

Where's God?

March/April 2009

Have you ever been in a desert place in your journey with God wandering around in circles just existing day to day? Has there been the promise of a better day, but the way is unclear and time seems endless?

Your strength and energy is just enough for the day, but life seems meaningless without purpose. You know God is there somewhere, but His presence seems faint. Anxiety heightens. Anger towards God's seemingly lack of intervention arises within.

In the midst of uncertainty, you cry out, "God, if you would just give me clear direction I will follow you." All you hear is the deafening silence as you wait for the darkness of the night to pass. The suffocating feeling of loneliness and abandonment encompasses you.

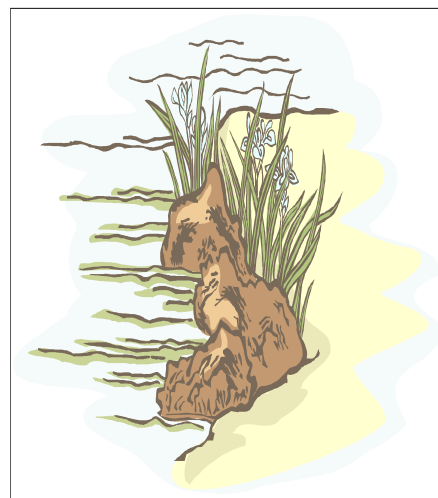
Panic begins to enter in as racing thoughts permeate your mind. "Is this the way it will always be?", you ask. Little by little pieces of your hope of a better day begin to whittle away.

- Hope of your relationship getting better.
- Hope that there is a purpose for this desert time.
- Hope that there is still a God who cares and wants the best for you.
- Hope there is a divine plan.

During this relentless time, your voice is not heard by others. Your energy is drained having to constantly prove your value. Responsibilities of everyday life weighs you down and becomes overwhelming. High expectations from others makes you feel you are not measuring up.

Your heart is broken by past experiences. Grief over your losses of significant relationships engulf you. Shattered dreams lie crumbled on the floor. Reality is hard to face.

It is at these times that we can find comfort in scripture. In Psalm 27:14 it says, *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.* The Lord is always working even if we cannot see it. These are times of strengthening our faith and trusting God moment by



moment that in time He will reveal His purposes.

As we read in scripture, Joshua had a desert experience that prepared him to become the leader of the Israelite people after Moses' death. Joshua experienced the loss of a friend, one in which he worked side by side on a daily basis. Having no home, he along with the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years.

He had seen the power of God over and over again giving provision and protection for the Israelite people from the time they left Egypt to wander in the desert to the fulfillment of God's promise to the Israelites.

He saw God minister justice to those who were disobedient.

Joshua knew the Israelites would enter the Promised Land as God said, but he did not know when that would occur. He like the others had waited forty years yet he still believed it would happen. God had been preparing Joshua to fulfill His purposes.

In the waiting time, God is molding and shaping us to be His vessel preparing us for His purposes. In the busyness of life, we need to take time to “be”.

Be still before God
Be in His presence
Be open to hearing His voice
Be in God’s Word
Be with God’s people

After Moses’ death, the Lord told Joshua to get ready to cross the Jordan River to the land that was promised. Can you imagine what was going through Joshua’s mind? It could have been a range of emotions from utter excitement to utter terror of the unknown. He had to be overwhelmed by all the responsibilities with no co-leader to help, yet he was not alone.

The Lord reassured him. *No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.*

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to

No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Joshua 1: 5 NIV

*their forefathers to give them. **Be strong and very courageous. . . Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged for the Lord, your God, will be with you wherever you go.***
 Joshua 1:5-9 NIV.

Joshua was instructed by the Lord. As the Israelites approached the Jordan River at **flood stage**, the priests with the ark of the covenant were to step into the water’s edge and then God would make a way. As the priest’s feet touched the river, the waters from upstream stopped flowing. The look on their faces must have been one of awe and amazement. Once again they had experienced the power and provision of God.

The priests with the ark of the covenant stood firm in the **middle** of the Jordan River on dry ground as the Israelites crossed over to the Promised Land. A member from each of the twelve tribes of Israel were instructed to pick up a stone from the **middle** of the river and bring it to the other shore.

The stones were heavy enough that they had to be carried on their shoulders. These stones were then placed together where they camped as a memorial of what God had done for his people. Each future generation would be reminded of God’s faithfulness.

In the **middle** of the uncertainty of life, God is there. When we are overcome with life’s storms, God is there. When dreams are shattered and losses engulf us, God is there. When life seems bleak and the path unclear, God is there.

He’s parting the flood waters, standing in the middle, preventing the waters from overtaking us, providing a firm ground to stand, and making a way where there seems to be no way. God proves over and over again His faithfulness and love for us.

We need to allow God to work in our lives and to trust Him remembering what He has done for us.

What memorial stones have you collected in your journey with God? Take time to list God’s miracles, wonders, and provision on a daily basis . As you do, you will be more keenly aware of God’s presence in your life and His compassion for you.

Be strong and courageous for our God goes before you.

By Paula Silva



Letters/E-Mail

Dear FOCUS:

I am interested in receiving information about starting a support group. I left a physically and emotionally abusive "Christian" marriage 3 years ago. I reached out to the church, no one gave me support. They made excuses for him and told me that God wanted families together. I was treated as if I was the problem, no one EVER told him he was wrong. When I finally left him they gave him leadership positions at the church.

It has been in my heart to start a ministry to help women in churches. While I was looking for information I came upon your website. I would like to know what steps to take and what materials to buy. Thank you.

—Email

Editorial Note:

Unfortunately in our Christian community, this email reflects the typical response by churches. We need godly men who will walk alongside these abusive men and hold them accountable.



Words That Heal

I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalm 121:1-8 NIV

FOCUS Support Groups

- Conway, **AR**
Sundays 3 p.m.
- Brandon, **FL**
The second and fourth Saturday of each month
- Eustis, **FL**
Saturdays 10 a.m. to Noon.
- Naperville, **IL**
Thursday evenings 7-8 p.m.
- Glen Ellyn, **IL**
Third Monday of every month
- Wheaton, **IL**
The first & third Saturday 9:30 a.m.
- Wood Dale, **IL**
Second Thursday at 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.
- Lexington, **KY**
Saturdays at 9 a.m.
- Akron, **OH**
The second and fourth Thursday of every month at 6:30 p.m.
- Findlay, **OH** The second Thursday of every month 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
- Olmsted Falls, **OH**
Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
- Felton, **PA** The second Thursday of
- each month 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
- Knoxville, **TN**
Tuesday at 7 p.m.
- Lynnwood, **WA**
Wednesdays 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- Weston, **WI**
Thursdays 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

If you are interested in information about a particular support group or would like to start a support group in your area, contact Paula Silva at 630-595-7023 or paula@focusministries1.org..

Heart Piercing Wounds

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. James 19-20 NIV

All of us have from time to time said things that we later regret. Emotions run high and anger comes to the surface. There are, though, individuals who consistently remain in a pattern of behavior using words to destroy others out of a sense of entitlement, superiority, and power. In James 3:6 we find, *The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

These abusive people can even profess to be "Christians" using this mask to cover up what is really in their heart. *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. James 3:9-10 NIV*

When confronted with a verbally abusive person, we have a tendency to explain or defend ourselves over and over again hoping to prove that their statements are false. This only gives the abusive person more ammunition to use against the victim.

In Patricia Evans' book, *The Verbally Abusive Relationships*, she states, "If you are encountering abuse and feel that if you could explain things, he'd understand, remember this: If someone started throwing rocks through your windows, you would be more inclined to tell him to stop than you would be to explain to him why he shouldn't throw rocks. Verbal abuse is like

a rock thrown through your window." Verbal abuse shatters the window (our spirit) of our heart into pieces. Eventually we will no longer know who we are.

Therefore it is critical to identify the categories of verbal abuse.

- ★ **Name Calling**—The abuser uses derogatory names.
- ★ **Abusive Anger**—The abuser exhibits sudden outburst of anger which are usually irrational and unexpected.
- ★ **Threatening**—The abuser knows the victim's greatest fears and uses these to intimidate and keep control.
- ★ **Withholding**—The abuser refuses to acknowledge the victim's thoughts and feelings while remaining aloof, silent, and emotionally distant.
- ★ **Countering**—The abuser refutes the victims perceptions, thoughts, opinions, feelings, and life experiences usually stating the opposite viewpoint. This causes the victim to not trust her own perceptions.
- ★ **Discounting**—The abuser invalidates denies, and distorts the victim's perceptions, feelings and thoughts stating; *You're too sensitive. You make a big deal out of everything. . .*
- ★ **Blocking and Diverting**—The abuser either refuses to communicate or controls what is to be discussed. Sometimes information is withheld or the topic of discussion is suddenly switched to a new topic other than the original. This puts the victim into a position of defending herself. *You're such a nag. You're always trying to start*

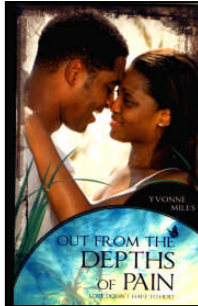
something. These are common statements used to block or divert.

- ★ **Accusing and Blaming**—The abuser blames the victim for his anger and problems. He accuses the victim of doing something wrong.
- ★ **Judging and Criticizing**—The abuser consistently judges, criticizes, and negates the victim's feelings, thoughts, opinions, and actions.
- ★ **Trivializing**—The abuser considers the accomplishments, talents, abilities, and statements as insignificant.
- ★ **Undermining**—The abuser undermines the victim's decisions especially parental decision regarding rules and consequences given to children.
- ★ **Ordering**—The abuser demands instead of asking politely.
- ★ **Denial**—The abuser denies that he is abusive by saying statements like: *I never said that. That never happened.*
- ★ **Forgetting**—The abuser denies he said or did something even if it happened recently.

Responding to verbal abuse in appropriate ways is a difficult task. Our tendency is to become defensive and angry ourselves. This only adds fuel to the fire. Setting boundaries such as telling the abuser to stop, walking away or becoming emotionally distant are appropriate responses for a victim who remains in the relationship.

By Paula Silva

Book Review



OUT of the DEPTHS of PAIN By Yvonne Miles

From the honeymoon on, Leah's life becomes a nightmare. After she becomes pregnant with David's child, she feels an obligation to stay in her unhealthy marriage.

When she finally decides to turn the tables on David, a way of escape presents itself, allowing her to build a new life with her son.

However her memories of the past threaten to hold her back from finding true love with Christian, a Christian man who wants to bring her out from the depths of pain by helping her find her way to God.

This Christian novel is an example of God's redeeming love.



SAND AND STONE

Two friends were walking through the desert.

During one point in the journey, they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other one in the face.

The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, she wrote in the sand:

"Today, my best friend slapped me in the face."

They kept on walking until they found an oasis. They decided to go swimming.

The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning. But the friend saved her.

After she recovered from the near drowning, she wrote on a stone:

"Today, my best friend saved my life."

The friend who had slapped and saved her best friend asked, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand. And now, you write on the stone. Why?"

The friend replied, "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in the sand, where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away.

"But when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

Learn to write your hurts in the sand and to carve your blessings in stone.

Author Unknown

AllWorship.com

Author, Editor and Publisher: Paula Silva
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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.

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 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126.** 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.



Behind the Mask

"O, Lord, You alone are my hope." Psalm 71:5

FOCUS Ministries Fundraiser Luncheon and Silent Auction

October 17, 2009

Diplomat West Banquet Hall

681 W. North Avenue

Elmhurst, IL 60126

10:30 a.m.— 3:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$40

Speaker: Leslie Vernick, www.LeslieVernick.com

renown speaker and author of *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship*
and frequent guest on Midday Connection

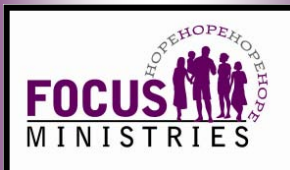
Emcee: Anita Lustrea, host of Midday Connection (Moody Broadcasting Network)

Entertainment

Marie Barlow Martin, Christian Singer/Songwriter

Rachel Mohn, www.panicdotes.net

*Purchase tickets at focusministries1.org or
call 630-595-7023*



P.O. Box 2014
Elmhurst, IL 60126

Phone: 630-595-7023
www.focusministries1.org

Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- **Silent auction items** are needed for our Behind the Mask fundraiser.
- **Volunteers** are needed for our fundraiser in Oct.
- Professional **grant writer and fundraiser**
- **Selling** of KY house
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry
- Donations have dropped severely because of the economy, but contacts have increased. Presently we cannot meet all the needs because of lack of funds.

Praises:

- FOCUS Ministries is featured in the *Today's Christian Woman Magazine*, March/April 2009
- We continue to partner with **Marie Barlow Martin, Christian songwriter/singer**, to address the issue of domestic violence. She recently had an opportunity to sing for chapel at **Focus on the Family**.

Prayer Requests:

- Pray for the development of our teen/tween curriculum

- Pray for woman and families who contact our FOCUS Women's Center. We have had to turn away women who have come to us with physical needs because of the lack of funds.
- Pray for pastors' wives that are being abused. Within one week, three pastors' wives contacted our ministry for help.
- Pray for individuals, churches, and businesses to commit to **monthly giving**.
- Pray for all the **FOCUS support group leaders** in the U.S

- Pray for **property** near Elmhurst, IL to be donated for our FOCUS Women's Center. We have out grown our facility.
- Pray for **houses** in IL, to be donated for use as transitional homes.
- Pray for more **invitations** from churches to train pastors, staff, and congregations about domestic violence.



Upcoming Events

- **April 3-4 2009**—Train the Trainer, Oakbrook Terrace, IL
- **May 19, 2009**—Speaker at The Kings Daughter Ministries, Lifesprings Center, Aurora, IL
- **Sept. 16-19, 2009**—Exhibitor at the American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference, Nashville, TN
- **Sept. 25, 2009**—Breakout session speaker at **NACCFA Conference**, IL
- **★Oct. 17, 2009**—Behind the Mask Fundraiser Luncheon, Diplomat West, Elmhurst, IL, Guest speaker, **Leslie Vernick**, Singer, **Marie Barlow Martin**, **Anita Lustrea**, host of Midday Connection, and **Rachel Mohn**, www.panicdotes.net. **Tickets can be purchased online at focusministries1.org or 630-595-7023.**

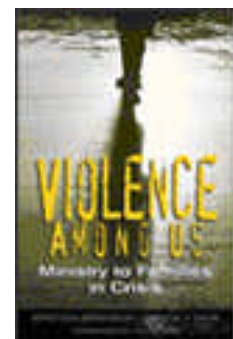
- Visit Marie Barlow Martin's website, www.mariebarlow.com, to view her concert schedule.

If you would like the FOCUS team to come to your church for a women's retreat ("A Woman's Journey To God"), seminar on domestic violence, or other speaking engagement, please contact us as soon as possible as our calendar for 2009 is quickly filling up!

Contact Paula at 630-595-7023 or contactus@focusministries1.org.



www.MarieBarlow.com



Paula Silva, Coauthor



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www.focusministries1.org

Endorsements:

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

"I commend FOCUS Ministries for helping the church in its battle against domestic abuse. After seeing the response to a message I preached on this topic, I've come to realize that domestic abuse is much more common in our churches than we would like to admit. The materials and interaction I've had with FOCUS Ministries was helpful and very much needed. I pray that God will use FOCUS to awaken all of us to the reality of abuse as well as bring hope and healing to the victims.

Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer
Senior Pastor, The Moody Church, Chicago, IL



Ways You Can Help FOCUS Ministries

- ★ Join with us in ministering to women and families who experience domestic violence by participating in our Exercise-a-thon. Choose any exercise (run, bike, walk, skip, jump rope, swim, play tennis, baseball, football, lift weights, etc.), set your own goal, raise pledges, and take action against domestic violence! Just print off the [FOCUS Exercise-a-thon form](#) on our website, fill in your name and address by the participant's name, raise support, exercise, and then send in the completed form with the funds raised by November 15. Checks are to be made out to FOCUS Ministries and sent to P.O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126. A tax deductible receipt will be given. If you have questions, please email at contactus@focusministries1.org. We want to thank you for your support of this ministry.
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O Lord, You Alone Are My Hope! Psalm 71:5 NLT