

# Women @



# THE ORCHARD

THE ORCHARD EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH | WOMEN'S MINISTRIES | OCTOBER 2011

## Choosing God's Way

**F**our-year-old Ben had clearly heard his mother tell him to come inside after a fun time of roasting marshmallows out in our back yard this summer. Yet, he stubbornly stood looking at us through the screen door, his little will taking a firm stand against doing as he had been told. I watched as my daughter exercised wisdom in parenting her willful child, patiently telling him it was bedtime and if he did not choose to come in immediately there would be consequences. But the battle for control had only begun.

**F**or the next hour, as the sky grew dark, this little blonde-haired boy tried various forms of manipulation. First, he asked his mother to pray for him to be able to obey, (which she did). Next he cried out that he was afraid and needed her to come out and get him, (which she did not). All the while, we marveled at the resolve that one so young could have, though he could hear Papa and Daddy playing inside with his little sister. Still not willing to give in, Ben tried asking for prayer once again. This time, however, his wise mother responded lovingly but with this truth: *"Ben, God is willing to help us when we ask Him but we still need to make the choice to obey!"*

**A**s Ben finally came into the house, I considered my own heart's inclinations. How often have I prayed for God's help with overcoming sin, but then continued to act as though I was powerless to obey?

- Asking God for peace while continuing to fret and worry over some situation that was out of my control.
- Praying for wisdom, and then lying awake during the night trying to figure out how my problem would be resolved.
- Confessing and asking God's forgiveness for sin, yet allowing shame and condemnation to steal my joy and freedom.

**O**ne wintry evening, some years ago, God gave me a personal lesson of my own. As I sat waiting in my idling car for my daughter to get out of a basketball practice that was supposed to have ended a half hour earlier, I was growing increasingly impatient and frustrated. Finally, seeing her emerge from the building, and recognizing that I was likely to pour all of my pent up frustration out on her, I shot up an almost flippant prayer, *"Lord, give me patience!"* In one of those divine life-changing moments, the Holy Spirit's still small voice broke through my self-focused emotions and said, *"I have given you patience and everything else that you need for godliness; I have given you My Spirit. Now choose to walk in my way."* In an instant, as I chose to exercise patience through the power of the Spirit, every hint of impatience and anger dissipated and I was able to warmly greet my unsuspecting daughter as she climbed exhausted into the car.

**A**lthough I knew that a fruit of the Spirit is patience (Galatians 5:22), I learned a valuable truth that day that I've never forgotten: Although God's Word assures us that, in Christ, we have been empowered with everything we need to live godly, fruitful lives (2 Peter 1:3-8), we will still remain powerless unless we *appropriate* these truths through faith-driven obedience. The question before us is, "Do I really believe that, through the Holy Spirit, I have been given *everything* I need to do God's good and pleasing will?" The answer to this question is very important because what we believe will determine how we live.

**J**esus Christ died, not only to pay the penalty of sin, but to break the *power* sin had over us. Romans 6:16-18 says: *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you, who were once slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the standard of*

teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. That begs the question, who are we enslaved to? Is it our flesh or the Holy Spirit who lives inside of us?

**W**hile there is a battle always warring between our sin nature and the spirit, if we find ourselves repeatedly and powerlessly giving way to the desires of our flesh, we would be wise to examine our hearts to be sure that we have truly surrendered our lives to Christ, as Lord and Savior of our lives. Sadly, there are many who prayed a prayer as a child, but no transformation has taken place and their lives resemble the world more than Christ. These folks may know a lot about Christ, talk Christian talk, yet have never submitted their lives to His authority. *Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever one sows that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (Galatians 6:7-8).* If you have never truly repented of your sin and given your life to Christ, I implore you to bow your knee to His authority today, entrusting your life fully to the One who died for your sin.

**F**or many others, however, the gospel that was Good News when they first came to salvation gradually became *old news*, as they set out to live the Christian life in their own strength. When the church in Galatia reverted to this same kind of works mentality, Paul challenged them, *Let me ask you this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (3:2-3).*

**W**e have been saved and called to a holy calling, *not because of our works, but because of His purpose and grace.... (2 Ti 1:9).* We not only need God's grace to save us, but we need His grace to sanctify us as well! I don't know if you've noticed, but trying hard to be holy just doesn't work. In fact, it will generally breed a growing sense of failure and actually distance us from God. On the flip side, when we start to feel proud of how well we are doing, we must be on the lookout for self-righteousness and pride at work in our hearts. The flesh is hostile to the things of God, and not only is it impossible for our flesh to become holy it has no desire to do so. Apart from the Spirit of God, we will be self-motivated, self-ambitious and self-exalting. We want what we want when we want it. Our only hope is Christ, in whom we have the power to say no to our flesh and say yes to God. By faith, we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6). Moment by moment, every choice we make determines whether the sinful flesh, or the Spirit of Christ, will reign in us.

**T**his is so important to understand because we live in a world that promotes a victim mentality. We excuse sinful

behavior, either calling it a weakness, or pointing the blame to someone else. But, as believers we are not powerless over sin. We must simply choose to believe what God's Word says is true because of the gospel and then live according to those truths.

**C**onsider the implications of this: We don't have to give way to our flesh when the alarm goes off and we feel too tired to get up and do our devotions. We can say no to emotions that tempt us toward self-pity when we are passed over or feel lonely. By the power of the Holy Spirit, armed with the truth of God's Word, we can fight and win the battle against discouragement, insecurity, and fear. We can thank God that we don't have to give into jealousy, envy, overeating, under eating, or immorality of various kinds. Even when provoked, we can choose to respond in a way that is pleasing to Christ rather than returning evil for evil. In other words, a heart that is increasingly controlled by Christ, (rather than self) will also experience increased victory over sin.

**P**recious Ben misses out on many blessings because he wants control no matter what the cost may be. That is just what the flesh naturally does; simply put, it contends for supremacy with God. Pride and rebellion blind us to the good things the Lord delights to give to those who walk in His Spirit. I sometimes wonder how many blessings I have missed out on, when I've done what is right in my own eyes rather than pursuing holiness *through the power of Christ*. How often have I walked away feeling justified in actions that have satisfied my flesh, yet quenched the Holy Spirit? Unwittingly, while we may think we have gotten our way, we have simply chosen to serve another master, our enemy, who in spite of all his grand promises, is determined to steal, kill, and destroy all that Christ died to give us.

*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me, but only when I step out in faith and obedience to God. Let your manner be worthy of the gospel of Christ....practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you (Phil. 1:27, 4:9, 13).*

Thanks for letting me share my thoughts with you,

*Linda Green*

Director of Women's Ministries - Arlington Heights Campus

A decorative border of small, stylized open books is arranged in a grid pattern around the perimeter of the page. The books are drawn in a simple, line-art style, showing the pages and the spine of each volume. The border is consistent on all four sides, creating a frame for the central text.

# Making It Personal

Read and meditate on Romans 5:12- 6:23. What gospel truths directly refer to Christ's gift of salvation from the penalty of our sin? What gospel truths speak to Christ's work of salvation from the power of our sin? How will these truths make a difference in the way you live each day?

Read Galatians 5:22 and list the fruit of the Spirit. As you reflect on each of these, ask God to show you the ways in which you are leaning on your own strength to produce this quality in your life. Read John 15: 1-11 and consider how you are actively abiding in Christ.

Ask God to show you any areas of rebellion in your heart, where you are insistent on your *own way* rather than choosing to walk obediently in the power of the gospel. Spend time in prayer, thanking God for the Cross and confessing and repenting where the Spirit brings conviction.

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Titus Two Tools Women's Fall Event

## SEX, ROMANCE, & THE GLORY OF GOD

October 21, 6:45-9 PM, Arlington Heights Campus

\$5 registration online by October 19



You're invited to join us as we look at the grand purposes that God has for relationships, marriage, and sex. Whether you are hoping to marry one day, have been married for 40 years, or are happily single, please join us as, woman to woman, we learn what God thinks about sex, romance, and His glory.

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