

# 34

## Whose Shadow?

From childhood, shadows have fascinated me. I could play games with my shadow. It was fun!

Robert Louis Stevenson's delightful verse says:

*I have a little shadow that  
goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him  
is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from my  
heels up to my head;  
And I see him jump before me  
when I jump into my bed.*

Psalm 91:1 says, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."

Now we're talking someone else's shadow. God's shadow! When I rest in *his* shadow, I do what *he* does. And if I run ahead of or away from him, his protective shadow no longer covers me.

I have a Mighty Shadow who  
goes in and out with me . . .

# 35

## Hand Me Downs

The Apostle Peter wrote to Christians, "You were redeemed from the empty way of life *handed down* to you from your forefathers" (1 Peter 1:18b). An empty way of life, knowing only evil desires and futility. Some kind of inheritance to leave your kids! How did they come by that way of life?

Growing up, I remember seeing Momma countless times wearily nodding over her opened Bible. After caring for a family of ten all day, bedtime was often her first and only quiet time. Tired as she was, she chose to spend it with the God I knew she loved and revered. Without words she instructed me and gave me a priceless inheritance.

From the time we children earned our first dime, Daddy taught us to set aside a penny (a tithe) to give back to God before we saved or spent any of it for ourselves. It wasn't hard for us to do, because we'd seen our Daddy do it with his own money. Far from an "empty way of life," my parents handed down to me a pattern of godliness.

The Bible says Timothy came to possess the faith of his mother and grandmother.

Moses recognized faith in his natural father, even though he was raised in Pharaoh's house. He said, "My father's God was my helper" (Exodus 18:4b).

God was forever telling his people, "Pass it on. Don't forget my commands and the great things I've done for you. The next generation needs to know" (my paraphrase).

Faith in God passed from generation to generation . . . "so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you" (Deuteronomy 6:2).

Dads, Moms, Grandparents: What sort of hand-me-downs are you giving your children? They're watching you.

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# 36

## Momma's Gift

I was a fifth grade student and Mother's Day was approaching. My teacher announced that we would each be making a hurricane lamp from an empty tuna can attached to a wood base. A glass chimney would set inside the can. Presto! A lovely gift for Mom!

Miss Sandeen reminded us to bring our tuna cans and 50 cents to cover the cost of the materials. I was impressed with the project, but knew I would not be able to make one. Every year it was the same. With eight kids in our family, 50 cents was hard to come by. Anyway, Mom said she didn't need gifts. Our love was enough.

At school I watched my classmates sand their wood and paint their can. Then one day I was called to Miss Sandeen's desk and given supplies to make a lamp. She explained that Chris McKinney, the boy who sat in front of me, had paid for my materials.

Dear, kind Chris! He always treated me with extraordinary kindness and respect. And you know that puzzled me, because he was a "Catholic." I had been blunt and outspoken with him about belonging to the wrong church. I wasn't sure I even wanted to be his friend. He was so doctrinally wrong. I was so doctrinally superior, I didn't even know how to be nice to him.

*"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give a tenth . . . but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone" (Luke 11:42).*

I'm sorry, Chris. I was a little Pharisee. You were more righteous than I.

P.S. Momma liked her lamp.

# 37

## Leaning On Jesus

*"I . . . do not need a thing" (Revelation 3:17).*

In a world of their own, my two preschool daughters sat for some time in the big over-stuffed chair, singing from an upside-down hymnal. Suddenly, their little song stopped. I listened to hear Mindy say to her little sister, "We gotta lean on Jesus now, Bridget. You know we hardly been doing that lately."

Has that realization caught up with you? Do you still recognize how inept you are without Jesus ? Or have you become so "righteous" that you no longer need Him?

*"Because you have depended upon you own strength and on your many warriors, the roar of battle will rise against your people" (Hosea 10:13-14).*

How much better to *"Trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).*

# 38

## God Knowles

I came across this little note in my "Memory" box that our son Lincoln wrote when he was 6 years old.

Amanda Knowles

Lincoln Knowles

Mindy Knowles

Bridget Knowles

Emily Knowles

Portia Knowles

Dad Knowles

Mom Knowles

God Knowles

Jesus Knowles

Lincoln didn't yet understand that God doesn't wear our name. Rather we wear God's name. But one thing was perfectly clear to his young mind . . . we're all family!

# 39

## Only A Dream

My boy was going to die.

My only boy. Lincoln, just six years old, would die soon.

How I would miss his boyish ways and his bouncing laugh, his grubby face and his tight squeeze around my neck.

It was just too much to lose. How could I bear it? And yet it was true. He would die, because he had lied.

"But he's just a boy," I thought, "and death is so severe a penalty."

I knew they would be coming any minute now to take him away but he was being so brave about it. Our family was gathered together to spend our last few precious minutes with him.

His Daddy, with pain in his eyes asked, "Lincoln, didn't you know that what you said wasn't true?"

Linc's serious reply was, "No, Dad. I didn't know. I thought it was right."

Oh, why did his life have to end this way?

And then I awoke. It was only a dream! I wasted no time getting to Lincoln's room. I had to see him! Touch him! As I stood by his bedside he looked so sweet and innocent, sprawled sideways across his bed, sleeping soundly.

I reached down to hug and kiss him again and again. "Thank you, God! Thank you for my boy!"

I couldn't sleep after that, so I went downstairs to begin my day. And immediately this thought struck me. The death penalty isn't really too severe for lying or any other sin. It is justice. "For the wages of sin is death . . ." (Romans 6:23).

If not for God intervening with his beautiful mercy, my dream would be reality. Not only for Lincoln but for me and each of my children, for my husband and everyone for all time.

God had a son too — an only son. And he gave what he had because his love was so immense he couldn't bear to see us — every last one of us — die for our sins.

We are helpless to save ourselves by ourselves, just as little Linc was in my dream.

"Dear Lord, what a terrific plan! Thank you for letting me call you 'Father.' Jesus, thank you for dying for my sins."

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

And that's no dream!

—Reprinted from ONE BODY, Summer, 1997



# 40

## Joy To Jesus!

It was December 1985. Our house was decorated for Christmas. In the spirit of the season our 8-year-old daughter Portia popped into the kitchen and presented me with an old weathered board on which she had scratched the words, "Joy to Jesus."

I smiled and accepted it gratefully. What a precious thing for her to do! But as I displayed the board, I wondered where she came up with "Joy to Jesus." Why not something more "Christmasy" like "Joy to the World?"

Through the years, however, Portia's little inscribed phrase keeps reminding me that I *do* want to bring joy to Jesus. The way I live, the thoughts I think, the praise I give or withhold or the way I respond to a crisis brings either great joy or disappointment to my Savior.

Oswald Chambers said, "What a pang will go through us when we suddenly realize that we might have produced downright joy in the heart of Jesus by remaining absolutely confident in him, no matter what was ahead."

Hmmm. Joy to the world. Yes. But joy to Jesus too! Thanks, Portia!

# 41

## Dollars & Sense

Our daughter Bridget was bemoaning the fact that she couldn't use their car because it wasn't running.

Her 4-year-old son Trey simplistically suggested she fix it. Bridget explained that they needed money to do that. Trey responded, "You're going to fix the car with money?"

To him, money seemed a strange tool for a mechanic to use. How could money fix a car?

I like Trey's fresh approach though. Why do we adults place so much emphasis on money when our God has limitless resources and means? God doesn't need our money to fix things. Everything is His. *"If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine and everything that is in it"* (Psalms 50:12).

And does the Sovereign Lord who spoke creation into existence need our mortal talents and abilities? Not really. But He does want our hearts, our willingness and our trust.

When our hearts are fully given to God, He Himself will provide what is needed by whatever means He chooses.

# 42

## A Person's A Person (No Matter How Small)

I was snuggled up in our comfortable recliner with my two-and-a-half-year-old grandson, Trent, reading to him from a Dr. Seuss book, *Horton Hears a Who*. Horton is a gentle elephant who is enjoying a leisurely dip in a jungle pool when he hears a faint noise and sees a speck of dust blowing by. Knowing that dust specks don't yell, Horton concludes:

*" . . . Why I think there must be someone on top of that small speck of dust! Some sort of creature of very small size, too small to be seen by an elephant's eyes. Some poor little person who's shaking with fear, that he'll blow in the pool! He has no way to steer! I'll just have to save him. Because after all, a person's a person no matter how small."* Imagine Horton's surprise when he learns there is a town located on the dust speck! A town called Who-ville, with churches and grocery stores — even a mayor, and a whole population of "Whos"!

The remainder of the book tells of Horton's heroic dedication to saving the endangered "Whos." This in spite of a number of conniving jungle cohorts bent on destroying the dust speck. They can't see tiny persons on the speck. They call Horton a "fool" and his just cause "rot."

In the end, however, Horton's enemies learn for themselves that there really are tiny "Who" persons and join Horton in caring for them.

*" . . . From sun in the summer. From rain when it's fall-ish. I'm going to protect them no matter how smallish!"*

Now why did I think of tiny, unseen, unborn persons and kind, caring people who only want to save them?

# 43

## Pray With Me

I had the four-year-olds at VBS this Summer. The class moved from place to place for various activities every 20 minutes. This was very traumatic for my grandson, Trent. He constantly clutched my hand lest I "lose" him. Besides, he wanted his Mom. Instead of enjoying VBS, like I had so hoped, he was terrified most of the time.

I had prayed *for* him but not *with* him until the fourth day. We prayed about all his fears and asked God to give him a friend to help — someone who might be lonely or afraid like him.

Trent was on my lap during memory verse time. Nichole, who had been perfectly happy the entire week, came to us quietly with tears running down her cheeks. She sobbed, "I want my Mommy." Trent locked eyes with me as if to say, "We prayed about this!" Immediately, he gave Nichole an understanding hug and continued to pat her shoulder.

I'm so glad we prayed together that morning, because Trent knew it was *God*, not chance that brought Nichole to us.

*"If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).*

# 44

## Little Rascals

From the time their family was seated in front of me at church, I was smitten with their two little boys (I guess I'll always be boy crazy). They were picture perfect little guys. Brown eyes, rosy cheeks, scrubbed and groomed for Sunday.

During communion I observed how eagerly and carefully they passed the emblems to their mother. I smiled at what I was seeing and prayed that the significance of this moment would be tucked away for a long time in their consciousness. I hoped they would grow up to appreciate all the Lord's Supper is and represents for them personally.

But even as I prayed, the younger boy scowled and stuck out his tongue at his brother. I was disappointed. These cute little lads were rascals after all!

I could identify though. Even with naughty little boys. Because in my own self there is a struggle between the Spirit and the flesh. *"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please"* (Galatians 5:17).

I will never measure up to God's standard without a Savior. Only in Christ is there victory over sin. *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

As I took the bread and cup to my lips, I had a fresh love for my perfect Redeemer. Without Him we're all rascals.

# 45

## Blood-Bought Men

No one is outside the reach of Christ's blood. Revelation 5:9 tells us, " . . . with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation."

Since Jesus purchased men from this all-inclusive range of peoples, who are we to say the gospel is only for certain types or classes? Yet we hear things like:

*"We are the only ones."*

*"They'll never amount to anything."*

*"God is through with the Jews."*

*"Blacks do not have souls."*

By putting restrictions on the blood of Christ, have we not indeed " . . . treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and . . . insulted the spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

# 46

## Guilt-Free Eating

**"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).**

For those who feel guilty having seconds of calorie-laden potatoes and gravy, or chocolate cake, try this appetizer.

**"Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalms 34:8).**

To be spiritually fit, God offers a diet that allows you to eat all you want, whenever you want it!

**"When your words came, I ate them, they were my joy and by heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty" (Jeremiah 15:16).**

No counting calories or fat grams here! In fact, the more we feast the better!

**"I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands" (Psalms 119:131).**

Yum yum! And there's more! How about dessert? Don't worry about portion size.

**"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth" (Psalms 119:103).**

Surely you'll want a bed-time snack!

**"At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws" (Psalms 119:62).**

You can't sleep at night? Try this.

**"My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises" (Psalms 119:148).**

Hey! I can live with this diet! Why have only an occasional morsel of God's Word when I may indulge and be better off for it?

# 47

## They've Turned Off the Light!

*"Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command you children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you — they are your life" (Deuteronomy 32:46-47).*

Few in America would deny our society is broken. For many, life has been turned upside down. People are asking, "What's happened to us? And why?"

Politicians are scurrying to fix things with new programs and laws. Still, divorce and children being raised by single moms are too common. Jesus loved us enough to teach us about real love, kindness, keeping promises and being sexually pure. *That's* the remedy. Does that mean nothing in the 90s?

Drugs and alcohol have a real hold on both young and old. The Bible warns us many times about these pitfalls. Is no one listening?

New Orleans has averaged a murder a day for the past three years. Think of the human grief! Do people who take lives have no conscience or regard for God's Ten Commandments? Or do they even know God has instructed them?

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (John 8:12). America needs this light!

For years our government and schools have withheld "the light of the world" from its citizens. They've literally turned off the light, leaving children to feel their way



through life in the darkness. President Theodore Roosevelt once said: "To educate a man in mind and not in morals, is to educate a menace to society."

*"The unfolding of your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple"* (Psalms 119:130). Our schools need the light of God's word. Taking it away and expecting pleasing results is like trying to do counted cross stitch in the dark.

# 48

## I Remember Poland

It was the people. How can I describe them? I'm still not sure of what I saw in their eyes as I greeted the Polish people I passed on the streets of Warsaw and other cities. It haunted me then. It haunts me still.

Their eyes expressed so much . . . but what was it? Guarded curiosity? Suspicion? Distrust? Emptiness? Hardship? Under their cold stares I felt like an object being studied rather than a person.

At first it bothered me that they neither returned my greeting nor acknowledged my smile. My gestures of friendliness and good will were totally snubbed. Then God reminded me that the Poles have a past much different from mine. They haven't yet forgotten Hitler or Communism, nor the horrors of their nation's history. Perhaps they do not yet feel the freedom of trust.

So much to ponder. I felt compassion and I prayed they would be given the opportunity to know the God I love and trust. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."

*"Every day they pass me by, I can see it in their eyes. Empty people filled with care, headed who knows where. On they go through private pain, living fear to fear. Laughter hides their silent cries, only Jesus hears . . . People need the Lord, at the end of broken dreams, He's the open door. People need the Lord, when will we realize people need the Lord." (Greg Nelson & Phil McHugh © 1983 River Oaks Music Co./Shepherd Fold Music).*

# 49

## Precious Thoughts

*"How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!" (Psalms 139:17a).*

As I studied the Cubana airplane that would take our little group of four from Cancun to Havana, many busy thoughts went through my head.

"Will that old plane get us there?" God's Word spoke to me. *"If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast"* (Psalms 139:9-10). I was comforted.

"Am I really going to Cuba?" Until just a few short months ago, I had never dreamed such a wild thought. God had put Cuba on my heart about four years before. It was at that time I began praying for this small, needy nation — for its government, its citizens, for God's people there and for Fidel Castro himself. I was elated when we were actually invited to go there!

Yet as I looked at that rustic airplane that would soon take us there, I pulled a bit more of God's word from my heart. *"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be"* (Psalms 139:16b). God alone knew it, planned it — before I was even born — that I would board *this* plane, on *this* day, and go to Cuba of all places.

And suddenly I was in awe of Him!

# 50

## Soldiers in Skirts

In Cuba, religious organizations already in place prior to the 1959 revolution are still recognized by the government. Those coming after that time however, are illegal and must keep a low profile to exist. Precaution must be taken by these sincere Christians to keep from being found out by the governing authorities.

We were reminded daily while we were in Havana: "Be careful," "Be discreet," "Don't arouse unnecessary attention." So, when I attended the first all-Cuba Christian Ladies Meeting, I was quite nervous about the noise level of their rousing song service. I was certain the whole neighborhood was listening with raised eyebrows!

When I asked about this seeming contradictory behavior I was told that ladies can get by doing things men wouldn't be allowed to do because women are not taken seriously and are not usually considered a threat.

Now if Cuban women were like many American women, they would be incensed and offended by that mentality. American females are competitive and *want* to be taken seriously. Yet in Cuba, this putdown of the feminine gender is being used by God to bless and build His Church! Isn't that just like our God to take a tool of Satan and use it for His own noble purpose?

Because of this disservice, these brave zealots are able to work morning till evening going from house to house to bring many people to Christ. We were told that the women of the church are responsible for much of the

church growth in Cuba. They are not competitive, but they are a real force working hand in hand to exalt our Lord Jesus. Fearless, zealous sisters these — in daily combat with Satan.

The Christian women of Cuba had two urgent concerns. One was to obtain Christian tracts and literature to pass out to people on the streets. The other was for decent clothing to wear when they go forth in the name of the Lord. Many have to borrow clothes for this purpose! They told me, "We don't want fancy clothes for going to parties or movies. We only want to look respectable when we present Christ to others."

There are other obvious needs (food and medicine), but their primary passion is the Lord and His Church. The Christian women of Cuba are selfless soldiers in the Lord's army, and they're out to win the battle — in skirts.

# 51

## In His Arms

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty . . . He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge . . . (Psalms 91:1,4).*

*He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart (Isaiah 40:11b).*

*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16).*

I may come to the throne of my God and know that He will hold out His scepter to me! What's more, I can climb right up on His lap and snuggle in close to His heart. And He will put His arms around me . . . and listen!

# 52

## “Now I See”

In Genesis 21 we find the Lord, for his own reasons, instructing Abraham to send Hagar and her son Ishmael away. Abraham kindly packs food and water for their trip.

Mother and son set out, but after wandering in the desert for some time, their situation becomes grave. They are homeless. Hopeless. Their water is gone. The boy is near death. They are desperately alone. Ishmael cries. Hagar steps away to sob, because there is nothing she can do.

But . . . the God who had seen everything opened Hagar's eyes so that she saw thing she had not seen before . . . like a well of water . . . like God himself!

In an earlier but similar desert rescue, Hagar said, *“You are the God who sees me . . . I have now seen the one who sees me”* (Genesis 16:6-13).

Our great God does indeed open blind eyes. Knowing that he sees my plight allows me to see him in a new way. It is a revelation of hope and possibility!

God is still sovereign.

I am not alone,

# 53

## Praying God's Purpose Away?

While reading in Genesis recently, my heart wept for Joseph because of all the injustices brought on by his jealous brothers.

Remember how unkind they were in plotting to get rid of him? First they took his prized robe (a gift from his father), then threw him into a cistern. While Joseph waits in horror in the pit, his brothers sit down to enjoy a picnic lunch! Rather than kill their younger sibling they chose to sell him to the Ishmaelites, then dipped his robe in goat's blood to deceive their father, Jacob, into believing that wild beasts had killed Joseph.

Then followed Joseph's unfair experience with Potiphar's wife, forgotten in prison; all the while longing for his father. Surely he felt the pain of rejection. Surely he questioned God.

I couldn't help thinking that if I were a contemporary of Joseph, I would have prayed something like this:

*"God, please cause Joseph's brothers to treat him kindly. He doesn't deserve this! Don't let them sell their own flesh and blood! His Daddy won't be able to bear the heartbreak this will cause. And You know it's Mrs. Potiphar who was immoral, not Joseph. She should go to prison instead of him! Rescue Joseph — now! You can do it. You're God, after all!"*

Yet in the end, after Joseph is brought to power in Egypt and is reconciled to his brothers, he said to them, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives"* (Genesis 50:20).



How often do we in our limited understanding pray away God's purpose? We only see the present hardship. God sees the beauty of the completed project!

It's not easy to see loved ones suffer, and they certainly need our prayers. At the same time, let's take heart in knowing our God sees beyond the current circumstances and even uses them to accomplish His greater good. Suffering and injustice are often God's props!

# 54

## A Place Of Abundance

Any major, worthwhile project, whether it's an education, a family reunion, losing weight, or landscaping the yard, will require sacrifice. There will be unexpected glitches. It will cost something — sometimes much. It will disrupt the normal flow of living and change will be necessary.

Being faithful to God for a lifetime (a major project), will cost much. There will be bothersome, painful experiences in the process. They will seem undeserved, uncalled for, and impossible to live with.

Are you disappointed? Bewildered? In debt? In physical pain? Broken hearted?

You need to know God is not neglecting you. He cares very much about your current need. Given to Him, it will not be wasted. In His hands your hardships will be recycled for His glory and your eternal good! He is a master at turning the tables on Satan and using your dire circumstances to bless you! Believe it! Count on it!

*"For you, O God, tested us;  
You refined us like silver.*

*You brought us into prison  
and laid burdens on our backs.*

*You let men ride over our heads;  
We went through fire and water,  
but You brought us to a place of abundance."*

(Psalm 66:10-12)

# 55

## A Letter To God

Dear God,

Once again I must confess your greatness. The more I understand of you, the more I realize I do not understand you. The more I learn of your word, the more I see that I know so little.

But I do know this. You are always right, always faithful, always good — whether I understand anything at all.

Love,  
Evelyn

*"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out" — Romans 11:33*

# 56

## “Doubter”

A few years ago a reader in Appleton, Wisconsin, wrote Ann Landers, suggesting that people who believe in God are “simple-minded, superstitious dimwits unable to face life without a crutch.” A reader in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, sent Ann this poem, “Doubter.”

*O you who could not put one star in motion,  
Who could not build one mountain out of earth,  
Or trace the pattern of a single snowflake  
Or understand the miracle of birth,  
Presumptuous mortal who cannot alter the universe in any  
way,  
Or fashion one small bud, release one raindrop  
Or toss one cloud into a sunny day  
O earthling who could never paint a sunset  
Or cause one dawn to shine.  
O puny man who cannot create a single miracle,  
How dare you doubt the only One who can?*

*(Author Unknown)*

# 57

## Led by God's Word

Second Corinthians 12:8-10 has encouraged me many times. The apostle Paul writes how he dealt with his "thorn in the flesh."

*"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

*That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

I want to share a time when this passage picked me up and carried me along — a time when I felt very alone, very hurt and very weak.

More than anything, I wanted to respond as God's child and bring Him delight in the way I handled my circumstances. I understood that He was polishing my character and my faith by the situation I was in.

At the same time, I felt Satan hissing about my ankles trying to trip me up. It was a real battle between my spirit and my flesh.

I took my Bible to a quiet place to do battle with my soul. I spent a good part of the morning meditation on God's word — seeking His face. Not only to make the pain go away, but to offer Him a pure heart.

He showed me it's O.K. to suffer. He will help me to honor Him, even in my weakest moments.

Here is my prayer to Him as it was prompted by His word to me.

I said, "My Father, I am so weak. I need You."

And He said, "*My grace is sufficient for you.*"

"Thank You, Jesus. With Your grace I know I'm not as desperate as I *feel* right now."

*"For my power is made perfect in weakness."*

"Your power for my weakness? What an awesome thought! I give You my weakness for You to do with as You wish. Make Your power alive to me — in me."

*"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness."*

"My God, it's *hard* for me to *boast* about my weaknesses, my hurts and difficulties. But by Your sweet spirit that You gave to dwell in me, I *do* thank You! The outcome will be beautiful! You promised!"

*"So that Christ's power may rest on me."*

"Sweet Jesus, that is a comforting thought! Your power *resting* on one so insignificant as me! Your power and all the beauty of You shines so brightly next to my mortal weaknesses."

*"That is why for Christ's sake . . ."*

"You! You are what really matters, Lord, not me. Your eternal purpose; not my agenda."

*" . . . I delight in weaknesses,  
in insults,  
in hardships,  
in persecutions,  
in difficulties."*

"I can delight in these things, not because it's easy or fun. It isn't easy, Lord, and it isn't fun! But I can still delight . . . because it's Your time to shine — to show Your great power — not in *spite* of my weaknesses, but *because* of them."

*"For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

"Father, I still hurt. Things are still hard for me. It hasn't all gone away. Yet I have peace in knowing hardship and suffering are part of the process of my growing dependence upon You.

"I don't ever want to become so strong, invulnerable, or self-sufficient that I no longer need to depend upon You.

"Besides, I remember when You became weak for my sake. You suffered the hurt of insults. You endured hardships and persecution and difficulties — for me!

"I'm sorry You hurt. But I'm glad You did.

"Is that the way You feel for me?

"I love You!"

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# 58

## A Tale of Two People

In Luke's record of the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, one is impressed with the similarity of the angels message to both Zechariah, the father of John, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Their faith responses, however, were different.

Both Zechariah and Mary pleased the Lord. Zechariah was "upright in the sight of God" (1:6); Mary was "highly favored by God" (1:28).

Each encountered the angel Gabriel with fear. Zechariah was gripped with fear (1:12); Mary was greatly troubled (1:29).

Both were told not to be afraid (1:13, 30).

Each were told they would have a son with a great mission (1:13-17; 31-32).

Both thought conception impossible in their individual circumstances and asked, "How?" Zechariah asked, "How can I be sure of this?" (1:18). Mary inquired, "How will this be?" (1:34).

Each response appears to be the same — in print. Yet Gabriel told Zechariah, "You did not believe my words" (1:26). But of Mary it is said, "Blessed is she who has believed" (1:45).

God's message was true and came to pass whether Zechariah believed it or not. Thank God, His words (all of them) are always true, even if we don't fully understand them.

As we celebrate the gift of our promised Savior, may our faith in Him be rock solid!



# 59

## Immanuel, "God With Us"

"'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' — which means, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:23).

Isaiah 57:15 says that God lives in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit.

What a profound thought that the Almighty, Eternal God chooses to live with us! And what a contrast to the pagan "gods" outside the Christian culture — "they do not live among men" (Daniel 2:11).

Jesus, our "Immanuel," came to live among men. In so doing He showed us how to love, feel compassion and forgive. He taught us how to pray, to love our enemies and how to disarm Satan.

We are privileged to be loved by this most holy God. Do we dare return to Him anything less than our very best?

# 60

## Love Hurts

I asked a friend the other day about one of her kids who is causing her a lot of concern. I saw hurt in her eyes and I ached for her. I assured her of my prayers and tried to encourage her.

Why is it we hurt so deeply the very ones we love the most? Children, parents, and spouses are extremely insensitive from time to time. Our insides are torn apart by the very ones who say they love us. Then we are driven to the arms of God for consolation.

Ahhh! How soothing it is to stay in the presence of God who knows our hearts! He wipes away our tears saying, "There, there, little one. Of course it hurts. I understand."

Indeed, God does understand because He has been hurt too. His children have caused Him a great deal of pain. We who profess to love Him find time for everything and everyone but Him. That's called neglect. Neglect hurts God. We choose our own selfish impulses in preference to His instructions, rejecting Him. Rejection hurts God. Our little "affairs" with the world wound His heart. Every good thing we have comes from Him, yet we dare to complain and overlook His gifts to us.

I am convinced that since God loves the most, He also hurts the most. Love hurts!

# 61

## Quiet Love

*Thoughts on Colossians 3:18-19*

In quietly loving, respecting and submitting to our husbands — and cheerfully fulfilling our marital duties toward him — we are helping him to love himself more — to feel good about himself. This is very important in light of the fact that he is commanded to love his wife as he loves himself.

The more a wife works with God in bringing out the best in her husband, the more he will love himself (as a man created in God's image). And when that happens, his self love can more easily reach out to the wife who prompted it.

# 62

## Knowing Christ

All my earthly credentials are nothing without Christ  
Jesus my Savior. What can they possibly mean without  
him?

I don't need empty victory.

I need Jesus.

Even suffering for him is a joy  
simply because he is in it!

How can he heal me if I am  
not first broken?

How can he comfort me if I  
am not first in pain?

How can he rescue me if I  
am not first in danger?

How can I go deeper with  
Christ if I do not first suffer?

*"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and  
the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in  
his death" (Philippians 3:10).*

# 63

## More Than This Moment

During a very trying time in my life, the Lord comforted me by giving me these thoughts.

*There's more than this moment,  
There's more than this life.  
There's more than tomorrow,  
Come joy or come strife.*

*There's more than this body,  
There's more than its health.  
There's more than providing  
Material wealth.*

*There's more than amusement,  
There's more than to laugh.  
There's more than pursuing  
A smooth, easy path.*

*For God, my Creator  
Has known all along  
The things that would break me,  
Or give me a song.*

*He offers His wisdom  
And gives His advice;  
And when it's all over  
Gives eternal life.*

# 64

## In Times Of Trouble

The following is a message (author unknown) I like to share with others.

In times of trouble God's trusting child may say:

First — He brought me here. It is by His will I am in this difficult place: in that I will rest.

Next — He will keep me here in His love and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child.

Then — He will make the testing a blessing, teaching me lessons He intends for me to learn, and working in me the grace He intends to give.

Last — In His good time He can bring me out again — how and when He knows.

Say: I am here

1. By God's appointment
2. In His care
3. Under His training
4. For His time

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psalms 51:15).

# 65

## The General, The Father

One of many advantages of being a Christian is having God's Holy Spirit living in us, giving us power to accomplish things beyond ourselves; making it possible for us to be valiant soldiers of faith—comforting us all the while. God expects me to grow up, mature, train for hand-to-hand combat with Satan and come out victorious.

Tall orders for a lady! He calls, I answer. He assigns, I obey. He leads, I follow. He provides, I trust.

I am His *servant*, His *slave*, His *soldier*. Yet when I come to Him with questions and battle wounds, I find my Commander to be gentle and understanding, for I am also:

- ◆ *His child* - "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God." (I John 3:1a).
- ◆ *His chick* - "I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings . . ." (Matthew 23:37).
- ◆ *His lamb* - ". . . he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart . . ." (Isaiah 40:11)

Whether I am in the heat of battle with Satan or resting comfortably in the arms of my Lord, He knows how to deal with me . . . *because the General is my Father.*

# 66

## Rags To Riches

*"Take off the grave clothes and let him go" (John 11:44b)*

Lazarus had been dead and in the grave for four days. It was all over for him, and that was that. Or was it? Not at all! Jesus came and changed the whole picture. He brought Lazarus out of the tomb, from death to life. No more need for binding grave clothes! Lazarus was alive and free to go!

What Jesus did for Lazarus physically, He did for us spiritually. *"God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions"* (Ephesians 2:4,5). We were bound with the grave clothes of sin, but we who are His have *"died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"* (Romans 6:2). Why would we want to? *"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ"* (Galatians 3:27).

No one needs to be bound again in the stench of old grave clothes — clothes contaminated with jealousy, ingratitude, hatred, sexual immorality, selfish ambitions, etc. These are not fitting for children of the King of kings. Ours are royal — raiments of righteousness! The King says, *"Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience"* (Colossians 3:12b).

The choice is ours. What are you wearing?

*"Take off the grave clothes and let him go!"*