from the Heart

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"...to strengthen women who minister to women..."

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Prepared for the Storm

By Donna Jeffries

Have you noticed trials seem to roar into our lives like a freak storm or an unexpected hurricane? After the storm subsides and the skies clear, you can see how God prepared you for the trial—in advance.

I write a weekly online Bible study. Toward the end of one lesson, I had given several quotations having to do with God's omniscience. The lesson concluded with the old hymn, "His Eye Is On The Sparrow."

As soon as I finished typing the last lines of the hymn, I was moved to tears, acutely aware of God's presence. I wanted to sit and bask in that pleasant moment but had to get going. Hurriedly, I gathered my things, anxious to be on the road for a two-and-a-half hour drive to the central California coast.

As I drove west into the foothills, I noticed a small curl of smoke coming from a grass fire—not uncommon in California. Oncoming traffic was passing through the smoke so I assumed it was safe to proceed. Within moments after entering the smoke, the wind shifted, the smoke thickened and the fire roared down to the edge of the road. The flames were as high as my SUV and hot! With no place to pull off the road or turn around, I began to panic. Suddenly visibility dropped to zero and at that moment I slammed into a car stopped dead in the road. I had passed a huge tractor-trailer rig a few miles back and in a matter of seconds he would likely crush me. I laid on my horn to get the car moving forward. We pulled ahead and off the road. I was so shaken I couldn't get out of the car. As I sat there trembling, the last lines of the hymn came immediately to mind, "His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

In retrospect, I understood God had prepared me as I wrote the lesson by giving me the awareness of his omniscient Presence. (Also in retrospect, I should have lingered with him a while longer and avoided the whole mess!)

God does not send us a trial—large or small—without advance preparation before the fire-storm roars down upon us. This principle can be observed in the lives of numerous biblical personages, particularly Abraham. When God was about to put him to the supreme test of his life, God said, "Take now your son,

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Prepared for the Storm

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your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

God prepared Abraham in advance for the ultimate testing of his faith through the many comparatively small trials leading up to the events of Genesis 22. Previously God had called Abraham to leave his country, family and father's house—in essence all that was safe, secure and well supplied, to go to a land that would be shown to him in the future (Genesis 12:1). Once in the land, he was faced with the issue of survival due to famine (Genesis 12:10). Escape to and return from Egypt produced new trials. One that was particularly difficult was the departure of Lot from his encampment (Genesis 13). Lot selfishly chose for himself the best land and pitched his tent towards Sodom (verses 10-11) which proved to be a source of grief to Abraham when he had to rescue Lot (Genesis 14) and when he pleaded with God for the lives of citizens of that wicked place (Genesis 18:23-33).

For many years Abraham's faith was exercised as he waited for God to fulfill his promise of an heir (Genesis 15:4). Abraham believed God and his belief was counted as righteousness (verse 6). But time passed and bowing to pressure from Sarah, a son, Ishmael was born (Genesis 16). God appeared again to Abraham and repeated his promise of a son born of Sarah who was well past the age of childbearing by that time. Finally, when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, their long awaited child was born. In a few short years, conflict between the sons required another painful trial for Abraham as he was forced to send his eldest son Ishmael away.

With each succeeding trial, God caused Abraham to progressively climb to new heights of faith. Each test was a little more difficult than the preceding one, but at every stage, Abraham gained a new and more intimate understanding of the nature and character of God.

Chapter 22 opens with these words, "Now it came to pass after these things…." So we ask, "What things?" The last event we read about in chapter 21 was the covenant Abraham made with Abimelech. After the treaty was ratified, Abraham planted a tree by the well, "Beersheba," and called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God (Genesis 21:33).

"Although he had just made a covenant with an earthly king for the sake of peace in the region, Abraham honored God who had made an eternal covenant with him and his descendants in regard to the land. He had seen God's faithfulness to one part of that promise in the birth of Isaac. Now he looked forward in faith to the complete fulfillment of the promise when his descendants would possess the land forever. He knows this will happen in God's time because God is "El-Olam" the Lord, the Eternal God" (*Weekly Word Bible Study,* Donna Jeffries, *Women of the Harvest: Online Magazine,* 2006, Lesson 25, pp. 8-9).

The realization of the eternal nature of God broke fresh on Abraham's soul. God lives eternal, unchanging, beyond time and space—and therefore, he stands by his promises forever. Nothing changes them because the God who made the promises is eternal and unchanging.

God prepared Abraham through these trials for the supreme testing of his faith—the Level 5 hurricane approaching the aged and unsuspecting friend of God. In his mercy, he prepares all his children for the sudden storms in life.

Donna has been active in women's ministries for 26 years. Her responsibilities have included Bible Study Fellowship Teaching Leader; Director of Women's Ministries at Calvary Bible Church in Bakersfield, retreat speaker with Oasis, and most recently as author of Weekly Word Bible Study for Women of the Harvest. Donna and her husband Don have been married 32 years and have three married children and five young grandchildren. They reside in Bakersfield.

God loves each one of us,
as if there was only one of us.
—Augustine

From the Editor

Fickleness and Faithfulness

By Tammy Tkach

I tend to do things in spurts. It seems to be a human tendency, to be excited about something and enthusiastically pursue it, then fizzle out. I do this with exercise programs. I've started several different exercise regimens over the years. In college, I ran and played tennis. For a while, I joined a fitness club and worked out regularly. Later, I exercised to videotapes in my living room. I walked for a few years. Now I'm back to tapes and still walking. Sometimes I exercise every day, then I'll skip a few days or even weeks for various reasons, then I'll go back to it and have to almost start over.

I go in spurts spiritually too. Sometimes I meditate and write in my journal every day, then I'll move on to a prepared study and forget the journal. At other times in my life, I've just read through the Bible, and abandoned the studies. I've picked up devotionals, then left them for other books. At times I've even left off praying for periods of time, or not opened my Bible for a while.

I've beaten myself up about this, believing it was a character flaw, and perhaps it is. Thankfully God understands how I am. He knows I'm inconsistent and fickle, but he loves me anyway.

Many years ago he helped me set the direction of my life—toward him. He called me by name to be one of his children, to know him and his love and to be redeemed by his Son. And even though I wander in and out of faithfulness, I am always moving in the same direction—toward God.

A. W. Tozer put it this way: "I would emphasize this one committal, this one great volitional act which establishes the heart's intention to gaze forever upon Jesus. God takes this intention for our choice and makes what allowances he must for the thousand distractions which beset us in this evil world. He knows that we have set the direction of our hearts toward Jesus, and we can know it too, and comfort ourselves with the knowledge that a habit of soul is forming which will become after a while a sort of spiritual reflex requiring no more conscious effort on our part" (*The Pursuit of God,* p. 82).

Isn't it great to know God completely understands the fickleness of the human heart? And isn't it also great to know he helps us stay pointed in the right direction, always set toward his face? As Tozer says, if our hearts are set toward Jesus long enough, we will form that habit of soul that will take us right into eternity with God.

Thankfully God is not fickle. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is not like us—he never does things in spurts, with starts and stops. He is always faithful, sticking with us through our unfaithfulness.

Tammy is the president of the NEWIM Inland Empire chapter.

Visit NEWIM on the Internet at:
www.newim.com

We'd love to hear from you!

If you would like to contribute to *From the Heart,* we'd love to hear from you. To share news, encouragement and testimonies, please e-mail Ginger Bertoni at hartcol110@aol.com.

Please e-mail Ginger if you have workshop ideas, opportunities, resources or knowledge to share.

You may also e-mail Tammy Tkach at tammy_tkach@wcg.org with chapter news or any other item of interest.

It's all about connecting and sharing!

Chapter Reports

Chapter meetings—make a small investment of your time (two hours, a few times a year), and you will leave enriched, encouraged and invigorated as a woman and as a ministry leader.

How the Lord is using NEWIM around the state

San Fernando Valley/ Ventura Counties Chapter

The chapter met every other month this summer. Our format includes a time of worship, a brief devotional and discussion.

May—We met at Simi Prez church in Simi Valley. Our topic was "Developing Effective Leaders." We had a great discussion on what it means to develop lay leaders for a variety of ministries, including how to identify and develop leaders. Women brought materials to share with others, including helpful books and resources.

July—We met at The Church at Rocky Peak in Chatsworth. Our topic was "Challenges of Communication in Ministry and Between Ministries." This was an energetic discussion on effective communication, including types and forms of communication.

We close in a special time of prayer in small groups. It's a time to really hear the heart of the women in a personal setting and we commit to pray for each other.

After serving as chapter president since February of 2005, Jan Lackey will be stepping out of that position effective the first of the year. To date no one has expressed an interest in filling the vacancy. Chapter board member positions are also open. Anyone with an interest may contact Jan Lackey or Ginger Bertoni.

Jan Lackey, president, San Fernando Valley/Ventura Counties chapter. Jan is also Director of Women's Ministries, The Church at Rocky Peak. Phone 818-709-0113, ext. 124 (office hours M-T-Thu). E-mail: jlackey@rockypeak.org.

San Joaquin Valley Chapter

At our September meeting, special guests Ginger Bertoni, president of NEWIM, shared the heart of the ministry, and Barbara Willett, NEWIM's Director of Chapter Development gave away door-prizes! Jackie Rettberg (Director of Oasis retreats,) inspired us with her message "A Reality Check as a Christian." She challenged us to look in the Gospels and read what Jesus said as the ultimate reality check.

At our June meeting, guest speaker June Rolen spoke on "Seasons of Service." She shared from the wealth of her own life experience, and encouraged and challenged us to live with the attitude of a servant. She also reminded us that every season of life is a good one, and though they will be different, each is valuable.

We always enjoy networking after the message. Topics have included fall kick-off ideas for women's ministries, redeeming the time, Christmas and Thanksgiving activities, ways to get women involved in serving and the vital role of submission.

Our chapter meets once a quarter, and next year we are planning a few Saturday meetings for those unable to attend on Fridays. We are also working on a special meeting, inviting various local speakers to share as a way of introducing them as resources.

Please check the NEWIM website for dates and speakers for upcoming meetings.

Shirley Barber, president, San Joaquin Chapter, (559) 298-8001 x 273, or e-mail Elaine at elainemarie2@sbcglobal.net.

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Chapter Reports

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San Diego Chapter

The San Diego Chapter joined in on a special time with Vonette Bright on June 15 as she shared her passion for prayer. Later in the month many gals from the San Diego Chapter ventured up to Bakersfield to worship with Anne Barbour and get in on some great seminars. Jill Briscoe was so encouraging to us as leaders. Traveling on the road with co-laborers in women's ministry was a real joy.

San Diego's next chapter meeting was held on Friday morning, September 29, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Emmanuel Faith Community Church in Escondido.

Topic for this next meeting was "Mentoring Matters!" Author Pam Farrel and some of the incredible women she has mentored and discipled shared how you can become a woman who:

- Has a plan for passing the baton of faith.
- Learns the keys for mentorship and discipleship.
- Gains helpful resources to build your own team and ministry.
- Equips women in outreach using new "Project Esther" tool.

Everyone who brought five women from her team received a free copy of Pam's new book hot off the press, *Women of Influence.*

Please join us as we continue making friends and networking in San Diego County.

Watch for info on our next meeting on Team Building.

Bev Amsbary Davenport, president, San Diego Chapter, bdavenport@efcc.org.

For more information on NEWIM chapters, check the link on our website at:

www.newim.com

Orange County Chapter

Our OC Leadership Team has come up with a new vision and some exciting goals:

- Make networking a priority and vary our meeting days and times to allow more working women to fit chapter meetings into their schedules.
- Provide a safe place for women in ministry to share, pray and brainstorm together.
- Invite local para-church ministries and community organizations to make presentations at some of our meetings.
- Reach out to young women for the purpose of modeling and mentoring in the area of Christian Leadership.

Past meetings:

April—How can we best meet the needs of women serving God in the OC.

May—A dinner to honor Cheri Dale, who has re-located to Scottsdale, Arizona.

June—*Return to Be Encouraged!* Kudos to the *Return* team! What a well-organized event and well worth the drive.

July—A 27th "Spiritual Birthday Celebration" for Monica Brislawn, our past chapter president!

August—A summer salad potluck dinner, served on the patio of our new chapter president, Lynell Brooks.

September 29th—Friday Morning Fall Kick-off. Jill Austin, Head of Women's Ministries at St. James Anglican Church in Newport Beach, led us in a vintage faith practice, "Lectio Divina."

October 28th—Saturday morning meeting.

Upcoming Meetings:

November 30th—Thursday evening Potluck Holiday Dinner

January 26th—Friday morning meeting.

February 23rd —Friday morning mmeeting.

For more information, please call Nancy Burchell, Outreach Coordinator, at 949-642-4484.

Lynell Brooks, president, Orange County Chapter. Phone: 714-545-1150, home; 714-966-5483, work; lbrooks@vanguard.edu.

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Chapter Reports

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Kern County Chapter

The Kern County chapter will have it's first meeting Wednesday, November 8th at Teri Thompson's house. The meeting will include directors from all over the county to discuss the vision of NEWIM and let the directors share what they would like to see happen in this new chapter.

We are excited to get together and get things rolling! We've had great feedback since *Return*. Many are sharing ideas on ways to network. It will be fun to get us all in the same room and see what God does! If you are in the area, we would love to have you join us.

Teri Thompson, the president of the new chapter, lives in Bakersfield, and has a wonderful husband, Brad, and three grown children. She loves to teach the Word of God to women and watch it transform their lives. She is the Women's Ministry Director at Crossroads Christian Fellowship and Director for the Kern County Women's Conference. Teri has been teaching weekly Bible Studies for many years and speaks at women's events.

Teri Thompson, president, Kern County chapter. E-mail: btthompson587@sbcglobal.net; phone 661-587-7181.

Inland Empire Chapter

The Inland Empire Chapter met on May 20 in Norco. June Chambliss gave a moving and inspiring testimonial, reminding us never to give up, no matter what.

Our next meeting date has not been finalized. Please check the NEWIM website for future dates and locations.

Tammy Tkach, president, Inland Empire chapter. Phone: 909-574-0190; tammy_tkach@wcg.org.

South Bay Women/ Los Angeles Chapter

With unceasing love, a burden for the women of the South Bay of Los Angeles, and after much prayer, I felt the Lord was leading me to take the mantle as president of this chapter of NEWIM.

My name is Cinda Herring and I co-pastor with my husband, Milton, the Living Word Christian Church in Torrance. He is a reserve chaplain in the U.S. Army, was deployed to the Middle East in 2004-2005. Some of you receiving this newsletter prayed for us during that time and I am truly thankful. God answers prayers!

The words of the song, "I Need You To Survive," express my sentiment well. It talks about how we all need each other and are important in the church.

As the body of Christ, we need each other. As women in ministry, we need each other. Can we come together, pray together, care for one another and share with one another? Can we support one another in the goal of advancing the Kingdom of God? I believe we can. Let's see what God can do with his body.

Next meeting: Thursday, November 2, 2006, 9-11 a.m. at Crenshaw Baptist Church, 18749 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, 90504.

Please let me know if you're interested in serving with me or if I may be of service to you.

Cinda Herring, president, South Bay/Los Angeles chapter, wordcc@cfaith.com. Living Word Christian Church Sunday meeting location: 18119 S. Prairie Avenue, Torrance, 90504.

> Courage does not always roar. Sometimes, it is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."
>
> —Anonymous

Future NEWIM Events

The Oaks

conference for directors of women's ministry

Oaks of Righteousness—A Working Conference For Women in Leadership

The Oaks is a special place for women in leadership. As a leader we always need to be growing and learning in our skills.

Seasoned teachers add new and updated material to this conference each year. We encourage you to return and bring some of your leaders with you. Networking at its best happens in a comfortable atmosphere.

Topics may include lay counseling tools, recruiting and retaining volunteers, planning events, finances, current resources. We never forget to keep God's Word central in our ministries.

The next Oaks is Sunday, March 4 (at 4 p.m.) through Tuesday, March 6 (3 p.m.).

Location: St Anthony's Retreat Center in Three Rivers, California.

Cost: $240 (single occupancy); $199 (double occupancy). After February 20, add $25 late fee.

Includes: 2 nights of lodging, all linens and 6 meals.

Contact Bev Amsbary Davenport for registration or more information at 760-781-2166 or e-mail her at bdavenport@efcc.org.

I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts; the rest are details.

—Albert Einstein

RETURN TO BE Encouraged

2008

Return To Be Encouraged 2008 is in the planning stages. Plan now to join us in beautiful Orange County for another wonderful and inspiring conference. Please join us in prayer for God's blessings and guidance in every aspect of planning.

In almost everything that touches our everyday life on earth, God is pleased when we're pleased. He wills that we be as free as birds to soar and sing our maker's praise without anxiety.

—A. W. Tozer

Salvation is from our side a choice, from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest by the Most High God. Our "accepting" and "willing" are reactions rather than actions. The right of determination must always remain with God.

—A. W. Tozer

The Springs

A THREE DAY PRAYER & REFLECTION RETREAT

November 9-11, 2006, Redlands, $171

Sunny Schrimsher, (714) 964-7243
sunny@integrity.com

The Oasis

Please visit www.newim.com for information on the future of *The Oasis* retreats.

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