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“... and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” **Luke 1:31-33**



*Inspiration for Her*

WWW.INSPIRATION-MINISTRIES.ORG  
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**THE OFFICIAL INSPIRATION MINISTRIES WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER**

  
*For  
unto us a  
Child is born  
Unto us a Son  
is given, and the  
Government shall be  
Upon his shoulders,  
And His name shall be called  
Wonderful, Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father  
Prince of Peace!*  
*Isaiah  
9:6*

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*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



A couple years ago around this time I heard a song on the radio, and I remembered it from when I was a kid. Apparently, it was released in 1997... So only 19 years ago... It is called "Welcome to Our World" by Chris Rice. I've put the lyrics down below.

Tears are falling, hearts are breaking / How we need to hear from God / You've been promised, we've been waiting / Welcome Holy Child

Hope that You don't mind our manger / How I wish we could have known / But long-awaited Holy Stranger / Make Yourself at home

Bring Your peace into our violence / Bid our hungry souls be filled / Word now breaking Heaven's silence / Welcome to our world

Fragile finger sent to heal us / Tender brow prepared for thorn / Tiny heart whose blood will save us / Unto us is born

When I was younger, I'm not sure that I really listened to the words as much as just the melody, and somehow, it wasn't until probably 15 years later that I heard the song at a time that it could really resonate with me. But as I sat in my car, carefully listening to each word being sung, it hit me. That even as a newborn baby, Jesus Christ was being shown how terrible of a world He would be living in, and eventually saving. That even as a newborn baby, He was having the weight and sin of the world placed on His tiny little shoulders. That even as a newborn baby, He was being called to something greater than Himself, something greater than anyone else on earth. He had an immense burden to carry, yet was unable to even care for His own basic needs – being clothed, fed, carried, held. I can't imagine being so young and having such a huge responsibility. Shoot, I'm 24 years old, mother of one (soon to be two), married to the director of a growing ministry, and still have a hard time accepting my own responsibilities sometimes!

And I'm not just talking about my "earthly" responsibilities of motherhood, marriage, business owning, etc., but my "spiritual" responsibilities also! My responsibility to share the love of Christ and the good news of the Gospel with others; to aid those in need of a hand; to be a listening ear and a strong shoulder for someone going through a hard time; to spend time in the Word of God, and being open to the moving of the Holy Spirit. I have the responsibility to forgive others, even when they continue to hurt me or my family, or when they don't understand the concept of forgiveness or transformation. I have the responsibility to submit my life and will to Christ's care and control on a daily basis, and even a momentary one. None of these responsibilities come naturally for me, but they are responsibilities that are for my own good. And these responsibilities remind me that they are nothing compared to the responsibility Christ had in living a perfect,

sinless life, not void of trials or temptations, performing miracles, enduring scrutiny and persecution, all to be humiliated and murdered. All for a sinner like me. And He did it willingly. If that doesn't bring joy to the day of His birth, I'm not sure what would! Personally, I think He is a little crazy – probably gets it from His Dad. But I've never been more thankful to have a crazy Person in my life, and on my side. Someone who cares about me more deeply than I care for myself. Someone who knows me better than I know myself. Someone willing to look past my sin, mistakes, and shortcomings, and see who I've been created to be – someone worth sacrificing for; someone worth loving; someone worth forgiving.

I was just rereading the letter I wrote in October, and when I got to the part where I said "He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be crucified on a cross, so His blood could make YOU white as freshly-fallen snow," I couldn't help but think about all the times I've complained about the snow we get in Indiana. In fact, just a week or so again, we saw our first flurries of the season, and I was dreading it. Mostly because it means it's getting cold, cold enough to snow, and I just don't love cold weather. Not to mention, I slipped on ice while carrying Lilly out to the car one night last year, and ice is inevitable when it's cold enough to snow! I had a sore elbow for about a week, but overall, we were both okay, thank You, Jesus. But if I didn't have to be put in that position again, especially being pregnant again this winter, I'd be perfectly fine with that!

Anyways... I say all that to say, rather than being upset about all the cold, slippery stuff, I should be rejoicing in the fact that the blood of Christ has made me as white as that freshly-falling snow. And I am as unique as every snowflake that hits the ground. YOU are as unique as every snowflake that hits the ground. And YOU are made white as that freshly-fallen snow the moment you believe and ask Jesus Christ to be Lord of your life. And what better time to make that decision than during the season of His birth?

I can only imagine the feelings you ladies have while being locked up during the holidays, many of you unable to see any friends or loved ones. And for that my heart truly breaks. But, I want to remind you that even though you may feel physically alone, know that we in Auburn, Indiana, are thinking about and praying for you often, especially during this time. More importantly, you are surrounded by other women going through and feeling the same things you are – so reach out to someone! Give them a hug. Share a meal with them. Bless them with a kind or encouraging word. "Treat others how you would like to be treated."

Most importantly, God didn't send His only Son to die on a cross for you, just to leave you feeling abandoned and alone. So turn to Him! Thank Him for the things you have, the people you have, and the time you have. Because you've been given them for a reason! YOU have been given a reason. A reason to live, to love, and to have hope. Hold on to that Hope when all else seems gone.

Looking to Christ this Christmas and beyond,

*Kirsten Foster*

Inspiration Ministries

# Blessed Assurance

by Laura Gauthier

In 2006, at the age of 28, my husband and I were rear-ended by a drunk driver at 9:30 AM. I suffered from whiplash and a minor concussion due to hitting my head on the headrest of my seat. Because of the concussion, we opted for an MRI of my head. The MRI did not show damage to my brain from the accident, but it did show a rare congenital (born with) vascular condition in my right occipital lobe. To spare you all the medical details, here's what this means in a nutshell: I have a clump of veins that are not supposed to be in my brain, they are very tiny and there is a pretty heavy blood supply flowing into these tiny veins all day every day. These tiny veins were not created to withstand this type of constant heavy current of flow. Essentially, I have a ticking time bomb in my brain.

After consulting with a specialist, we learned that most forms of treatment for this type of condition are rather experimental and it's seemingly more dangerous to treat the condition than it is to leave it alone as I had no pressing symptoms or signs of the AVM being active or in danger of bleeding.

What a shock it was to receive this information! It was really hard to find a way to live knowing this information and not living in a constant state of worry! For a while I struggled with being kind of mad at God for revealing the condition if there wasn't really anything we could do about it. I couldn't think of a good reason He would do such a thing, but I believed that He had a reason even if I couldn't see it yet.

Five years later my husband and I were finally planning to have a baby. My gynecologist wanted a neurosurgeon to weigh in on whether my AVM could handle a vaginal birth. The answer was that he didn't recommend it. He said that the women that he has seen that had this condition and had vaginal births ended up on his operating table because those little veins couldn't handle the elevated pressure and volume during childbirth.

All of a sudden I realized that knowing that I had an AVM in my brain was actually a blessing and we opted for a Cesarean section. I have now had three children by C-section, and am pregnant with our fourth.

This new pregnancy has brought with it all the usual fears and anxieties concerning the AVM, especially because I've been experiencing a lot of headaches this time. A couple of weeks ago I had a few headaches that seemed very strange compared to the others I'd been having. In fact, one of them even left me with temporary loss of vision in one eye.

That particular headache happened late at night and resulted in the decision to go to the ER to get checked out, just in case.

The ER doctor was very kind and asked me the normal series of questions about the headaches trying to determine if it was necessary to take the risk to the

baby to have imaging done. With the doctor's direction, we opted out of imaging and decided to wait until I could get in to see yet another neurologist.

My experience with doctors regarding the AVM has been disappointing to say the least. For example, the doctor I was set up with as a result of the recent trip to the ER, entered my exam room with the question, "Why are you here?" followed with "I don't treat AVMs" followed by "You should have a relationship with someone in another city in case something happens, so that they aren't like 'who is this girl?' when you get there." Then he released me without even one question about my recent headaches or checking to see if I was presenting any other current symptoms.

I cried when the doctor left the room, like I've cried after almost every conversation I've ever had with a neurologist. I pulled it together in time for the nurse to return and tell me they would make a referral to the hospital in the other city but that she didn't know how long it would take or who the doctor would be. I left in shock and disbelief.

I went home to my family and made dinner and went about the rest of my day. I woke early in the morning with the recent doctor conversation playing through my head, followed by the other doctor conversations I've had in the past. I thought, "No one in the neurology world cares!" Immediately the Lord whispered to me, "I care. I see you." I wept. I wept because I knew it was true, and because I knew that it is really the only thing that matters. Doctors don't know everything, they can't see everything, and they can't predict the future, but my God does, can, and knows, and HE loves me. Even though this appointment was disappointing and left me feeling unseen and unheard, I can trust that it is part of God's plan for good because Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him."

My friend, do you feel unseen? Do you feel unheard? If you do, I want you to know that God sees you, and He hears you. He cares about the hardships and the circumstances that cause you to feel alone and unloved. He desires for us to come running to Him and all He asks is that our hearts are ready to receive and ask for forgiveness, and that we allow Him to meet us where we are. That's it. That's all. He requires nothing else. There isn't any one sin that can keep you from the peace that He offers if your heart desires and asks for forgiveness.

Some truth from His Word that I cling to:

**Psalm 139:5** "You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me."

**Psalm 139:13** "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb."

**Isaiah 40:11** "He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart;  
He gently leads those that have young."

A Savior is born!  
Hallelujah Myrae  
Cheryl Meyer

Sarah Sprague  
Merry Christmas  
I pray you're  
life will be  
blessed

Merry Christmas!!  
Sending all of your  
our love & prayers!  
we are so thankful  
for your encouragement &  
love to share the gospel.  
God Bless!  
Braut & Christy Wilcox

Joy to the world!  
Nancy Paschal  
Theresa Paschal

Jesus loves you  
Antonio Settimo

Andy  
Weber  
12

Merry Christmas from Inspiration Ministries!  
We are in this together, Brethren.  
Jesus is the reason for the season.  
Love, Andrew & Kirsten Foster & the IM Gang

God  
Always loves you  
Taylor O'Reilly

Merry Christmas  
Bryan

Merry Christmas  
God Bless you all!  
Michelle Jannert

Merry Christmas  
May God be with  
you thru the  
season and always  
Love Dave Emerick

Merry  
Christmas  
&  
God Bless!  
Michael Weber

MERRY  
CHRISTMAS  
DOUG

Merry Christmas  
God Bless You!  
Bless! Cindy Schwab



"UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE  
HOUSE, THE BUILDERS LABOR  
IN VAIN" Psalms 127  
LET US LABOR WITH HIM!  
MERRY CHRISTMAS!!  
Don & Michelle & STEPHEN  
HARVEY

Merry X-mas  
from the "Minstrel minister"  
Love, Jay L.

Donna & Riggs.  
Missou. Merry Xmas  
Merry Christmas  
Denny Myers

# *My Heart, My Voice, and Christmas*

by Rebecca Congleton

**F**rustrated. Discouraged. Isolated. Unsure. Those are just some of the emotions I felt last week, while I was on total vocal rest to try and resolve some voice fatigue and loss of range I had been dealing with off and on for about six months. I had decided to try this somewhat extreme course of action after reading about vocal fold nodules and comparing my symptoms. I didn't have all the telltale indicators, but enough of them that I didn't want to continue talking and singing while possible callouses formed in my voice box, changing my voice permanently.

Trying to communicate without saying a word was incredibly difficult. I found myself irritated that my husband couldn't understand my gestures and wasn't taking the time to read what I had written down on my white board, before asking the next question. I was fearful that the thing I was created to do, the thing I love to do more than anything else in the world, would never feel good again, that the pain I had been experiencing while singing would never go away. I was cut-off from the people I love by silence, left to contemplate the worst-case scenario, within my troubled heart, alone, with dwindling hope.

This time of year, many of us struggle with feeling heavy sadness. I have written before about my childhood and young adult holiday experiences, and the corrosive way they color my expectations and emotions about Christmas. I have found that many people connect with that feeling, the haunting darkness of our past that permeates moments of joy, during the "season of light."

Maybe your father was the worst kind of drunk on Christmas Eve. Maybe your mother was manically happy, but in a way that was unsettling, because you knew depression was coming, and it would be worse than last year. Maybe your friends and cousins and neighbors all seemed to have found the "spirit" of Christmas, but you just found yourself worried your family would come apart, your kids would be disappointed, or your electricity would get turned off, extinguishing the half-lit string of lights on your plastic tree.

Because of the way my early life shaped my thinking, I make a conscious effort not to let my heart become ruled by fear and sadness. It's a daily struggle for me. Call it trauma, or spiritual weakness, or habitual worry. Call it whatever you want, but I'm aware it's an area I have to lay at the feet of Jesus, nearly minute by minute, or it will consume my life. This time of year is definitely the most difficult. The Christmas tree in my living room is a reminder of the greatest gift ever given, the Savior of the world, who came as a humble baby, to save me, to rescue me, to redeem me. I refuse to let it be a trigger for insecurity, fear and shame...but some days it is. Some days it's also a reminder of my weakness, and my desperate need for help.

I sang this morning. I stood beside my husband and I sang the first Christmas carol of the season, at a little church in Columbia, SC. We led worship together,

like we do most Sundays, but today was special. Today, I started to get my voice back. I sang with a bit more ease than I have in several weeks. I sang with more confidence, and a revived sense of gratitude for the gift I've been given. The "worst" is not happening. My days of lifting my voice in worship are not ending. I am on the mend, and I'm not taking it for granted. I still have some work to do rehabilitating my vocal folds... and also my heart. Both tend to be a bit more fragile than they should be. Both need the healing hands of Jesus to recover from abuse, neglect and striving to exceed their limitations, and both were created by Him and are safe and secure in His trust.

My heart, my voice and Christmas, are all easily corrupted by the cares of this world, but when all three come together and are laid at His feet, it's a beautiful sound. "Go tell it on the mountains, over the hills and everywhere. Go tell it on the mountains, that Jesus Christ is born."

## *O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus*

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,  
Vast unmeasured, boundless, free!  
Rolling as a mighty ocean  
In its fullness over me!  
Underneath me, all around me,  
Is the current of Thy love  
Leading onward, leading homeward  
To Thy glorious rest above!

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,  
Love of ev'ry; love the best!  
'Tis an ocean vast of blessing;  
'Tis a haven sweet of rest.  
How He watches o'er His loved ones,  
Died to call them all His own  
How for them He intercedeth,  
Watcheth o'er them from the throne!

O the deep, deep love of Jesus,  
Spread His praise from shore to shore!  
How He loveth, ever loveth,  
Changeth never, nevermore!  
O the deep, deep love of Jesus  
'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me  
And it lifts me up to glory,  
For it lifts me up to Thee!

# *Time to Heal*

by Sue C.

**H**olding back tears, I sat behind a large desk in a courtroom. Beside me were my husband and a caseworker. A probation officer that we had met just minutes before was talking to an attorney who was there to represent my teenage daughter, who was nowhere in sight. The last time I saw her, two days before the hearing, she was in the midst of another angry rage, intent on causing damage to people and property. Yet again, I was injured, the police were called to assist us, and I had to decide... Would I let them arrest her this time?

Our pastor had warned us that, since we did allow police to arrest her, and she had some time in a cell to think, she could be very angry. I was trying to prepare myself for anything. Guards brought her into the courtroom wearing a uniform provided by the detention facility, her hands cuffed in front of her. She wasn't angry. She looked more defeated than anything else. The judge ordered her to stay another week for a mental health screening, so we left. That evening, my husband and I both sobbed together as we stood in our kitchen. How did things get this bad? Would we ever be able to trust her at home again?

I was angry, sad, hurt and confused. I had been injured so many times in these fits of rage, and I was just done: done with the arguing, done with the chaos, done with the hurting. In all honesty, I didn't want her to come home. At that point, I didn't really care where she went as long as she was looked after and she wasn't anywhere near me. It is tough to admit that, but it was the truth.

None of the out-of-home options we pursued worked out, so we had to bring our daughter home when she was released the following week. God smiled on us, and we were able to arrange it so that she and I (and our other daughter) were never alone together. We always had backup. For months, this was the way we did things. Once, the system was tested. A couple of months after her release from detention, she went into a violent rage again, but I had three other adults available to help me contain her. With the promise that she would be arrested again if this behavior persisted, she began to change, learning how to make better choices when angry.

Forgiveness and trust weren't rebuilt overnight, but over time, with God's help, I was able to completely forgive my daughter for the hurt and pain she caused me and the rest of our family. Just as God has forgiven me for all of the ways I have messed up, He gave me grace to forgive her and to restore our relationship to a better place than it had been before. This Christmas season, I hope that you will take time to consider God's amazing forgiveness and the gift He sent us in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. God has tremendous power to forgive and to restore broken relationships. May He bless you this Christmas season and provide hope and forgiveness where you need them most.

# *The Candy Cane*

**T**he candy cane is a Christmas tradition. They are used as decorations on Christmas trees and, of course, they are one of the most popular of all Christmas treats. I have heard several stories about the history and meaning of the candy cane. I don't know if they are true, but I do think that the candy cane can teach us a few things about the true meaning of Christmas.

First of all, if you look at the candy cane like this it looks like the letter J. Jesus starts with the letter J, so that should remind us of Jesus and help us to remember that Christmas is Jesus' birthday.

If you look at the candy cane like this, it looks like a shepherd's crook. The shepherd used his crook to keep the sheep from wandering away from the flock and getting lost or eaten by a wild animal. The Bible says, "The Lord is my shepherd." The candy cane should remind us that Jesus is our shepherd and He will keep us from wandering away and getting lost or hurt.

The candy cane is mostly white. White is a symbol of purity. That should remind us that Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God and that because He came to be the sacrifice for our sin, we can become as white as snow.

Candy canes have three red stripes. The Bible says that before He was crucified, Jesus was whipped which made blood-red stripes across His back. The Bible says that we are healed by those stripes. The stripes on the candy cane remind us that Jesus suffered and died, so that we can have everlasting life.

To many people, the candy cane is a meaningless decoration seen at Christmas time or just a piece of candy to be eaten. This year, every time you see a candy cane, be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas.

## *Write to Inspiration Ministries*

**W**e are committed to corresponding with anyone who writes us! We have women waiting for letters to respond to. We would love to get to know you better and to encourage your spiritual growth via personal letters. Also, 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 free of charge!

We would love to include MORE articles written by our readers, because who better to connect with incarcerated women, than other incarcerated women?

This can be in the form of the articles you've read so far, as poems, as songs, any way you communicate best! In the past 4 ½ years, we have found testimonies to be the most powerful tool in bringing others to Christ, and we love to share the 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 be shy, Ladies! God has called us to share the Good News with others, no matter where we are! After all, He doesn't choose the qualified, by qualifies the chosen. And that means Y-O-U! We look forward to hearing from you soon!