



FOCUS Newsletter

a newsletter for women in difficult relationships, feeling emotionally and spiritually alone

Love Song

Jn the depth of every woman's soul is the longing placed there by God for love and adoration.

The dream of every young princess is for a handsome prince to pursue her, to tell her she is beautiful, and to ravish her body and soul with his love.

(To be honest, it's the dream of every *old* princess as well!)

Even if the handsome prince does come along, it isn't too long before the princess discovers he failed a few courses at "prince school," as he doesn't quite measure up to her ideal knight in shining armor.

A wise princess realizes that perhaps it is not the prince at fault, but the level of her expectations.

Sometimes an imposter prince steals the affections of the princess, and she doesn't find out about the deception until it's too late. By the time she realizes he is a fraud, he has locked her in the dungeon of utter despair where she lives for years without hope.

He tells her she is ugly, and treats her with such disrespect that she begins to believe him. As the vision of her beauty gets trampled by his disgust and contempt, her spirit is broken and her

passion for living grows cold. She survives on the bread and water of crisis living, starving for the love and affection her young heart so desperately craved.

In some instances, the once-upon-a-time princess will simply give up and become the ugly wretch as a self-fulfilling prophecy to the verbal assaults from the faux-prince.

Other more determined, reckless gals will blast their way out of the dungeon and run away with the first guy who looks in her direction. She moves through multiple relationships, still seeking the real prince among the toads. Always searching, but never finding . . .

But one princess found hope in the midst of despair. She would not settle for simply a makeover of the dungeon, but instead sought the fullness of God to fill her empty soul.

She heard the song of the lover of her soul as He pursued her with unrelenting passion:

"I've been waiting . . ." ¹

Her ears perked up! He's really out there—and he's still waiting for me—ME!

Can it be true? Am I hallucinating?

The Lord your God is in your midst . . .

He will rejoice over you with gladness.

He will quiet you by His love.

He will exult over you with loud singing.

Zephaniah 3:17 ESV

His voice was unmistakable—rich with emotion, gentle and powerful at the same time, speaking directly into the depths of her soul, breaking down protective barriers she had erected long ago, awakening desires God himself placed there.

"I've been waiting . . . to dance with you in fields full of colors you have never seen." ¹

Her knees buckled as she collapsed backward into a chair, breathlessly asking herself, "How did he know . . .?"

"How could he know about my unspoken desire to dance intimately with someone who really loves me?"

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How did he know how much I love beautiful flowers, especially those blooming in the springtime?"

"I've been waiting . . . to show you beauty you never dreamed that's always been in you." ¹

She could barely hear the words due to the sounds of her own gut-wrenching sobs. No one had ever told her she was beautiful! In fact, she spent most of her life hearing just the opposite. Never good enough, never pretty enough to be noticed.

Wait . . . did he say beauty has *always* been in me? Where was

it hiding? If it was really there all along, why didn't other people see it and tell me? Everyone can't be blind, can they?

She wondered if He was talking about the "inner" beauty that every mother told her homely daughter to develop. She wasn't so sure she was beautiful on the inside either.

But wait . . . as her sobbing subsided, she realized he was referring to beauty she had never dreamed about—beauty that he knew was there all along.

What must it be like to have someone love you who can look past all the imperfections (inside and outside)? Even more astounding, what would it be like to have someone *tell* you in words and express in actions how beautiful you are? How humbling and exhilarating at the same time! Is it possible for such a person to exist?

Now she was intrigued to hear what he would say next.

"I've been waiting . . . to see you tremble as you're embraced by a world saturated with my love."¹

She was already trembling . . . weeping, and confused by the overwhelming flow of emotions rocking her senses all at once.

She could only imagine what it would feel like to be embraced by someone who thought she was beautiful, who desired to dance with her. If she ever experienced *that* kind of love—a world "saturated" with his love—she would linger for a long time in his embrace. And without a doubt, she would be trembling, but this time it would not be out of fear.

The words of love continued . . .

"I've been waiting . . . to watch you realize what all your longing was for."¹

Until now, she thought her deepest longing was to be Mrs. Prince Charming, to have a loving home with beautiful children, and live out her days with her soul mate.

What was she was missing—besides the fact that the prince either didn't show up at all, or else turned into a toad right after the wedding ceremony?

"If she ever experienced that kind of love—a world "saturated" with his love—she would linger for a long time in his embrace. And without a doubt, she would be trembling, but this time it would not be out of fear."

Oh . . . it suddenly dawned on her that perhaps there wasn't a prince to be found on earth that could satisfy all her longings. She needed a love that no man alive was capable of giving.

The romantic fog was lifting in her brain as she lifted her gaze from the guys on the planet to the King of the kingdom. "It was you!" she exclaimed. "You're the one I've been longing for all this time."

The King's voice became clearer as he sang the next line:

"I've been waiting . . . to show you the thread of grace that ran through all your pain."¹

She knew about pain. It was her daily companion for many years. She believed God had rescued her and restored her to a life of joy and purpose. Now, the one who loved her was asking her to look back to a place she hoped to never go again.

Just a brief memory of the past brought torrents of tears. But this time the pain was lessened by the realization that He was there—hearing every hideous word, watching every assault, grieving every time she numbed her pain with something other than His love (food, work, sleep, TV, drugs, alcohol, shopping, revenge), and grieving that her offender had wounds of his own that needed to be healed.

His voice interrupted her thoughts:

"Every tear you cried dried in the palm of my hand. Every lonely hour was by my side."¹

As she caught a vision of her past pain, it was much more than a sequence of unfor-

tunate events between broken people—it was a brilliant display of grace interspersed between every act of violence, every broken vow, every act of rebellion.

He was there! He was the glimmer of hope, the comfort in the midst of pain who carried her when she was incapable of taking the next step. He was the breath of life that revived her in the midst of depression. He was the redeemer who bought her back from the enemy, who restored the years lost with joy and passion beyond her imagination.

His song became more beautiful with each new verse:

"I've been waiting . . . to let you drink the water of which your greatest joy on earth was just a taste."¹

Without a doubt, her greatest joy was her child—the one person who gave her unconditional love, who did not shrink back because of her appearance, who gave her great joy and fulfillment.

If this earthly love by a child was just a taste of His love, she wondered what a whole glass full would be like. Forget the glass—she wanted to dive into the reservoir and swim around until she was saturated with His love.

She wanted to know this kind of love NOW! But reality brought her back to the sounds of cars on a busy street, children laughing, birds chirping, and phones ringing. For now, she would have to be satisfied with a little taste here and there—the taste of real community, love from children and grandchildren, beautiful spring flowers, oceans, mountains, snowflakes, a wonderful meal with friends, and perhaps even the partnership of a flesh-and-blood prince . . . or not, as God desires.

As she firmly planted her feet back on earth, she lifted her eyes to heaven and listened to the final verse:

"I've been waiting for the day when at last I get to say, 'My Child,' you are finally home!"

Dance with all the strength that you can find, for you are finally home."¹

She fell asleep, smiling, longing, imagining the words to the personal love song He would sing to her when she finally arrived home.

¹ Words by Todd Agnew (CD available in book entitled "The Martyr's Song" by Ted Dekker)

Letters/E-Mail



In The News . . .

Dear FOCUS,

I am a pastor's wife. Please suggest some tips to handle or adjust to my husband who degrades me in front of the congregation and relatives. But I'm sure he loves me a lot.

—A heart-broken and confused pastor's wife

Editor's Note: This plea from a pastor's wife is one of many we receive. Domestic violence is not only entrenched in the congregation, but it exists in many pastor's homes. How can the body be led if the head is sick?

The enemy of our souls has blinded many church leaders to place more emphasis on pursuing legalism and doctrine than in pursuing Jesus. Instead of feeding the souls of the flock with the compassion and grace of Christ, they puff themselves up with knowledge and dispense edicts and opinions which tear down instead of build up. Instead of reflecting Jesus to their families, they become demanding tyrants who feel entitled to special treatment. They feel justified in demeaning and punishing anyone who fails to meet their self-imposed law.

It breaks our hearts every time we hear of this tragedy in the home, and especially in the pastor's home. It must also break the heart of God. Pray for us as we minister to so many who are hurting.

GA—A new nine-person police unit in Cobb County will specialize in domestic violence, reports the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. **“Nearly 40 percent of our homicides were domestic-related,”** Chief George Hatfield said in explaining the move. Comprised of six investigators, two supervisors and a clerk, the new unit will work on stalking and domestic and family violence cases. DeKalb County created a similar domestic violence unit in January.

TN—Domestic violence is costing the state approximately \$174 million a year in tangible costs, finds a report from the Tennessee Economic Council on Women. It finds that domestic violence in the workplace is escalating, with companies in the state losing at least \$10 million in paid work time to abuse each year. Domestic violence-related health care costs are \$33 million and prison costs for domestic violence murders are \$15 million each year.

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

FOCUS Support Groups

- Eustis, **FL**—Saturdays 10 a.m. to Noon. Call Sherry at 352-434-9310
- Savannah, **GA**—Saturdays. Call Patty Jean at 912-629-4720
- Aurora, **IL**—Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. Call Brenda at 630-370-0138.
- Tinley Park, **IL**—Tuesdays at 7 p.m. Call Stephanie at 708-503-4470.
- Wheaton, **IL**—1st and 3rd Saturday at 9:30 a.m. Call Joan at 630-690-0976.
- Wood Dale, **IL**—2nd Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Call Paula at 630-595-7023.
- Lexington, **KY**—Saturdays at 9 a.m. Call Leslie at 859-224-1619 (x 143).
- Madisonville, **KY**—Thursdays at 6 p.m. Call Brenda at 270-825-2423.
- St. Louis, **MO**—Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. Call Sylvia at 314-918-7647
- Olmstead Falls, **OH**—Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Call Sally at 440-234-8430
- Knoxville, **TN**—Tuesday at 7 p.m. Call Roberta at 865-470-2820 (x226).

If you are interested in starting a support group in your area, contact Paula Silva at 630-595-7023.

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When Struggles Come . . . Where is God?

By Eileen Warren, CADC III, CCS I

Part One: Stay in Sacred Bondage

Think with me for a moment of Jesse sending his young son David out to the fields to shepherd a small flock of sheep. (Read 1 Samuel 16:1-18:1)

We all might imagine a father saying something like this, "Son, remember you are a small boy. If a wild animal attacks, run! Save yourself. We can always replace a few sheep; I can't replace you."

However, Jesse did not say *those* words to David. Jesse sent him out with a blessing or prayer that perhaps went like this: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you." (Numbers 6:24-25).

Jesse surrendered everything he valued (even his own son) to God's plan in a way that is almost unimaginable to me. (1 Samuel 17:20). Jesse's natural tie to this life, to his sons, to his possessions, and even to his sheep was transformed through sacred bondage.

(Sacred: "dedicated to a deity" [God] Microsoft Word Dictionary # 1)

Then we have David, a young teenager, whom we might imagine responding to Jesse something like this: "You expect me to do WHAT? Tend sheep. NO WAY! You couldn't PAY me to do that. It's DANGEROUS out there. Send a servant, not *me*. Have you forgotten who *I* am?"

However, David did not say *those* words to Jesse. David was aware of his father's need and perhaps even came to Jesse with words like:

"Father, I know that you need my help; *here am I, send me.*" (Isaiah 6:8)

There was a strong bond of love and respect between Jesse and his sons, and as a result David's deepest passion was in unity with his father, and his father's passions were in unity with God. These were deep relationships.

David's natural desire to have his own way was *transformed* (not just conformed) through sacred bondage.

(Sacred: "not to be challenged or disrespected" Microsoft Word Dictionary # 5)

Samuel, Saul, Jesse, and even Eliab never even considered David as the one the Lord would ultimately choose. David was so far down on the list he was almost forgotten (verses 6-11). Samuel was on a mission—the outcome that only God knew and only God controlled.

Samuel was forced to stop and wait until God began to speak (verses 6-11). The results were totally unexpected. There was something special about David's *heart* that caught God's attention. Samuel, Saul, Jesse, and Eliab expected events to transpire that were immediately transformed through sacred bondage.

(Sacred: "worthy of or regarded with religious veneration, worship, and respect" Microsoft Word Dictionary # 3)

It is in the early months and years (generally before age three) that a child securely bonds to his/her parents. Bonding is the most crucial developmental stage of infancy and early childhood, and/or the lack is perhaps the

most emotionally destructive such as in *Failure to Thrive* infants and *Reactive Attachment Disordered* children. There are several critical elements that help to form a "secure" bond of attachment such as consistent love, nurturance, and needs being met timely and adequately (Sroufe & Waters, 1997).

In the same way human bonding affects children, the lack of sacred bonding affects our relationship with God. The *Failure to Thrive Christian* may not have ever established a secure bond with God. This bonding provides our only authentic source of love and nurturance, and our every need becomes met timely and adequately. (Read *Inside Out* by Larry Crabb for concepts on *crucial and critical longings*.)

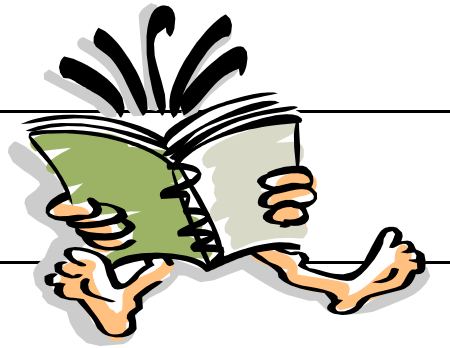
The treatment for children who lack bonding is to wrap them (swaddle) and hold them until they can begin to take in the love a parent offers (often an adopted parent). Ponder the infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes bonding to earthly parents, Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:7).

When a child is wrapped tightly, he/she can't kick and flail. The child is held in a very defenseless and vulnerable position until it completely surrenders. Feelings of love, defenseless, helplessness, vulnerability, fear and surrender work together in very complex sequences to solidify human bonding.

Christians can (and actually do) feel much like an infant who is desperately flailing about, unable to take in comfort, wanting to be loved, and needing to feel safe but unable to sustain it (bonding), especially under stress.

(Continued on page 6)

Book Review



The Martyr's Song

by Ted Dekker

How would life be different if you viewed beauty through God's eyes? Do you have to wait until you get to heaven to see the beauty and potential God placed into you at your birth?

This book is a novel about a peaceful Bosnian village which was disrupted by a group of hate-filled soldiers at the end of World War II. Although the violence is graphic, the view into heaven is breathtaking.

This is a story within a story that grips the reader from the very first page. The story begins in 1964 in Atlanta, GA where a school girl struggles with hating herself because she is ugly. She encounters a strange woman who gives her a card that reads:

"You think physical beauty is important? Come to my flower shop tomorrow and I will make you beautiful."

She explains, *"And I'm not speaking of inner beauty, child. I can change the way you look with a power beyond your comprehension."*

There is a hidden treasure in this book—a CD with a song written and sung by Todd Agnew, also called "The Martyr's Song." The song itself is priceless!



Recipe of the Month

Tricolor Mexican Bean Salad

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3 T. lemon juice | 1/2 celery rib, minced |
| 3 T. lime juice | 3 scallions, thinly sliced |
| 2 Large garlic cloves, crushed | 1/3 cup fresh cilantro, chopped |
| 1 T. chili powder | 2 tomatoes, seeded and chopped |
| 1 tsp. ground cumin | Puree lemon and lime juices, garlic, chili powder, cumin, salt, and red pepper flakes in blender until smooth. Add oil in steady stream until incorporated. |
| 1 tsp. salt | Place corn, beans, bell pepper, celery, scallions and cilantro in serving bowl. Pour dressing over salad and toss well. Cover and refrigerate for at least two hours or overnight. |
| 1/4 tsp. hot red pepper flakes | Just before serving, stir in tomatoes and season with salt to taste. |
| 1/2 cup olive oil | |
| 2 ears corn, boiled and kernels cut off | |
| 1 (16 oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed | |
| 1 large yellow bell pepper, chopped | |

Words That Heal



Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion . . .

Rejoice with all your heart!

The Lord has taken away the judgments against you. He has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst. You shall never again fear evil.

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save.

He will rejoice over you with gladness;

He will quiet you by His love.

He will exult over you with loud singing.

Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors.

And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.

Zephaniah 3:14-15, 17-19 ESV

When Struggles Come . . . Where is God?

(Continued from page 4)

God offers each of us adoption into His family. He will swaddle you and He is able (and committed) to form a secure bond of love with you (Romans 8:15).

Staying in sacred bondage is where a radical transformation of our normal value systems, of our normal desires, and of our normal expectations begins to take place. Sacred bonding may feel like we are dying (and in a way we are) as we completely (100%) put ourselves in a position of surrender (helpless and vulnerable) to Him. The results are guaranteed that we will experience (have it to the full) His love, nurturance and our needs met timely and adequately.

In my own struggle I came to realize that I had a 10% formula for conforming to the Christian life. I figured out if I gave about 10% of my income and spent about 10% of my time in prayer, Bible study, and church attendance that was “good enough” (and even “better than” most Christians I knew).

I viewed *doing* these things as an investment in my spiritual life that implied when a crisis came I would have “enough” savings to “cash in.” I was even arrogant enough to believe that God “owed” me some interest on these investments. I felt entitled to have a life that looked like all the other successful, happy, and flourishing people that seemed to be all around me.

When my crisis hit, my heart struggled with resentment toward God as I cried, “I don’t deserve this.” I tried to convince myself it was *normal* to feel the way I did. In my heart I knew I didn’t want supernatural *strength* or *courage* like David had received.

I didn’t want the ability to get through this trial . . . The truth is *I didn’t want the trial*.

I wanted God’s love, but I was flailing around and feeling insecure and anxious. As I began to embrace the concept of sacred bondage, I began to do the painful work of surrendering by being defenseless and vulnerable. God wrapped me up and held me tightly. His heartbeat and mine began to beat in a rhythm that bonded my possessions, my desires, and my purpose to His. I internalized His love, attention, and affection, and the results have been transformational. I deeply desire to *stay in sacred bondage*.

How is your bond? The story of David continues in 1 Samuel 18:1: “. . . *And David met Jonathan and immediately there was a bond of love between them . . . and they became the best of friends.*”

All love flows from our primary ability to bond. Do you have an insecure attachment where you keep trying to find satisfaction and security in how many flocks of sheep you own?

Do you have an anxious attachment where you can’t believe God would ask you to face danger by tending his sheep?

Do you have a total lack of attachment where God really doesn’t factor into your plans or relationships?

The hard work of bonding is to stay in any difficult situation with *sacred surrender* (where everything belongs to God), *sacred unity* (where our desires come from God) and *sacred anticipation* (where we wait until God moves).

You may need help to *stay in sacred bondage* where you will find an authentic source of love, security, affection, and

most of all, God Himself. The kind of bonding I have been suggesting may require help in the form of spiritual direction or Christian counseling. It would be my joy to help on this journey.

Peter said (1 Peter 1:7): “These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (A radical and unnatural response to our struggles and difficulties . . . is worship.)

“Father, you are our perfect parent, and your love is life-giving. May we experience Your presence in a way that transcends our difficulties and struggles into sacred bondage. May we stay swaddled and held until we become calm and secure.”

Here are a list of words to ponder. Listen to what they may say to your own heart:

- Sacred Bondage
- Ownership
- Dedication
- Love
- Surrender
- Secure
- Strength
- Courage
- Vulnerable

If you have thoughts or comments about this devotional, email Eileen Warren at:

eileen@mwacounseling.com



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 FOCUS Women's Centers and Homes of Refuge and provide salaries for 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

Mail to FOCUS, P. O. Box 323, Hanson, KY 42413

Upcoming Events

- **July 10-19**—Trip to Colorado Springs (**School of Spiritual Direction**) for Jenny, Paula, and Brenda.
- **August 10-12**—**Leadership Summit** at Willow Creek, Barrington, IL for FOCUS Board Members.
- **Sept. 9**—**“Restoring the Hope”** Conference for Women, Villa Park, IL. Keynote speaker: **Rachael Crabb**. Contact Paula Silva at 630-595-7023 to register, or register online at www.focusministries1.org.
- **Oct. 10-17**—**AACC Conference** in Denver, CO (tentative)

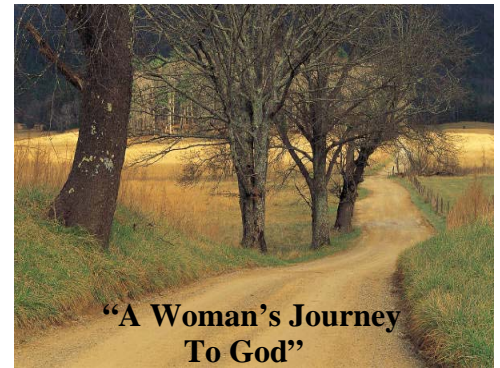
If you would like the FOCUS team to come to your church for a women's retreat (see above), seminar on domestic violence, or other speaking engagement, please contact us as soon as possible as our calendar for 2006 is quickly filling up!

Contact Brenda at 270-825-2423 or Paula at 630-595-7023 or by email at contactus@focusministries1.org.

If your church would like on-site training to help you minister to families dealing with domestic violence, please contact us by email at:

contactus@focusministries1.org

or call 270-825-2423.



**“A Woman's Journey
To God”**

A weekend retreat for women in pursuit of God

NEW: Virtual Office!

Join our free virtual office (forums, Bible search, lots of links and free downloads) by going to our website: Focusministries1.org and signing up. You can communicate with others and us on lots of interesting topics!



FOCUS Ministries, Inc.
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Focusministries1.org

Our mission is to encourage women who are struggling in difficult circumstances to find strength and hope in Jesus Christ. “O Lord, you alone are my hope.” Psalm 71:5 NLT

Endorsement:

“These women are called, prepared, and surrendered to their crucial ministry. The stamp of God is on their lives and work. It’s my prayer that God will use their gifts across the world to draw thousands of women to the hope that Christ provides. This is one ministry I’m sold on.” **Dr. Larry Crabb**, New Way Ministries

Funding:

FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization 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, transitional housing, 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.

Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- **Gravel** for driveway at KY Women’s Center
- **New furnace and air conditioner** at KY Women’s Center—approximately \$2,000.
- **Replacement windows** at KY Women’s Center
- **Facility** in western suburbs of Chicago to house IL Women’s Center
- Professional **grant writer**

Prayer Requests:

- Pray for individuals, churches, and businesses to commit to **monthly giving**.
- Pray for funding to purchase **school building** in Madisonville, KY (\$50,000) for expanded women’s center and transitional housing.
- Pray for **Sylva Neubauer** and the startup of a FOCUS branch office and support group in St. Louis, Missouri.
- Pray for God to send **people** alongside us who have expertise in

development, fundraising, public relations, and grant writing.

- Pray for **property** near Elmhurst, IL to be donated for IL Women’s Center and transitional housing.
- Pray for **funding** to send Paula, Brenda, and Jenny to Advanced School of Spiritual Direction in Colorado Springs (July 2006).
- Pray for **property** to be donated for FOCUS Women’s Retreat Center.

- Pray for **houses** in IL, KY, and MO to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- Pray for funding to provide **scholarships** for women to attend our weekend retreat, “A Woman’s Journey to God,” and our “Train the Trainer” seminar for support group leaders.
- Pray for more **invitations** from churches to train pastors, staff, and congregations about domestic violence.

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