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For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **John 3:17**



Inspiration for Her

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THE OFFICIAL INSPIRATION MINISTRIES WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER



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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

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **2 Corinthians 5:17**



You've probably noticed the new addition to the Foster family in this picture over here. Well, that is Anthony James "AJ" Foster! He was born 2-8-17, 8 pounds 5 oz, 21 ¼ inches. It was a much smoother birth than that of his big sister, who just celebrated her second birthday March 18th. I can't believe how incredibly blessed I am by the family God has given me.

I'm sure God could give me something to write about pertaining to my new life as mom of two, but instead, He gave me something a little different. Not to worry – I'm sure I'll be back to "normal" in the next issue 😊.

Something I've taken responsibility over for the past couple of years now is the cover art for the newsletters (mostly *Inspiration for Her*). I'm not super great at design/artsy kind of things, and all I really have to work with is Microsoft Word. Very professional, I know. But hey, it gets the job done. Well, this month I wanted to go with a "Spring" theme, since that is the weather we've finally been experiencing in Indiana. That's where the flowers come in – literally. Also, pun intended in the verse – "spring"s up. Clever, right? Anyways... I was searching through Google images for something to "copy" and was having a hard time until I came across the picture used as the background. All of a sudden, I felt like the Holy Spirit just put it all together. Honestly, as I'm writing this, He continues to show me more and more about the photo and the verse. Hallelujah.

So first, the picture. Notice the flowers in the background, how they are blurred out – being forgotten, dying, passing away. They represent the past. Our mistakes, our failures, our short-comings. All the things God tells us to forget. All the things the blood of Jesus has covered. And the flowers in the foreground are in focus, living, thriving, growing. Those flowers pull your focus. They are the present, our future. Our dreams, our goals, our purpose. All the things God is doing or is going to do. The red flower (which may be difficult to see since you have black and white...) represents what is new, original, unique. It represents YOU. It represents the transformation of your mind and heart and life in Christ Jesus.

And now the verse. I was reading this verse in different translations, and I was so intrigued by how much the meaning of a verse can change just because of a simple word, like "am" or "will." The translation in the picture is NIV. I typically use ESV, which read "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert," but I couldn't get over the words "I am" in the NIV, versus "I will" in the ESV. The word "am" has

a present tense, meaning right now, regardless of what else is going on, what circumstance or consequence we are experiencing. The word "will" has a future tense, meaning later down the road, when things change. This doesn't have to be a bad thing, and I don't believe it would be dictated by our circumstances, but is rather a promise from God that He WILL make a way, no matter what. I believe comfort can be found in both translations, but one more so than the other, depending on where we find ourselves – the NIV when we are going through the wilderness, and the ESV when we aren't, but know it's not far away.

So wherever you find yourself – in the wilderness, or maybe just preparing for it – know that God *IS* and *WILL* make a way in that. And that He doesn't care about how "bad" or "not bad" your past was; He cares about how wonderful and glorifying your future with him will be! He cares about *YOU*. He cares about your fears, desires, feelings, needs... And He cares that you trust Him enough to share those with Him. I know it can be a big step to take, trusting someone with those things. But I also know that it's worth it. It's worth passing the load onto the only One who is capable of carrying and caring for those desires, needs, and fears, with our best interest at heart.

I don't feel like I can reiterate enough (probably because I can't hear it enough myself), that our past, or even our present, has zero impact on God's ability, willingness, and desire to use us. Don't think for even a second that because you wear a certain colored jump suit, or walk down a yellow line, or have never experienced incarceration, or have always gone to church, that God sees you any differently than any other woman who has or has not experienced the things you have. We all have our own roads to walk, our own stories to tell, our own lessons to learn. And the Holy Spirit will use those roads, stories, and lessons to draw you closer to the Father, to bring you to repentance, and to further the Kingdom. I encourage you to seek out what the Lord has for you in the here and now. A verse was recently shared with me that I believe fits here: "It is God's privilege to conceal things and the king's privilege to discover them" (Proverbs 25:2, NLT).

I just want to take a second to say how excited I am to be including some pieces written by YOU LADIES! We've received so many letters from women around the country we are having a hard time keeping up. But don't worry – responses are coming! We would love nothing more than to encourage you in your walk with the Lord, answer questions, and get to know you wonderful women. So keep 'em coming! Let us know if you've found inspiration in these pages, what has touched your heart, what has opened your eyes, how the Lord is leading and changing you. I know these letters are super encouraging for me as the editor, but also as a woman of God, knowing that what I have shared matters. I'm sure other ladies would love to hear the same!

Excited and Inspired for what is SPRINGing up,

Kirsten Foster

Inspiration Ministries

My Testimony – Part 1

by Arlene Samuelson

Hello, I'm Arlene. I'm a grateful believer in Christ and have struggled with Depression but came to Celebrate Recovery due to my life-long struggle with Food Addiction. Let me start my testimony by sharing an experience earlier this week from my daily devotional. Jeremiah 18:6 says: *Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand.* It reminded me that part of what I am about to share deals with me trying to be the creator of my own destiny, while my life, in truth, is for the Potter alone. God finds a way to perfectly use our humble clay for greater purposes than we can ever fathom. It's not always a comfortable journey, but I have every faith in the Potter's purposes and end products.

I am an only child born to normal working class parents in rural Northern Indiana, and in many ways my childhood was the very normal one of a small-town girl. But in other ways it was not. While my parents were basically "good" people, my father was a rather stern man who had a lot of walls around him. I know he loved me because my mother, his chief enabler and co-dependent, would often "explain" my father to me and that, despite his behavior, he did love me. While my parents more than bent over backwards to make sure I wasn't a spoiled, only child by being very sparse with their praise and affirmation, my life was balanced by the fact that my mother DID make sure she and I were in Sunday school and church every week. I accepted Jesus' saving grace at age 11 – because, as a good Baptist, I was very glad that Jesus was going to save me from Hell!

A couple of our family dynamics stand out as having importance to my addictive life. First, my father (probably for fear of embarrassing himself) would never attend my school functions – especially when we had "Dad's Night." I would always have to find a substitute Dad – which I did with seeming cheerfulness. My mother actually had to "guilt" my father into attending my High School graduation (where I was a speaker) as well as applying the same pressure to give me away when I got married. In those situations was born my need for attention and approval from others. In 2003 when my father died rather suddenly, I could express a surprising thought to my mother, "Somewhere down deep, I am really angry at Daddy that he could not put his own fears aside to meet his daughter's needs." Oddly enough, because at that time I had gained understanding of my own approval needs through CR and other programs, I was able to state the thought, and rather quickly forgive my father and move on.

While I can remember a few fun times in my family, the second important Family Dynamic was this: I very much recall that mealtime could be a very tense time for my mother. My father, a meat and potatoes man, expected his supper to be on the table when he got home but he would never call if he was running late – 30 minutes, 60 minutes, 90 minutes – so what? -- so poor mother, a woman who, to me, seemed confident in most things, would just become totally wishy washy trying to keep supper warm and stewing what to do. I cannot tell you the number of times I had the pleasure of eating overdone pork, beef, or liver. Not to mention

the tension around that dinner table – all to which my dad seemed oblivious. BUT, on Thursday nights, my dad worked all night. Then mom and I could eat WHEN we wanted and WHAT we wanted – pizza, spaghetti, casseroles – anything. Freedom was whatever food we wanted! I am sure my mother would deny this, but I distinctly remember her mentioning rather quietly at the side of my father's casket that now she could eat whatever she wanted.

I was pretty skinny until I reached the third grade. That year I had every childhood disease in one year. Suddenly my mother's training to "clean my plate" because of those "starving children in China" was not needed. I was a "chubby" – much to my mother's frustration. My life long struggle with who I was vs. what I looked like was starting. My mother had her own struggles with food, but to me this was just one more place where her frustration and disapproval meant I didn't measure up. For many years, my mother, a product of her generation, would express that I was overweight yet urge 2nds and 3rds on me! I am certain there are several of you that can relate!

My need for approval played itself out several ways in both my teenage and adult life, not by my being a rebel (in my small town everyone knew all your business) but by being a very good student. Good grades were highly respected in my home but well-balanced by my father's concerns for common sense – "Use your head, Arlene." But I also was a rather loud-mouthed wit among my peers and even adults. We were a smart group of kids in my High School class, but it was "zing" or be "zinged." For one looking for approval, giving a "zing" was much better than receiving one! Of course, this didn't exactly make me the most-dated girl in my class, but it got me attention, which I very much craved. I also learned to apologize when I put my foot in my mouth. But there were many times as I went through my teen years that my feelings were hurt anyway. It's a telling thing that the two songs chosen for me as a part of our Senior year were "Big Girls Don't Cry" and "It's my Party and I'll Cry if I Want To." Those songs pretty well summarize the down side of my teen years. The up side was that my grades got me the scholarships I needed to attend college. Sadly enough, I only weighed about 145-150 pounds in high school, but in my heart, I was very much a "chubby" body unsuccessfully looking for approval.

I will share more of my testimony in the next issue, but let me share something I am learning from a Bible study called "Loving Well" by Beth Moore. As someone who is aware of needing approval, I am wrapping my mind and heart around Beth's Four Confessions. Maybe it will be good for you to ponder these thoughts as well. Perhaps you never thought of yourself as capable of love or there are people in your life who are very hard to love or even that no one could ever love YOU! Let me tell you, God does love you and me – no matter what! Here are the four confessions. Consider memorizing them: 1. God is perfect love. 2. Nothing can separate me from God's perfect love. 3. God pours His perfect love into my imperfect heart. 4. Accessed, I can love anyone through anything.

Until next time...

The Truth About Lies

by CJ Eaton

If you have ever heard two eye witness accounts of the same event, you might have difficulty figuring out the facts in the situation. Everyone has a different viewpoint and ability to remember what they saw or heard so putting together an accurate record can be complicated. It only gets more complicated when emotions are involved, particularly if those reporting have something to gain or lose from the outcome.

I can't even remember how many times I've heard statements like, "truth is relative" or "this is my version of reality." This implies that facts change based on what we choose to believe. Everyone does have their own perception of truth but that doesn't change what the facts are, only how we interpret them. We believe the way we do based on our emotion, attitude, history, and current circumstances. And sometimes we may just feel the need to be right, regardless of the truth.

Perhaps we are so convinced that what we believe is truly accurate because we really can't stand the idea that we may have a faulty memory, or could be easily deceived. The truth is we are all being deceived everyday by the greatest liar there has ever been. I am astounded and mortified at the number of times, and the various ways, I have bought into the lies that Satan tells. Some of them can be so hard to recognize as lies because they tend to make me feel comfortable. And accepting the truth means I need to change, which is rarely a comfortable process.

The ability to discern truth from lies has not always been one of my strengths, unfortunately. And this is becoming more and more obvious as I delve into God's Word. There are countless lies and half-truths that we, as women who follow Christ, have been fed and have believed. It is lowering to realize that as much as I love following Christ and learning more about who He is, it's still too easy to get caught up in the deception that is so prevalent in our world. Deception that is completely rooted in Satan's agenda and designed to pull us away from the future God has planned for us.

Some of his lies have a lot more impact on me than others. Some I have believed without realizing they are lies and contradict God's Word. One of these that caused me to struggle most is that I'm "entitled" to have what I want because of how difficult my past was. When I think about this, the hard circumstances, the troubles, the trials and how all of those have affected me, it gives Satan the opportunity to whisper lies to me. Lies such as, "it's not your fault that you don't have a strong self-esteem – you've been damaged," or "it's perfectly justifiable to indulge in whatever makes you feel better," or my all-time favorite, "you deserve to be happy after all the pain and hardship you've endured." While I can't deny my past I can choose how I allow it to affect my future.

There is not one single thing that any of us have been through that Jesus can't resolve into a blessing for us or glory for Him. But we have the responsibility to live as He teaches, to make choices that honor His sacrifice, to put our own agendas aside so we give Him room to work in our lives. This means owning up

to our mistakes and allowing Him to cleanse us so we don't keep dragging our dirty pasts down the path of His truth.

Satan tells us lies and the world reinforces them. Satan creeps into our thoughts providing us the opportunity to doubt what Scripture tells us is true. There is a seductive, or as a friend of mine called it, "beguiling," quality to how Satan approaches us with his lies. When he exerts his influence to tempt us into sin, he can make it seem so appealing and even justifiable. He sets us up to think that we deserve to have whatever the desired outcome of the sinful act is and that any possible negative consequences are minimal and not worth considering.

This is one of the biggest lies Satan tells us. The consequences of allowing ourselves to wallow in the deceitfulness of Satan can be enormous. It could be the difference between growing into a willing servant of the Lord or living a joyless, empty existence. It could be the difference between pointing a non-believer to Jesus or allowing them to live in ignorance and never know His saving grace.

The truth is that our actions and our choices are determined by what we believe. Do we live like we believe God's truth or as though we accept Satan's deception? Do we choose to hold fast to God's promises and trust in His truth, no matter what the world tells us to believe? There is beauty in submitting to the Lord and the blessings we gain have no comparison to the shallow and temporary benefit of Satan's "feel-good" lies. We all have the option of leaving a legacy that either accommodates the world and what Satan wants or glorifies the Almighty God by throwing off the lies and living boldly in the truth of His Word.

"I Truth" Verses

The following statements and verses can be used to combat the lies Satan most often uses in our life. Memorize a few of them that stand out to you, and repeat them when you feel discouraged, alone, helpless, hopeless, or any other negative emotion Satan plants in you.

I AM CONFIDENT - *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 1:6***

I AM CAPABLE - *I can do all things through him who strengthens me. **Philippians 4:13***

I AM BEING TRANSFORMED - *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. **2 Corinthians 3:18***

I AM FORGIVEN - *To the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight. **Ephesians 1:6-8***

My Search for Love Part 2

by Anonymous

I ended up violating my probation in both states and went to jail. After another horrible detox and 6 months in county jails, I was sentenced to a work release program. This was the turning point in my life. I have to express the sheer genius of God's perfect plan. The program had just opened up for women. Had it worked out any other way, I would have gone to prison and would not have met the people I did. God worked through every one of them. They were perfectly placed in my life to help me grow into the person I am today.

Now let me tell you about the people God used the most, to show me a way out of the darkness and into His glorious light. While in the program, I met Pastor Michael. He worked there teaching a couple different classes I attended. He is my shepherd and has been there for me through so much. I'm surprised he didn't fire me from the church last year. I was very needy and called him as much as 20 times a day during a time my husband went thru a very hard time. I also met Adele, who was the praise and worship leader at the church. She came into the program and taught Bible studies every week.

Almost immediately, I felt a pull toward her. I know now that the pull I felt was actually toward Jesus that lives in her. During one of her Bible studies, I accepted Jesus into my life. At another Bible study after that, I was telling her some of my concerns and I was being released soon. I had nowhere to go, no money, and no one who cared anymore. I didn't even have anyone to pick me up when I got out. Adele said "Well, I'll pick you up. We will find somewhere for you to go, don't worry." To most people this probably seems trivial, but it was this small act of kindness that won my heart to the Lord. In that moment Jesus revealed to me that I was never again going to be alone. Adele saw me through God's eyes. Through my eyes, I saw God in her.

By the time I was released, I had arranged for another ride. After I was picked up, I was literally left out on the street. The person who picked me up lied about the fact that he arranged somewhere for me to stay. Once that fell through, he just left me there. I called Adele. She picked me up, and our church put me up at a motel. Adele took me, got me some food, and provided me with the things I needed. To make a long story short, I ended up going to live in a bad situation.

I was reading my Bible every day and going to church. I was seeing my kids every day and doing my best to block out the evil around me, but it was starting to slither back into my life. That's what the enemy does. But God!!!!

Like God does, He pressed my life once again to repentance. One day after a violent, abusive situation with the person I was living with, God said, "Enough!" I called Adele and cried out to her that I needed help. She and her husband came to pick me up and took me into their home. Keep in mind, I was pretty much a stranger. I was an acquaintance at best. They both knew that I had been a junkie, a thief, and a liar for the greater part of my life. Because God spoke and told them, "Take her, raise her up in Me, and I will do great and mighty things in her," I am

here today. All glory to God, but I also have to thank Paul and Adele for their total obedience and for heeding the voice of the Lord rather than listening to their own fears. They've never expressed any fears to me, but I'm positive they must have had them. During my time with them, I was immersed in the Word of God and the things of God. It was because God had given me a thirst for Him.

We became family. They call me daughter, and I call them mom and dad. They taught me, counseled me, scolded me, corrected me, loved me, and never gave up on me. I know I can be stubborn and rebellious, but God has done a mighty work in me and He is not done yet. Now, it is clear to me that Paul and Adele were pre-destined to be my spiritual parents and me their spiritual daughter.

I started writing to Brad as soon as I moved into Adele's house. He was in prison at the time. I wrote him in one letter "Hey, ya know that thing we have been looking for all our lives? I found it!" I starting telling him about a man named Jesus. He wrote back saying, "You're 'gonna be a Bible thumper now? Seriously?" Well, Brad ended up getting saved and baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Over the last 4 years that I've been saved, God has done miraculous things in my life. First of all, He saved my life and my soul. He has delivered me from drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. I mean delivered! There is absolutely nothing inside of me that desires any of that anymore. That part of me is dead and gone. Who the Son sets free, is free indeed! He gave me a job and then a better job. All my relationships with my family have been restored. My kids are back with me and are being raised up in the Lord. We've gone from a one bedroom apartment to a three bedroom house and from one vehicle to two. The Lord also restored and strengthened my marriage, after a brief separation when my husband first got home from prison. The devil tried to tear our marriage apart... but God!!!

My life now is to serve the Lord, Adele passed the torch, and I now teach Bible studies at the program where I got saved. I have earned my G.E.D and am now attending college to earn my bachelor's degree in the science of criminal justice with a concentration in human services. My goal is to become a substance abuse counselor. Who better to understand addiction than a former junkie, right?

Doors are being opened all the time for me to reach the unreachable. I thank God and just pray He uses me for His glory more and more every day. These are by far the best years of my life, and it's only just begun. I have faith, not to mention proof that God can do exceedingly, abundantly, far beyond all I could imagine. He has made me the head and not the tail. He has set me above and not beneath. His plan for me is for good and not for evil, to give me a hope and a future! It's all for His glory!

And the best part of it is, if He will do it for me, He will do it for anyone who calls on His Holy name! Friend, are you searching for love like I was? Are you looking for love in all the wrong places? Has your search left you addicted to drugs or alcohol? Has your search caused you to do things you never thought you would do? Do you want the white knight that rescued me to rescue you? He will if you ask Him! Call out to Him right now!

Exercising Rebellion

by Rebecca Congleton

What is it about someone else wanting us to do something that makes the idea of doing it so much more distasteful? It's called rebellion. Every one of us is a rebel at heart. Some of us wear our rebellion with a bit more flair and pride, but it's part of our sin nature, it's innate to who we are as fleshly people, and none of us escapes our rebellious streak without it getting the best of us, usually often.

My husband enjoys exercise. He struggles with maintaining a healthy weight now that he is in his thirties, so working out is a necessity, not just an activity, but even if he didn't need to run or lift weights, he would make time for it, because it brings him joy. I couldn't be more his opposite in that regard. I can't think of a worse way to spend my time than running or going to the gym! I have always been a very slender person, and I've never had to make exercise a part of my routine in order to stay that way, so the fact that I would rather eat chalk than run a lap, means I rarely do more than take a walk or dance around my kitchen.

About a year ago, I started complaining about my giggly arms. I stopped wearing sleeveless dresses and I started feeling self-conscious about the loss of muscle tone I saw in photos. Thinking he would help me feel better about myself, my husband bought me a little set of hand weights. He wasn't being judgmental or shallow. He simply wanted me to be happy. But the more he wanted me to do it, the more I dug my heels in and refused to pick up those weights.

I found them the other day, while I was cleaning behind my nightstand. There they were, those hot pink, little "baby" weights. Just seeing them made my eyebrows furrow, and my teeth clench together. Why did the sight of something my husband intended for my good, make me so angry and annoyed? Rebellion.

If it had been my idea. If I had gone to the store, picked out those weights, brought them home, and set my heart and mind on toning my arms, there isn't a person in this world who could've dissuaded me! I have willpower like you wouldn't believe. That same stubbornness that lends itself to helping me accomplish the things I want to do, is also the fuel for a mightily rebellious heart, when someone else is trying to lead me.

There are times when I know I respond to God that way, and that includes the authorities He has placed in my life. I don't like to follow rules or do things someone else's way, simply because they are in charge. My rebellious nature wants to know why, wants to prove it has a better way, wants to kick and scream and throw itself on the floor when all else fails. Wow is rebellion ugly. It has led me into many, many situations where I came to realize my pain and sorrow could have easily been avoided, had I just said, "Yes God, I'll do it your way."

Last week, after finding those weights, and examining my 36-year-old arms in the mirror, I decided I would finally give this workout thing a shot, because I realized, if I wait another year, I'll have even more work to do, and as far as I know, nobody has ever gotten in shape by exercising rebellion.

JUST BELIEVE

by Jamie Selky

As I awake each morning; I bow my head to pray;
Thanking my Lord Jesus; For this very day...

I don't know what will happen; Or even what I will do;
Yet I know it will be a blessing; Because Lord Jesus, I believe in You...

It may not always be easy; Or be just what we want it to be;
No matter if I'm locked up physically; Inside I shall be free...

I may not read my Bible daily; Still I sing His victory;
I know Jesus Christ the Lord; Has a great plan in store for me...
Even though my family isn't here right now; The Lord shall see me thru;
Guiding me each step of the way; Learning by what I will do...

I may even stumble and fall; And that too is okay;
Because my Lord is watching to see; No real danger comes my way...

He will never leave me; His love is forever and true;
So, if you turn to Jesus; He will guide you too...

It doesn't take much; Believe. And you will see;
That Jesus Christ is in your heart; You will forever be free...

Bound by Chains

by Cassandra Amole

Bound by chains, still I'm free
For I am home, God is with me
Amazing grace with Him I've found
To God my soul is forever bound
For Jesus died on the cross for me
My sins forgiven, I pray on bended knee
I shall follow Him until my last day
No more shall I ever again stray
For my Father in heaven waits for me
Eternity with Thee, Lord I plea...

I wrote this when I was first brought back to God during my time in Moore County Jail. "Bound By Chains" not only means being in jail but also bound by our sins: addiction, greed, sex, money, hate, anger, jealousy, depression, shopping, etc. God loves us no matter what, we just have to accept Him into our heart and glorify His name to break the chains that bind us. Don't give up. God can break any chain that binds us. Psalm 107. May God bless you.