

Chosen Vessels

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

2 Corinthians 4:7



AABC Women's Ministry

Summer 2011

Take Time to Stop and Smell the Flowers

by Leanie Palmer

Why is it that so many of the old, more pleasing traditions seem to fade over time, and have you noticed that despite the myriad of gadgets invented to simplify our lives, we seem to have increasingly less unclaimed time? Perhaps we simply need to "stop and smell the flowers". I think we can all agree that if we slowed our pace, we could be better stewards of the time God allows us, and less likely to overlook some of the opportunities presented to us. "Each minute that you miss, is time lost and will not return to you again."

As I glanced at the calendar this past May 1st, my memory took me back to another May 1st -- sixteen years earlier. It was a beautiful sunny spring day, and I had planned to make the most of it. There was an abundance of yard work to get done and flower beds to prepare. I do love my flowers! My plan was to get as much accomplished that day as physically possible. We all know how unpredictable the springtime weather can be in western New York.

My four year old daughter, Eden, and I were the only ones home, so I knew my chance of making progress was excellent. Eden seldom had problems entertaining herself, and I was certain that she would enjoy playing outside in the sunshine while I worked. I was ready to get started, but Eden wanted to stay inside and color a picture before going out. I told her that she could color at the patio table, so she gathered her paper, crayons,



along with a few other items, and followed me outside. After some time had passed, she apparently grew bored with that activity, and was ready to get a little exercise. As I progressed with my task, I would occasionally catch a glimpse of her skipping into view, as if she was checking up on me. That was fine; it saved me from having to go check on her.

After a couple of hours, Eden approached me and said, "Mommy, I think somebody came to the front door." I told her I was sure that wasn't so because I would have heard them drive in. To that she replied, "Maybe they walked." I told her not to be silly. After all, we lived in the country; "Nobody walks to our house", I replied. "Maybe they did today," she said. She usually wasn't so persistent, but was obviously either bored and wanted my attention, or simply desired to be in the house, neither of which was an option. I advised her to behave herself, and that we would be going into the house for lunch shortly.

When we were ready, she ran

toward the front of the house, but since we were only feet from the back door, I insisted we go in that way. She reluctantly obeyed. I explained to her that if we had dirt in our shoes, and I was certain we did, it would save some additional cleanup. Eden had eaten about half of her sandwich when she asked, "Do you think someone came to the front door?" To which I replied, "We are not going to play that game again!" The tears started to roll down her cheeks, and she left the remainder of her sandwich on the kitchen table. She picked up her blanket, and was sleeping soundly on the sofa within minutes. I was sure all the fresh air had tired her out, and I was grateful that she had decided to nap without any coaxing.

I took advantage of the situation and resumed my work in the backyard. Another hour must have passed when I heard the mailman come and go. I needed a break, and I wanted to check on Eden, so I set my gardening tools down and walked out to the mailbox. As I started back toward the house, I noticed something hanging from the front door knob. As I drew closer, it became clear to me what it was—a May basket. I carefully lifted the little funnel shaped basket; a priceless creation of purple construction paper decorated with flower stickers. There was a tiny plastic hair band cleverly serving as a handle, and it was all held together by what must have been an entire roll of scotch tape. Draped over the top edge of the basket was a sorry little

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A Woman's Garden of Verses: Lessons from the Cactus: Loving Prickly People

By Gina Stearns



Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; Romans 12:10

In a fallen world, not every plant and flower in a garden has a lovely and innocuous existence. For example, I think of the cactus, “hens and chicks”, or roses that have thorns. These can be so enticing and even appealing but we must stand back in order to not get barbed. It reminds me that perhaps God has chosen to place these in gardens to remind us to love the prickly people in the world, many of whom are our own Christian brothers and sisters.

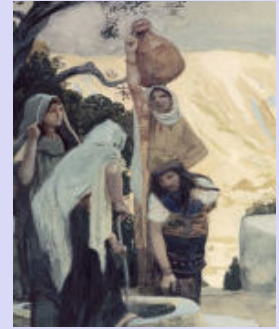
In the church, it would seem that this is more common than one would expect. We are commanded by the Word to love each other in the family of God. Sounds like an easy task when compared to the other command which is to love our enemies. Yet I think by placing such troublesome flowers in a garden, we learn to appreciate the beauty of each plant even as we are aware of their spikes. I once read somewhere that often times, as Christian brothers and sisters; we are compared to a bunch of porcupines trying to huddle together for warmth. But we are always driven apart out of fear of the wound we can inflict upon each other with our own quills. Sooner or later though, we learn just how close we can get to still effectively comfort each and not encounter those spines. We learn to relax our own quills and learn to sense how close the quills of others might be. It is usually accomplished through trial and error. But God has a more effective way.

An even greater example is Christ himself who bore the cross and was crucified, not for the winsome or pure, but for the wicked, sinful beings that we are. His example of love is the one that breaks my selfish desires to vindicate myself, put myself first, or seek to even the score. His is one of humility, the King of Heaven who would muddy not just his feet but his whole

News at the Well

Looking Back

A wintry weekend in March brought 28 ladies to Penn York camp for a relaxing, fun, inspiring time of fellowship. Beth Moore's animated instruction from Proverbs taught us much about using our words wisely. This was complemented by games and activities centered around the theme “Wise Words for Women”. “MC” Mary Rech capably led us through the weekend as we ate, listened, worshipped, drank coffee, played and grew to know each other in a more intimate way. Friendships were made and deepened. Thank you to the Chosen Vessels Committee and Penn York camp for a wonderful weekend!



Coming up

Mark your calendars for August 18th! This is the date for our annual ladies picnic (watch the bulletin for details). We usually combine this with a gift shower for the Pregnancy Resource Center of the Valleys. Keep your eyes open for sales on the following items: newborn and infant diapers and clothing, receiving blankets, burp cloths, bibs, bottles, baby food (within use by date), wet wipes, baby wash and shampoo. The center is always so thankful for what we can donate.

body to redeem the prickly, unlovely ones of this fallen world. As the master gardener He knows just how to pick the roses without getting jabbed by their barbs and how to show off their velvety softness.

I think we are called to the same ministry of loving the unlovely, and it may be even knowingly wrapping our arms around a “cactus Christian” and blessing them to the point where they will no longer need thorns or pickers to protect themselves—for the truth of God's love through us will surely set them free.

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

Luke 6:35

cluster of wilted dandelions with a few tiny withered wild flowers mixed in.

Suddenly everything fell into place. Weeks earlier, we had read a story which gave an account of a woman who received a knock at her door, and when she opened it, there was a May basket waiting for her. Eden knew nothing about May baskets, and I hadn't thought of them in years. I told her when I was a little girl, we constructed them at school each year during art class, after which we would take them home, fill them with flowers and give them to our mothers, grandmothers, or a special friend. I told her it was supposed to be a surprise, so once we arrived home from school, we placed our basket on a door knob, knocked at the door and hiding from view, watched the response from the delighted recipient.

That morning, when I flipped the calendar from April to May, I said, "Hooray; it's May; summer's just around the corner." I had long forgotten about the story, but Eden had not. I had no idea what she was working on at the patio table, I had no clue that she was running around gathering flowers, and kept checking on me to make sure I didn't check on her, and I certainly didn't know that she had carefully placed a special little bouquet on the door handle and waited with anticipation for my response.

A lump formed in my throat as I recalled her repeated attempts to persuade me to go to the front door. I thought she was being selfish; wanting my undivided attention. Instead, I was the selfish one; I simply did not want to be interrupted. If only I had taken a few minutes to "stop and smell the flowers". I had crushed her precious spirit, and it broke my heart. As I looked at the pathetic little bouquet, I realized that there was little hope of reviving this one. I quickly gathered up some fresh dandelions and interspersed a few tiny white wild flowers. I attempted to arrange them as I imagined the original ones must have looked. I was painfully aware that I had allowed a true blessing to escape me.

I quietly entered the back door, and saw that Eden was still sleeping. I snipped a couple of inches from the pointed end of the paper basket so that it would stand on the kitchen table. I then partially filled a small container with some water, arranged the fresh flowers in it, and placed it inside the basket. It served as a splendid little centerpiece. Eden heard me in the kitchen, and wandered out. She was obviously

Book Reviews

Choosing to SEE

By Mary Beth Chapman



"I've told my kids for years that God doesn't make mistakes," writes Mary Beth Chapman, wife of Grammy award winning recording artist Steven Curtis Chapman. "Would I believe it now, when my whole world as I knew it came to an end?" Covering her courtship and marriage to Steven Curtis Chapman, struggles for emotional balance, and living with grief, Mary Beth's story is our story--wondering where God is when the worst happens. In *Choosing to SEE*, she shows how she wrestles with God even as she has allowed him to write her story--both during times of happiness and those of tragedy. Readers will hear firsthand about the loss of her daughter, the struggle to heal, and the unexpected path God has placed her on. Even as difficult as life can be, Mary Beth Chapman chooses to SEE. Includes a 16-page full color photo insert.

delighted to see "her" creation in all of its glory. I said, "Look, somebody made me a May basket; I wonder who it could have been." "I know who it was," she said, smiling. I was very thankful that the Lord, in His own gentle way, was so faithful to get my attention.

The Lord so often uses the simplest events to display His goodness. He's never rude, He doesn't barge into our lives; instead He very graciously offers His love and wisdom. It is our choice whether to accept or reject it. Do we sometimes treat God as though He was interrupting us? How often do we miss out on His blessings because we fail to acknowledge His prompting. We fill our days from beginning to end with activities; often based on our own perception of urgency, and too often God is not part of our plans. When we exclude Him from our daily routines, we also eliminate so many of the joys He has in store for us. As with the flowers in the basket, there may be only a limited time to reap each blessing awaiting us. "*The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God stands forever.*" (Isaiah 40:8) Fresh flowers are delightfully satisfying--so beautiful; so fragrant. The Lord offers us fresh "bouquets" daily. Will you take time to "stop and smell the flowers"?

Chosen Vessels ~

We welcomes literary contributions (poems, stories, devotions) which honor God and encourage ladies in their Christian walk. Please give your pieces to either Brandi Lasnick or Gina Stearns.

*Gentle Jesus*

By B.J. Hoff

Let me take nothing for granted, Lord,
especially the
small simple things—
the pure and lovely, but often
inconspicuous things.
Help me to see the splendor in
a patch of wild flowers,
sense the mystery of a fog cur-
tained river at dawn,
admire the grace of a
country lane,
and celebrate the
glory of a rainbow.
Grant me a glimpse of your
infinite care
in the pattern of an oak leaf,
a bee on a blossom, a mother
bird, a friend's smile.
Quiet my heart, Lord;
make me keenly aware
of the blessings of
beauty all around me,
and continually grateful for the
confirmation
of your love in all of life.

"He will quiet you with his love."
Zephaniah 3:17

*Sicilian Summer Zucchini Medley**from the "cucina" of Gina Stearns*

This dish contains many of my favorite flavors of Italy. It is earthy, rustic, and satisfying. Substitute chicken or steak strips for the pepperoni. Skip the meat and serve as a side dish to your main course. Mangia!

2-3 medium zucchini sliced
3 T of olive oil
1 med onion
2-3 tsp minced garlic
½ tsp. oregano
2-3 T of fresh or 1 T dried basil
1 T of sugar
Pinch of salt
½ tsp pepper
2 T of balsamic vinegar
¼ cup of halved olives green and/ or black
¼ cup or more of sun-dried tomatoes
¼ cup of Parmesan cheese
1 cup of sliced pepperoni, halved
1 cup or more of mozzarella cheese

Sauté the zucchini in olive oil until limp and slightly golden. Add chopped onions and sauté lightly. Add the garlic, oregano, and basil. Stir in the vinegar. Add the sugar, salt, pepper, olives and tomatoes. Stir in the Parmesan cheese and pepperoni. Remove from heat and transfer to a 9X13 baking pan. Add the mozzarella and lightly stir in and/or let melt on top.

Crackpots Corner

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(See Genesis 6-8)

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SOME OF NOAH'S DESCENDANTS WERE NOT 100%
BOUGHT IN TO THE RAINBOW THING