

My “Anchor” articles

By CQ

2013

A Journey, an Old Book, and a Passion

At first it started as a hint of a nice idea—to make a new children’s Bible that would be unique and one of a kind. The twist being that it would be nurturing and without aspects that aren’t appropriate for young children, yet oddly are present in most of the Bibles I’ve looked through in the past 25 years of caring for children. I’d mulled over it and wished for such a tool for raising my children. Little did I know that once I started, this was to become my focus, passion, and commission for nearly two years now, and that mysterious happenings and results would be the norm while working on it.

My journey through the Bible began once again. I felt I knew the Bible. I have heard it, read it, and memorized it since the time I was able to talk. I could sum it up as a book of history, instruction, admonition, and encouragement, with some future predictions thrown in. I didn’t expect to fall in love. I didn’t expect the healing to take place in my heart. “Healing” is the only word I can think of using.

Seven years ago I’d read the whole Bible cover to cover. Most of it was interesting, but some aspects really got to me and seemed rather traumatic. I tried to forget those things. I didn’t know that time and becoming a mother would change my perspective and understanding.

This time it was as if I were reading a book I’d never read before. It seemed every word and story took on new meaning and unveiled previously unknown secrets. Rather than merely seeing historical facts while reading, I felt emotion along with the characters. I had new depth to my own heart through my challenges as a mother. This seemed to make everything I read take on new meaning. This book is magical.

If something doesn’t make sense one year, just wait and give it another go later, brushing aside the “know it already’s.” I learned that it’s not a knowledge type of book. It’s a living and interacting thing. I think we have yet to discover what the concept “God’s Word” really means. It can get deep into someone’s heart and do something that no one on earth can. And a year later those exact same phrases can revolute a life all over again. It’s weird; it’s wonderful. There aren’t concepts and words on earth that can describe this substance, because it’s so unearthly.

The other day I got an analogy for children that puts it down at a level that I and they can grasp. How like Lego are the verses in the Bible. Here’s some of what I wrote on it:

Sometimes I’ll read a verse and I’ll notice one thing that it’s talking about, and then at another time in my life I’ll realize something else that I didn’t notice on an earlier read. A verse can be just what I need to encourage me when I am sad. Yet that same verse might teach me an important lesson that I need to learn some other day. Yet again, that same verse might be the answer I needed when I had a decision to make and I prayed and Jesus reminded me of that Bible verse.

Each verse is like a different Lego piece. When you look at each piece, they look simple, and when you turn it this way and that way, it looks different too—the top view, the side angle, the bottom, and so forth. And when you put different pieces together, they can make endless creations and designs. No one has ever discovered all the things that can be made with Lego, right? That’s the same with the Bible—

every time you read it, there will be something new to discover. And just like Lego is used to build things, God's words in the Bible will help us to make our lives interesting, fun, and useful.

Back to my journey. I found my morning chats with my husband to be bubbling over with all kinds of newfound tidbits. Sometimes with joy, sometimes with tears as something had so deeply touched me, sometimes with an I-hope-I-found-something-out-that-you've-never-discovered-before excitement.

"Everyone knows that Elijah called down fire from heaven on the altar—but was he the only one, or the first?" (One other person was King Solomon, for instance.)

"Did you know that there was a ferry boat—and called just that in the KJV—that took King David and all his entourage over the Jordan River?"

"Did you know that King David wasn't just good at playing the harp, but he had thousands of harps made so that many people could sing and praise as part of their service to God? And some whole families of hundreds of people had the ministry of singing and receiving prophecy?"

"Mordecai was an amazing publisher. Just think, they had to do it all by hand! He made several messages go out—and each one was an enormous task, with thousands of copies made and translated into every language around!"

I remember, too, the feeling I had, the change it brought to my heart and mind, after reading the story of Jesus' appearances after His resurrection. It was a great revelation to me to realize that He was *really* with them all the time, only just not visible. And so He is today as well. When He said, "I am with you always," He actually meant it, in reality. He was involved. He heard each word they said. When Thomas missed seeing Him and declared his conditions for belief, Jesus heard every single word and was there. There was a new understanding granted to me then that changed me.

Odd things would happen too, depending on what story of the Bible I was working on. For example when I was doing the one where Mary anoints Jesus with her perfume oil, I walked into the kids' playroom to check on them. As soon as I walked in, my four-year-old said, "Mommy, sometimes you smell so nice! Like right now!" This won't seem like a big deal or unusual to you unless you realize that we are chemically sensitive and no perfume, cologne, shampoo, cleaning fluids, soaps, or anything scented is used by me and the children. Neat!

Then there was the time I was working on the story of Jesus and the children. My youngest was very into Jesus all of a sudden, and often asked for me to show him the "Jesus loves me right now" picture of Jesus with children.

I'd often wondered what the "cloud pillar" was like that led the Israelites through the wilderness. Well, when working on writing the story of that part of the Bible, I went outside and saw a sight that kept me outside for quite some time, except to dash in and grab my camera! In the spotless blue sky there was some type of cloud formation that looked unlike any cloud I'd ever seen before. It moved from one side of the sky to the other. It was a perfectly straight, ruler-looking cloud—as if it were a jet stream. But it was closer and it never once changed shape or dispersed, and it moved in its entirety in the direction it was pointing toward.

Or there was the time when I was working on the story of mother Hannah and boy Samuel and how she made a coat for him each year. That day our broken sewing machine decided to work. Why had I even tried it? The children had gotten the urge to ask me to sew them clothes! I prayed, they prayed, and the machine worked, and in a day or two they all had matching new night clothes. And I have never made clothes for children before. “Where did that come from? Ah, of course! Thanks, Hannah!”

Well, I won’t explain about when I was doing the book of Isaiah, and about my three-year-old’s sudden dress-code preference!

These people are real, and reading the words in the Bible changes the situation around us, according to what we read. It’s unexpected. It’s far-out. It’s God! He’s alive. He interacts with us in our lives. We are His project and the focus of His love.

The things I’d had issues about either made sense as I read on and got a good, full perspective as I saw the thread weaving from one book to the next, or sometimes the Lord seemed to whisper things to my heart that gave me a new understanding. I was at full peace with the Bible for the first time. More than at peace, I’ve changed from feeling “Okay, got it,” to being in awe. What’ll I discover next? Or what will I find out that I have never realized before? It’s been read for thousands of years and still arrests the passion of those who give it a deep read—and again, as the pages of their life turn.

July 2012

How Jesus says: I love you!

I think one of the main things that has drawn my heart to want to be closely knit with Jesus’ heart has been the personalized touches of His love that He’s given me. I relate to that poem that says,

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him.*

(By James G. Small)

He does special things in each of our lives—sometimes we notice, many times we don’t, and other times we notice but don’t peg the credit right. It must be sad for Him, but Jesus loves us too much to give up. On and on throughout our life He just keeps trying to say and to show us those three wonderful words: I love you!

As early as a child I was testing Him out, to see if He really was on the other end of prayers—and more specifically my little prayers. I could see the reason for a big God answering when my family needed a house, and we prayed and looked and at long last got the best we could imagine. Yes, I believed in a vague way, that, “The Lord answered our prayers”, but it didn’t touch me deep in my heart. It didn’t grab me personally.

Months later while playing in the big nice yard of that house I found an empty water spray bottle. It was broken inside, and I so wished it would work. I wanted to spray water on the flowers, just for fun. So I prayed in my heart for Jesus to make it work for me, and then I tried it again. My heart skipped a beat. My

mind was in wonder. Water came spraying out for the next few minutes (before returning to its non-working state again). Oh boy! Jesus was not only real, and could hear big prayers, but little ones too. He could hear and answer my little prayers for things that made no difference at all in the big scheme of things—just a difference to me, for a moment. I realised He knew what I was thinking, and furthermore cared if I was happy.

As a teen struggling with endless emotions and loneliness, I needed such love in as tangible a form as was possible from the One I had given my heart and life to. On a walk I saw by the side of the road the tiniest, cutest little pansy. It was adorable. I'd never seen this miniature version of pansies before. I picked it, and held it carefully all the way home. The blossom was no bigger than my fingernail, and the stem only as long as my finger. I placed it in a paper cup on my bedside, trying to extend its expected short life as much as I could. A week passed and it still sat there in the water as good as new, cheery and bright. I was happy.

Then the most curious thing occurred—a “never before, never since” thing. From its tiny stem there were roots growing. Roots, that in a short time only got longer and stronger. I planted it in a flower pot, and with joy saw it grow into a plant with many other blossoms. My creator—the One Who makes plants to grow as well—was there with me, continuing to create of my life what He wanted, molding me through the ups and downs, and bringing blossoms of joy my way.

Fast forward to young adulthood, and having still no sign of “that special someone” seemed to make every step an uphill climb. My work then could be considered a light load. But for me at the time it was oh so hard. I was caring for one dear little girl, while her parents both worked. I was often with her for 11-12 hours a day, and found it wearisome at times, because after playing the role of a stand-in parent, I didn't have the “reward” of then having a husband's arms to rest in when the day was over. There wasn't much challenge at the time for me, but on I braved, doing the best I could, and all the while, unbeknownst to me, being trained for what my future would hold.

One day the mother bought a box of second hand crayons for her girl. With joy the little girl promptly dumped the whole pack all over the floor. Ah... *one more mess to clean up...* then I noticed something else mingled with the crayons. An earring! Just the style and shape I liked, and matched colour of clothes I happened to be wearing that day. Surely there wouldn't be a pair in this second hand box of crayons. But I was wrong. There were two earrings indeed. I smiled. I wouldn't have found a pair more perfectly suited to my tastes if I'd gone out to shop for some. I wore them often, and my heart perked up every time I did.

Years later when I last married, and continuing on the roller coaster of life with the challenges and thrills of parenthood, a puzzling, scientific phenomenon occurred—at least I've never heard of it being possible. To set the scene: It happened at a time when my husband was compelled to be gone for 6 months (refused visa entry into the country we had been staying and working in as volunteers). I was caring for our one year old with all his health issues, while pregnant with our second child, and ending in a sudden, unexpected C-section. I was then caring for the baby too. My husband couldn't enter the country, and I couldn't leave the country till we had the passport and paperwork for the new baby.

Ever heard of an egg that after being boiled, painted by a child to resemble a bird's egg, placed in a decorative nest, displayed on the shelf for several months—and then when it was opened one day, was found to have turned into golden coloured glass? It was like an amber stone, or glass. It didn't smell in the least. It didn't go bad. It was hard and clear as glass, and amber in colour.—The “white” of the egg, that is. I still have it. Perhaps my heart was like that egg—cooked in the hot water of the difficult situation. Then God gave strength and faith, as good as gold or jewels. We came through, and the better for it.

Now, a mother of three children, and hoping and praying for them to know Jesus' love for them in personal ways as well, validating His reality in their own hearts, I'm thrilled when such occurrences happen—such as the following account my children wrote about in a letter to their friends:

“One of our favourite things to do is to draw with our new coloured markers. Because we like to draw amazing pictures—like treaded work vehicles!

“Here is a special little miracle Jesus did for us the other day. For a few days we had been looking for one of the lids to the light blue marker. We didn't want it to get dried out, but it just seemed to disappear one day when we used it.

“We just got new bike helmets and read about bicycle safety and wanted to ride them. We drove to a place that had a big area for biking and we wore our new helmets and had a good time riding around.

“When we were at the bike park, mommy looked in the grass in the bike playground area, and was so surprised to see, guess what? A light blue marker lid—to just the same kind of pens that we have. It was exactly what we needed. It had some dirt on it, and had been there for a while, it seemed. We brought it home and happily placed it on our pen! Jesus is so amazing. He knows what we are thinking and what our wants are.”

As the days, months, years—and yes, decades—pass, I've learned to know and love Him personally through countless special touches and displays of His love, in ways that would seem totally insignificant when compared to all the change and miracles that are needed in the world—but made a world of difference to me. He won me—forever, through His love. And faith alone tells me that I make a difference to Him, and that's why He'd even bother to. “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

August 22, 2015

Chasing Crocodiles

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil, and he will fill from you. (James 4:7)

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

Have you ever heard the saying, “The only thing to fear is fear itself”? Or it could be said, “The only thing to be afraid of *allowing* is fear itself!” That means we should not tolerate or give place to a feeling of fear. If we let it grip our heart and mind then it will control us. It will take away our freedom to do what we must do. Most of all, fear hinders us from freely serving the Lord.

If we are submitted to or in obedience to Jesus Christ, He is well able to protect us and give us all the courage, grace and faith that is needed. If God is the one empowering us and in control of our lives, then we have the authority, in Jesus' name to resist all evil from His and our adversary, the Devil.

So, since the Devil can't do much else, to us who are protected by God, he tries to weaken us and control us through fear. If our spiritual enemy can get us to think his fearful thoughts and distressing imaginations and crippling worries, then he can gain more and more control of our actions—or rather make us very inactive.

When I read this ancient true story quoted below, I thought it incredible. It's not telling you what to do if you face this type of fearsome beast when out in the wild. This is not practical advice in the physical

world today—for if you tried it, I doubt you would have the upper hand and would meet the fate others have.

However, even though a true story, I ask you to look at it as a parable for the lessons we can derive from it. Being well acquainting with my own personal victory over fear when in my teen years, this story stirred me. If you too give it some thought, you may see that it holds a great key to liberating us from the fear that makes us unable to conquer and win against the bad that seeks to snare and entrap all those who have set out on their mission for our Master and Maker.

(From “Curious Creatures in Zoology”, compiled/ by John Ashton in 1890. Spelling of words updated.)

“The greatest terror unto Crocodiles, as both Seneca and Pliny affirm, are the inhabitants of the Isle Tentyrus within Nilus, for those people make them run away with their voices, and many times pursue and take them in snares.

“Of these people speaketh Solinus in this manner: There is a generation of men in the Isle Tentyrus within the waters of Nilus, which are of a most adverse nature to the Crocodile, dwelling also in the same place. And, although their persons or presence be of small stature, yet herein is their courage admired, because at the sudden sight of a Crocodile, they are no whit daunted; for one of these dare meet and provoke him to run away.

“They will also leap into Rivers and swim after the Crocodile, and, meeting with it, without fear cast themselves upon the Beasts back, riding on him as upon a horse. And if the Beast lift up his head to bite him, when he gapeth they put into his mouth a wedge, holding it hard at both ends with both their hands, and so, as it were with a bridle, lead, or rather drive, them captives to the Land, where, with their noise, they so terrify them that they make them cast up the bodies which they had swallowed into their bellies; and because of this antipathy in Nature, the Crocodiles dare not come near to this Island.” (End of book excerpt.)

If these people would have looked at the frame of their own body and compared it with that of the fearsome creatures, they could have done like most everyone else on Earth does—lived in fear and suffered many sorrows from this creature who would have surely taken the advantage. But they instead chose to “give no place” and turned the situation around. Instead of being in fear, they were feared. They sent both fear and their enemy scrambling by their courage. They kept in charge of their habitation through faith and use of their voices loudly, and thus kept it safe for their families.

We have to love God with all our heart and mind and soul and be as a vacuum for His loving, good, and all-powerful Spirit. And at the same time we must maintain an utter hatred, vehemently so, for anything pertaining in any form to God’s adversary. Anything that is manifested both in the physical world of material possessions, literature, other media, and practices; as well as in the realm of the unseen in the spiritual. If we do as the Bible admonitions, “Neither give place to the Devil, (Ephesians 4:27)” and we wholly desire God in every part of our life, thoughts and doings, then we can be fully empowered.

The Word of God is the most powerful force around. If fear or troubles of the enemy start to be inflicted on our minds and hearts, our voices, too, can be a very strong force when we use them to quote God’s Word and sing faith-building songs to Him. Singing a song of faith and praise can make one victorious.

The way to victory over fear’s paralyzing control of our life? Do not allow it any spot. Instead, do the thing you fear, with the power and Word and name of Jesus in your heart and voice, and you will then be set free. You may have to boldly do so several times, but eventually the habits of your mind will change. Instead of fearful imaginations, you will look to Jesus and let His faith fill your heart. You will be free at last to do that which you know is good and right, without the fears and evil imagery attempting to stop you.

Pray, in Jesus name, with other strong believers, for the grip of fear in all its forms to be let go, along with any hold the enemy is trying to have on you. You must fight in prayer and then trust that God heard and answered. The next part is up to you. Plunge boldly, fearlessly, into that humble duty, task or

situation that you were previously hindered from freely doing when fear gripped you. But this time, use your voice, out loud in praiseful song to Jesus, and quote promises aloud from the Bible, and you can know that your very presence together with the Spirit of God will chase away what it is that you are tempted to fear. *“I will fear no evil, for though art with me,”* King David said in Psalm 23.

August 22, 2015

Topics: peace and faith, no fear, God is with us, trusting in Jesus’ love, surrender to God’s will

Perfectly Tranquil

There is no fear in Love; perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4:18)

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. (Isaiah 41:10)

Love and fear are opposites. Those that love Jesus with all their heart and have rested their future and life with Him, find a peace that none can explain nor take away from them. But if we, like Peter who wished to walk on the stormy waves to see Jesus, get our eyes on the waves of our troubles, may feel the grip of fear. The solution and secret is found in the words of this passage, “Thou (Lord) wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusted in thee,” (Isaiah 26:3). We need our mind stable and firm on Jesus—His love, His unlimited ability to help us, His thoughts and Words, and trust that He sees and knows all, and will make everything work out for good for us in the end.

Some fears are somewhat imaginary or mental or come from the invisible spiritual side. Other fears are caused by real events or possibilities. But whatever incites fear or worry or distress in our hearts, God is still in control. He still loves us, and is able to help bring us through the situation for the better. We can have peace as we teamwork with Jesus, looking to Him for His guidance, as we face danger or unwanted struggles.

Fear, like a disease, can be contagious. It’s good to realize this—both so you can put a stop to it before it sweeps others up along with you into its tormenting control, and so that you can guard against it when others’ fears are beginning to affect you. If the fearful disposition of those around you is beginning to make you feel the same, it’s not because your senses and wit are validating it and telling you the cause of fear is worth the worry; it is simply because it’s a contagious thing—but only if you don’t hoist up your spiritual immune system.

God’s Word, His promises, His voice to You right at that moment, the truth and reality as God sees it, and the knowledge of God’s love for you will shield you aplenty against the virus of fear. “There is no fear in love” and “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 18).

The lady who penned the following thoughts and events in her life, found the way to total peace of heart and mind, and freedom from fear. She first of all chose to be full surrendered to the Lord, wanting her life to hold only that which would please Jesus most; her love for Jesus made her desire this. Then, just like a loving couple talks to each other as they are on a journey, so did she wish to be in close and constant communication with the Lord, through every step of her life’s way, while doing His will. She knew Jesus loved her eternally and immeasurably, and this gave her peace and faith that because she belonged to Him who treasured her; He could see and care about all that befell her and would only allow that which was for her good.

(From: "The Autobiography of Madame Guyon" by Jeanne Marie Bouvier de La Motte Guyon, written in the 1600's.)

"We met with accidents in this journey, sufficient to have terrified anyone. ...yet my resignation to God was so strong, that I passed fearless, even where there was apparently no possibility of escape. At one time we got into a narrow pass, and did not perceive, until we were too far advanced to draw back, that the road was undermined by the river Loire, which ran beneath, and the banks had fallen in; so that in some places the footmen were obliged to support one side of the carriage. All those around me were terrified to the highest degree, yet God kept me perfectly tranquil."

"Although we had much more danger on the road than when going, I had no thought about myself, but all about my husband. Seeing the coach overturning, I said, 'Fear not, it is on my side that it falls; it will not hurt you.' I believe, had all perished, I should not have been moved. My peace was so profound that nothing could shake it."

"I had nothing to wish for, nor yet to be afraid of. Everywhere I found my proper center, because everywhere I found God. My heart could then desire nothing but what it had. This disposition extinguished all its desires; and I sometimes said to myself, 'What wantest thou? What fearest thou?' I was surprised to find upon trial that I had nothing to fear. Every place I was in was my proper place."

"My disposition at this time was a continual prayer, without knowing it to be such. The presence of God was so plentifully given that it seemed to be more in me than my very self. The sensibility thereof was so powerful, so penetrating, it seemed to me irresistible. Love took from me all liberty of my own. ... My strong love to the will of God would have rendered everything easy to me. The property of this prayer was to give a great love to the order of God, with so sublime and perfect a reliance on Him, as to fear nothing, whether danger, thunders, spirits, or death."

"One day reflecting humanly on this undertaking of mine, I found my faith staggering, weakened with a fear lest I were under a mistake, which slavish fear was increased by an ecclesiastic at our house, who told me it was a rash and ill-advised design. Being a little discouraged, I opened the Bible, and met with this passage in Isaiah,

'Fear not thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel. I will help thee saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel.' (Isaiah 61:14) and near it, 'Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.' (Isaiah 43:1-2)"

2013

Connected

Our property happens to be the hub and access point for the Internet connection and telephone wires for several houses. One day, as had happened countless times before, a pair of telephone wire fix-it men knocked on our door. However, after they left, we were without Internet for the next 10 days. For us that's a problem, as both my husband's and my work rely on it. People were waiting for prompt replies or work would slow down or halt—and they would be clueless as to why the sudden silence.

When we called the company, we were put in the queue for servicing. It was to take one or two weeks until it would be our turn. What had they done to our connection? We found out later.

During that time, there were other struggles to contend with. Some issues with our children had peaked, and at long last I took some time alone with the Lord to ask Him a string of questions. My husband would do the same. We would compare notes and hopefully find solutions.

One thing the Lord asked of me was something I had long kissed good-bye to, and that by all circumstances would seem utterly impossible: Stop everything each day—during the day—for a good long while, to pray, read the Bible, connect and commune with Him. I read at night sometimes, when I wasn't needed for mother duties throughout the night. But to stop during the day, while the kids did whatever ... I really didn't see it as being doable.

"If you want me to do this, You're going to have to work some kind of miracle—I don't see how it can be a reality," I told Him. Do this on top of all the kids' care, teaching, cooking, cleaning, and my work as well that had to get woven in to each day. But I was desperate, and eager to grasp at anything to bring a solution.

As I was having this prayer time in a tent outside, and I made the decision to say yes, not worrying about how it could actually work out, I heard a comforting voice. It was a man saying to my husband, "I've come to fix your Internet."

Something in his tone made me feel at peace. He climbed the ladder and took care of the problem. He then explained, "Someone has come and taken your line and given it to someone else. I'm going to give it back to you, and they'll just have to come back again and do the job right."

Our connection was working, and somehow I knew there was something more to it than that. My connection with the Lord was getting hooked up again. Life had just been too busy to really stop, breathe, listen and look up.

I pray each day alone and with my family. I read the Word with my children. I read many of the online articles and posts. My work involves a lot of Word-based reading material and Spirit-led writing and prophecy. But there's something different about stopping for just me-time. Just me and Jesus, absorbing things that are just for me. Luxury.

When you are a mother, with constant needs to tend to, you put your own needs aside so many times that eventually you save yourself the trouble and stop wishing for and attempting to enjoy things for yourself anymore. But Jesus wanted me to connect—my heart to His.

Peace and relief in our children's situation was felt as I attempted each day to spend some "just Jesus and me" time. There was a marked difference from that time on in the problems we were facing—especially on the days I managed to take time to stop and have quiet, focused reading and meditation time.

The other day I was about to read something to the children. Two of them were eager to listen, but one of them darted out of the room, as if the sight of a book triggered an eject button. He chose to go off to play. I was sad. I wanted to have a nice time teaching them something. I looked forward to this time.

This boy is happy to play with me, he loves my cooking and is vocal with his appreciation, he's obedient, and he's glad to romp around outside together. He's very glad to hug and cuddle, and he's thankful that I'm there to comfort him when he's hurt. So it's not that he doesn't like me, and he knows he needs me. But it seemed lately he didn't want to listen or absorb anything I wanted to impart—in books or verbally. And that leaves a hole in our relationship.

The thought came to me, "Am I being that way with Jesus? I like to have Jesus around. I'm glad He can fix up my hurts. I depend on Him being there for me when I pray and have a need. I like to praise Him and think He's just great. I like to know that I'm pleasing Him and I try to obey Him. But am I willing to

take the time to sit in the student seat and to let Him instruct me and read His Word, to study it, to focus?”

It’s really hard to do. There’s so much else to think about. My mind is like a dozen machines, trying to keep everything going and keeping track of everything. There are a lot of jokes about guys not understanding how a woman’s mind works, and they have to learn tolerance and understanding. A woman might, in a moment of intimacy, say the most unrelated things—because there is so much going on in her mind!

But for some of us women, at least for me, I have to not give in to negative comparing with guys’ seeming luxury of being able to face things one at a time, focus on one job at a time. Seems so relaxing! To compensate for the many jobs I have to fill—all simultaneously—the Lord gave me a complex mind-machine that can juggle several things at once, keeping mental track, data, and stats of everything.

So for me to take the time to stop all those thinking machines, put everything on pause, put my motor in “park” and focus on something that is only for me—not for the kids, the house, our marriage, the work, for others, and so forth—is a real change of gears. The experience with my son, who for that week wanted to do anything—as long as it wasn’t to listen and learn anything—gave me a clear picture of how Jesus must feel. My son has changed now, and so have I.

Until then, I thought it was good enough to tell Jesus I love Him, to be serving Him, to be working for Him, to be His intimate mate. But my not stopping to let Him instruct and teach me, and to take time to really get to know Him personally, was leaving a hole in our relationship. I needed to do more than just read Word-related material quickly to take in spiritual facts. Like meeting with a close friend over a meal. The food intake isn’t the main thing you are there for, but the fellowship and the knitting of hearts.

I’m forming new habits and schedules now. I tell the kids, “It’s my Jesus time now.” And most of the time it works out, and they respect it. After all, it’s baked into their day and expected of them—to have time daily to read and pray. If I don’t do it too, how will they learn to make it a life habit and reap the wonderful benefits?

31, march 2013

Each Spring I Think I Can Garden...

Our vegetable garden has many a tale to tell. But for the most part there is nothing it can boast of producing. I get discouraged. But when the sun shines and beckons me to try yet again, I give it a chance.

“Why is it that it takes so much work and effort to coax these food-growing seeds to do their thing—when the weeds need absolutely no help at all? In fact the very reason they thrive is when I DON’T give attention to the garden!” I wondered.

Well, we’ve had some strawberries and a few acorn-size beets and carrots, and a one year we had some thriving lettuce, and a couple of cucumber plants. But really, for the work we put into the garden this year, there was nothing at all to speak of.

After we had spent most of the day preparing the ground and planting about 10 different types of vegetables I was full of faith and anticipation for the great outcome. But my son didn’t share my hope. “Why are we even planting these—since last year it didn’t work?”

It was true—but in a unique way. The seeds did grow—and grew into plants that eventually were taller than my children, but oddly enough they were mostly all leaves and produced no food on them, or very little that was actually edible. It was supposed to be a cabbage patch with various types of cabbage.

Nothing resembled the full-colour photo on the seed packet, in shape or appearance, and had a very strange texture.

We'd waited so long for them to mature—all the way until it was time to plant yet again. We just had to up root them, eat what bits we could, and then try to dispose of the several large bags that these big good-for-nothing plants filled. We had a fun time cooking the bits and pieces, that for the months of waiting and work, made up to about half-a-meal for the children.

This year we watched the dirt, waiting for the transformation from brown to patterns of green. There were little shoots quickly emerging—even before the expected time, and so many of them! “Wow! Things are growing already!” I was happy. Well, until I took a closer look.

“That’s odd—all the seedlings of all the types we’ve planted look identical... and I thought we planted the carrots in neat rows? These seedlings are covering the whole garden plot. What? It’s grass!” All grass growing—not a proper shoot to be seen. Only the peas and beans were doing what they were meant to. Thank God for that! I did see about three lettuce plants beginning, but by the next day they had vanished entirely. Most likely a salad for a slug. (We came across an article that gave us a clue as to the mystery of the grass growing: Dig and dig, and keep a garden plot you are planning on using dug up throughout the year that. Never let the weeds or grass go to seed!)

Oh well, the exercise, sunshine, and practicing going through the motions was fun in its own way. But it wasn’t an entirely fulfilling endeavour.

If the one who planted the apple tree in our yard could see it now they might feel the same way. It’s a huge bird feeder to some very happy cockatoos. We don’t mind the birds eating all the apples on it, even before they are fully grown—as the apples are worm and bug ridden, every last one of them, every year.

Last year there was however one apple, down low enough that we could reach it, that remained mysteriously untouched by the birds. It grew and grew into a big and proper ripe apple. We picked it and to our delight there was absolutely nothing wrong with it. It was delicious and good. We all shared it. There’s nothing like picking food from your backyard for a snack!

We’d love to have that be a reality for us, so we are reading through a good book on gardening. There was something I never knew! One section was talking about fruit trees. I had always assumed that fruit trees grew fruit—each year. However, this book was saying that it’s not like clockwork, but what it said sounded a bit closer to real life.

Some years a tree may not produce any fruit at all. Some years it yields a little. Other years it may grow a whole lot. There are all kinds of reasons for it. If there has been pest control in the area, for example, and there aren’t enough bees around to pollinate it, then the tree can’t produce fruit. If it has born many fruit one year, it might take a rest the next year. Different things affect the fruitfulness of the tree.

Gardening—or trying to—has taught the children and I a lot. And that part of the book got me thinking, or relaxing really. Each year is different. We are to try our best and give life our best shot, and it can be fun to keep busy working away on positive projects for the good of others. But not every year will the produce the same or anticipated results.

When I came to this city I joined a support group for a while. It was for Christian homeschooling families. I had so many great ideas and ambitions, and ways that I could contribute the homeschooling community and families. The plans never really worked out. One family visited us a couple times for children’s Bible studies, but then moved on. There wasn’t a “harvest” or “fruit” in the ways that I thought would be so nice. But I did make contact with a few people, and throughout the past few years we’ve been able to help each other in different ways.

There's one mother that I felt I'd made a difference to. We connected, and she's been a help to us too at times. My children felt like instant friends with her boys the few times they came for a visit. Her husband built beds for our children for free. I've been able to send her notes of encouragement via email, and she really appreciates the moral support.

I feel in some ways she's like the one, lone apple on the tree for all my efforts here. But what I do makes a difference even to one person, then it's worth it.

I'll keep learning all I can about gardening, and I'll keep planting the seeds of faith in the hearts of anyone I get the chance to reach. I won't worry about the outcome if it seems to make no big difference in the overall world, and I don't feel I have a whole harvest of "sheaves" to "bring in" to Heaven, like that song says, I'll remind myself that the "well done" commendation was to a faithful servant. I'll focus on being that, and leave the results and harvest stats up to the Lord.

2014

Giving Beyond Personal Gratification

It was a bit of a revelation to me when I was told, "Thank you. You've made me feel loved." I guess somehow in my subconsciousness I think that to make others feel the Lord's love, I have to feel the surge of it flowing through me out to them. I must have missed a lesson in that grade. The fact was, I was just going through the motions to do someone a favour, in response to their request; I was their only option. I didn't feel any special motivation or particular spark, and certainly no pulsating "love" empowering me.

At first it puzzled me. How does that work? How can someone feel the Lord's love through our actions, when even we, the giver, feel no spark of it, but do it out of the "duty of love", just going through the motions in obedience to the principles of God's Word? However, when thinking about myself and how I feel when others are there for me, it's no mystery. Do I assume that when someone responds to my requests for help, that they only do it if they have a gushing feeling of love 'n' compassion? Or are they often just being Jesus' transmitter to lend a helping hand, whether they feel the love pulsating or not? Did I feel Jesus' love through their action, regardless of their love feelings or lack of them? For sure. I take it as from the Lord.

I have felt Jesus' love in million ways throughout my life, and I'm grateful to the countless souls that have pitched in their two-cents and more along the way, that have helped and sustained me and got me this far. It's good and humbling to realise that there's a good chance that most of the time it was just out of love for the Lord and obedience to His Word and His leading that they demonstrated that love in action. Love is a verb—not just an emotion.

Jesus had a personally heart-to-heart talk with me yesterday. I began to realise how selfish it is when choose primarily to exert energy and give of myself and time to things that bring some sort of personal gratification. I mentally went through all the "giving" I do each day—which I thought was nearly non-stop. But in reality there aren't that many situations where I compel myself to give in a way that I expect nothing at all in return, no feeling of gratification. Even cleaning the dirty bathroom floor gives me back the reward of a cheery environment; or standing on my feet cooking for hours—I get to eat it too, and of course I chose a menu that I would enjoy most, as a way to inspire myself. Would I give the same energy and time, if I truly received nothing in return in this lifetime, or at least not immediately?

What gift of love can I give to others today, something that would mean a lot to them, something that makes them feel a big hug of encouragement from Jesus—even if I don't feel the smallest spark of joy in it initially? He calls me to be His hands and body, His tongue, eyes and ears on Earth for those who need to know He cares. He can be the one to always feel the compassion, and those I help can get to experience the emotions of love received; my job is just to be the conduit.

I'll look today for new opportunities to give love—in ways that are “outside the box” of my personal shallow well of love. The degree of love they feel in return isn't hinging on my human fickle feelings, but rather if I'm in sync with doing what the Lord and His Word are calling me to do, and I'm willing to do it with enthusiasm and a bit of flare if I dare.

That's all He's asking when He says to “love one another”. The rewarding rush and rapture of doing a deed of love can be felt in the Land of Love above, where I'll be more capable of enjoying higher levels of joy.

Moments after writing the above, my first chance came—my opportunity to give beyond personal gratification. Would we let someone stay at our small house for an additional three months? It has already been over a year, when the original request made was for just a month or two. Close quarters and a single shared bathroom can have its challenging moments. Then I remembered! The lights began blinking in my mind; the angels compelling, “This is your chance to give without any form of gratification in return! The Lord will be the one to repay.” So I cheerfully said yes, and immediately felt a sense of satisfaction—like I'd just marked off the most important “to do” of the day.

2013

Impossible Happenings

Sometimes it's fun to pray those “impossible” prayers asking for things that, to my mind, seem completely unable to materialize. I like to not limit the Lord, and sometimes I think it offends Him when we think something is beyond His ability. Knowing His sheer delight in answering prayers and aiding us in any way possible, as we pursue His will, gives the boost of faith to truly ask “anything in His name.”¹ And then I wait with curiosity to see His response.

I know I can't expect that every single thing I ask for will come to me, right then or even ever. So I even state that in my prayers, adding, “If You know it's best. If not, I trust You to work out something better.” Then at least I've opened the door for the miraculous, and it's amazing to see what *does* come about—such as what happened with our food and shopping situation.

Can an impossible request be answered, tailor-made? Here's what just happened to us.

For months I'd been praying for “something” to work out. It was even hard to know what exactly to ask for, but I stated our challenges and what would be ideal to have in our situation.

Buying our weekly food was a problem. I can't leave the house most of the time, due to health and vehicle issues. So I can't shop. It all falls on my already overworked husband to do it. It was draining for him, and took away from the little time he had when he was not working, instead of spending time with his children or resting.

I also wanted food to cost less, so it was less of a financial strain. We wanted fresher and healthier food, right from the local farms. Any help in the health department was worth exploring; we knew that the plastic packaging, chemicals, and long storage and preselling time that is common in the main shops wasn't helping us any.

How could the Lord answer such a request?

¹ John 14:14.

One morning my five-year-old wakes up and says, "Mommy, in my dream last night there was a message that said, 'Something special is going to happen tomorrow!'"

And sure enough, it did!

The day was nearly over when there was a knock on our door. I stood there to hear a man telling me everything that was my wish come true. I could hardly believe it. Of all the houses, of all the cities, of all the states in this huge country, here was a representative from a team of farmers that wanted to do something new. They wanted to bring food from the farms right to people's doorsteps.

I was a bit in a daze, but worked through the steps of signing up for it. Now, I just "shop" online, selecting what we need that week. We open our door early on Tuesday morning and there is our weekly food in boxes! Fresher, no plastic packaging, and costing less than what we had been paying at the shop. I'm taken aback. There really isn't a tailor-made need that is too hard for the Lord to figure out a solution to.

Yesterday, when wondering if it really is cheaper, I looked in the boxes and there were several extra things placed in our box. I added up the cost of all those unexpected "free" items and it came to a notable amount. My son said, "I just felt in my heart the Lord gave us the extra food today to show us His love."

It didn't happen overnight, and took many months of praying for it—whatever "it" was supposed to be. But "when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life."² Now instead of feeling drained, we are elated and feel like it's a Christmas miracle every week!

Here is another story that a friend of mine wrote to me about praying down the impossible.

John and Sarah, long-time missionaries in Thailand, needed a house. They had been the last ones in a large missionary centre that had closed down; they looked for a place but could not find anything that suited their needs. So they went back to the landlord and asked if they could stay at the centre, and they would look after the place till the landlord found someone to rent the house. And because the landlord appreciated their missionary efforts, he graciously allowed them to stay there rent-free for two years as no one wanted to rent the place. However, near the end of two years it seemed like one person wanted to rent the place. John and Sarah were quite desperate and went to the Lord. He gave them a beautiful promise:

"I am going to bring you to a very special place where you will be able to continue to do your work for Me. Keep looking to Me and I will bring you to the perfect place where you can have all your needs met. So do not fear this time but look on it in great joy for I am continuing to use you and to keep you both so remember in all thy ways acknowledge Me and I shall bring it to pass. It is not, I maybe, or I might, but it is I SHALL. Please remember that. Also they that put their trust in Me will find a place of rest. That not only means spiritually, but it means physically too."

Then the day came. The landlord's representative came to the door and regretfully announced that the landlord needed the house back. John and Sarah had always thought they would have at least 2 months' notice so they would have time to find a new place. However, that was not to be:

"I'm sorry," he said, "the renter wants the house right away, "So you will have to move out in one week."

"One week!" John and Sarah exclaimed, "But that's very short notice. How can we possibly find a new house, pack and move in one week?"

However, there was no way around it; they would have to move out. John and Sarah prayed for a miracle. Then they started making the necessary preparations and packing up their belongings. The landlord's representative apologized for the short notice and the inconvenience it was causing.

² Proverbs 13:12.

"The landlord's family got together to discuss your situation," he said, "We've known you for a long time and you are doing a good work. We felt so bad to have to ask you to leave our house, which you've also taken good care of."

Then he leaned forward with a big smile; "They came up with a solution for you; the house they own across the street had been occupied by a lady for 10 years. But she just happens to be moving so the house is now vacant and available. You're welcome to move there."

"And," he added with a smile, "with the same arrangement to begin with, rent-free."

John and Sarah didn't know what to say, at first. They were amazed how the Lord had engineered the whole situation for them so they could stay in the same neighbourhood, and not have to look for a place to move to and at the same time, have the lady across the street moving out!

John and Sarah had a great time praising and thanking the Lord for this wonderful answer to prayer. The house across the street is more suitable for them and much easier to manage. After a few months' living rent free, they were able to sign a 5-year contract at a very good rent, so they don't have the worry about having to move again on short notice. And each month, the Lord has also wonderfully supplied the needed funds for the rent.

He is truly a wonderful Father and never takes anything away but He gives us something better!

2015

7 Jan 2015

By Chalsey--my Prayer for the New Year

In His Presence

The presence of the Lord brings peace; being in His presence gives joy.

- *Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. (Psalm 16:11)*

"When I try to find happiness and fulfilment in everything else but Your dear presence, Jesus, I am left wanting. I would like to say that You bring me full satisfaction, yet the more I get to know You, the more of You I want. I'm glad I have an eternity with You to look forward to, for it will take that long to begin to quench my thirst for You. Every sip of Your presence, every glimpse of the hidden You from behind the current veil, makes me long for You more than anything and everything else; it makes me willing to give everything up that would be necessary, to have all of You; and to be what would bring You joy as well."

- *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. (Psalm 31:20)*

"The words and actions of others—mostly those done out of pride and fear and selfishness—can make me want to vanish, to run far away; to hide in a cavern in the rocks in a peaceful place, like some prophets of old did, and to only have You with Me. Your presence brings surcease to the turmoil that the world and

its inhabitants can give. Yet even being alone, far from sight and beyond the earshot of things that hurt isn't enough, for there is still my own sinful soul and human nature that would trouble me.

“The place that would bring total peace to my heart, mind, body and spirit is to be infolded in You, covered by You—and this covering is secret, invisible to others, and thus the safest place in the world. I can't be evicted from it by anyone, for I dwell secretly with You there, no matter where I am. In Your presence You can shield me from the pain that pride- and fear-driven acts can cause. You shield me; You are my filter, only allowing that which will be a benefit to me to touch me. If I go out from this secret place, this closeness to You, this allowing You to guide my thoughts and my heart, this keeping my mind focused on what brings You joy, this passion of getting to know You, then I will be defenceless and as a beaten one.”

Leaving His presence, or pushing off His Spirit that delights to be a part of our lives, is the first step to a self-destructive life. (As was the case when Jonah attempted to “flee from the presence of the Lord”, Jonah 1:3, and found himself in some real stormy times; or when Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord”, Genesis 4:16-17, and built a city, and it became corrupt [along with everyone else around], and led eventually to a worldwide deluge.)

- *Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.* (Psalm 51:11)

“When pride enters in, it's easy to think we can do anything and everything and nothing can stop us, and that the credit should be to us. Lord, Your amazing patience is beyond anything found in the hearts of mankind worldwide. All it takes for our plans to end is for our heart to stop beating; or for our eyes to suddenly cease sending the signals to our brain and we are blind; or for us to be unable to breathe. When all is going well, it's easy to give credit to ourselves for the good job we think we are doing, yet Lord, in reality we are completely and utterly at Your mercy. You give us life. You give us breath. By You are we able to do anything at all. If You were to lift Your finger and pull the plug on our life, then we would, like the man in the parable of the rich fool, have to leave all our plans and works behind. (Luke 12:16-20) We truly can't do a thing without You. Keep us from the blinding pride, so deceptive, so corrupting. Truly You will hold us accountable for our actions and we will regret all that was done out of pride and arrogance, all that led us and others further away from You. All that we did that was good is only possible because You have granted us life, breath, and ability. May we never forget that, with every breath we breathe, with every task we accomplish, with every smile You allow us to share. You begin all things, and You will end all things, well. By You we have life, and by the breath of Your Spirit and Your active, moving, loving Holy Spirit in us are we empowered to fulfil Your will and bring about Your plans in our lives and in the lives You've enabled us to touch.”

So is the “presence of the Lord” in a certain fixed place that we go and come from, or can His presence move with us as we go? And what makes us stay within His presence, no matter where we are?

- *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* (Psalm 139:7)
- *And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.* (Exodus 33:15-16)

“I know You, Jesus, are always and will be always with Me, no matter where I go, but I know there is a difference whether I listen to You and look to You and follow Your counsel, or whether I choose to do only what I think is right. Please break down my wilfulness, my pride, my childish scampering off trying to do what only appears good for the moment, and instead take Me into Your arms and whisper to Me Your thoughts, Your dreams and Your plans. Take out from My heart the wishes that conflict with Your highest and best plan for my life. Let me not say in my heart, “later... first I want to explore this or that”. Only by Your lovingkindness do I even have a now—let alone a “later.” I can’t count on anything but this second I am living now; and even that is only possible because of Your permission and power. May I use each moment to truly be as Your servant, doing wholeheartedly as You wish, with no undercurrent of self-will pulling me aside. It won’t get me anywhere. It will just slow me down from going and doing what You have planned and willed for My life. No matter how great my whims might seem for the moment, they are just a waste of time, if You are not in it. Let me go only where You bid us to go—together—You and Me. Working as a team, with You as the boss is the way to be in Your presence in all I do. You will never leave me; let me walk always with Your Spirit, each day I live.” (Continued in part 2)

Does it matter how we behave, the words we say, and our conduct when in the presence of the Lord? What kind of attitudes should we take on in order for the King of our lives, the Lover of our souls truly enjoy our company?

- *Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.* (Psalm 95:2)
- *Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.* (Psalm 100:2)
- *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.* (Psalm 140:13)

“Your Word says You dwell within the praises of Your people. To speak of Your marvellousness, Your greatness, is like making a declaration of belonging to You; it shows with whom our loyalties lie; it’s promoting the establishment of Your Kingdom. Through praising You we are siding with You, and in essence choosing against the opposing forces. In banding together with You as our sovereign Lord we are helping to strengthen Your Kingdom and making it be established in our lives here and now, which brings the demise of the Enemy’s devises and what he plots against us. That’s why he hates to hear us boldly and constantly proclaim our loyalties and steadfast commitment to You, Jesus, which we do through praise. Joined with You we’ll be unstoppable. So no matter how things might appear at this stage of the game or play of life, I want to show my faith in Your perfect running of Your Kingdom; faith that You have got everything under control and will bring about the best through it all. With praises in word, praises in song, praises in all I do—even if in between the heaves of hard labouring, or wiping the tears my human heart cries—I will be pledging my allegiance to You. I know I’m on the winning side when I’m choosing to be in Your presence, walking and living with You. Praise will make us a tight and strong team, and empower You to bring about the best in my life.”

- *That no flesh should glory in his presence.* (1 Corinthians 1:29)

“If I want to bathe in the beauty of Your presence, dear Jesus, and be accepted by Your Father, there’s something I’ll need to leave outside the door. ‘No flesh’ means no human; ‘should glory’ means basking in pride, glorifying ourselves’. I hear this verse telling me that You, Jesus, and Your Father the God of all flesh, can’t stand pride; You can’t stand to be around it. Pride and self-glory is the opposite of everything that You stand for; it disgusts You, it’s revolting; it’s intolerable. You are the spirit of love, humility, and true rightness. We don’t have it in ourselves to be good, so we have to let Your goodness and forgiveness cover for us. We can’t love unless You have put Your love in us, for all love comes from Your Spirit. Those that walk in Your presence, and are filled with Your Spirit have Your love in them. When we are low on love, it’s because we are low on You and need time in Your presence. Humility too, is something we can’t really conjure up, but we can stop ourselves from glorying in our own supposed greatness. We can choose to proclaim Your goodness and righteousness, which we are eternally grateful for. Because of Your righteousness, we can rest assured that right will prevail and those that love peace and beauty will eventually be satisfied.

“Let me walk in humility before You, oh my God, my Lord, the salvation of my soul. Let not pride spoil the union that You would like to be having with me. It’s the sins of my own selfish arrogance that put a barrier between us. I want to be accepted in the close and intimate friendship of Your Heavenly team that rules over all. Let me forsake all that is within me that would get in the way of uniting closely with You in heart, mind and soul. I want You, Jesus, Your Father and Holy Spirit to find joy allowing me into Your presence.

“Abide with me forever. May my heart ever be empty of self, a constant vacuum for Your Spirit to dwell in me and be with me always. I know my heart will endure heartache, my mind might fear, and my spirit grow weary, and at those times I might wonder if I still have Your presence with me. These things are nothing to You, as You are ‘greater than our heart’, (1 John 3:20; Psalm 61:2) and you are ‘nigh unto them that are of a broken heart’ (Psalm 34:18). You’ve said, ‘Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:29), and ‘fear thou not for I am with thee’ (Isaiah 41:10). No matter what feelings wash over this clay that I am, or what breaks this earthen vessel, me, You will honour Your promises: ‘Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you,’ (James 4:8) and ‘I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ ” (Matthew 28:20)

We are rather accustomed to the silent presence of the Lord, and it being a matter of the heart, a matter of faith—in the mostly unseen God; but it hasn’t always been that way, nor will it always be.

- *The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. (Psalm 68:8)*
- *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)*

“I live for the day when You, Jesus, will be able to present me before Your Father, as a jewel You have saved and fashioned, cut, polished and made bright with Your own light and presence. I know You are an only Son, the apple of Your Father’s eye, and only those that resemble You and have the trace of You in their being—the mark that signifies their belonging to Your family—are accepted into that Heavenly, divine clan, with God as the head. Let me absorb all I can of You... or let me rather be absorbed into You, melted into You, completely changed to conform to Your likeness, that when others try to look at me I go unnoticed and You alone are seen. I love Your Father with all my soul, and will give anything to be accepted by Him to be a wife to You, His Son, Jesus—the theme of my life, the reason for my existence.

Though I see not You and Your Father and Holy Spirit with my eyes, I don't want to walk the way of the foolish, like those with a blindfold on that say "no one can see me". For I know the eyes of the Lord are in every place. Your Word tells me of Your reality, and that should be enough. But You've deemed it right for me to be the recipient of Your many gifts of care, and a multitude of Your miraculous workings in my life.

It astounds me how very meek You are. You are the reason that anything still exists on this Earth, the one that caused me to awaken this morning, yet You hold Your peace in stillness when the world proclaims that they have decided to deny Your reality. I so relish the day when the veil at last will part with a might sound, and the whole Earth will be filled with glory of God. And to think that God "will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them..." (Revelations 21:3). At last there will be for all, the joy of seeing, hearing, and living in the very real presence of the God of all.

For those of us who are having a hard time waiting, You told Your disciples—and us—something so heart-touching, so precious. You said if any of us loved You and kept Your Words, that Your Father would love us, and You said, "we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23) Our hearts and homes would be Your home. My heart is open; my home is open. You are the guests I most want to have staying with me. Let me remember to do my part to invite You—through loving You with all my heart, and using my life to fulfil Your will and do what You say to. Through loving You, obeying Your Words, wishing to be close to You, walking in humility before You, and praising You, I will be in Your presence, and there find fullness of joy.

1996

Oh, Thou Whom my soul loveth,

I give myself anew to Thee.

I rest upon Thy precious bosom.

Keep me ever near to Thee.

You alone can fill my longings.

Grace and power are in Your hands.

I stand upon Your precious promise.

On the Rock, not sinking sand.

When these traveling days are over,

And I reach the golden shore,

I will see then Thy full beauty,

And will only love Thee more.

Resting, trusting, loving, giving.

These make the life so sweet.
When through You life I am living,
You make everything complete.

I know I dare not put my trust,
My hope and things I desire,
On passing things, but I must
Keep my eyes on Someone higher.

Oh Thou Whom my soul loveth,
Let me fly anew to Thee.
Holding firmly to Thy promise.
You will always be near me.

I cast upon You every burden,
Leave with You my every care
Not a worry need I cling to
For You're with me everywhere.

How wondrous are the secrets
I can find in quiet prayer,
When I take still time to listen,
You work out my every care.

As I walk on this life's journey,
I will firmly hold Your hand.
For each golden step I climb
Has by You been fitly planned.

Oh Thou Whom my soul loveth,
I need Thee every hour.
I will give my heart, mind and soul,

And receive Your love, strength and power.

March 17, 2017

Might or Mind?

Under the apple tree our family was sitting for breakfast, and my husband was sharing a Bible study with us that he had recently done. How many times did Jesus or those writing about Jesus in the Gospels, quote or refer to the Old Testament? It ended up being quite a few instances.

There are so many quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament; so much is built on the stories and principles of what had gone on before. And there are so many prophecies written in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the New Testament. The Old and New Testaments of the Bible are like a pair of hands—right and left; they work together.

As we were reflecting on this and reading some verses, something I had always wondered about jumped out at me, and the answer was found.

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:5, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy mind.” (Matthew 22:37)

If you look the passage up in the Old Testament you’ll notice that Jesus made a slight variation of it in his New Testament reciting. In Deuteronomy it says:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deuteronomy 6:5)

I used to wonder about that.

My husband shared another example with us, when Jesus quoted a portion of Psalm 8:

“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise.” (Matthew 21:16)

Again if you compare this quotation to the passage in the Psalms you’ll notice a slight change.

“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.” (Psalm 8:2)

Then like a light turning on, I suddenly saw a pattern. Wow! Jesus was giving us insight to winning and succeeding in our modern day struggles, as tactics had changed. In the Old Testament there were many situations that needed physical strength to help good overcome the evil, as the Enemy was using physical ways much more to infect the world. Thus the words “might” and “strength” were in these passages.

But wisely Jesus, the Word of God, quoted the scriptures and added in what we’d need today to win the spiritual battles that we now face primarily —battles that happen in the mind, and for the hearts, minds and souls of people.

And what is the best, winning tactic when facing battles of the mind? –Praise! I’ve found that in my own life, that no matter what is going on in my mind or around me, just to say a praise to the Lord keeps me on the upper hand, and gives bravery.

When my son was speaking discouragement about one aspect of his day with sweeping comments of “nothing ever goes right—everything is going wrong” I had him stop and write out several things that he was glad about. I jogged his memory about several neat things that had actually happened that day or very recently. This act on his part, though the opposite of what he felt like doing, changed it all. He was happy and fine for the rest of the day—even though the actual situation that he wasn’t so pleased about didn’t change. There was so much else to focus on that was good, true, lovely, and “of good report”.

Sometimes there are questions about the ways so called “Christians” of the past have acted. Was it right that they use physical force to try to eliminate this or that other religion? --Might rather than mind; strength rather than praise. Well, we have to examine fruits. Was the goal reached? Did they even know what goal was that Jesus commissioned us to reach?—Bringing the “good news” to all nations (Matthew 24:14; Luke 24:47); Teaching them to observe all things (Matthew 28:19); Preach the Gospel to everyone (Mark 15:16).

Perhaps we can excuse some of the past mistakes and failures due to the fact that though Christian in name, there was often a tight hold on who was allowed to read the Scriptures. Unlike we do today, many people in the past were denied the chance, or didn’t have access to them in their native tongue. We who can freely read the Bible in our own languages are now held fully accountable to faithfully study it and act on it.

But back to the point in question: Has physical strength and conflict against other religious faiths worked to eliminate the false ideologies and practices, and now the love and light of Jesus Christ is shining in everyone’s lives? Or do the religions they fought still hold a very strong place in the world?

God says “Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit”. If it’s a work of the flesh, it will react in the way of the flesh. When a body is hurt, its mechanism goes to work to make that place even stronger than before. When Christians are persecuted, they gain strength and new believers join and the message gets more widespread. Others, in other situations can react in much the same way.

So if we want to stay on the winning side, fulfil our calling, we need to listen to our Commander, Jesus, and take His cues and use the new tactics for winning today’s victories:

Guard our mind:

2 Corinthians 10:4-5—(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Realise the Enemy is preying on the minds of people, to turn them away from God:

Romans 1:21,22, 28—Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

Use methods that teach and change hearts and minds—

Colossians 1:9b—Be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:23-24—But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.

Keep praising the Lord to throw off the mental traps and weights:

Ephesians 5:20—Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:8—Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

1 Thessalonians 5:18—In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Think about the Lord and believe His promises:

John 14:27—Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Romans 4:20-21—He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

(From Chalsey Dooley, Australia)

Name to go on it: Koriane

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July 2012

An Expected End

I find myself wondering, “What’s going to happen? How long will I live? Will I take part in the Great Tribulation, like I’ve grown up believing? Or will I grow old, my children outliving me? How long will they live, and what troubles will they face?”

I’m sure I’m not alone in these thoughts. I am someone that likes to plan, to think ahead, to dream big and then work on building those dreams. I’d like to have some reassurance one way or the other. I’d like it in writing just how long I am to live, and what will happen with each member of my family. Then I could more capably make my life’s plans and be sure to give the right things my focus and not be dealing with uncertainty and the unexpected curves of life.

The words to a verse in Jeremiah began to come to me as I went through my the day, pondering this thought. “To give thee an expected end.” (Jeremiah 29:11) It seemed to be saying that the end of my life won’t be what I don’t have the faith to face, or something that I don’t already know will happen. It was a comforting thought. But on the mind ticks.

“What am I expecting? There are countless ways this game could play out! I expect anything could happen, and will prepare for the worst! I’m not out of the fog of uncertainty yet.”

Then the One who holds the chess game in His wise and caring hands reminded me of the things I could for sure count on, what I truly could expect from now until I see His face in eternity.

--I can expect that He’ll always be with me, helping me in any situation

--I can expect that all He does, He does in love and will in the end be good

--I can expect the road of life to be tough, but never more than I can handle

--I can expect my prayers to be heard and answered in all the best ways

--I can expect to be cared for and my true needs provided for, and His promises to remain unfailing

--I can expect a heavenly welcome and life forever with Him

--I can expect my children to live forever, continuing to live on when their time on Earth is over
--I can expect the Lord to show them His love and care and provision of their needs, as we love and obey Him
--I can expect there always be a purpose and good reason for whatever God allows in my life, though I expect I will not always see each reason or good results just yet.
--I can expect to receive opposition for my choice to believe in Jesus and to tell others about His love, but to be more than compensated for it, in ways beyond my imaginations and hope-fors
--I can expect to not know everything, but have to live one day at a time, trusting, and eventually be rewarded for my walk of faith, obediently taking one step at a time as He leads.

I often think of words of a Hymn I learned as a teen:

If we could see, if we could know, we'd often say
But God in love a veil doth throw across our way
We cannot see what lies before
And so we cling to Him the more
He leads us til this life is o'ver.
Trust and obey

Though my way is as clouded and veiled as it always was, and I may need to "expect the unexpected", there's a new reassurance inside that He knows all, and will do what is best for me. And unlike so many others, I do have a good list of things that I can stand on and trust Him to do. Most things may be completely out of my control, but I'll trust the best things to come—at least when it actually is "the end".

My life is ultimately and completely in His hands, no matter how eagerly and vigorously I attempt to hold the reins. But I have today, or at least this moment, so I'll let Him lead me to the right paths by asking, "Where to now?"

So what can I truly count on? Where will my paths lead to? His arms, eventually. I'll hear His whisper today, telling what to do, and how to do it, with joy in my heart knowing that He'll be there to welcome me, come what may.

Will everything I'm trying to do and every plan for the future find fulfilment and prove worth my efforts? Time will only tell. However, if it's what He led me to do, I'll be glad in the end that at least I tried. And when I receive my hoped for, "Well done" at the end of my life—however short or long it may be—any broken plans and un-lived dreams won't seem to matter then. I'll be with Him, and that will give me more than enough joy.

Here's some prose that came to me the other day, when thinking about the new chapter in life I'm beginning:

I stand on the shore of by gone memories
As they fade like stars with the kiss of the sunlight's beams
I face the new, my soul lit anew
As I take the next step
He leads, I know not where

I cannot count on the sunshine to last
Night will fall in time
And His hand the only sure reality once again
But even stars have a beauty amidst the darkness and shadows
Diamonds that could never attract my gaze in blaring day light
So on I'll walk, hand in hand
With Him Who has charted my path all along

"Take me to shores yet to be explored
Sail me far into the distance
Where sky meets horizon
Let go of me not ever
In day and in night
In dreams and in sweat

And yea in these blissful times of the in-between
--Together, that's all that will ever matter

Time will pass, but You are eternal
The traces and memories of life will fade
But eternal will be the love we share.

“Going, going! Doing, doing!”

This is the story of a mother's struggle and journey to Jesus' feet.

The darkened night sky, glittered with stars, that I see out the window would give the illusion of it still being night time. But my 1 1/2 year old won't be fooled. For him 4:00 am each morning is time to "rise and shine". As soon as his eyes open, he asserts his needs repeatedly with his favorite words: going, going, doing, doing!! He's definite and won't be detained. He's gotta be on the go! My son's words seem to be echoing my own heart beat: go, do, act, be, move, take care of! And on goes the list.

By 5:00 am this morning my team had grown, and my 3 sons and I were cozy on the big bean bag, as close to the heater as we could be. As we started our day with prayer and reading together, for a second my mind longed for opportunities of by gone days. "Oh, if only they were sleeping, and I could be here, in the stillness of the early morning. I could be having such quality time, absorbing, reading praying..." Then a thought woke me up to the present. I WAS doing just that! I was here, at Jesus' feet, in the early hours, and I even had a Bible study group joining me.

If they had been adults I would have felt so accomplished as a Christian—getting up in the early morning for prayer and Bible reading. But because they were children somehow I have thought of it differently. Well, it is different. It's on a different level. However now, instead of only growing in my own faith and relationship to the Lord, I was at the same time helping to nurture the minds and hearts of young ones, bringing them to Jesus. It's a beautiful thing. A wonderful way to start the day.

At the beginning of this journey of disciple-turned-mother I felt I was being taunted and it was driving me crazy. On one hand His Word says to take time with Him, and then on the other hand I was totally at His mercy to make my little ones rest without disturbance so I could have that special time. I couldn't understand why something supposedly so important to Him—my quiet time with Him—wasn't granted to me. He was withholding it in the way I wished to see it materialize. I prayed, I pled, I cried, I felt frustrated, I got angry, I demanded, I gave up, I tried time and again, but like a carrot held out, I could never reach the "perfect" quiet time.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul." Ah, such bliss, such a picture of calmness. A yearned for reprieve. Since becoming a mother of 3 young boys, "still water" times weren't as often or exactly what they used to be. Before having children it never came easy, of course, and pre-dawn was still the best time of day to ensure it. But with every last second of day and night taken and given now to my (and others') little ones, I was having a hard time adapting to the change.

My baby was so sensitive to sound that typing my prayers and His thoughts to me was off the option list for about a year or so. And as terribly frustrating as it was, nearly every time I barely touched the pen to the paper, the till-that-moment sleeping baby was immediately woken and crying and in need of help for the next few hours. Aagh! I was baffled. It really wasn't helping me to cope gracefully with my stretched-to-the-limit life.

However the lessons He was teaching me, and the rocky path I had to walk were helping to change me,

shape my character , and grow me in new ways that wouldn't have been possible were everything to have been so posh, pristine, predictable, punctual and perfect in my life. Those "P's" were taken away, and replaced with a pill of patience. And other jewels I never would have held, were things always my way. I have since then learned to surrender and seize the new options and avenues He brings to "restore my soul".

I read through the Bible cover to cover with my first little one, when often I could do nothing but stay very very still while I held him, in order for him to get some rest. I made a list of hundreds of stories to teach my children from it. I use it extensively to this day.

With the next child He asked me to wake yet extra early to have quiet time (before 4:30 am, when health issues usually kicked in to usher in the morning), to make a special book of His words to me, and mine to Him. Sometimes it worked out. I had to have great strength of will to "slay the sleep dragon" and rise. But the Words He gave in our times of meditation filled three books. Such beautiful things He imparted to me. Here are some words from His heart to me from one of just such times, that helps to paint the picture I'm expressing here:

(Jesus speaking:) Sometimes we wade in crystal waters, or in rippling streams. Other times we bathe in abundant fountains of pleasure. Yet other times we splash in the shallow puddles of the water that runs over the flat mountain rocks. Other times we sit on dry and cracked earth and I give you to drink and wash your parched face from My canister.

No matter where and how, we are together, we can always have fun—because we are together—and the joy of Heaven isn't just in the waters of blissful times of refreshing and invigoration. I am the source of the joy and life you feel. It isn't contingent on even the experiences you have with Me and in *how* you are able to enjoy the refreshing water of life.

I'll always provide water—for you need it—but how and where and the amount varies as we trek together, through all kinds of terrain. But you know that the true Source of life is always beside you. One look into the dreamy, life-giving, refreshing and joy-filled pools of My eyes reminds you. You have all, and will have all, that you need when you are close by My side. Every interaction adds that refreshing and a wave of new hope and strength washes into your soul.

No matter how hot, or dusty or rough the terrain, you'll always have what you need—for all is imbedded within My very heart. I will satisfy every yearning, craving and need. (*End of His words to me.*)

Now with my third child, and the first two getting older, there are new ways He's chosen to feed and nourish me. Sometimes when reading from the Bible to the children, I can learn just as much, if not more, than I'm hoping they'll learn! For example, I noticed a wonderful jewel yesterday in the book of Jonah. We read where it said: *When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.* (Jonah 2:7-8.) The words jumped out at me. It was as if Jonah was in our home, reading our thoughts, understanding the human tenancy and saying, *"When I felt I couldn't take it any longer, I chose to pray and call out to the Lord. If you listen instead to thoughts of despair, to the negative barrage that hits you when things are rough, it's as if you are rejecting your own life-saver. Turn to Jesus, and get the help. Don't listen to anything else, or you'll 'drown'."*

And it wasn't just in his mind that he was thinking he was a goner. All circumstances said he was or would have been, if he had given into those thoughts that told him he was done for. But he resisted. He kept on believing in the impossible. That there was still a chance, if God still answered prayer, if He was still indeed the forgiving and merciful God He claimed to be, that a prayer could help. And it did. Or we might have not heard from Jonah again!

Another neat principle we gathered: He was on the wrong track getting on the boat to begin with. But the

moment he admitted it, confessed it and wished to make things right, the Lord started to use him—right then and there. God didn't wait till the Nineveh preaching began. As a result of his honest witness to the sailors, and God's obvious miracle of a storm suddenly stopping, the whole crew was converted! From that story we realized and discussed how God can use you no matter where you are, or what you are doing, the second you turn to Him and want to go His way. Ah! I felt refreshed at that moment.

I've learned now that though my life is one constant going, going, doing, doing, I can take Him along every moment of the day. He's not only in a fixed box of time. We talk constantly. I get fed from His Word as I share it with the children. And when it works out in the night for peaceful "green grass time", it's great.

Somehow I think our "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" is equally important to Him. Sometimes it can seem that we are hungry more than the times we are satisfied and "filled". But it seems that even our craving, in the times between "feeds" is satisfying to Him in a way. When we feel as David expressed it, "As the hart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul unto thee, oh God" it pleases Him. If we are hungry, if we are wanting Jesus to fill us, then we don't have to feel bad in those times when it just doesn't happen as we'd wish for. We can encourage ourselves as we "wait on the Lord" that the desire in our heart for Him and His words is a beautiful thing to Him. And in His time and way "He fills the hungry with good things."