

A Magazine for the Empowerment and Enrichment of Today's Inner-City Women

Reach UP

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The Worth of My Body

One Woman's Journey

Special Occasions

Making Christmas Special
without Spending It All



The Worth of My Body

I can remember it as if it were yesterday. When I was nine years old, we were evicted from our home. My mother worked two jobs so she took us to stay at the apartment of a male friend of hers for the night.

That same night my body was violated by this so-called friend. I was awakened from my sleep as I suddenly felt this man remove his hands from between my legs to run across the room because there was a knock at the door. Thank God it was my mother. In the morning I couldn't figure out if that incident actually took place or if it was just a dream, so I never told anyone.

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About Our Cover

Jasmine first experienced God's love when she was a teenager. She decided to follow Jesus Christ and not look back — and that has made all the difference. Through many trials, including losing her brother in a tragic accident in 2004, she has rested in God's strength to uphold her and give her continual victory. Jasmine lives with her husband, Cephus, in the South Bronx, New York. Together they are raising their one and a half-year-old son, Hosea.

Jasmine's verse: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take."*

Proverbs 3:5, 6



The Worth of My Body

Where I grew up there were usually guys outside smoking and drinking on the block. One day when I came home from school, I was met in the dark stretch of hallway by one of the guys I knew from the neighborhood. This guy was much older than I was, and he had strong muscles. You know the kind – he looked as if he'd just been released from the penitentiary. He came very close to me, so close that I was able to smell the aroma of marijuana and alcohol on his clothes. Then he pushed his tongue in my mouth without saying a word. Thanks to the neighbor who saw the shadow through the main door window and started banging on the door to get in, he left me alone. But this wasn't the end of similar confrontations.

Sometimes I wondered if it was my fault, but mostly I tried to ignore it. That led me to become involved in fashion shows and other appealing events which made me popular.

Looking back, these things did me no justice. These activities only became a cover up. The truth is, what started off as a violation to my body – the same as rape – turned into passion, which ultimately grew into lust. That caused more damage because I thought it was normal.

Finally, I started asking myself the question, "What is my body worth?" I didn't realize that things like this happened to lots of women, but affected each woman differently.

Those women who viewed themselves as having worth and who didn't give their bodies away outside of marriage did eventually gain God's promises. In time they did become successful because they held out for the honor God gave them because of their obedience.

**"Some....
made bad
decisions"**

But others, like some in the neighborhood, made bad decisions by becoming strippers or someone's playmate for money. They gave in and didn't do things God's way. They ended up going through lots of struggles and suffering as they tried to make ends meet, all the while trying to look as if they could afford the expensive living.

If someone would have told me as a child that my body was worth something, I think I could have probably avoided some situations – and not depended on that knock at the door. Today, I find it very important to tell a child the worth of his or her body while growing up. Everything that I went through early in my life has caused so much pain that everyday I asked the question, "Man, am I worth anything?" Those were the days when thoughts of suicide entered my mind.

Years later when a purpose, my child, entered my life, I said to myself, "Man, with all my stupid mistakes, I can't believe I'm still here. I must be worth something." I was ready for a change.

Getting into the Word has helped me see that from the beginning it was told to us that our bodies are a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). They are gifts from God and the place where God lays. I found out that if I allowed Him to come inside of me and reside in this temple where He belongs, He would release me from all the hurt and disgust I've carried around.

**"You are
worth are
everything
to Me."**

Eventually I watched all that mess that surrounded me finally disappear. Now I can hear Him saying to me, "You are worth everything to Me." I have come to realize that it was always Jesus who was knocking at the door – the door of my heart. And I am thankful that I let Him in.

I could have avoided the outcome of those events just by opening my heart and allowing Him in. For a while I was a victim of circumstances. Not anymore. He bought me with His life, and there is no one on earth who would pay that price for me.

(Continued on Page 6)



Special Occasions

by Karen Blake

The holidays give us the opportunity to make special memories for our children. No, I'm not just talking about Christmas morning when they open presents.

Take the opportunity to make your own special occasions and family traditions that will warm your children's hearts for a life-time.

You can do this for little or no cost. How?

Go somewhere special. The great thing about living in the city is that there's always a lot going on! Go to special free events in your city, like a tree lighting, a sing-a-long, or just a walk downtown to see all the decorated streets and stores!

You can find out about these free events from the newspaper, your child's school, or online. If you don't have a computer, go to the library to use one. Someone will be glad to assist you. In fact, libraries often host free events for children.



Do something special in your home. Make holiday cookies. There are cookies that come in a can that have a holiday picture imprinted on them. You just slice and bake them. Letting your kids add their personal touch with sprinkles or decorating gel adds to the fun!



Make holiday decorations out of things you have around the house -- paper, crayons, scissors, and tape. Make paper chains or tree decorations. Make home-made cards for your family and friends.

(You may even want to shock your neighbors by making cards for them as well, wishing them well as you hand-deliver them with your kids!)

When you decorate your house for the holidays, make it a special occasion -- do it with your kids.

TIPS to make a special occasion special:

Call it a special occasion. When you do, your kids will too and they will soon come up with their own ideas for these special family times.

Don't let anything stop you from having a special occasion - not your hard day, not your kids' bad attitude, not this guy yelling in the hall - again. Your home is your home.

Create the atmosphere you want it to have.

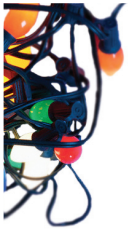
These are just a few simple ways to create special occasions that will warm your children's hearts for years to come.



Whatever you do, make it special!

all images courtesy of Karen Blake

Q: What well-known favorite Christmas carol was written because of mice? answer on page 6



A Safe Christmas is a Merry Christmas

by Victor M. Velez



Christmas. A time for joyous celebration with family and friends. Personally, I look forward to the food, the music, and the decorations of the season. Those are the things that get my Christmas spirit flowing.

Christmas decorations are special to my family and me because it's almost like decorating for a big birthday bash for our Lord Jesus Christ.

The lights, the trees, and the garland are things that represent – at least to us – the celebration of our Lord's birth and resurrection.

Christmas decorating is so much fun, and it's something the whole family can do. But as parents, we also have to realize the potential dangers that can ruin the holiday.

I was reminded about this from a short video clip. It was of a Christmas tree that caught fire in just 40 seconds and burned the whole room because of some defect in the wire of one of the lights. Just 40 seconds.

This tragedy is something that no one wants to have as part of their memories. So here are some Christmas decorating safety tips that we make sure to do at our home.

In most homes the center of focus of our Christmas decorations is our Christmas tree. So IF you choose to get a real tree, caring for it may mean the difference between a safe holiday or a dangerous one.

The U. S. Fire Administration says that there are six times more fires in late December caused by Christmas trees! Too often this is because people forget to water a LIVE tree. Once a tree is allowed to

dry out and die, it becomes a hazard. One spark and you could lose your apartment.

So don't forget the 1/2 rule. By January 2nd (1/2), get rid of the tree according to the laws of your city.

A much safer (and easier) choice is a fake tree.

If your tree is over five feet tall, I suggest securing the tree to the wall with wire as an extra precaution. Especially if you have young children like I do who like to climb. This prevents it from tipping over.

The second possible dangerous fire hazard is the candle. Candles are so beautiful. The glow is so romantic, and the scents fill the air with Christmas smells. But they can also be deadly.

Candles are basically an open flame, and anything getting too close can catch on fire. And like my son, Jacob, children are attracted to the dancing little flames. So if you can't watch your small children all the time, I suggest you not use candles until your children are more mature. Or, try to find the battery operated candles. Some are scented and look like real wax candles.

Another hint. Many Christmas decorations need to be hung close to the ceiling or high up on your windows. Never use a ladder without someone else holding it for you. Don't climb up on chairs and wobbly tables either.

When decorating, safety should always come first. Why risk celebrating your Christmas from the hospital or with a cast on your leg? Take the proper precautions and have a beautiful and safe Christmas.

Ask Pat:

Featuring any medical or nutritional questions you want to ask a Registered Nurse ...

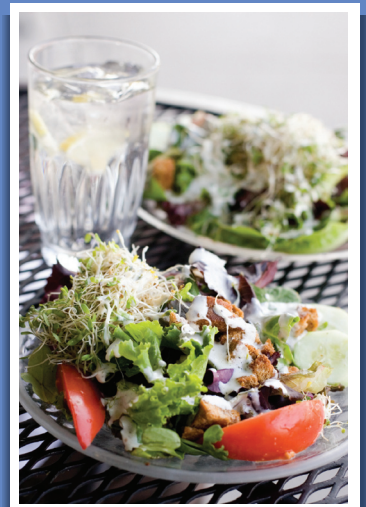
"My muscles cramp when I sleep. Why?"

Barbara D.,
Bronx, NY

Answer: Calf cramps can be triggered by dehydration (not drinking enough water), sitting too long, or being low in potassium, calcium, and magnesium. These are minerals that help muscles contract and relax.

Try to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water daily, walk or stretch your legs every hour or so, and make sure you eat a salad on a regular basis. Eating a lettuce salad daily, or every other day, is best to get the minerals your diet maybe lacking. If during the night you feel like you still have the sensation of "walking, or have a creepy-crawly feeling," you may have restless legs syndrome, which is a neurological condition: See a doctor.

Patricia M. Gonzalez, RN,
CPAN, Assistant Director of
Post Anesthesia Care Unit at
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New York, NY



The Worth of My Body

The worth of my body is not in the way I look, the way I am shaped, or the price of the clothes I wear. It is because of He who now lives in me. That's what makes me priceless. Now I adorn myself for Him, not for the men in the night clubs who made me feel worthless and less than a woman. Now it's for the Man who paid the ultimate price, the Man who calls me His princess and tells me I'm worth far more than rubies (Proverbs 31:10).

He is for all women – and all men – who are going through any kind of pain and are risking their personal health and lives by putting themselves in danger, hurting their children and loved ones, and feeling like they're worth nothing.

We need to ask ourselves why God chooses to lay here in our temples. "Could it be because He thinks I'm worthy?"

Yes, I am worth something! I am worth a lot more than one dollar, a lot more than five hundred dollars, and even more than a million dollars. And so are you!

He wants you to know that He gave His life for you, and He's been knocking on your door. I urge you to free yourself and let Him in, then see your worth.

"Thank you, Jesus, Your love is unconditional."



Karen Grant lives in Fort Lauderdale with her daughter and is a volunteer counselor with Victim's Advocate Services.

Q:What well-known favorite Christmas carol was written because of mice?

“Silent Night Holy Night”

In 1818, a traveling band of actors were performing the story of Christ's birth in small towns around Austria. On December 23, they arrived at a small village near Salzberg.

Unfortunately, the St. Nicholas church organ wasn't working and wouldn't be repaired before Christmas. It's said that mice had eaten through the bellows. So Assistant Pastor Josef Mohr went for a walk – a long walk high up on a hill where he saw peaceful snow-covered villages. He thought about Christmas. He thought about the angels announcing the birth of baby Jesus to the shepherds on a hillside. And he thought about a poem he'd written a few years before.

He decided to give the poem to Franz Gruber, and in only a few hours Gruber came up with a melody that could be sung accompanied by a guitar.

The simple, little song went from village to village, around the world ... down through the years.

*Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright,
Round yon virgin mother and Child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight,
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia:
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born*

*Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light,
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth*

Cleaning Tips

Short on time? Fill your tub with cold water and pour 1 cup of bleach in it to soak for 1 hour. Throw in plastic or rubber shower mats so everything will be sparkling clean and sanitized too! Don't let little children or pets near it until the tub is drained and dried it out.

After you wash your dishes and place them in the drying rack, pour boiling water over them and quickly cover with a towel. The dishes will steam dry and you don't have to towel dry the dishes!

Take five minutes before bedtime to put things dropped around the house back in their place. Homework by the door, shoes in the closet, mail in one spot, laundry in a basket, and so on. Work at finding a place for everything and make it a habit everyday to put things away. Don't forget to teach your children where things belong, too.



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We believe that the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, are the inspired, genuine Word of God.

We believe that God is eternally existent in three separate persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe that God the Father is the personal Creator of all things.

We believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, that He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, provided for the forgiveness of our sins by His death on the cross, and was bodily resurrected, went back to God the Father, and ever lives to pray for us.

We believe that all people are by nature separated from God and responsible for their own sin, but that salvation is freely offered to all by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When a person repents of sin and accepts Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord, that person's sins are forgiven, and he/she becomes a child of God, destined to spend eternity with Jesus.

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are valid for today.

We believe in the second coming of Christ.

We believe in a real heaven and eternal separation from God.

This Magazine has been given to you by:

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Dedicated to the memory of my mother, Shirley Wacker, who made our house a home and filled it with love and memories that time cannot erase.



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