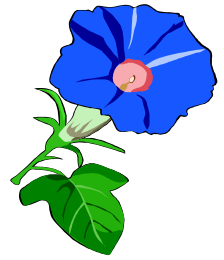


FOCUS



a newsletter for women who find themselves in difficult circumstances, feeling emotionally and spiritually alone

August 2004

Volume 9 Issue 11

God Loves Pit People

In the video series, *Loved by God*, Liz Curtis Higgs says, "The darker the pit, the brighter God's light shines."

How dark is it in the pit where you live?

There are two ways to get into a pit—fall in or be thrown in. Either way, when you find yourself at the bottom, miserable and alone, broken and battered, look up! God is there, ready to climb down into the pit to carry you out.

But He won't force you to leave until you are ready. He'll wait until you've exhausted every attempt to climb out on your own. Go ahead—give it your best shot. He knows it won't work, but He's willing to wait until you know it—until you come to the end of yourself and say "help!" All you have to do is ask!

In *Loved by God*, Liz suggests three questions that "pit people" ask God.

1. Are you strong enough to carry me out of this pit?

"God, I've got a lot of baggage and excess weight. Are you sure you won't drop me on the way to the top?"

The Psalmist (Ethan the Ezrahite) described God's strength this way: "You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face." Psalm 89:13-14

(Continued on page 2)

I called out your name,
O GOD, called from the
bottom of the pit.

You listened when I called
out, 'Don't shut your ears!
Get me out of here! Save
me!'

You came close when I
called out. You said, 'It's
going to be all right.'

Lamentations 3
(The Message)



You're Invited!

Come as you are . . .
no cost, no obligations, no requirements



FOCUS Support Groups

Cedar Rapids, IA Thursdays at 6:30 p.m.
New! Call Celeste at 319-447-1963 or Pat at 319-395-0021 for directions.

Aurora, IL 1st Saturday of each month at 9:30 a.m. Call Brenda at 630-370-0138.
New!

Wood Dale, IL, 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Call Paula at 630-595-7023 for directions.

Palos Heights, IL, 1st Saturday of each month at 9:30 a.m. Call Debbie at 708-499-5058 for directions.

Westmont, IL, First and third Saturday at 9 a.m.. Call Stephanie at 630-852-5273.

Wheaton, IL, 1st & 3rd Saturday of each month at 9:30 a.m. Call Joan at 630-690-0976 for directions.

Carbondale, KS Call Vicki at 785-836-7475 for more information.

Madisonville, KY Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. Call Brenda at 270-825-2423 for directions.

Lexington, KY, 1st Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Call Kim at 859-977-2742 for directions.

Olmsted Falls, OH 1st & 3rd Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Call Sally at 440-427-7700 for directions.

Danville, PA 1st & 3rd Thursday at 6:45 p.m. Call Janet at 570-208-5900 (x.5649).

Knoxville, TN Tuesdays at 7 p.m. Call Roberta at 865-470-2820 x226 for directions.

Contact Paula Silva at 630/595-7023 or email at Paula@focusministries1.org for details on starting a group in your area!



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2. **Are you brave enough to carry me out of this pit?**

“Lord, other people have tried to help, but they shrink back when they see how messed up I really am. They are either scared or inadequate. Can you handle it?”

The Psalmist affirms God’s ability to take control: “Who is mighty like You, O LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them.” Psalm 89:8-9

3. **Do you love me enough to carry me out of this pit?**

“Father, when you really get to know me, will you change your mind and decide I’m not worthy of your love?”

The prophet Zephaniah knew about God’s unconditional, unchanging love: “The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.” Zephaniah 3:17

He has already proven His love for you on the cross

After you ask God for help, the second step is trusting Him to do what He says.

The Psalmist believed God was trustworthy when he wrote: “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction (*the pit!*), who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Psalm 103:2-5

If you are stuck in the pit of revenge and unforgiveness, God wants to carry you out.

So now its up to you! Do you want to move from the slimy darkness of the pit you’ve been living in for years, or are you comfortable being stuck in the muck?

If someone else pushed you into the pit, you’ll have to let go of your bitterness and desire for revenge before God can lift you out.

I know how you feel—*it’s not fair!* Here’s how the writer of Lamentations describes it (3:46-66): “All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. Fear and a snare have come upon us, desolation and destruction. My eyes overflow with rivers of

water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. My eyes flow and do not cease, without interruption, ’till the LORD from heaven looks down and sees. My eyes bring suffering to my soul because of all the daughters of my city.”

“My enemies without cause hunted me down like a bird. They silenced my life in the pit and threw stones at me. The waters flowed over my head; I said ‘I am cut off!’”

“I called on Your name, O LORD, from the lowest pit. You have heard my voice: ‘Do not hide Your ear from my sighing, from my cry for help.’ You drew near on the day I called on You, and said, ‘Do not fear!’”

“O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life. O LORD, You have seen *how* I am wronged; judge my case. You have seen all their vengeance, all their schemes against me.”

“You have heard their reproach, O LORD, all their schemes against me, the lips of my enemies and their whispering against me all the day. Look at their sitting down and their rising up; I *am* their taunting song.”

“Repay them, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. Give them a veiled heart; Your curse *be* upon them! In Your anger, pursue and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD.”

Be honest now—have you ever asked God to zap someone who has wronged you? Thank God, He does not give us what is fair—He gives us grace.

If you are stuck in the pit of revenge and unforgiveness, God wants to carry you out. If you are paralyzed in the pit of lies and addiction, God wants to lift you up.

Some of you have been trapped in a pit for decades. Don’t give up! “As long as you are breathing, there is hope!”¹

He stands ready . . . the choice is yours. If you choose life, your response must be:

Help!
I trust you!

¹ Paula Silva, Restoring the Hope Conference Sept. 2004

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**The mission of FOCUS Newsletter
is to encourage women
who are struggling in difficult circumstances
to find strength and hope in Jesus Christ.**

Subscriptions: \$15 per year (12 issues). Send check or money order made payable to FOCUS, P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413. Complimentary subscriptions are available for those who cannot afford a subscription.

Funding: FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit organization. This ministry is funded by contributions and grants. **If you would like to help us minister to hurting women through the distribution of printed materials, support groups, workshops, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413.** A tax-deductible receipt will be provided for all contributions.

FOCUS Ministries (and all individuals affiliated therewith) disclaims any personal liability for information presented within this newsletter or in seminars, workshops, and support group meetings. You should always consult a professional for medical, psychological, legal, financial, or biblical advice.



Dear FOCUS,

I first learned of your ministry on Midday Connection and was very touched by what you do for hurting women. I pray that this little gift will help you further God's mission.

—J. from Illinois

We are greatly impressed by the wonderful work you are doing. I know that God gives the same vision to His people in order to get the work done all over. When I began to read your web page I was quite taken aback, as it was the same vision He has given me. May God's favor be upon your ministry.

—C. from Tennessee

Opportunity for Writers

If you have been affected by domestic violence and have a story to tell, you are invited to send your poems (free verse is fine), devotionals, short essays (200-300 words), or personal stories (1,500 words or less) to Rebecca Cochrane to be used in her book to be called *Dancing Under the Gallows*.

Rebecca's email address is theriskywriter@aol.com or riverecho@aol.com. You can also mail it to her at 504 Michigan St, Pittsburgh, PA 15210.

Dancing Under the Gallows will be an anthology of poems, short stories, and devotionals from survivors of domestic violence.

There will be no remuneration for submissions, but a free book will be given to each one whose contribution is included in the book.

When you submit your articles, please include information on where you can be contacted by phone, email, or regular mail. You may use an alternative address if it is not safe to receive mail or calls at home.

If you want to keep your identity anonymous in the book, please indicate that on your submission.

In the News . . .

FL—Ocala police have reversed a cost-saving measure and will now keep all three police department offices staffed day and night, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*, after Jose Vazquez shot his wife, Debra Allen Vazquez, at a police department that was deserted. Debra Vazquez was driving with the couple's infant granddaughter when Jose rammed her car. She drove to the police department for help, but it was closed and locked. Jose shot and killed her in the parking lot, and later killed himself. The baby was unharmed.

MA—The Southern Hilltown Domestic Violence Task Force conducted a comprehensive investigation of the domestic homicide of Karen Trudeau, who was murdered by her husband in May of 2002. Members concluded that the judicial system failed Trudeau, who called state police and went to district court to seek help at least 13 times in the months before she was killed. The Task Force identified red flags that were present in the case, created a Danger Assessment Guide, and offered recommendations to protect victims and hold offenders accountable. More information is available from Monica Moran at 413/781-6045 or moran9@crocker.com.

Japan—A new law will extend protection from domestic violence perpetrators to former spouses and children, according to Reuters. Courts can now order batterers to leave their homes for two months and stay away from their former spouses and children, as well as current spouses. The law is designed to prevent abductions from childcare centers or schools. A 1999 survey found that one in 20 Japanese women said they had experienced "life-threatening" domestic violence.

Mexico—Hundreds of thousands of people marched in Mexico City on June 27 to protest the kidnappings, robberies and gender-based violence that have plagued the country, a few weeks after federal officials threatened to charge 81 police officers with incompetence for failing to solve a ten-year series of slayings of women in Ciudad Juarez. More than 300 women have been killed in the border town, many after being sexually assaulted. A new survey suggests that Mexican women are not safe in their homes either. Nearly half of the nation's women said they suffered some form of domestic aggression in the past year, according to a survey of 57,000 families. Nearly one in ten experienced physical violence and 7.8 percent sexual violence.

Reprinted and adapted from "News Flash" (<http://www.fvpf.org/newsflash>), an online newsletter of the Family Violence Prevention Fund.

Looking Back . . . Forging Ahead

True Stories of God's faithfulness through darkest moments

J ended up in an abusive marriage in 1997. I married too quickly without knowing much about my husband after becoming pregnant.

On our honeymoon, I found out that he was not quite the prince charming I thought he was. That was when it all started—first yelling, silent treatments, constant criticism.

When I was five months pregnant, he became so enraged over the way I cleaned the bathtub that he pinned me behind the door. He was 6'1" tall, weighing 250 pounds, and I was 4'11" tall, weighing 130 pounds. That was only one month into our marriage!

I sought counseling and told him I would leave if he didn't seek help. He went to counseling, but quit because he felt the counselor only cared about me and thought we were "all against him."

After that one incident, he learned he could not physically harm me without losing me, so all the abuse turned into emotional, financial, verbal, and any other way he could control me.

His depressive episodes became more and more frequent. He lost three jobs, slept most of the time, and yet still found ways to put me down. If I asked for help around the house or with the children, he called me a nag or a bad mother.

I was working 40 hours per week, raising two children, caring for all the housework, finances, and him.

During our fifth year of marriage, after the birth of our second child, I felt I could stand it no longer. I was desperate.

One Sunday morning as he lay sleeping, I took my children to the church affiliated with their daycare center. Within weeks, I was saved. This made the abuse worse. I was now "one of those."

I wasn't allowed to play Christian music or read scripture. He threatened me that I had better not drag "his" kids to the altar.

I prayed and prayed for my husband, knowing it was in God's power to change him. But after a fight about money he decided to leave the house, check into a hotel, and take his own life.

That event forever changed my family. I'm so grateful that in his insanity, he did not choose to take me or the children with him.

While God did not cause my husband's suicide, I do believe that he allowed it. And I do believe He is going to use what happened to me and my children to work to the benefit of His kingdom.

I have felt the calling of the Holy Spirit to minister to other women being abused or who are married to men with a mental illness. I have to work a full-time job to support my family, and I was left with over \$40,000 in debt and no life insurance.

My dream would be to counsel wounded women and help them rest in the arms of the Father who loves them.

He is my counselor and my comforter. Through my husband's tragic death, He has brought peace and joy into my life and into the lives of my children.

Trish

We need YOUR story!

Tell us how God has helped you in a difficult situation.

Your story may be the encouragement someone else needs!

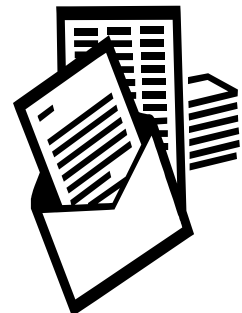
You may remain anonymous if you wish when your story is published.

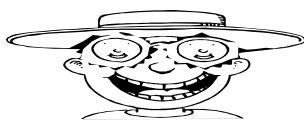
Mail articles (850 words or less) to:

**FOCUS
P. O. Box 323,
Hanson, KY 42413**

or

email Focus2@bellsouth.net





Just For Fun

Good vs Evil on Diets

And God populated the earth with broccoli and cauliflower and spinach and green and yellow vegetables of all kinds so Man and Woman would live long and healthy lives. And Satan created McDonald's. And McDonald's brought forth the 99 cent double-cheeseburger. And Satan said to Man, "You want fries with that?" And Man said, "Super-size them." And Man gained pounds.

And God created the healthful yogurt that Woman might keep her figure that Man found so fair. And Satan froze the yogurt and he brought forth chocolate, nuts, and brightly colored sprinkle candy to put on the yogurt. And Woman gained pounds.

And God said, "Try my crispy fresh salad." And Satan brought forth creamy dressings, bacon bits, and shredded cheese. And there was ice cream for dessert. And Woman gained pounds.

And God said, "I have sent you heart healthy vegetables and olive oil with which to cook them." And Satan brought forth chicken-fried steak from Cracker Barrel so big it needed its own platter. And Man gained pounds, and his bad cholesterol went through the roof!

And God brought forth running shoes and Man resolved to lose those extra pounds. And Satan brought forth cable TV with remote control so Man would not have to toil to change channels between ESPN and ESPN2. And Man gained pounds.

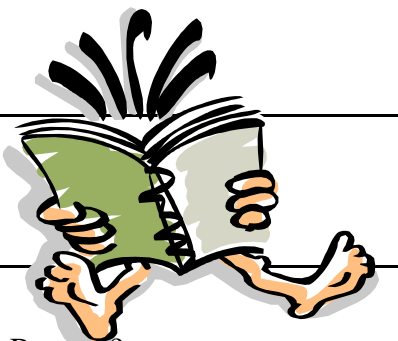
And God said, "You're running up the score, Devil." And God brought forth the potato, a vegetable naturally low in fat and brimming with nutrition. And Satan peeled off the healthful skin and sliced the starchy center into chips and deep-fried them. And he created sour cream dip also. And Man clutched his remote control and ate the potato chips swaddled in cholesterol. And Satan saw and said, "It is good." And Man went into cardiac arrest.

And God sighed and created quadruple bypass surgery . . .
and Satan created HMOs!

Author unknown

Book Review

by Brenda Branson



Who's Pushing Your Buttons?

by Dr. John Townsend

Do you have a difficult person in your life who drives you crazy? Of course you do! Instead of giving up on the person you love, Dr. Townsend offers hope and practical help. He writes, "Difficult, button-pushing people can and do change. God has been in the business of changing difficult people for eons."

This book points you to God as the source of all reconciliation and growth. You will learn how to detach from the hurtful parts of your button pusher and celebrate the good parts, how to set limits, take control, and stop the stress.

Recipe of the Month

Mesclun Salad with Cranberries and Avocado

2 (5 oz.) bags gourmet mixed
salad greens with herbs

2 ripe avocados, coarsely
chopped

1 cup walnut halves, toasted

3/4 cup dried cranberries

1/2 cup blush wine vinaigrette

1/4 tsp. freshly ground pepper

Toss salad greens, avocado,
walnuts, and cranberries in a
serving bowl.

Lightly dress salad with desired
amount of vinaigrette. Toss
gently to coat.

Sprinkle with pepper. Toss
again before serving.

Yield: 6 servings

Recipe from

*"Christmas with Southern Living
2004"*

Three Ways Women React to Domestic Violence

by Donald Stewart

Passively

- A passive woman says nothing and allows the abuse to continue.
- She becomes the abuser's enabler.
- She grows weaker and the abuser grows stronger.
- Her passivity prolongs the loss of her own honor and dignity, and encourages the abuse to continue.

Aggressively

- An abused woman has every right to be angry at her husband, but far too often, her righteous anger deteriorates into a sinful rage that seeks revenge.
- Her response might include anything from filing for divorce to using violence against her husband.
- There are many women in prison in the U.S. today because they killed their abusive husbands, not out of self-defense, but out of retaliation.

How should a godly woman react?

- She flees to a place of refuge when the time is right.
- She exposes her husband's sinful bullying behavior by reporting him to the police, her pastor, and her family.
- She walks in a way that enables the heart of God to be revealed through her to her sinful husband.
- She challenges him from a position of safety.
- She remains steadfast in her dependence on God.
- She remains innocent of all wrongdoing as she participates in the process of holding her husband accountable for his wicked behavior.
- Although she is rightfully afraid of him, she breaks free from the bonds of fear so that her life is not controlled by fear.
- She does not retaliate by allowing her anger to become sinful. Instead, she trusts God to bring about justice for her in His time.
- She does not let her husband off the hook easily and allows the criminal justice system to impose on him whatever punishment they see fit. This means that if he is arrested, she shouldn't bail him out of jail. If a restraining order is issued, she shouldn't secretly let him back in the house.

Detective Sgt. Don Stewart is the author of "Refuge—A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence & Abuse." He is a veteran officer of the sheriff's department in Green Bay, WI (now retired), and certified by the federal government to train other police officers and health care professionals to respond to domestic violence.

Will You Help?

- Approximately \$2,400 is needed *each month* to provide salaries for Paula and Brenda, who are now working full-time with FOCUS. Only \$250 per month is currently being pledged. Please consider making a monthly pledge for this immediate need.
- If 3,000 people pledged \$10 per month, we would have funding to hire much-needed staff, maintain IL and KY Women's Centers, expand distribution of literature world-wide, and provide transitional housing without government funding or grants.
- Shop online at www.igive.com at your favorite stores (including Dell Computers; brand-name clothing stores and outlets; favorite books, electronics, and appliance stores, etc.). Designate FOCUS Ministries as your favorite charity and we will receive a percentage of the amount you spend online.
- When you need to buy a **book or CD**, log on to our new website at focusministries1.org and go to "Recommended Books." We have a link to Amazon.com from which you can order any book or CD (just click on Amazon logo) and FOCUS will receive a percentage of the proceeds.

Did you know donations can now be made online at www.focusministries1.org?

Words That Heal

I waited patiently for the LORD;
and he inclined unto me, and heard
my cry.

He brought me up also out of an
horrible pit, out of the miry clay,
and set my feet upon a rock, and
established my goings.

And He hath put a new song in my
mouth, even praise unto our God.

Psalm 40:1-3

Partners In Ministry

- YES! I would like to receive FOCUS Newsletter each month for 1 year at the rate of \$15 per year.
- I want to partner with FOCUS to educate churches and individuals about domestic violence and help families suffering from the trauma of abuse. Here is my faith promise of \$_____ per month as God provides. Here is my one-time donation of \$_____ to use where most needed.
- I want to support the Women's Centers in KY and IL and provide salaries for directors and staff. Here is my donation of \$_____ or my monthly pledge of \$_____.
- Enclosed is my gift of \$_____ to provide complimentary copies of FOCUS Newsletter to women and organizations who cannot afford a subscription.
- Count on me to be a prayer warrior for this ministry. Please send me specific requests.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413



FOCUS
P. O. Box 323
Hanson, KY 42413

O Lord, You Alone Are My Hope! Psalm 71:5 NLT

The Princess and the Predator

continued from Vol. 9 Issue 10

... A True Story of God's Grace

He was a master of manipulation—using his unsuspecting son and crocodile tears to get the attention of a lawyer in the library of the county court house.

Ron had two attorneys during the course of the custody battle—a woman who was gullible to Ron's charm until she experienced his rage, and a man who quickly resigned when he observed Ron's irrational behavior.

Since he was without counsel, Ron would either have to represent himself or find another unsuspecting lawyer who would buy his victim routine. Thus, he took his young son to the law library and set the scene to snag a sucker.

This time, however, Ron met his match. An elderly gentleman who appeared as harmless as a doting grandfather offered his legal services . . . for a fee, of course.

The victimizer (Ron) was being victimized, and he didn't even see it coming. Even though Ron had never owned a credit card, the old gentleman convinced him to procure two cards and max them to the limit in payment for his retainer. It was a brilliant move by a crafty lawyer to con a desperate man.

The dynamics between the two men amazed Glenda. She had known Ron to be a controlling, abusive man who arrogantly delighted in dominating others. It was surprising to see Ron being controlled and dominated by another man

who used verbal abuse and intimidation to keep him in line.

The first tactic of Ron's new lawyer was to discredit and disqualify Glenda's attorney by accusing her of coercing Ron to sign the parenting agreement. In order to defend herself against these trumped-up charges, she would have to resign the case. That left Glenda without legal counsel and no money to hire another attorney.

It all happened so fast . . . one minute Glenda was represented by one of the best attorneys in the county, and the next minute she was all alone without counsel. What had been previously agreed upon, signed and settled was now being challenged. It was not fair!

Ron's attorney knew Glenda had no legal training and thought she would be easily intimidated. It was probably Ron's description of her that gave his attorney confidence that he could easily chew her up and spit her out in the courtroom arena.

Glenda was easily intimidated, passive, compliant, and naïve. *At least she used to be.* She was a compliant child who rarely rebelled or went against her parents' wishes. She looked for the good in everyone, and too easily trusted people who claimed to be reliable and trustworthy. She had been taught to be submissive, loyal, gentle, kind, and to never, never rock the boat or question authority.

It was painful to admit how many years she had remained passive, allowing evil to gain a foothold in her life. Although she did not fall into a pit of despair due to her own addictions or sinful choices, she wore a neon sign on her back that said, "Push me in—I won't fight back."

But in the last five years, Glenda began to change. She stopped denying and hiding the abuse taking place in her home and began to seek help. When God opened her eyes and carried her out of the pit in which she had been entrenched, the first breath of freedom revitalized her spirit and renewed her confidence.

She was no longer the mousy, fearful victim who could be silenced by a look or threatened by words. She had a boldness that did not come from assertiveness training, but from the Spirit of God within who said, "*I will fight for you, and you will hold your peace.*" (Exodus 14:14)

Ron's attorney had not been introduced to the new Glenda, so he was in for quite a shock when he invited her to his office for a pre-trial meeting in which this fat cat hoped to produce fear and trembling in the little mousy woman who *dared* defy him.

to be continued . . .