



Women In Touch

A Quarterly Publication of Autumn Ridge Church Women's Ministry

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Endless Grace

By Jacqui Stahl

In the blazing afternoon heat, I watched one of my older brothers go speeding down the gravel hill on his bike. As he turned onto our cabin's blacktop driveway, he performed stunts on his handle bars and seat. Being an enticed twelve year old, I decided to ride my 10-speed blue Schwinn to the top of the hill and pedal as hard as I could so I could go as fast as I could. The first few times down the hill, I did some "minor" tricks and my confidence blossomed. I was positive it was time to attempt a majorly cool stunt like standing on my seat.

I set my teeth, biked to the peak of the dirt mound, and let the wind whip through my hair upon my descent. Suddenly my rear wheel slid in the gravel as I turned onto the driveway; I careened out of control and proceeded to body surf across the asphalt. After tasting a mouthful of dirt and freshly cut grass, I came to a stop and lifted my head to see my father sprinting towards me in what appeared to be slow-motion. He scooped me up and carried my bleeding body to our cabin.

My screaming escalated as I sat at the kitchen table and my mother poured hydrogen-peroxide over the gaping wounds that now existed on each of my knees. My father silently picked out the small rocks and debris from the scrapes on my arms. After 30 minutes of old-fashioned scrubbing, the blood still oozed around the bandages which were now displayed in a patch-work fashion on my arms and legs. While my parents discussed whether to drive me to the emergency room or not, I caught my dad's eye and, with tears streaming down my cheeks, whispered, "I'm sorry." Expecting to be yelled at, a gentle voice replied, "Me, too."

Dad never barked at me in his usual disciplinarian manner or voiced his clear opinion of my foolishness in the days that followed - the natural physical consequences of my choices seemed to be enough. Rather, he quietly set about repairing my bike. To say I had a fender-bender was putting it mildly!

(story continues on page 4)

New Life in Christ

By Katherine O'Grady

My dear friends, my beloved sisters in Christ, I hope that you take the time to read this issue cover to cover and let the articles resonate with you. This particular issue is a special issue that focuses on grace, forgiveness, and new life in Christ.

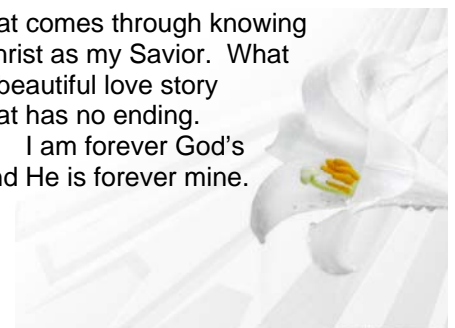
Everyone of us has a story of how God has shaped and molded us into the women we are today, bringing us

from darkness into light. Personally, I shudder to think what my life would be like if it were not for Christ. He has taken me from the mire and molded me into a beautiful, spotless creation. My spirit is alive because of His righteousness.

This Saturday as I arise early and tie my sneakers for a resurrection run, I will awake with the indescribable joy

that comes through knowing Christ as my Savior. What a beautiful love story that has no ending.

I am forever God's and He is forever mine.





Broken and Beautiful

Experiencing God's Forgiveness

These next two segments include heart-felt testimonies from women of Autumn Ridge Church who have experienced forgiveness in the hands of a savior through Healing Hearts Ministry.

“I came into this church a few years ago broken, with many hurts and strongholds gripping me tightly. I was angry, bitter, and stubborn... no one could get me to forgive. I did not know how to forgive and I was actually afraid of what life might be without the strongholds and burdens. I felt like I was on a never ending hamster wheel and did not know how to move on. The Lord helped me to break free of the bondage of unforgiveness, guilt, shame, self-pity, and hatred. The difficult things that happened in my past caused me to blame myself. I had extreme guilt and I was most of all angry with God. Through studying God's Word, I learned that Jesus understands my pain, anger and hurt. He went through so much just so I can live; He died on the cross for all of my sins. The Lord's grace has filled me and He has shown me why I have to forgive. If I don't forgive, it's a sin and I want to honor and be obedient to God. After learning what Jesus went through so I can have salvation, I realize that there is no sin too big for Jesus to forgive. Daily, I strive to ask the Lord to create in me a clean heart, to give me conviction where needed and repent of my sin. The Lord has changed me, my heart has softened, and I have been healed of many hurts that have been a stronghold on me for many years. Praise God!”

~ *Olivia Ohr*

Nothing can separate us from the love of God; not ourselves, not our sin, not even death. It's a never ending love story from God to you.

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8:37-39



The Process of Mosaic Artistry

Unwanted, battered and soiled pieces of glass are taken and cleaned and restored by the artist. The artist then takes the broken pieces and carefully arranges them in delicate patterns to create beautiful, breathtaking art.

Broken and Beautiful ...continued

“I believe that God led me to this class. I was struggling with two abortions and feeling lost. I felt alone. I tried therapy and all my therapist said was, ‘I thought you were over the abortions.’ I felt angry and hurt that my therapist just thought I should be done with my pain. It wasn’t until this fall 2009 that I found hope again. I started a new relationship with a spiritual man who got me thinking more about church. So I asked my friend what church they went to and they said ARC. The first time I went to church here, I was reading the bulletin and saw a class about women who were suffering from abortion. I thought to God ‘wow’ as I felt a chill. I thought it was so amazing that He led me to this church. I took this class which shows just how amazing God really is. I believe that so many think that after an abortion it is over, and you can forget that it ever happened. Healing Hearts helped me through my hurts and pains. I believe first that Jesus will always be there for me even through the hard times. I learned to trust him, have patience in Him, and believe my faith journey after the class is just the beginning. Healing Hearts helped me to release the pain that I needed to let go. They have showed me a new path in my faith journey and I have had to tell my story, so I can help others in the future.”

~Megan Alomassor

God’s desire is for you to have a relationship with Him, to gather all of your broken pieces and reshape you into His very own masterpiece. Despite your past, the strongholds on your life; through God, you can break free.



If you are burdened with the guilt of your past, and need freedom in your life, Autumn Ridge Church offers Healing Hearts Ministry. Healing Hearts is devoted to helping women who are hurting because of the affliction of their past. Counselors will take you through God’s word and help you find the answers to your questions, and help you discover healing, love, and forgiveness. Help is offered through one-on-one counseling, support group settings, and through the website. If you would like to break free from the bondage of your past, please contact Julie Bashore at (507) 261-9659 or julieab@healinghearts.org.

Endless Grace...

By Jacqui Stahl

(continued from page 1)

"I still egotistically think I can do stunts on a daily basis. And guess what? I still stumble and fall from my pride. But God, like my father, doesn't turn his back on me or tell me, "I told you so!" Instead, He runs over and lifts me back on my feet. And when I have truly made a mess of things, He carries me for awhile and tends to my wounds.

-Jacqui Stahl



My spectacular fall had nearly totaled my bike, and my "Mr. Fix-It" father tried to make it like new again. When I had healed sufficiently to repetitively bend my knees without ripping open the scabs, it was my dad who prodded me to go for a ride once again. He extended me grace.

I still egotistically think I can do stunts on a daily basis. And guess what? I still stumble and fall from my pride. But God, like my father, doesn't turn his back on me or tell me, "I told you so!" Instead, He runs over and lifts me back on my feet. And when I have truly made a mess of things, He carries me for awhile and tends to my wounds. Isaiah 40:11 says, "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms..."

"All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way." (Is. 53:6) We all arrogantly choose to do stupid bike tricks every day. Even so, God never withholds his love from us. Jeremiah wrote, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23) And when we look Him in the eye and tell Him how sorry we are, God, like my



father, looks us back in the eye and tenderly says, "I'm sorry, too." He gives more grace.

God knows we will regularly stumble, skin our knees, and experience "road rash" due to our prideful, carnal nature; yet each time we do, He quietly presents us with our repaired bike and tells us to go for another spin. He gives us what we don't deserve. He constantly provides us with another opportunity to practice living in humble obedience and another opportunity to experience His infinite grace.

See, God's grace doesn't end at the cross the day we become Christians and receive new life. On the contrary! The cross is just the place where grace begins. I'm so thankful God's mercy – His endless grace – is new and available in full measure every morning regardless of how spectacular yesterday's fall was.

Excerpts from the Hymn: "Before the Throne of God"

Words: Charitie L. Bancroft, 1863.

My name is graven on His hands;
My name is written on His heart,
I know that while in Heaven He stands,
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
and tells me of the guilt within;
Upward I look and see Him there,
who made an end to all my sin.

Behold Him there! The risen Lamb,
my perfect, spotless Righteousness;
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace.



Exclusive Interview with Claire Farm

Claire Farm, wife of Dan Farm, Pastor of Outreach and Discipleship, imparts her wisdom and knowledge to the women of Autumn Ridge.

Q: How long have you been at Autumn Ridge Church (ARC)?

A: I have been at ARC since 1993, 17 years. I moved here from Racine, WI, to work at the Rochester Athletic Club (RAC). It's there that I met my husband, Dan.

Q: How did the Lord call you and your family to Autumn Ridge Church?

A: I started attending ARC, then First Baptist, when I first arrived in town because I had a sister and brother-in-law that attended, John and Lynn Mulder. Dan and I both worked at the RAC for several years, Dan wanted to go into the ministry, but I wasn't ready. We were at Fort Wilderness one summer, (1997) and were listening to the speaker tell his story of how God called him into ministry. Dan was ready! But, it was through this former state patrol officer-turned preacher that God whispered to me that He wanted us to go into the ministry. God changed my heart that week. We came back to Rochester and Dan received a phone call from the middle school/high school pastor, Doug Weincouff, that the church had decided to hire a full-time middle school pastor. Was Dan interested in applying? Yes, was the answer! After several interviews and a nationwide search, First Baptist offered Dan the position of Middle School Pastor. The rest is history!

Q: What are some of your hobbies & interests?

A: I like the outdoors, walking, exercising, gardening, reading, and my family!

Q: What are some of the ministries that you are involved in at Autumn Ridge Church?

A: I am on the Building Implementation Committee for the new Center at Autumn Ridge, I also worked in Kid's Club on Wednesday nights - I am a small group leader for 5th grade boys (I have one!), I work in the Ministry Center, serve communion on Saturday nights and Dan and I have a small group in our home on Sunday nights.

Q: What do you enjoy about Autumn Ridge Church?

A: I very much enjoy the preaching and the worship experience on Saturday nights. I love the Emmaus dinners. I love the people of ARC, who are so loving and giving in both their physical help and financial support. I love our outreach groups such as "Next Chapter Ministries," and "In His Name" to name a few.

Q: One thing that you have learned about being a mother that you can share with the other women at Autumn Ridge.

A: As parents, we all will make mistakes with our children, no matter how careful we are. We will hurt them or let them down. I have learned that it's a good thing to admit when you are wrong and to say, "I'm sorry. Will you please forgive me?". Also - Lighten up!

Q&A

As parents, we all will make mistakes with our children, no matter how careful we are. We will hurt them or let them down. I have learned that it's a good thing to admit when you are wrong and to say "I'm sorry. Will you please forgive me?"

“I am Free!”

By Andi Koens

Grace, love, forgiveness. All familiar terms, yet why is it that the very words that express our liberty in Him are the terms we often wrestle with most? Perhaps you have been a born-again, bona fide believer of Jesus your entire life and upon seeing those words there is emptiness, confusion. Maybe you say I don't know how to love. I don't know how to forgive. Perhaps you relate to Philip Yancey's words, “what is so amazing about grace?”

By simple definition we know that grace is unmerited favor. To us as believers grace was personified in Jesus Christ. He is grace to us, our saving grace. Not long ago I, as a Christian, held myself in a yolk of bondage to the guilt of my past offenses against Christ. I went to God in prayer again and again because I felt so badly for my sins. I knew the words of Psalm 103:12 “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

I had head knowledge of the verse, not heart knowledge. By repeating the same sins to Jesus over and over, somewhere along the way, deep inside I didn't believe He could really forgive THAT. He could forgive someone's “this” but not my “that.”

Through prayer and intense times in the Word, the Lord has been teaching me the deep truths of His love, grace and forgiveness for me.

I now realize that by repeatedly asking forgiveness for the same sins I am:

Saying that I don't believe that God is able. Thinking there is something I can DO about it—suddenly I am working to earn forgiveness and grace (when in Ephesians 2:8-9 we know grace is a gift of God not earned by works), mocking the very meaning of



Christ's death for me. To put it rather bluntly, when we don't believe God can forgive us it is like slapping our precious Lord right in the face! We are offending the most precious One, the One we breathe for. I know these words are harsh, but they are what made something “click” for me.

In reality, the truth is that throughout Scripture we hear the prophets repeat, “He is able; the God we serve is able.” Ephesians 3:20 says that **He is able** to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. Our God is not only able, He is MORE than able. Hebrews 7:25 states that **He is able** to save **completely** those who come to God through Him.

God doesn't do anything half way. His grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9) to forgive you completely. Remember dear sister, when our Jesus chose to die He did so while we were still living in bondage to sin (Romans 5:8). Jesus is what love is. Suddenly, grace and love and forgiveness are no longer words on a page but rather filled with life-giving significance. Isn't this freeing? You better believe it! Take a deep breath and release the weight. This is just part what it truly is to be transformed by Jesus and have new life in and through Him.

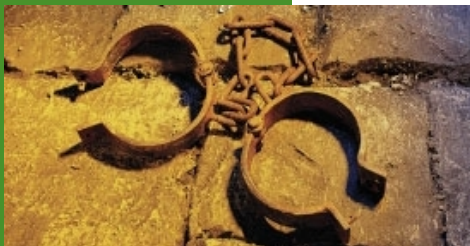
I echo Paul in my supplications for you all “that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3: 17b-18).

We praise you Lord for your indescribable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15)!

*We praise you Lord for your indescribable gift!
(2 Corinthians 9:15)*

“Not long ago I, as a Christian, held myself in a yoke of bondage to the guilt of my past offenses against Christ.”

-Andi Koens



“Now I will break their yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away.”

Nahum 1:13

You are Cordially Invited

Isaiah 55:1-2

By Karen Rucker

We all love to receive an invitation. The invitation may be to a party, a wedding, or another special event. No matter what the occasion is, an invitation makes us feel special; someone wants us to be with them and enjoys our company. Often, we are invited free of charge and given wonderful benefits such as food or favors to enjoy.

During this Easter season, we are especially mindful of an invitation given by God Himself. In Isaiah 55:1, the prophet reminds his readers to participate in the benefits obtained by the suffering of the Servant, Jesus Christ. Isaiah says "Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters." We are to "Come, buy... without money and without cost." Jesus had paid the price that we might receive the free invitation.

So what are the benefits we are invited to enjoy? First and foremost, we are invited to accept the free gift of salvation. It would be wrong to come in any other way than by accepting a free invitation. Laboring to obtain salvation by our own efforts would be what God describes through Isaiah as spending our "wages for what does not satisfy."

Secondly, we are invited to live. God says, "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live..." There are many voices today trying to instruct us on how to live and be happy, healthy and wise. While God instructs us to "listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good," we may find ourselves listening to other sources. Instead of walking through life holding on to God's truth, we sometimes find ourselves stuck in one of life's ruts, believing or living a lie. God promises when we come to Him through Jesus, He will give us an abundant, new life.

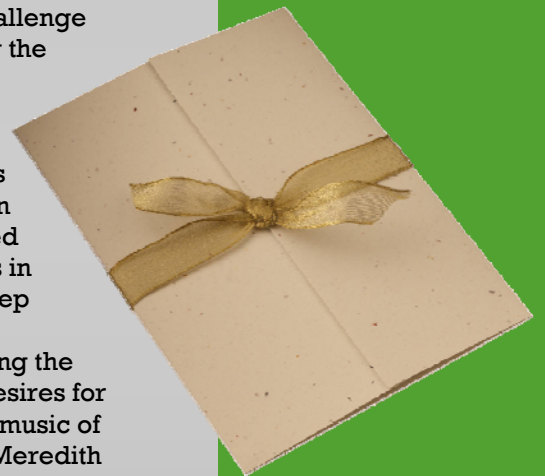
Third, we enjoy the benefit of having God's Word accomplish His purpose in us. God tells us that as sure as the rain and snow come down from heaven and water the earth, so will His Word accomplish what He desires. We can also be assured that as we share His Word with others, it will accomplish His purpose for their life.

Sometimes it's difficult to extend that kind of invitation even to good friends. We know what God's invitation to the thirsty has meant to us but we find it hard to offer it to others without feeling awkward. That is part of the

reason that the Devoted Hearts Conference has invited Bible teacher Jan Silvius to come to Autumn Ridge Church on April 23-24, 2010. She will be teaching on "The Treasure of Truth", the Truth we come to know by accepting God's free invitation.

Jan will share with us how God desires to write a new story in our lives. She will challenge us to follow the truth of God's Word and discuss how women can be freed from things in life that keep them from experiencing the life God desires for them. The music of Selah and Meredith Andrews will bring to us the Treasures of Truth in music.

I am excited to invite you to join us for the conference. Knowing how good it is, I urge you to also invite a friend to hear the words of Truth with you. Best of all, we will hear His free invitation for a new life in Him – the same invitation that brought thirsty people like you and me to the waters of life.





Special Note from the Women's Ministry Leadership Team

On April 23 and 24, we have the privilege of hosting a very special event for women, the [Devoted Hearts conference](#). This year's conference is entitled "The Treasure of Truth". Our speaker, Jan Silvius, will be teaching women how to walk through life holding on to God's truth and to have freedom from the words and thoughts which prevent us from living the life God desires. For more information on this event, see Karen Rucker's article on page 7 of this newsletter.

[Pools of Refreshing](#) is a quarterly event that gives women an opportunity for extended worship and prayer. The next Pools of Refreshing will be on April 18 at 6:00 p.m. in the Timothy Chapel. The evening will also feature a teaching on "Preparing for Revival: Lessons from the Wise Woman of II Samuel 20".

As you have attended our various ministries this past year, maybe you have had a desire to dig deeper into the Word of God. This summer, trainers from [Precept Ministries International](#) will be leading workshops on how to study the Bible. There will be courses on How to Study Old Testament Prophecy, How to Study New Testament Epistles, Word Studies (Greek), and training to lead a Bible study inductively. Mark your calendars for July 30-31 and watch for more details on this website in the future.

If we can help you find a niche here at Autumn Ridge or answer any questions you may have, please contact us at [women\[at\]autumnridgechurch.org](mailto:women[at]autumnridgechurch.org). We look forward to meeting you!

Warmly,

The Women's Ministry Leadership Team

Women in Touch newsletter is created by and for the women of Autumn Ridge Church. It is your thoughtful and heart-felt contributions that make this newsletter what it is. We highly encourage you to submit your thoughts and testimonies of how the Lord is working in your life. All contributions, comments, or questions may be directed to Katherine O'Grady at (kogrady007@gmail.com or 412) 720-8076. Submission deadlines for 2010 are as follows: June 15 for the summer issue, September 3 for the fall issue, and December 3 for the winter issue.