



The Christian Connection™



VOLUME 9 NO. 1 Spring 2012

A Quarterly Newsletter from Christian Resource Network, Inc.

SOARING COMMUNICATION FOR CHRIST

Embracing The Love of God



We had the mildest winter! And now spring is here. What a blessing! The month of March, the first month of the Passover (Nissan), symbolizes the miracles God used to free the Jewish slaves from Egypt and the beginning of their journey to the Promised Land (Exodus 12:2). Like the Israelites, we have so much to thank God for, but yet, when we go through trials of great magnitude, we remain dumbfounded and unable to understand why we are experiencing such difficulties and wonder how much longer we can wait on God for our breakthroughs. We ask the question, "How long Lord?"

I face that predicament as I cope with the challenges of caring for our daughter with mental illness. I experience the everyday drudgery of her pain and suffering—a journey that is mixed with emotions. Coupled with my wanting to see her improve, I struggle to stay afloat and, sometimes, end up drowning in the midst of an ocean of possibilities. The journey seems endless and the only reason I am standing strong is because I am bathing in God's love. I present a sampling of biblical references as I discuss the unfailing love of God and hope that you, too, will be strengthened in the midst of your journey.

The parable of the lost son is an example of the Father's love for His son or daughter. The younger son left home taking his portion of his father's inheritance and wasted it. He returned home empty-handed, sorrowful, but surprised to find that his father loved him regardless of what he had done. Recognizing his son from a distance, whom he thought was lost, his father ran toward him, embraced him, and forgave him. The father showed patience and faithfulness by waiting for his son to return home and being present when His son needed him. He showed love and kindness by clothing his son with the best robe and giving him sandals and a ring. He had his servants kill the fattened calf and prepare a party to celebrate his son's home-coming (Luke 15:11-32). Similarly, God loves you and me unconditionally. The Bible states, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8 NIV). Jesus paid our sin debt in full. When we confess and repent of our sins and believe in our hearts that Jesus died and rose again, we receive the gift of salvation and eternal life (John 3:16). Like the son in the story, our God waits eagerly and patiently for us to repent and rest and receive our salvation (Isaiah 30:15). He has forgiven us of our past and has restored us to our rightful position in Him (2 Co.5:18). Now, we have access to our heavenly father who is faithful (Ps.92:2), kind (Job 10:12), forgiving (Psalm 103:3), patient (2 Peter 3:9), and loving ((Psalm 144:2).

Inherent in God's love for us is His promise never to leave or forsake us. He said to Joshua, the son of Nun, "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never

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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

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leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and be courageous” (Joshua 1:5-6 NIV). God affirmed His promise to Joshua in Joshua 1:9, "Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord, your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua followed God’s instructions and won the battle against Jericho (Joshua 6:12-21). When we go through trials and see the enemy coming in like a flood, we need not be discouraged. We have a God who loves us, who is with us wherever we go, and who fights and wins our battles.

The book of Jeremiah, Chapter 31 verse 3 (NIV) states that, "The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'" This scripture verse reminds us about God's steadfast love and kindness to the Israelites, how He miraculously delivered them out of the land of Egypt when they faced tremendous trials at the hand of Pharaoh (Exodus 12). God is the same God, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:6 NIV). What He did for the Israelites he will do for us. We serve a God who is concerned about us. He will keep us and overshadow us with His love. His love will carry us through the storms of life. Nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:39).

Saints, I pray that, as you continue on your journey, whether the roads are rough or smooth, that you will position yourself to embrace the unconditional love of God and partake of the abundant life He has prepared for you today.

In Christ,

Joan M. Blake
Editor/Publisher

PRAYER AND MEDITATION

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Joan Blake writes about leaving her native island of Trinidad and Tobago and embarking on the greatest mission of her life—going to America alone. She shows by her personal testimonies how life deals out times of great joy, as well as crises. When such crises come, it is so easy to crumble under one’s storms and turn inwardly to loneliness, anxiety, fear, anger, un-forgiveness, and bitterness, but it is only by having an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Who has all the answers, and by committing every detail of one’s life to him, can we find rest. Rest is standing on the promises of Jesus and putting one’s trust in Him.

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SAVE THE DATE NOVEMBER 3 & 4 2012

Christian Resource Network Inc., will host its annual healing and deliverance service on Friday, November 3, from 7-9pm and its Network Breakfast on Saturday, November 4, from 8:30am to 12:30pm at ENC, 23 East Elm Ave, Quincy, MA. 02169. Come and be renewed!!

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Excerpts from a sermon by Rev. Balla



IN THE SHELTER OF THE MOST HIGH GOD

(A MEDITATION ON PSALM 91)

I believe Psalm 91 is placed by our heavenly father for you and me, His sons and daughters, to encourage us during our times of trouble. I don't know how many times I referred to this Psalm in my troubles and was comforted by meditating on it. It is so important that even the devil knows it and used it against Christ.

BACKGROUND TO PSALM 91

Psalm 91 is an exuberant hymn of praise. In many ways, it reminds us of Psalm 90. Both begin with the blessedness of the one who finds a dwelling place in God. The writer of Psalm 90 appears to be a man advanced in years who has experienced disappointments and frustrations while the writer of Psalm 91 seems to be a young man with buoyancy and expectancy. This Psalm can be divided into two parts: Part one, verses 1-8, which explains God's character and His care and Part two, verses 9-19, which speaks about man's response and the rewards of obedience. Though several metaphors were used in this Psalm, the underlying meaning is, that God cares for his people and there is safety for us when we live in the shelter of the Most High. Let's delve into Psalm 91.

I. GOD'S CHARACTER AND HIS CARE: (Verses 1-8)

Verses 1-2 state, "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge, and my fortress, my God in whom I trust." The Psalmist rightly began the Psalm addressing God; he used three words for God. In the Hebrew language, the meaning of the word "God" has greater significance and depth than that of the English language. Therefore, our understanding of God is limited and certainly the awe of God is minimized. In terms of God's character and nature, over a hundred names were used in the Hebrew language. Of the many names, three most commonly used names are found in Verses 1 and 2. Firstly, El Elyon is "The most high God." God is sovereign, which means that God is in charge of the entire universe ALL the time. God is in control of our lives to such an extent that nothing can happen without His permission (Psalm 57:2). This refers to his Omnipotence. No fortunes, evil dictator's plans or worldly circumstances can thwart God's plans. Secondly, El Shaddai is "God all sufficient." This could be used in unison with Jehovah-Jireh, another Hebrew name, because God supplies all our needs at the prescribed time according to His riches and Glory in Christ. Thirdly, Elohim means "Plural God," the most commonly used name for God. We know this plurality as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When we know our God is all powerful, highly exalted, all sufficient and the Supreme Being, our appreciation and respect for God will increase. Our lives will radically change knowing that God is in control of our lives.

In ancient times people faced various dangers involving plagues and animal attacks; whole families and tribes would be wiped off. They understood the importance of living under the protection of the almighty. Living in the shelter of the Most High God means that we entrust every aspect of our lives into God's hands including families, marriages, homes, schools, businesses, cities and our nation. When we sincerely entrust our lives to God, as the Psalmist assures, we will have no fear of sudden dangers.

Verses 3-8 display great confidence in God's saving, protecting, and providing power. Verse 4 states, "He will cover you with his feathers, under his wings you will find refuge, his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart." Three metaphors were used in this verse. Firstly, look at the metaphor of "under his wings." In the Old Testament, the metaphor of wings was often used

(Pastor Balla's message continued from page 4)

to explain the protective and redemptive power of God. The following scriptures explain this concept: Psalm 36: 7, "How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings"; Psalm 57 states, "Have mercy on me, O God. . . for in you my soul takes refuge, I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed." Jesus used the same metaphor In Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."

God is longing to take us under his wings, but how far are we willing to come under his protection? Are we like the city of Jerusalem constantly refusing to recognize Christ as the Lord of our lives? We have a choice, we can either let God be God and take care of us or reject Him and go on our own way."

Rev. Francis Balla, is the senior pastor of Evangelical Congregational Church of The 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 10:30a.m.

JOURNAL WRITING CLASS

In March of 2012, some of the women and men of Evangelical Congregational Church of the Atlantic, located at 136 Sacamore Street in North Quincy, together with others from various churches, participated in a month-long journal writing class taught by Joan M. Blake, author.

The class centered on the art, purpose, and benefits of journal writing. Participants reflected on issues in their personal lives through practice exercises, bible-reading, and discussion.

Below is one of the many pictures taken on the last night of the course.

From L to R are Ken, Anna, Joan Blake (Speaker) Bill, Pam, Lynn, and Don.



In Need of Prayer?

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Interested in Having a Book-reading or Journaling Class at Your Church or Organization?

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Letters To The Editor

If you were blessed by the articles published in this edition or previous editions, we want to hear from you.
Please email: jblake@christianresourcenetwork.org

This Poem was taken from "Prayer and Meditation" by J. Blake
Thanking God for His Unconditional Love

I praise You Mighty God, Wonderful Counselor,
My Redeemer, my Crown, and the lifter of my head.
I praise and worship You this morning for being my Creator.
Thank You for loving me just as I am.
Thank you for giving me joy and peace,
For providing for me, for healing me,
And for calling me out of darkness into Your marvelous light.
You are forever assuring me that You are by my side
And that you will never forsake me.
Thank You, Lord, God, for Your unconditional love.



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P.O. Box 190971
Boston, MA 02119

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