

Walking in Hope

February 2010

DEVOTIONAL: THE POWER OF TOUCH

By *Becky Roberson*

There was a darkness. A frightening, enveloping, smothering darkness. And yet there was safety there. Much like the entrance to a large cave, shelter taken while a storm raged behind and uncertainty loomed ahead. Fear and a sense of security seem to be mutually exclusive, yet the mind is able to cocoon itself in just such a way. There was no blindness but an inability to see.

My fall resulted in serious head and rib injuries. Many have asked what happened. I don't know because I wasn't there. I think I tripped. Hitting my head erased any other memory. For the first week, I was unaware of anything except pain, the feeling of being hot or cold, of thirst. The medicine only dulled the physical pain. I tried not to move except to care for the most basic of needs.

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DELTA'S CORNER: "WHERE YOUR HEART IS"



*Delta Schrade with Hubby
Metro Pastor's Wife*

Dave Ramsey says, "Live today like no one else, so that tomorrow you can live like no one else."

Although he uses this philosophy to teach individuals about constraining their spending today so that they can live unencumbered tomorrow, this is actually a Biblical principle that applies to so many things besides just our finances.

Colossians 3:1-3 says, "Set your affections on things above, not on earthly things."

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SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH: MEDITATION

By *Wendy Kautz, Editor*

I have the same New Year's resolutions every year: lose weight, and get organized. Anyone else?

Sometimes I add one, like: improve my posture. By the middle of January, I'm usually still doing OK. This year I've lost a couple of pounds, and I've made a couple of small strides toward getting more organized. So I'm feeling pretty good.

But how long will it last? How long until I'm buried under piles of laundry, toys, and paperwork, eating my weight in cookie dough?

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But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

I had a profound sense of safety and of being loved. There was no doubt that God loved me. But this knowledge did not come from inside. Truthfully, I did not think of God during the worst of this time. There was no awareness of good or evil, no memory of scripture or how to pray, no desire to examine my relationship with Him. My mind was empty.

During the next couple of weeks, my injuries slowly began to heal. My hands shook and would not obey. My vision was blurred and bright lights hurt my eyes. I was assured these limitations were temporary and I accepted that time would take care of them.

The mental pain came as awareness began to return even though the memories did not. When I would try to remember, my head would throb. Thinking hurt. My thoughts and emotions belonged to someone else. I could not look anyone in the eye for fear that they might be able to see the pain inside. It was visible to those who know me well. Gone was the silliness, the joy, the optimism, the abandon with which my mind often played. The essence of me was missing and I mourned the loss. The new person within was unfamiliar and unwelcome. I had a pronounced and uncontrollable sadness that I might never be back.

I could not turn to God to calm me. I did not remember how. I don't think He was worried about my devotion to Him as He had already provided for my care. He sent His touch.

I had visitors. You did not believe me when I said I did not need anything. I needed you. I don't recall

what you brought or what you said. I knew you were there. I knew you were praying. It was enough and I am grateful.

Steve and Stacey were there. They anticipated my needs and met them with quiet gentleness. They shielded me and gave me time to heal. They assured me that I was still there and would return. Most importantly, they never questioned my faith. They did not quote scriptures critical of my fears, for mine were like those of a child, innocent of the wiles of the evil one. They kept the faith for me. In the darkness, they were there to quiet and to comfort. I believe there is nothing as powerful and as gentle as a warm, loving touch. I remember their touch when I remember nothing else.

For those strong in mind and body, Jesus would teach and train, even admonish if needed. For those weak, He would touch. This experience has given me a new appreciation of being an intercessor. I need to pray for those who cannot or know not. I wonder about those who live within themselves, either by way of physical injury or mental incapacities. Do they know? Do they understand but have no way to express their worries or their dreams? Can they pray or are they totally dependent upon others to intercede on their behalf?

I now see fear and depression in a different light. Perhaps Satan intends for fear to paralyze not only the one in its grasp but also the ones who have an opportunity to banish it. Those who recognize its tendrils are often better able to break its bonds than the one who is bound by its darkness. Sometimes there

can be a song in the heart even when it is breaking. At other times, the sound of the crashing pieces is too loud to hear the melody. Sometimes the pain and sadness are in the tears for all to see. Sometimes they are known only to Him to be shared with one of us in His soft, still voice. Sometimes He sends a touch. Sometimes He sends me.

Am I the person I once was? Not yet. Not completely. Do I want to be? Not entirely. Lord, forgive me for being judgmental. Forgive me for being so ready to quote scripture and so hesitant to move in its power. The Word never leaves us and will wait until it can be understood. Help me to be there when You send me. Help me to be an advocate for those who have no voice. Help me to love. Help me to pray. Help me to see. Help me to listen. Help me to touch. With warmth, with quietness, with gentleness. With Your awesome power.

I am Becky Roberson. §



Becky and Steve Roberson (See Money Matters page 6) holding Ellie & Millie Rose have attended Metro for 26 years and are both in the choir. Becky is a church nursery worker, artist, and math teacher. Steve is a church elder, hiker, and photographer.

“WHERE YOUR HEART IS” continued from page 1

This Greek work for “set” (*frone*) carries with it the idea to “adopt this view,” “have this attitude,” or “seek these things.”

Another verse that slides right into this way of thinking is Matthew 6:21, “*For where your heart is, that is where your treasure is also.*” A more liberal translation found framed on many kitchen walls might be, “Home is where the heart is.”

Now, you may be surprised to know that this article is NOT about money. No, I want us to talk about our hearts. Has your heart found its home?

Over my lifetime I have lived in nine states and moved in and out of 23 homes and two college dormitories. I attended seven different schools before graduating from high school. I cannot tell you how many churches I have attended in my earlier years, since it was my father’s call to plant churches, but what I can tell you is that with some moves it was easier than with others to lay down my heart and make it home. Always though, by the end of the assignment, parting was such sweet sorrow, the uprooting of my heart from one place to transplant it in another. With such a transitional upbringing, it is easy to understand why my “need” for a house that represents me has become something about which both my husband and myself are only too aware.

I don’t think I’m that different though than most women. Indeed our homes can easily reflect our style and personality. They often provide security ... not just mon-

etary provision ... but the security that comes when we have a place for free expression and creativity, for storing and surrounding ourselves with things that hold memories and exhibit priorities, for building life and love, for sharing and giving acceptance, for planting the seeds of dreams today and staying around long enough to eat of their fruit tomorrow ... for all the things that make a house a home. For all these reasons, it is easy for us to say, “Home is where the heart is.” Hopefully, home is everything and



everyone we love; and although we know our homes are not some perfectly canvassed Norman Rockwell or Currier and Ives painting, such knowledge does not keep us from continually brushing, stroking, and perfecting our own would-be masterpiece.

So, in our good and noble intentions, could it be possible that we have so focused our lives on what we are painting here of our earthly home that we have, without really meaning to do so, set our affections on it rather than on our eternal home? Have we fluffed and plushed here so much that it has become easier to lay down our hearts where we will not even spend a century than where we will spend an eternity? A simple evaluation would conclude that if we are building today for tomorrow, should we not be

building in the place where we will be spending most of “tomorrow”?

I am afraid that we, as Christian women, have been spending too much energy on our earthly “homes” and have neglected making heart-deposits in our eternal home. I am only too aware of my own heart ... that it wants to grow shorter roots in the here and now than the longer ones it takes for reaching a seemingly distant heaven.

I am also cut to the core with the words of my Savior, “*The greatest command is to love the Lord with all of your heart*” (Mark 12:30). I would never consider my home here on this earth a place apart from my husband or children. Home is where they are! Why

then does my heart not yearn for where He is—the lover of my soul, the one who exchanged His life for mine? Amazingly, it is He that is again demonstrating a yearning love for me in that He has temporarily left me in order to build me my dream home ... better stated, a home (in every meaning of the word) where my dreams will come true! He has left word for me: “*I go to prepare a place for you. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*” (John 14:1-3). Can you hear Him? He loves me ... He loves me ... He loves me!

So again I ask, “Has your heart found its home?” May we live like we can’t wait to get home! **§**

What is it that makes us lose the motivation to work toward our goals? Right now it seems easy. But later on, it seems so hard. I'm thinking about that this year while it's still easy. I'm hoping to get a handle on why I slack off so that maybe, just maybe, I won't do it this year.

Of course it's not just a New Year's thing, and it doesn't happen only in those two areas. It seems to happen in just about every area of my life: teaching, keeping up with chore charts, cooking, getting up early to read the Bible and pray, sending birthday cards and thank-you notes, trying not to nag my husband, exercising, whatever. There's a honeymoon period, in which whatever I'm trying to do is easy and almost fun. Usually I'll experience some success and feel good about myself, and I'll think, yeah, I can do this. Then down the road, at some unknown and unanticipated point, I'll hit a wall.

In my life, and maybe in yours, this wall seems to take one of two forms. One is complacency. I'm feeling good, I'm down a few pounds and people are starting to compliment me, or I'm ahead in my schoolwork, and then I start feeling like, I don't have to work quite so hard, I can give myself a break. And then my "break" goes on and on until I feel so unmotivated that I give up. I am a classic "hare" in the "tortoise and the hare" story. I start strong but never finish, or I race over the finish line at the last minute in a roaring panic.

The other wall I often hit is discouragement. I slip up, therefore I'm a failure, therefore why bother? It's not a logical train of thought, but it's a train I board quite often nonetheless.

Discouragement and complacency. Hmm. In other words, the two things that cause me to slack off in my goals are: failure ... and success.

So what, you're asking yourself, is the solution? How can I avoid the pitfalls of discouragement and complacency and reach my goals? Well, I don't know. But I have been thinking about it a good bit lately, and here's what I've come up with:

1. Have a concrete, realistic goal, and write it down.

2. Have a practical plan, and write that down too.

3. Have an accountability partner, and don't stop checking in, even when you "fail." My mom and I are both doing Weight Watchers, and we check in with each other almost every day.

4. Don't rely on feelings, or what I call "motivation." I tend to only do the things that I feel motivated to do (i.e., feel like doing). Then when those positive, energetic feelings fade or are replaced by negative feelings of inertia, I give up. But just like in marriage, when the honeymoon is over, I have to rely on something bigger and less fickle than my feelings.

5. Be level-headed when you experience success. I may have made a good start, but I still have a long way to go. If I settle for less than my goal because I've accomplished part of it, I'm just cheating myself.

6. When you experience failure, give yourself a break. But not too much of a break. If you fail, and you will fail at times, treat yourself with grace. Even God rested from His labors. Give yourself a little break ... and then get back on the wagon. I teach English, and I sup-

pose I do have a student every once in a while who is as dumb as a brick. However, 99% of the people who fail my class do so because they just stop showing up for class. I imagine this is true in almost everything: true failure only happens when someone gives up. The key to success is not perfection. It's persistence.

7. Ultimately, I must learn to depend on God, not on myself.

The Bible says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." The Bible also says, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." If I want my life to bear real and lasting fruit—if I want to see results in my life that are much more valuable than a slim body or an organized closet—I must learn to abide in the Vine.

Perhaps the most beautiful and inspiring scripture I know is Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." I know how far I can get relying on my own strength and my own motivation. But His strength is limitless. If I will put Him first, He will put the best goals in my heart, and give me the strength to accomplish them.

Father, thank You that Your love is not dependent on our accomplishments, but it is completely unconditional. Help us to have the goals You want us to have in order to grow in You and to bless others. Help us to be disciplined, but also to treat ourselves with grace, just as You treat us. Thank You that You always provide the strength to do everything You call us to do. In Jesus' name, Amen. S

HOUSEHOLD HINTS: TWO OF THE GREATEST GIFTS TO GIVE YOUR CHILDREN

5



By Chrissy Skelton

1. Spend quiet time with God.

Have you ever lain down at night feeling exhausted, brain-dead, and overwhelmed? Or perhaps, you lie awake wondering why the day went by so fast and you never got a chance to fold the laundry that still sits wrinkled on your living room chair. Maybe at night you carry burdens to bed about news a doctor gave you in regards to your child and are wondering how to deal with it. Jesus says, "In this life, we will have trouble..." How are you coping?

I have tried several ways to cope with the major troubles that life can bring and the minor setbacks of our daily routines. Although books, sermons, and friends can give us wonderful advice, I've found God speaking in a still small voice: "But Chrissy,

I have the best advice! My ways are higher and better. I see the big picture. I am for you and not against you. I am your HEALER. I can be your teacher, parent, and friend!" WOW! How easy it is to forget what a rich and loving father we have in Jesus Christ. Matthew 11:28-30 says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

So often, we get so busy that we forget to just STOP and sit at the Father's feet. He wants to lead us in the decisions we make for our children, and more importantly, He wants a personal relationship with us. It is amazing how giving God just five minutes of my day makes

such a difference. Rise early and ask God to speak to you about your day. Ask him to guide you. Pray that God will help you not explode or lose it throughout the day. I have found that through spending time with God He develops more character and good fruit in our lives. How wonderful it is that your children will reap the benefits of the time you've spent with God. In return we will be better mothers and wives because we are being changed daily and renewed by the one true thing that can fulfill us: Jesus Christ.

2. Invest in your spouse.

Remember the honeymoon days? How little responsibility we had back then and so much time for one another! When children come into the picture it changes everything!

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MONEY MATTERS: MY HOPES FOR THIS RECESSION

By Steve Roberson

I know of no one who has not been impacted by the economic turmoil of the past two years. Jobs have been lost, retirement funds have been decimated, college funds have disappeared. The impact goes on and on. Character is revealed during trying times and we have the opportunity to find out what we are made of. What will we learn? Will our priorities change? Will we look back and say we answered the call to be all that God intended? The article below was written by Todd Harper as he reflects on these trying times. I hope you find it meaningful in your walk.

*God Bless,
Steve Roberson*

My Hopes for This Recession

By Todd Harper
President of Generous Giving

This recession has been difficult for me and many of my friends. Nearly anyone with any assets has lost money as asset values have fallen, and in many cases fallen precipitously. I don't like losing money. It creates anxiety and fear in me. I do not like to experience these emotions. This experience has caused me to reflect on where I am placing my hope. Am I placing my hope for a secure future in my retirement assets, college funds, or home value? The sad reality is that I am. To the degree I am experiencing anxiety and fear, I am not living out the truth



of 1 Timothy 6:17. *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment”* (author's emphasis, not Timothy's).

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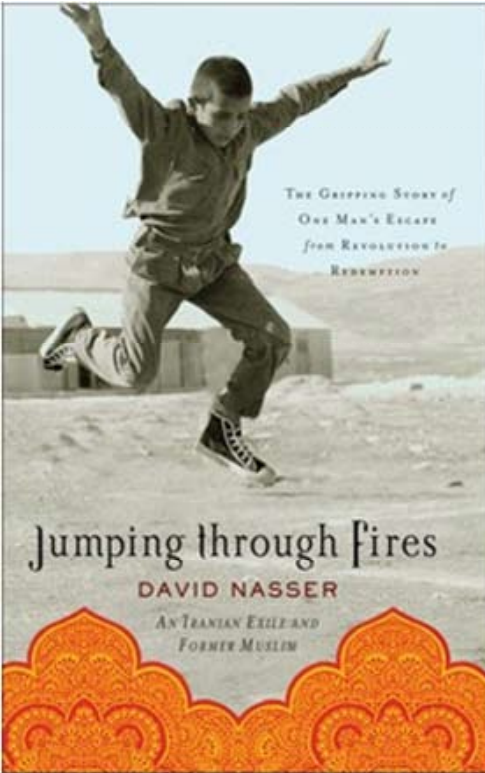
TWO OF THE GREATEST GIFTS *continued from page 5*

Yes, they are a blessing from God but it can be very easy to create an atmosphere in the home that completely centers on the children, and the marriage can easily get put on the back burner. One day we wake up and realize we don't know our spouse anymore. We wonder why so many of our friends are getting a divorce. Relationships take time, energy and work. Second to our relationship with God, our spouses should be receiving the most of our investments. I want to challenge you throughout this lovey dovey month to make time for your spouse. Go on a date at least twice a month. It is HEALTHY and OK to take a break from your kids. Don't allow your budget to be an excuse. You can always go out for coffee or dessert or just take a walk

at the park. I realize babysitters are expensive, but you can also make time for each other without ever leaving the house! By golly, set the alarm if you have to and wake up before the children! Have a cup of coffee together so that you can actually communicate without any interruptions. If you're not a morning person, you can put your kids on a schedule so that EVERY night you can put your kids to sleep and have uninterrupted time with your spouse. My personal favorite time of the day is after we put the kids to bed. I finally get to have my husband all to myself! This is a wonderful time to connect. We talk about our day, serious and not so serious stuff... ust communicate. Sometimes we watch TV or pray. Just do what works for you. Some of you

may think I am over the top with my schedule, but I promise you that I am able to be a better mother and wife because of it! **S**

Chrissy Skelton has been married eight years to Metro's Children Pastor Derrick. They had three children in 32 months: Ella Grace, 3 years; Hudson, 22 months; Sadie Kate, 6 months. Chrissy has undergraduate and master's degrees in Special Education. Prior to moving to Birmingham, she taught elementary, middle, and high school students for six years. Now she stays at home with her three children and also serves part-time as Metro's Nursery Director. She has a passion for children, broken homes, families, and people in general.



BOOK REVIEW: JUMPING THROUGH FIRES by David Nasser

Reviewed by Rebecca Tibbs

It was after small group on a Monday night. I walked next door to Barnes and Noble and browsed the Christian book selections. I had only heard of David Nasser once before, from a friend who goes to church with him at Hunter Street. She said she heard him give his testimony and it was amazing! After that short conversation, I didn't give David Nasser much thought again until I came across this book.

I know the title probably caught my attention, but learning that he had converted from Islam to Christianity sparked my interest even more. How could this have happened? What was said to him to turn him to the truth?

Moreover, my limited experience with other belief systems challenged me to wonder how I would ever help lead someone of another faith to Christ, especially after witnessing my husband
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HOPE FOR THE RECESSION continued from page 6

My hope for this recession is that I would more fully live out the truth in God's word. That instead of putting my hope in wealth, I would truly put my hope in God. In applying God's teaching to my life, there is the promise of peace, contentment, and joy. My prayer for this recession is that millions of God's people would be liberated from finding security in what is insecure and temporal and put their hope in the One who is truly trustworthy!

But how do I make trusting God a reality in my own life? Paul continues this passage in I Timothy 6:18 with a clear answer: "Command then to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" (NIV).

Giving is the surest way to reorient my perspective from hoping in the temporal to placing my faith in the eternal. It is a specific action I can take to demonstrate my faith

in God's provision for my needs. It takes the focus off of myself and places it on others.

One of my friends, who works in the financial industry, recently shared with me how he was struggling with anxiety about his finances. As a result he and his wife had backed off of their giving. He continued to battle fear and anxiety. Finally, they wrote some checks to ministries that they cared about. He called me shortly after putting the checks in the mail describing the peace, contentment, and joy he was experiencing.

Imagine what the world would be like if this recession encouraged millions of Christ followers to begin to place less hope in their wealth and begin to place their hope in God more fully, thus freeing them to be generous on every occasion. Paul continues in verse 19 explaining the truth of God's heart for us:

Giving frees us to experience the life that is truly life!

VERSE: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth." (Proverbs 27:1)

THOUGHT: Humility about the future! We don't control tomorrow. At other times in our lives we may have taken tomorrow for granted; not so anymore. Tomorrow may not come. Tomorrow something horrible could happen. Tomorrow everything we possess could be gone. In the face of these discouraging possibilities, is there anything positive we can hold onto? Absolutely! We know that God holds tomorrow in His hands. We know that because our life is hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col. 3:1-4) our tomorrow is secure. It might not be what we expect. It might not go as we planned. But it will go as God determines and it will end up with us sharing in His comfort, victory, and glory. **S**

band desperately trying to share the truth with a dear friend who was raised as a Mormon, but to no avail.

This book was interesting to me from page one. It's a quick read that gets you hooked from the start. This book offers a couple of things. First, it is an autobiography of how this little boy comes to America and adjusts to life in a different culture. Secondly, it thrilled me to see how God works through different people's lives to reach someone for His glory, but not only that, how God's grace was woven into David Nasser's life from the beginning.

My hope for this book is that people will read it and re-examine

their lives and how they are loving the people around them. If I had enough money, I'd buy everyone in our youth group one and get them to discuss the book. These youth from Shades Mountain Baptist who reached out to David were persistent and straightforward without being judgmental. This is what the Church and Christianity are all about.

This book left me hoping that I can be more aware of the lost around me and see the needs of those that are in my circle of influence. David Nasser's testimony is one that will remind us all how far God will bring you to make you His own. **S**



Drew and Rebecca have been at Metro since 2003. They are very involved in the music department, Sunday School, and small groups. They have two boys, Jonah, 11 and J. Edward, 7. Rebecca attended Lee College for two years and then transferred to the University of Montevallo, where she earned a degree in speech pathology. She loves following the weather and being on the computer.

HAGGAI Project

Wednesday February 10 • 6:30 pm
Focus on Gifting

Sunday February 21
Ministry Team Fair

February 24 – March 31
Ministry Team Community Building
& Training Groups

*If you have not taken the Spiritual Discovery,
please e-mail haggai@metroco.org*

Women's Bible Studies for 2010

WORKING WOMEN

Tuesdays | 6:30 p.m. | L213

Study the Bible with Sherry Thomas and discover that it works! shthomasattorney@aol.com

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Thursdays | 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. | L113

Sharon Mayeux facilitates this updated version of Breaking Free by Beth Moore.

WOMEN OF GRACE

Thursdays | 9:30 a.m.

Lois Adcock is leading Beth Moore's study of "Esther." Questions? E-mail Kay Wildman at wild7228@aol.com.

"A WOMAN'S HEART: God's Dwelling Place"

Sundays | 5:30–7 pm | C014

Beth Moore has "revisited" her very first Bible study, "A Woman's Heart: God's Dwelling Place," on the Old Testament tabernacle. E-mail Kay Dick at kdick@shelbyed.k12.al.us.

Together on Planet Mom

MOPS Meeting
Monday, February 8
9 – 11:30 am, Metro Commons
Speakers: Joe & Sharon Mayeux
Activity: Date Night Boxes

Metro Church

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