

# Women @



# THE ORCHARD

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

## *For Me to Live is...*

When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Philippi, he wasn't writing from a vacation home on the shore. He hadn't just gotten a big raise nor met the girl of his dreams. To the contrary, Paul was writing this letter, (which overflowed with joy and thanksgiving) from a prison cell. In light of this, we are challenged by his words, "I have learned the secret of being content in any situation," as well as his declaration, "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" These purifying words tend to roll off our lips far more easily than they are lived out day by day. Yet through the sacrifice of His Son, God is committed to work these truths so deeply in our hearts that they can become our own testimony as well (Philippians 1:6).

It is intriguing that Paul's letter does not focus on asking this church to pray he gets out of prison. Rather, His prayer is that, whether delivered from prison or delivered out of prison through death, he would honor Christ. Paul's highest desire was *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead* (Philippians. 3:10-11). That was Paul's prayer. Is it our prayer as well?

When we turn Paul's words toward ourselves, our hearts are exposed. We know what we *should* answer, even what we *want* to answer, but when the cost of how this prayer might work itself out in our lives flashes into our mind, we are tempted to change the subject or find a verse that isn't quite so confronting. After all, we rationalize, Paul was a super saint. But the issue isn't Paul's spiritual maturity, or our lack of it. The question on the table is what do we love?

Trials and tests are a barometer of sorts, exposing the idols vying for our allegiance. Suffering, if we lean into it, will lead us to ask some helpful questions. Is my de-

sire and purpose to be happy or holy? Is my authority myself or Almighty God? Is my appetite for things on earth or eternity? Do I respond to difficulty with whining or worship?

My own recent trial has been refining in this way, especially as it has gone on far longer than I ever imagined it would. It has reminded me that the supremacy of Christ in my life is something that has to be acknowledged every single day. Every morning we must begin by recognizing God's authority to rule and to reign over the affairs that concern us. Even if our deepest desire is to say, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain," there is a battle that rages in us. Our spirit may be willing but our flesh is demanding, self-promoting and, frankly, pretty whiny!

James warns us of this as well, saying our passions are at war within us. The world appeals to our flesh, telling us we are wonderful and deserve whatever we have placed a value on: things such as comfort, success, unbroken happiness, a good reputation, revenge for those who have hurt us, a good marriage, and so on. Yet, the moment we take a bite of that lie, it begins to lead us away from the Gospel, which tells us something quite different! We actually deserve God's wrath and eternal death! Apart from Christ we were "lawless and disobedient," "ungodly sinners," "unholy and profane," "selfish and proud," "opposed to God and His ways." On our own we promote our own glory and demand our own way. Really, apart from our Savior, our difficult circumstances and things we have suffered are the least of our problems!

*Self* always wants to be in control and in the limelight, so when *self* comes up against Paul's words it is not only understandably uncomfortable, it is completely contrary to anything *self* wants! To truly desire Christ above all else requires that *self* must die. Praise God, Jesus Christ has already accomplished that for us on the

cross. Yet day by day, as we live this out by faith, we must *put off* self and *put on* Christ, because there is *only one* who has the right to rule our lives and it is Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord.

**A**lthough many of us truly do desire holiness, all too often we have already determined what the path toward that end should look like. We aren't too excited about obstacles, detours, or having to wait on God for long periods of time. But since God rules that is for Him to decide, even if we never understand the way He has led us. *God's thoughts are not our thoughts; His ways are higher than our ways* (Isaiah 55:8-9).

**G**ood and upright is the LORD; therefore He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep His covenant and testimonies. Who is the man who fears the Lord? *Him will He instruct in the way that He should choose*" (Psalm 25:8-12). God lovingly chooses the classroom He will sanctify us in, and it may include undesirable circumstances such as financial hardship, a difficult marriage, poor health, a rebellious child, joblessness, loneliness, rejection, or any number of other trials we wouldn't choose. As part of our assignment for this class we are given a question: What is the one thing you want: healing or Christ? financial security or Christ? a husband or Christ? \_\_\_\_\_ or Christ?

**B**ut lest we answer too quickly, the question also carries with it an implication. If Christ is your one desire *then you must be willing to accept this place I have for you in order that you might receive more of Me in your life*. Will you trust My goodness and receive the grace I want to give to you? Are you willing to so align your heart with eternity (not earth) that you lay down the thing you *most want* for the thing I *most want to give* to you? Will you trust My love for you?

**G**od's Word reveals the glory He deserves! He is God, Creator, eternal, and all-powerful. He is our Redeemer and is good, gracious and merciful. He is Lord of lords, King of kings, Divine Healer, and He owns the cattle on a 1000 hills! Our circumstances are sovereignly arranged by Him to prepare us for an eternity that is going to be greater than we can imagine. Sharing in His sufferings, and becoming like Him in His death, bears Resurrection Life in us. As we respond with trust and obedience in our trials and difficulties, we are privileged to showcase God's faithfulness, bringing glory to His Name.

**T**his means that when we find our "self" beginning to pout about the unhappy place in which we find ourselves, we must take ourselves in hand and head to the cross. We must repent of every sin the Spirit has mercifully convicted us of, humbling ourselves before our Holy God. At

the cross we surrender our will to His will, whatever that means.

**W**e get into trouble when we let ourselves believe the lie that life should always be clear blue skies and warm comfortable breezes; expecting unbroken happiness, husbands who always love us as Christ loves the church, children who don't ever embarrass us, enough money in the bank to make us comfortable, friends who never hurt us and bodies that are strong and healthy. In this sin-filled world the only way to dispel this lie is to preach the truth of the Gospel to ourselves (which promises us a cross to bear) each morning and throughout the day.

**O**swald Chambers said, "God plants His saints in the most useless places. We say, 'I should be here because I am so useful.' Jesus never estimated His life by the standard of greatest use. *God puts His people where they will glorify Him and we are not capable of judging where that is*. Our job is to be faithful."

Thanks for letting me share my thoughts with you,

*Linda Green*

#### WOMEN AT BARRINGTON...

Registration is still being taken for Life in Christ Discipleship and Living the Gospel in Relationships

#### **Women's LIFE Group:** *Life in Christ Discipleship*

WHERE: The Orchard, Barrington Campus  
WHEN: Tuesday mornings (9:30–11:30 AM), beginning February 15

#### **Women's LIFE Group:** *Living the Gospel in Relationships* by Tara Barthel

WHERE: The Orchard, Barrington Campus  
WHEN: Monday evenings (7–9 PM),  
(February 21 - April 18)

Visit the Barrington Women's page on our website and to register online.



# Making It Personal

Read Philippians 3. In this powerful chapter, Paul emphasizes gaining a deeper knowledge and intimacy with Christ. There was one thing that was above all other things for Paul, “pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,” pursuing Christ likeness. What “one thing” are you pursuing and what ways does your daily life reflect that?

Describe the way a particular trial or difficult circumstance helped you to grow in knowledge and intimacy with Christ and brought you closer to your goal of Christ likeness.

In verse 13 Paul says “One thing I do: “forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal...” What do you think Paul meant by forgetting what was behind him? Are there any past good deeds or achievements (as Paul once bragged about) or sins and failures that are distracting or debilitating you from running the race set before you? How does this passage encourage you to press on?

Spend time repenting of anything that is contending for supremacy with Christ in your life. Ask God to so align your heart with His that one day you might truly say, “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

WOMEN AT **ITASCA**...It's not too late to join!

## Women's LIFE Group:

"*Life in Christ Discipleship*," under the leadership of Sheila Clark, Itasca Women's Ministry Coordinator, (847-884-9219) focuses us on what it means to live a fruitful life for the glory of God in every aspect of our lives...marriage, parenting, work, community, church. Women of all ages, including teens, are welcome. Register online.

WHERE: The Orchard, Itasca Campus

WHEN: Monday evenings (7-9 PM) *or* Tuesday afternoons, 1-3 PM

We can't think of a better way to begin a new year at a new campus than to dig into the Word of God with sisters in Christ! We hope you will join us for one of these LIFE groups. Here is a testimony from someone who has done the study!

*Life in Christ Discipleship has been transformational for me. Although I had been a believer for many years, I had always had difficulty in connecting the dots between the doctrine of Scripture and the application of it in my life. When my children were rebelling, it just seemed like words on a page to me. In Life in Christ I saw women who were living out the truth of Scripture in their daily lives, and they helped me to learn how to do that as well. My leaders were godly women who were sitting at the feet of Jesus, and it made me want that same kind of relationship with my Lord. Scripture came to life in a way it never had before. I'm forever changed and forever grateful.*

- Melanie

**COFFEE TALKS:** Would you like to meet for conversation over a cup of coffee or tea? Call Sheila Clark, Itasca Women's Ministry Coordinator, at 847-884-9219 to set up an appointment.

# Join us...

## OVERCOMING UNPREDICTABLE EMOTIONS

**TITUS TWO TOOLS | ALL-CAMPUS WOMEN'S EVENT**

Friday evening March 18th, 6:45-9 PM at the Arlington Heights Campus, Fellowship Hall

*Speaker Stacey Smith, a former inmate of the Arkansas Department of Corrections*



For all ages and seasons of life

Cost: \$8

Register online (or sign up using an envelope,  
available at church)

Questions: Contact Michelle Miramonti  
[mmiramonti@theorchardefc.org](mailto:mmiramonti@theorchardefc.org) or 847.392.4840

- ◇ Copies of this newsletter can be found at the ministry desks at the Arlington Heights, Barrington and Itasca Campuses.
- ◇ You can also receive it by email. To be added to the email distribution list, please contact Claire at [cbechard@theorchardefc.org](mailto:cbechard@theorchardefc.org).
- ◇ Or, to subscribe online at [www.theorchardefc.org](http://www.theorchardefc.org), search for "Women @ The Orchard" and click on "Subscribe to our e-Newsletter."

