

# Reflections OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

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*Finding hope for life's journey*

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MARLA BRENNEMAN

An OlivePRESSBook™  
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**Olive Press**

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Messianic & Christian Publisher

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In honor to God all pronouns referring to the Trinity are capitalized; satan's names are not.

## Reflections of God's Faithfulness

### Finding Hope For Life's Journey

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Published by

Olive Press **צְהַר זֵית**

Messianic and Christian Publisher

P.O. Box 567

Port Leyden, NY 13433

[www.olivepresspublisher.org](http://www.olivepresspublisher.org)

Our prayer at Olive Press is that we may help make the Word of Adonai fully known, ... and spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere. May our books help open people's eyes so they will turn from darkness to Light and from the power of the adversary to God and ... trust in **יְשׁוּעַ** Yeshua (Jesus).

(From II Thess. 3:1; Col. 1:25; Acts 26:18,15 NRSV and CJB, the *Complete Jewish Bible*)

This book has earned the distinction of being called an **OlivePRESSBook™** because it embodies the concept of being "crushed" to produce the "light" that guides readers to His Light

Cover design by Harriet Miller

Interior by Cheryl Zehr, Olive Press

Printed in the USA

ISBN 978-0-9790873-3-2

1. Spiritual Growth 2. Devotional 3. Inspirational

This book is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Without Him, I wouldn't be who I am today.

# PREFACE

Our church hadn't had a monthly newsletter for many years, so I decided to start one. When I began working on the first edition, a church member told me I needed to write a monthly column. He said it could be called, "View from Where I Sit." My first thought was that no one would want to read what I wrote. But with this person's kind coaxing, I added my column.

I determined ahead of time that the column should be encouraging to others and be real. Each month, I asked the Lord what I should write, and most entries seemed to flow out of me very naturally. Three years later, I began working in the church office and continued creating the newsletter. Through the years people have commented about my writing, telling me how what I shared really blessed them. Some were people I met in other states who had been reading the newsletters on our church website.

What I have gone through has helped me minister the hope of Jesus to others who are going through life's struggles. Because of what He has done for me, I have been able to show them that God is faithful, that He can be trusted, and that He will never leave us or forsake us.

My purpose in compiling these writings into a book is to encourage you. My prayer is that you will be drawn closer to Jesus, our Lord and Savior, as you read about my life. God can surely be trusted with your pain and struggles. I encourage you to take everything that you are struggling with, lay it at His feet, and watch Him work miracles for you. An added bonus is a wonderful relationship with Him, the best friend you will ever have.

I have kept the columns in their original format: one per month. I added a few new entries along the way. The columns can be read as daily devotionals or from cover to cover, as you choose.

I want to introduce you to my family. I have been married to my wonderful husband, Bob, for over 28 years. He works in construction. We have four children. Amber, our oldest, is married to a terrific guy, Matt. She is in graduate school getting her master's in counseling. Matt is working in sales. Kyle, our firstborn son, attends college majoring in economics and philosophy. Jezra, our second son, currently works as a hotel clerk, saving money to continue his schooling in psychology. Breanna is our "baby," although she is over 18. She is in an honors college studying biology. When I wrote most of these entries, our children were in elementary and middle school and we had not even met Matt. Now they are all grown up. I am thankful for the help each of them and Bob gave me in getting this book to press. They all contributed one way or another. I have a wonderful family. I am very blessed!

I would love to hear from you! You can contact me at

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or write to me through the publishing house.

Marla Brenneman

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## Acknowledgements

I want to thank my wonderful family, who has been very supportive through this process, and the friends who have walked with me through thick and thin. Without all of you, things would have been much worse for me! A special thank you to Barb, Denise, Elaine, Laura, and Rachel, who serve as intercessors for this book.

# Reflections OF OUR AWESOME GOD



## GOD IS FAITHFUL

JANUARY 1997

**F**aithful. This is the word that comes to my mind when I think back over the last year. God has been faithful to me throughout the year even when things weren't going the way I thought they should. He is faithful as my provider. Whenever we were at a point of not knowing how we were going to make it, God has always come through in providing money to do what we needed to do or in providing a way to do without the money. He is faithful in the way He leads and guides me. Even when I am not sure about the way He is leading me, He is always there helping me see that His way is best. He is faithful in the way He comforts me when things are going wrong or when sad things happen. He always understands my grief and gently helps me accept what happened and move on with Him. He is faithful in the way He disciplines me, not in a harsh, condemning way, but in a gentle, loving way. He is faithful in His love for me, never faltering in that love even when I am unlovable.

My experiences with God's faithfulness can be applied to the body as well. God has been very faithful to us as a congregation, even when we thought things should have been done differently, He is still faithful in showing us what He wants us to learn through these experiences.

Thank you, Jesus, for your faithfulness in 1996. We look forward to seeing more of your faithfulness in the New Year ahead.

## GOD'S WINNOWING FORK

JANUARY 1997 (CONT.) BY BOB BRENNEMAN (MY HUSBAND 😊)

John the Baptist said, *"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and He will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire"* (Matthew 3:11-12).

I myself have seen and felt the Lord's winnowing fork run through my life this past year. I have seen this fork applied to others and to those in our congregation as well. It has been a painful year. The Lord is peeling off layers of chaff. This chaff is bondage that keeps us from the Lord and from loving others. The more layers the Lord strips off, the more we can see the seed within. This seed isn't of our works, but the work of the Holy Spirit within.

Will we allow the Lord to continue to peel away the chaff so that His seed will be revealed within us? I am sure that in 1997, *"according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will"* (Ephesians 1:11), God will bring forth a great harvest as we continue to submit to Him.

## GOD'S CONTAGIOUS LOVE

FEBRUARY 1997

This month is traditionally a time to reflect on the love between a man and a woman, but I want to reflect on God's love for us and the love of His people toward each other. We have seen this love in abundance during the illness of my sister. Our local congregation was very good to us in providing a way for Bob and me to go and help my sister's family while she was in the hospital. Numerous people here prayed with us and called to express their concern. My sister's church family came together. They scheduled meals, but people who weren't even on the schedule would stop by with a frozen casserole or other food items. One family brought a bag of sandwich meat and buns for submarine sandwiches, with chips and pop to go with it. People would call and ask if they could pick up anything for us at the store and would not let us pay for it. Others brought cereal and prepared foods to stick in their new microwave my father provided for them. We were overwhelmed with love for these people and so impressed with their generosity. We have witnessed the body of Christ in action in a crisis. Jesus said, *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another."* (John 13:35) We certainly know that these people are Jesus' disciples! Jesus' love in action is a beautiful sight to see.

This made me think of people like my neighbors who have no church home. They have no one to rally around them during a crisis. What better way to show Christ's love than to organize meals from our small group to these neighbors. Jesus' love is meant to be shared. I will always be grateful to God for letting me see His love in action in such a tangible way!

# STEPS TO A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

MARCH 1997

**P**eter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. "Never, Lord!" Peter said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "*Get behind me, satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.*" Then Jesus said to his disciples, "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me*" (Matthew 16:22-24).

I have been thinking about the cross and Jesus' death. It was a very humiliating death. I can't even imagine the pain and suffering our Lord went through for each of us. He went through this to have a love-relationship with us as his bride. In order to have this relationship, there are three steps we must take.

The first step is to deny ourselves. I have a hard time giving up the way I think things should happen. I have it all figured out in my mind. I am often like Peter, only looking at things through the eyes of flesh and not seeing them the way God sees them. God's way is always the best way, but usually not the easy way!

The second step is taking up our cross. The cross symbolizes total commitment even unto death. Are we willing to commit to Jesus even unto death? Our cross includes living within our circumstances. A leader in our church said, "Our circumstances are God's harness." Often I want to escape from the harness that is put on me. In Elizabeth Elliot's devotional book, *A Lamp for my Feet*, she says, "When personal relationships break down, it is a sure sign that there is a rift in one's relationship with God."

The third step is to follow Jesus. After we have denied ourselves and picked up our cross, we are ready to follow Jesus. He doesn't usually give us an "itinerary" to follow with all the details spelled out in advance. He just shows us the first step which can look very hazardous or scary. When we take that step, then He shows us the next one. It is a lesson in trust every step of the way.

The reward comes as we step out into what He is calling us to do. It brings fulfillment. It builds our faith. We get to know the Lord better. We become sure of the One we are trusting.

As we approach Easter, we can celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus because we know that wherever He leads us, He has been there before. Thus we know He understands our pain and struggles, and will never leave us or forsake us!

# JURY DUTY!

APRIL 1997

I was called to the jury on Monday, March 10th. Thursday of the same week, I was supposed to go with Jezra on a field trip to an aquarium. It was required that each second grader had an adult with them for individual attention. Jezra and I had looked forward to going for over a month. When it was my turn to be interviewed by the lawyers, one of them asked if there was any reason I couldn't serve on this jury. I told him about the field trip.

We took a break right after my answer. All the other prospective jurors were saying they were sure the lawyers would excuse me. "He sounded very sympathetic to you," one said.

When we got back in, they named the people in the jury box who were excused. My name wasn't among them. I was to serve on the jury! I was very unhappy, sure that I would have to miss the school trip. There was some hope in my mind that it could end on Wednesday, but not much.

On Wednesday at lunch recess, the prosecution hadn't rested yet. I was sure there was absolutely no way I would get to go with my son. I figured if the defense had half as much as the prosecution, it would take at least another day to get to deliberation. When we got back from lunch, the prosecutor stood up and said, "The prosecution rests, your Honor."

The defender rose and said, "The defense rests, your Honor," without ever presenting anything.

Hope sprang up in me then for the first time.. Before I knew it both lawyers were giving their closing arguments. We were deliberating by 3:20 p.m. After the verdict, the judge and the attorneys came in to let us ask questions we had about the case. As I was leaving after the question time, I told the judge I was so glad to be able to go on the trip with my son.

"We knew you would," he replied, as if I should have known, too.

The judge could see the whole picture. He knew the evidence the lawyers were presenting. He knew there was only a slight possibility that the trial would last past Wednesday. I was the one all bent out of shape with worry

the whole week because I was so afraid I would miss that special memory-building time with my child.

God, like the judge, sees the big picture. We must trust Him. We often get too worried about things in our lives. God sees it all. We can trust Him to bring it to pass. All the worrying in the world will not change the facts. We must trust God even with our deepest desires. He knows what we need and He always has our best interest at heart. We can spend our energy trusting Him, or wear ourselves out with worry. I want to trust Him!

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).*



## FATHER'S DAY

JUNE 1997

As I think of my earthly father, I think of all the things he has taught me. An appreciation of God's creation, an excitement for the Bible as he made scripture come alive with his commentaries, and a heart for reaching out in love to others without thinking of getting something in return. Think about what your father instilled in you and the importance of an earthly father. God is mostly referred to as a father, so fathers must be very important. To know the love of a father is the greatest joy on earth. But even if you did not have that kind of love from your earthly father, God is offering you a perfect father-love. God the Father really loves us! *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). I am just recently learning what this kind of love is all about. God loves us no matter what we do. There is nothing we can do to stop this love. We were loved long before our earthly parents brought us into this world. Wow! I pray that we all may *"grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God"* (Ephesians 3:18-19).

## GOD'S RIVER OF REVIVAL

JULY 1997

I had a "vision" from the Lord the other night as I crawled in bed. I "saw" a huge, flooding river overflowing the banks, uprooting trees, houses, and other things in its path. It was as if I was in the river and could hardly stay above water, scared to death that the debris would hit me. I asked the Lord, "Who or what is safe during this flood?" It looked as if everything in its path was being destroyed.

At that moment, I could see right through the muddy rushing water to a fish that was swimming in it. I could tell the fish was totally enjoying the rushing water. It was like a playground to a child. This fish was at home in the water. It didn't matter how furious the water was; this fish could survive and even enjoy it.

The Lord spoke to my heart, *"My daughter, the people who will survive my river of revival will be the people who already dwell in my presence, who know how to breathe in the presence of the Lord. When the rushing river of revival comes, these people will be able to enjoy the water and not be drowned by it."*

I want to dwell in God's presence. I want to be in tune with His spirit and swim in the presence and power of God. I pray that we will all be able to survive the rushing river of revival when it comes.

*My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to Me. No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in My presence* (Psalms 101:6-7).

## BECOMING LIKE A CHILD

AUGUST 1997

*And He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).*

The other evening I was watching as an 8-month-old baby would take off crawling across the floor toward his destination determined to get there. Whenever my kids tried to stop him, he would just crawl around them. The only way to stop him was to pick him up. Are we that focused on God's plan for our lives that we are determined to get there no matter what obstacles are in our way?

Have you ever watched a child explore the outdoors for the first time? As soon as they are old enough to observe the world around them, they notice everything. If we look at the world through their eyes, we will see it in a new way. Everything is there for the child's exploration. We should have that "exploration mentality" with the new things the Lord is doing; an anticipation of what the Lord has in store for us.

Children are also so trusting. They take you at your word. They believe that you will do what you say. They believe whatever you tell them. We need to have that kind of trust in God. As adults, we start to reason things away. We have a hard time taking God at His word. We need the faith of a child to make it in our walk with the Lord. Jesus, help us to "change and be like little children." Help us have the kind of faith that takes You at Your word, explores the new things You are doing, and determines to get where You are calling us no matter what the devil throws our way.

## FACING OUR GOLIATH

OCTOBER 1997

*Greater are You who lives in me than any Goliath I must fight.  
Greater than all my enemies, using what they mean for harm  
for good in my life (from the song, "Greater Are You," by Mark Altrogge).*

There are times in my life when I face the "Goliaths" of depression and anxiety. These giants look so huge and immovable when I look at them with my human eyes. They're big, I'm small. They seem overwhelming. I begin to act like the other Israelites who were dismayed and terrified of fighting the giant. When Goliath came out, they all ran from him with great fear. (See I Samuel 17.) If I continue to look on these giants with my human eyes, I become defeated and discouraged.

Praise God there is another way! David didn't see the huge, immovable giant. He saw an enemy of the Lord. He knew that God was bigger than anything. He fought the giant with a tiny stone and faith in a big God. He was fighting in the power of the God of Israel. David said to Saul, "*The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine*" (1 Sam 17:37). David acknowledged who the deliverer was. He knew who to put his trust in. He spoke a statement of faith in the Deliverer. God defeated Goliath using David's small slingshot because David was faithful to do his part.

I, like David, have a choice. Am I going to run away in terror or am I going to stand in the strength of the Lord? The Lord has done so many miraculous deliverances in my life, yet with each new giant, I have a tendency to forget what He has already done. Like David, I can make a statement of faith. "The Lord has delivered me from anxiety and depression before; He will defeat this anxiety, too!" It is amazing what a statement of faith can do when I feel overwhelmed and helpless. When my eyes are off the magnitude of the situation, and onto the magnitude of God's promise of deliverance, there is hope! I have to do my part by standing against the lies of the enemy.

God, You are greater than ALL my enemies. You are using what they mean for harm for good in my life! Praise Your Name!

## CLEARLY FOCUSED

NOVEMBER 1997

Things are not very clear for me this month. I must not be sitting with Christ *in the heavenly realms* (Ephesians 2:6) right now. I have been off schedule with my quiet times with the Lord lately. It sure affects my whole life when I don't take the time to spend with Him. My focus is on the situation at hand instead of living above my circumstances. I confess this to the Lord and ask Him to forgive me.

A church leader once told us, "Our circumstances are the harness of God." When I am in the middle of a trying situation, the harness is very restricting and I cry out to the Lord and say, "Get me out of this, Lord. I can't handle it!" But He gently takes me in His arms and says, "My child, I love you. I am not through with you yet. Hang in there! This is for your own good even if it looks like too much. You have much to learn from Me. Let Me teach you what you need to learn to function in the role I have called you to. Trust Me. I am in control and I will never leave you or forsake you."

Submitting to the Lord and what He wants to teach me is not easy. When I do, it removes the fog and lets me see things clearly. I no longer look at them with my human eyes but I see them through God's eyes and they look totally different. No longer is my thinking clouded by my human reasoning. I can rest in the Lord's wisdom and sovereignty and allow Him to do the work He wants to do in my life. Then I can *trust in the Lord with all (my) heart and lean not to (my) own understanding. In all (my) ways acknowledge Him and He will make (my) paths straight* (Proverbs 3:5,6).

## YOKES AND BURDENS

DECEMBER 1997

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30)

There are times when I lay down at night and can't drift off to sleep. My mind is racing with all the burdens of the day. I have to get up out of bed and go journal for a while. As I'm writing, I'm asking the Lord what it is that I can't lay down and let go. Usually something comes to mind right away and I pray, "Jesus, I give you \_\_\_\_\_. I have been carrying it around on my shoulders when it isn't mine to carry. I lay it at your feet."

Sometimes I have three or four things I've been carrying that are not what the Lord wants me to carry. As I pray, I feel those burdens falling off. I can usually go right to sleep afterward.

Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light. I know when I am carrying more than Jesus wants me to carry when my burden is too heavy and the yoke pulls really hard. Most of the stuff I carry around and worry about and try to figure out is not mine to carry. When I release it to the Lord, the pressure is off of me and onto those shoulders that were meant to carry it. Jesus works miracles in situations that look impossible to me when I give up my striving and place them in His capable hands.

*Jesus, I come to you for the rest that my soul needs. I know You will give me rest. I take Your yoke that is easy and Your burden that is light. I leave my own burdens and yokes at the cross. I trust You. I know You will work it all out for my good. Amen.*

# Reflections IN THE VALLEY



## NEW YEAR, NEW THINGS

JANUARY 1998

*See, the former things have taken place, and **new** things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you. (Isaiah 42:9).*

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a **new** thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:18-19)*

I believe this coming year will be a year of **new** things that God is bringing on this land. I believe that He is speaking these **new** things to His prophets now and will continue to tell us of **new** things He is going to do in His church and in His people. Are we ready for the **new** things He is going to do?

Both these verses call for us to forget the former things. Are we dwelling in the past? Is there pain and heartache in the past that is keeping us from moving forward into the future with the Lord? God will take us back to that pain and heartache and help us walk through it with His agape love. He will help us forgive the persons who hurt or wronged us. He will help us to be able to move ahead without dwelling on the past. Jesus came to set us free from the things that bring us down. Let's open our hearts to Him to do the things that He wants to do.

Let us be open to hear what God is saying to us. He will take us through **new** things one step at a time. He will help us prepare for the **new** things He wants to do in and through His people. Let us be open to how He wants to do it and go with God as He moves forward! Let's not miss it because we didn't perceive it!

## SUFFERING WITH A PURPOSE

FEBRUARY 1998

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).*

Jesus brought me through a lot of pain and suffering in my lifetime. While I was going through it I wanted to die. It was very hard to cope. Now Jesus is using the same painful times to comfort others. Through the things that I have suffered God wants me to speak to others about the hope and future He brings. My suffering was for a purpose.

Are you going through a tough time right now? Does it seem like there is no hope? Does your future look very glum? God is bringing you through this for a purpose. Right now that doesn't help much, but later on you will see God's purpose in it all. I never wanted to go through depression and despair. Now because of going through it I can tell others they are going to make it. Jesus is real! He cares for us all the time. In our hopelessness, He offers hope. In our despair, He offers delight, joy, and confidence. In our pain, He offers comfort. God will bring you to the place where you will be able to help others because of the miracle in your life.

Have you come through a situation that was painful? Do you have victory? Share that with other people. God will bring others into your life and across your path that need to hear what you have been through. There is a reason for the pain and there is a future in sharing what God has done in your life.

God has truly comforted me during the pain in my life through Himself, my husband, and other Christians. Without God in my life, I would never have made it. Now He is leading me to share what He has done to help others through similar situations. You have been through different pain and difficulties and you can reach people I could never reach. As we all work together, the kingdom of God will be extended throughout this land.

## SPURRING EACH OTHER ON TO GOOD WORKS

MARCH 1998

*Hebrews 10:23-25 says, "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

I am thinking of ways to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds." One way is for us to hear from others who are doing the love and good deeds. This helps us see that God uses ordinary people in their ordinary lives to bring "out-of-the-ordinary" results.

God is faithful! He will fulfill His promises! Let us not be discouraged. We are on the winning team! God is victorious! We need only to do what He tells us to do. The results are totally God's responsibility. As we meet together, let us encourage each other in the things the Lord is doing in our lives. Is God leading you in any way that would be an encouragement to the body of Christ and spur us on to love and good deeds? Then share it with others. We all need that encouragement to get moving with the Lord and not stay stuck in one place. Let's encourage one another in the Lord!

## “YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT”

APRIL 1998

*As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.” Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. **You give them something to eat.**” “We have here only five loaves of bread and the two fish,” they answered. “Bring them here to me,” he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. **Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over (Matthew 14:15-20).*

As I was reading this today, the words of Jesus, “*You give them something to eat*” really stood out to me. Here was a massive problem: feeding five thousand people. No one in their right mind would suggest that five loaves and two fish would feed this crowd. Yet Jesus was asking them to feed the multitude with these meager provisions. When they gave the meager provisions to Jesus, there was more than enough to feed all the people. Would I have given Jesus my meager loaves and fish or would I have argued with Him saying, “This will never feed this many people, Jesus! What are you thinking? There is no way to do that!”

It is the same way in prayer. We come to Jesus with meager faith, only the size of a mustard seed. We pray believing that Jesus can multiply our efforts to be more than enough. All He asks is for us to give it to Him—give Him our meager human provision. He will bless it and it will be more than enough to satisfy the multitudes! We must give all we have to Jesus. We must have faith that Jesus can take all that we have and make it complete and then some! Amazingly, He gives it back to us to do the work He’s called us to do.

This month as we focus on prayer, let’s remember that all we need and more is in Jesus. All we have to do is ask and believe and He will do great things in our lives!

## THE ENEMY HAS NO POWER

MAY 1998

*“About judgment, because the ruler (prince) of this world [satan] is judged **and** condemned **and** sentence already is passed upon him” (John 16:11 AMP).*

*“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 3:10).*

Satan is condemned and his sentence is already passed upon him. He has no power over us unless we give it to him. We are to make known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (satan and his demons) that they are defeated; the victory is won! Praise the Lord!

I have often forgotten this. I let myself be pulled down by satan’s lies that say I am worthless. All I have to do is tell him, “Satan, get thee behind me! You are defeated! Jesus did the work on Calvary and it is finished! Complete. Your hold on me is broken in Jesus’ Name!”

It’s already completed. We must enforce it. I can pray with more confidence knowing that I am a representative of Jesus Christ on this earth. I am to present this victory again.

“An understanding of this pattern is crucial, for our intercession is but an extension of the life and ministry of Jesus, as His was of the Father.” (Taken from the *Lightning of God* by Dutch Sheets, p. 10.)

## THE RESULTS ARE UP TO THE LORD!

MAY 1999

The other day I was seeking the Lord for my neighbor who is going through an intensely painful period in her life. I was feeling overwhelmed with the pain and anguish she is experiencing. As I sought the Lord about this situation I sensed Him saying: *Cry out to Me for those around you who are hurting. Don't try to do anything on your own. I have a plan for each person you are relating to that includes more people than just you. You need to do your part. You don't have to make things happen. Just be open to listen to My voice. When I say move, move. When I say speak, speak. And when I say pray, pray. I am continually looking for people who will go when I say go and stay when I say stay. Open those clogged ears and listen to My voice. Don't question Me, just do it! I have higher plans than you have and My ways don't look like your ways. Trust Me and move ahead when the cloud moves. Stand still when the cloud stands still. Walk in My path and listen to Me.*

As I seek His face for those around me, I don't have to feel overwhelmed. I can do what He's asking me to do and leave the results up to Him. He will do the work. All I have to do is bring her needs before Him and allow Him to work in her life. There are some things I can do for her that may help alleviate some pain, but mostly all I can do is pray. It was comforting for me to know that the results are in His hands. I just need to listen to His voice and follow the path He places before me. That seems much less of a burden to me.

The next time I feel overwhelmed, I will remember this word. I will put the person or situation into His strong arms of love, and let Him be the one who carries the burden.

## THE ENEMY HAS NO AMMUNITION IN HIS GUN!!

JUNE 1999

The other night I had a vivid dream. Faith rose up in me when I woke up. There is no ammunition in the enemy's gun! Fear and intimidation are his only tactics against us! Here is the dream as I remember it:

It was awful! The Nazis were everywhere. I could go about my regular routine except once in a while a Nazi official would be wheeled up to me in a wheelchair. The guy pushing him would carry a small pistol, pointed at me. The guy in the wheelchair was covered with a blanket. The blanket had a Nazi emblem on it. He wore a Nazi uniform. He had on shades and a Nazi hat so I could never see his face.

Sometimes the guy in the wheelchair was just an ordinary soldier. I had absolutely no fear. I wasn't intimidated with a regular soldier. But when it was this Nazi official I was much more intimidated. He would be wheeled up to me and I would be given orders. I wouldn't be fearful but I wouldn't talk back. I would receive the orders and do them.

The last time when this official was wheeled up to me, he ordered me to say, "Hail, Hitler!" before I carried out his orders. I knew I couldn't do that so I totally refused, then turned and ran. The one pushing the wheelchair shot me with his gun before I got very far. I fell to the ground believing I was dying. I couldn't feel any pain but figured I was too badly wounded to feel pain anymore. Shots kept coming as I was lying there. I decided that if I appeared dead, they would give up and go away. But then I would move a bit or twitch, and they would shoot again.

Finally I realized, to my surprise, that the gunshots were not hurting me at all. I was only feeling a force like a blow without pain which would make my body move a little. When they were gone, I got up and went about my business, this time knowing they were powerless against me!

I woke up singing, "I went to the enemy's camp and took back what he stole from me!" The enemy uses fear and intimidation to keep us from the

realization that his guns have no ammunition! When someone isn't afraid, he has no power at all! So we have nothing to fear! His weapons have no ammunition! We can get up after an attack and go about our business, not hurt at all!

## FORGIVENESS ISN'T EASY BUT THE REWARDS ARE GREAT!

JULY 1999

**A**fter doing the sermon on unforgiveness, I have been tested in this area. I realize now that I can never sit back and say that I have arrived and am now totally “unforgiveness-free!” There are many times when I know that I shouldn't be acting this way. I should forgive. But my flesh wants the other person to suffer a little first.

I was very upset with my husband. I went into my “prayer closet” and poured out my heart to the Lord about what he did that upset me so much. (It was the same old issue surfacing again—the house.) As I was crying out to God, some of my frustration and anger drained away. I then released the situation to Him, giving up the right to control what goes on.

Next I sat down, waiting silently before the Lord as I wrote what I felt God was saying to me. God spoke to me, but He never once told me what Bob should or shouldn't do. Instead He gently showed me what I needed to do. I was to worry about my motives and heart condition and He will worry about my husband's. He didn't even talk about any of the things I had poured out to Him. He turned His searchlight on my heart and showed me what had to go. After that, I could forgive my husband easily.

Sometimes I wonder why God even bothers with us humans. We stumble and fall so often. Just when I think that I am doing well, another roadblock appears and sends me flying. Guess what? It's not in what we can or can't do, it's in who God is and what He has created in us. Humility is to know who to put our confidence in. Will we put it in ourselves and our ability, or will we put it in God who knows the big picture? He always gives us what we need to fulfill the calling He has placed on our lives.

“We must turn to the cross of Jesus to find both the forgiveness and the power to overcome sin,” a quote from Rick Joyner's book, *Overcoming the Religious Spirit*. Jesus has the power we need to forgive and be forgiven and to overcome. The freedom that comes is much more wonderful than the feeling of hanging on to the resentment and anger. There is no comparison!



# Reflections WHILE SEARCHING



## GOD'S WAITING ROOM

JANUARY 2001

I feel like I have been in and out of God's waiting room for three months now, since Breanna had a seizure. We have had tests and have waited for the results. We have had doctor visits where we were referred to specialists so had to wait for those appointments to come. Last month we got the results from the neurosurgeon. The doctor's report couldn't be worse! The tumor in Breanna's brain is in a dangerous place—on the brain stem. Even though it is the size of a pea, it is both dangerous to let it go and dangerous to do anything about it. Even though it is awful news, it was good to finally have the answers to what was in Breanna's brain. The neurosurgeon at the Children's Hospital, had no question what the MRI showed.

This sent us into God's waiting room again with the hope of God shrinking her tumor before the next MRI. There are some physical signs that show this might be already beginning to happen—Breanna's droopy smile seems to be less pronounced than it once was. Yet we know that the next MRI, scheduled this month, will confirm or deny this. No matter what, we know that God is sovereign and in control of what is happening to our child.

The word "wait" is mentioned 92 times in the Bible. A lot of those times are from Old Testament stories about someone lying in wait for someone else and other similar uses, but I found that most of the ones in the Psalms are about waiting for the Lord—being in God's waiting room. Here are a few of my favorites:

Psalm 5:3 *In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.*

Psalm 33:20 *We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield.*

Psalm 37:7 *Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him.*

Psalm 37:34 *Wait for the Lord and keep His way. He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it.*

Psalm 38:15 *I wait for you, O Lord; you will answer, O Lord my God.*

Psalm 130:5-6 *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

Praise the Lord! His waiting room is for those who wait expectantly! We are waiting expectantly for Him to give us an answer. He is our help and our shield. Waiting for Him is waiting with expectation that He will do what He has promised. We can trust Him with our daughter, knowing His timing and His deliverance is coming! We will inherit the land! We can wait because the Lord is just and true and the purposes He has for Breanna will be accomplished!

## SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS

FEBRUARY 2001

**L**uke 10:38-42 gives the account of Jesus at the home of Mary and Martha. In verse 41 Jesus says, "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset by so many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*"

I am a vintage Martha. When a task is at hand, I have a hard time concentrating on anything else. I get up in the morning determined to spend quality time with the Lord. But by the time my feet hit the floor, I start seeing all the things that need to be done. I have such a hard time letting it go and concentrating on the Lord. I'm also guilty of making the time with the Lord just another task and going through the motions without really being there. *Oops, I need ten minutes of journaling, ten minutes of worship, and oh, I didn't read four chapters of scripture today.* That's the way my thoughts will go if I let them.

During a recent personal ministry time, I heard the Lord say to me (I'm paraphrasing), "Marla, Marla, don't you know that I don't want to be another thing on your agenda? I don't want you to do things when we are together. I want you to be in my presence. Sit at my feet and spend time with me without your agenda. I want to spend time with you, not just be something you check off your to-do list. Lay it all down and sit at my feet and enjoy my presence."

I'm not saying that reading the Bible, worshipping, and journaling isn't important. But when it gets to the place of being a rote exercises, then it isn't a relationship with Jesus, it's just another thing on the list.

I choose to spend time soaking in God's presence in silence before Him, listening to His heartbeat and following what He wants from me. This is the best time of fellowship with the Master. I can do all kinds of things for Him, but if I haven't gotten the instructions from the Master Himself, it is just busywork. "*Marla, Marla, you are worried and upset about many things but*

*only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken from her."*

I want what is better, don't you? I used to feel like Jesus was being so hard on Martha. After all, she was preparing a meal for her Master, taking care of everyday needs. This isn't bad. But I realize that I can get so busy with serving the Master that I have no time to spend at His feet. It's not wrong to do my routine tasks but it is good to remain open to the times of visitation when Jesus wants me to spend time at His feet, soaking in His presence, so I will be prepared for what His agenda is for me.

*"Jesus, I'm ready. Let me sit at Your feet for the next half hour or so and enjoy You and You speak to me Your agenda for the day! Let me hear from You, the One thing that is needed for this hour!"*

## MY CHURCH EXPERIENCES

MARCH 2001

**M**y church background growing up was unique. My parents come from a very conservative church, which they left when I was about 2 years old. I don't have any memory of us going there as a child.

Soon after, my parents helped start a neighborhood church with a few other families. My memories of church life start in this small family church. My dad helped pastor there. We did a lot of things together with the other families. I remember feeling a deep sense of God's presence during the services. I was around 8 when we left this congregation. I later found out it was because my parents had received the Holy Spirit and the others didn't approve.

My dad had heard of a group that was meeting in a bordering state. We ended up traveling 3½ hours every Sunday morning to go to church. I think my mom and dad felt they had found THE church—God's chosen people. This church was not supposed to have "rules." We were all supposed to follow the Lord. But there were a lot of "unspoken" rules. For example, the women wore plain head coverings and floor-length dresses with a cape. Eventually every woman dressed like that so they would not look less "spiritual."

Many strange teachings were gradually introduced and accepted. One major teaching was about "Angel Ministry." The leader of our group received this ministry, which made him one step above everyone else. He would hear from God for all of us. We could not question what he told us because it was straight from God. There was a lot of what Bill Hamon calls "spooky spiritual" going on. This man would be slain in the spirit during a church service. While he lay there like a dead man (that's what it looked like to me as a child) he would receive prophetic words from the Lord. When he would "wake up" a new teaching was introduced that no one could question. A lot of very unhealthy rules were "adopted" this way. A controlling spirit was at work in a big way. Many marriages and families were destroyed and people were hurt deeply.

I remember sitting in church singing a hymn and making an error like putting the word "I" or "me" in the place of the word "God" so it would

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