



138 East 7th Street
Auburn, Indiana 46706

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 55

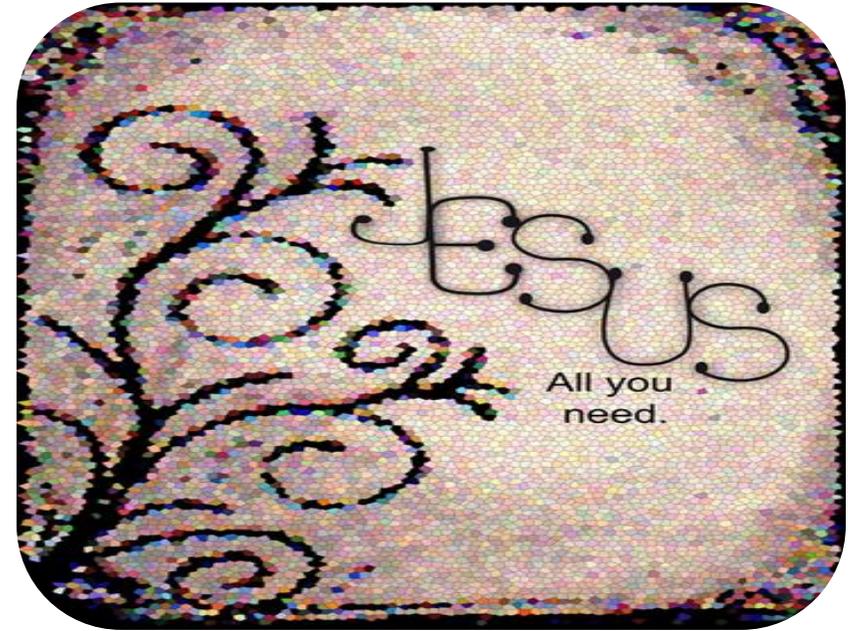
And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will continue to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. **Philippians 1:6**



Inspiration for Her

WWW.INSPIRATION-MINISTRIES.ORG
FEBRUARY 2016 VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 (49)

THE OFFICIAL **INSPIRATION MINISTRIES** WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER



NEWSLETTER FEATURES

- 1) **Letter from the Editor**
by Kirsten Foster
- 2) **Welcome...**
by Carla Boggs
- 3) **Old Boots**
by Amy Slone
- 4) **Unworthy, Inadequate...**
by Laura Gauthier
- 5) **For the Love of Gomer**
by CJ Eaton
- 6) **Don't Get Used to Darkness**
by Sharon Brooks
- 7) **If Only**
by Abby Carnahan

Inspiration Ministries is unifying the body of Christ in order to most glorify God and inspire others to accept the saving and satisfying love of Jesus Christ.

Letter from the Editor

She is energetic and strong, a hard worker. She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness. Proverbs 31:17, 25-26



First, I just want to say how excited I am to be writing for a WOMEN'S newsletter!! I've written periodically for the Inspiration Newsletter over the past 3 years, and while it went to both males and females, it just wasn't the same, because we all know men and women just don't think alike! So what I find funny or something that touches my heart, might not resonate with men the same way it does for other women. So, I am SUPER excited that God has blessed us with the opportunity to expand the ministry to you ladies specifically. We pray you find these articles a blessing and an encouragement to you, wherever you are. And we pray that if you haven't experienced the saving and satisfying love of Jesus Christ, that you will find it in these pages, and that this will stir conversation between believers and unbelievers alike in order to expand the Kingdom of God!

As you can see by the picture above, I am a wife of the best husband I could ever ask for. Andy encourages me in my walk with the Lord and has been instrumental in me being the woman I am today. We got married in June of 2014. I am also the lucky mama to this cute little girl, LillyAnn Michelle Foster. She was born March 18, 2015, so she's almost a year old already. I can't believe how quickly she has grown, and as much as I would love to stop that, I know I can't, so I just pray that she continues to grow into a child after God's own heart. This is all pretty new to me, and God often uses my family as a way to teach me things, so they will often be a part of the things I write.

Alright, let's get down to business! I'm going to start out this first newsletter being totally open and honest, and frankly, pretty darn vulnerable, with all of you. Here goes nothin'... When I read the passage I included at the opening of is letter, I chuckled at the phrase "When she speaks, her words are wise..." Because, well, I have no idea what I'm doing. By that I mean, I've never before been in a leadership position quite like this. And it's pretty daunting. I'm young and I probably lack more experience in "life" than many of you. So I often feel like I lack the right words to say, or advice to give.

I shared these feelings with my husband, Andy (Director of Inspiration Ministries), and he said "The most important thing to remember is that you lack nothing, because you have the Holy Spirit, who teaches us all things." *Sigh* yeah, yeah, Honey. You're right! I hate (and love) when he's right. So, we are

going to begin our journey together, not knowing a whole lot about much, but knowing the One who does.

I didn't always have the Holy Spirit inside me to give me the words. Sure, I grew up in a Christian home, going to church every Sunday morning, youth group on Wednesday nights, and participating in the worship arts program. However, that isn't what defines a Christian. Religion isn't what is going to get me into Heaven one day. No, that rests in my understanding and belief that Jesus Christ came to Earth in the form of a man; lived a perfect, sinless life; experienced the most horrific torture and despicable, shameful death on a cross to atone for MY sins; three days later rose again; and now sits at the right hand of God, pleading on MY behalf. Thank You, Jesus! A phrase I've come to like is "you don't know what you don't know." So growing up, I didn't know what living for Christ really meant. All I could go by was the example of my pastor, parents, and church friends. But all I really saw them doing was everything I was already doing. That changed when I met Andy and he started asking questions about my journey with Christ. Here I was, at age 19, having gone to church my whole life, and I had never read the Bible cover to cover; I lacked knowledge of basic Biblical concepts; I had never examined MY faith, but instead rested on the faith of my parents. I thought I understood what I was doing when I raised me hand, with all heads bowed and eyes closed, but once the heads were up and eyes opened, I was no different than I was before. I was a mess (and I still am)! After I realized this, then it was my turn to start asking questions.

I started asking questions about what it meant to truly live like Christ, what it looked like to be a godly woman and eventual wife and mother, how I was supposed to love my enemy, how to show grace to people, etc.. I certainly haven't mastered any of these things, but by the grace of God, I am able to live day by day, knowing that even if I failed the day before, His mercies are new every morning.

The opening verse of this passage really highlights for me my aspirations, not only as a woman, or a wife and mother, or as the editor of *Inspiration for Her*, but as a fellow female and Sister in Christ to each of you. That together, we can be energized through Christ and His sacrifice. That we can be strong in the faith, and hardworking in service for the Lord in expanding His Kingdom. That we may have joy in all circumstances, regardless of what the future may hold. That together, we can become wise women, who lack nothing, knowing when to speak and when to listen. And, that through our learning process, we learn first and foremost to give grace to one another, as Christ has been gracious to us.

Lord willing, you'll be hearing from us again in April, where you will be able to read more testimonies of transformation through the power of Jesus Christ, including ones written by YOU!

Excited and Inspired for a new season,

Kirsten Foster

Inspiration Ministries

Welcome to Inspiration for Her



by Carla Boggs
Vulnerability Ministries, Founder & Director

To say I'm excited about this newsletter is a very large understatement! Honestly, I am in awe. I'm in awe that God uses me as He does; I'm in awe that these pages are filled with stories that I know in the midst of their moments they couldn't see how it could ever possibly be used for good and yet it is; I'm in awe that YOU are reading these words.

There is something powerful about putting words in print, about seeing your thoughts in black and white; there's something even more powerful about baring your heart to a woman you've never met—that is the very essence of vulnerability and the very reason my heart is bursting with excitement as we launch our first *Inspiration for Her* newsletter!!!

My story is full of twists and turns and one giant pot hole that threatened to swallow me permanently. I have two ex-husbands and three children, I have had close to 20 jobs in my lifetime and have moved more than that. But nothing prepared me for the moment when I was staring at a Bible while being raped by a man who called himself a Christian—just 4 months after I was baptized. I went from a girl who wanted NOTHING to do with God, to a woman who shouted through baptism how much I loved God, to a victim wondering if God was even real. I wrestled with “where is this God that said He would never forsake me?” and honestly wasn't sure I even wanted to continue being a Christ follower.

Eight and a half years later I have a company called Vulnerability Ministries through which I share my story of not just the wanting to die, but how I can now say I LOVE being me! And recently Vulnerability Ministries partnered with Inspiration Ministries so that we can, together, create safe environments for people to share their story, experience TRUE healing, and discover just how deep, how wide, and how long the love of God truly is. My journey is a wild one, but I wouldn't trade it for anything and I am pretty excited to begin sharing stories of my own and my friends and then to begin to hear your stories—I hope you're ready because good things are coming!

These scriptures have been my rock as I made my way out of that pit of hell and began to create a new and better life, “But forget all that—it's nothing compared to what I'm going to do. For I am about to do a brand new thing. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness for my people to come home. I will create rivers for them in the desert!...Yes I will make springs in the desert, so that my chosen people can be refreshed.” Isaiah 43:18-20. I needed refreshed, I needed new, and I needed help. I'm thinking maybe you do too? Take heart my sweet friend...the time is now.

old boots

by Amy Slone



I have a pair of boots that I love hard. I wear them a lot... to the store... to the bank and even to work some days. They quite possibly could be my favorite pair of foot apparel ever owned. It's easy for me to slip them on. I know they will be comfortable... they won't pinch or rub the wrong way. I can manage easily with them on my feet... they just feel right.

I wonder sometimes... how easy is it for me to still slip into other things that maybe aren't so gentle on my soul; old ways of thinking, old ways of seeing, long after I've clung to His promise that I've been made new. I see how, at times, it's easy for me to still search for reasons why God shouldn't choose me; when I'm feeling lonely, useless or discouraged. It can be easy to find comfortable space in the “yeah, but...” messages in my mind. It's easy to slip on those “comfortable boots” and replay words we'd wished we hadn't said; words we wished we would have; moments of misplaced shame or less than kind responses; moments where grace would have served both us and our world a little better... if only. Those are easy places to slip into and we have an enemy who beckons us there every hour of every day.

But then, in ways that only this Jesus can manage, He calls us to new places. He reminds us that we are His and our old ways, old thoughts, “old boots,” are not the freedom living He calls us to.

“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?” (Galatians 4:8-9, NIV)

Our human nature is to remember, to replay. Our flesh makes it easy for us to “slip into” all that's “less than.”

He comes to redeem, forgive, and make new. I'm not even so unsure that one day He may literally slip a new pair of boots on this girl's feet, just because He knows I like a good visual lesson most days.

Take hold of His truth today: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

We are free from old ways, old traps, old boots. He says it's true. So the next time we reach for that ratty pair of shoes, that old ratty way of thinking, let's be reminded of who we belong to, because that makes all the difference. That's the truth of who we are in Him.

But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. Isaiah 43:1

Unworthy, Inadequate, but Not Lost

by Laura Gauthier

*The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. **Zephaniah 3:17***

I am the second of four children born to a poor and very young Mennonite couple in the 70's. My parents were practically babies themselves when they had me, and they were scraping by on pennies doing what they could to make ends meet. Fortunately for me there was no childhood crisis. In fact, to the better part of the world I'm sure my life was like a dream compared to most. Despite of my "happy" childhood, as early as the age of five I remember feeling rejected, misunderstood, un-chosen, unloved, and not special.

By the time I was a teenager I was deeply dissatisfied in the friendships I had, boy crazy and looking for love in all the wrong places, and way too aware of every detail of my body that wasn't ideal. I didn't feel loved, and I didn't think I was good at anything, and therefore worthless in the eyes of others.

Notice that I said "in the eyes of others?" Somehow even though I had received so many messages of my unimportance there was still some room for pride. I spent a lot of time thinking about what people would say about me if I died, how sorry they would be because I was convinced that if I died everyone in my life would notice the great things about me they had somehow overlooked.

Well I didn't die. I am now 38 years old and like anyone else, a lot of things have happened in the last thirty years of my life. I made a lot of bad choices, most of which were driven by an animalistic desire to be noticed, cherished, seen, heard, and loved, and maybe even worshiped. I said and did things I am now so ashamed of. I hurt people, I hurt myself, I lied, I stole, I fought, I broke the law, I gave myself away, and I damaged things that I cannot ever repair.

At the bottom of the pit I had dug for myself at the age of 22, I gave up. I admitted to the God that already knew, that I was screwing everything up. In fact, I didn't know how to not screw everything up. I sat on the hallway floor of my small apartment and cried my eyes out. As I sobbed loud guttural sobs, sounds like a dying animal came out of me. I cried so hard I couldn't catch my breath because I knew how big of a mess I had made. I knew something needed to be different but I also knew that my efforts were not going to be enough.

I wanted help, I needed help, and I was finally asking for it. I told God that He was going to have to show me how to do it differently because I didn't have what it took. I told Him I was going to continue to make a mess until He showed me how not to. I gave Him permission to come in and overhaul my life. I wanted

a relationship with Him, but I didn't know how to go about having an authentic one without exerting my own efforts, which always ended up in a huge FAIL. I needed to be carried out of my life, out of my own head. I needed a miracle.

I'm still not sure how He did it. What I do know is that I kept trying things my own way, then realizing that's what I was doing, surrendering to Him again and asking Him to take over. I learned how to be still and wait for Him instead of plowing through life doing what made sense to me in the moment. I had to keep surrendering to His way, and laying down my own way. Little by little over the years He changed it all; He changed me.

I believe He saved me that day I called out to Him on the floor in my apartment. I also believe that He kept saving me day after day after day until this very day. This very day, He's still saving me, and I am still learning to surrender.

There are days and sometimes moments in my life now that I believe I have something to offer the world, I am special, beautiful, important, able, talented, and worthy of love. There are also still days and more moments in my life when I feel I am worthless, unable, unimportant, average, one of billions, unseen, unheard, misunderstood, and down right ugly through and through.

What I **know** is that He died for me, like He died for you, so that we don't have to live in the prison we create for ourselves, the prison of sin and shame. I know that His blood covers all my iniquities, and though I will continue to have iniquities, His blood will continue to cover those too.

I am a sinner chosen by the One True God, and I am unworthy, inadequate, and incapable of anything but making a mess, but I am not lost. I am not lost because He has never lost sight of me. He hears me, He sees me, He knows me, and He chooses me, and He chooses you! In John 10:9-11 Jesus tells us: "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep". A good shepherd knows His sheep and He knows where each of them are. He has not lost sight of you.

Jesus is really good at cleaning up the messes we make of our lives, and all that He requires of us is that we surrender our own ways to Him. The truth is that we are all unworthy, inadequate, and incapable of anything good outside of Him. He is a good God, a loving God, and no matter how far we have strayed from Him and His ways, we are not powerful enough to ever be out of His reach.

Friend, if you are tired of carrying the burdens of life, I encourage you to lay them at His feet. Jesus knows, and He is waiting to make a miracle out of your life. Ask Him to show you how to LIVE.

For the Love of Gomer

by CJ Eaton

Do we really understand God's love for us? How do we know He love us? Why does He even bother to love us? We could probably discuss this topic all day long and never really grasp what His love is because it's really beyond anything we can imagine. When I think about God's love for me I get a picture of sacrifice. I know that's not exactly pretty and may not inspire warm gooey feelings, but His love for us is far beyond our feeble comprehension. And His Word bears this out. Throughout the scriptures He gives us ample evidence and countless examples of how He demonstrated His great love for humankind through sacrifice. The Psalms are full of examples of His love carried out in His mercy and grace.

I remember the very first Bible verse I ever learned was John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” I don't even have to check to know this is exactly how I learned it. It wasn't until years later that I took the time to think about exactly what that meant. Our God, the Creator of all the world, the One Supreme Super Holy Power over Everything (my own name for Him), sacrificed His very own child, His human progeny, for the purpose of saving the rest of us, lowly sinners, from eternal damnation.

Even before Christ, in the Old Testament, He reveals His love over and over. He brought the nation of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He spared Daniel from being eaten by lions, and He gave us profound wisdom in the Proverbs so we can know how to live in community with others.

One of the most powerful and humbling examples of His love is in the book of Hosea. We are introduced to a woman of dubious virtue, Gomer, whom God has pre-arranged to marry one of His prophets, Hosea. She was likely raised in a family where sexual immorality was not only practiced, but accepted. I have to wonder if Gomer was a victim of her lascivious father with no one there to defend her. She was identified as a woman of a “promiscuous spirit” who had no understanding of her worth as a person.

When God commanded Hosea to marry her, you can bet more than a few heads turned. I imagine everyone he knew expected Hosea to take a virtuous wife, one he could walk with proudly who would bear for him obedient and respectful children. Who he got was a woman who had no clue how to meet those expectations. And at one point she left him, looking to satisfy her needs with other men. Why would she abandon the precious gift of marriage to a God-fearing man? Maybe it was just too unfamiliar for her to be comfortable. She was probably treated better than she had ever been before so why leave? Perhaps she believed she wasn't worth of being loved by Hosea. Perhaps she didn't think she could be accepted into his life. Or maybe she felt incomplete since she had done nothing to earn it.

The deeper story is the parallel between Hosea and Gomer and God and His chosen children, the nation of Israel. God lavished His love on Israel and they repeatedly turned their backs on Him to worship false gods and idols. He could have chosen to abandon them. He could have turned His back and allowed the consequences of their choices to overwhelm and destroy them. But Hosea 11:8-9 tells us of His miraculous compassion when He realized He could give up His children, when He choose to “not carry out His great anger,” when His actions showed the relationship He has with His people is far more important than punishing them for their disobedience.

And in case you were wondering, He didn't forget or forsake Gomer. God told Hosea to go get her, purchase her from the slave block, and bring her back to her home. He instructed her to live in love with her husband, to be the beloved, cherished bride that He had intended. Can you imagine how this very public declaration of love affected Gomer? How would that affect you or me?

This story illustrates that there is nowhere God won't go and nothing He won't do to save His children. Just as Jesus refused to abandon the one lost lamb, He will not desert us just because we aren't obedient. Yes, we will all have consequences for our choices and God will probably allow us to suffer some along the way but He always gives us a path back to Him.

God's love isn't based on whether or not we deserve to be loved. None of us ever will since it's impossible to earn it. Even though He was exceedingly angry with the nation of Israel and they didn't deserve His love, He chose to forgive them and keep them for his own. Gomer betrayed her husband but she was restored to a loving relationship with him. That love is available to all of us – not because of who we are but because of who God is. Because of His love.

Write to Inspiration Ministries

Here at Inspiration Ministries, we are committed to corresponding with any one who writes us! We have several women volunteers standing at the ready, waiting for letters to arrive. We would love the opportunity to get to know you better, and to encourage your spiritual growth VIA personal letters.

If you would like to have the newsletter sent directly to you, please send us your name, DC#, and institution name, and we will add you to the mailing list. We have ministry sponsors, so this comes at no cost to you! Also, if you know of anyone else, either behind prison or jail walls, or in the free world, that could use a little inspiration, please send their information as well.

Last, but not least, we would love to include articles written by our readers, because who better to connect with incarcerated women, than other incarcerated women. We have found testimonies to be the most powerful tool in bringing others to Christ, and we would love to share the good work of the Lord with other women around the country! We look forward to hearing what God is doing in and through you!

Don't Get Used to Darkness

by Sharon Brooks

When my daughter was a baby and needed to go to the Pediatrician, we had a game we played to pass the time as we waited for the Doctor. I would hold her and go over to the light switch and flip off the light. I only waited a few second before turning it on again. Even in that short time, her eyes adjusted to the darkness. Once the light was on, you could see her eyes as wide as they could be and her pupils fully enlarged. We would both laugh and then she would say, "Do again!" I started leaving the light off a little longer each time and her eyes would not only react the same way, but she would start squinting at the light. She was not afraid because she was safe in my arms, and the darkness was only temporary.

As adults, we can sometimes get used to darkness around us. We are bombarded each day with the horrific news of events near and far. We are surrounded by negative people, as well as our own issues we deal with on a daily basis. We can be in a dark place, as I once was. I saw no light, no hope that the future could get better. Fortunately, there were people in my life to remind me the light was always there and darkness could never dim it.

In God's Word, John 8:12, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." He also promises in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you or forsake you." Let that soak in for a moment. The God of this universe has promised to never leave you; you will never be alone. Even when we feel we are, we have assurances that we aren't. That's an awesome promise! It's easy to get so accustomed to the dark that we forget there IS a light, and His name is Jesus!

Just as all I had to do for my daughter was to flip a switch, God is always there, ready to do that for us. All we have to do is ask and He will flood our hearts with light, hope, and assurance. So don't get used to the darkness around you. Ask God to fill you with His light. His light can never be switched off or dimmed, and will never leave you. He is ready and waiting. Then you can let that light shine with others around you, and be proof of hope in this dark world. Yes, even in the darkest places, circumstances, or issues, He is there!

Don't adjust to darkness. Accept and adjust to His light today.

To the Sisters in Christ

Being a woman of God means daily needing to be reminded of the value we have in Jesus. We all have the desire to know our weight in worth and purpose, to fully understand the living and loving beauty we are called to be and display. I've found the subject of edification is most inspiring when it's found in the wisdom of another Sister in Christ. We want to make it clear that you ladies of the Lord are important to us, and we are committed to inspiring and encouraging you. We are in this together. Our hope is to reach the hearts of women everywhere, whether in literal confinement or spiritual, to come along-side you in prayer and friendship.

If Only...

by Abby Carnahan

If only I had a job, I would be thankful.
If only I could lose 10 pounds, I would be happy.
If only my kids weren't in so much trouble, I would be content.
If only it wasn't raining, I could see the sun.

We utter phrases like these all the time. Your "If only..." may sound entirely different depending on the season you're in, but the mentality is just the same: I can't praise/worship/honor/thank God until this situation is different. There is no sugar-coating it—that's what we're communicating to Him. You may even be negative to others. But above all, the Lord is the one being hurt by our unwillingness to step outside ourselves and simply show Him our gratitude.

Paul urges us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 to "Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." We were promised to have challenges and struggles in this life, but we can't forget the most important part of that promise—Jesus has overcome the world! Your "If only..." pales in comparison to what you have: victory in the Most High God!

"Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe" (Hebrews 12:28). This may look different for each of us, but it is imperative that we make the choice to show God our gratitude in both big and little things. Jesus taught the principle of integrity when he said "If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones" (Luke 16:10). I believe that same integrity can be shown in the way we honor God with our thanksgiving. He wants to bless us, but His greater desire is for us to acknowledge Him as the source of each blessing.

I challenge you to start a habit of showering God with thanks and praise for who He is and for all He has done. Start with the small things if everything else seems too heavy...but start somewhere. I am praying that your spirit will be lifted as you choose to honor the Lord with your thanksgiving!

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

Worship the Lord with gladness.

Come before him, singing with joy.

Acknowledge that the Lord is God!

He made us, and we are his.

We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving;

Go into his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him and praise his name.

For the Lord is good.

His unfailing love continues forever,

And his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Psalm 100