

ISSUE TWO
RESOLVE AND RESILIENCE



REVIVE

devotional

SPRINGVALE
WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Welcome to Revive

Lori Doner Jones



For our second Revive event I wanted to explore the idea of “Resolve and Resilience”, especially since we are at the start of a new year and a new decade! What does it take for us to stand strong in our faith all the time, especially, (but not only) when life is hard?

Charles Spurgeon said:

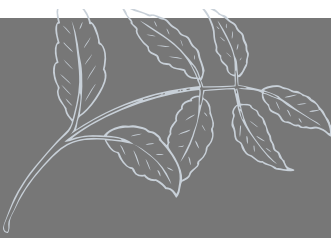
“I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages”.

I'd like to say that I've followed Jesus whole-heartedly since I asked him “into my heart” as a child, but that wouldn't be true. While I didn't stray far, I also didn't know Him, and I didn't get to know Him while my life was going well and I was surrounded by His blessings. The reality is, during that time, when life was pretty good, I was learning to rely on ME; God was an afterthought. It wasn't until I was hit with some “waves” that I realized I was not enough, and the relationship I had with God, or lack thereof, wasn't enough. It was in the “wave that threw me against the Rock of Ages”, that I was brought to my knees, to find Jesus. So I can say *now*, that I have learned to “kiss that wave” or - appreciate Him crushing me, so that He could truly *meet* with me. Sometimes, it's in our trial we meet Jesus for the first time, even if we've called ourselves a Christian for a long time.

Each of us have different paths to Jesus, but regardless of how you encounter Him, no matter how you get there, it's when we come to the end of ourselves, that God can do some real work, as only He can. That's when sanctification can happen, and we can start to see real growth in our Christian lives.

In the next few days, as you read these entries, you will meet with different women, at different stages, all learning to lean in: to hear God's voice and direction in the small details of their lives. Learning to trust, to obey, to wait, to praise, to adore and to prepare. Learning “Resolve and Resilience,” in all the moments and seasons, the good ones as well as the difficult or challenging ones. Learning that life may be unexpected, but with Jesus, even in the unexpected, we can find abundance. Even in the storm, we can learn to kiss the wave that brings us closer to Him.

This year, in 2020, I pray each of us will experience true and lasting Revival.



"We live in a broken world where things happen. So it's not surprising that things get broken in our lives as well. But what about those times when things aren't just broken but shattered beyond repair? Shattered to the point of dust. At least when things are broken there's some hope you can glue the pieces back together. But what if there aren't any pieces to pick up in front of you? You can't glue dust.

It's hard to hold dust. What was once something so very precious is now reduced to nothing but weightless powder even the slightest wind could carry away. We feel desperately hopeless. Dust begs us to believe the promises of God no longer apply to us. That the reach of God fall just short of where we are. And that the hope of God has been snuffed out by the consuming darkness all around us.

We want God to fix it all. Edit this story so it has a different ending. Repair this heartbreaking reality. But what if the fixing, editing, and repairing isn't all what God had in mind for us in this shattering?

What if, this time God desires to make something completely brand-new? Right now, on this side of eternity no matter how shattered our circumstances may seem.

Dust is the exact ingredient God loves to use.

We think the shattering of our lives could not possibly be for any good. But what if the shattering is the only way to get dust back to its basic form so that something new can be made? We can see dust as a result of an unfair breaking. Or we can see dust as a crucial ingredient."

From:
It's not Supposed to be this Way
- by Lisa Terkeurst



DAY ONE

ONLY FOR A MOMENT



Lori Doner Jones

Recently, my beloved cat of 17 years passed away. Just two days after Christmas, she didn't come when I called her for breakfast and I found she had died. She was old, and frail, but it was still an unexpected shock and we were all crushed. A few days later when saying goodnight to my daughter, I told her not to forget to say her prayers and she responded "No". So I asked her what she meant, and she told me she didn't want to talk to God right now because she was angry with him for letting Kennedy die. She was taking a "God break".

That's a very common human reaction isn't it? When God allows us to experience pain, don't we sometimes react with anger towards him? Do we turn away, when we should turn towards him? I can say personally, I have had moments where I just can't talk to God, when I felt hope was lost, or things didn't turn out as expected, and I felt He let me down. Lots of our hurts and disappointments in life attack us and leave us shattered, and sometimes asking "God, where are you? How could you let this happen?" And in our pain, we sometimes take a "God break" as we wrestle between **our faith** and **our feelings**. The bible has many examples of people stricken with hardship questioning why? I think, following Christ *well* relies on our ability to dwell in the unknown – to accept that we don't have the answers, and may not understand, but we **TRUST** in Him. We believe Him, and we know He is sovereign and He has a plan and is working it out (Rom 8:28). We have to let our faith win, when our feelings want to run the show. It's our *resolve* in WHO he is that helps us run back to Him, even if we've had a moment (or several) when our natural human emotions make us feel like He let us down.

Paul writes: *"So we don't not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal"* (2 Cor 4:16).

Paul indicates that this trial is "for a moment", but when we are experiencing that moment it can feel like it's never going to end. In the book of Job, after suffering severe hardship, Job regrets the day he is born: *"Let the day perish on which I was born"* 3:1 *"I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul"* 10:1.

While Job is suffering, he receives no comfort from his friends, and no answers from God. He loses everything and feels that God's presence has totally left him. He clearly feels forsaken, utterly alone and confused and yet he has faith, just a little seed left, that tells him his LORD is still there, though he doesn't feel him near, and cannot understand his circumstances. He still holds steadfast to who he KNOWS his God to be.

"Behold I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him, on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold" 23:8-11

There will be times that we cannot understand our circumstances, the why, or how long this will last, but we can hold fast to who we know God is. We don't have to like the trial, but we can rest knowing He will make it "matter", even if He doesn't make it "better".

"Nothing you walk through is wasted with God. He redeems every drop of our suffering" – Sheila Walsh

As a side note, my young daughter is back to her prayers, and I found her this week reading the Bible on her Bible app. Praise God, that He draws us back when we wander away.

Lord, thank you that you know our emotions and you understand us better than we understand ourselves. That you can take our disappointments, even when we feel angry with you and give us comfort. Help us to trust you and help us to dwell in the unknown until the day all will be revealed. Soften our hearts when they are hard, pull us close, when we push you away and give us faith and strength when ours is weak. Holy Spirit intercede for us, when our voice has left us and we have no words. When we are the end of ourselves, let us be filled with your spirit. In Jesus' name - Amen



*"Let us hold fast the confession
of our hope without wavering,
for he who promised is faithful "
Hebrews 10:23*

DAY TWO

RELENTLESS PERSISTANCE

Stéphanie Rourke Jackson



Have you ever felt so badly rejected by a person or a group of people and all you wanted to do was power up, confront them and vehemently defend yourself?

Or just run and hide? I have, on more occasions than I'd like to admit. While on a class trip to Pioneer Village in grade 4 my teacher did a mock 1800's classroom and I was asked to recite a math problem. When I couldn't produce the answer, she demonstrated to the class what would have happened back in the pioneer times by telling me to "go put on the DUNCE cap and sit in the corner". This was completely embarrassing! My classmates snickered and laughed. Some felt sorry for me. All I wanted to do was take off and run! The shame I felt was excruciating. As a 9 year-old, I had no idea what grit, courage, resolve, and resilience meant. Nor did I have a grasp on who I was uniquely created to be. I didn't know or understand what my IDENTITY was.

Suffice it to say that several times throughout my life I have encountered similar circumstances that caused me to feel a sense of humiliation, embarrassment, and the greatest of all pains ~ rejection! Friends who said they'd be there for me and weren't, kids who disobeyed and wandered, doing things that went against my values, my husband who confessed to adultery, employers who told me they were restructuring and would have to move me to another department or let me go. These circumstances were wounding. They cut. We get destroyed by life's casualties that can leave us reacting in a perpetual sense of feeling "not good enough".

How we should we respond? What does God say? Who does He say we are? To quote Lauren Daigle lyrics, God says "I am loved; I am strong; I am held; I am Yours"! Sisters, isn't this comforting? Isn't it reassuring? Doesn't it lift you out of the pit of darkness and miry clay? It should. But I get it, sometimes even though we read it, hear it and know it, we don't really feel it. What do we do now? When life truly feels like, and maybe is, falling apart?

We lean into His word. We collect the promises that resonate with our heart and situation. We breathe in scripture like oxygen. We admit our vulnerability, we ask for prayer, we seek wise counsel, we do therapy, we engage in our community in order to find HOPE. To build confidence and resilience. To be reminded of the precious worth and value that our Father in Heaven sees us as.

In the very beginning, God created us in His image, Genesis 1:27. Who do you say God is? This is also YOU, sister! For you are fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful (that's the stuff God wants you to bring out into the world), Psalm 139:14-15. You are chosen; created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Ephesians 2:10), which God already prepared in advance. Think about it, He already purposed you to do really good things ~ are you using your gifts, strengths, personality and passions to do this? To honour Him, bless others and experience personal satisfaction? If not, then why?

If you're like me you sometimes feel overwhelmed, not good enough, like you've failed. So what should you do? **STAY IN THE RACE!**

"Let us RUN with perseverance the race marked out for us" Hebrews 12:1. Relentless persistence ladies. RELENTLESS PERSISTENCE! If there is breath in our lungs and we are still here, on this planet regardless of our circumstance, we have a mission. God encourages and admonishes us in this. "For I know the plans I have for you sisters, to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" Jeremiah 29:11. This message is for ALL, not just some. We, believers in Christ, are promised that He will "work all things together for our good" Romans 8:28. He implores us to give thanks in everything~ the good, the bad and the ugly which includes the betrayals, the struggles, the really hard situations ~ ALL of life's experience, we should give thanks.

Count it all joy the author of Philippians says. It sounds unfair and unjust to encourage someone to be joyful and thankful when their loved one just died, the cancer diagnosis is given, your child is in jail, your financial situation is beyond bleak or your husband confesses to adultery. Where do you practically find JOY in these hardships?! How do you resolve your pain, hurt, anger?

- *Prayer, bring every hurt, every tear to God, He can handle it (Psalm 56:8)*
- *Allow the scripture, God's sacred conversation to you, to permeate your soul (Colossians 3:16)*
- *Identify and list the emotions you feel and the situation that is happening*
- *Ask the Lord for help and to share divine insights with you (Isaiah 41:13, Psalm 121: 1-2).*
- *Connect with your community of faith, reach out to your Life Group, have a coffee with a believer who will listen with love and truth (Proverbs 18:24) and don't neglect the professional help of a therapist or a recovery group. Know who you are, understand your identity and believe that you are worthy (Proverbs 31)*

· You are set apart, created to do marvelous things, to love and be loved ~ know this in your mind and create thoughts that convince your emotions and beliefs that this is TRUE (1 Corinthians 6:11)

· Serve others, take your eyes off your own problems and life and do something for someone else, help to carry their burdens (Galations 6:12)

Sometimes that thorn that keeps you down and tells you that you aren't good enough or you need to do something more, like the one Paul had and that God never rid him of, maybe isn't there to TORMENT you so much as to MENTOR you. Maybe God is refining you through this circumstance. Perhaps, there is an area of your life you need to fully surrender to Christ? Maybe you've given him some or most of your life, but have you released ALL of it to Him (the kids, your job, your spouse, your ministry, your status, your finances, your reputation)?

Dear Lord, thank you for creating me so beautiful and wonderful. Thank you for helping me when I call upon you even if it doesn't feel like the kind of resolve I'm looking for. Help me to see through your perspective, through the lens of redemption and fortitude. To carry on even when things get brutally hard. Give me Your vision, Your heart, Your mind so I will gladly choose to endeavour through my hardship and I can grow in purity and resilience for your purpose in my life. Amen.



There were many days I spent in the cycle that I have followed so many times without change:

Pray. Praise. Cry. Read and receive the Word. Repeat.

Those were the days of a broken and contrite heart, and God accepted it.

- "Big Challenges, Even Bigger God" Shireen Spencer

DAY THREE

THAT SWEET SECRET PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH

Sonali Sinnatamby



Shortly after I got saved, someone gave me a little laminated card on which was the title "How to Grow As a Christian". At the top of the list of instructions was: Have a daily quiet time with God, to pray and read your Bible ...I was twenty one years old. I had nothing else to work with. I had been well churched, attended service weekly, received communion, sang in the choir, knew my Bible well. But I didn't know any other young person in the congregation who had had a salvation experience. There was no fellowship, no groups or programs to help me grow in my relationship with God.

So ...I went to the Source - to Father God - and made my bold petition: "Lord, teach me from your Word and teach me how to pray." My Bible came alive. The precious, powerful words leapt out at me and I was able to comprehend them in a way I had never imagined. I shut myself in my room each day and poured my heart out to God. "ACTS – Remember ACTS !" That's what the rector of the church told my confirmation class when I was 14 years old.

A – adoration

C – confession

T – thanksgiving

S – supplication (making your requests)

"This follows the pattern of the Lord's Prayer," he added. It was a good model for a novice like me, navigating the unfamiliar path of prayer. So I started my quiet time with Jesus by adoring him. Praising him. Tell him how wonderful he was, how I loved and appreciated him and how thankful I was for gift of salvation. Then I paused to confess my sins and shortcomings and asked for forgiveness and cleansing. Then I reflected on his goodness and all his blessings and remembered to thank him. And then ... I made my requests known to him. And tied it all up in Jesus' name – amen.

The days went by and I found myself spending longer and longer in his presence. I didn't want to leave. I realized that intimacy with God required patience, work and commitment, just like intimacy in a friendship or romantic relationship. The more time you spend with the person you are drawn to, the more you get to know them. The more you desire to return to spend more time with them. The crazier you get about them. The deeper in love you grow. The more you trust them. The more you know their tiniest whim, quirk or change in mood.

The more you recognize the littlest change in tone of voice or facial expression. You know their voice – anywhere, anytime, even when you're half asleep. But it takes time, determination. And discipline. Like taking medication. Even when you don't feel like it. Even when nothing seems to change in your external circumstances.

I called my hidden place of prayer my Secret Place. I found I couldn't wait to get there, to meet with the Lover of my soul. To share my day with Him. To seek His face, to be in His sweet, cleansing presence. Prayer and God's Word go hand in hand. Charles Spurgeon was once asked, "What is more important: Prayer or reading the Bible?" He replied, "What is more important: Breathing in or breathing out?" That pretty much sums it up. One is ineffective without the other. It's like trying to clap with one hand.

The hardest season for me, prayer-wise, was as the mother of infant twins, working full-time. I missed Jesus, I missed the quiet time of converse in his presence. I felt empty and drained. As if life and I had nothing special to offer each other. So I chose to wake up very early in the morning to meet with Him. It meant less sleep, but the soul food I received nourished and carried me through the day. And the months and the years. Very soon my eyes would fly open a second before the alarm jangled at 4.00 am. It's been years since I've needed the alarm to rouse me to my sweet Jesus time.

Eleven years ago came six months that saw me bedridden from the chemotherapy and radiation treatments I was undergoing after a late diagnosis of breast cancer. I had just strength enough to crawl out of bed at dawn and sit in my chair. Those times of communion with Jesus carried me through. And oh, the spiritual muscle that grew and burst through my broken spirit. Several hundred pages of handwritten journal entries testify to that dark and humbling, grim but painfully beautiful season in my life.

I've heard people say, "I'm so busy, I wish I had time to pray ... like you. My response: "I make the time. I'm too busy NOT to pray." Who would dare to drive on an empty gas tank? We are not so busy that we go for days without food or drink. Or sleep. We wouldn't put off going to the bathroom or taking a shower.

For me, as a follower of my Lord Jesus, prayer takes priority over all these things. I realized very early on in my walk with Jesus, that heading out to meet the day without getting fuelled up in his presence is like stepping out naked onto the highway. In the dead of winter. Directly into the path of a speeding transport truck ...It's not hard to spot spiritual muscle in the body of Christ. Just like those bulging biceps and tight six-packs at the local gym, spiritual muscle shines through the eyes of people who spend disciplined quality time in the presence of their dear Master. His presence and power enfolds them like a mantle. It oozes out of their pores, through their words, in their smile.

After decades of sitting daily at Jesus' feet and pouring my heart out to him, I found myself asking, "What is prayer, really? How does it work?" My answer: "I'm not sure. Not after all this time." But then I'm not sure how my daily intake of vitamins, strenuous exercise and careful choices in nutrition really work. All I know is that I'm healthy and able to function well in the daily tasks that are demanded of my body. (And my heart, my doctor recently told me, works like a twenty-year-old's!)

Revival begins with prayer and prayer begins with me. Jesus and me. Alone together in my Secret Place. So I continue to pray, to talk to God daily, whether I feel like it or not, come rain or shine, in sickness and in health ... until the end of my life when I finally see my Saviour face to face. And what a day that will be ...*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. [Matthew 6:33 (RSV)] If my people who are called by my name, humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and heal their land. [2 Chronicles 7:14 (RSV)]*

And my life is song written by the Holy One.
Each lyric penned with purpose and with pride.
For each day that I live, I'll be careful to give praise
To the One who writes the story of my life.

- Shireen Spencer

DAY FOUR

PURPOSE IN THE WAITING

Lisa Mihelcic



In Western Christianity, the feast of Epiphany on January 6th commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, and thus Jesus' physical manifestation to the Gentiles. Christ, of Jewish heritage, is sent by God to unite Jews and Gentiles alike under one truth. God's chosen people, the Israelites, were selected to prophesy and await the Messiah, but He was given to each of us, to save all our souls from certain death. Our Jewish brothers and sisters were waiting for centuries for their Messiah. How prepared were they, how alert were they, during the silence from God?

As a more quiet season has hit my life recently I now am faced with a sense of waiting. Waiting for what's next: the next adventure, the next life event for my daughters, the next business success. Recently, I have heard God's gentle voice telling me this will be a season where He will challenge me to go deeper in my faith, be that new disciplines, new voices to shape me, new trials to teach me. Meditating on our Revive event's theme of sanctification, I am learning that sanctification is most simply, God's ultimate will for us (1Thess 4:3), to become holy as we grow closer to Him. God chooses us to be saved and made holy through two complementary forces, our own belief and the Holy Spirit. We are sealed by the mark and the work of the Spirit, through our belief in truth (Eph 1:136). Once we believe, we are marked as His own, made holy and useful to the Master, prepared to do any good work. (2 Tim 2:21) Prepared to do any good work? What is preparation while I wait? How prepared am I, really, I ask myself. What do I need to do to prepare better for the work of the Lord in me, while I am waiting? Does waiting mean I should let God and let go? And what does ANY good work really mean, I ask myself with some hint of my typical desire to retain some control. But then I admit that this thinking has much to do with my own efforts. The mistake in this is that it chokes out the truth that it is the Lord Himself who prepares us for what is next, He determines our steps, despite our plans. We trust Him to do this wisely, beautifully, in His perfect timing.

Our part then, is to plan, to do our best, to do what is necessary and responsible, to learn what we need to know, to use our gifts wisely, and to surrender the outcomes of our efforts to the Lord who knows us and always has a plan for us. This trusting in Him includes using our gifts wisely.

One of the strongest spiritual gifts I have been given is the gift of faith. (I encourage anyone who does not know what their gifts are to just begin the conversation with God about this, and to take this assessment <https://spiritualgiftstest.com/>) This is their definition of the faith gift: The word for faith in the New Testament is Pistis. It carries the notion of confidence, certainty, trust, and assurance in the object of faith. The Holy Spirit distributes this gift to some in the church to encourage and build up the church in her confidence in God. Those with the gift of faith trust that God is sovereign and He is good...They expect God to move and are not surprised when He answers a prayer or performs a miracle. See also I Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 11:1-40.

I do encourage others in my life, in my work, in the church -- it is more than a part of my personality and now that it has been defined as a spiritual gift, I have recognized its value and effects more clearly as I use it more strategically. I lift up others in my words and prayers faithfully, believers and non-believers, in my certainty that God is at work in their lives, pursuing them. There is a peacefulness that comes with knowing and using our gifts, a peacefulness that comes from being sanctified, marked, chosen to do God's works. And so with this confirmation of my gifting, I actively yet peacefully wait for what is next while I use my spiritual gifts for others, however God asks me to. I will stay alert to His calling. I will pursue peace not busy-ness. I will stay connected to His voice. I will focus on being prepared rather than making preparations. I will make effort to be holy, so that I may see the Lord. As Paul says in Hebrews *"make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy, without holiness no one will see the Lord."* (Heb 12:14) My part in holiness, therefore, is simply being prepared, alert to His invitation, tuned in to the present. In this, I will SEE him in my life and what He will do. Isaiah 43:19 (The Message) gets me very excited to be prepared during my waiting season.

"Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it? There it is!..."

The leaders of the early church, believers like us sanctified by faith in Jesus, were sent out to the world to bring awareness, "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18). Seeing God and His handiwork is possible when we are watching, waiting, with our God-given holiness.

I completely and absolutely believe that God is working through me. I have deep faith in this kind of power God has, to work in us and through us, despite our brokenness. We do not make ourselves holy through depth of belief or through our works of faith and service. We are being made holy as we believe and act on God's commands. The bible is full of reminders of how to align ourselves with God's commands. Recognizing and acting on your spiritual gifts is one of these commands and is a valuable continuation of your journey with Him. How does He touch others in your community using the gifts that He has bestowed on you and within you? What will you do in your season of waiting to ensure you are prepared, alert to His call?

Oh, to SEE what He is doing is a mighty joy and gift – I pray this for all the believing women in this community, which is undoubtedly in the midst of a spiritual revival.

Don't you see it?

Join us for our next
mentHER circles event

Saturday, May 2

9-11:30 am

see website for registration details

*"In 2020, in women's ministry at
Springvale, we are counting on God to
do what only He can do!"*

-Deborah Woode

Join us Tuesday evenings
7-9 pm for evening bible study
"Experiencing God"

Lord, increase my faith. Teach me how to "walk in faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7). Give me strength to stand on your promises and believe your every word. I know that "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:7). Make my faith increase every time I hear or read your word. Help me to believe for Your promises to be fulfilled in me. I pray the genuineness of my faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes even when it is tested by fire, will be glorifying to You, Lord (1 Peter 1:7). I know that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). I know I have been "saved through faith," and it is a gift from You (Eph 2:8). Increase my faith so I can pray in power. Help me to "ask in faith, with no doubting, for I know that "he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind". I know that a doubter is double-minded and unstable and will not receive anything from You (James 1:6-8). I confess any doubt I have as sin before You, and ask You to forgive me. I don't want to hinder what You want to do in me and through me because of doubt. Increase my faith daily so that I can move mountains in Your name.

- abbreviated from "Power of a Praying Woman"- Stormie Omaritan



DAY FIVE

TOWARDS SANCIFICATION

Barbara Hill

1 Thessalonians 4:3 it is God's will that you should be sanctified...

That means that it is going to happen. But what is it that is going to happen to us?

The dictionary definition is to be set apart, declared holy (which also means set apart), purified, free from sin. In fact, to be made like Jesus. Which would be lovely - except that our inside selves are not capable of it unaided. This is partly because we are sinful creatures, so are actually and factually unable to sanctify ourselves. It is partly because, when we are truthful and honest, we don't want to.

Becoming like Jesus will involve change - some things have to be got rid of, some things have to be acquired, the outside has to be shaped and the inside has to be cleared out. It is a process involving submission to someone else that is going to hurt at times. Because it is nothing less than being remade in Jesus's image. And our self, our inner being, will fight like mad to stop it.

This was always the case of course. C.S Lewis in *Mere Christianity* commented that the little tin men wanted to be merely better little tin men. They didn't want to be remade into men of flesh. But our culture now has made submitting to God even harder.

As other absolutes that the world once trusted have been broken down over the last sixty years there is nothing left to trust but ourselves. And as the weight of significance and meaning has been placed squarely and solely on the self, that self has buckled under the strain. Hence the exploding literature on self-help. We are urged to listen to our inner voice, to be true to it, to forge through to an understanding of who we are. So it has become harder to hear and trust the commanding voice of an external God who tells us that the self has to be killed and then denied. On an ongoing basis! And that the road to significance and meaning lies through change and therefore suffering.

So what is the gain? Why, that we turn into eternal creatures, fit to live with God forever. And we find significance and meaning down here as we live out this inner life on earth. We learn to look up, to live with a future-oriented mindset that makes us useful and joyful here on earth.

Let's look at three ways God sanctifies us.

The pruned plant:

John 15:1-2 "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener...every branch that does bear fruit he prunes.."

Attached to the vine that is Jesus we may have overgrown bits, or bits going in the wrong direction. God, the master gardener, takes his pruning shears and snips off confidently all the bits that are impeding growth. I'm told it is necessary - I myself was always afraid to prune the roses and funny enough they all did die eventually. But God knows no fear in this. His moves are always right. But of course pruning will hurt. You can't snip off anything painlessly. So what will hold us true during the process? The wonderful promise that once pruned we will bear more fruit! We will bring people to Jesus. We will have a harvest of righteousness and that will make us happy.

The clay pot: *Romans 9: 20 "But who are you, o man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it 'why did you make me like this?'"*

We undergo continual shaping by God's hand, like the potter shaping the pot on the wheel. We like to sing songs like Refiner's Fire but what will be our reaction when we are stuck inside a hot oven to set in the form God has purposed? As Mercy Me says "what will I say when I am held to the flame". We should not be surprised by the fiery experience we are undergoing. All of this was promised in the Bible. What is the reason for it, the end planned by God before all time? That we would be vessels fit for the Master's use, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. 2 Tim 2:21.

A little soldier in the battle: *Eph 6:13 "Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."*

In this familiar passage detailing the spiritual armour we must don Paul makes it clear that evil days will come. We are in a battle at all times whether we realise it or not. The armour must stay on. There is no taking it off for a rest. No one thinks a battle is a picnic. It takes effort and sweat and determination.

God says at the end of all our effort we have to stand. Stand firm. No backing down. In 2 Tim 2:4 Paul cautions Timothy that no soldier gets involved in everyday life if he wants to please his commanding officer. So we may have to cut ourselves off from things in popular culture that don't advance the battle. It is all worth it because the crown of life is in our future, the new name, the new body, the new existence where no pain or tears will ever come. We see in a mirror darkly now but then we will see clearly. God himself will come to comfort us and to take us away to that better life.

The process of sanctification is not one we would have chosen. But the rewards are literally out of this world.

I want to be like Jesus, I want to be able to look at him at the end of time and not be ashamed. I'll trade that for ease here on earth - as long as I keep my gaze upwards and off the road ahead of me. And of course there are many sweet and sacred times here on earth - the love of friends and family, the beauty of creation and the bubble of joy inside that never shuts off. As the hymn Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken rightly says "solid joys and lasting treasures, none but Zion's children know".

Lord, I want to be changed, and I pray those changes will begin today. I now I can't change myself in any way that is significant or lasting, but by the transforming power of Your Holy Spirit all things are possible. Grant me, according to the riches of Your glory, to be strengthened with might through Your Spirit in my inner being (Eph 3:16) Transform me into Your likeness. I know you will supply all that I need to according to your riches in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19).

Help me to become separate from the world, without becoming isolated from it or turning my back on it. Show me when I am not humble and help me to resist pride of any kind. Let my humility be a testimony of Your Spirit within me. May Your love manifested in me be a witness of Your greatness. Teach me to love others the way You do.

Soften my heart where it has become hard. Make me fresh where I have become stale. Lead me and instruct me where I have become unteachable. Make me faithful, giving, and obedient the way Jesus was. Where I am resistant to change, help me trust Your work in my life. May Your light so shine in me that I become a light to all who know me. May it be not I who lives, but You who lives in me (Gal 2:20) Make me to be so much like Christ that when people see me they will want to know you better.

- "Power of a Praying Woman" - Stormie Omartian

As you participate with God in the increase of your faith and sanctification, God will undoubtedly be at significant work in your life. Our third faith practice is to watch. We will call glimpses we catch of God at work "Godstops". The Stop in Godstop is an acronym for 'savouring the observable presense'. God accomplishes so much that we don't have eyes to see, but if He's willing to make some of His work and a measure of His presence observable, I want to stop all my distractions for a moment and see it. Don't you?

- "Believing God" - Beth Moore

DAY SIX

A CALL TO GODLY LIVING

Deborah Woode

Romans 12

What is godly living I often ask myself?

I finally came to a conclusion that a godly life is one that obeys God all the time.

In Romans 12:1&2 we find a call to God's people to live a godly life -a strong admonishing in verse 3 – "I urge you" present your bodies, he's talking about your total being - your mind, your will, your emotions, your personality must be presented to God. He owns it! God has a purpose for my life and the purpose is to bring Him glory and honour.

No one likes the word surrender, what it means is that we have to give up something and what we don't like to give up is our rights, our will, we don't like somebody telling us what to do. Why did His disciples call Him Lord? Lord means He is in control, He is the master. God doesn't like a dead sacrifice, He wants a living sacrifice because He has chosen to live His life in you and me on this earth through the work of the Holy Spirit. What exactly does this mean?

A living sacrifice is one that is making a difference, one that has been presented to the Lord for His purposes and not our own. A living and holy sacrifice – set apart, that is what sanctification is all about. As we grow in our Christian life, we continue being sanctified-we want to be more like Him. When people see us as Christians, they have the right to expect you and me to be different because we say Jesus Christ is our Lord and master of our life. As continue to meditate on the word and live in obedience, we will see life from a different perspective. We learn to see the father's wisdom as we learn to sit still before God who accomplishes all things for us.

the Christian life is never meant to make people think more or better of me. The goal is for me to look more like Christ, and should people happen to notice me in the process, for them to think more of Jesus
- "Sick of Me" by Whitney Capps



SELF HELP VS. SANCTIFICATION



**The following is an excerpt from the book of
"Sick of Me - by Whitney Capps.**

Have you considered that in our culture we have often traded sanctification for self-help? Whitney's exploration of this idea is very revealing and thought provoking. Consider these differences :

Self-help depends on my efforts to get to where I need to go.
Sanctification asks God to do what only he can, and then equips me to do what I can in response

Self-help focuses on my definition of healthy, helpful, good and wise.
Sanctification allows Scripture to define the virtues I out to pursue and display

Self-help believes that my life is my own.
Sanctification says that my life is God's, and He determines my purpose and my path

Self-help asserts that knowing my worth and value gives my life meaning.
Sanctification moves me to find my worth in what Jesus paid for me.

Self-help pursues good things. Sanctification chases God things

Self-help strives to make my life easier. Sanctification is submitting to a life that might be harder, but better.

Self-help has me at the center. Sanctification has God at the center.

Self-help's endgame is my happiness. Sanctification's goal is my holiness.

These distinctions might seem like semantics of subtle shifts. But it's in the subtle shifts that sanctification takes place. And the shift, means the difference between frustraion or fruit. The shift is the gap that separates being sick of me versus being filled with Jesus.



DAY SEVEN

PURSUE SANCTIFICATION

Barbara Hill



Pursue Sanctification.

Pursue peace...and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. Hebs 12:14

One of the features of our life with God is that there are things that he does and then there are things that we do. As Paul says in Phil 2:12-13 'continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to act according to his good purpose.'

God sanctifies through his Holy Spirit. He brings experiences to us to improve us, to burn away the dross so that the gold can shine. But we are not merely passive objects in this process. God also requires that we ourselves pursue sanctification. The details for each of us will be different as we obey this command but what is common to all is that effort will be required and we will feel we want to give up at times.

Let's look at three ways we pursue sanctification.

The marathon: Hebs 12:1. *"Therefore...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."*

Sometimes the pursuit is like a marathon, where the road may be flat but it is long. We can't see any end to it. It just keeps going and going beyond our understanding. Our strength flags, we may question why this experience won't stop. How can we keep going? Verse 2 supplies the answer - keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus. Stop looking at the road and lift our eyes to him. The great promise to keep before us is that God is treating us as important children. We are legitimate, going to be co-heirs with Jesus. This experience is discipline and fathers only discipline their legitimate children. We just keep killing the self, sure that the answer at the end of the race will make all things clear.

The hill climb: Mark 14:36 *"...take this cup from me"*

Sometimes the experience is short but very intense. Think of Jesus in Gethsemane pleading that the cross might pass him by. He knew the purpose for it but he still couldn't contemplate actually doing it. His sweat dropped on the ground like drops of blood because of the severity of his anguish. We do pursue that crucified Saviour. Jesus told his disciples that in this world they would have trouble but that he would never leave them or forsake them. Paul told the Philippians that not only did they have the privilege of believing in Jesus but also that of suffering for him. (Phil. 1:29) Paul told the Corinthians that short, momentary affliction was producing an eternal weight of glory in them. (2 Cor.4:17) It seems that growth in

the Christian life comes through suffering. So we have to keep bending the knees and taking another step up for that crown of glory at the top of the path.

The athlete. 1 Cor. 9: 27 “No, I beat my body and make it my slave...”

We have all seen people subduing their bodies, beating it up, making their hearts race at the gym - they even pay to do so! So Paul's instruction here is not difficult to understand. Successful athletes don't stop training, They do it daily. They have sore muscles most of the time. They have to not eat sugar or bread. We are talking about a lifestyle here, not something we do once in a while. We will only develop muscle and good hearts if we keep exercising them. If God never gave us anything to resist and push against we would be weak and flabby, no use in His kingdom. God isn't interested in spoilt children; he wants fit, dedicated children who know how to keep going and ignore the aches. Just like top athletes. Except that the prize we win is far above all earthly compensation. There is no reward on earth to compare to hearing Jesus say well done, no jewels that sparkle as our heavenly crowns will, and we don't have to wait for heaven. Here on earth we are refreshed with springs of blessing, the leading and comforting of the Holy Spirit, the peace that passes all understanding.

With Paul, our aim should be to finish the race, fight the good fight, keep the faith. 2 Tim. 4:7. Because the crown of righteousness is waiting.



DAY EIGHT

THE PERFECT PATH TO RESEMBLING JESUS

Andrea Paszana



"The goal is to resemble Christ? In this lifetime?" I asked as a new believer, with shaky skepticism in my voice. It sounded not only an impossible feat, but also rather smug, or over-confident. How could it be achievable to resemble the highest example of character - despite all our hurts, hangups, habits, our baggage?

That was the plan from the beginning, *"God created man in his own image; so he created him in the image of God, he created them male and female"* (Gen 1:27) Sadly the perfection of creation was shattered when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's one command. Adam and Eve were fooled into believing that God withholds good things. We too can be fooled into believing that what we want is better for us than what God wants for us.

Rick Warren Pastor and Author of 'A Purpose Driven Life' said:

"It's not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It is far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this earth you must begin with God. You were born BY purpose and FOR his purpose".

Jesus was fully obedient to his father and honoured his authority. Jesus exemplified the love for his father and he did what he was called to do, he followed through with his God given purpose. (John 14:31) Glorifying God by bearing his own image is our greatest calling and purpose. How remarkable would it be if our purpose was aligned with God's purpose? So how do we grow to resemble God and align our purpose with his?

Motivational speaker Jim Rohn famously said, we are the average of the five people we spend the most time with. Shouldn't then the relationship we have with Jesus, be the closest, most important and precious relationship? If we interact with Jesus daily, through prayer, reading and meditating on his Word, surely we will begin to resemble him?

In Paul's letter to the Phillipians (Phil 1:6) Paul gave some solid encouragement. *"I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus".*

What a relief! The beauty of the work that Jesus started in us isn't meant to perfect us, but rather to align us to His will for our lives. God uses broken people, imperfect people. He's not after our perfection. God's power is in fact perfected in our weakness, and his grace is sufficient! (2 Cor 12:9) His desire is to heal broken hearts, minds and bodies and he does that when we surrender our life to him.

Despite trying, we will not experience perfection in this lifetime - but we can experience a perfect relationship with God. In that relationship we will grow to resemble him and glorify him.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16 AMP "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good deeds and moral excellence, and [recognize and honour] glorify your Father who is in heaven".

Lord, It is not by my own efforts, but it is a gracious gift from you that I am saved and that even in my weakness, your power is made perfect. Help me to align my will, my desires and dreams with yours God, so that I may be a light and your name would be glorified. Amen.



This is the Christian life. Having faced our failure to express His likeness and image in the world, we come to the Cross for forgiveness, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and become incorporated into Christ, to become vehicles for the expression of His life and purpose. The world desperately needs to know this but will have no grounds on which to believe it until they see the life and character of Jesus Christ lived out in your life and mine. This is God's purpose for you! It was His purpose when He first created man and is therefore the only thing that makes life make sense in any ultimate way. Have you found reality in Jesus Christ or have you substituted something else?

"Christ for Real" - Charles W. Price

DAY NINE

IS THIS WHAT I SIGNED UP FOR?

Rachel Salvagna



Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Has God called you to something that is making you feel uncomfortable? Is He calling you to something you know will be difficult and stressful? Has He called you to a journey you feel you are just not ready for?

I was content with my life. I was a wife, mom to four kids and I was working part-time as a supply teacher. I was happy. Then I was offered a full-time job and I turned to God for help in making my decision. God answered in a very clear way with Philippians 4:13 that I could do all things through Christ who strengthens me. *But God I don't want to!* I knew what he was calling me to was going to be difficult and stressful and that it would also affect my husband and my children. But I chose to live my life according to God's will because His plans are not my plans. I said yes to becoming a full-time teacher not knowing how I was going to do it, but confident that this was God's calling on my life.

Two months in and I thought God maybe had made a mistake! No, I thought he *did* make a mistake. I was definitely not qualified for the job, I was exhausted, I had no patience left at the end of the day for my own children and the house was becoming a disaster. I was stressed and unhappy.

In this modern world where self-help advice consists of how to live your best life, do what makes you happy, life is too short, find your passion, and the list goes on, it is easy to focus on ourselves and the desires of our own heart when things get difficult.


The search for happiness in this broken world has become a culture of doing what is best for yourself and not what is best for you according to God's plan. How easy it is to give up because you are not happy in that job, marriage, or relationship because we have come to believe that God wants us to be happy! But God never promised us happiness once we became His daughters. He promised us eternal life, to provide for us, to be a refuge for us, He promised us hope and a future, He promised to be with us always. I knew God had called me

to this. I hear clearly when praying to Him that I just can't go on, that He has not called me to something else. This is His plan for me. To grow, to persevere, to lean on him on this journey, even though it is hard. I don't know if I will ever understand His plan for me, but I trust in His plan nonetheless because His ways are not my ways.

Maybe you feel the journey God is calling you to is uncomfortable or just too much to bear. I pray that you are not swayed by the false hope of happiness in this broken world and instead turn towards Jesus for strength to continue. He does not give as the world gives and He will sustain you in your journey.

Jesus, thank you for your faithfulness and undying love for me. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to grow in my relationship with you and to rely on you during my time of need. I pray for your continued strength in this journey. I pray that I turn to you in my darkest hours and do not lean on my own understanding or turn to others for wisdom. I pray for continued encouragement and to feel your love around me. In your precious name, Amen.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.



"If the world is underwhelmed by Christians, it is largely because we bend a the merest inconvenience. We opt for popularity instead of pain. We choose worldly pleasures and temporary comforts at the cost of all we say we believe. Personal appetites and people pleasing may give us some sense of immediate gratification, but living without resolve will result in long-term disappointment and negligible impact."

"Resolved" - Lina Abujambra

DAY TEN

NEVERTHELESS....

Lori Doner Jones



Inevitably when I start to plan a Revive event, in the weeks leading up the event I can see that topic everywhere I go and in every conversation I have. It's a real growing experience to immerse myself in the topic we are exploring and see how it relates to whatever I am encountering at that particular moment. January 8th, my daughter turned 13. And while out celebrating her entry to her teenage years I said to her – "you and I need to enter into a covenant with each other" you see I have been studying Genesis right now, so that word "Covenant" sounded totally appropriate to me! I explained to her what I meant and she said "Ok, what I need from you is, to LISTEN to me" and I said, "Deal – I will agree to LISTEN to you, and you will agree to OBEY me...this will be our covenant" She was not quite convinced she was ready commit to me on this one. She said again, as though I needed clarification: "I will OBEY YOU, if YOU LISTEN!" But what she really meant was – "if you give me what I want, I will do what you want –providing it is also what I want".

I was relating this story to a colleague and they scoffed when they heard I had asked her to "OBEY" me, as though the word itself was inappropriate and too harsh of an ask, like I was a Prison Warden . I think culturally we are conditioned to think the word "obey" is very negative. There's a stigma attached there that implies a loss of one's self. When we think of obedience, we don't want to do it! It feels restrictive, and almost violating. You can test this out by asking your husband if he would just "obey you for one day" and see how that goes!

I explained to my daughter that though I would listen, it didn't mean she would get her way. I still might ask her to follow my rules which are there for her best interests, and we may not agree with each other, but I will always only be trying protect her and care for her and sometimes she might have to trust that I know what is best and just obey. Which made me think of how I see my relationship with God. If I am truthful, I want, what my daughter wants. I don't just want Him to just "Listen" I want Him to do as I wish – to answer my prayers in my way, in my time (now) - almost like a genie in a bottle. I want him to grant me my wishes and desires, and maybe if he gives me what I want, maybe then I will obey.

It is interesting for me, as I listen to myself trying to teach my daughter, how He is teaching me. How He is testing me to enter the same covenant with Him – He agrees to LISTEN and I agree to OBEY - even if it isn't in line with my wishes. When I ask my daughter to obey me I feel like it should be easy for her, as I am not trying to keep her from good things, but only trying to help her develop into the very best version of herself and trying to keep her safe from harm. Why would I not trust my heavenly Father to do the same for me? And even more important is the fact that for me, as a parent, I might actually make some mistakes along the way, but the All Mighty, all knowing God of the universe knows everything, and cannot make a mistake as it pertains to me so it's up to me to choose to obey Him, knowing that I can trust that even if I want something different, His way is better for me.

Since I am currently studying the old testament, I am reminded of Abraham the father of our faith and his unwavering obedience. This seemed easy for him, though his assignments were *great*. I think of him taking Isaac to the mountain to offer him as a sacrifice, this is a story I have always hated. But now, as I examine the text I see a few things I didn't understand before.

Abraham *believed* God. He *belonged* to God. He knew God had always fulfilled his promises to Him and protected him. ALWAYS. Abraham was focused on the "promise" not the "obedience". He knew that on Isaac there was a promise – a promise that God had been faithful in. The very fact that Isaac existed was evidence that God did as He said He would do. He knew God to be faithful, so he didn't delay, he just acted in obedience, but I really believe he knew, somehow, he would walk back down that mountain with Isaac.

Personally, I am always focused on the obedience, not the promise. I focus all my energy on what it will take for me to do my part - what will it *cost* me, rather than focusing on what God has promised me already. What I learned this week is, if I believe what I say I believe, I need to see the promise first.

I am reminded of Jesus in the a garden of Gethsamane when Jesus, the son who actually was sacrificed, prays – "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, nevertheless, your will, not mine be done" (Luke 22:42) . As I think on that, I am longing for the day my child would say that to me.... And I realize how hard that is for me to say the same: "Nevertheless, your will, **not mine** be done....."

Jesus, provides our example: He asks to be heard, and then, nevertheless, regardless of the answer, or the impending result, he acts in obedience.

What would it take for me to do the same? What kind of resolve is necessary for that kind extreme submission. What kind of resilience?

In this new year, my prayer is that I can grow towards that – as I ask my own child to obey me in her teenage years, am I prepared to obey Him in my “spiritual teenage years”? God did fulfill his promises to Abraham and these promises echo even to this day, but Abraham didn’t get to see, while he lived all that God would actually bless him with and how great his promises would actually be fulfilled, at least not this side of Heaven. And we may not either.

If we believe, what we say we believe, are we ready to trust that He will be faithful? Are you **RESOLVED AND RESILIENT** to step forward in faith, no matter the cost, regardless of the journey, and live set apart for Christ?

Believing IN Him

Believing Him & His Word

Belonging to Him

Becoming like Him

This is true Revival.



I had drawn a line in the sand declaring myself Christ’s follower. I had said yes to the One who promised to give me life. I was about to find out that when a person answers the call of the Saviour, it is by far the best decision in the world, but also the hardest. After all, answering the call of Jesus of Nazareth means following the example of the One who was stripped for our sakes. Yet it is the stripping that makes the man or woman fit for Christ. It is the stripping that allows greater usefulness for the King. It is the stripping that distinguishes the true saint from the casual observer. And it is the stripping that allows us to finally reach the place of abundance in Christ.”

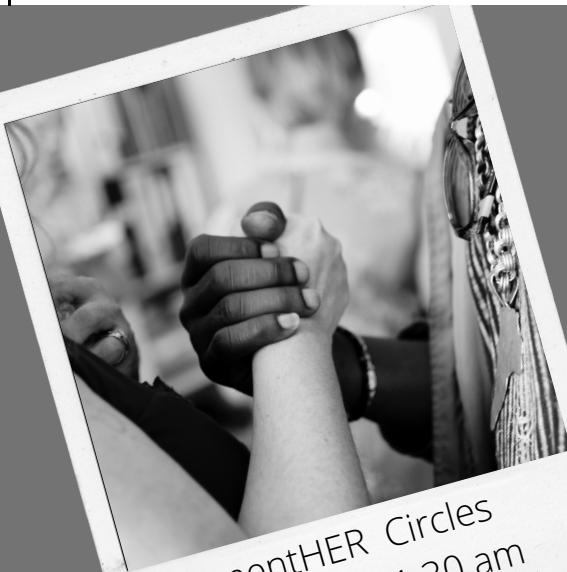
“STRIPPED” - by Lina Abujamra

Notes



Notes





mentHER Circles
May 2, 9-11:30 am



Women in the Word
Tuesdays, 9:30-11 am

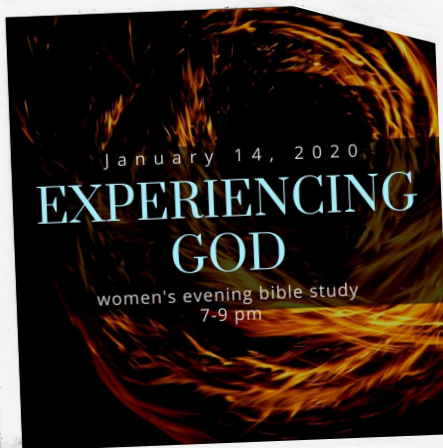
springvale women



Psalms 40
February 22, 9-11 am
May 24, 7-9 pm



April 19, 7-9 pm



Tuesdays 7-9 pm

Check www.springvale.org/women
for details on all upcoming events and registration

REVIVE

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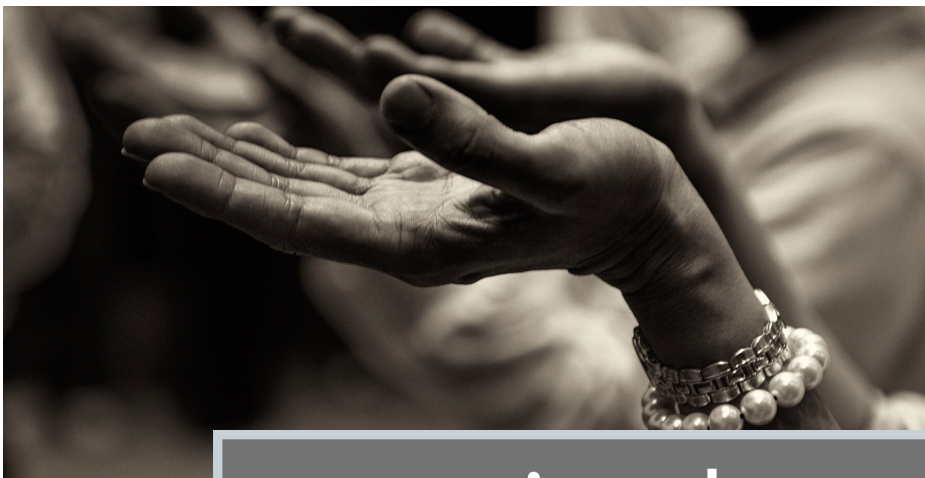
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