

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

Reach UP

Spring 2008

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“Fallen Pieces” by Sharese P.



God made us to love Him, obey Him, and walk intimately with Him. Because of sin, which is disobedience to God, this intimacy gets messed up. When we either love our sin or feel shame about it, our first nature to love God gets buried deep away and we can actually hide from Him.

It's a scary thing to know our own sin has pushed us far away from God. But the truth is that God's love for humanity will never end; that is why He sent Jesus to forgive us, heal us, and restore our fallen pieces. A poem I wrote in August of 2004 reflects this truth:

[[her poem]]

“Me, Jesus”

don't worry, there's no need to fear.
don't shrink in shame,
don't hide and be afraid to call my name.

don't you remember the story?
close your eyes – can't you see the hill?
can't you see the wood?
can you feel my Father's will?

For me, Jesus to die,
for you, lovely
For me, Jesus to hurt,
for you, beauty
For me, Jesus to agonize,
for you, Bride

Please look up, my eyes are waiting,
my arms are open,
my heart is ready to embrace you,
unfold you and hold you.

It's me, Jesus,
and I care, I always have and
always will.
I'm not scared of your scars.
you're scared of me not loving you,
not wanting to be near you.

But I'm here assuring you.
It's me, Jesus.

The cover picture was taken in the front of my apartment while living in Bedford-Stuyvesant, New York. I never could figure out why these wild petunias grew only in front of my stoop in the cracks of the sidewalk.

But I'm childlike enough to think that my Heavenly Father was blessing me in a way He knew helped me feel good deep inside. See, I love flowers so very much! Imagine, in the middle of a neighborhood known for danger and oppression, little seeds sprouted in the dirt of those ugly cracks and grew into pretty flowers. And for about four springtimes, I had such pleasure seeing them as I'd go in and out my door everyday.

I encourage you to look to your Heavenly Father to bless you in special ways. He loves you so very much ... and cares about what you care about!

One more thing. Never doubt that that the good you do and say makes a difference. Just as seeds take root and can grow in the smallest of cracks, a kind word or act can break through to the toughest person. That's one of the ways God works in and through us. And I have to tell you, by the fourth spring there were flowers all up and down the block.

So maybe when you see the *Reach UP* masthead with that little flower pushing its way up, you'll think of those wild petunias in Brooklyn. Nothing could stop them from making a difference and creating beauty wherever they happened to be.

by Crystal
Wacker



Want vs. Need

by Yvette Woodward
and Stephanie Collins

Many times when we get a raise or have some extra money, we think it's time to spend. How many times have we gone by that store window and said, "I want that dress!" or "I want those pair of shoes," or "I want a new car"? Many have said this, but the question we need to ask ourselves is, "What do I need?"

Debt has become one of society's main problems, and it is affecting all people across all financial divides. Whether you are married or single, you have to spend your money wisely. One factor that contributes to this problem is "want vs. need." What you want is not necessarily what you need.

There are several ways to assess if what you want is really what you need. First ask yourself:

1. Do I really need that extra pair of shoes or that thing for my house? Will it make more clutter?

2. Will this thing that I want enhance or improve my quality of life without putting me into debt? (Being in debt is not living a quality life.)

3. Can I find a less expensive item with the same value or quality? If you decide what you want is a true need, then be sure to work on the answers to this question.

Here are some tips to save money when shopping:

1. Just take enough money to purchase what you need.

2. Know what you are going to purchase before you go out the door. Make a list and stick to it!

3. If you have credit cards*, never ever take more than one credit card when you leave the house.

4. Eat before you go food shopping. You will be less likely to buy "junk foods" and extra food that you do not need.

We hope these few simple tips will help you save some money. They've helped us.

*For those of us who are compulsive shoppers, put your credit card in a baggie leave it in the freezer. During the time it takes to thaw out, you can honestly figure out whether you still want or NEED that "thing." Probably not....

You are Not Alone

You have got to love the Verizon commercial: A guy looks like he is all alone in the world. Then with one zoom-out of the camera, you see he is not alone. In fact, there is a whole network of people with him, making sure his phone call goes through.

This Verizon network includes a lady with a clipboard, a guy hanging from the ropes, a helicopter hovering nearby, and of course, the famous, “Do you hear me now?” spokesman with the dark hair and glasses.

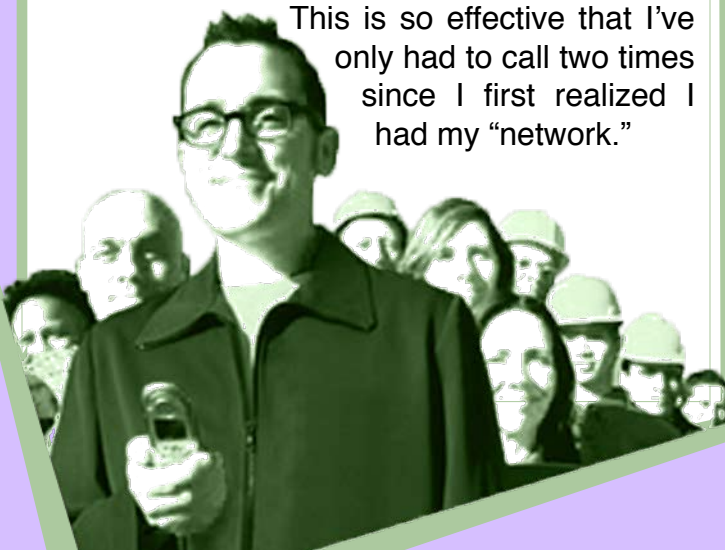
Often, as single moms, we feel like the guy in the commercial – all alone, especially when it comes to disciplining our children. Sometimes our kids are not afraid to get right up in our faces and be rude – extremely rude. It’s like they know we’re alone and they want to test the limits. They want to rule over us.

I realized one day, in the midst of one such battle, that even though it may look as if I were alone, I am not! Zoom out! I have a network too! I have a network of people who love my teenage daughter and me, people who believe in right and wrong, good people who want both of us to succeed.

It was at that point that I calmly and firmly said to my daughter, “I am not alone in the world. You are not going to speak to me like that. I have a whole network of people who love me and who love you, and if you’re not going to listen to me, I am going to call one of them, like your uncle, and get his help. I am not alone.” Then I picked up the phone and made the call. Once her uncle spoke to her, my daughter calmed down. And then at a later time we went over the fact that she needed to respect me.

Your child may continue to have fits, as mine sometimes does. Your child may try to keep you from making the call. Stay calm. Remind your child that you are not alone, then make the call when you can.

This is so effective that I’ve only had to call two times since I first realized I had my “network.”



Letting your kids know you have a network makes them feel safe. And whether or not they put it into words, they realize, “Mom is not alone. She isn’t a pushover. I can’t ‘get over’ on her. That means no one else will either. I am safe under her leadership.”

It’s good for the child, and it’s good for you to realize that you are not alone! If you will follow God and His ways, He will lead you and provide for you. You are not alone!

Helpful hints:

- 1.** Choose people for your network who believe in and do what is right, such as people who seriously follow Jesus Christ and His ways are great. (Get connected with them in a Bible-believing church in your neighborhood.)
- 2.** Make sure you speak to the people in your network before you call them so they know what is going on.
- 3.** When you speak to your child, stay calm. Speak firmly, not in a threatening way.
- 4.** Continue to learn about more good, healthy ways to raise your kids.



*T*his Easter season, take the time to sit down with your children and read the Easter story to them. Have them keep these questions in mind as they listen to the story. After you have finished reading the story, read these questions again and answer them with your children.

The Easter Story Focus Questions:

- 1) Why do you think Jesus’ friends were so sad?
- 2) What caused the heavy stone to move away from the tomb?
- 3) What did the angels tell Mary and her friends?

What a sad day it was for Jesus’ friends! They stood sorrowfully watching Jesus as He hung on the cross to die. They couldn’t help Him. They loved Jesus. They thought of all the good things He had done for them. He fed the poor. He healed the sick. He made the blind man see. He made the lame man walk. And now He was dying as they hopelessly watched. They knew they would miss Him, and wondered why Jesus had to die.

When Jesus finally died, one of His friends named Joseph asked to bury Him. Another friend, Nicodemus, wrapped Jesus’ body in clean cloths, and together they took Him to a tomb to be buried. Joseph rolled the large stone against the entrance of the tomb.

He made the lame man walk. And now He was dying as they hopelessly watched.

The people who had wanted Jesus killed remembered that Jesus had said that after three days He would rise again. They were afraid that Jesus’

friends would steal His body and tell people that Jesus had risen from the dead, so they asked the governor to make sure no one would steal Jesus’ body from the tomb. The governor told them to take guards to the tomb and make it as secure as they could.

Then there was a great earthquake that rolled the stone away from the tomb! On the third day when Mary and her friends went to take spices and perfume to the tomb where Jesus was buried, they were surprised to find that the stone had been rolled back from the tomb. They went inside and found the cloths that Jesus had been wrapped in, but Jesus was not there. The angels told them that Jesus was not there. He is risen, just as He said! Mary and her friends ran to tell the others the good news.

Yes, it is true. Jesus is alive.

(Now is a good time to ask the Focus Questions....)

Dig a little deeper: You can read more about this story in Matthew 27-28.

It’s good to ask ourselves, “What does the Easter story mean for you and me?” The Bible tells us in Romans 3:23 that all of us are sinners (we have disobeyed God’s law), which means we are separated from God. No matter how big or how small we think the sin is, it still makes us unable to be with God (James 2:10). Romans 6:23 tells us that the payment for our sin is to be separated from God forever, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus loved us so much that He took the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross so that we could have eternal life with God if we repent or are sorry for our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. What Good News!

This week, work with your child to memorize these Bible Verses together:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”
John 3:16

“He is not here; He has risen!”
Luke 24:6

Jelly Beans Tell the Easter Story

What child can resist the bright colors and sweet taste of jelly beans? Grab a handful of jelly beans and share the story of Easter with your child by using the colors of the jelly beans to tell God's story of forgiveness and hope for each one of us.

(Helpful hint for moms of preschoolers:) Use this as a time to teach the color names as you tell the story. Then have your child share some of the jelly beans and retell the Easter Story with other kids in your building or neighborhood.



Yellow is for the sun that shone brightly above,



Orange is for the sky that once went dark,



Smashed (smash one or two!) jelly beans are for the sin that made its mark.

Red is for His blood that took my sin away,



White is for the grace of that glorious Easter day.

Purple is for Jesus, the Risen King!

Pink is for the hope that each new tomorrow will bring.



Green is for the grass where they sat and heard of His love,



*Colorful jelly beans
Pretty and sweet,
Tell of His story
In an Easter treat!*

Ask Pat

Tonia from Brooklyn asks,

Why do I crave certain foods?

Eating certain foods like pasta, rice, bread, and sweets will raise your blood sugar levels. It also temporarily elevates the levels of certain chemicals in our bodies, which acts like keys to unlock other chemicals. The main one in this case is dopamine, and it releases other chemicals. Some are called endorphins, which give us a feeling of pleasure. Another one is serotonin, which gives you that feeling of well-being. Serotonin is also why you get sleepy after eating a big meal.

Many of our comfort foods are also heavy in carbohydrates. Think about the foods you want and crave when you are feeling stressed or sad. Do you want mac 'n' cheese, fried chicken and mashed potatoes, or a bowl of spaghetti? Maybe you start craving cake, cookies, or Little Debbie's. One way or another we go back to the foods that make us feel full. Combine this with the rise in serotonin levels that tells our brains that we are happy. It's no wonder we crave foods rich in carbohydrates when we are stressed or sad.

Knowing the triggers that hit our brain is the start to getting these food cravings under control. Eating regularly three meals a day with snacks in between helps. Low-fat microwave popcorn is a quick fix to the carbomunchies!

Stay tuned for my next fix for when you're craving that mac'n cheese.

Thanks for that question, Tonia. I'm sure we all struggle with the comfort foods.

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

Stepping into (or Out of) the Ring

by Babs Kincaid

“You just don’t understand how he pushes my buttons.” Ever heard someone say that? Or perhaps you’ve said it yourself. You know that person who just knows how to step on your last nerve and shoot your anger up to the moon!

Picture a boxing ring and your meanest neighbor in the ring with you. He has just put you down big time with his brutal words. You hear the words ringing in your ear and stinging your very being. You say to yourself, “Those are fighting words!” So you step into the ring and begin to brawl with this loser.

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You have just lost the battle. You just sank to his disgusting level!

You win by not stepping into the ring! There are no winners in the ring, only losers. When you step into the ring, you are guaranteed to get beat up!

“No!” is a power word. You do not have to ramp up the fight. You can let it die without your help. It takes more courage to walk away! It takes more courage not to step into the ring and instead walk on by. You do not have to play the monkey game -- monkey see, monkey do.

Let God take the battle! Let God do for you what you cannot do for yourself! Haven't you played the victim role long enough?

So your accuser has just pushed your buttons again. You can choose not to let him control your emotions. You can choose not to give your power away. You can let your accuser stay in the ring and act foolish all by himself. You can choose to take the high road and walk away and let God have your boxing gloves. You won't be needing them anymore. That's how God's true Champions are born!

I've learned this "Recovery Tool." Whoever you give your control to, controls you. Did you get that, dear sister? Whoever you give your control to, controls you! Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. The battle is the LORD'S. Stepping into the ring is giving your power away and allowing someone else's bad behavior to control you. To walk in courage is to walk away from the ring.

My Wow verse: "Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city." *Proverbs 16:32*

Babs Kincaid lives in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. All the glory for her writing goes to Jesus, her "Knight in Shining Armor" who is responsible for taking her to heights beyond her wildest dreams! This is an adaptation from a chapter in her upcoming book, "Breaking the Cycle One Day at a Time."



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Reach UP © magazine is published quarterly.