watching, and so are you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Sunday, June 1, 2008

Sin in the home?

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

**1 John 1:9**

I wanted to set up a special daddy daughter day with my daughter Sarah. I hadn't been spending enough quality time with her. So I called her to let her know that this Saturday was her special day and that we would do whatever she wanted. She chose to go to breakfast, see a movie, and then go fishing. She was very excited that we would be spending the day together.

Our day started at Old Country Buffet for breakfast. She was enjoying the personal attention and talking up a storm. All of a sudden she said, "Daddy can I tell you something?" I said sure. She proceeded to tell me that about two years ago she had stolen money (\$10) from her sister to use to buy her hamster "Creamy", but that it was ok because she had repented and asked God to forgive her. I was a little surprised, but I let the Holy Spirit lead the conversation. I told her that I was proud of her and glad that she told me and that it was the Holy Spirit who prompted her and gave her the strength to tell me. I then asked her what she thought she should do. Her answer was that she had already repented. I said I know that, but that she needed to ask her sister for forgiveness and pay her back the \$10. A grimace came onto her face. I explained that she needed to make things right with her sister. She understood and agreed.

While she went to the bathroom, I prayed. I asked the Lord to give her the strength to tell her sister and ask for her forgiveness as well as give me the self-control not to nag her about talking to her sister. I also mentioned to the Lord (as if he didn't already know) that Sarah didn't have the \$10 and would have to owe it to her sister. We went to see the movie. After the movie we went towards my car. As soon as Sarah and I reached the parking lot, she saw a dollar bill crumpled up on the ground. No one was in sight. She quickly picked it up and opened it up. It was a twenty-dollar bill. We spent the next few minutes praising and thanking God. I explained to her that God had blessed her for her obedience in asking for forgiveness and bringing her secret sin out into the open. God not only gave her the \$10 she would need to give her sister, but he gave her another \$10 for herself. Needless to say the rest of the day went well.

When Sarah's sister got home, it was the moment of confession. The Lord honored her prayer and gave her the strength to tell her sister and ask for forgiveness. I believe her sister was surprised. She forgave her and was very glad that she got \$10. Sarah wound up buying a piece of candy, tithing on the \$20 and giving the rest of her money to the church for "Coins for Kids". God is so good!

Steven Krogh

Prayer: Lord God, help us to recognize our sins even those secret sins we may have. Help us to humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness from the person we have wronged. We look to you, Lord, for the wisdom to choose the right words and the strength to make it right and repair the broken relationship. Lord God, we thank you for your love, your mercy and your grace. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Honor God Above All

**Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD.  
Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded in  
My dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with  
the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?  
1 Samuel 2:12 and 29**

Being born into the priesthood was such an honored position as an Israelite that the tribe of Levi didn't inherit their own territory, but the Lord Himself was their inheritance. However, along with blessings always comes the responsibility to live in faithfulness and uprightness. Sadly, Eli failed to honor God in his priestly responsibilities, and was negligent in instructing those in His charge who would take over that office after him – his own sons. This failure further exposed the underlying carelessness of Eli's fathering. At issue were both his irreverence for God and his gross misguidance of his children; the repercussions of which affected the religious life of the entire nation. A people can be expected to rise only so far as their leadership in terms of personal, family and social morality and spiritual integrity; as with a nation, so also with reference to the family unit.

Likewise, we too have *received* the Lord as our inheritance. It has become our charge to carry out a life-ministry as priests unto God. Paramount to our existence is for God to be the focal point of our lives. And for those of us who are blessed with children we **must** be certain to guard that precious life with which we have been entrusted; that we not neglect or falter in our responsibilities to raise up our children in the fear and admonition (discipline and instruction) of the Lord. It is essential that we *pass down* our priestly ministry (and family lifestyle) with such a level of integrity that our children know for certain that the Lord God holds first place in our hearts and minds. All our parenting must retain that notion that God is to be **honored first** and **foremost**. We are to be careful never to put our children (nor *anyone* or *anything*) above or before God. Only then can we be confident that our posterity will genuinely **know** the Lord and recognize His voice in a life of communion with Him – and ministry in Him.

Ed Otero

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for Your covenant commitment to us in grace and love. We thank you for allowing us merciful access to Your throne of grace wherein we are afforded the incredible privilege of ministering at the altar on behalf of others who desire to know you. Help us in our priestly life-ministry to represent You transparently; that others may come into the *fullness* you have for them. Be evidently present through us as we instruct our children in all Your ways; and reveal Your glory through us that they may come to have a reverence for You and ultimately fall in love with you for a lifetime of personal service in and to You – to Your honor and praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, June 3, 2008

Wednesday, June 4, 2008

Secrets of the Deep

**You make vows and break them; you kill and steal and commit adultery. There is violence everywhere - one murder after another.**

**Hosea 4:2**

You fall into one of two categories today. Either you have participated in an abortion, adultery, or vile acts with your tongue and have not repented and turned from your sin, or you must pray for those in our church body who have. Our families are hurting from wrong decisions.

The love of God and the blood of Jesus can cover all of it. Jesus took the most extreme punishment in replacement for all you have done. All that is required is changing your mind for the better with repugnance of your past sins, asking for God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and accepting it from him. Then forgive yourself.

Jen Forquignon

Prayer: Father, you are a God who sees everything even in the murkiest parts of our hearts. Thank you for shining your light in that darkness to guide us out of the pits we have put ourselves in. Thank you, Jesus, for taking on the form of a slave to pay the price we never could. Help us, Lord, to forgive ourselves for the things that have grieved you. Heal this church body and restore our families that have suffered for so long from the effects of such sin that we may go forth and minister to those still in anguish and deliver your good news.

Worship Me

**Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth.**

**John 4:23-24**

It was Mother's Day and we went to Olive Garden for dinner. My mom and dad were talking to us about how we worship on Sundays and asked if we knew what worship was. After several minutes of discussion, my dad gave everyone an assignment for the week, to write a paper about what worship means to us. Here is what I wrote:

"God loves worship and so should you! God loves when people fully worship him and give him their full attention. I think worship means to praise God in dance, song, prayer and in attitude. If you strive for excellence in attitude, God is smiling down on you. He loves when you worship him in spirit and in truth and when you thank him for helping you. When you worship or praise God, you should stand, listen to the words and try to understand what they mean. Sometimes you should even raise your arms up to show that you are into it. God likes it when people mean what they are saying and I think I could worship better by putting my energy into each song and enjoying it. I could understand the words and mean all the wonderful comments that I am making about God. Every day I worship by praying and reading my Bible. Worshiping God should be exciting and fun. Every day you should get up and thank God for a beautiful day because he likes it. Before I go to bed, I worship God by praying and not worrying about what will happen tomorrow. Worship can be done in many ways. Worshiping God is so important and special because he rewards you for it. Can you do it?"

Jessica Krogh

Comment by her dad: The truth that comes out of our children is an awesome thing. Be blessed.

Prayer: Father God, we humbly come into your presence. Create in us a hunger and joy for worship. Let us worship you in spirit and truth and rejoice in the awesome splendor of your creation. Help us to set our busyness aside each day and devote special time to giving you praise and honor. Let us seek daily to deepen our relationship with you by reading your Word. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Thursday, June 5, 2008

Nothing Can Move Me

**...But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:24**

Some believers are tempted to give up on their faith in God whenever the least thing seems to go wrong in their lives. The apostle Paul suffered many things: beatings, stoning, and shipwreck -- yet he called them "light afflictions."

Second Corinthians 4:17 tells us..."For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" and 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 tells us..."We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed"

We are in a battle for the hearts and souls of men. The devil is against us. While we know our victory is sure, we should not expect to never face obstacles or difficulties.

Second Timothy 2:3 tells us..."You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." If this life was all there was, this would not be a wise way to live. But there is a life in heaven and a future world. We would be foolish to live as if this life is all there is. So we should not forget eternity and focus only on the present. We must hold on to our faith in God, no matter how things seem to be going at the present. Because of our limited understanding, our ability to evaluate things accurately is limited. Our wonderful Lord Jesus can be trusted. He loved us enough to die in our stead, so we could go free. Why would He lie to us?

We must be determined not to be moved by things our enemy does to get us off our faith in God's Word.

Jeanette Ingrassia

Prayer: Father, help us not to be moved by what we see nor by what we feel. Help us to be strong and hold onto to what we believe, and we believe the Word of God. Amen.

Friday, June 6, 2008

Unconditional Surrender

**In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.  
Luke 14:33**

All that we are as well as all that we have must be handed over to Him. This surrender covers the way we earn our money as well the way we spend it. It covers home, children, time, gifts, ambitions, body, life and soul. Everything is to be surrendered to His control. "Yield yourself unto God"...,"seek ye first the Kingdom of God"... , present your bodies as a living sacrifice" - so the verses multiply.

One result this surrender produces is that while everything goes under His control, some things will go out of our lives. Everything that is sinful will have to go not because God wants to spoil our lives or to rob us of happiness, but for the very opposite reason. It is because sin is always the enemy of man's deepest and truest happiness and good. God wants to put sin out of our lives.

Jean and Danielle Joseph

Prayer: Father in heaven, help us to let go and let you take control. Holy Spirit, empower us as we surrender all to Jesus. This we pray, in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, June 7, 2008

Ten-minute investment

**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.  
Ephesians 6:4**

I had a very stressful day at work. There were tons of work to do. My staff members were making mistakes. Our clients were complaining. My bosses were taking their frustrations out on me. My job was becoming a pressure cooker of stress.

It was a long drive home. As soon as I walked in the front door, my wife kissed me and said hello and good-bye. She was heading off to her job working nights at McDonalds. It was left to me to put the kids to bed. Sarah went to bed without any problems, then it was Jessica's turn. She asked me to read to her. I blew up and yelled at her, telling her that it was past her bedtime and I would not read to her because she just wanted to stay awake a little longer. She persisted with her request. I refused to yield. I turned off the lights and stormed out of the room, as I heard her start to cry.

While sitting in my bed, the Holy Spirit got a hold of me. I can't remember the exact words I received, but "you idiot, all she wanted was for you to read to her" came through loud and clear. I felt horrible.

The Lord is great. He gave me an opportunity to redeem myself the very next night. I wasn't going to blow this one.

Jessica said, "Daddy, can you please read to me?" I said, "I would love to". Ten minutes later I kissed her good night and told her I was sorry about last night. She said, "It's ok, I love you daddy!" I thought, ten minutes, that's it. What a great outcome. God is awesome. What a great investment of my time. I made a vow that night to make every effort to not bring the frustrations and stress of my work day home with me. I leave it at the office. Praying on the drive home works great.

How about you? Where is your frustration and stress from your workday coming out? Make every effort to leave it at the office and invest your time and love into your family. It will be one of the best decisions you will ever make.

Steven Krogh

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us as fathers and heads of our household to show the love of Christ and be an example to the rest of our family as Christ is the example for us. Help us to be gentle and loving. Help us to speak words of kindness and encouragement into our children. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, June 8, 2008

## Fear Not!

**Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10**

Has fear ever gripped you and paralyzed you? Many of us know what fear is. That fear could have been instilled in us while we were growing up. Fear of death, sickness, injury, the dark, danger, the unknown, people's opinions, rejection, lack of finances, job insecurity and failure are what some of us might be facing. Some of us fear failure that we wear ourselves out and stress those around us. We don't know how to rest and trust in the Lord.

Firstly, we need to identify that those fears mentioned above are not from the Lord but from the evil one. The only fear we need to have is the fear of the Lord. Therefore, why are we receiving something that comes from the devil? We need to **feed on the Word** of the Lord, NOT on those negative thoughts. We need to **remember** what the Word says about us....**that we have a spirit of power, love and sound mind (2 Tim 1:7); that we are more than conquerors in Him who loved us (Romans 8:37). We forget that there is a devil out there who wants to kill, steal and destroy but our Lord came so that we might have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). We have been given authority to overcome ALL the power of the enemy and NOTHING will harm us (Luke 10:19).**

**The Lord is our shepherd, WE SHALL LACK NOTHING! Psalm 23:1** is a promise that we shall have all that we need for **He supplies all our needs according to His riches in glory (Phil 4:19)**. Why don't you say, "Daddy, you are my shepherd, I shall not lack..." Fill in the blank with the opposite of the negative that you are facing right there and then. Keep doing that until **He delivers you from all your fears (Ps 34:4). Hold every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5)**. Let the peace of the Lord flood over your heart until you know how much He loves you and has cast all those fears away for **perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18)**.

Julie Verdi

Prayer: Father in heaven, cover us with the blood of Jesus to protect us from all evil. Arise and scatter our enemies. Let us not be sifted like wheat. We have the mind of Christ and we bind every negative thought that tries to infiltrate our minds. Pour forth the power of the anointing that breaks all the bondages and set us free from all fear. May your peace guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. We believe that you are transforming us more and more into the image of Christ. May we live victoriously for you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Monday, June 9, 2008

### Fulfill Your Duty

**Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

#### **1 Corinthians 7: 3-5**

In this day and age of unbridled sexual encounters in our culture and escalating divorce rates in the Church itself, believers must safeguard themselves from any possibility of *giving the devil an opportunity* to infiltrate the marriage covenant. In an effort to display a Christian couple's marriage in high honor and to make certain we avoid any cause for God's judgment, we are exhorted to "keep the marriage bed undefiled" (Heb.13: 4). Not only must we make solemn commitments never to expose ourselves to pornographic material (be it through "romance novels," internet sites, or even the movies couples watch *together*), but also married believers must guard themselves from *drifting* into any measure of physical *relations* with someone other than their spouse. It is our spouse (and our spouse alone), who must fulfill our physical (sexual) needs.

Yet, I believe at issue remains the core to this basic truth; namely, that as a couple *joined in oneness* each partner no longer has authoritative rights to his/her own body. We must abandon our American notions of self-sufficiency and independence in light of God's truth that we have a genuine and spiritually pertinent duty to fulfill in keeping our spouse fully satisfied emotionally, romantically and physically. It should not seem odd to be concerned with our spouse's personal preference for how he/she desires our physical body and appearance to be kept. After all, the precluding focus ought to be that our "own" bodies are actually the very dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit. This alone should be enough to keep us diligent in being healthy and vibrant physically.

The command to "stop depriving one another" stands as a reminder to believers that God so fashioned us with healthy physical desires meant to be fulfilled "*dutifully*" (if not enthusiastically) by our spouse; who is a fellow heir of the grace of life. Our mutual co-habitation is essential if we are not to have our prayers "hindered" (1Pet.3:7). And in this regard, we are encouraged to "deprive" one another only as a type of fasting for the very purpose of prayer (1Cor.7:5). Yet, even there Paul immediately reminds us to "come together again" afterward because of the weakness of our flesh and Satan's tactic of gaining a foothold in this very point of our relationship. As Paul further says, he/she who is married ought properly to be concerned about his/her spouse; ultimately, how the spouse may be pleased (1Cor.7: 33-34). Let us endeavor, by God's grace, to exercise our marital responsibilities to our spouses - recognizing the great *privilege* we are afforded in our covenant bond of loving unity.

Ed Otero

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of marriage in general and for our spouse in particular; and we thank you for the gift of sex. Help us to be all You have called us to be to our spouse and be sensitive to meet their needs in any way we can in Spirit, in soul and in body -- to *be* selflessly **for** them and **to** them all they need us to be. Keep us ever pure in Your sight and as living testimonies of Your grace and presence in our union - that You may be glorified in all our married *activities*. In Christ Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Tear Down That Wall

**Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it. Joshua 6: 20**

Relationships within families and married couples, if they are to grow healthy and strong, need to be built on solid foundation – Jesus, the Rock of our salvation. I think of relationship building very much like building a house. Houses need to be built on solid ground and built with effective and efficient tools and equipment. Likewise in a marriage or parent-child relationship, we need effective and critical tools like good listening and communication skills, forgiving and humble hearts and a desire to always plug in to the true source of strength - Jesus - regardless of our circumstances.

There is also another aspect of constructing homes that I find similar in relationships – the building of walls. We may not physically build walls in relationships but we do build invisible “walls” that often wreak havoc in our relationships.

How have you fared in this area of relationship building? Have you become so adept in building walls that your marriage and other family relationships have gone cold, callous or bitter because of those invisible walls? If so, may I borrow the words of President Ronald Reagan in a speech in 1987 when he challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to destroy the Berlin Wall as a symbol of his desire for freedom in the Eastern Bloc: “Tear down this wall!”

My dear brother or sister, if you are in this situation, may I ask you to tear down that wall before it becomes very difficult to reach out to your loved one. I pray that you ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and help you cultivate a forgiving and humble heart to get started on the road of healing and restoration.

After seven days of the Israelites marching around the city, the walls of Jericho came falling down and the Israelites attained victory. May your desire to take at least that initial step towards reconciliation happen within an even shorter time as you head towards the road of victory and reconciliation in your relationships.

Benilda Salvador

Prayer: Holy Spirit, I ask that you guide us as we seek to mend or restore our broken relationships. Help us to overcome pride and unforgiveness so that we can start taking that initial step of tearing the walls that destroy our relationships. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

My Wife – A Fellow Heir

**And grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life. 1 Peter 3:7**

In this life we have different kinds of partnerships whether in business or in our personal lives. But in marriage specifically, God wants us to have a fully committed and engaging partnership.

Some men erroneously think that when wives, as written in Scripture, are to submit to their husbands, they are to have minimal or no voice or input in any matter concerning their relationship.

If I treat Benil as a silent partner, we both lose. I lose because I might make poor decisions if I unilaterally decide on things. She loses because she is deprived of opportunities to make her part of the decision-making process that can develop her and make her feel an important part of our relationship.

I think it is important we allow our wives to enter our some times “secluded” world. We need their help so that in cases where we may not be going the way the Lord may want us to go, we can have them beside us to remind us and encourage us to continue to walk in God’s way. Most of all we need them to be our prayer partners, particularly in situations where we feel hopeless. I pray that we men will have the courage to give our wives greater access to our world and not think of it as less manly but in fact godly when we seek to have them as a partner and equal heir.

Efren Salvador

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, I lift up to you married relationships. I pray that we men may grow daily in our partnership with our wives, seeking always to give them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Thursday, June 12, 2008

He Knew

**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”  
Jeremiah 29:11**

My wife who never woke me in the middle of the night, nudged me and said, “Honey, it’s time to go.” I have never packed a baby bag or seen an ultrasound or even told my wife to push. I’ve never seen a newborn take its first step, speak its first words, or cry its first tears. I’ve never even rocked a cradle or hugged a child to sleep. I haven’t felt the joy of looking into a child’s face to see eyes and teeth and lips that look like mine. All I’ve experienced are broken family dreams and childhood memories of an abusive father, a battered mother, and an overdosed brother, all of which made me bitter and angry.

Then one day my wife told me something I will never forget, she said “you’re upset with **God’s Will** for your life.” Those words made me realize that only God knew the plans He had for me.

He knew that by taking something away from me He would make me value it more. He knew that memories of the past would cultivate passions for the future. He knew He had to put me through something in order to prepare me for His service. He knew that the young lady I met on the subway over 25 years ago would one day become my helper and my wife. He knew she would trust me with her entire family; daughters that write me love letters, a son that loves me and calls me Dad, and a mother-in-law that calls me Papi.

He knew that one day I would love and minister young men with the same passion that I love my family. He knew that the blueprint of my life would encourage other men if I only was willing to follow His plan. He even knew that one day I would write “He Knew.”

Troy E. Davis

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus. Thank you for the life experiences that have made me who I am today. Because of you I care. Because of you I love. Because of you I try.

Friday, June 13, 2008

How Many White Hairs Do You Have?

**For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:2**

One day a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast upon her brunette head. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, “Mom, why are some of your hairs white?”

“Well”, her mother replied, “every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white.”

The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, “Momma, how come all of Grandma’s hairs are white?”

This is a funny story but true. Who do you blame for your gray hair? It is so much easier to point and blame for how we react to our situations and sin than to take the blame for our own mistakes. When will we all start accepting our faults and have Jesus help us learn our lessons to never be repeated? So who do we blame - our fathers, mothers, sisters even our kids for how we react or excuse our sins? Society says you can’t change it, that it is just the way you are but reality is that Jesus helps us repent, forgive and let go to start a fresh and new life. No more blame game just forgiveness. We also need to be careful when we start pointing fingers at others; somehow we lose sight of our imperfections. As we all continue to grow we need to realize that we have lots of lessons to learn. Let us be slow to judge others and quick to love them instead.

It is time to re-evaluate ourselves and ask God to reveal our faults and instead of blaming others ask God to forgive and help you to move on. Let us accept the gray hairs on our heads as victory over every battle won with the help of the Lord.

Denis and Grace McKeown

Prayer: Lord, help us to be people that see the way you see. Forgive us for blaming others for our own faults. Teach us Lord to remove the shame of our shortcomings and help us to rise above our imperfections. Give us new eyes to see ourselves differently and to see others in love. Help us be less judgmental and become people with clear vision and a gentle touch. Help us build each other up and encourage each other so the work of the Kingdom may go forward and we rejoice together in the blessings. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Saturday, June 14, 2008

### Learning to Have a Grateful Heart

**And do not be drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and humns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5: 18-20**

I believe that some of the greatest lessons in life, we learn from our children. They radiate a degree of purity, not encumbered by the world's standards that we learn as we grow older. Even a simple suppertime conversation can make you rethink things out.

Every dinnertime, my six-year old daughter tells me..."Hmm, Mommy, this chicken/fish/food is sooooo goood. You're the best cook ever. You're the best Mommy in the world." And I think to myself..."Oh my, it's not really any different from the dish I usually make." Seeing her thankful and sincere praise makes me realize her sense of gratitude. She means every word without a tinge of prejudice but with a look of appreciation in her beaming little face. It dawned on me that the Lord wants me to learn this spirit of gratitude and praise, not just sometimes but ALL the TIME.

My Father, who provides me with everything, doesn't He deserve much more of my time and a whisper of appreciation for every big and little thing? I have been blessed tremendously and my Father has to know that I am thankful EVERY TIME. This week, I realized that I have a long list of blessings...we take them for granted as we go through our daily routine. Allow me to enumerate some of them and maybe you can see that little things can make your heart leap for joy. I realized that I am blessed to witness the awesome rising of the sun from my bathroom window, for the fragrance of the air after the rain, for the two red tulips that bloom in the morning, for the 24 hours that the Lord has given me to use everyday (instead of complaining of too little time and too much to do), for my youngest sister who recently got married and for my other sister who had a baby, for my family that is growing and for being blessed with friends and family from Church, who fellowship and pray with me, for having the privilege to do a series on Breaking Free with other women from Tuesday Bible study, for being blessed with my ever so loving, caring and patient husband...my soul mate, for my two lovely kids who give me joy and craziness (that I would not trade for anything in the world), for my daughter who does excellent in school and my son who is learning how to walk. The Lord has shown me THESE BLESSINGS and I am thankful. Having a thankful heart changes our perspective in life. It makes us see how we are blessed and not how we are deprived. It makes me see what I have and not what I do not have. It makes me see how the Lord loves me and takes care of me despite the circumstance I am in.

Sandee Seldura

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to always thank you for EVERYTHING! Your blessings are countless! How wonderful are your ways! Help me to take the time to whisper "Thank you" no matter how busy I am. No matter what happens, we know you take care of us, your children. Thank you that we can run to You and You always listen. Amen.

## Is God Your Father?

by Pastor Dave Bucci

God never made the claim in the Bible that He was the Father of a clan, a heathen nation, or the people of the earth. He is their Creator period. But when the nation Israel was being formed and especially under King David we find God calling Himself Father. His emancipation marked them as His own and they became His adopted children. His care for them is frequently compared to that of a Father. On the other hand, He was requesting that they be obedient to Him. As the nation of Israel turned away from God, He became the Father to the remnant rather than the Father of the whole nation. This thought was reinforced by Jesus Himself in the Gospels.

On this Father's Day, I ask you, "Is God your Father?"

Meditate on the following verses which are contained in the "Father's Love Letter" that was originally produced as a PowerPoint sermon illustration in 1999 and accompanied by Brian Doerksen's song "Faithful Father":

### *My child,*

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. Psalm 139:1  
I know when you sit down and when you rise up. Psalm 139:2  
I am familiar with all your ways. Psalm 139:3  
Even the very hairs on your head are numbered. Matthew 10:29-31  
For you were made in my image. Genesis 1:27  
In me you live and move and have your being. Acts 17:28  
For you are my offspring. Acts 17:28  
I knew you even before you were conceived. Jeremiah 1:4-5  
I chose you when I planned creation. Ephesians 1:11-12  
You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book. Psalm 139:15-16  
I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live. Acts 17:26  
You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14  
I knit you together in your mother's womb. Psalm 139:13  
And brought you forth on the day you were born. Psalm 71:6  
I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me. John 8:41-44  
I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love. 1 John 4:16  
And it is my desire to lavish my love on you. 1 John 3:1  
Simply because you are my child and I am your Father. 1 John 3:1  
I offer you more than your earthly father ever could. Matthew 7:11  
For I am the perfect father. Matthew 5:48  
Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand. James 1:17  
For I am your provider and I meet all your needs. Matthew 6:31-33  
My plan for your future has always been filled with hope. Jeremiah 29:11  
Because I love you with an everlasting love. Jeremiah 31:3  
My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore. Psalms 139:17-18  
And I rejoice over you with singing. Zephaniah 3:17  
I will never stop doing good to you. Jeremiah 32:40  
For you are my treasured possession. Exodus 19:5  
I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul. Jeremiah 32:41  
And I want to show you great and marvelous things. Jeremiah 33:3

(see back page)

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me. Deuteronomy 4:29  
Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4  
For it is I who gave you those desires. Philippians 2:13  
I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine. Ephesians 3:20  
For I am your greatest encourager. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17  
I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4  
When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you. Psalm 34:18  
As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart. Isaiah 40:11  
One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Revelation 21:3-4  
And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. Revelation 21:3-4  
I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus. John 17:23  
For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed. John 17:26  
He is the exact representation of my being. Hebrews 1:3  
He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you. Romans 8:31  
And to tell you that I am not counting your sins. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19  
Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19  
His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you. 1 John 4:10  
I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love. Romans 8:31-32  
If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me. 1 John 2:23  
And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. Romans 8:38-39  
Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. Luke 15:7  
I have always been Father, and will always be Father. Ephesians 3:14-15  
My question is... Will you be my child? John 1:12-13  
I am waiting for you. Luke 15:11-32

## **Love, Your Dad**