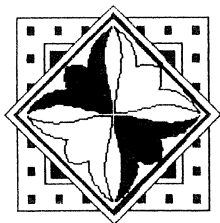


**GOD'S CALL: FROM
INFILLING TO
OUTPOURING**

**Sermons by Wesleyan/Holiness
Women Preachers**



Margaret Dunn, Editor

**Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, Inc.
c/o Messiah College
Grantham, PA 17027**

copyright © 2000 by Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy

Contents

Foreword	iv
Resting: Time with God	1
Commissioner Kay Rader	
Reflecting: Tune into God	11
Rev. Enriquita “Kits” Monencillo	
Reaching Out: Speak Out for God	19
Rev. Janine Tartaglia Metcalf	
Responding: Obey God	30
Rev. Dr. Diana L. Swoope	
Contributors	41

Foreword

The contributors preached these sermons at the second international Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy Conference in Indianapolis, April 11-14, 1996. The conference theme was "God's Call: From Infilling to Outpouring."

We published these sermons because they deserve a broader audience. The illustration of the women building steps in a hill because they couldn't go around it, the story of the Shunammite woman and personal testimony are all memorable.

Thanks go to the contributors who helped translate their sermons from oral to written form. Thanks, also, to Betty Ruth Tippin who proofread the manuscript. Special thanks to Margaret Dunn who assumed the editorial responsibilities for this booklet.

May these sermons inspire you as they did their hearers in 1996.

For copies of this booklet or other booklets in our series, contact me at the address listed below. Bulk prices are available.

Susie C. Stanley
Series Editor
Convener
Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy, Inc.
c/o Messiah College
Grantham, PA 17027
sstanley@messiah.edu

Resting: Time with God Commissioner Kay Rader

Almost immediately following my husband's election to the office of General in July 1994, I became aware of how dramatically both his and my life would be altered by this turn of events. The Salvationists here will tell you: "As goes the General's schedule, so goes the General's wife's schedule." Of the various expectations concerning the office of the General, one appears to be set in cement: *Generals do travel*.

Therefore, when I saw the topic "Resting: Time with God," I was convinced that God really does have a sense of humor. What could I possibly say about resting?

You see, I had assumed that there would be time with God following the elections—I would see to that! However as September swept into October, October sailed into November, and November into December, I became increasingly aware of the demands of this new lifestyle—a lifestyle over which I had very little control.

During our first three months in England, we located an apartment (a flat), moved our belongings and ourselves into the flat, traveled to three continents, and visited seven countries. In addition to joint responsibilities, I found myself on a solo mission to Rwanda in order to check on The Salvation Army relief operations there. Meanwhile, back in London, life whirled around us like a tornado as we began learning new jobs, new faces, names, phone numbers, banking and health systems, and much more (not to mention learning how to drive on the left-hand side of the road!).

1995 proved to be even more intense. The more I move from airport to airport, suitcase to suitcase, preparation to preparation, meeting to meeting, the more I realize just how crucial is this matter of resting: how intensely significant is the matter of time with God.

Isn't it amazing how well God knows our struggles? He never leaves us stranded in airports—or anywhere else. In the Book of Hebrews, chapter four, a word from the Lord to me—to you: "*There is a rest for the people of God.*" Finding it becomes our problem.

Perhaps you will identify with me when I say that I often come to the water in order to have my spiritual water jars refilled, and, like the

woman of Samaria, I find Jesus there (and he was there taking a rest, you know), but also, like the Samaritan woman, I assume Jesus has no bucket. John 4:11 (Good News Bible) says, "Sir, you have not a bucket. And the well is deep. Where would you get that living water?" The Good News Bible is well known for its illustrative sketches. The 1976 edition included a sketch for John, chapter four, that pictured Jesus sitting beside the well and at the end of the well rope is a bucket. That particular edition is known as the "bucket Bible." In subsequent editions, the bucket was removed from the picture.

In my opinion they should have kept it, because the meaning of the scripture is found neither in the presence nor the absence of the bucket. The point is the woman's assumption concerning the bucket.

How often we come before the Lord seeking rest, only to find ourselves facing Jesus who offers us life-giving water, water to quench the thirst forever, water to satisfy the thirsty soul, and we, like the Samaritan woman, say, "But sir, you have not a bucket and the well is deep."

Oswald Chambers calls this, "*inferior misgivings*." "We know exactly what we cannot do," he writes, "but we do have misgivings about Jesus. We are rather hurt by the idea, that He *can* do what we *cannot*" (57).

Having finished a business meeting with members of staff in my husband's office recently, one of the members was asked to close the meeting in prayer. We bowed our heads and he prayed, "Father, we rest before you."

A SABBATH-REST

Hebrews 4:1-13 is about God's promise of rest for the people of God. It is called a Sabbath-rest because it is their (or our) participation in God's own rest. Commentator F. F. Bruce says, "One way or another, this blissful rest in unbroken fellowship with God is the goal to which his people are urged to press forward. Professor of Systematic Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary, Dr. Laurence Wood, says: "The idea of the promised rest found in Hebrews 4 lends itself to the symbol of the perfect Christian life of exclusive worship and love for God."

Discovering the secret of entering into unbroken fellowship, this blissful rest, or exclusive worship and love for God, will help us tonight

as we consider this subject, “Resting: Time with God.”

Hebrews 4:1-5 being one of the problematic texts of the New Testament, biblical scholars and commentators explore every possible avenue of meaning. In most cases, their conclusion, in plain sense and language, is “The good news of this promise—this Sabbath-rest—has to be appropriated and assimilated by faith if it is to bring any benefit to the hearers.” Here lies the precise problem: *The Appropriation and the Assimilation of the promise.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke of mothers creating a “world within a world”; when they create homes for their children. Here God creates “rest within a rest.” A peace in the eye of the storm; tranquillity in the midst of turmoil. You and I must enter his Sabbath-rest—the rest of God. We must become participants in God’s own rest. But all too often we are held back by that which held the Children of Israel back—*Unbelief and Disobedience.*

One of the phenomena of our modern world that never ceases to intrigue me (those primarily affected being women), is the hauling of water. Even in our modern world, millions of gallons of water are borne on the heads, backs or the shoulders of millions of women. Often a simple solution seems obvious, but far more often lies well beyond the reach of the burden bearers. To an American, a dry tap simply means we must call the water department, or the plumber, or the nearest fix-it person (oneself, perhaps!). Not so these women. They don’t know the luxury of options. Hauling water falls into the same category as other curses placed upon them by virtue of them being born female.

Two Salvation Army leaders from Africa are here with us this evening. We were together in Zimbabwe recently for a conference last January where we heard the story of another of our colleagues. She was from East Africa. Her name is Leunita. As a young girl, it was her duty, one with which she faithfully complied, to fetch water every day for the family. The watering hole was not only a long distance from the village, it was located at the foot of a very high hill. So the girls had to climb down the hill, fill their water pots, and then struggle up again. But they discovered a solution—a way to alleviate their suffering. They cut steps into the side of the hill. How they rejoiced over those steps, Leunita told us—steps to the top! A stairway to rest.

John Wesley was convinced that this rest spoken of here in Hebrews

4, came as a result of what he called a “single eye and a pure heart.” “God coming to those that fear him,” said Wesley, “and fixing his abode (as we would say taking up residence) in their souls, bring them into the rest which remains for the people of God” (Wood). *God shows us how to carve out the steps to the top.*

“Lord, I believe a rest remains to all those people known,” wrote John Wesley. “A rest where pure enjoyment reigns and Thou art loved alone. Where doubt and pain and fear expire, cast out by perfect love. To me the rest of faith impart, the Sabbath of Thy love” (26-27).

What are the steps to the Sabbath-rest? One psychologist said: “Rest is found in what *is*, never in what ought to be.”

Hidden there in that hillside in Africa were the steps that Leunita and her friends carved for themselves. The stairway leading upward. They just needed to appropriate the provision— and then, putting one foot before the other, climb to the top.

The writer to the Hebrews leads us to the steps, the first of which is found in chapter 4, verse 3, “Now, we who have believed enter that rest...” The Amplified New Testament has it this way: “We who have believed, adhered to, trusted, and relied on God, do enter that rest.”

I. This is an attainable rest. It is not beyond our reach.

Peace comes in resting in God’s unconditional love for us. “True peace,” wrote Catherine Booth, “divine peace, the only peace that will do to die with arises out of a settlement of our differences and a cessation of hostilities toward God, and reconciliation with God, bringing assurance and quietness in view of the past, present, and the future.”

As we carve out the steps to Sabbath-rest, we look at verse 7, chapter 4, and rejoice that:

II. This rest, too, is available.

“Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today...” (4:7). It is a new day and God gives another opportunity of securing that rest. Here is made clear the superiority of Jesus to Joshua. This mention of rest was not a reference to those whose bodies fell in the desert (you’ll find that in chapter 3, verse 17); not a reference to their entering into Canaan—“For if Joshua had given them rest,” (verse eight) “God would not speak later of another day,” as he did to the psalmist in Psalm 95:11 (reference to

this is found in verse 7). This rest is available, and it is available—now.

The third step is found in verse 9. Our attention is drawn to these words, “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God” (NIV). The Amplified reads: “So, *then*, there is still awaiting a full and complete Sabbath-rest, reserved for the people of God.”

III. This rest is undeniable

New Testament scholar, lecturer Donald Guthrie, points to the possessive aspect of God here. “He delights to call the believers his people,” says Guthrie. “God’s people share his rest. What he did, they do. By identifying with him they enter into his experiences. There is no doubt that the writer is implying that the believer’s present rest is as much reality as God’s rest. Not some remote hope, but a hope that is immediately realizable. So, then, there still awaits a Sabbath-rest, reserved for the true people of God.”

A former leader of The Salvation Army, General Freiderich Coutts describes the Sabbath-rest in this way. He says: “It is experiencing God’s infinite succor before we can face in his strength his infinite demand.” He goes on, “Restless souls frequently know a great deal about God’s demand, but little of His succor.”

In her book Walking on Water, Madeleine L’Engle writes:

... there is time in which to be—simply to be—that time in which God quietly tells us who we are and who He wants us to be. It is then that God can take our emptiness and fill it up with what He wants and drain away the business with which we inevitably get involved in the dailyness of human living.

There is an exposure to God that renders us powerless to keep going as we are. We must seek the next step. Here it is in verse 11.

IV. The realization that this rest is *within our grasp*.

In other words, don’t miss it! “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience” (4:11). We are to be zealous—to exert ourselves—to strive diligently to enter into this rest of God. If we are to find that “rest with a rest,” we are to know and to experience it for ourselves.

Twelve years into missionary experience, I had lost all hope of ever knowing this Sabbath-rest. I couldn’t see the bucket. Stuck on the banks

of the Jordan, to my mind, nothing seemed more remote than this rest. Struggle had become the name of the game. No steps carved in the side of the hill and no way to carve them. Nestle was out, wrestle was in. Preoccupied with the personal Mt. Everest of frustration, nagging feelings of injustice, particularly in relationship to my role as a married woman officer, wife, and mother of three children, I became spiritually paralyzed by fear and doubting. Strangely enough, because this spiritual slump of mine came at a time when the Christian churches of Korea were experiencing what was described as “an explosion of the Holy Spirit,” I was hit by a “holy hand grenade”—friendly fire—which fell right into our front room where I was sitting — having an encounter with the living God, earnestly exerting myself to enter into this promised rest. Determined to stay there until rest came, even if it meant staying the night, I could have borrowed a prayer by hymn writer Timothy Dudley-Smith:

Come, oh thou traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold but cannot see.
With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak.
Be conquered by my instant prayer.
Speak or thou hence shall move,
And tell me if thy name is love.
‘Tis love. ‘Tis love. Thou diedst for me.
I hear thy whisper in my heart.

At last the truth of God’s word came to my heart—that God’s “today” still exists and the promise is still open—(the final appeal of Hebrews, chapter 4) broke through to me. The urgency of His word—“Today does not last forever”—became unmistakably clear. In that moment I knew the promise could be missed and I was close to missing it. “Therefore,” says the writer to the Hebrews, “here and now through faith, enter into the very rest of God.”

Mine was an instant prayer. A prayer of four words: “Lord, this is it!” Instantly I knew rest. Rest from myself, rest from preoccupation with nonessentials—trivia; rest from depression, rest from self-inflicted stress. Through faith and with the help of Galatians 2:20, I claimed the “Today” of Hebrews 4:7. It was my day. D-Day. Deliverance from doubt, disbelief, and disobedience. I was no longer blind to the bucket whether it was visible to the eye or not. In that moment I, too, could rejoice over the steps cut into the hill. From then on I knew that the burdens would

never be the same.

Indeed, from that moment there would be no time-outs with God. I knew I could find my rest in his unconditional love. And He has never failed me even during times of greatest stress.

There is pressure on the Sabbath-side, you know. Mine, yours. There are ministerial stressors. Peace comes in resting in God's unconditional love for us. Ed Boshman in Faith Today magazine listed some of the greatest stressors facing ministers today:

- ongoing minor squabbles and differences, such as, problems in the congregation resurfacing and demanding our attention again and again
- disunity in the congregation
- lack of adequate volunteers. Overextension of ourselves
- dry spiritual life
- Then, of course, gossip.

In the March 27, 1996 London Times, Ruth Gledall, Religion Correspondent, adds to the list: "Eighty percent of clergy complain of working abnormal hours and say it is making a misery of their home lives. Nearly 60 percent say they have no social life, 80 percent say the abnormal hours they work are a cause of marital tension and that their homes lives are suffering because of this stress."

Ministerial work is not a nine-to-five job. And the glorification of rest is not intended to imply that work is therefore a misfortune, either. You and I are hard workers—we will remain hard workers. We work hard and hard work often results in pressure and stress.

Pastor and author Michel Quoist prays,
Lord, here we are, out of breath, out of courage, and almost out of hope. Caught between the infinity of our desires and the limitation of our means, we're tossed about, torn, pulled here and there, confused, and exhausted. So, Lord, here we are, finally still and finally ready to listen. Lord, make us strong enough to do what we should do, calmly, simply. Help us, above all, to find you in our commitments. You are the wellspring and all things are drawn to you. So we have come before you, Lord, to rest and to gather our strength.

Rest Within Rest!

We are to anticipate these—peace, joy and concord—even in the midst of pressure, if we have entered into the Sabbath-rest. Being on the

Sabbath-side of rest puts pressure in its place—in the hands of God. God has given a rest to his people. Our part is to be careful lest anyone be found to have fallen short of it (Hebrews 4:1). We must beware lest we think we have arrived too late in history ever to enjoy the rest of God. There is a story about a child, on being told some of the great Old Testament stories, who said wistfully, “God was much more exciting then.”

We have a continual tendency to look back, to believe God’s power has grown less and to believe the golden days lie behind. The good old days of the holiness camp meetings when people testified with boldness about the Sabbath-rest of God. Hebrews 4:9—“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God. . . Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest.”

Enter in a spirit of one who prayed,
“Give me full joy and peace, eternal inward rest.
Lead me to Calvary’s holy feast.
There let my soul be blessed” (Pearson).

Or this prayer:

As pants the hart for cooling streams
when heated in the chase,
So longs my soul, oh Lord, for Thee,
and Thy refreshing grace.
For Thee, my God, the living God,
my thirsty soul doth pine.
Oh, when shall I behold Thy face,
Thou majesty divine?
Why restless? Why cut down, my soul?
Hope still and Thou shalt sing the praise of Him
Who is Thy God, Thy health eternal spring (Tate).

Perhaps tonight you want to pray the prayer of John Wesley: “to me the rest of faith impart. To me impart the Sabbath-rest of Thy love” (26 -27).

In chapter four, the writer to the Hebrews leaves us at the throne of grace. Ultimately it is there we find rest. In Jesus we receive all the strength we need to maintain our faith and to resist the temptation to let go and fall back.

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

“Let us make every effort to enter that rest of God.”

Let us pray.

So, Lord, here we are, finally still and finally ready to listen. Lord, make us strong enough to do what we should do, calmly and simply. Help us, above all, to find YOU in our commitments. YOU are the wellspring and all things are drawn to YOU. So we have come before you, Lord, to rest and to gather our strength. Amen.

Works Cited

Bruce, F. F. Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, chapter IV, "The True Rest of God May be Forfeited."

Catherine Booth, Her Continuing Relevance. Essays edited by Clifford W. Kew. London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters.

Chambers, Oswald. My Utmost for His Highest. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1935.

Coutts, Freiderich. Commentary on the New Testament. London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters.

Dudley-Smith, Timothy. Someone Who Beckons: Daily Readings and Prayers. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Gledall, Ruth. London Times: March 27, 1996.

Guthrie, Donald. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Hebrews. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960.

L'Engle, Madeleine. Walking on Water, Reflections on Faith and Art. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980.

Pearson, William James. Songbook of the Salvation Army song #431, London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters

Quoist, Michel. Prayers. Translated by Agnes Forsyth and Anne Marie de Commaille. New York: Avon Books, 1963.

Tate, Nahum. Songbook of the Salvation Army song #557, London: The Salvation Army International Headquarters

Wesley, John. A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. London: The Epworth Press, 1970.

Wood, Laurence. Pentecostal Grace. Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Publishing Company, Inc., 1980.

Reflecting: Tune into God
Rev. Enriquita "Kits" Monencillo

Before I begin this evening, may I sing to you a song, one of the old favorites which defines beautifully our omnipotent God in Psalm 139:

When I go to sleep at night, behold, Thou art there,
When I rise to morning light, behold, Thou art there,
Upon the troubled, stormy sea or in the busy crowded street,
Lord, wherever I may be, behold Thou art there.

Thou art there, Thou art there.

I know you really love me, Lord,

I know you really care.

If I'm on the mountain so high or in the valley so low,
This is one thing I surely know—behold, Thou art there.

In the quiet place of prayer, behold, Thou art there,
When my burdens are so hard to bear, behold, Thou art there.

In the midst of loneliness or when my heart is happier,
For my heart is surely blest, for, Lord, Thou art there.

Thou art there, Thou art there.

I know you really love me, Lord,

I know you really care.

If I'm on the mountain so high or in the valley so low,
This is one thing I surely know—behold, Thou art there.

Yes, my life is truly blessed, for, Lord, Thou art there.

As I was introduced this evening it was mentioned that my church has a local FM radio station in Bunawan, Agusan del Sur, the only radio station in that community. It broadcasts from five o'clock until nine o'clock each morning. My program is from 6:30 until 7:30 and it is divided into three parts. The first part is called reflection and you see in your brochure, my topic "Reflecting: Tune into God." It's just a coincidence, is it not? So I preach for about 20 to 25 minutes, then followed by health reminders, and then the third part is morning greetings for all those people around. I enjoy my program, but I need to prepare at least eight sermons every week. It's hard work, but I love it.

But the radio station is only 10 kilowatts. You can just imagine, it's a very poor one. Anyway, it's broadcasting in the community. So when the current is low, the signal is poor, and when there are distractions such as when my dog comes inside the radio room, or

children are playing outside, or someone knocks at the door, I need to tune in. Because those other FM stations will take my program, so I must adjust it. We try to look at ourselves as ministers of God—we've been called by God, haven't we? And as we reflect on our past and present circumstances or situations, let's make sure we are tuned in with God.

This evening, I will be bringing to you a topic, "Reflecting: Tune into God," with three major divisions. The Scripture is found in Romans, chapter eight, verses 35-39.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

Praise the Lord.

Reflecting: Life in the Spirit

The first thing we need to consider this evening is reflecting a life in the Spirit. Our theme is "Come to the Water" . . . infilling and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As Wesleyan/Holiness ministers, we must ask "What does holiness mean?" We are always saying life in the Spirit or life through the Spirit. As we read it beginning in verse seven it says,

The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you (Romans 8:7-11 NIV).

Reflecting a life in the Spirit. And what does Paul mean in saying this—when he wrote “life in the Spirit” in Romans 8:2? It means our mind accepts what the Spirit desires. We want to obey God’s will. We want to do just what He wants us to do. So the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to pray like this: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.” We always say, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). What does it mean? It does mean letting the Holy Spirit empower us, letting the Holy Spirit control our lives. That is holiness.

In the Philippines, some people say you are holy if you do not smile. That is a misconception. Some also think that when you are a holy person you do not wear shorts, you do not cut your hair, you do not wear slacks—that’s how they define it. But we believe that as we read in the Scriptures . . . it says, “If the Holy Spirit . . . is living in you” (Romans 8:11). And this is the favorite phrase of Saint Paul. When you read through his epistles you will always see “Christ in you” (Colossians 1:27, Romans 8:10) “in Christ.” (Colossians 1:28; 2:6, 10, 11). And so we find it here. If the Spirit of Christ is in you, if God’s Spirit is in you, that is life in the Spirit. Women of God, do we have the Spirit in us? There are lots of professing Christians today. And the thought might be that we’ll be speaking in tongues if we are filled by the Spirit of God, but we don’t really believe in that. What we believe is that when we ask the Holy Spirit to possess us, to control us, to be the King, the Lord, and the God of our lives and we are obedient to do His will, that is being in the Spirit. That is what Saint Paul is saying here.

So when we say “in Christ,” “Christ in you,” that is being controlled by the Spirit of God—letting God possess us, nothing less. That is why Paul says in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ.” We want to do His will completely. This is full surrender, complete surrender to the will of God. We also find that living a life in the Spirit means we have the assurance that we are children of God. And the Bible says that the Spirit in us cries, “*Abba, Abba*, Father” (Romans 8:15a). So if the Spirit of God is in us we can call Him “Daddy,” “Papa,” and in my dialect we call our father “tatay.” That is intimacy. We can call him our father, not because we are like this but because the Spirit is in us. So we are daughters and sons of God. Praise the Lord.

Reflecting: Living A Life of Faith

And reflecting is not only living a life in the Spirit. If we read through we see that we need to live a life of faith—reflecting—living a life of faith. Paul says in verse 28, “all things work together for good to

them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). You know what? This verse was quoted when my husband died. What is good in my husband’s death? I do not know. But I know there was something good behind it. I could not see it during that time but I know that all things work together for good to those—only to those who love God. And that is faith. If we love God, we know that He is here and we believe that He is in charge of us.

So suffering is being quoted here and being defined in verse 22 . . . we read what Paul says:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

(Romans 8:22 -23 NIV).

And if we back up a little bit, look at verse 17 and verse 18.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed, we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:17-18 NIV).

You know, as I think of all the sufferings I have experienced, I said, “Lord, is it really necessary?” But when I read this verse again and again it says, “If you want to become an heir, then you need also to share in his sufferings” (Romans 8:17). So I am not saying that it’s not necessary. That is not Paul’s words. He said we need to share. Indeed, we need to “share in his sufferings in order that we may share in His glory.” Praise the Lord.

But then what does he say? He says, “We are more than conquerors” (Romans 8:39). Who are those people? Those who love the Lord. Those who are filled by the Spirit of God. Scripture says:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? (What, then...) If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors (Romans 8: 31-33, 37 NIV).

So Paul is saying that the sufferings are there. You will experience sufferings, hardships, and many others but in all these—and I want to name all the sufferings that I have experienced. I have experienced financial shortages, perhaps you cannot relate with me—unpleasant attitudes of my parishioners against me; the brutal death of my husband; my daughter met an accident a year after my husband died, and my daughter's illness was diagnosed by the psychiatrist as chemical imbalance; and now I am on the special ministries, which I do not know what kind of ministry, So I have no job. I'll be going home from the US to I don't know. You know, I enjoy the song "Follow the leader." I said, "Well, Lord, You just lead. I will follow. I don't know where to go." That is a life of faith, my sisters and my brothers.

So when you reflect on your past and your present condition, you must live a life of faith so that you can tune in to God, or else if you will say, "Why did God do this to me?" You will just complain, and complain, and complain, and complain. When my husband died there were lots of people who said, "Oh, he is taken by the Lord." I said, "Oh, no, I don't think so. He is taken by the Lord, so what does it mean? He asked those five suspects, five criminals to kill my husband? That's not fair. I was presiding at a meeting for His Kingdom, I was doing my part, and God was asking somebody to kill my husband. That's unfair." But I said, "No, it's not. It's not the Lord who killed my husband, it's Satan." So I am still a friend of God—a friend forever. But then there was a time when it was really very hard to pray, very hard to read your Bible—when you're grieving. But do you know what? When you live a life of faith and the Spirit of Christ is in you, look at your Bible. In verse 26, "When we are weak, the Spirit of God intercedes for us" (Romans 8:26). And look at verse 34. It says, "Christ is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:34). So, the Holy Spirit, when we are too weak to pray, to get in tune with God, He will do it for us, He will take charge. You need not worry because you do not know how to pray. You know, that day—the hardest day to pray—the only prayer I uttered was, "Lord, help me. Lord, help me." One of my missionary friends told me, "You know, Kits, that was the greatest prayer you ever made." I think so. It helped a lot. This prayer soothed my heart and calmed my mind. People were amazed. They were talking how this widow was not really yelling and crying so loud like the others who lost their husbands. Tears were just falling, but not really, because my heart was so light. There was peace. Why? Because the Holy Spirit was interceding for me and Christ was also interceding for me.

So we need to live a life of faith in spite of all the sufferings, in spite of all the crises in life. We need not quit. My name is Kits. The original spelling is Q U I T S and you read it “quits,” isn’t it? And what does it mean to quit? Stop. Do not go on. Dr. Robert Cranston, one of my favorite missionaries in the Philippines, said, “Kits, you need not call your name ‘Quits.’ You are not a quitter.” I said, “Yes,” Because my real name is “Enriquita.” That’s a Spanish name. So my friends spell it Q U I T S for my nickname, so I decided to spell it like this—

K I T S—because I am not a quitter. Praise the Lord! I want to live a life of faith in spite of all the trials. Who shall separate us from the love of God? Death? Tribulation? Nakedness? Nothing can separate us. Nothing. In all these things we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:35-37 NIV). Why? Christ is in us. The Holy Spirit is in control. It is not because I am Kits that I can do it, but because the Holy Spirit is here. Praise the Lord. Hey, Kits, “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). I have been quoting this verse again and again, but now I can really relate myself to it. And in my own interpretation the Lord is saying, “Hey, Kits, you just sit back. Relax. I am in control anyway. Don’t you worry.” “Why this, Lord? This, Lord?” And you keep on whining. So let us reflect a life of faith for nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Reflecting: Living a Life of Hope

And the third one, and this will be the last, reflecting, living a life of hope. We share his sufferings. but then it says, “These sufferings cannot compare with the future of glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18 NIV). We have this hope and this hope originated from the fact that God loves us. Praise the Lord. Because I am His child, I call him my daddy, so why should I fear? I have that hope that I am secure in His hands and I am His heir, so though I don’t have money, I don’t have a house, perhaps I would line up my things on the street, but I am His heir. I need not worry. And the Holy Spirit and Jesus is interceding for me. He is with me. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). That’s our greatest hope, my dear sisters. We can rely on God. We can always rely on Him. He is in control. Nothing can separate us from His love. All these sufferings will not last. I really wanted to browse that book Storm Pass. Have you seen the book by Robert Schuller? Tough times don’t last, tough people do. So these sufferings will not last. Tough times will come, but we know the Spirit is in us and with us.

Joseph, the son of Jacob; the three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshack, and

Abednego; and Daniel stood the test because of their loyalty of their love for God, their devotion to God. They stood the test. They were able to overcome. They were overcomers. They were victorious. Why? Because they were in God's hands. And God was in control and He is still in control today and he will be in control tomorrow. "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). We keep on worrying about tomorrow. We do not know what is ahead. But we are sure that we are in his hands. He holds our tomorrows in His hands. Praise the Lord.

And in Hebrews, chapter 12, this is my second to the last verse that I will read to you. It says:

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12: 2-3 NIV).

So if it seems that your burden is overwhelming, you are wading through deep waters, you need to look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. He is the only source of your strength and power and everything—of your inspiration. Sometimes you want to talk to people but they do not understand. Sometimes they will misunderstand you and it will just add up to your problem. So you need not tell them. You need not tell them if it's really a heavy problem. You had better look up to Jesus. Tune in to God. Tell him, "Lord, this is enough. I cannot carry it anymore. This is too heavy for me." Just unload all your burdens to Jesus (I Peter 5:7).

And in James, chapter one, verse 12 it says, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." The storms may be too strong, may be very devastating. Maybe your trials are overwhelming, you cannot carry it by yourself. You need to tune in to God. Tell him. Just tell him, "Lord, here is my problem."

You know, when my daughter was diagnosed with a chemical imbalance—I said, "Lord, the ministerial appointment committee are saying, 'Kits, you need to go to another church.'" But I know it is not God's will for me to move. So I said, "No." And that is not disobedience anyway. I just feel it is not really God's will for me to move with this pressure. If this old church could not understand the situation, how much more for a new church? So I said, "Well Lord, I just leave it to you." So

I said, "I do not want to be appointed this time." But it does not mean that I don't want to do his will. So the bishop said, "You will be on a special ministries." But there's no job description anyway. It means no job description, no salary. So I keep thinking, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" And the Lord just keeps telling me, "Kits, after all these trials, I just want you to relax. Just relax, sit back, be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). I keep hearing this call: "I want you to minister to the ministers who are hurting." So this is a new call: "I want you to minister to the ministers who are hurting." *** So I said, "This is a promotion, Lord. And you will finance it." I need to get more training. So this morning I have been to the counseling session. I need to get more training for this. But the Lord is saying, "Yes, you can put up a clinic for counseling." And he assured me. So I said, "Yes, Lord, you lead the way. I will just follow."

So you pray for me, my sisters and my brothers. I do not know what is ahead, but I am sure that I am not out of touch with the love of God. Nothing can separate me from the love of God. Same with you.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God if the Spirit of God is in us and we have that assurance that God will lead the way through to the finishing line. Don't back up, don't quit. Go on and on. Just let the Lord lead the way and you follow, and I'm sure as you reflect on God and as you keep on tuning in to God you will receive more power—holy boldness—more power, more inspiration, more strength to do His will. And we are called by God to do it. So I hope that the Lord will bless us all. Whatever circumstances we may encounter in life, let us hold on to God. Just tune in to God. Don't just sit back and say, "No, Lord. I will quit." But just go on. Hang on. Look up to Jesus, the author and finisher of you faith, of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2). God bless you.

*** From 1996 - 1998, Kits taught module classes for pastors and lay leaders. Her experiences became a blessing to many of her students.

Reaching Out: Speak Out for God
Rev. Janine Tartaglia Metcalf

It is wonderful to attend a conference where they correctly pronounce your name. I have been called "Janine Tarantula," "Janine Tortilla," "Janine Tarantino," "Tortillini," you name it. Even Walter Cronkite has mispronounced my name. I received a call from the veteran anchorman while I was anchoring the local news in San Diego. Walter called because he was taping promotions for the CBS affiliate stations. In his low authoritative voice he asked, "Excuse me, how do you pronounce your name again?" and I said, "Tar-tell-ee-a." He said, "Tar-tell-ee-a?" I said, "Right." He said, "Fine!" And that was that until one day later when Walter's producer called. He sheepishly said, "We're so sorry. Mr. Cronkite's forgotten how you pronounce your name. Is it Tar-teg-fini?" "No," I replied, "it's Tar-tell-ee-a." Unfortunately, the producer had to call one more time. Right before the taping, he called just to make sure. "We're sorry, but Mr. Cronkite still can't remember how to pronounce your name. Isn't it Tar-tag-fia?" "No," I chuckled, "It's Tar-tell-ee-a."

You would not believe what happened. When Walter finally taped the promo, it came out just like this: "And that's the way it is. Now stay tuned for the Channel 8 Evening News with Jay-nine Tar-tell-ee-a!"

Even if good ol' Walter mispronounced my name, there was something about Walter Cronkite that I admired. In fact so many people trusted him that when he retired in 1985, he was seriously considered as a candidate for the presidency. Why was Walter so highly regarded? It all boils down to one word: "CREDIBILITY."

When this man delivered the news and told us, "That's the way it is," we believed him! Think about it. You and I have been given the GREATEST NEWS in the whole wide world to share:

- that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,
- that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead just like he said he would,
- that someday soon the clouds will depart, our Lord will descend, and every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Sisters, that is the best news in the whole wide world to share! And what really blesses me is the fact that the one who broke this story was not an all-time big star reporter. I mean, we are not talking Mike Wallace from CBS News in New York or Peter Jennings from Washington, D.C.

We are talking Mary from Magdala, a little fishing village on the shores of the sea of Galilee.

This dear woman had a very common name and hailed from a very common town. Still she was never really common, for anyone who is touched by Jesus is never really common. Mary's life had been totally changed by Jesus. If seven demons had been cast out of you, you would be changed, too. We are talking total transformation here. Mary had been transformed inside and out by the power of the Master. And after she was healed, she served Jesus and she followed Jesus all the way to Jerusalem, all the way to the cross, all the way to the tomb, and for her faithfulness, God blessed her with the most incredible scoop—the Pulitzer Prize winning story of the ages—that, hallelujah, Jesus WAS AND IS alive! Through her witness the word spread to the disciples. They, in turn, eventually helped spread the Gospel to the outer ends of the Roman Empire. Mary Magdalene was such a blessed woman, one of the last to see Christ die, one of the first to see him live again! She was an essential character in the passion narrative that she shows up in all four Gospel accounts.

Let us look at the resurrection appearance story as recorded in Matthew, chapter 28. It is early Sunday morning. Jesus had died on the cross and his body had been placed in the tomb. Those of us who have ever witnessed the death of somebody we love can relate to the anguish that Mary must have been feeling. The Rabbi she loved, her healer, her redeemer, the One who had given her a sense of true dignity and worth was gone. Rather than withdrawing and sulking and feeling sorry for herself, she came to the tomb on a mission. Mark tells us that she, along with another Mary, brought the spices to anoint Christ's body. Let us hear together the Living Word of God.

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the

dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you so." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. [There's that phrase again—"Do not be afraid."] Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matthew 28: 1-10 NIV).

Yes, the disciples saw the risen Christ in Galilee; but hours before Mary had her own "close encounter of the first kind!" Before Peter the Rock and before John the Beloved, God gave the news of the resurrection, the greatest story of the ages, to this woman. This announcement came by way of an angel and then by way of Jesus himself. In some ways, she should not have been surprised. After all, the Lord had told the disciples that he would die and rise again. At least three times he said so. In Matthew 17:22 - 23 he said, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life" (NIV). Jesus repeated the prediction, but it did not sink in. How many times has God tried to reach us through the Scriptures or a distinct impression from the Holy Spirit, and yet it never quite sinks in? That is why we learn this beautiful story about Mary . . .

BEFORE WE GO OUT TO PREACH JESUS, YOU AND I MUST FIRST BELIEVE JESUS.

Mary was commissioned to tell the greatest story in the world. Before she carried out the mission, she had to believe that the risen Christ was for real. To encourage her faith, an angel beckoned her to come and see the empty tomb. In each one of our lives God has used something or someone to heighten our receptivity to divine breathings. Perhaps God has used a difficult situation, a sermon, a scripture passage, a song, or a friend to invite you to come in and see Him in a different way.

God used a Christian family to tell me to "come and see Christ" back in 1979. I had been an anchor/reporter in television news for ten years. I was moving up the ladder. Everything seemed to be going well for me except that there was a great void in my life. Even after the first week of walking down those impressive long corridors of NBC in Los

Angeles, a gnawing emptiness consumed me. In God's mercy and providence I met a family whose faithful witness altered my destiny. Their son was one of 52 Americans held hostage by the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. Gary Lee and the other American embassy employees remained in captivity for 444 days. Their dramatic ordeal could have ended in triumph or tragedy. Due to the volatile status of Iran, no one knew if the hostages would be released or executed. That is why Pastor Lee and his wife Hazel made such a dynamic impression on me. Regardless of their son's fate, they exhibited a faith and peace that merited attention. Their authentic witness convinced me that Jesus was someone I needed to know.

I would interview them and they, in turn, would interview me. Camera crews entered their parsonage with lights, cameras, cords, and recorders. In ten months we scratched their coffee table. We scuffed their walls. We stained their rug. And yet, their door never shut! The Lees used the worst time of their lives as an opportunity to share God's love with someone like me. In their own way, they told me, "Come and see."

Unfortunately, I did not initially oblige their invitation to church. I was a cynical reporter who had observed too much religious hypocrisy. In time, however, I knew the Lees had something that I desperately needed. After ten months of careful scrutiny I came to Earl Lee's church. In all honesty, I attended the Pasadena First Church of the Nazarene with thirty other reporters in hopes of capturing a story. We were alerted that a break in the hostage crisis would occur when Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency. We were there to cover church reaction just in case the hostages would be released a few days before the inauguration. I was busy writing my story and Pastor Lee preached a message from Isaiah 43. (This may be a passage for somebody here tonight. I don't know who you are. I don't know what's going on in your life, but will you hear the Word of the Lord for you?)

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. (Isaiah 43:1a - 3a NIV)

That morning Pastor Lee did not give a formal invitation to receive Christ. Frankly, I did not need one. In front of my colleagues in the balcony, I put down my notebook and I stood up. I heard God. I did not

fully comprehend the implications for justification, regeneration, sanctification. I DID know that I was a sinner and I had put other things before my God. Privately, I told God, "I'm so sorry."

Noting my changed posture, my camera operator Jimmy said, "Uh, what do you want us to shoot?" And I said, "I don't know. Something's happening to me." He shook his head and said, "Oh, no." That morning, I asked the Lord to forgive me and to come into my heart. There God resides today and I am so very thankful! Our Lord has changed my life and continues to transform my life

One family was used by God to convince me to "come and see." Through their dynamic faith I witnessed the mystery of Jesus, all man . . . all God.

- Yes, Jesus was a man who became hungry, but He is God, the Bread of Life.
- Yes, Jesus was a man who became thirsty, but He is God, the Living Water.
- Yes, Jesus was a man who became weary, but He is God Almighty who says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
- Yes, He was a man who walked with us in the darkness, but He is God, the Light of the World.
- He was a man who was baptized with water, but He is God who baptizes with fire.
- He was a man who wept at a funeral, but He was God who told Lazarus, "Come forth!" He was a servant, but at His feet every knee will bow.
- Yes, He was a man who wept tears in Gethsemane, but He is God who will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Tonight I can tell you, I believe. I believe Jesus is the Son of God! I believe He is alive and He is coming again. Before I could preach it I HAD TO BELIEVE IT! Our lives must reflect the Incarnate Word and must be guided by the Written Word. I live tonight by the promises of God. And hallelujah, as a brand-new step-mom of teenage sons, I need God's grace AND those promises. My greatest sermon is a sanctified life. May I be so thoroughly consecrated to Christ that any menial task has the potential to become a holy offering. This elevates whatever we do, wherever we go into the realm of the sacred.

Oh sister, before we can preach Jesus we must believe Jesus. That is why the angel invited Mary, "Come and see the empty tomb." And then what did he say? He told her to go and tell.

II. ONCE WE BELIEVE JESUS, WE MUST BE WILLING TO SPEAK JESUS

Mary had to be convinced that Jesus was not dead. She went in, took a look at that tomb and then the angel said, "Go quickly and tell his disciples." The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Mary and her friend Mary did not sit around asking the angel, "Are you sure about this?" or "What really happened here?" No questions asked. The word from Matthew is they "hurried away from the tomb."

They hurried away. They had a message to tell. They had a place to go and so do you and I. We are called to share Christ's life and teachings wherever God sends, whenever God calls, with whomever God chooses. And if our listeners happen to be senior adults in a rest home, then Praise the Lord. If they happen to be little children, if they happen to be teens, if they happen to be women OR men, then Hallelujah! Every person matters to God. Everyone with whom we share is so vitally important to the Kingdom of God. May we not miss any opportunity to be used by the Lord. May we be free to take advantage of any occasion to participate in God's redemptive mission.

We must also be aware that the sacrifice may be great. Learn from Elizabeth Cole, who spent years ministering to lepers in a remote village of Africa. The risks may be high. Learn from Leona Gardner. Here's a woman whose hut was burned and her life was threatened over and over again by villagers in Guatemala. They had never heard the Gospel and had never seen or heard a woman preacher. And suffering may at times be insurmountable when you follow the Lord. Learn from Johnny Hill Jernegan who braved numerous shootings while ministering to prostitutes on the dusty streets of Texas. And for current inspiration, recall last night's sermon from our sister Kits. We learned so much from what she said and didn't say and how she said it. She witnessed to me and I know she witnessed to you that God's grace IS sufficient and God's power is made perfect in our weakness. Oh, God, give us the grace to be obedient, knowing that you will equip and empower us for whatever you call us to do.

I will never forget that first time the Lord called me to preach my first sermon. Can you remember yours? Oooooooh! I was scared spitless. I went to Louisiana expecting to share my testimony at a Senior Adult banquet. When I arrived in Baton Rouge, a welcoming committee at the airport informed me that I was the evangelist for the camp meeting the next morning. I concealed my shock until I entered the hotel room. Then I immediately fell to my knees and asked God, "Now, what are we going

to do?" And I rocked back and forth, praying and pleading, "Lord, I need your help. I don't know how to prepare a sermon. I only know a few verses. How can I do this?" Nothing seemed to break through until about three o'clock in the morning. I received the most distinct impression. I cannot remember the words, but it seemed as if the Holy Spirit said, "Daughter, the service is mine." Compelled by that divine assurance (and sheer exhaustion), I collapsed into bed and slept for several hours. I remember walking into the open air tabernacle and sitting in a huge evangelist's chair. My feet did not even touch the ground. I witnessed a good old fashioned Nazarene praise service. All about me people were getting blessed, rising, walking, singing, shouting! One little lady in a wheelchair in the front mustered up all of her energy to express her joy. She could barely move. It took her half the service to rise to her feet, wave her hanky and whisper, "Glory!" And with that, she slowly slipped back down and smiled.

Despite the ecstasy of worship, there was division in the camp. One of the churches attending had been split in two because of a controversial church building project. Half the church was sitting on one side of the aisle. The other half of the church was sitting on the other side. Both sides were determined not to break ranks and reconcile their differences. Something incredible happened, however, when I began to preach. By the grace of God I began reciting scriptures that I had not memorized or prepared. While I was speaking, a man in the back of the tabernacle stood up and yelled, "George, where are you?" Suddenly George rose from the other side of the tabernacle and said, "I'm here, John."

John tearfully said, "George, I'm so convicted. Will you please forgive me?" George responded, "Yes, but only if you will forgive me." They met in the center aisle, embraced each other and repented of their bitterness. Within moments the whole church group stood up, repented and sought each other's forgiveness. The service erupted in a most profound encounter with God. People knelt in God's glorious presence. Some wept. Others lifted hands in praise. All were aware something extremely holy was happening. I just stood in awe and humble gratitude. And almost on cue, a faint but distinct voice whispered, "See, daughter, this service is mine!"

God is so faithful. You know that's what so blessed about being forty-three? I now have a track record of God's faithfulness. Day after day after day after day He has provided for me, protected me, and delivered me from sin. And to this day God cleanses me from attitudes that do not reflect Jesus. The sweet Spirit of God continues that

sanctifying work in my life. Oh, sweet sister, believe it, preach it and, hallelujah, rejoice in it.

III. WE ARE NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE JESUS AND SPEAK JESUS WE ARE TO REJOICE IN JESUS

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Mary went off to tell the good news with joy. Likewise, our message must be accompanied with joyful confidence! This is not always easy when your ministry lacks a cheering section. Consider the plight of Paul. He was under house arrest, prohibited from planting churches and preaching to multitudes. Still, he writes to the converts in Philippi: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all" (Phil. 4:4-5 NIV).

Why can we rejoice? Why can we allow Christlike gentleness to be a part of our countenance? Why? Paul offers the answer: "The Lord is near." The Lord is near us wherever we go. To convince Mary of His abiding presence, Jesus appeared to her and talked to her. Not only did he greet her, but in the Gospel of John, he actually calls Mary by name.

You and I this very night can rest in the truth that the Creator of all, the Creator of the universe, knows us by name.

- This is the One who set the stars in place, who placed this earth exactly 93 million miles from the sun (any closer we'd burn, any farther away we'd freeze to death)
- This the One who placed just the right amount of oxygen in the air to sustain life
- This the One who placed in each one of our bodies a central nervous system that controls the way we breathe, that controls the heartbeat, that keeps our body temperature somewhere around 98.6.

The almighty, all powerful, eternal I AM knows each here by name. He knows you, Phyllis. He knows you, Lois. He knows you out there, Mary. He knows you out there, Kirsten. God knows you and calls you by name.

When Mary arrived to share the good news with the disciples, the response was less than exuberant. Luke tells us that the disciples did not believe her because her "words seemed to them like nonsense" (Luke 24:11 NIV). The disciples' response brought back some vivid memories of a Sunday morning when I stepped up to the pulpit. As soon as I began to preach, a man in the middle of the church stood up, shook his finger at me and screamed, "No, you shouldn't be there!" He then marched out and slammed the door behind him. It brought back memories of my

seminary preaching class. Whenever it was my turn to preach, more than one third of the class refused to attend. It brought back memories of the times when I was asked as the only woman in the class to be the class secretary and to make coffee for the class.

Those painful episodes reaped important benefits. First, they prompted me to fix my eyes on Christ and seek God's sanction of my call. I constantly prayed, "Whatever you want, Lord, I want. Wherever you lead, Lord, I'll go." Second, I reviewed those controversial passages in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 in their historical and literary context. A careful exegesis of the prohibitive scriptures as well as a host of supportive passages provided a new understanding of my call. Third, I asked God to purify my attitude toward opponents of women in ministry. The Gospels clearly teach that we do more than tolerate our enemies. We must take one giant step farther and love them. And, in my case, he told me to serve them. Perhaps you would not be led to do the same thing, but I was compelled to make the coffee and to do so joyfully. Every morning I made the coffee . . . and in time my male classmates realized I made the worst coffee in the class. They wised up and began brewing their own coffee. And after three and a half years of working on that M.Div., we reached our graduation day. One of the brothers who had never invited a woman to be on his church staff or church came to me and admitted, "I don't know what to do with you." I looked up and I chuckled, "Oh, Michael, don't worry about it. God does."

There are times, sisters, when our denominations do not know what to do with us. There are times when local churches don't know what to do with us. But, praise the Lord tonight, God does. Rejoice in the fact that your God knows you. He knows your frustrations, but hallelujah, He knows your devotion. For this by far is our greatest gift to the Lord. Aside from the degrees, aside from all the titles and responsible positions, God cares about the status of our hearts.

A.W. Tozer contends: "The church waits for the tender voice of the saint who has penetrated the veil and gazed with inward eye upon the wonder that is God." Let me say that again. "The church waits for the tender voice of the saint who has penetrated the veil and gazed with inward eye upon the wonder that is God" (43).

Lord, may I continue to penetrate the veil and enter into the Holy of Holies. May I continually ask you, "Am I holy before you? And if not, reveal to me whatever is dividing my heart. I want to be honest with you and with myself. More than anything I want my life to be a witness for You."

May we be blameless in God's sight so that we can be credible models for a new generation who will "go and tell." May our faithful witness help open the door for young women and men sensing God's call.

As we leave tonight, let us stand in the presence of the Holy I AM. I do not know what your life has been like in these past few weeks or months, but would you make where you're standing an altar tonight? Free your hands and cup them before our gracious God tonight.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might. Heaven and earth are filled with your glory. And in your presence tonight, Lord, we bow. We exalt your name together and we invite your sweet Spirit to take a good look deep within our hearts. And, Lord God, in order to share, in order to speak the truth that you are alive. Lord, we ask you to first sanctify us through and through. We place in our hands tonight anything, dear God, that has been hampering our witness for you. For someone here, dear Lord, there may be a little lingering resentment because the doors of ministry have remained shut. Oh, it's hard to wait. It hurts. For somebody here tonight, Lord God, there may be lingering self pity and doubt because of criticism that hurt to the core. Dear Lord, we give you our hurt. We offer up our fear tonight, Lord Jesus. There is someone here who is holding back, afraid to step out to heed your call. Please Lord, lift her fear so she will be able to risk it all for you. Lord, reveal those hidden sins, those blind sides that get in the way of an effective ministry.

Sweet God, sanctify our lips so that we may speak for you. Sanctify our eyes so that we may see the hurting, the lonely, the lost. Sanctify our ears, Lord, that we may become better listeners to discern the deep, often unspoken, needs of others. Quiet us, Lord, to listen to you. While you are at it, sanctify our hands, that we may reach out to the most unlovely. Oh, Jesus, we are so precious in your sight. Sanctify our hearts through and through. May we hate sin and all that breaks your heart. At the same time may we extend love and mercy to the sinner.

We offer these deep needs, dearest Lord. All that we have. All that we hope to be is yours tonight. May we receive your forgiveness and with each breath, drink in your grace. Regardless of position, regardless of salary, regardless of anyone noticing, we dedicate our future ministry to you. Thank You for those little glimpses of glory, those little affirmations you give us along the way. Thank you for your Holy Word, that source of deliverance, of healing, of help, and direction. Thank you for your Sweet Spirit who enlightens, equips and sets us on fire.

Whatever we say, whatever we do, may it be for Your honor and

glory, Sweet Jesus. This is all we ask. Hallelujah! We pray this in the name that is above all names, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, JESUS! Amen.

Works Cited

Tozer, A.W. The Pursuit of God: Tozer Legacy Edition. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publication. 1982.

Responding: Obey God
Rev. Dr. Diana L. Swoope

Our Lord, we love You and thank You for every opportunity we have to gather in our name with Your people. This is indeed Your place. While it has been used for various purposes prior to our arriving, we have sanctified it and consecrated it as being your place because we are here. Where two or three of your people gather together in Your name, there You are in the midst. Wherever You are, You own it, You occupy it. We thank You. Thank You for these, our sisters and our brothers who are here today--here because they need a word from You, because they need to come to the brook of refreshing to have their souls cleansed, to have their hearts regenerated, to have their minds refreshed, to renew their purpose and their goals, so that they might move back into the venues of service and give to you the very best that they have. We ask, Lord, that You would then speak to us so that we might hear a clear word that would give us the direction we need. We praise You. We honor and glorify your name. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Good morning. I greet you in the name of the Lord. I am grateful to be here among my sisters, my co-laborers in the Gospel, that we might hear from the Lord, that we might receive direction that God has already given, that we might receive the impetus and the courage we need to move forward.

Our theme this morning is, "Respond to God" and the word simply is "obey." Respond to God. The message is this: the only word that clarifies our response to God is "obey." Let me share with you from the Book of II Kings, a familiar story, but for our understanding, I want to read that story to you—

Second Kings, chapter eight, and I'll begin reading at verse number one. It reads as follows:

Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, "Go away with your family and stay for a while wherever you can, because the LORD has decreed a famine in the land that will last seven years." The woman proceeded to do as the man of God said. She and her family went away and stayed in the land of the Philistines seven years. At the end of the seven years she

came back from the land of the Philistines and went to the king to beg for her house and land. The king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, and had said, "Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done." Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman whose son Elisha had brought back to life came to beg the king for her house and land. Gehazi said, "This is the woman, my lord and king, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life." The king asked the woman about it, and she told him. Then he assigned an official to her case and said to him, "Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now" (2 Kings 8:1- 6 NIV).

The Shunammite's story is couched within the framework of obedience. I challenge you, my co-laborers, my sisters and my brothers, respond to God. Obey him.

To set the context for the story which we have read this morning, we need to go back to chapter four where we first meet her, where Elisha first meets her. Elisha was traveling through Shunem expounding the Word of God. He was such a blessing to many people there. One day this woman said to her husband: "Listen, the prophet comes and he blesses us so much but he doesn't have a place to live. We have money, we have an extra room. Let's build him a room onto our house and make him an apartment so that when he comes he has a place to stay." She became such a blessing to Elisha who had been such a blessing to her. One day Elisha said to his servant Gehazi: "Listen, I am so blessed by this woman. I want to do something special for her." You remember the story. Elisha called her and told her, "By this time next year you will have a son. You will give birth to a son." And she did. Her son became ill. Elisha restored him back to life. As we have just read in chapter eight, we hear Elisha saying to the Shunammite woman that there is going to be a famine in the land. In order for her and her family to be protected, she must leave and go to another land, wherever it is that she chooses, but she must leave and go to another land. As I think about this, I think about the fact that it really pays to be kind to people. This Shunammite woman did not know what she was doing when she extended her hand of love and care to Elisha, but just through her kindness, it was repaid to her. It pays to extend your hand of love. It pays to extend your hand of kindness, because you never know when it's going to come back. Isn't

that what the Lord said through Solomon? “Cast your bread upon the water and after many days it shall return to you” (Ecclesiastes 11:1). We may not have a lot, but whatever it is that we have, we can expose it and give it to God and allow it to be used for His purpose. No matter what it is, it just pays to be kind to people. We shouldn’t be quick to draw lines in the sand or to repay evil for evil. Let us not be quick to ball up our fists and say, “Well, I don’t need you. You don’t want me in your ministry so I’ll just go off and be off all by myself.” We should not be quick to walk away from things that seem not to be working out. We need to learn to love people, to be kind to them, and to extend the hand of grace to them. It is amazing how God returns it back to us.

The famine was coming and Elisha did not have to tell this woman that the famine was coming. He told her because they were friends. He took the word to her, “There’s going to be a famine in the land. You must go. You must leave.” As I read this story of the Shunammite woman I learned about obedience. I want to share those things with you this morning.

To Obey We Must Trust

If we are going to obey, if we are going to respond to God through obedience, it takes number one, a trusting relationship. The word that you need first of all is trust. This Shunammite woman obeyed the prophet because she trusted him. She had a relationship with him that he had said something to her earlier that came true, and so now she could believe what he was saying now. In order to obey God we have to trust the Lord. We have to trust that God is right. We have to trust that God is right.

Sometimes it seems as though God does not know what He is talking about. There are times when we want to look up and around at God, whether God is speaking to us through our pastor, our mentor, our husband, or another sister, we want to look up and say: “You must be kidding. This cannot be right. I am wealthy, I’ve got a lot of wealth, I’ve got a lot of money, I’ve got a position, I have virtue, I have respect, I have honor. You want me to leave here? You want me to leave this job? You want me to leave this role? You want me to leave this position and go to a land that I don’t know anything about? Surely, surely, surely, surely, you have something misplaced.”

But in order to obey, we must first learn to trust—trust that God is right. Trust that God has our best interest at hand. In order to learn to trust God, we must not only get used to hearing God’s voice on the

horizontal, but we must have some mentors around us. We must learn to submit to another's leadership in order to learn to trust God. For some of us here this morning, I know the word "submit" for us has become a very difficult word to hear because it has been abused and misused. The Bible instructs that if we are to learn obedience, we must submit. How did Jesus learn obedience? He submitted to the voice of God and he learned obedience through the things he suffered. He had to submit himself to the leadership of someone else.

My sisters, if we really want to grow in our ministry, if we really want to become all that God is challenging us to be, we must learn to submit to the authority of somebody. If we are going to really learn obedience, we must learn to trust through submission. The difficulty is that many of us have been hurt and abused through the word "submit." Some of you sitting here today may find it difficult to submit to someone else's authority. I do not know who that authority may be. I am just challenging us to find mentors, pastors, and accountability partners in our life. We need somebody who knows us better than we know ourselves so that when we want to run away from what God is calling us to do, they can stand in front of us and say, "Oh, no. You must go. You've got to go. And I don't care what cost it brings to you, you must step out on it."

The Shunammite woman had a relationship with the prophet and because of that she trusted the prophet's word. The Bible says that she proceeded to do what he said to do. She did not linger, she did not wait around, she did not go and try to pack up a whole lot of stuff. We find out that she must not have packed anything because when she got back, she had nothing. She just went. When we learn to trust God, we will move out on what God says. How long will we wait to do what it is that God has called for us to do? Let us not be like Lot. When the word came to Lot that he needed to move out of Sodom, he lingered and hung around until his wife got kind of attracted to Sodom. She said: "Listen here. It took me fifteen years to get you to buy me this furniture. What are you talking about moving? We just got this house. What do you mean, moving?" They lingered long enough for her to renew her attachment to it. When they finally did decide to go, she was looking back and she became a pillar of salt. Later when her daughters were in the cave and were looking and saying, "We don't have any progeny," they had no one to guide, lead, or correct them.

What am I saying, sisters? When we do not obey God, we do not know whose obedience we are stopping. When we do not obey God, we

do not know whose life we are rearranging. Because Lot's wife did not obey God, when her daughters needed her, she was not there to give wisdom and counsel. Hear what I am saying this morning. When we do not step out, when we do not step out on what God calls us to do, we may be hindering the progress and the process of someone else's life. Trust God and step out. It may cost us. I understand it will, but we can not afford to linger. We must move immediately as the Shunammite woman did. Because when we disobey God, it becomes a weapon for the enemy to use. When we obey no matter what it costs; the God who is right, He will make us right.

As we obey, God will make it right. However, we must not assume that God will make it right immediately. The Shunammite went to the land of the Philistines. When she came back she found that she had lost all she had. She learned trusting God through obedience is very risky. It may cost us very dearly. It may cost the ridicule of some people. It may cost friendships. It may cost relationships. It may cost a position. The point is — who would we rather trust? Would we rather trust God, or would we rather trust what people can give to us? I have decided that I would rather trust God. They can take my position, they can take whatever it is that they want, but I am going to trust God because God is right. Because God is right, I don't care who thinks that I am not right when I am doing what God said do.

When I was first called to preach, I was living in Memphis, Tennessee, the Baptist belt and the Church of God in Christ. When I was called to preach, there was no such thing as a woman preaching in a Baptist congregation. A brother who was related to our pastor came over. He belonged to a Baptist church. I was preaching that day. After I finished preaching, he came up to me and he shook his finger in my face and said to me, "You are wrong for what you are doing," and "You are going to die and go to hell because you are disobeying what God said do." That really hurt me. It cost me his friendship. I tell you why because I have just never been one to just kind of stand around and let people roll over me. When he told me that I was going to go to hell because I was doing what God said was right for me to do, I looked at him and said, "Well, I guess I will meet you there." I did not mean to be disrespectful or anything like that. When you obey God, do not think that everybody is going to like what you do. Do not think that everybody is going to pat you on the back and stroke your hair and say, "Oh, looky here! Another woman is coming to preach the Gospel. Praise the Lord!" It will not be like that because there are those who have determined that that is not the

right course. But God has said it is right. And let God be true and every man be a liar. I choose to trust God and believe the Word of God. If we are going to obey, it takes trust, but we may lose some things along the way. The Shunammite woman lost something. Sometimes trusting God, it seems like God is tricking you. It seems like God has set you up. I am sure that when she got back, she wanted to go to Elisha and say, "Hey, listen here. I did everything you told me to do and I prepared and now I do not have any place to serve. I have gone and I have been in the land and you took me around the famine and now I do not have any place to live. I went to seminary, I earned all the degrees they told me I was supposed to earn. I stayed there for four years, for five years. They said the M.Div. was not enough so I went back and earned a Ph.D. They said that wasn't enough so I went back and earned a Th.D., and they said that is not enough so I just earned any old kind of degree. And now I am prepared and there is no place for me. You tricked me." Sometimes we feel like that. We have to learn not only to trust, but we have to learn to be persistent.

To Obey Takes Persistence

If we are going to obey, it not only takes some trust, it also takes some persistence. It takes persistence. When God gives a call He said, "The gifts and the calling are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). Those who believe God, those who come to God, must first believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him, who persist in seeking that which He has called for them to do. When the woman came back, we do not know if her house was taken over by eminent domain because she had deserted it; we don't know if some pauper had moved in and just taken over and said, "I am not moving out." We do not know what happened to her house and her land. We just know that she didn't own it anymore. But when she got back, rather than wringing her hands and saying, "Oh, they don't want me around. I guess I will just go on home." This woman said, "Listen, I don't care who is living in that house. That house belongs to me. I do not care who has occupied it. That house belongs to me. God called me to it. God said it belongs to me. God said it is mine and I am not going to let anybody else take over what God said is mine. If I have got to go to the king and beg for it, I shall."

So she persisted and went forward. She did not give up, she went to the king. Sometimes the way things look is not the way they really are. We have to learn to persist beyond what appears to the eye so we can get to what it is that God has really called us to. She said, "I am going to talk

to the king because there's really no one else doing anything about this. Elisha sure can't. He can wave his stick that he has, but only the king can decree that I get my land back." So she went to the king and when she got there, she overheard a conversation. Gehazi and the king were talking. They just happened to be talking about her! And the king said to Gehazi, "Tell me all about Elisha's miracles." And Gehazi could have told him all kinds of things. Gehazi could have told him about Elisha catching Elijah's mantle. He could have told about Elisha stretching the widow's oil so it did not run out. He could have told about Elisha's mantle removing the poison from the food and all he did was put flour in it. He could have told about Elisha causing an ax head to float through the water and come back to the shore. There were a whole lot of stories he could have told about Elisha, but he just happened to be talking about Elisha restoring the Shunammite woman's son back to life. And who should come in while he is talking but the Shunammite woman!

I have learned that there are really no coincidences when we are trusting God and that God is working it out. He is setting it up. Sometimes, it does not look like it is working for our good, but if we persist in the ways of God, He will work it out so that we will show up just at the right time. I have learned that if we trust and persist in the things of God, He is working things out while we sleep, He is working things out through our tears. He is working things out when we cannot see Him working. God is moving and working on our behalf.

Just as Gehazi was telling the king about the Shunammite woman, in she walks and Gehazi says, "Hey, there she is!" And the king said, "Tell me all about your story." She did. I have learned something--my Heavenly Father watches over me. I do not need to try to knock down doors or have to become a man to be who I am. I can be all woman and be all God's woman. I can be all woman and be a prophetess for the Lord. I do not have to change into something else or be somebody else to do what God says to do. I can still wear my lace. I can still put on my perfume. I can still put on my earrings and my pearls and necklaces and still be God's woman. "It's a man's world," they want to try to tell us, but it is my Father's world. And it is my Father's Word. And I learned to persist.

There are no coincidences when we are working with God. We remember the story of King Xerxes and Esther, when Haman wanted to kill all the Jews. We recall one night King Xerxes could not sleep and because he could not sleep, he called on the wise men to bring him the books about himself. He could not sleep so he wanted to read about

himself. I guess he thought that it would be the most boring story in the world. So they brought him the books and he began to read and came across the story where Mordecai had saved his life and he had not honored Mordecai. Just as he got to that story, he heard some noise out in the courtyard and he said, "Who's out there?" We know who it was. It was Haman, the same Haman who wanted to kill Mordecai came in just when the king wanted to honor him.

I found something out. If we just persist with God, He'll make our enemies honor us and then hang themselves. We do not have to break down the walls. We do not have to break through anything. We do not have to make people accept you. We just have to be prepared and persist in the ways of God. We observe the Shunammite woman was prepared when she went to talk to the king. She didn't stutter. She didn't stammer. When he asked, "Tell me your story," she was ready. She came right on out with it. We need to get ready to speak the Word of God so that when the opportunity presents itself, we can just walk right on through the door.

There are no coincidences when we are working and persisting in the ways of God. When we learn to be persistent, I have found God will work it out. I went to seminary in Anderson, Indiana. I thought that by doing so I would get myself positioned to move into a full-time pastorate or associate pastorate. I was not hoping to go to the largest church in the world, I wanted to go and serve. I did. I stayed there and I made some of the highest grades of anybody on that campus. I had a 3.99 grade point average out of a 4.00. It was almost time for graduation and all of my friends, most of them my brother-friends, would come to me and tell me, "I've been called to go to Florida," "I've been called to go to California," "I've been called to go here," and "Where have you been called?" I looked at them and looked at myself and became discouraged. I said, "God, I've been prepared. I am all dressed up and I don't have anywhere to go."

Little did I know that in that same month that we were talking about this, little did I know that God had the senior pastor of the Arlington Church of God in Memphis, Tennessee, where my mother lived. He was preaching a revival at my mother's church and my mother had just thought that anybody that had anything to do with Anderson had to know me and so she walked up to him and said, "Do you know my daughter, Diana? She is in the seminary studying to be a full-time pastor." Three days later, I still did not know God was doing this, three days later I went to the office of the Director of Urban Ministries there on campus and told

him, "Well, I do not have an appointment. If you could just find me an internship in a church." He said, "You know what? Ron Fowler, who is the pastor at Arlington Church of God just called me yesterday, asking me did I know you. And in you come today. Let me call him back and say, "Yes, I know you." He went to Memphis, came back to Anderson, called somebody else looking for me and didn't even know me. But God was working it out. There are no coincidences when you persist in the ways of God.

I recall another time when as a staff member at Arlington Church of God, we were looking for some money to fund this new program. We needed some foundation money, and foundations didn't typically give to churches. We decided that we were going looking for some of this foundation money and I sent out these applications. The foundations didn't call me, so I decided to do something unconventional. I decided to call them. So I picked up the telephone. I was scared to death cause you really aren't supposed to do this. That's just not protocol. You see when we want something from God, sometimes we break protocol. The king did not ask for this woman. She just decided to go. Sometimes people will not call for us or prepare a place for us, sometimes they do not want you around, but we have got to persist and just go. The Shunammite woman went to the king. I called up the foundation and the phone was answered by the head of the foundation's wife. She also was on the Board of Trustees. She told me: "I hardly ever come to this office but my husband is out of town and he called me and he needed something, so I came by the office." Then she said: "You know what, I usually don't answer the telephone either but this time the telephone rang differently and I picked it up." I said, "You know why it rang differently, because God was ringing the telephone."

You see when we persist, God will work it out. He is working it out for us. Some of us right now are discouraged because it seems as though circumstances are suggesting that we prepared for nothing. It seems as though the circumstances are suggesting that we heard the wrong call, the circumstances are suggesting that we ought to turn around and go back, but we have to learn to be persistent. God cares and He is working it out for you. If we are going to obey, we have to trust. If we are going to obey, we must be persistent.

To Obey Takes Expectancy

Lastly, if you are going to obey, you must be expectant. We must have an expectancy that God is going to do it. I do not think this woman

had any doubt in her mind that what she was asking for she would receive. She did not have any doubt because she was talking to the one who could make the difference. When we understand that God can make the difference, our expectancy level tends to rise. When we begin to understand that it does not really matter who wants us around, who called us, who ordained us, we go.

There must be an expectancy that we can make a difference through the grace of God. The Shunammite did and because she had an expectancy, the king appointed an official to her, the king just didn't make a decree, the king gave a personal captain to her. Let us read that again: "The king appointed an official who personally took care of her case." I get so excited when I think about that and the reason I get excited is because I understand something about God--that God is not treating me like some convention. God does not have me like I am on a university campus and all they know is my Social Security number. God has my personal case in his hands and is appointing Someone, whose name just happens to be Jesus Christ, to oversee my personal affairs so that which I need He will surely provide. My sisters, be encouraged this morning and have a level of expectancy. We may have been hurt. We may have been frustrated. We may have been disappointed. Sometimes these things lower our expectancy level.

It is kind of like when I was carrying my first child. That child just would not come. When I was six months pregnant, I looked like I was ready to deliver so you know what I looked like at nine months. I got so tired of feeling like the Goodyear Blimp till I told the Lord, "Lord, let's just get this thing on." I said to my baby: "Let's come on out of here, however you come out. Come out, come out, wherever you are." But she didn't come. And sometimes, sometimes when things do not work within the time frame we think they should. Sometimes when things do not work out just as we had imagined, our expectancy level gets lowered. I knew that I was pregnant with a child of God and that I needed to wait for the delivery. Similarly when we know that we are pregnant with the Word of God, we just wait for the delivery. We need to keep our expectancy level high and God will deliver in His own time. My baby did not come after ten days. I was told that if I walked five miles, she would come. So I walked ten miles. Then I was told if I cleaned up the house, walking up and down the stairs and hanging drapes, she would come. I washed every window in my apartment and she still did not come. Finally, the Lord said to me, "Sister, sit down and wait, because you are pregnant and when you are pregnant the delivery has to come so

just keep looking, keep anticipating, stay on the edge cause the birthing pains will come--she is going to kick you, your water will break and soon will come forth the best thing you have ever seen in your life."

Sisters, this morning I say to you, "You are pregnant." God has impregnated you with His call. God has impregnated you with His Word. God has impregnated you with His promise. God has impregnated you with His love. God has impregnated you with His grace. God has impregnated you with His peace. Just wait on the Lord and let Him continue to take you through the trimesters. There will be morning sickness when you feel like you cannot go on. There will be times when you are sick and tired of being pregnant with no delivery, but just wait on the Lord and be of good courage and He will strengthen your heart. Keep your expectancy on who God is and the delivery--oh, somebody better hear me this morning--the delivery, the birth will happen.

Sometimes, if you rush it and it comes here premature, you won't be ready for it. But if you just let the Lord. Let Him take his time in you, bring that child to full birth. When the time is right, no one can stop it. The doctors could not stop it. When the child is ready to come, the child is going to come. They can push it back up but she is going to push back out. When God has decreed that it is your time, folks can push on you, they can try to stop it, they can try to annihilate it, they can try to wipe it out; but what God has said will be born, will be born, and it will come to full delivery with your expectation. Respond to God, obey the Lord, trust him, persist in his Word, keep your expectancy level high. My God, who is a just God, will right every wrong. My God who is a just God will fix everything that is broken. My God who is a just God -- God is too just to be wrong. He will fix it. He will restore it. He will reclaim it on your behalf.

Our Father, we thank you this morning for your Word and for Your will and for Your women. My prayer is that You would bless us today, even as we respond to Your Word. We ask that as we gather around to pray we might be strengthened and encouraged and have the will, the persistence of this Shunammite woman, who would not take no for an answer, who just did not look at the circumstances and resign herself, but said, "Lord, I will go through." Give that courage, give that expectancy, Lord, I pray this morning. We praise and glorify your name. Through the Lord Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.

Contributors

Commissioner Kay Rader
Resting: Time with God

Kay Rader is a “world citizen.” She was born and raised in Georgia, lived in Korea, London, England, and has traveled world-wide with The Salvation Army. Kay received her B.A. from Asbury College and holds honorary doctorates from Asbury Theological Seminary, Greenville College and Roberts Wesleyan College.

Kay and her husband, Paul, spent twenty-two years as missionaries to Korea where she taught and trained Korean Salvation Army Officers. After a series of leadership roles in the United States, following their return from Korea, her husband was elected the 15th General of The Salvation Army in 1994. The Raders moved to International Headquarters, London, England, where Kay served as World President of Women’s Organizations. She has been a tireless advocate for the women and children of the world. The Raders were the first American-born officers to serve as international leaders of the movement. They retired in July, 1999, and presently make their home in Lexington, Kentucky.

Kay and Paul have three adult children, two of whom teach at Seoul Foreign School in Korea. Their youngest daughter and her family live and work in Pennsylvania. They have seven grandchildren.

Rev. Enriquita “Kits” Monencillo
Reflecting: Tune In To God

Enriquita “Kits” Monencillo is an ordained elder in the Free Methodist Church. She served in the role of Senior Pastor since 1975, and as a District Superintendent from 1987 to 1990. At the time of the 1996 conference, she served as Pastor of the First Free Methodist Church of God of the Philippines, Bunawan, Agusan del Sur and preached two times each Sunday. Additionally, she preached on a gospel radio station in Bunawan.

She now serves the Free Methodist Church in Hong Kong. Her ministry revolves around pulpit ministry, pastoral care, and counseling. She teaches two baptismal classes on Saturday and Sunday. She says she is “blessed with so many friends: Filipino, Chinese, and American.”

Kits has a Master of Divinity and a Master of Ministry degree.

Rev. Janine Tartaglia Metcalf
Reaching Out: Speak Out for God

Janine Tartaglia-Metcalf teaches in the Religion Department of Point Loma Nazarene College. Prior to joining the faculty, she was an evangelist in the Church of the Nazarene, speaking to churches, conferences and colleges throughout the U. S. She is an ordained elder in the Nazarene church and is currently working on her doctorate degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. Her ministry has been enriched by spending eight years as an associate pastor and a decade as a broadcast journalist, anchoring and reporting on five California television stations.

Janine's husband Ed, a high school teacher, accompanies her on some of her summer preaching engagements.

Rev. Dr. Diana L. Swoope
Responding: Obey God

Diana L. Swoope is an ordained minister of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). She joined the staff of the Arlington Church of God in Akron, Ohio in 1981 and presently serves as the Associate Pastor of that church. Pastor Swoope's leadership in the church is a vital link to its growth.

Diana received a B. S. degree in Science from Memphis State University, 1977, a Master of Religious Education from Anderson School of Theology, 1981, and a Doctor of Ministry from Ashland Theological Seminary, 1989.

Diana has been the founder or impetus behind the creation of several programs linking Arlington Church of God to the greater Akron community. In 1988, she cofounded the Arlington Christian Academy, a chartered elementary school. She now serves as principal of the school whose enrollment has steadily increased to its present size of 143 students in the kindergarten through eighth grade.

Diana has been a frequent speaker for conventions, revivals, and seminars all across the USA, Canada, Jamaica, Grand Cayman, and Bermuda. She is the author of Jesus Our Source.

Diana and her husband Lawrence Allen are the parents of three children.

