



The Christian Connection™



A Quarterly Newsletter from Christian Resource Network, Inc.

SOARING COMMUNICATION FOR CHRIST

ANNOUNCEMENT

Joan M. Blake, Author, President and Founder of Christian Resource Network, Inc., and Editor of The Christian Connection Newsletter, will conduct a Book Signing and Presentation of Her First Book entitled: Standing on His Promises, Finding Comfort, Hope, and Purpose in the Midst of Your Storm.

In her book, Joan M. Blake discusses leaving her native island of Trinidad and Tobago and embarking on the greatest mission of her life-going to America alone. She shows from her many experiences how life deals out times of joy as well as crises. During crises, the tendency is to crumble under the stress. It is only by having faith in Jesus Christ can one find comfort, hope, and purpose in the midst of one's storms.

Book Readings will be conducted at the following venues:

Grove Hall Branch Library
41 Geneva Ave (Mezzanine)
Dorchester, MA 02121
Librarian: Mr. Richard Kort
Tel: 617.427.3337
Date: Saturday, April 17, 2010
Time: 2:00 P. M

Mattapan Branch Library
1350 Blue Hill Ave
Mattapan, MA 02126
Alice W. Yancey Community Room
Librarian: Mr. Maurice Gordon
Tel: 617.298.9218
Date: Tuesday, June 1, 2010
Time: 6:00 P.M

Contact/Book information:

Email: Jblake@keytolifepublishingcompany.com

Log on to: www.Amazon.com or www.keytolifepublishingcompany.com

Telephone: 617.282.6182

Paperback \$14.99; Hardcover \$22.99 plus tax and shipping

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PO Box 190971, Boston, MA 02119.

Deny Yourself and Follow Him By: Joan M. Blake

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40).



During the month of March, 2010, certain states in the Northeast, including Massachusetts, experienced the effects of a rain storm. People were without power, basements were flooded, roads were temporarily closed, some businesses were shut down, and there were isolated cases of people losing their lives. However, nothing could be compared to the earthquake that hit Haiti in January, 2010, killing millions of people, destroying properties and leaving people homeless, without food, clothing, and medical care. The reality of millions of people in Haiti

and elsewhere, surviving in this way, has brought me to my knees in prayer and has allowed me to put my life in proper perspective.

As I viewed the damage to our basement as a result of the Northeast rain storm, I was disappointed that I had lost important paperwork stored in the bottom drawer of my file cabinet. I began looking through the soggy papers that were stuck together, trying to salvage some, and thinking what would happen if I couldn't salvage the important ones. Sorting the ones I wanted to keep and discarding others proved to be an impossible task; so, I decided to put the task off for another day.

The following day, as I sat in the Sauna at a local YMCA, the Lord reminded me of Haiti and the hard-to-answer questions surfaced: What would you have thought if your entire house was flattened and everything was lost? How would you feel if you had lost your loved ones? Those questions sent a shock wave through me. I realized that what I regarded as important was not important at all. So often we tend to take everything for granted and neglect the importance of life that God has given to us.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, that we are to deny ourselves and follow Him. We must live this life, not aimlessly, but with a purpose, desiring to please God and fulfill his will. Many of us feel that we do not have the talents to do God's will, but God equips us to do the task that He has called us to do. Whether you are a mother nurturing your children, a teacher assisting students, a worker feeding the hungry and providing help for the homeless, or a pastor helping his congregation, you have what it takes to do the task. God desires to use you where you are and has given you the tools to make a difference in someone's life.

Love is the catalyst for making that difference. If we love God, we want to be used by Him and for Him. We love Him because He first loved us and sacrificed His life for us (1 John 4:19; Romans 5:8).

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The Christian Connection

The Christian Connection is published by the Christian Resource Network Inc., a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization whose main mission is to provide support to those who are experiencing emotional pain. Other related services include women's small group training and mentoring services.

If you would like to become a member of Christian Resource Network, Inc., make contributions, advertise in *The Christian Connection Newsletter*, or be on our email list, please contact the editor or visit our website.

Email:

Jblake@Christianresourcenetwork.org

Mail

Christian Resource Network, Inc.
P.O.Box 190971
Boston MA 02119

Website

www.christianresourcenetwork.org

Telephone

617.282.6182

Editor

Joan M. Blake

Assistant Editor

Leah M Blake

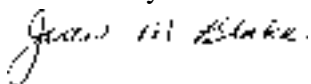
(continued from page 3)

We can sacrifice our lives for others by giving of our money and talents.

Jesus affirms this by the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-28. A man goes off on a journey and entrusts five, three, and one talents to each of his servants, respectively. The first two servants invested the owner's money and brought 100% returns while the third servant who was given the one talent buried it. The two men were praised and rewarded while the third man's talent was taken away from him and given to the man with the ten talents. Jesus uses this parable to show us that those of us who are called to do Kingdom work and perform it will be abundantly rewarded.

Jesus gave another illustration through the parable of the sheep and the goats. When He Jesus, the Son of man, comes in all his glory with the angels, He will separate people one from another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Jesus is the shepherd. The sheep are his followers, those desiring to be on the Master's team, who hear his call, do his will, and follow him. The sheep will obtain an inheritance which has been prepared for them before the foundation of the world; for the king commended them: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:35-36). Jesus demonstrates that when you help others through your giving and compassionate acts, you are doing the will of God and that you are doing it unto Him (Matthew 25:40). You are one of God's followers, showing love, compassion, and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the hope of salvation and eternal life, to the hopeless.

May God shower you with his blessings.



Editor/Publisher

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!

Standing on His Promises

Finding Comfort, Hope, and Purpose in the Midst of Your Storm by: Joan M. Blake, Author.

Hardbound copies are \$22.99 plus tax and shipping

Paperback copies are \$14.99 plus tax and shipping

Orders can be made by logging on to:

www.Keytolifepublishingcompany.com or

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P.O.Box 190971

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Or by calling 617.282.6182

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DESCRIPTION OF BOOK

This book is a moving story of Joan Blake's journey from her island home of Trinidad and Tobago to attend college and work in America. She expresses the joys and challenges of being a wife and mother, and shows by her personal testimonies that even when life deals out times of sorrow, we can find comfort, hope and purpose by resting in God.

The prayer, scripture, and reflection sections at the end of each chapter enables one to use the book for personal as well as group study.

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WHAT IS MISSIONAL?

By: Rev. Francis Balla

In the past decade, I have heard the term "Missional" used more and more. I recently attended a pastor's network meeting where pastors and new church planters were working on a book called "Think Missional : Becoming The People God Intended," by Les Welk.

The word "missional" is a relatively new term but has been used by mission strategists since 1950. It is important that Christ-followers and faith communities seek to grasp the meaning of "missional" living and pursue such a lifestyle.

Let me share a few thoughts from Les Welk's book. "Missional" is a helpful term used to describe what happens when we replace the 'come to us' invitations with a 'go to them' life-a life where "the way of Jesus" informs and radically transforms our existence to one wholly focused on sacrificially living for him and others and where we adopt a missionary stance in relation to our culture."

Being "missional" is to participate in the mission of God-what Christ is doing in the world. Therefore, the church is not to determine its own agenda, but rather, participate in God's agenda according to His call and guidance. A "missional" church is more concerned with being God centered than program centered. It does not see itself as a "vendor of Christian marketing" but views the Church as the "sent people of God, sent on the mission of Jesus."

Sometimes, we have a wrong notion of missions. Darrel Gudder in his book "Missional Church" stated, "The mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purpose to restore and heal creation." We think missionaries are *special* people with a *special* calling to deliver a *special* message to a specific group of people. We esteem these people. This is well and good; but do you know that in one way or another, we are all missionaries and have received the

call to go? And we all have the same sender sending us with the same message on a mission. Jesus said in John 20:21, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." To do what? To share the good news with the lost-the mission of Jesus.

THE MISSION OF JESUS:

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus was focused on his mission, the needs of others. He gave up his life in order to accomplish his mission. What did Jesus say about his mission on earth? He stated in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." He illustrated and demonstrated his mission by parables and miracles. The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin illustrate that lost souls are God's top priority. He reminded his disciples of his primary purpose time and again. On one occasion he said to them in Mark 1:38-45, "Let us go somewhere else...to the nearby villages....so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons."

If we claim to be Jesus' followers, then we have an obligation to fulfill. Let's ask ourselves corporately as a church and as individuals how are we fulfilling the great commission? When the world around us is changing rapidly, we cannot afford to do the same old things in the same old way year after year. Each of us needs to rise up and ask, "Lord how can I be involved in building this church? How can I use my gifting and skills to serve you better?" When the world out there is dying without Christ, how can we, the followers of Christ, keep this wonderful gift of salvation to ourselves? May the Lord help our Church and each of us to be fully committed and engaged in the mission of God, Amen.

Rev. Francis Balla, is the senior pastor of Evangelical Congregational Church of Atlantic in North Quincy MA. He served with Youth With A Mission in Hyderabad, India for twenty years. He holds a M.Div in Urban Ministry from Gordon-Conwell theological seminary. Please checkout the Church Website. www.eccquincy.com. The Church is located at 65 Newbury Ave, Quincy, MA 02171. Sunday service is at 10:30am.

WHEN OUR PRAYERS GO "UNANSWERED" ... By Jessica Hilliard

At one time or another every Christian has encountered a particular dark moment of faith: it is the moment when we have poured out a deepest desire before God in prayer- a desire involving every fabric of our being- and God has not granted our request. The confusion, or anger, or heartbreak can seem unbearable. A resounding "Why, oh Lord? Why?" echoes through our souls, whether we want it to or not. Surely if God is good (and He is), and surely if He loves us (which He does... more than we can imagine), well then surely, He would have answered our prayer... Right?

At times like this the counsel of our friends and fellow Christians can make or break us. Too often I have heard well-meaning, sincere Christians "comfort" others with the words "Well, if you just have enough faith, then God will answer your prayers." Clearly they are implying that if our prayers are NOT answered, it is because we are deficient, lacking the right attitude or amount of belief to "get through" to the divine ear. What are we to make of this? It can certainly be true that an unbelieving heart hinders the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. For example, if I just pray to have a forgiving heart toward an aggravating person in my life, yet have no real belief that I will ever forgive him, I should not be surprised when my prayer goes unanswered! Why? Because I have already decided that I am not going to allow God to change my attitude, and He is going to respect my decision even though it saddens Him.

But, what about the prayers parents pray for their children? I cannot see into every heart, but I believe when most of us have prayed for our children to be healed, or spared, or for other situations equally close to our hearts, we do not ask with an attitude of unbelief. We may ask with a desperate heart, or with a heart of hope, or with a heart of pain, but I think we believe God can answer our petitions. So, when our pleas are not answered in the way we would like, we feel betrayed, angry, and righteously indignant. Why? Because at the core, most of us also believe what our well-meaning friends might have said. We think that if

we ask in the "right" way, we are sure to receive. We feel we have "done our part" by praying, so why has God not done "His part" by giving us what we prayed for?

I think most of us have been misled at some level into thinking of God as a divine "vending machine." We approach prayer somewhat like buying snacks: we deposit the correct amount of "faith," and dial in our request. Then, "click, click, whirr," out comes our divine answer; and it's the one we wanted, of course! After all, isn't this what Jesus meant when he said "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it (John 14:14)?" Admittedly, I believe the answer is a resounding "no." It is easy to imagine that a loving God would never deny us what we need to avoid pain. But shielding the beloved from pain is only a part of true love.

My two year old has multiple, serious, gastro-intestinal issues. Her stomach (along with several other organs) simply does not work like it should. After multiple surgeries and medications failed to fix the problems, her doctors and I have decided that for now, it is simply best for her to avoid oral intake and to rely instead on a special formula delivered directly into her intestines for food. We know why this is best for her, but of course she cannot understand it. Every day I face her heartbreaking sobs as she asks again and again for "pood!" (food). From her perspective we are simply causing her meaningless and unnecessary pain. I'm sure it must be very confusing and upsetting to her that her mommy should act this way. Although it saddens me intensely to put her through this every day, I know that we are actually allowing her to experience one level of pain in order to shield her from other, ultimately far worse, pain and illness. In this situation, the most loving thing I can do for her is to deny her heartfelt request.

One of my favorite parts of the Gospel of John (John 9:1-41) describes an encounter between Jesus and a man born blind. In a society that regarded congenital birth defects as a definite sign of sin, I'm sure this man must have suffered terribly! I'm sure he must have cried out to God repeatedly for healing, and been bitterly disappointed every time his eyes opened to another day of darkness. And what about his parents? According to the religious leaders of the day, the sin that caused the man's blindness might have been theirs! I know they must have been heartbroken for him, and have wondered why God was bringing this misery on their beloved child. Why did a loving God allow this man and his

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(when our prayers go un-answered, continued from page 6)

family to experience such sorrow? Jesus himself said it had nothing to do with sin! In fact, all of this man's pain and sorrow had a wonderful goal. The day he met Jesus, his eyes were healed. But more importantly, his soul was healed and made right with God. And not just his: many, many people had the opportunity to find and know God because this man was born blind. His years of suffering led to the opportunity for eternal happiness for many. Though it may legitimately seem as if there can be NO worse pain than what comes in this life, that actually isn't true. This life lasts 70 to 80 years on average. Eternity lasts forever. A loving God is interested in our eternal plights (and NOT just ours-everyone's) more than anything else.

So, when Jesus said that we will receive what we ask for in his name, it's important to understand what he meant. Asking in his name means asking in accordance with His will. It means asking for the answer that brings God glory and is in line with His big picture, not just our ideas about what we want and need, no matter HOW legitimate these seem. This does not mean God doesn't care about our pain or our heartbreak. He cares immensely. The Bible says that Jesus came to "...bind up the broken-hearted..." (Isaiah 61:1)." God cares enough about our eternal heartbreak that He sent His Son to die for us, bringing us the only chance we have of eternal happiness. You cannot care more than that! But this side of heaven we will experience pain, disappointment, and because we simply cannot always understand God's big picture, prayers that seem unanswered.

When dealing with unanswered prayer, the only way to find peace is to trust that God really does love us. If we cement this truth in our heads and hearts, we can slowly accept that the pain God allows in our lives is usable to bring good to many others and ourselves. We may never understand why God chooses to answer some prayers and not others anymore than my two year old asking for food understands my sad "No." But we can trust that if we follow Him, God will use

our pain to bring about good, and in His time will complete the best plan for our life and the lives of all who trust in Him.

Jessica Hilliard graduated from Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in 2006 with an MA in Theology. She currently stays home with her two children, and works part-time as the Head of Women's Ministries at All Saints Anglican Church in Attleboro, MA.

Do you need prayer?

**Email: Jblake@christianresourcenetwork.org
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Interested in Having a Bookreading at Your Church or Organization?

**Please call:
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Prayer of Salvation

Father, God, I come to you because I am
Desperately in need of a Savior
I have sinned and my life is out of balance
I don't know where to turn
Father, I believe that your son Jesus
Died on the cross to set me free of my sins
I confess and repent of all my wrong doings
And ask your forgiveness for my sins
On this day. I invite you and accept you into my heart,
To be Lord and Savior of my life
I have made a decision to follow you all of my life
I am rejoicing that because I have confessed
Jesus as my Lord and Savior and repented of
My sins, that I have the gift of salvation and
Eternal life. Thank you, Father.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen

Letters To The Editor

If you were blessed by the articles published in this volume, we want to hear from you.

Please email:

jblake@christianresourcenetwork.org

Plan to Attend our Network Breakfast November, 2010

Be inspired as you listen to messages, prayer, and song.

Be open to God's leading. Be an encourager! Share your testimony, pray for someone, help someone, and build partnerships. Be restored! Be rejuvenated!

Be a part of a great network, a time of teaching, sharing, and discussion.

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