

Clinging to the Vine: Leading in Brokenness

by Jen Pinkner

A few years ago, God led me through a time of brokenness. My father was struggling through the latter stages of Parkinson's disease and my husband was going through a hard time that affected me in all areas. I had a full plate of leading a small group and a job that was highly relational. I was also trying to carry out responsibilities to help with my father and mother, in addition to figuring out this new phase of marriage.

My circumstances were not changing for the better, if not getting worse, and all I had to garner strength from was my time with God in His word and prayer. I met with Him daily and established a pattern of self-examination, repentance and joy in Him. I learned for the first time that prayer was not about changing my circumstances. It was about clinging in joy to the Vine, the giver and sustainer of life.

During this time of brokenness, I continued to lead my small group. It was a scary thing because I was much more fragile. I had established a group in which the rapport was already built, but I really think I began to lead in a new way because I was so much more connected to God and His word. I was actually strengthened as a leader because I was clinging to God and depending upon Him instead of my own skills or personality or gifting. God was doing a work in me that produced growth and a perseverance that could only be from Him.

Was this time easy? Oh no. But, I did learn trust and joy in the midst of pain. I learned about authentically struggling without making my struggle the center of my life—Christ became the center. I am so thankful for that time because that pattern of connection with God continues in my life.

So many times in my life, I have tried to pour from an empty, dried up container only to spread the dust of death around instead of the life of the Spirit. I have learned that if I try to lead others, disconnected from my relationship with Christ, I set a tone in the group that is artificial and inorganic. The group simply becomes another sermon thrown at them instead of a place for the lives of real people to connect to a real God who gives real direction in His word.

Depending just on my gifting, I try to hand out advice instead of bearing with them and listening. If I am not being convicted of sin daily as I walk with God, I am quick to be critical of others or point

to a legalistic fix instead of pointing to the gospel. Or, in other times, I might give cheap grace that does not see the depth and deadly effect of sin by simply trying to please others by making them feel better. These are all ways to waste the time in a small group.

As a leader, I am not an expert. A small group is simply not a task to fulfill or a group of people to "fix." A small group is an organism with individuals that grow individually and collectively. As a leader, I am there to foster spiritual growth and community in others, and I cannot ask individuals or a group to grow where I do not grow myself.



What makes a good small group leader? The first thing is a growing, wrestling, struggling, real relationship with the One who transforms me into the likeness of Christ because that is the only hope for me as the leader and group as a whole.

How do I foster that relationship practically day in and day out? I spend time in God's word daily in study and not just a devotional thought. It is through the truth of His word that my heart is intersected. Only through that truth am I made aware of how places in my life are in direct opposition to God. In the light of His word, I take time to examine my heart in relationship to God and others and follow Him by repentance and obedience.

Again, I cannot ask the group to examine and grow if I am not practicing this in my own life. I want to lead in realities and not theories. I also take time to pray for the group as a whole and individually. I may plant and water to some extent, but it is the Spirit who grows them and brings fruit. As I learn dependence on Christ, I teach them that through my life.

As a leader, I am called to live a life of struggle, growth and authenticity just as I pray my group does. It is not about fancy methods of growth strategies, but it is about a life that clings to The Vine of Jesus Christ, our very hope.

From www.smallgrouptrader.com

Life group prayer and praise

- Please pray that our Positive Behavior Support Team will be able to help our new boy (**Steven**, 6) who was so badly neglected that he can't speak, eat without choking or relate to others. ~ **Kate**
- I've been washed white by the blood of the lamb. ~ **Gary Cox**
- Please continue to pray for my **family** and my **mom**. ~ **Shawn**
- Please pray for **Chris, Kathy and Alyssa, their baby Addison** was born 3 months premature and just passed away. ~ **Joanne**
- Yesterday as **Reba** was preparing to run through the songs for the first service, she received a call telling her that her mother in Indiana had passed away during the night. After some tears, Reba pulled herself together and led the music for both services. In the early service, we did gather around her for prayer before the sermon. Then, during the Sunday school hour between services, **Mike** learned that his father – who has had a series of strokes – had had a seizure during church and had been taken to the hospital. His prognosis is not good, Mike's folks live in the Sacramento area. **Mike and Reba (Haliburton, pastor at FBC Napa ID)** and the girls took off to drive to Indiana for her Mom's services. Please keep the family in prayer as they deal with this difficult situation, and pray also for travel mercies. ~ **ABC/NW Prayer Request**
- Please pray for **Chris Nelson's mom, Stephanie Bloemendaal** in OR, she has colon cancer that is in-operable.
- **Gail Downing** needs to be rescued from alcohol addiction, please pray for her.
- Please pray for my grandma with cancer. ~ **Mary Condon**
- Please pray for my best friend **Stacey** that she does not have breast cancer. ~ **Priscilla Hahne**
- **Janet Tracy's mother Evelyn**, has stage 4 brain cancer, please pray for her and the family.
- Please pray for **Sharon Young's mother Evva**, with MERSA. And please pray for **Sharon** that she can handle what is ahead of her and that she would be able to take care of her own health issues.
- Please continue to pray for **Karla**. ~ ~ **Sandra Signs**
- Please continue to pray for the pain in my lower back. And please keep praying for **Nathan**, he needs a job. ~ **Carolyn Kelly**

HAITI EMERGENCY RESPONSE

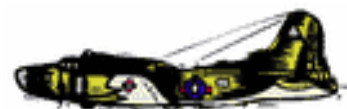
A 7 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti on Tuesday, January 12, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. with devastating results. The death toll in affected areas has not yet been determined. Our missionary families serving in Haiti were in the United States at the time, but Steve and Nancy James are returning to Haiti immediately. Because of your giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering earlier this year, \$25,000 in funds will be made immediately available to the Haitian Baptist Convention for distribution. But the need is great and more funds are needed. You can help. Emergency donations can be made now by writing a check to FBC, marked "OGHS – Haiti Earthquake Relief." —Pray for Haiti and its people. —Pray for the proper response of the world to this tragedy. —Pray for believers in Haiti to shine forth the love of Christ in this time of desperate need. Haiti, a nation of 9 million people, is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. It is about the size of Maryland and is on the western half of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic.

Pastor Allan will be on sabbatical and out of the office from January 11th to February 7th. During this time Allan will be completing the writing/dissertation piece of his doctoral degree in Missional Leadership. He began this degree in January 2006, and is looking forward completing the program. Please be in prayer for Allan during this time as he completes this final piece.

ATTENTION ALL FBC CHURCH MEMBERS: your FBC Foundation Board has made a minor change to the By-Laws that govern the Foundation. The document is now available for your preview and comments. Pick up a copy in the church office on the front desk. The revised By-Laws will be available up until the date of the annual Church meeting (Feb. 7th, 9:00 am). At that meeting you, the church membership, will have the opportunity to ask questions and to vote to accept the minor revision to the Foundation By-Laws. Please be informed. Take some time to pick up a copy in the church office. Darrell Olson, Chairman, FBC Foundation

Pray for our Military

- Jonathan Michaels Estrella— son of Sharon Boswell.
- Jason Bjazevich—Megan Owenby's husband—Army Special Forces— Stationed in N. Carolina.
- Joel Ellis—son of John & Midge —Serving in Iraq.
- Scott Harpell—son of Brian & Lynne— Stationed at Fort Carson, CO.
- Eric Schmidt — son of Gene and Pat Schmidt — Camp Fallujah, Iraq.
- Benjamin Lagonia—dear friend of the Naylor family—stationed in Manitoba.
- David Coyle—son of Karen Mark— residing in Seattle, member of the National Guard.
- Adam Flynn—a young Marine safely home and out of military.
- Brett Love—grandson of Wilma—Army National Guard-Serving at home.
- Robin Swartz - Serving in the military - currently home in Everett.
- Christian Chmielewski—nephew of JoAnn Couturie' - in the Marines.
- ENS Andrew E. Timpner (fiancé to Christin Suthard) on deployment with USS Momsen.
- Devin Abbitt—nephew of Paul Abbitt - Marine, stateside.
- Duane Neyens—brother to Kathy Chapman—Nat. Grd. Afghanistan.
- Philip Ankney-LCPL Afghanistan Cousin of MaryAnn Peterson.
- Jeffrey Lillard—son of Barbara Lillard — Srg. In Army, Stationed in Afghanistan.
- Aaron Chmielewski—joined the Marines.



Life Group Happenings

All in the Family

by florence miller

Betty Reeves goes in for cataract surgery this Thursday, 1/14, and **Phyllis Allen** will be having the same procedure soon.

Please continue praying for **Esther Friesen** as she tries to adjust to new living arrangements. May she find God's will in all of this change.

A word from **Lois Hudspeth** saying that her family are treating her royally as she gets settled, living with her daughter and son-in-law.

Ruelyn Nelson was overwhelmed with the wonderful helping response this past week with the dismantling of the Christmas decorations and says a BIG thank you to a terrific crew who helped to put away our Advent decorations on Wednesday the 6th: **Dave Pearson, Arlene Olsen, David Miller, Doug Weir, Denise Bennecker, Lyle Gordon, Pat Alvarez, Jeanette and Jerry Thompson, Gloria Love, Karen Mark, Pete Case and Lee Nelson**. They were so efficient and speedy they were done before the lunch was quite ready for them! We did have wonderful participation and I am continually amazed at the way our congregation helps out where needed. Thank you with sincere appreciation!

If you had dropped in on **S.A.M.'s** January luncheon this past Friday you might have wondered about the crazy antics and uproarious laughter happening. Was this some new odd religion or wondering what the joke was? The program was given by a delightful lady whose day job is as a trained therapist but who also gives programs with the theme of *laughter is the best medicine*. If you see some members going around greeting people, clapping hands and laughing Ho Ho Hah Hah Hah, they're not weird, just still having a good laugh remembering the good program. To join the Senior Adult Ministry group the beginning age is 50; the meeting and luncheon is on the first Friday of the month at 11:30 a.m.; the cost just \$7.00 for the meal and a membership fee of only \$10.00 per year. Next month will be a musical program with **Dick Connors**, and in February the **SAM** group is getting ready to take another trip, this time to the **Benaroya Hall** to hear **Marvin Hamlisch** on the 20th. Sign up at the SAM desk.

We had not received news about **Alan Carter's** progress for some time. Alan is **Lysle and Lois Pickard's son-in-law** who is now undergoing therapy in hopes of recuperation from a debilitating stroke. An update follows from **Alan's daughter, Laurie**: *"This year at Christmas we gathered around Dad's bed....Dad continues to have an amazing attitude through all of this...He is having a lot more neck movement and being able to move his head up and down. Praise the Lord! At this point, Dad is not receiving much in the way of therapy unfortunately. we are being told that he will not get any more therapy from his medical provider and Medicaid does not cover therapy either."* Also a note to the family from **Shannon Stone**. Shannon is Lysle Pickard's sister's (**Marilyn June**) granddaughter who is in residency in physical therapy in a Portland hospital and gets her Doctorate this year, (and Lysle adds a footnote - maybe this is God's plan to heal Alan) . Shannon asked Alan to show how he could move his arms. and he was able to move them all the way to his body after Shannon held them up so he wouldn't have to fight gravity. They were all amazed and fervently ask for continued prayer.

Just received this note from **Pat and Lou Alvarez**: I just have to share this. We just got an e-mail that a donation of about \$9,000 came in to Action Int'l at the end of the year and they put it toward the construction project in Merida (*Camp John 3:16*)!!!! So we have about \$20,000 to start work when we get down there later this month! This is SO exciting!! Thanks for your prayers – and I know you'll keep on praying for us and the project. Our most immediate prayer is for God's direction on our method of getting to Merida – fly or drive (we would drive if a donated newer truck or car comes in by Wed this week – otherwise, we'll buy airline tickets). God will provide, either way!

Got Soup? Got Soap? Got Jesus?

Our Friday Night Outreach Ministry team shirts say

Got **SOUP?** is the meal part of the ministry. Got **SOAP?** is the toiletry part of the ministry and got **JESUS?** is the message part of the ministry. Now - just to confuse things we have Got **SOCKS?** for the clothing part of the ministry. I oversee all of it of course, but now delegating the **SOUP** part to **Monti and Jeanne**. **Janet** does the **SOAP** and **Donna Sorensen** is heading up the **SOCKS** part. **Chris**

Lifegroup Contributing Opportunities

Update January 10th

Adult attendance: 290

Children: 9 am: 29+9 10:30 am 61+18

Youth Small Group: 12 + 3 Middle School 17 + 3

Happy Birthday



January 13th John Oversvee

January 14th Jane Rodriguez

January 15th Arlan Johnson, Carole Oare

Lela Meadows Scholarship

ATTENTION ALL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS, COLLEGE STUDENTS, POST GRADUATE STUDENTS: Application for the 2010 Lela Meadows Scholarship are available, beginning January 4th in the church office. To be eligible to apply you need to be a current and active member in our church. Application deadline is Wednesday, March 31st, 2010 at 4:00 pm

USHER CAPTAIN 2009:

January—Pete Sontra
Luckey Elkins

February—Ron & Kay Olson
Craig Reisen

COFFEE HOUR 2009

January 17th
John VanDalen
The Followers

January 24th
David Brock
Men's Life Group

January 31st
Alex Tarin
20-30 Something


February 7th
Lyle Gordon
SAM

February 14th
David Karber
Open Door

AVALANCHE RETREAT

4th thru 8th Grade Avalanche Retreat is coming soon! Register now with either Pastor Nathan or Pastor Alex—cost is just \$70.00. They will be going to Cascade Meadows Camp in Leavenworth on January 29th, returning on the 31st. You won't want to miss this exciting time, playing in the snow, inner tubing and having fun and fellowship with your pals. Experience God in the snow.

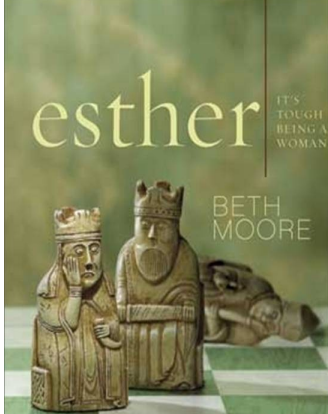
Annual Congregational Meeting -- Feb. 7th 9:00 am



"Quiet Strength"
~Wednesday Nights~
Starting Feb 3rd
6:30 pm
Cascade Room

Men's Bible Study -- \$10.00 for book

TONY DUNGY



Starting Feb. 3rd,
6:30 pm
Wednesday Evenings

~Calling all Women~