PM

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Recovery from loss and Grief

How Churches can Respond to Mental Illness

LIFE ISSUES

PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF GOD

AFRICA CONFERENCE

August 23-September 3, 2014

For the first time ever, Pentecostal Church of God pastors and leaders from all across the continent of Africa will join together in Nairobi, Kenya, as the Pentecostal Church of God Africa gathers for this historic conference. This will be a convocation for worship and praise to Almighty God, an interchange of ideas, and a roundtable for planning for the future of the spread of the Gospel across the continent. You can help by PRAYING, GIVING, AND GOING! Mark your donations: All Africa Conference 2014.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

World Missions Department
817-554-5900 ext. 341, 342 or
Email at: worldmissions@pcg.org

THE race

WOW4

EAST COAST CONFERENCE

APRIL 4–5, 2014 | INDIANAPOLIS, IN

FEATURING:

DARLENE BISHOP

DARLENE IS A NATIONALLY KNOWN CONFERENCE SPEAKER AND PASTOR AT SOLID ROCK CHURCH IN MONROE, OH.SHE BEGAN MINISTRY IN 1984 AND HAS SINCE GROWN NATIONALLY. SHE NOW TRAVELS FULL TIME ACROSS THE WORLD.

SULA SKILES

SULA SKILES IS A MINISTER, WRITER AND SEX TRAFFICKING ABOLITIONIST. HER PASSION FOR HELPING OTHERS COMES FROM A PAINFUL TRAUMATIC LIFE STORY. SHE IS HAPPILY MARRIED TO PASTOR JOHN MARK SKILES. TOGETHER THEY ARE LAUNCHING IMPACT LIFE CHURCH IN 2014.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE:

FRIDAY APRIL 4TH

REGISTRATION OPENS	6:30 PM
GENERAL SESSION 1	7:30 PM

SATURDAY APRIL 5TH

GENERAL SESSION 2	10:30 AM
LUNCH	12:00 PM
GENERAL SESSION 3	1:00 PM

Empowered
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES
PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF GOD

ABSOLUTE
PG. 8

CONNECTED
PG. 5

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EDITOR IN CHIEF
Charles G. Scott

Executive Editor | **Loyd L. Naten**
Production Manager | **Brian Ramos**

Communication Lead | **Randy Lawrence**
Design and Layout | **Josh Rogers**
Content Editor | **Peggy Allen**
Content Editor | **Brooke Skiles**

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Cover Photo by Courtney Skiles

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue of the *Pentecostal Messenger* is dedicated to life issues. Pastor Robert Schuller said, "Tough times never last, but tough people do." As believers, it is imperative that we understand the words of Christ in Matthew 5:45, "for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (NKJV).

The articles and columns in this issue include various life issues that people face each and every day. As you read these stories, we believe you will not only be inspired in your walk with Christ, but also feel the comfort and the strength of the Holy Spirit to make it through any valley or challenge this life may present.

-PM

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 4 — **APRIL 4–5, 2014:** WOW4 East Coast Conference

May 3 — **MAY 3, 2014:** Messenger College Commencement

August 23 — **AUG. 23–SEPT 3, 2014:** All Africa Conference

May 1 — **MAY 1, 2014:** National Day of Prayer

June 17 — **JUNE 17–21, 2014:** Summerfest '14 Baltimore, MD

June 27 — **JUNE 27–30, 2015:** General Convention, San Diego, CA

Photo by Melinda Williams

Mark Bentley is shown with the town of Pulaski's excavator, which is similar to the one used Wednesday night to rescue a woman from a car that was swept away by flood waters.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

By MELINDA WILLIAMS
The Southwest Times, Pulaski, Va.

When town of Pulaski employee Mark Bentley helped rescue a woman from flooding last January, he said he wasn't looking for glory, but those actions helped earn him Pulaski's "Employee of the Year" award for 2013.

"Taking a piece of heavy construction equipment into a raging, flooded stream, requires a cool, calm head, not to mention the ability to maneuver a large piece of equipment with no margin for error," Mayor Jeff Worrell said in announcing the winner at the town's annual Employee Luncheon and Awards Ceremony. "Yet, the skill and precision gained from long years of experience paid off with a successful rescue."

Worrell added, "After performing this selfless and courageous act, (Bentley) stated that (he) would not have left without the victim even if (he) had to swim in and out to rescue her. He then refused any compensation offered and any overtime pay that he might have received."

Eanes was about to go to bed last January when he got a call that his skills were needed to operate some heavy equipment to help rescue a woman from her vehicle, which had become stranded in swift moving flood waters off Eanes Ferry Road in Hiwassee.

Swift water rescue teams had tried to reach the woman, but the width of the raging water prevented them from being able to safely do so. When an hour passed and efforts had failed someone suggested trying heavy equipment.

Initially, the plan was to tie a raft to the arm of the excavator and have Bentley swing it around to the car with rescuers onboard. But the rigging crew they needed was about 30 minutes away.

"I told them 'Let's just drive out there (on the excavator) and get her, put her in the bucket and carry her back out," Bentley told *The Southwest Times* at that time. "It was a whole lot safer and she'd already been out there too long."

To make sure the land under the flood water was stable, Bentley "did a test run" alone. "I figured if something's going to happen, then it's just going to be me," he said. "So, I drove the excavator out in the middle of it. The first time I was probably within 50 feet of her and I was almost tempted to just go get her, jerk her out, and throw her in the cab."

Once he determined the ground was stable, two rescue personnel were tethered inside the bucket so he could haul them out to the car. The woman crawled out through a window into the bucket, and he hauled them all back to safety.

Bentley said he wasn't scared, adding, "I didn't even think about it. If you get in that situation you have to keep your wits about you." He said he was more scared watching the car the woman was stranded in bobbing up and down in the water.

Worrell said it was Bentley's 25 years of experience operating heavy equipment and his "highly referenced work that spoke for itself" that prompted the town to hire Bentley.

"When (Bentley) accepted a position with the town, we quickly found out that we could give (him) any assignment or project and never have to question that it would be completed promptly, accurately, and to the satisfaction of all parties involved. (He) has received rave reviews from citizens and fellow employees for … incomparable ability and skill in performing … work for the town," said Worrell.

The town also recognized employees for their years of service during the luncheon.

Mark Bentley is a Licensed Minister with the PCG serving in the Mid Atlantic Coast District.

ENCOUNTER CONFERENCE

The annual Encounter Conference for leadership was held on January 10–11, 2014 at Bethel Family Worship Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. This year's theme was "Remain in Me." All weekend long pastors, bishops, youth directors, and young leaders represented from across the country gathered together to be refreshed and resourced. They were challenged to hear God's voice and not let the enemy serve as a distraction. Students and leaders were urged to seek God's voice with reckless abandon and total surrender. The entire weekend was interwoven with moments of powerful and intense worship, insightful and anointed speaking, and challenging teaching on leadership values. In spite of the cold and the snow present in Indianapolis, the heart warming and overwhelming presence of God rested on that place as young and old worshiped as sons and daughters of the most high King. If you were unable to make it to Indianapolis, you can view the event on line at bfwcindy.sermon.tv.

EYE2EYE
BISHOP CHARLES SCOTT

IT'S JUST EMOTIONS

This year I will ask several individuals to join me on this page to talk about the thematic issues of the edition. It is my prayer that these "conversations" will speak to your heart and minister to your life.

In this issue, we talk about the reality that Christians face discouragement, grief, and depression—but not alone. First Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you."

I asked Lona Walker about some of her experiences in dealing with these emotions as a Christian.

General Bishop: Lona, can you describe a time in your life when you dealt with discouragement, grief, or depression even as a Christian?

Lona Walker: Actually—all of the above. My failed marriage in 1982 began a season of sorrow that went deeper than I thought possible. My husband and I were pastoring in Elkins, Arkansas when he went to California for what was to be a 3-week revival but never returned, leaving me with a 9-month-old baby girl and a stunned church. The first stage for me was faith, as the congregation covered me in prayer, believing he would return. After the initial shock, I composed myself, and with the church's support I was encouraged and strong. But slowly, reality set in. After some time, the church was in need of a pastor, and I conceded to an uncertain future. That's when all of those emotions attacked me at once.

General Bishop: What was your response to those emotions?

Lona Walker: I remained hopeful for several months and clung to what I knew rather than what I felt. I stayed in the area thinking it would be easier for him to come home if I didn't move out of state to where my family lived. During that time I fought in the spiritual realm as hard as I knew how to at that point in my walk with the Lord. I was a young abandoned mother but had a seasoned godly saint as a mother of my own. She became a spiritual coach for me that was vital to my stability, yet she couldn't walk it for me. It was only God and me as I felt my way through the darkness.

General Bishop: Was there a turning point for you?

Lona Walker: Yes—but not in the way I expected. It was a beautiful sunny morning in August when I heard an unexpected knock at the door. I was numb with shock when I realized I was being served divorce papers. I could only read "Dissolution of Marriage." It was as if I had not been to a day of grade school. Not another word on that paper was legible to me. Hysterically I called Mother, who was desperate to know what the papers said about the baby. "I don't know," I kept repeating. "I can't read it." She continued to encourage me to pull myself together. We had to know what they said. It eventually became obvious he had no intention of seeking custody. As a result, he has never been in her life and she doesn't remember him. As unfortunate as that sounds, I'm grateful he never had any influence over her formative years. It was a blessing in disguise.

General Bishop: How did you cope overall from a Christian perspective?

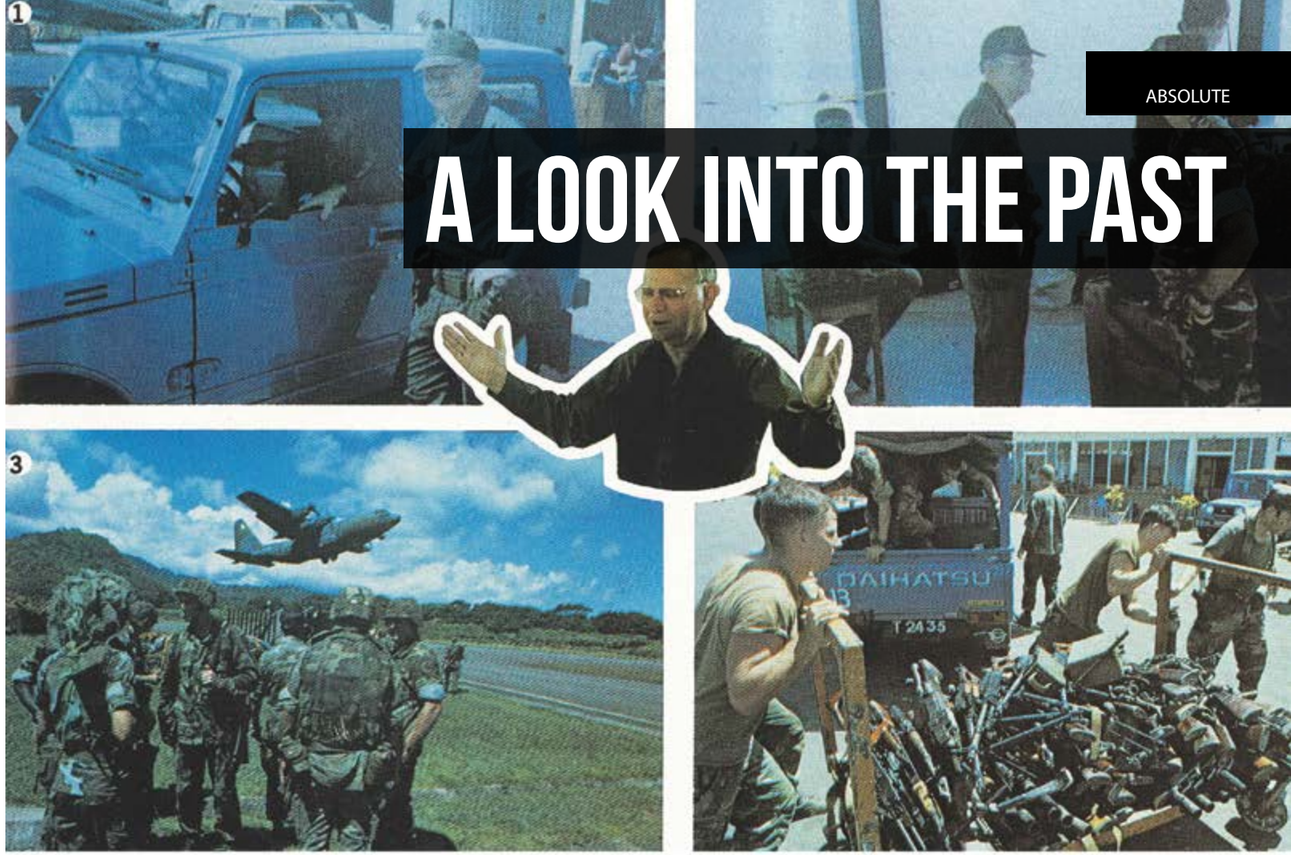
Lona Walker: It was merciful to get direction. This was no longer about restoring the marriage, since he remarried 16 days after the divorce was final. My focus shifted to survival; but not just to survive. I intended to walk out of this with honor and dignity. I sought an anointing that would break the yoke of condemnation. I developed "spiritual survival skills" that saw Kimmy and me through a 14-year journey. David and I married in 1996 and founded "Singing Again Ministries," because I am proof that a broken heart can sing again.

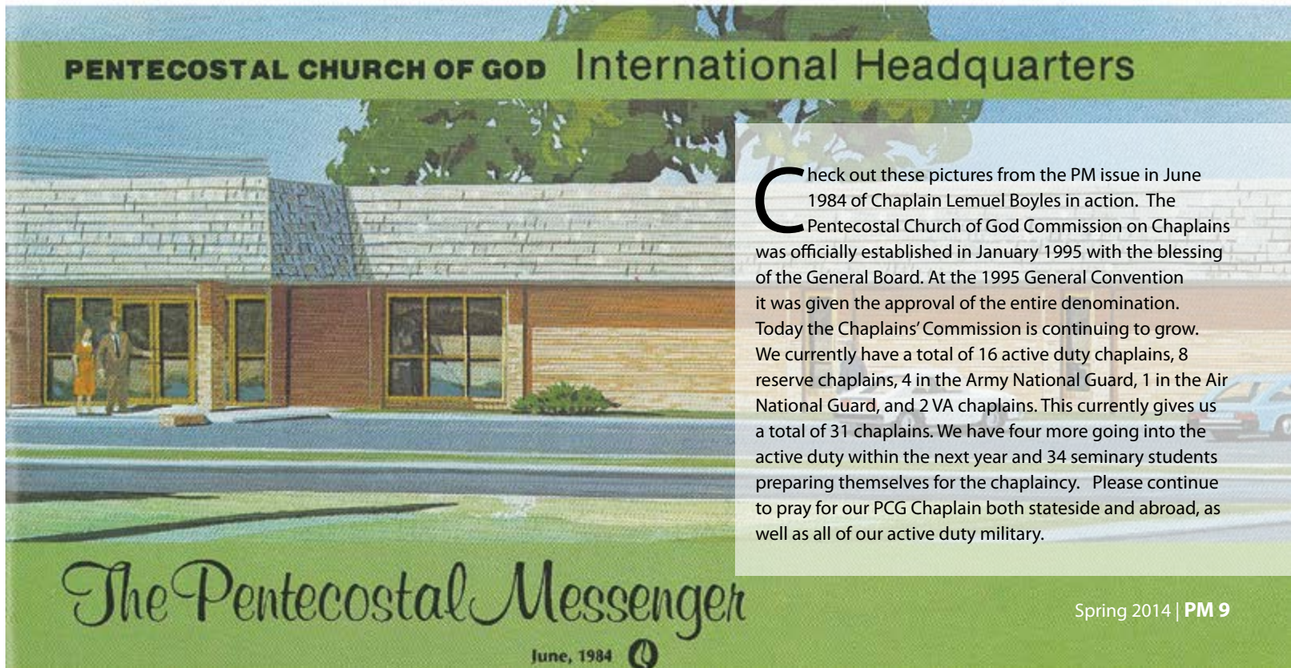
I've often said, "My lowest moment with God could not be compared to the best of moments for those who choose to spend life without Him."

General Bishop: Thank you, Lona, for sharing parts of your journey. God's grace is sufficient for our most difficult trials, and I know we can see that eye to eye.

Charles Scott is the General Bishop of the Pentecostal Church of God and author of the book *Storms Don't Bother Me*. Follow him on Twitter @generalbishop.

A LOOK INTO THE PAST





Check out these pictures from the PM issue in June 1984 of Chaplain Lemuel Boyles in action. The Pentecostal Church of God Commission on Chaplains was officially established in January 1995 with the blessing of the General Board. At the 1995 General Convention it was given the approval of the entire denomination. Today the Chaplains' Commission is continuing to grow. We currently have a total of 16 active duty chaplains, 8 reserve chaplains, 4 in the Army National Guard, 1 in the Air National Guard, and 2 VA chaplains. This currently gives us a total of 31 chaplains. We have four more going into the active duty within the next year and 34 seminary students preparing themselves for the chaplaincy. Please continue to pray for our PCG Chaplain both stateside and abroad, as well as all of our active duty military.

IF I WERE GOD

There are many experiences in life that we have not experienced and, therefore, we are unable to understand how those experiences will impact our lives. Yet, God understands them all. In fact, His love for us is such that He is aware of every emotion, every pain, or anxiety that any issue or challenge produces in our heart.

It is at these unexpected moments when we are caught off guard that our faith and confidence in God is tested. It is in these times that we tend to forget who God is and the promises He has made to each of us. Promises such as *"I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5, NKJV).* Or His statement which says, *"There is a friend who sticks [to adhere or cling to] closer than a brother" (Pro. 18:24, NKJV).*

Sometimes I'm surprised at my own lack of faith in God when confronted with the unexpected. I have a lapse of memory concerning what Paul told the Thessalonians: *"that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this" (1 Thess. 3:3, NKJV).* What often happens is that we start living our lives from the circumstances we're dealing with rather than from our position in Christ. We start looking at what the outcome will look like rather than how we're dealing with the process, which really defines who we are and what we're made of.

Depending on our level of faith in God, we will either turn to God for peace and assurance, or we start questioning God as to why He allowed these issues to come our way. We then set ourselves up as God by verbalizing how things should have been handled, as if we know better than God. Just a word of caution: there will be those times when your experience will contradict your theology . . . times when you come to realize you don't know God, nor His Word, as well as you thought you did.

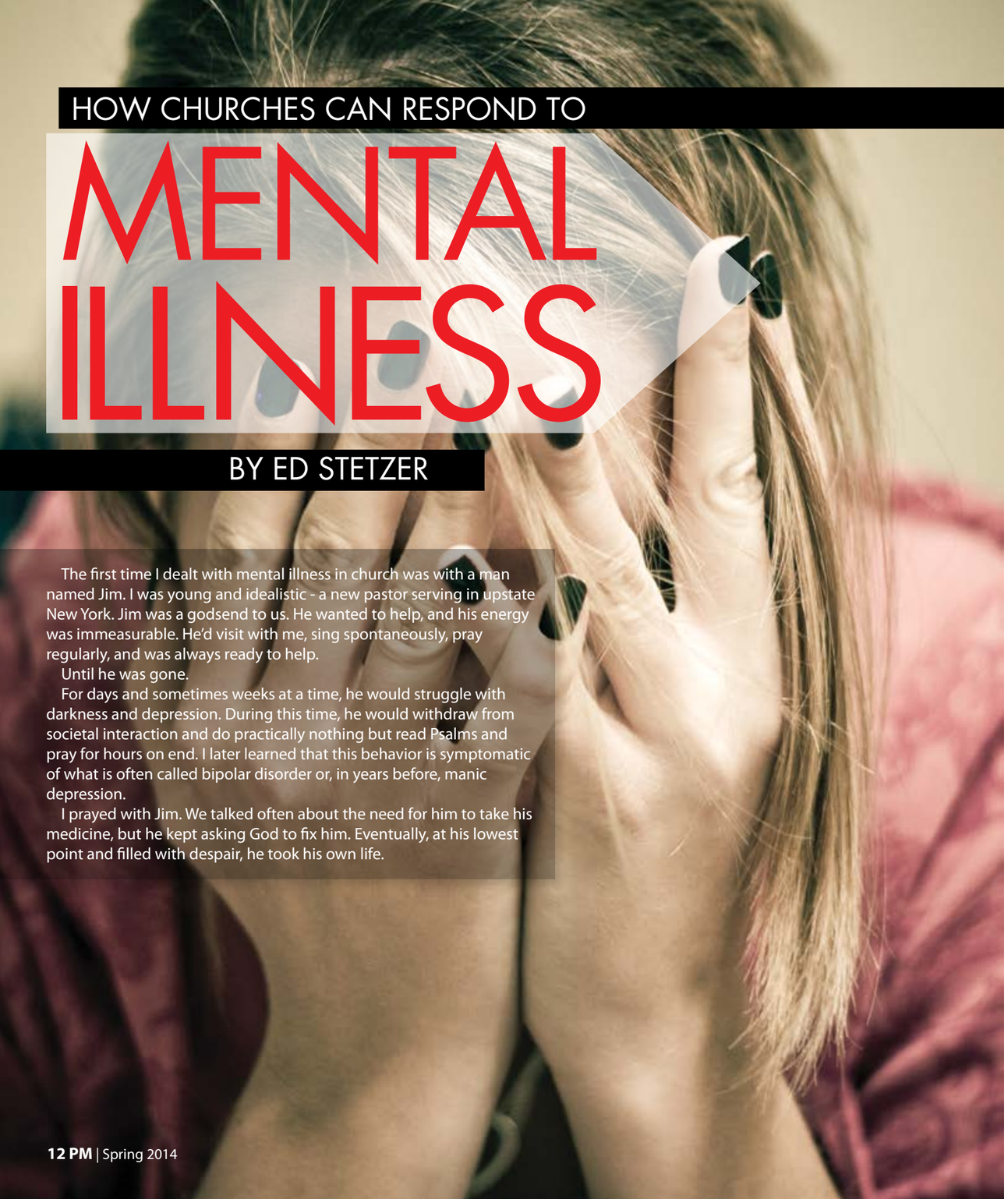
Jesus knew His disciples failed to understand all He had just said to them—the news of His departure and of His approaching death; the announcement that one of their own would betray Christ (it pierced their hearts like a sharp arrow); or to hear that Peter, their spokesman, their rock of strength, their most prominent and boldest brother, highly beloved and trusted by the Master, part of Christ's inner circle, would commit the deadly sin of denying their Master three times. It was unsettling to their spirits. The thought of these events was enough to scatter the disciples to the four winds.

Jesus knew that not only His disciples, but also each of us would be educated in the university of troubles, trials, difficulties, and adversities. To the disciples whose world was about to be turned upside down, Christ says, *"Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1).* God is saying that to each of us who are being tried by fire—who have been caught off-guard by heart-crushing circumstances—who are overwhelmed with loneliness, fear, and doubt—and whose dreams, hopes, and future have seemingly been shattered by the unexpected. We lose sight of life and the truths of God's Words.

So, as with the disciples, Christ seeks immediately to fortify our hearts, to strengthen us against impending trouble, and to shelter us from every sorrow and perplexity that wastes no time in impacting our lives. How does Christ accomplish this? The fortification comes through faith in God. Christ says, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe in Me also." We will all, on many occasions, be placed in a position where our faith in God is tested; it will be our faith that sustains us when it seems our world is falling apart.

Job's perspective on life didn't change until he beheld God as He truly is. Then you hear him say, *"I know that you can do all things" (John 42:2, NKJV).* Listen, God is trustworthy at all times no matter what the circumstances are.

Loyd Naten is the General Secretary of the Pentecostal Church of God.



HOW CHURCHES CAN RESPOND TO MENTAL ILLNESS

BY ED STETZER

The first time I dealt with mental illness in church was with a man named Jim. I was young and idealistic - a new pastor serving in upstate New York. Jim was a godsend to us. He wanted to help, and his energy was immeasurable. He'd visit with me, sing spontaneously, pray regularly, and was always ready to help.

Until he was gone.

For days and sometimes weeks at a time, he would struggle with darkness and depression. During this time, he would withdraw from societal interaction and do practically nothing but read Psalms and pray for hours on end. I later learned that this behavior is symptomatic of what is often called bipolar disorder or, in years before, manic depression.

I prayed with Jim. We talked often about the need for him to take his medicine, but he kept asking God to fix him. Eventually, at his lowest point and filled with despair, he took his own life.

As a young pastor unacquainted with how to deal with these events, I found myself searching for answers. I realized two things:

First, people with mental illness are often attracted to religion and the church, either to receive help in a safe environment or to live out the worst impulses of their mental illness.

Second, most congregations, sadly, have few resources for help.

On the weekend of April 6, 2013, we learned of the death of Rick and Kay Warren's son, Matthew. Those of us who know the Warrens know how they have anguished over their son's illness, seeking to keep a low profile even as Rick penned the best-selling devotional, "The Purpose Driven Life." This weekend, Matthew took his own life - putting the issue of mental illness front and center again.

Matthew had the best medical care available, a loving church that cared for him and his family, and parents who loved and prayed for him. Yet, that could not keep Matthew with us.

Mental illness is incredibly destructive, and the end result is not always ours to determine.

Matthew's life was not a waste and, yes, every day had a purpose. His pain is over now, but perhaps his life and death will remind us all of the reality of mental illness and inspire people of faith to greater awareness and action.

So, what can we do as people of faith to address issues of mental illness?

1. CHURCHES NEED TO STOP HIDING MENTAL ILLNESS.

So often in a congregation, we like to pretend this is not a real issue because we have such a difficult time understanding it. We stick our heads in the sand, add the person to the prayer list, and continue on ministering to the "normal" people. But it's real, and it isn't going away. In 2009, the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index showed 17 percent of respondents as having been diagnosed with depression. There are people in the pews every week - ministers, too - struggling with mental illness or depression, and we need to recognize this.

2. THE CONGREGATION SHOULD BE A SAFE PLACE FOR THOSE WHO STRUGGLE.

We are often afraid of mental illness and the symptoms that come with it. As a result, we don't know what to do with our own level of discomfort and our fears for safety, or we just don't want to be inconvenienced.

A study from Baylor University indicates "that while help from the church with depression and mental illness was the second priority of families with mental illness, it ranked 42nd on the list of requests from families that did not have a family member with mental illness." This is a real need among our congregations, one that we absolutely cannot ignore or expect to go away. People of faith know that God has freed them to love others, and that love extends to everyone, even (and sometimes especially) those we don't understand.

3. WE SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID OF MEDICINE.

I realize this can be a heated debate. I also recognize that medication must be handled with care - as it should with any condition. But many mental health issues are physiological. Counseling will naturally be a part of treatment. But if we are not afraid to put a cast on a broken bone, then why are we ashamed of a balanced plan to treat mental illness that might include medication to stabilize possible chemical imbalances? Christians get cancer, and they deal with mental illness.

We've long seen the value in the medical treatment of cancer. It's time for Christians to affirm the value of medical treatment for mental illness as well.

4. WE NEED TO END THE SHAME.

I saw it in my own family. Suicide has struck our family more than once, making the news where we wished it did not. When my aunt was arrested for gun smuggling to Ireland, our family did not think of this as an issue of Irish revolution. She was brilliant, a lawyer and a doctor, but mentally ill. Her involvement in the Irish "revolution" was one in a long line of bad choices driven by her illness and eventually led to her suicide.

Yet, it was hard to talk of these things. They had to be "handled in the dark" because "no one could know." I love my family. But shame was something that was difficult to avoid in every case.

Let's be honest. These are typically delicate situations. And we want to protect the privacy and dignity of the people we love, particularly when they are behaving in ways that might draw negative attention. But compassion and care can go a long way in helping people know they don't have to hide.

Why should this be of concern to people of faith? Simply put, there is no place where Americans are more connected and no place where grace is more expected than the church.

Mental illness has nothing to do with you or your family's beliefs, but the greater community that holds those beliefs can be key to the lifelong process of dealing with mental illness. Most research points to the fact that more religious people tend to be healthier, both physically and mentally, but religious activities do not remove people of faith from sickness of either kind.

Christians believe the church is the body of Christ—the hands and feet of Jesus—and that means going into the darkest places and the toughest situations to bring light. It means walking with those who are suffering, no matter what the suffering looks like. PM

Ed Stetzer is president of LifeWay Research, an evangelical research organization. He blogs at edstetzer.com and his most recent book is *Subversive Kingdom*.

COURAGE TO REACH OUT

BY DR. JAMES RAYBURN

From over 30 years of counseling, I have noticed that the most important step a person can take to resolve an issue is to gain the courage to ask for help. Issues requiring outside help can be due to a medical situation, relational problem, mental health issue, or traumatic event from the past. Although each person tries to deal with these issues in different ways, people often attempt to process the problem internally. Inward processing can produce strong feelings of isolation, wrong decisions, and an obsession with "what if?" questions or "what I could have done differently" scenarios that can overtake a person's mind and thought process.

However, there is hope in the truth that negative situations do not need to produce negative thinking. In difficult times, we need to reach outside of ourselves and ask for help. True trouble arises when we embrace our reservations in asking for help. What causes these reservations and how can we overcome them? From my experience, the root of our reservation is fear. When people face tough situations, they often think they are the only ones suffering. This isolated thinking leads people to be overcome by a fear that asking for help will make them seem weak, lose a position or status, expose some hidden events from their past, or reveal them as spiritually weak. We cannot let fear keep us from reaching out for the help necessary to come out of the situation victoriously.

We live in a very individualistic society where many of us were taught to make it on our own and not show emotions. One of our favorite Scriptures is Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me" because it empowers us. Yet, we forget the context of this verse. Prior to saying this, Paul is expressing gratitude for his care. Before proclaiming this victorious truth, Paul required help. We also forget 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God's grace is necessary for our strength. We are not strong enough on our own, because we as God's creations are designed to need His help. Unfortunately, we often embrace our own strength and the fear that motivates us to avoid seeking help.

Fear of losing position or status will keep some people from asking for help. Often when a person has or is close to crossing the threshold into unhealthy actions, they become more focused on their position instead of their personal relationship with God and family. The words they tell themselves are, "If someone finds out it will destroy my ministry and my congregation." Please note the focus on "my ministry" and "my congregation." Where is God in this picture? Individuals can become so consumed by their title or position that their entire self-identity is defined by this. We are not defined by title or position but rather by our character and integrity. Luke 18 shares a story about a young man who on the outside had done all the right things. Yet, Jesus shared there was one thing he lacked. By selling all that he had and giving it to the poor, he could establish a new self-identity through a relationship with Christ. Yet, he went away in sorrow because position meant more than relationship. In times of crisis, any situation can become so consuming that a person can lose the right perspective on the situation. The possession or status isn't worth holding on to! Freedom can only come by embracing our position as God's precious child.

The fear of exposing past and sometimes deeply hidden events can keep someone from asking for help. Everyone has a story, and in that story is both celebration and tragedy. At times individuals place the tragedies of their life in locked compartments hoping they will never come out. Yet, for the majority of individuals, these deep dark moments have a way of coming to life through unhealthy behavior or broken relationships. Past rejections, broken relationships, and sexual, emotional, physical or even past spiritual abuse can try to define who we are. These events can put seeds into our mind, spirit, and soul if we believe the lies we were told. In John 4 Christ encounters a woman at a well, tells her everything there is to know about her, and listens as she admits the truth. He responds by setting her free from the bondage of the past and giving her a new future. There is freedom in saying your secrets

out loud to God and then giving them to Him. Holding on to the past's secrets only makes you prisoner to them. We need to be like the woman at the well and admit our past while praising God for the present and future deliverances.

Fear of being seen as spiritually immature, weak, or not having enough faith can also motivate a person into silence. "If I could only pray more, if I could only read more, or if I could go to the right meeting where the prophet could speak deliverance, I could be healed." One of the darkest lies that Satan tempts us with is our own self-sufficiency. Christ needed people too. He asked for the presence of His closest disciples during His Gethsemane experience. He established a circle of 12. Yet, none of us would call Christ weak or spiritually immature. Today, just like the early church, we have established ministries of helps, including intercessory prayer groups, community programs, care outreach for those in need, teachers, missionaries, trusted counselors, and mentors. There is no reason to not ask for help. Don't let fear rule you. Take hold of Christ's strength within you and follow His example by reaching out to someone. There is freedom from that dark place of heavy loneliness; you only have to ask.

So what can the Church do to help with a person's battle with these fears? We can help by simply allowing the gifts that God has established in the Church to operate to their fullest. Paul writes in I Corinthians 12:28, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." We normally do not have any problem with this list of gifts, with the exception of "helps." This specifically addresses those who are gifted to show compassion and mercy to those who are in need. To hinder the operation of this gift is to hinder the true purpose of Scripture in ministry to the whole body of believers. The church can utilize the gift of helps through support groups such as grief from the death of a loved one, divorce recovery, parents of children with special needs, families dealing with eldercare, marriage enrichment, individuals struggling with addiction, and any other area of need that can be identified within the congregation. If your church is not able to provide these, then consider partnering with some other congregations so that you can share resources. Don't forget about the silent sufferers in your congregation. Provide every avenue for them to get the help they need.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE; PCG CARES ABOUT YOU! YOU ARE THE GREATEST ASSET GOD HAS GIVEN US TO PRAY, GO, LEAD, AND REACH. WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU!

One simply needs to look at the statistics of how many ministers are leaving the ministry each year and at the climbing divorce rate, even in ministers' homes, to know this is a pressing concern in today's Church. The number of suicides among clergy and clergy family members is also increasing, along with negative coping behaviors of pornography. God does not intend this for His Church! Let us not hold back any of the gifts that God has established for us to minister to the needs of His Church.

Here are some quick references for a person gong through a tough situation or for anyone considering asking for help.

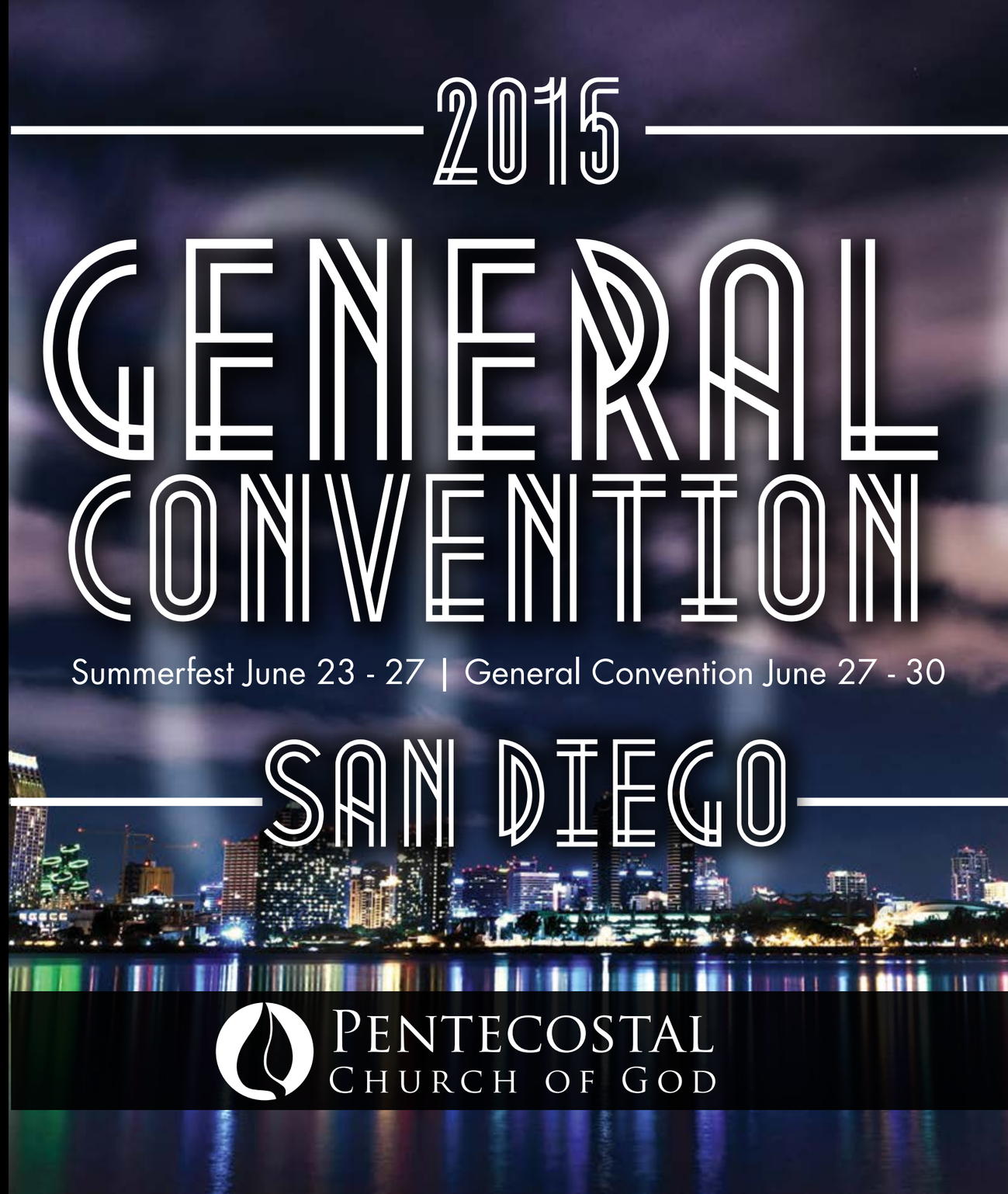
WHEN DO WE NEED TO TAKE COURAGE AND ASK FOR HELP?

1. When the Holy Spirit warns us! He will always speak to our spirit before we are about to do something that can be harmful to us, our family, or our congregation.
2. When we are feeling alone or isolated.
3. When we feel there is no one who can understand us or our situation.
4. When we recognize a need to simply talk with someone.
5. When the problem is beginning to reach a point of crisis.

HOW CAN A PERSON REACH OUT AND GET HELP?

1. Seek a prayer covering from trusted prayer warriors.
2. Talk with your local physician to make sure your situation doesn't stem from or accompany a medical issue.
3. Seek counsel from a trusted friend or mentor.
4. Connect with a credentialed Christian counselor.
5. Become a part of a support or covenant group.
6. Break through the fear by realizing there is hope for your present situation.
7. Fight everyday to include a time of prayer and worship to the God who supplies the strength for victory.

Pastoral Care is here to help you. You do not need to be alone in the time of crisis. Let us help you! Consultation is available through email (Mdpcg@aol.com) or through a referral message on PCG Website (PCG.org). Presentations on spiritual health, family relations/enrichment programs, and mediation for conflict resolution are available through Pastoral Care. PM



HOW LONG?

RECOVERING FROM LOSS AND GRIEF WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

BY TEENA SKILES

I remember June 3, 2003 as if it were yesterday. I stood over my brother as he took his last breath on this earth. Alongside me were my sister-in-law, my uncle, and my husband. To this day I feel so privileged to be a witness of God's divine presence in that room.

It was just moments before my brother's passing that I had excused myself and frantically headed into the guest bedroom to hyperventilate—a first for me. With hands on my knees, heaving violently, the walls were crashing in. I could not control what was happening. My husband, Joe, had followed me into what felt as a dungeon. I remember him taking my hands and saying my name over and over, "Teena, it's okay. Just breathe." My eyes focused on his breathing routine, and I eventually mimicked a calm pattern of inhaling and exhaling. I really don't know what triggered this reaction: maybe it was the fact that my parents had just left to purchase my brother's, their son's, burial lot, an unimaginable trip for a mom and dad.

I collected myself, opened the door, and stepped into the most beautiful presence of peace and serenity I have ever felt in my life. My spiritual eyes saw angels hovering in every corner. One angel was divinely assigned to our 8 ½-month-old baby girl and miraculously swayed her to sleep. Parents of babies "wired for sound" know a miracle when they see one. Was this the feeling of death? Peace? Stillness? Calmness? Quietness? Restfulness? If so, by faith I chose to accept what the Holy Spirit was showing me.

I stepped back into my brother's room a different person than I was when I left. Whatever happened between my exit and re-entry validated my true belief. "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14, NKJV) "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In My Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1, 2, NKJV); "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4, NKJV); The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7, NKJV).

Now, rewind seven years. It was a typical fall day in Missouri in October 1996 when I received the phone call that my brother had suffered a massive seizure. Days of testing proved he was the recipient of a fairly rare brain tumor. I was not there when he and his lovely wife had to ask his physician the questions, "How long will it take me to get better?" "How long will I have to stay in the hospital?" "How long until I have another seizure?" "How long will I have to take treatments?" "How long can I walk without using a cane, walker, or wheelchair?" "How long can I work and provide for my family?" "How long do I have to spend with my wife, my daughter, and my son?" "How long do I have to live?"

Maybe you have heard your loved ones ask the same question; or even, maybe you have had to ask. "How long?" I count myself blessed not to have had to roll such words off my tongue. But I must admit,

> "Your experience will provide the help someone else may need to make it."

I have asked my own painful "How long?" questions through the journey of losing a loved one.

1) HOW LONG DO I GRIEVE? How long do I question? These two subjects are a natural process and a natural response. Each question depends upon each individual's season of life and season of spiritual life. For some, their "How longs?" may last for days, weeks, months, or even years. These questions can create an unhealthy dynamic, if not put to rest in due time. Grieving does not come by a play-by-play book or a prescription of, "if applied three times a day for four weeks you are cured." In fact, I passed with flying colors on my college psychology test that listed the stages of grief defined by author and psychiatrist, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. I wasn't expecting to experience these stages; I was satisfied with just having the head knowledge. This death was my first close loved one. I had it in my mind that possibly a "Dances With Wolves"-moment would transpire. The chief of our family tribe would walk up to me and tell me that my mourning days were over. Stands with a fist seemed to accept the instruction well. This wasn't the movies, which meant I had to rely on Someone higher than myself to write my healing script. Survivors that have loved ones depending on them most likely take their thoughts captive and strive to work through this process/response in a timely manner. We get into trouble when we believe we know ourselves better than God. His timing is perfect if you will allow Him to direct the grieving process.

Teena pictured with her brother Perry

2) HOW LONG DO I FEEL GUILTY? This question has been my number one struggle. It tries to rear its ugly head still, all because I am the only child left. Why did this have to happen to my brother, the namesake of our family? He was a husband, a father, a provider, a son, a brother, an uncle, a friend,

and a man who loved God with all his heart. The enemy saw a chance to pounce on my vulnerability. Never did my parents or sister-in-law portray this thought to me. This was a self-induced fight. I felt guilty for being healthy, for having a wonderful marriage, for laughing, for playing, for traveling, for living. Why is it that we listen to those voices in our head rather than the breath of God? Guilt began to build a wedge in my relationships with my family. One-sided, that is. The wedge was entirely in my mind, and the enemy would fabricate lies and stories and nonsense that I would actually believe! "Your parents would much rather have your brother on earth than you." "Your sister-in-law doesn't want you around; you'll just remind her of what she doesn't have anymore." Lies, all lies. I allowed Satan to use the silence that sometimes is a result of loss against me. "Now you don't have anything to talk about with your family." "They don't care; why should they?" I know I lost some precious moments with God because I didn't believe and follow His Truth, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

As a survivor, I chose to capture my thoughts and renew my mind as Romans 12 instructs us. There's healing in being together (even if there is silence); there's healing in laughter; there's healing in conversation; there's healing by being present. When Jesus hung on the Cross and died for mankind, He took every ounce of guilt with him; guilt of sin, and for me, guilt of living, for it is Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2:20).

Once I overcame that guilt, Satan began to throw a different guilt dart at me: the guilt of not doing enough. "You should have been around more." "You should have offered to help more." "You should have done this . . . you should have done that." Don't think because you have overcome one hurdle in your race that the enemy will leave you alone. He will try every angle he can to keep your thoughts, your emotions, your spirit off of the One and only true God. It's time to capture those thoughts! Don't even crack open that door. Of course, there are a ton of things I would have done differently. But, our love and faith in God goes deep. When you remain in Him, He remains in you (John 15). When you go through grief, sometimes the only thing you know to do, or the only thing you can do, is just remain. And remain, we did. Our blue-collared family roots were and are anchored in the sure foundation of Jesus Christ, for we know His ways are higher than ours.

3) HOW LONG DO I CELEBRATE? Yes, I said celebrate! This year we will celebrate the 11th anniversary of my brother seeing Jesus face to face. Every June I am reminded of the atmosphere my brother made us promise we would create as we remembered and honored his life. "I don't want a bunch of sobbing; it's my life and I want it happy," he said. My big brother taught me graciously throughout his sickness, even in his last days, of what life is truly about. We celebrate the fact that we have the opportunity to choose Christ as our Lord and Savior and, therefore, heaven as our eternal home. What exactly is there to celebrate? A future reunion. Birthdays (it just so happened God demonstrated His love toward our family by allowing our baby girl to share the same birthday as my brother). Every 21st of September you will see a bouquet of blue balloons sailing toward the heavens, delivering a message of love and perseverance. A celebration of life.

4) HOW LONG DO I REMEMBER? One of my most favorite times in church is when we take communion. God knew we would forget; that's why he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." How can we forget the most sacrificial love given to mankind? But we all do. We intentionally remember through the sacred ceremony. In that same way we intentionally remember my brother—the boy, and my brother, the man, throughout the year, every year. I "tell on him" to my parents (my joke is that he can't hurt me now); I listen to music we would blast through his 1970 blue Chevrolet truck speakers; I relive moments of playing snow football and Army soldiers; I stare at our childhood and grownup photos; I picture him sitting by the beach, meditating; I reminisce about him, his best friend, and Joe helping decorate for our parents' 25th wedding anniversary (what

"GOD HAS NOT BEEN TRYING AN EXPERIMENT ON MY FAITH OR LOVE IN ORDER TO FIND OUT THEIR QUALITY. HE KNEW IT ALREADY."

was I thinking?!); I remember with my parents and my family what a precious man of God he was as we change the seasonal flowers on his tombstone. I want to always remember, so I must be intentional.

5) HOW LONG DO I SHARE MY EXPERIENCE? Allow me to use Deuteronomy 11 from the New Living Translation as a guide for this answer. Beginning with verse 1, "You must love the LORD your God and obey all his requirements . . . Keep in mind that I am not talking now to your children, who have never experienced the discipline of the LORD your God or seen his greatness and his strong hand and powerful arm. They didn't see the miraculous signs and wonders . . . They didn't see what the LORD did . . . Your children didn't see how the LORD cared for you . . . They didn't see what he did . . . But you have seen the LORD perform all these mighty deeds with your own eyes! . . . Teach them to your children. Talk about them . . . ." (verses 1- 7, 19).

As long as you have breath, share what you know about God and His strength during your weakest, loneliest, saddest, angriest, and heart-broken moments. Your experience will provide the help someone else may need to make it. A new family friend, Daren Lindley, prophetically exclaimed at a recent event, "The bread to feed the city is in the house." My family and I had to rely on the Bread of Life, God's Word, to get us through our painful experience. The Bread that fed us, can feed other individuals and other families that are struggling with the same "How long?" question. We must be an example to the next generation. My girls did not see what I saw, but they will because I will paint the picture for them to the best of my ability through celebrations, by intentionally remembering, by conversations, and by sharing the solid verse I stood on from Lamentations 3:19-25:

> I remember my affliction and my wandering,
> the bitterness and the gall. I well remember
> them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet
> this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
>
> Because of the LORD's great love we are not
> consumed, for his compassions never fail.
> They are new every morning; great is your
> faithfulness.
>
> I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion;
> therefore I will wait for him.' The LORD is good
> to those, whose hope is in him, to the one who
> seeks him;

The faith journey you walked through or are walking through allows the glory of God to be prevalent in all generations. We must include the next generation in our experiences with sorrow, pain, and death. It is by the word of our testimony that we are made overcomers (Rev. 12:11). Death is a part of life, but it's not the end of life. We must remember who gave His life and that He is the giver of life.

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? (Psalms 13:2)

Death may have sent you into a dungeon and saturated your mind with fear. Your hands may be on your knees; you're bent over heaving in and out; you are spiritually hyperventilating. Breathe in; breathe out. Breathe God's Word in; breathe God's Word out. It's going to be OK; you are going to make it. You are going to be a different man and woman of God than you were when you entered this day.

C. S. Lewis wrote in his work, *A Grief Observed*, "God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down." For those of us who have sat or are sitting in death's courtroom, Christ strikes the gavel and declares that it has been long enough.

Teena Skiles serves with her husband Joe as the National Youth Directors for the Pentecostal Church of God.

Teena is also a sought after speaker for women's conferences that seeks to inspire young people to pursue God passionately.

Empty Arms

A Mother's Journey through Infertility and Healing

By Rachel Nylund

1 Samuel 1:1-18

There is a tendency today for people, especially those in the ministry, to claim that they are "transparent." In this light, I tell my story and those of other women like me. This piece addresses the taboo subject of childlessness that does not occur by choice but by natural incapacity to give birth. We, like Hannah, are women with *Empty Arms*.

In March 2001 my fiancée, Eric, and I had a brainstorming session about all the things we should do before we got married that coming June. An old-fashioned, but wise, choice was to go to a physician and get our physicals. Mr. Nylund's went off without a hitch; the soon-to-be Mrs. Nylund's physical was a different matter altogether. After a few tests, the doctor was under the suspicion that I had undergone premature menopause. When I went for a follow-up to determine hormone therapy, the regular doctor was on vacation and her replacement had far more extensive experience in treating women's health issues.

This physician asked a simple question, "Do you get headaches?"

Did I get headaches? Honestly, I rarely went an entire week without having a headache that lasted at least one day. I remembered days off from school, spent in a completely darkened room with a cold cloth on my forehead, lying down, trying to remain as still as possible, a pillow over my head to block any sound coming from outside my room. "Yes! I got headaches."

"I want to do an MRI. I think I know what the issue is," he said coolly.

I simply thought I was going to finally have my headaches cured, and the fact that he said he was certain I wasn't menopausal made me ecstatic. The MRI was scheduled for July. I married the man of my dreams and took on his two children, ages 5 and 7, who had been abandoned by a mother who longed for a party lifestyle. We were a happy, loving family looking forward to building a future together. I began creating our little nest of a home and was a wannabe-Martha Stewart-type mommy. Every day cooking, cleaning, and playing with my little pre-made family was an adventure. The only thing that would make it better was when Eric and I could start adding to our bunch. During quiet times, children in bed and hubby resting in his lazy boy after work, crocheted blankets and booties and sweaters started piling up. Hand-sewn burp rags and receiving blankets added to the pile. Clothes in every color and style for boys and girls found their way into the cedar hope chest treasury.

And the doctor called, "Results are in. Can you come to the office on Wednesday?"

The day was sweltering for Oregon, over 100 degrees. I walked into the cool air-conditioned office absolutely unprepared for what life-altering, dream-shattering news was going to come my way within the next 15 minutes. I sat in the sterile room playing with the roll-out paper strip that crinkled beneath me on the examining table. I had read every magazine about antiques, stylish senior citizens, and *Country Living* the office had ever held. I played guess how many tongue depressors and cotton balls were in the canisters wondering if I would ever be able to work up the courage to actually dump them out and count them to see how close I really got to the true amount. I was working on guessing how many of those long-handled wooden Q-tips there were when the doctor walked into the room and made me lose mental count. She pulled out a chart and began reading off numbers that made no sense to this newlywed.

I blinked in sudden comprehension at her next words, "So, that means no babies for you, but you have those two cute kids, so you didn't really need to have more *anyhoooo*."

"*Anyhooooo!?!?*" I just received spine-jarring news from a four-eyed, elderly, lab coat-wearing owl? What was happening? I cannot explain to you the feeling in the pit of my stomach. The only thing I can say is that it was sudden; an eternal emptiness swept over me. The doctor asked if there were any questions or was I able to understand everything. I

> “The only thing I can say is that it was sudden; an eternal **emptiness** swept over me.”

shook my head, no questions. I nodded, everything understood. Make an appointment for the next month at the receptionist. Pay her too, like leaving a tip that said, “Thank you so very much for ruining my life.” Have a great day? Sorry, too late for that now.

With a lump in my throat from holding back tears, eyes burning, hardly able to see, my focus on what was happening around me began to melt away. I recall walking out the door calmly, too calmly, nearly robotic, and moving faster and faster until I was running to the car. I dove into the driver’s seat and the door had barely closed before it began—a wailing so deep and painful it was not merely uncontrollable; it sounded as though it was coming from someone else. The tears mingled with the sweat; it had to be at least 120 degrees in the car and had me groping blindly for tissues. I found a napkin from when my kids had Dairy Queen ice cream cones the day before; it disintegrated. Who was I kidding? I didn’t need a tissue; I needed a quilt. After what seemed like hours, but was probably ten minutes or so, I was able to compose myself somewhat and located a kid-sized dirty t-shirt on the back floor. It held up . . . almost.

I sat there for nearly an hour. I didn’t realize it was that long; my mother told me the receptionist called her and told her where I was. No more tears came right then. I honestly don’t remember most of what took place. I do remember looking at the initials on the office sign that proclaimed my doctor had a business partner, a lady who was an FNP and a *midwife*! That word churned in my mind with those other words that continued to cut like daggers: “midwife,” “no babies for you,” and then it was over. I am sure now that the Holy Spirit allowed me to have my breakdown moment, and though I was alone, I was not alone. He held me, kept me safe, and kept me sane. Instead of my mind snapping, I snapped back into reality and realized that there were people waiting for me, little people who were spending the day with Grandma and Grandpa. Little people who were the reason that I, thankfully, didn’t really need to have any babies! My arms felt heavy as I turned the key in the ignition; time to get on with life.

Privacy is a virtue. This is something that has been ingrained in me from an early age. This story is not one I have ever been comfortable sharing, but during the span of my most recent course at Messenger College, I began reliving all the pain, sorrow, and questions I had the day my dreams died. *Marriage and Family* with teacher, Rev. Vernell Ingle, triggered the thought process that went along with my deepest ponderings. If God designed marriage to be the foundation for family, if God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it” (Genesis 1:28, NLT), then why had He made me in such a way that I could not fulfill His first commandment, His crowning achievement of Creation?

My story is not a bizarre one. A simple short article could not hold all the words my story could tell about the anguish I have endured or the victories over the tempter who offered depression in every sort of flavor. Other women long to find meaning in what is called barrenness. Though I do not agree with all of her views, I recognize the grief described by Monica A. Coleman in her article, *The Barren Woman Bible*. “In real life, barrenness is much more complicated. It’s infertility and miscarriages. It’s bleeding and not-bleeding—but on the opposite schedule than you want. It’s counting days, doctor visits, taking blood, running tests, more doctor visits and a slew of bills and—if you’re lucky enough—insurance forms. And did I mention what it does to sex?! What was once fun and adventurous can become calculated, programmed or halted.”[1] A half-way anonymous blogger known as Trish shares, “When you experience infertility, it seems that every other woman in the world is pregnant. I still have that feeling, but not just in that concrete obvious way. I often get the impression that everything, every comment, is geared to draw attention to my infertility and conspire to make me feel inadequate and a failure—a *less-than* woman, a *less-than* person.”[2]

Reading others’ *Empty Arms* stories on-line gave me an epiphany. I am not the only woman that has had a panic attack while walking through the baby department searching for the most darling outfits as gifts for a baby shower, when she would rather get hit by a Mack truck than attend. I am not the only one that stores’ personnel have seen roaming through the cribs and baby toys with tears in their eyes and whom they approach with fear in their eyes. I am sure they want to call security, or the men in white coats, as they say softly, “Are you OK?”

“Oh, allergies,” I say. What an awful lie! How does one look at a stock boy and say, “No! I am not OK. My gut has a void that will never be filled, and every year that I get older, there’s less of a chance that I will hold a sweet baby in my arms. I will never know the joy of holding a newborn in my arms and knowing he or she is mine. Never! Can you fix that? Can you make me whole? Can you calm this rage, pain, and grief in my heart?” How can one do that? It simply would not be considered polite or proper, not to mention awkward.

The final step in beginning the healing process for me was the hardest. It is the hardest for any woman, but most especially for a Christian. During prayer, I cried out my usual standard of “Why? Why not? You heal others. What’s wrong with me? Why can’t it be Your plan?” A still small voice said meekly, “Admit it.” Fighting with God does not get you very far. It took much arguing though, and before I realized what was coming out of my heart, my mouth . . . I spewed, “I’m mad at You! I wish I could hate You! Why would you let women who don’t even want their children and kill them at abortion clinics continue to get pregnant and I’ve been faithful and served You and You won’t heal me. Why?” I didn’t need a tissue. I needed a quilt. And then it was over. Instead of His wrath, He covered me in peace. It took much humbling, but I came to realize that He had another plan. Everything happens for His glory to be displayed. One of the most amazing attributes of our heavenly Father broke into my devastated, mangled heart; it was His *kindness*. *Hesed* (the Hebrew word translated “kindness”) is rooted in one of the “most important words in the Old Testament, and is often translated in the KJV as lovingkindness or mercy.” *Hesed* is a quality central to God’s character, and “it is the foundation for God’s actions.”[3]

There is no doubt that God has guided me gently through the nearly 12 years since I learned of my diagnosis. To say that there are never moments of intense pain would not be true. The truth is, they are becoming less frequent and the ache is practically tolerable. I have found joy in the children God has placed in my care—a son, Tony, and a daughter, Krisha, who needed a mother. Though we have not been able to legally adopt any children, we have three godchildren that we have known since before they were born. From the beginning of our marriage, two boys and a girl became a part of our family. We love them as much as if they are actually our own flesh and blood. We have had the privilege of making Christopher, Jeramy, and Audrey a part of our lives, and they have allowed us to be “God” parents to them. That made five gorgeous children we were given. Then a young man came into our lives while he was enrolled in a discipleship program here in Oregon. His father was not in the picture, and his mother was far away. I recall the day when I put my arm around him and said, “You are part of our family.” We adopted him into our growing brood. He fits in well with this blending of a blond-haired, blue-eyed Norwegian dad and an American Indian mom, with two children who look just like my daddy, and three others who obviously do not belong, genetically-speaking. Harold is a 6 foot black man who is now an army-trained martial artist. He is creatively using these skills by passing his E-5 and entering training to become a chaplain’s assistant and eventually a chaplain. He calls us mama and dad. We call him son. Harold is child number 6. In addition, we were able to foster 3 more children who were eventually reunited with their blood families, but we love them still the same. And now our 3 oldest sons have married sweet, beautiful girls, so we now have three daughter-in-laws. So far, we have two amazing, talented, adorable god-grandsons. We call them our grandbabies. They call us “gigi” and “g-pop.”

Bragging? Yes! Thankful? Oh, yes! Can we all find this joy, this peace? Emphatically, yes! Whether or not you acquire children the way I have, it is possible to allow God to create a family for you. I am comforted by the words from the psalmist who said, “God setteth the solitary in families” (Psalm 68:6). Our family may not look like the ideal we had planned, but we can rest assured that God is in control. He places those who are alone into families to love and be loved. We do not have to force these relationships; God brings them about. I may not have given birth to my children. My body failed me, but my God has not. This family is not a bunch of castaways that were picked up randomly, but they were placed in my path by a loving Father. My prayer for you, longing sisters, is “That you let our rich Lord fill your *Empty Arms*.”

Notes

1. Coleman, Monica. “Progressive Christian.” patheos.com. http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Barren-Woman-Bible-Monica-Coleman-10-04-2011.html (accessed February 4, 2014).
2. “Blessed Are the Barren.” Blessed Are the Barren. http://blessedarethebarren.wordpress.com/ (accessed February 4, 2014).
3. Cole, Laurie. *Beauty by the Book*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996.

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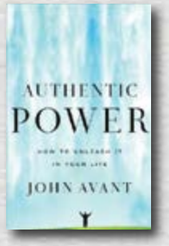

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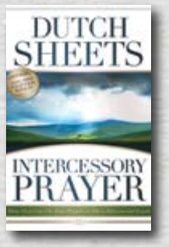

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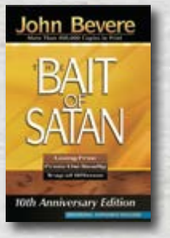

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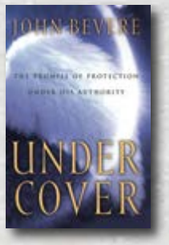

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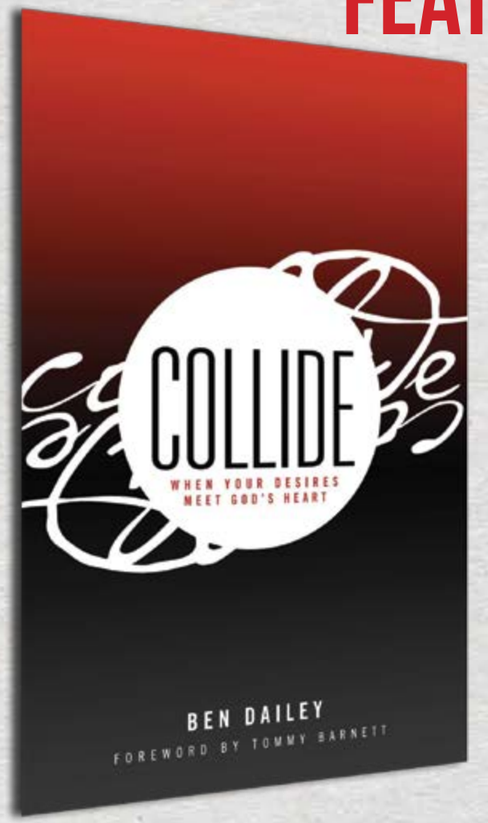
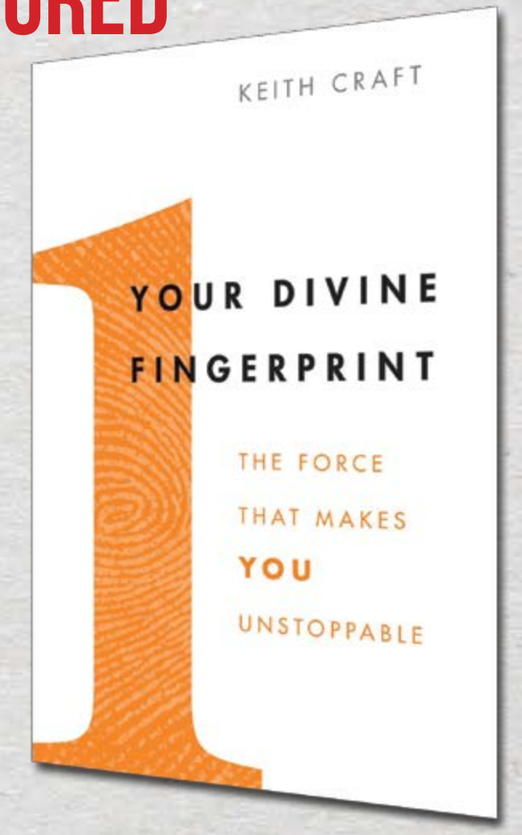


COLLIDE By Ben Dailey
Price is **12.29** reg **14.99**
ITEM# 30496

It's inevitable. Sooner or later, our desires will collide with God's heart. His purposes are far higher than ours, his wisdom far deeper, and his love far wider. From our limited perspective, we think we know what God should do to bless our lives. We have dreams for our careers, our marriage, our kids, and every other aspect of life. Sometimes, we're right on track, but today, tomorrow, or a year from now, we'll realize our hopes and dreams have crashed. At that moment, we have a decision to make: Will we shake our fist at God, walk away, or cling to Him more than ever before? The moment our desires collide with God may seem like the end of a dream, but in reality, it's the beginning of fresh insights and renewed hope.



YOUR DIVINE FINGERPRINT by: Keith Craft.
Price is **19.99** reg **24.99**
ITEM#6527

According to science, 99 percent of our DNA sequence is the same as other humans. Pastor Keith Craft believes that the 1 percent difference in each of us is a type of glory that God has given us.

Within the pages of his motivational and inspirational self-help book, *Your Divine Fingerprint: The Force That Makes You Unstoppable*, are the tools to help you discover a unique fingerprint that you have been given. These tools will help you deploy your unique difference that your family needs, your marriage needs, your job needs, your faith needs—that the world needs. And when you embrace and live in that uniqueness, you celebrate the glory of God.

PCG ALL AFRICA AUG 23– SEPT 3 2014

Imagine a land mass over three times the size of the continental United States and Alaska and Hawaii. That is the continent of Africa. Now, imagine getting leaders scattered across 19 countries of that continent from different cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages, together in one place at the same time for the same purpose. CHALLENGING to say the least, but with Acts 2 reverberations. For the very first time ever, Pentecostal Church of God leaders and pastors from our mission fields across the continent will gather in Nairobi, Kenya, for this historic conference.

The purpose is threefold: 1) We will gather for a great convocation for worship and praise to Almighty God. Ghanaians, Ethiopians, Congolese, Kenyans, Tanzanians, Zimbabweans, South Africans, and a host of others will lift their voices in unison to the God that has changed and is changing their lives. 2) Nairobi will be an intersection for an interchange of ideas. Breakout session speakers will share fresh fire with national bishops, national leaders, pastors, men, ladies, youth, and teachers. 3) A roundtable forum for national leaders to forge their future and the spread of the gospel across the continent. From many nations they will develop a new strategic effort to extend the influence of God's life-changing Word by cooperatively working together to reach not only their own nation, but others across Africa.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- **PRAY** – From now through August make this a part of your regular prayer time.
- **GO** – Join us in going to Kenya for this exciting journey. Contact the World Missions office for information: email at wmpcg@pcg.org or call at 817-554-5900, extension 344.
- **GIVE** – Your gift, large or small, will be vital to achieving our budget of $60,000.00. Mail your donations to: Pentecostal Church of God WORLD MISSIONS, PO Box 211866, Bedford, TX 76095, or you may give online at www.pcg.org. Mark your gifts: ALL-AFRICA.

MISSIONARY SPOTLIGHT

GERMANY

CAPITAL: BERLIN | POPULATION: 80,585,700 | LANGUAGE: GERMAN

The city of Berlin

WHERE?

Germany

WHO?

Daniel and Hermine Falquez

WHEN?

Appointed as missionaries November 1997

PRAY FOR:

Favor as they reach out to share the love of Christ with the German people.

FINANCIAL NEEDS:

Monthly Support

MEDIA REVIEW

The following is not an endorsement of the views, and opinions expressed by the presented materials and do not neccessarily reflect those of the Pentecostal Church of God.

MUSIC

Switchfoot, " Fading West"

The San Diego Band has been releasing music since 1996 and is still releasing music with their new album, *Fading West*. The 11-track album exemplifies the bands expertise in rock and uplifting lyrics. The album is different than their other albums, as it has a more of a "radio-pop" kind of feel. In relation to their album, Switchfoot released a documentary.

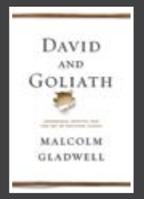
Elevation Worship, "Only King Forever"

Elevation Worship has released a live album that presents a perfect worship set. They have released an album that celebrates God who is glorious, who is King, and who is Lord of all. Elevation Worship provides 14-track album that sets a spiritual atmosphere with the words of the lyrics and the raw sound of people worshiping in the background.

Casting Crowns, "Thrive"

"We weren't made to survive; we were made to thrive (Jeremiah 17: 7-8)." Casting Crowns releases their 6th album, *Thrive*. They deliver their signature style of music and meaningful lyric about real life that is redefined in our identity in Christ. The overall album delivers a message of hope when we are rooted in God.

BOOKS



David and Goliath by Malcolm Gladwell

Everyone tends to cheer for the underdog. Using the famous story of David and Goliath, Malcolm Gladwell encourages readers to think about how we handle obstacles in life and celebrate the greatness of the challenges an "underdog" faces. Gladwell uses the attributes an underdog faces that help foster the attributes of a leader: faith, courage and determination.

For this I was born by Brian Houston

Everyone always faces the life question, "What is my meaning in life?" Brian Houston encourages readers, in his book *For this I was Born*, to live life for the Cause of Christ. However, to live life for Christ's cause we have to know what that cause is and know the ultimate generosity of Christ. Houston, using Scripture and guidance, helps you understand why you were born, to know what you are living for and what you are prepared to die for.

Women of Valley View by Sharon Srock

Sharon Srock, a member of the Pentecostal Church of God for forty years, introduces *The Women of Valley View*, a book series that follows ordinary women who use their faith to do extraordinary things. Srock currently has two books published, *Terri* and *Callie*, and will be releasing a new book, *The Women of Valley View: Pam*, in 2014. We are proud to have Sharon Srock share her gift with us. To know more about Sharon Srock and *The Women of Valley View* please visit womenofvalleyview.blogspot.com.

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BE OUR GUEST

BILLIE GIBSON

DEEP DARK DEPRESSION, EXCESSIVE MISERY

Save me, O God, for the floodwaters are up to my neck. Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire; " (Psalm 69:1-2, NLT).

Did you ever feel like that? The Psalms are filled with passages of Scripture reflecting this mood and sentiment. I tried writing a psalm once, but it came out something like this, "Gloom, despair, and agony on me; deep dark depression, excessive misery. If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all. Gloom, despair, and agony on me." Funny? It isn't when you realize there are over 20.9 million Americans who suffer from depressive disorder annually. Many times people suffer from clinical depression, but here I want to deal with what I refer to as circumstantial depression. In other words, my circumstances are depressing me. My first struggle with this was after my husband passed away in a traffic accident. I couldn't sleep, so I ate my way through the night and began drowning my sorrows in the bottle (bottle of chocolate syrup). I began to search the Scriptures for help and this is what I found.

There was a vast difference between King Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-20) and King David (1 Samuel 30:1-8) whenever they were overwhelmed. Saul had to have someone else play the harp for him when he got depressed, but the Bible says that David encouraged himself in the Lord. We have to learn how to do that; far too many rely on someone else to encourage them.

When David and his men returned to Ziklag, they found that it had been burned with fire and their wives and children had been taken captive by the Amalekites. To make matters worse for David's circumstances, his men were thinking of stoning him. What did he do about these overwhelmingly depressing circumstances?

First, David wept until he had no more power to weep (1 Samuel 30:4)! Cry out to Jesus. Don't bottle your emotions up; hurt that is not healed by the Lord will turn to bitterness, anger, resentment, and unforgiveness.

Second, David encouraged himself in the Lord his God (verse 6). Sounds like the same advice Paul gave the Ephesians (5:19, 20). Psalm 56 is a perfect example of how David encouraged himself in the Lord when he was taken captive at Gath.

In Psalm 56:3 David says, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." But in verse 11 he has done a complete turnaround: "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." What caused the change in attitude? The key is the few verses between 3 and 11. Verse 4 says, "In God I will praise his word." (He repeats the same phrase in verse 10.) Stop right there and focus on his concept: the IN GOD part—the secret to overcoming depression is staying in God, staying in Christ. It is letting His Words abide in us as we abide in Him (John 15). It is like a cup of water that is set inside a punchbowl full of water; the cup is in the water and the water is in the cup. Christ in us is our only hope of glory (see Colossians 1:27).

Third, in encouraging himself in the Lord, David then said, "Please bring the ephod here to me," (1 Samuel 30:7, NKJV). The ephod was the covering the priest wore to allow him to go into the Holy of Holies where God's presence was. It represented a set-apart relationship and the authority of the priestly office. Because the veil of the Temple was torn in two, we now come boldly before God's throne according to Hebrews 4. When David called for the ephod, this indicates to me a time to examine one's personal relationship—to get rid of unforgiveness or anything else that hinders your relationship with God. As the priest wore the ephod as a covering, so we need to let Christ be our covering, shelter, refuge, tower of strength, and our hiding place.

Fourth, "David inquired of the Lord" (verse 8). We need to seek God to overcome depression. Let His Word speak to your circumstances; hear it say "peace be still" to the storms in your life.

Billie Gibson (Palumbo) is the former Discipleship director for the Pentecostal Church of God and currently pastors Southside Community Church of God in Joplin, MO.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

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Pastor, Southern Missouri District, Solid Rock Family Worship
Elayer, MO
Bishop Bob McGee
417-293-7077

@BrianCHouston Look down to get discouraged – Look around to get distracted – Look up to get direction!

@edstetzer Wise planning is not I decide and then ask God to bless it, but I ask God what he desires of me, and then pursue it!!

@jaredming What u make happen for others God will make happen for u.

@myhealthychurh God is active, constantly in motion, working to accomplish His kingdom purpose in your life. @JeffLeake #GodinMotion

@ChrisFord_DYD You only need one New Year's resolution… to be more like Jesus.

@TrinityPCG We love because He first love us. 1 John 4:19, NIV ~~~ We must remember to show love to our father daily, for he loved us. #Christ #Trinity

@tomtoney Let your past inspire you not define you.

@sevenly Sometimes the words we leave unspoken are the most important ones that should have been said.

@CreativeCL God gives you the tools to move through life but it's up to you to drive. #crtvmin

@benjaminpoe Manipulation is the tainted opposite of influence. Guide others with a PURE & intentional influential approach. #christian #leadership

THAT IS RELEVANT

RANDY LAWRENCE JR.

WHY?

Having four children under the age of 6, the most popular question in our household without a doubt is:

"WHY?"

Young inquisitive minds are continually voicing (sometimes at very high frequencies) their curious petitions to my wife and I as they try to figure out this thing we all call life. On some days, my mind races with the exact same questions. Honestly, there are many days when I want to stand on my tippy toes and scream at the top of my lungs as my 3-year-old Cali does and yell, "WHY? DAD WHY?"

Have you ever had those moments? Why this? Why that? Why did he have to die? Why this report? Why now?

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, *"To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven."* While this principle of God's Word at times might not be the most preferred method of human comfort, as believers we must hold on to the promise that God has a purpose and a season for all of life's "Whys."

In 1 Kings 17 the prophet Elijah finds himself in an interesting season of life. After obeying the Lord's instructions to proclaim a drought to King Ahab, Elijah finds himself down by the Brook Cherith, drinking from the brook and being fed by the ravens (as God had instructed). Life is going GREAT! Until we get to verse 7, *"And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land."* Boom! All of a sudden Elijah is thrust into a *Why?* moment. Just what do you do when the creek runs dry and the ravens won't fly? To seemingly add insult to injury, why is Elijah out of water? Because he followed the voice of the Lord instructing him to proclaim a drought, that's why!

It's in these precarious seasons and moments in life when we are essentially faced with two options: we either can run TO GOD, or run FROM GOD. Spurgeon said, "The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay." The choices and decisions we make in these difficult, sometimes unbearable seasons in life often have the greatest impact on our unforeseeable future. In the face of the *Whys* that are staring us in the face, screaming at us in very high decibels, we must be sure that God will not leave us alone. The same voice that instructed Elijah to proclaim the drought is the same voice that comes to him in verse 9 instructing him to "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." God hadn't forgotten about his boy Elijah. Likewise, while we are never guaranteed to have the answers to all of life's *Whys*, we do have the guarantee found in Hebrews 13:5, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Let me ask you an important Why? question, "Why go through these seasons alone?" In the difficult seasons of life, the enemy would love nothing more than to push us into isolation! He will use the Whys to try and isolate us from God's Word, the voice of the Holy Spirit, and the fellowship and support of believers. We will all face difficult seasons in life, and it is absolutely crucial in these moments that we refuse to take the somewhat attractive advice of the enemy to slip into isolation. So when the enemy comes with his deep dark suggestions of isolation, remind him of the words of Christ in John 14:18, *"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."*

You are not alone. We are not alone. We have all the help and support we need to face the all the *Whys* this life could possibly throw our way. To me, that is relevant.

Randy Lawrence Jr. is the Impact Leadership Development Director , a part of the editorial staff for *The Pentecostal Messenger*, and currently leads the Communications team of the Pentecostal Church of God.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

A LIVE PCG PRAYER EVENT

MAY 1, 2014

Join us for the National Day of Prayer event streamed live on May 1, 2014. Leaders from all across the Pentecostal Church of God will stand together to pray for America, its families, and its future.

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