

Getting To Know Him . . .

November/December 2010

Getting to Know All About Him

For teaching and clarity, the Bible describes Jesus in many ways. He is called Advocate (1 John 2:1); The Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25); Teacher (John 3:2); and Living Water (John 4:10). In Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor. In 1 Timothy 2:5, He is Mediator and in John 10:11, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. In our lives, there are times when we have to go to the Rock, Jesus in 1 Corinthians 10:4, because we need the assurance that what we believe and the promise of God we are standing on is not sand but solid rock.

I remember a time when, over the course of two and a half years, I was called to court every four to six weeks to respond to charges made by a controlling, manipulative ex-spouse. It seems no matter what I said or did nothing made any difference to the courts and no one opened their eyes to the fact that: a) I was in court every month or so answering to charges that never proved to be true, b) every charge made against me was by the same person and with no evidence, and c) the system was being used to harass and torment me during the first years of the divorce.

Looking to Jesus as both Advocate (one who pleads another's cause) and Mediator (the medium for bringing about a result), I came to know Him during a scary time, in a very practical way. He even became Judge (Acts 10:42) so that I could clearly see the hand of God on my life. I was never forsaken and never left to stand before the court alone. He was always with me.

In fourth grade, I knew and accepted

Jesus as Savior (John 4:42) but it wasn't until many years later, that I, making a complete mess of my life, came to know Jesus as Lord (1 Peter 3:9). I learned that His longsuffering toward me led me to repentance so that I would not perish in the state of existence I had come to know. The love He gave to me made Him Lord of my life and I was born again, baptized, and filled with the Spirit of God to begin a new life. For the first time, I understood Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life.

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It has been many years now and during this journey I have come to see and know Jesus as Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6), Redeemer (Job 19:25), and the Dayspring from on high that visits us to give us light in the shadow of death and darkness, as well as to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:78-79).

As believers we should expect to know Jesus, to know Him in different ways, at different times, and in all circumstances. Trusting God allows us to experience His Son in a myriad of ways that all serve to help us 'know' Him like Enoch knew Him, the way Martha's sister, Mary, positioned herself, at His feet to know Him, and the way the Apostle Paul desired to 'know' Him. In Philippians 3:8-10, Paul said that he would count

everything rubbish that he might gain Christ, "and be found in Him..."

Our nation is going through tough times. The State where I live is facing enormous debt while trying to survive a long line of corruption in leadership. Sometimes, it seems more and more obstacles appear that threaten our safety and well-being – unemployment, abuse and violence, poverty, homelessness, and the list goes on. Sometimes, it is so hard to speak faith when sickness and loss come to shatter your existence. Sometimes, the pain of a broken heart or the darkness of depression seems to cover you like a malignant blanket. These are events when we, as believers, get to know Him as "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). For me right now, I'm actually getting to know Him as Peace. "For He Himself is our peace..." (Ephesians 2:14)

I don't deny there is trouble all around – terrorist threats, tainted and diseased food, ridiculous acts of violence and crime, etc. But, the peace of God which is Jesus Himself, keeps me moving forward and silences the fear that tries to surround me. During this season of my life, encouraging others is essential to my function in the Kingdom. I cannot do that without the His peace. There is no way to sincerely and effectively encourage others if you do not have the peace of God. His peace lets me know that I have everything I need to do my assignment – encouraging and challenging the believer's walk to a higher level in the Lord.

By Brenda Spivey

Looking Back . . . Forging Ahead



I'd like to think I lived an ordinary, healthy life. I was raised by my single mother, but my father was always active in my life. My mother and I lived with my grandparents who were also involved. We were a loving and supportive family, my mother an Executive Director for an agency and my father a Principal and Minister. My extended immediate family consists of a doctor, lawyer, state agency assistant director, ministers, evangelists, business owners, and educators. We were a praying, church going family. I was a choir member and youth choir director.

In school I was a violinist for nine years, captain of the dance team, cheerleader, Student Council Treasurer, Math Club Vice President, DECA Marketing President, member of the Honor Society, Beta Club, and Homecoming Court. I even graduated in the top ten percent of my class and aspired to become an Ob/Gyn.

After high school I attended an HBCU, danced in the college band, and even joined a sorority. I have a Biology degree and Master of Public Health degree. My career started as a Research Assistant for a Cancer Research Study, a Forensic Biologist, and now a Microbiologist. I've co-authored two publications in a scientific journal.

When I left home after college, I joined a Bible teaching church. It was there I realized God was taking me to another level in my faith. I became active in foreign missions, discipleship classes, and other ministries.

I had my share of relationships, but they were normal and healthy. Everyone knows that every person you date isn't your mate. I wasn't perfect. Sarcastic, sassy, feisty, strong willed. But my bark was always worse than my bite.

So how did I get here? How did I go from a fun, strong, free spirited young woman to an insecure, broken, depressed, confused individual? People always thought I had such a wonderful life. But on the inside I felt awful more times than not. Some days I didn't know if I was coming or going.

It started when he was "the new guy" at church. He was charming, polite, and nice looking. He became the "talk" of the church. Women flocked to him immediately after services. I noticed him, but wasn't the type to approach a guy. And quite frankly, a man was the last thing on my mind. After the last guy I dated, I vowed to spend time getting to know me and deepen my relationship with Christ. Eighteen months of celibacy, I was beginning to finally walk into my destiny. I was happy, filled with peace, and enjoying my personal walk with the Lord.

Then one day, he called. He was very cunning, likable, caring, funny, and too good to be true. But on the inside he was also hurting and broken from a failed relationship and troubled past. I became his shoulder to lean on, his

prayer warrior, someone he could confide in. A few months later he moved in and my world started spiraling. There were sexually explicit emails/texts from women and multiple lies. He'd explode when confronted and convinced me it was my fault for invading his privacy. I'd tell him I was sorry and I wouldn't do it again. Things would calm down for a while. But soon it would happen again.

After every argument I was always confused and exhausted. I found myself trying to find the right words to say, when and how to say them. I was constantly walking on eggshells so I wouldn't upset him. But no matter how hard I tried, he'd always shift the blame on me. Again I apologized to things I later recognized I didn't do. Things began escalating to verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, and physical abuse. I remember the first time he slapped me. That followed with incidents of shoving, cell phones being broken, and being pushed into a wall.

Most of our arguments and fights involved his cell phone. Each time I begged him to leave, but he "didn't have anywhere to go". We'd go to counseling, but he would never be honest, and he eventually stopped going because "they always sided" with me.

Later I found out I was expecting. He was so excited and was willing to make changes for our child. But that didn't last long. The abuse started again. And again, he refused to leave. On one occasion, I stayed in a hotel. I couldn't call my friends because he turned us

Looking Back . . . Forging Ahead

against each other. A few I was just too embarrassed to call about the same problem. His friends had become mine or so I thought. My family never knew because I didn't want them to get involved.

One night he was at work and we were on the phone arguing. Before I knew it the door opened and it was him. He didn't say much and left shortly after. He didn't physically hurt me while he was there, but I was afraid of what would happen when he returned. I drove around and had an officer meet me. He gave me the numbers to local shelters, one was full, the other no one answered. He took me to the police station and I was given a card to contact the Domestic Violence Officer the next day. Too tired, pregnant, and emotionally drained, I went back home and went to sleep before he got there.

He proposed to me when I was eight months pregnant. I accepted, but my instincts suddenly kicked in. I checked our phone bill. Again, numerous phone calls and text messages all day and all night. He exploded and shoved his finger in my forehead. Of course, he wouldn't leave. It was midnight. I left and called the police. There weren't any marks or bruises so they couldn't do anything but take an incident report. That night I ended up staying with his family member. A few days later, I returned. I was pregnant and just wanted to be in my own home and bed.

A few months after our child was born, I was slapped, pushed down, and choked. This time I took pictures of the scratches and

bruises. But I was too afraid to call the police because I didn't want him to be in trouble. I finally moved back home for a week, but again I went back because of the sixty-five mile commute.

So how did I get here? How did I go from a fun, strong, free spirited young woman to an insecure, broken, depressed, confused individual?

Eventually I grew angry. In one month I confronted three women; one married, one engaged, and even a minister's wife. This only gave them reason to further believe that I was "psycho and crazy" as I later learned he had already portrayed me as. I didn't like who I had become. Besides my problem wasn't them it was him. They were only doing what he allowed. Twice that month he didn't come home. That was not the life I wanted to live.

For 4.5 years I continued to pray for a way out. If I didn't leave for myself, I now had to do it for my child. Finally, the next month the lease was up, I packed up everything in the apartment, put it in storage, and left with our infant child. We slept on a friend's air mattress for a month before my place was available.

Although I had physically left the relationship, I tried to maintain a friendship for our child and felt as if I still had some sense of loyalty to him. But he still controlled me even though he moved on with another woman. I tried to set boundaries, but he knew exactly what to say to get me to feel sorry for him.

Everyday I grew stronger and finally went out on a date. He found out and exploded, damaging some of my property, all while having a girlfriend. I warned the girlfriend, but of course he painted the picture of me being jealous, bitter, and wanting him back.

Even still, I tried to remain friends for our child. But at what cost? The verbal abuse, lies, manipulation, and threats continued. My life was threatened for the last time. I had ENOUGH! I finally found the courage to file an Order of Protection. Ironically, the girlfriend had also done so two weeks prior.

A relationship takes two people. But abuse is never justifiable or ok. In spite of setbacks, I still continue to press forward. After all the anger and frustration, I forgive him, but I won't ever forget and become victim again. I continue to pray for him because I am a believer in who God is and how he can change any and everybody.

Here I am today, on my road to recovery. I can't say I'm fully healed. I know it's a process. But I am on my way to the life that God has for me. A life of joy, peace, and overflow!

"Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security."
Jeremiah 33:6

By Alindria Carroll

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Prayer Requests & Urgent Needs

Urgent Needs:

- **Wal-Mart gift cards** to meet the physical needs of women and children
- **New board members** that share the vision of FOCUS Ministries
- **Part time** professional grant writer and fundraiser
- **Part time** administrative assistant.
- An **office space** to accommodate the increasing need for the ministry

Praises:

- **Churches** that are just beginning to understand the dynamics of domestic violence
- **Development of webinars**
- **Women** who are coming to the support groups who are growing, learning, and making the necessary changes

Prayer Requests:

- **Pray for a facility** for our FOCUS Women's Center. It would enable

us to expand our services and provide more trainings, seminars, and conferences.

- **Pray for funds** to hire much needed staff
- **Pray for board members** to serve on the FOCUS board
- **Pray for women and families** who contact our FOCUS Women's Center.
- **Pray for pastors' wives** that are being abused.
- **Pray for individuals, churches, and busi-**

nesses to commit to **monthly giving.**

- Pray for all the **FOCUS support group leaders** in the U.S
- 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

Author, Editor and Publisher: Paula Silva
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The mission of FOCUS Ministries is to provide a safe place for teens, women, and families who experience domestic violence and abusive relationships to find hope and healing in Jesus Christ.

Funding: FOCUS Ministries is a not-for-profit 501 c3 organization funded by contributions and grants. **If you would like to help us minister to hurting people through our educational materials, support groups, counseling, and financial assistance to victims of domestic violence, please send your gift to FOCUS Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 2014, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or online at www.focusministries1.org.** 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.

- **Nov. 21, 2010—Purple Event,** Calvary Church, Naperville, IL, 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- **Nov. 23, 2010—BlogTalkRadio,** 1:00 p.m., <http://blogtalkradio.com/cwa-radio/2010/11/23/sisterhood-pf-beautiful-warriors/>
- **Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2011—Exhibitor** at AACC World Conference, Nashville, TN

If you would like the FOCUS team to come to your church for a women's retreat, seminars or other speaking engagement.

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