

bloom!

Encouraging girls on their journey towards Biblical womanhood.

autumn 2008

lessons in **7**
contentment

18 Fiction:
A Trip to the Well

Leslie¹⁰
Ludy
& Set-Apart
Femininity

Rescuing the Beauty:
Revolutionary Media **8**
and ways you can get involved!

The Bulletin Board

"True contentment is a real, even an active, virtue—not only affirmative, but creative. It is the power of getting out of any situation all that there is in it."

—G. K. Chesterton

This issue's Book Giveaway

To win a free book of *Because He Loves Me: How Christ Transforms Your Daily Life* by Elyse Fitzpatrick, send us an e-mail with your full name and put "book giveaway" in the subject line. You must be a subscriber to enter the contest. The deadline for entry is December 10, 2008. The winner will be chosen randomly.



"Let us ever imitate the loving Jesus. The child comes to him; he takes it on his knee, saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." A widow has just lost her only son; he weeps at the coffin, and with a word, restores life to the dead man. He sees a paralytic, a leper, or a man long confined to his bed; he speaks, they rise, and are healed. He lived for others, not for himself. His constant labors were without any motive, except the good of those who lived in the world. And to crown all, you know the mighty sacrifice he made, when he condescended to lay down his life for man—when on the tree, quivering with agony, and hanging in the utmost extremity of suffering, he submitted to die for our sakes, that we might be saved! Behold in Christ 'love consolidated'. He was one mighty pillar of benevolence! Christ is love. Oh, you Christians, you should be loving also. Let your love and your beneficence beam out on all men!"

—Charles Spurgeon

Oasis

I drag my weary self
through the desert
through the heat
Succumbing to the intensity
of the sun
I'm burning
I'm scalded
whiteness is killing me
I collapse, shaking
crumpled
I'm letting go,
letting the sand swallow me up
surrender is easy
when there's nothing
to save you
no hand to comfort you
Then, when hope had melted
and been disintegrated
by the sun...
I feel a newness
life
water
I find an oasis

—Submitted by Amber Roberts, age 17

"Contentment, then, is the product of a heart resting in God. It is the soul's enjoyment of that peace that passes all understanding. It is the outcome of my will being brought into subjection to the Divine will. It is the blessed assurance that God does all things well, and is, even now, making all things work together for my ultimate good."

—A. W. Pink

"O LORD, **you have searched me** and **you know me**.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O LORD.
You hem me in—behind and before;
you have laid your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is **too wonderful for me**,
too lofty for me to attain."

Psalm 139:1-6

A Note to our Subscribers

New Re-subscription Policy. When the magazine first began, our policy was that each subscriber received four issues and then had the option of re-subscribing for another four issues. Because of the work that this policy involves, we've changed it so that once you subscribe, you will continually receive the magazine. If you wish to no longer receive it, please notify us and we will end your subscription. Thank you!

Your Submissions. We always appreciate any type of submissions to the magazine—articles, poetry, photography, art, recipes, recommendations, and so on. Articles are what we receive most, so we thought we would share a few guidelines of the type of writing we're looking to publish: (1) Make sure your article has one big purpose. (2) Include scripture. (3) Be original. (4) Share from your experiences. (5) Remember the gospel: we talk a lot about pursuing holiness, but let's remember that which is "of first importance." And lastly, we of course don't expect perfection (we aren't exactly professional writers either), but we do expect quality writing and a humble spirit.

Winter Issue. If you haven't figured it out yet, we're a bunch of girls who are, well, just like you. So although we are excited about *Bloom!*, we have school and families and life. So we hope you'll extend us grace as we go a bit slow at times (and maybe do us a favor and forget that this issue was supposed to come out in September). To help us get back on track, though, we'll be having a mini winter issue. But come spring, expect to see the magazine back to regular size with some exciting new additions, too.

Check out our online blog to read weekly posts from our editors about everything from decorating to more fiction stories! Go to:



www.bloom-blog.blogspot.com

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."
II Corinthians 5:21

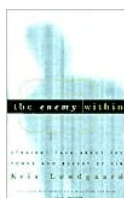
The BOOKSHELF :: This Issue's Recommended Reading ::



Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England by Faith Cook



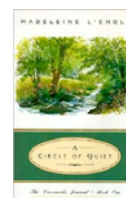
Discipline: The Glad Surrender by Elisabeth Elliot



The Enemy Within: Straight Talk About the Power and Defeat of Sin by Kris Luingaard



Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer by Roy Peter Clark



A Circle of Quiet by Madeline L'Engle (ages 16+)



::yummy autumn recipes::
 pumpkin brownies, autumn soup, cookies and more
15

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*And my God will meet all your needs according
 to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*
 {Philippians 4:19}

*The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant
 places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.*
 {Psalms 16:6}

::Our Purpose::

To encourage, inspire, and support girls on their journey towards a gospel-centered, world-altering, Biblical womanhood.

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We love to hear from our readers! Feel free to send us your suggestions, comments, questions, or article submissions.

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Letters of Advice from Older Girls

sister
-to-
sister

"The older women... can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."

—Titus 2:4-5—

Dear Sisters in Christ,

When life changes, we learn it's possible to gaze forward and backward at the same time. I've found this doubly true this past year between college and law school. When law school preparations weren't reminding me of starting college, then my job as a college admissions counselor was. Considering the ways I've changed in five years from a Virginia college freshman to a Massachusetts law student has made this year both disheartening and encouraging; I'm confronted with my lingering sin, yet reminded of God's great grace. It's a privilege to share with you about God's work in my life—and honestly, it was hard to choose just one area! Yet as I thought about the ways God has increased my trust in His goodness, my thoughts turned to friendship.

The summer before starting college, I prayed for friends I hadn't even met. After being part of a small home school group, I was excited to attend a college where I would be surrounded by likeminded Christians from across the country. Yet if I was honest with myself, I was also a little scared that I wouldn't find friends quickly. So I prayed the entire summer that God would place me with roommates who could become good friends. It was definitely a chance to practice trust: my rooming assignments were switched last minute before I arrived on campus (twice) and my parents left Orientation convinced at least one of my new roommates and I would never get along.

This inauspicious beginning was God's setup to refine my understanding of friendship. Behind the excitement and anxiety, I was also a little ashamed to be so concerned about making friends. Praying about it felt a little, well, unspiritual. Shouldn't I be more concerned about service or evangelism? Isn't dependence on friends the first step toward giving into peer pressure? And shouldn't a mature Christian desire only Christ? It is true that the importance I place on friendship often betrays a selfish desire for comfort and acceptance, reveals doubt in God's provision, and reflects the idol friendship can so easily become. These are real dangers; nevertheless, in His kindness, sometimes God teaches us to reject counterfeits by showing us true beauty.

Have you noticed how often Scripture records God's interest in our joy? My time in Virginia was filled with rich memories, and despite my parents' prediction, my freshman roommates are now two of my closest friends. God not only abundantly met a need I was hesitant to admit, but He patiently taught me the role friendship plays in His plan for His children. My freshman philosophy course dissected Aristotle's argument that man is a social being and my upper-level political theory courses emphasized the importance of close, vibrant communities for political strength. Both ideas are echoes of Scripture's emphasis on family and the Church and its praise of a true friend's honesty and love. God made us for community, and we find true happiness when we live in light of this reality. There are other blessings derived from friendship, like the ability to serve God more effectively together than we can alone, but simply enjoying our friends also honors our Lord. For God—how amazing!—is interested in our joy.

If God made me for community, than I need others. This second observation on friendship flows logically from the first, but it was harder to accept for a girl who considered standing alone a mark of spiritual strength. Yet that idea is only half-truth: doing what is right when no one else will is a virtue, but trying to justify prideful self-sufficiency is not. Fortunately, friendship is a potent remedy for pride. It puts my status as a dependent creature on display; it cries out that I am insufficient alone. Admitting weakness to my friends has been a consistent battle for me, yet I continue to learn that there is freedom when I live in humble honesty. Our friends are uniquely positioned to show us our sin: resolving conflicts with friends who know me enough to discern my motives has forced me to confront blackness in my heart I could not see alone. Our friends challenge us to live in a way that honors Christ in every moment—especially the unguarded, casual moments when it's "only our friends" watching. At their best, these aspects of friendship point us to Christ, for recognizing I need others reminds me I am dependent on God for every breath.

Preparing for law school highlighted a final thought on friendship for me. This summer I've been praying again, but the request is different. I've been praying for my future church. Throughout college, God brought pastors and friends into my life who all stressed the importance of the local church. I attended church consistently in college, but I regret seldom making it a priority beyond Sundays. As I move to a new city and a secular campus, I'm very aware of my need for the Church and its unity in Christ that reaches far beyond merely human friendships. Across the centuries, God has used the discipleship and encouragement of the Church to train His people for service and those times when He does call them to stand alone. The Church is where we hear the Gospel proclaimed and learn to see Christ with clearer eyes. The Church increases our joy, acknowledges our need for others, and points us to Christ. In essence, it is the best context for Christian friendship.

While I am excited for this coming year, it would be dishonest to say leaving my Virginia friends and starting over in Massachusetts isn't difficult. Yet seeing His faithfulness in the past strengthens my trust in our great God, and reflecting on friendship is a stunning testimony to God's kindness to us in every area. God has promised to meet every need, even the ones we are too ashamed to admit and the ones we do not fully understand. And should we be surprised? He has already met our deepest need through the sacrifice of His Son and then pours upon us every spiritual blessing in Christ. It is a good thing He gives us friends—how could we ever praise Him enough alone?

in Christ,

Lindsay See

Meet Lindsay See—

Lindsay See graduated from Patrick Henry College with a degree in Political Theory in 2007. She is now a student at Harvard Law School and eventually hopes to work in the family law/child abuse field.

You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

Psalms 4:4



Heather and her two sons.



a letter *from* heather

by Heather Paulsen, author of *Emotional Purity*

accountability

Dear Little Sister in the Lord,

“What is God teaching you these days? What areas do you see God growing and stretching you? Are you spending quality time with Him? Is there anything God has called you to do that you’re avoiding?”

Are these questions you receive often? Who would most likely ask you these tough questions? Do you ever ask these questions of others?

In Christian circles we talk often about accountability, but I wonder how often we’re really being held accountable? I have found in my own life that I tend to ask “accountability” questions that, if asked of me, I would not be uncomfortable to answer.

So let’s say I am really having solid time with God each day, it may be easier to ask, “How’s your time with the Lord?” But if I am struggling with being content with waiting on God for an answer, it may not be as easy to ask, “How are you in being content?”

Spiritual accountability is being held responsible for our actions regarding our walk with the Lord. It’s being kept in check and knowing that someone is keenly aware of our struggles.

If you are struggling with a certain aspect of your walk with the Lord: quiet time, bible time, waiting on Him, being faithful, walking worthy, laying aside selfishness, avoiding temptation, standing up for His truth, and countless other areas, it can be helpful to find and maintain accountability. I believe real growth and Christ likeness can take place within a healthy relationship, which has a good dose of accountability.

There was a time in my life where my walk with the Lord was not as strong, I found myself being pulled by the winds of the world and I avoided accountability. This, thank the Lord, was a rather short period in my life, but it was then I realized the tremendous blessing of real, spiritual accountability. Since that time in my life, I have found myself actively seeking accountability. In some circles I am known as the one to ask those tough, uncomfortable questions. In return, they know I want those same questions asked of myself.

Being accountable in your walk with the Lord will draw you closer to Him and closer to others. As Proverbs 27:17 says: “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Love,

Heather



lessons in contentment

Where I'm At by Jessina Leonard

This summer it felt like a tsunami of discontentment swallowed me. I have been discontent before (very often, in fact), but it differed this time. The emotions were much more volatile and the desires stronger. I began meeting people that had most everything I wanted. And I felt lost in disillusionment.

But through God's gracious sanctifying work, amidst my sin I've been learning a few things about contentment too. Yet, I am still discontent. In fact, I cringe to tell you these lessons, because even though I can say I have learned these things, believe them, and accept them—oh, how rarely I practice them! I do not break a pity-party with sudden joyous thoughts that God is good and trustworthy. No, more often it takes hard work: struggling prayers, repentance, filling my mind with truth. And I do not like hard work. I stay away from it. I wallow in my discontentment and complain—it's a lot easier.

So I share these lessons with you, not because I've attained them, but because when we know the truth, the truth will set us free. These truths—which, before this article, were scribbled on post-it notes in my room and stored in the recesses of my brain—are what I have kept returning to in those moments of discontentment. So welcome back to my bedroom. By God's grace, this is what I have been learning recently:

God is good. All the time.

I think I can safely say that we all agree that God is good. Yet, an attitude of discontentment proclaims exactly the opposite. Discontentment says: "What God has provided is not good enough. I know better how to satisfy my needs." As one of my friends wrote once: If we believe God loved us so much to redeem us, how come we cannot trust His goodness (which, let us remember, does not necessarily mean our immediate happiness) for our daily lives, needs, and desires?

Exodus 34:6 // Ephesians 3:18 // Psalm 34:8

Always something more.

I recently was talking to a lady who was celebrating her first wedding anniversary. Everything about her proclaimed Perfect Christian Bride. Yet she confessed something to me: although she was happily married after a few discontented years as a single, marriage did not satisfy her. Now, she said, she felt discontent without children. She told me, "We'll always be wanting something more unless we find contentment in the only One who is unchanging: God." In the words of Charles Spurgeon: "You say, 'If I had a little more, I should be very satisfied.' You make a mistake. If you are not content with what you

have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled."

Psalm 73:25-26 // the book of Ecclesiastes

We have everything we need.

And God knows exactly what we need. So, as Don Kistler writes, "The person with the discontented heart has the attitude that everything he does for God is too much, and everything God does for him is too little." Let us humble ourselves and realize that God knows our needs better than even we know them. Our God is trustworthy.

Ephesians 1:3 // Philippians 4:19 // Psalm 16:6 // Matthew 6:28-32

Be enchanted.

I have a bit of an obsession with C.S. Lewis. I recently noted that one of his biographers wrote that "above all, [Lewis was] characterized with a willingness to be enchanted." In other words, he realized that what he did have, he didn't deserve at all (but for the grace of God), so he was willing to be enchanted by everything—because everything is undeserved. As G.K. Chesterton wrote, "If Cinderella says, 'How is it that I must leave the ball at twelve?' her godmother might answer, 'How is it that you are going there till twelve?'"

Psalm 32:1-2 // 1 Corinthians 4:7 // 2 Corinthians 5:21

No one is righteous. No, not one.

I struggle most with discontentment with people. I become discontent with my friends and family for not living up to my expectations. I think they need to be more understanding or more generous with their time or more selfless. But, then, who am I to say that? Who am I to bring judgment on others, when my own life is broken and shameful? No one is righteous. Why should I hold my friends and family to higher standards than I hold even myself? Let us release people from being perfect and treat our friends and family with the grace and humility with which our Savior treated us. Let us turn our gazes to the cross.

Romans 3:10-11 // Romans 3:23 // Ephesians 2:4-5

We cannot change ourselves.

Instead, "it is God who works in [us] to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13). So really, the best thing we can do to grow in contentment is to grow nearer to God and pray for His power in our lives. Let us hunger and thirst for righteousness so much that we are like the persistent widow, returning again and again to our God, pleading that He plant seeds of contentment in our hearts.

Philippians 2:13 // Luke 18:1-8 // Matthew 5:6

Oremus pro invicem. (Let us pray for each other.)

In awe of Him,

Jessina



Christina Dickson's Mission: Rescue the Beauty

by christina dickson

Do you love your neighbor?

Stop for a moment. Think about the people in your life. Your family. Your friends. Your church family. Your fellow students. The clerk at the store. The kids you baby-sit for.

Do you love your neighbor?

Do you love them as Jesus loves them?

This year I have come to realize Jesus' emphasis on the second greatest commandment for more reasons than we often understand.

For when we love our neighbor, it changes everything.

The spring of 2007 found me in a dark place. On the outside everything was great. I was the responsible oldest of a family with 10 kids. I was a church pianist. I was a budding photographer and instructor. I had some big ideas for my life. But through a series of events, God took my dreams and broke them. He took my life and shook it. The next five months were filled with experiences of the deepest dark and doubt and despair.

"God, can you hear my cries?" Each day found me praying these words. "Are you listening? Are

you even there?" God was silent during this time of pain and spiritual conflict. I knew He loved me. I knew that He was good. But why was He making me go through all this alone? I didn't understand.

But I refused to succumb to the despair. After months of feeling cold and alone, I went to the beach for 4 days to pray and fast. "God, rescue me! Save me!" I pleaded earnestly. "I will not leave until I hear Your answer."

And God answered me. His Word spoke powerfully to me. *"He sent me on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy...those who were too mighty for me...He brought me into a broad place; He rescued me because He delighted in me."* (Psalm 18:16-19).

You delight in me. I will never forget the moment I wrote those words in my journal. The revelation brought renewed strength and hope to my dying spirit. If God delighted in me, just as a great warrior delights in his beloved, then He would stop at nothing to rescue me. No matter how intense the battle, no matter how strong the foe, God, the Hero of heroes, would rescue me - His beauty. In the months of healing following this time, I realized something

very significant: God feels this way to all those who are lost and hurting.

This concept became the very core of the purpose for Revolutionary Media.

In March of 2008, I had the honor of gathering a team of artists to embark on a journey that would transform our understanding of what it meant to love our neighbors the way Jesus loved them.

Our project was nothing less than impossible. Take 9, twenty year old something artists, and in 6 weeks create an artistic documentary and book that would raise awareness regarding the situation of street teens and runaways of Portland Oregon. Of course, it was much more than that. We were Christians. Our mission was to spend those 6 weeks of our lives showing these street kids the love and person of Jesus living in us. During this time, I learned that it is easy to say that you love your neighbor but living it out practically is a completely different experience.

Do you love your neighbor? The Lord seemed to challenge the team with this question every single hour of every day for the next 42 days. Did we love these teens enough to spend hours with them, sitting and talking on the curb in

BURNSIDE UNDERGROUND

I AM A PERSON BE THE CHANGE
 THE NEED WHAT WILL YOU DO
 DON'T JUST WALK AWAY
 YOU MAY SEE BUT REALLY LOOK THERE IS NO ONE THAT WILL HELP ME
 THEY ARE NOT INVISIBLE BE WHY DON'T WE FIT THEM
 I MAY NOT NEED A DOLLAR I MAY JUST NEED A HUG OR A SMILE OR A HELLO
 I DON'T WANT THE JUDGEMENTAL PEOPLE AND I DON'T WANT TO BE HATED
 THEY NEVER WANTED TO BE A STATISTIC THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND POOR IS GROWING
 "IT'S RACISM"
 VICTIM OF HATE
 WE TAKE DRUGS TO NUMB THE CUT TO FEEL THE PAIN
 SEEN THEM THE CHANGE



Opposite: The Revolutionary Media Team (Laura Clawson)
 Top Right: Christina and a street kid friend, Strawberry (Whitney Lindsey)
 Bottom Right: Ninji Cali, a 20-year old street kid with a tragic past and a hurting soul. (Christina Dickson)

the cold and in the rain? Did we love them enough to treat them to a Starbucks drink? Did we love them enough to hold their dirty hands for a prayer? Did we love them enough to last 19-hour working days to finish a project that would inspire other people to love and rescue them as Jesus would? The more we stepped out of our comfort zone to love these kids, the more Jesus moved - in the lives of the street teens, but also in our lives, and in the lives of people who were watching us and supporting us.

"I will never see street people the same again." I can't count the times I heard this statement. It started with our team. It expanded to our churches and families. Soon, strangers began to say the same when they ran across our projects online. But honestly, this change in perspective did not come because we took pictures, and wrote stories, and built scripts and filmed a community. Lives were touched because we played games with the hardened, laughed with the unlovely, and listened to the hurting. Lives were changed because we as artists and as Christians did what we could to live out the second greatest commandment: To love our neighbor.

Do you love your neighbor?

It doesn't take talent. It doesn't take skill. It doesn't take money. It doesn't take nice clothes. It doesn't take knowing all the right answers.

Loving your neighbor takes only one thing: the love of Jesus. It may look like discipling a younger girl. It may look like writing a letter to a soldier. It may look like visiting someone sick in the hospital. It may simply look like giving a cup of cold water.

Loving your neighbor changes everything. You will see things differently. You will live differently. You will know Jesus differently.

And you will never be the same again.

Do you love your neighbor?

Ways to Get Involved

- >>1. **Spread the news** about Revolutionary Media so others are inspired about reaching out to the street community.
- >>2. Next time you see a street person, **smile and say hello.**
- >>3. Watch out for RevMedia's upcoming "Dear World" - a resource guide about the street teen community, and how you can get involved and make a difference as Jesus's hands and feet.
- >>4. **Pray:** Revolutionary Media is a non-profit funded solely by its team and its youth supporters. Pray that God would continue to provide funding for its projects completion and distribution.
- >>5. Look out for **upcoming opportunities** with Revolutionary Media's upcoming projects to places including Thailand and Kenya.

Christina Nichole Dickson is a photo journalist from Portland, Oregon. At 20, she is director and founder of Revolutionary Media, a non-profit artistic media group dedicated to creating media projects that will cause believers to reach out and "Rescue the Beauty". To learn more about Revolutionary Media, please visit their

website: www.TheRevMediaProject.com



I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Galatians 2:20



Leslie
Ludy

Set-Apart Femininity

Q&A >>

“Set-apart femininity blends the classic womanly grace and dignity of an Audrey Hepburn with the sacrificial, poured-out-for-Christ lifestyle of an Amy Carmichael.”

Bloom!: “The preoccupations of a young woman – their looks, their clothes, their social life – don’t seem to change much from generation to generation. But in every generation there seems to be a few who make other choices.” You mention that this is one of your favorite quotes and that it inspired you at a young age to live a set-apart life. What is your vision for those “few who make other choices”? What exactly does living a set-apart life for Christ look like?

Leslie: During most of my teen years, I lived the way countless other Christian young women live today - with one foot in the world and the other in the murky waters of Christian compromise. I lived my life only two or three steps ahead of the culture’s standards. When it came to clothes – I dressed seductively, just not quite as slutty as the girls on the *Guess* jeans ads. When it came to role models – I revered popular young singers or movie stars that said they were Christians (what did it matter if you really couldn’t tell by their lives?) When it came to magazines – I read the style and beauty articles and (usually) skipped the ones that justified premarital sex. When it came to pastimes – I watched the same movies and listened to the same music as everyone else, and tried to overlook all the profanity and perversion. When it came to guys – I flirted and cavorted like everyone else but made sure it was mostly with guys who claimed to be Christians and went to youth group. When it came to relationships – I gave myself emotionally and physically to one fling after another, but saved my “technical” virginity until marriage.

I was a “Christian” young woman. But I was not a set-apart young woman.

This is the state of countless Christian young women all across America. We are entrenched in the attractions of pop-culture, trying to fit Christ in wherever it’s convenient. We are far more consumed with becoming attractive to the world than being found beautiful in the eyes of our Heavenly Bridegroom. And we are reaping the consequences of our compromise in unhappy, unfulfilled, insecure, broken lives.

Something has to change.

God’s sacred intent for us goes far beyond just saving sex until marriage, wearing one-piece swimsuits instead of skimpy string bikinis, or idolizing Christian bands instead of secular ones. It is not just making sure we tack on some Christian morality to our self-indulgent lives.

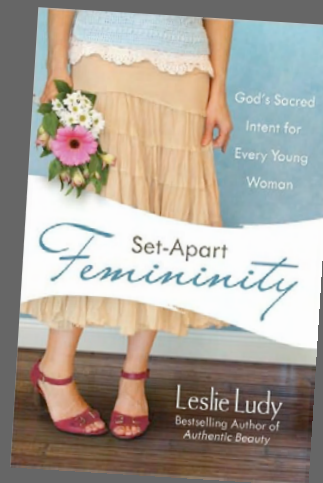
His sacred intent for you and for me is nothing short of absolute abandonment to Jesus Christ, entire separation from the pollution of the world, and ardent worship of our King with every breath we take. When we are set apart for Him, we don’t just try to fit Him into our life. Rather, we build our entire life around Him. Our life doesn’t just imitate the world around us with a few higher morals tacked on. Rather, our life is a glorious display of His selflessness, sacrificial love, and purity. We don’t live for our own pleasure when we are set apart for Christ. Rather, we become a living sacrifice for Him every moment of the day. As it says all throughout Scripture, we cannot love Him and love the things of this world. We must choose this day which master we are going to serve.

Bloom!: In your first book, *Authentic Beauty: The Shaping of a Set-Apart Young Woman*, you illustrate the richness of God’s intimate love for us and how we should return our love by living wholly for Him. How does the message of your newest book, *Set-Apart Femininity: God’s Sacred Intent for Every Woman* continue the ideas you set place in *Authentic Beauty*?

Leslie: *Authentic Beauty* introduces young women to the true Prince of the heart – the only One who can truly satisfy the deepest longings of their soul...Jesus Christ. It shows them how to cultivate a daily, intimate romance with Him and find their fulfillment in Him alone rather than searching for it through

guys and the approval of the world. *Set Apart Femininity* builds upon that foundation, and paints an exciting vision of what the set-apart life looks like in every aspect of your daily existence – from the way you relate to guys to the way you spend your free time to the focus and direction of your life. It gives

young women a huge vision of God’s sacred purpose for their lives and equips them with the practical tools to begin living a truly fulfilled and radiant life, starting today.



God has challenged me in these past few years, at a much greater level than I would have thought possible, to rise above the typical mediocrity of modern-day womanhood, and walk a road that is narrow, rocky and misunderstood by the masses. *Set-Apart Femininity* presents that very same challenge to you. If you want to remain comfortably where you are in your feminine journey, this book probably won't be your cup of tea. But if you are one of the thousands of young women that hunger to showcase something spectacular and triumphant through your femininity, *Set Apart Femininity* is what you've been waiting for.

Bloom!: What encouragement would you give to a young woman who desires to live a set-apart life for Christ but is struggling with the day-to-day applications?

Leslie: Today's young women aren't finding Him because we aren't searching for Him with *all our hearts*. We are too preoccupied with watching reality shows, too busy downloading the latest songs on iTunes, and too enamored with Hollywood's newest production to let our whole being be poured forth in constant and unreserved devotion in the service of the Lord who died to save us.

Most of us feel we don't have enough time for prayer and seeking God. But we don't even consider giving up our nightly T.V. time, our weekend movie fests, or our iTunes fetish in exchange for spending time in His presence. 1 Timothy 5:6 says, *she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives*. (NKJV) That's where most of us are at.

When we lay everything at the feet of Jesus and find our deepest fulfillment, rest, peace, strength, and joy in His presence alone – not dulling our spiritual life with worldly counterfeits – we are ushered into the supernatural, superhuman existence God designed us to live. That's when the presence of God draws near. That's when our prayers are heard and answered. That's when the life we read about in Scripture actually becomes our reality.

Most of us constantly battle with the fact that God is distant, intimacy with Christ is difficult to obtain, and our prayers don't seem to be heard. But God says, *You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*. (Jer 29:13 NKJV)

Living a radiant, set-apart life is not a complicated formula. But it does require a willingness to make radical changes – to ruthlessly remove anything that is hindering and distracting us from a life fully and completely consumed with the things of Heaven and not the things of earth. Take some time to prayerfully consider the way that you spend your free time, the influences and voices that you allow into your life on a daily or weekly basis. If you come with an open heart, God will be faithful to gently reveal all that must be removed so that His life can be experienced in all its fullness.

Bloom!: Throughout your books and website you talk a lot about Christian heroes and heroines of the past and how they have influenced your pursuit of Christ—people like Amy Carmichael and Gladys Alyward. Specifically, how have these great women of the Christian faith influenced you?

Leslie: History is filled with amazing examples of stunning set-apart women, wholly devoted to Jesus Christ. Some of my favorites are Amy Carmichael, Gladys Alyward, Sabina Wurmbrandt, Catherine Booth, Esther Ahn Kim, and Jackie Pullinger (who is still alive.) Their awe-inspiring examples of radiant femininity put modern young women (myself included!) to shame. Amy Carmichael wrote,

What is the secret to great living? Entire separation to Christ and devotion to Him. Thus speaks every man and woman whose life has made more than a passing flicker in the spiritual realm. It is the life that has no time for trifling that counts.

That quote sums it up for me. I love to read about the set-apart women of history because it reminds me that when we do not waste our life on shallow pleasures or trifle with worldly preoccupations, God will do amazing, world-altering things through our lives. We don't have to be highly educated or super-talented to be mightily used for the Kingdom of God. We just need to offer our lives to Him as a daily living sacrifice, and follow where He leads. And that's when our life becomes a glorious adventure that brings glory to His name.

Bloom!: How does the gospel intertwine with your message of set-apart femininity?

Leslie: The Gospel is not just about being forgiven from our sins. It's about being overtaken by the Spirit of Christ. It's about completely dying to self, getting out of the way, laying down our own agenda, and allowing His life to shine through us. We must decrease so that He might increase. Christ said that if we do not forsake all that we have and take up our cross daily and follow Him, we cannot be His disciple. Unfortunately that is not a message that is emphasized much in modern Christianity. But that is the core message of *Set Apart Femininity*.

Bloom!: *Set Apart Femininity* challenges girls to live a selfless, poured-out life. Why is this so important for Christian young women and what does it look like practically?

Leslie: Many modern Christians think that Christianity is made up of comfortable, well-off, self-indulgent individuals who live primarily for their own pleasure and go on a short-term mission trip every couple of years to ease their conscience. But *true* Christianity is made up of radically abandoned, poured-out, servant-hearted individuals who give their entire life to build the Kingdom to God. Women like Amy Carmichael, Jackie Pullinger and Gladys Aylward didn't merely lay down their right to live a comfortable, upper-middle class life. They laid down *every right* they possessed for the Kingdom and glory of God. They willingly sacrificed their right to be married, their right to live near their family and friends, their right to be recognized and appreciated, and their right to financial security – all for the supreme privilege of being Christ's hands and feet to a dying world. As set-apart young women, we must seriously consider the kind of life Christ has called us to live.

As a twenty-year-old young woman, Jackie Pullinger walked through the drug-infested squalor of the Walled City in Hong Kong, seeing hopeless old men addicted to opium, desperate young gang members who used violence to gain respect, and destitute women who sold their bodies all day and night in

order to buy one bowl of rice, and her heart broke for them. She prayed, "It would be worth my whole life if I could reach just one for You Lord. Do we live with this attitude, or all we so caught up in our own agenda that we don't even see the need all around us?"

Our act of worship is to offer our body to God as a living sacrifice. This is not just sitting in our comfortable church buildings and singing about how much we love Him. It is demonstrating our love for Christ by practically giving it to those who desperately need it.

James says,

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to him, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by

itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James 2:15, NKJV)

The world is absolutely flooded with those who are destitute of daily food and clothes. There are 143 million orphans in the world. Hungry, sick, scared and alone. There are 27 million human slaves around the world in desperate need of advocates. And there are millions of people dying of hunger while we live in comfort and pleasure. 25,000 people die every day of hunger or hunger-related causes, according to the United Nations. That's one person every three and a half seconds.

These people have a claim on your life. They have a claim on my life. They are a priority to Christ and therefore must become a priority to us. If we are so preoccupied with self that we will not show the practical, life-changing, hope-giving love of Christ to them, our faith is dead. It's time to get past ourselves and begin pouring our lives out for the least around the world. And amazingly, that's where true fulfillment comes from!



"If a soul has any beauty, it is because Christ has endowed that soul with His own, for in ourselves we are deformed and defiled! There is no beauty in any of us but what our Lord has worked in us."

— Charles Spurgeon

Turn the page to learn more about Leslie Ludy. And be sure to check out her website at www.setapartgirl.com. You'll find an online magazine, Leslie's weekly blog, a podcast, and a variety of other different resources.



Books by Eric and Leslie Ludy:

- — *Set-Apart Femininity: God's Sacred Intent for Every Young Woman* by Leslie Ludy
- — *Authentic Beauty: The Shaping of a Set-Apart Young Woman* by Leslie Ludy
- — *When Dreams Come True: A Love Story Only God Could Write* by Eric and Leslie Ludy
- — *When God Writes Your Love Story: The Ultimate Approach to Guy/Girl Relationships* by Eric and Leslie Ludy
- — *When God Writes Your Life Story: Experience the Ultimate Adventure* by Eric and Leslie Ludy
- — *The Bravehearted Gospel: The Truth is Worth Fighting For* by Eric Ludy



More *from* Leslie Ludy

"Our sinful, self-loving nature urges us to buy into the idea that in and of ourselves we are important, noticed, and captivating. Yet the **truth of the Gospel** is not based on our intrinsic loveliness, but the fact that **Christ loved us even while we were yet sinners**, naked and covered in our own blood and shame."

//Leslie shares about her family and writing//

Bloom!: Can you tell us about your family? How do you balance between caring for your family and running a growing ministry?

Leslie: Besides being married to the most amazing husband in the world, I also have been blessed with two amazing children. Hudson Jack, who is currently 3, came onto the scene after we'd been married eight years. The idea of balancing a family with full-time ministry used to intimidate me, and I thought that I needed to have the "ministry" season of my life first and then launch into the "family" season. But then I began studying the lives of historic women who changed the world for Christ. And I realized that by the grace of God, those of them who were married were excellent wives and mothers and excellent ministers of the Gospel at the same time. Elizabeth Fry and Catherine Booth are two examples. Elizabeth Fry had eleven children - all of whom loved and respected her throughout their lives - and she also reformed the entire prison system in Europe. Catherine Booth had eight children - again, they loved and respected her with fierce loyalty - and also co-led the world-altering Salvation Army movement with her husband William. So I realized that worrying about juggling a baby and ministry probably wasn't necessary. And since Hudson's birth, I have found that God has given amazing grace and provision to put my family first and still have time and energy left over for ministry.



Leslie & Hudson



Leslie & Harper

In October of 2006, Eric and I experienced the tragic loss of our second baby through a miscarriage. It was a life-altering experience, awakening us at a whole new level to amazing value God places on little lives that the rest of the world doesn't value. It gave us new passion not only for the unborn, but also for orphans around the world. And it re-directed our ministry focus toward these precious little ones that so desperately need advocates. During our research on the orphan crisis, we met with a local adoption agency that specialized in Korea and China adoptions. Not thinking that we'd be personally adopting anytime soon, we were just there to collect information and become more aware of the needs of these children overseas. But then we heard about a newborn baby girl in Korea who was missing her fingers and had deformities on her feet.

After a series of amazing miracles, this little girl is our daughter, Harper Grace. She is a delight and blessing to us every day, and her story has already made a huge impact upon Christians in America, bringing awareness to the miracle and beauty of adoption.

Bloom!: Did you always envision yourself as a writer and singer? How did your years growing up prepare you for the ministry God has given you?

Leslie: When I was young, my ambition was to be a professional singer and songwriter. I took voice and piano lessons for most of my life, and at the age of fifteen had a Christian producer who recorded a demo of my music to send to record labels in Nashville. But then God radically altered my life. I realized that my music, though done under a "Christian" banner, was actually for my own glory. I was following after an industry that promised fame, money and prestige - not a life radically poured out as a servant of Jesus Christ. He made himself of no reputation, and took on the form of a servant...

So that's when I laid down the pursuit of a "music career". I allowed God to overtake my singing and songwriting, and for the next several years, most of my music was simply a private extension of my own quiet times with Christ, not shared with anyone else - I began to understand what it meant to use this gift for the glory of my King alone.

When Eric came into my life, I found that he had gone through a similar journey with his own music. One of the things that brought us together was our like-minded heart for music - not music that pushed us into the spotlight, but music that led others into the presence of the King - us getting out of the way so that Christ would be seen.

Writing and speaking was the same way. We both loved to write and we were always comfortable on stage, but God challenged us to surrender those gifts back to Him and get out of the way so He could be seen. We never expected to be writing and speaking full-time. When we were first married, we thought we were going into medical missions. But word about our unusual love story was getting around, and publisher asked if we could write our story in a book. The book was published, and doors started opening for us to share our message around the world. Soon it was clear that God wanted us to be a voice of Truth to our generation through writing and speaking. Often we've had to surrender our publishing career back to Him as we have chosen to stand for messages that sometimes ruffle feathers in modern Christianity. But He has been faithful every step of the way, and we have learned to live as if His opinion is the only one that matters. Because it is!

An Appetite for Autumn

Try these five delicious and easy recipes for the perfect addition to your fall fest!

Mom's Homemade Chicken Pot Pie

: :Instructions: :

4 cups bite-sized pieces of cooked chicken
1 can (10 3/4 oz.) condensed cream of chicken soup
1 can (10 3/4 oz.) condensed chicken broth
1/2 tsp. dried tarragon
1 1/2 cups cooked vegetables (peas, carrots, corn, etc.)
1 1/2 cups all purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1 1/2 cups buttermilk
1/2 cup butter, melted

Heat oven to 350°. Place chicken in lightly greased 13x9x2-inch baking dish. Mix chicken soup, broth, and tarragon; pour over chicken. Arrange vegetables over top. Mix flour and baking powder in separate bowl; add buttermilk and butter. Stir to form a thin dough; pour evenly over chicken mixture. Bake uncovered about 1 hour, or until crust rises to top and browns lightly. Makes 6 servings.

Harvest Pumpkin Brownies

: :Instructions: :

-1 can (16 oz.) cooked pumpkin
-4 eggs
-3/4 cup vegetable oil
-2 tsp. vanilla extract
-2 cups all purpose flour
-2 cups sugar
-1 Tb. pumpkin pie spice
-2 tsp. ground cinnamon
-2 tsp. baking soda
-1/2 tsp. salt

FROSTING:
-6 Tb. Butter, softened
-1 package (3 oz.) cream cheese, softened
-1 tsp. vanilla extract
-1 tsp. milk
-1/8 tsp. salt
-2 cups confectioners' sugar

In a mixing bowl, beat pumpkin, eggs, oil and vanilla until well mixed. Combine dry ingredients; stir into pumpkin mixture and mix well. Pour into a greased 15x10x1-inch baking pan. Bake at 350° for 20-25 minutes or until brownies test done with a wooden pick. Cool. In a small mixing bowl, beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla, milk and salt until smooth. Add confectioners' sugar; mix well. Frost brownies. Store in the refrigerator. Yields 5-6 dozen.

Oatmeal Raisin Bars

: :Instructions: :

-1 cup brown sugar
-1 cup butter, softened
-1/2 cup sugar
-2 eggs
-1 tsp. vanilla extract
-1 1/2 cup flour
-1 tsp. baking soda
-1 tsp. cinnamon
-1/4 tsp. salt
-3 cups regular oats
-1 cup raisins

Heat oven to 350°. Beat butter and sugars until creamy. Add eggs and vanilla; beat well. Add flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt; mix well. Add oats and raisins. Press dough into ungreased 13x9-inch pan. Bake 30-35 minutes or until light brown. Cool in pan before cutting into bars.

My Best Gingerbread

: :Instructions: :

-1/2 cup sugar
-1/2 cup butter
-1 egg, slightly beaten
-1 cup molasses
-2 1/2 cup sifted flour
-1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
-1 tsp. ginger
-1/2 tsp. salt
-1 tsp. cinnamon

-1/2 tsp. cloves
-1 cup hot water

Cream butter and sugar. Add egg and molasses. Sift together all dry ingredients. Add to mixture. Add hot water. Beat until smooth. Heat oven to 350°. Bake in a greased 13x9-inch pan for 35 minutes.

Italian Vegetable Soup

: :Instructions: :

-3/4 lb. combination of bacon, ham, Italian sausage, chopped
-2 qts. beef broth
-2 cloves garlic, minced
-2 stalks celery, diced
-1 large onion, sliced
-1 medium zucchini, sliced
-1 leek, sliced
-1 cup red wine
-1/2 cup kidney beans

-1 can (16 oz.) diced tomatoes
-1/2 cup small pasta noodles
-2 cups shredded cabbage
-parmesan cheese
-allspice
-pepper
-1/4 cup fresh basil

Place bacon, ham, sausage and garlic in large skillet. Cook over medium heat until bacon is crisp and sausage is cooked. Add onion, celery, zucchini, leek, and a pinch of allspice and pepper. Simmer for 10 minutes. Heat stock in large soup kettle. Add contents of skillet and beans. Stir in cabbage and wine. Simmer for 1 1/2 hours. Add tomatoes and macaroni; cook for 15 minutes. Add basil 3 minutes before serving. Top with cheese.

Teens & Hospitality

Hospitality often has the connotation of being something just that our mothers do. You know—they plan the holiday celebrations and host the dinner parties for friends. But Romans 12:13 doesn't have an age limit: "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Are you, even in this season of your life, actively pursuing and investing your time in practicing hospitality? (And, let us remember, that hospitality isn't always inviting people over for a party—rather, Biblically, it is inviting people into our lives and showing them belonging, which mirrors the belonging Christ has given us.)

10 Reasons You Can't Afford Not to be Hospitable

1. Hospitality is one of the most practical ways to express the love of Christ.
2. Hospitality reflects the hospitable heart of God.
3. Hospitality is a great way to build unity and community with other believers.
4. The Bible promises rewards for those who practice hospitality.
5. Hospitality is one of the most effective ways to create a hunger for Christ in the hearts of non-believers.
6. Hospitality will help you deal with loneliness and depression.
7. Hospitality will help us deal with selfishness.
8. Hospitality will help you deal with materialism and help you get values that are eternal.
9. If you have children, hospitality is a great way to cultivate in their hearts a passion for ministry and a heart for serving other people.
10. God commands us to be hospitable.

Taken from ReviveOurHearts.com.

— musings under a ceiling fan—

by Megan Dutil

surrender

photograph by Jennifer Goggans

I flop on my bed, stare at the ceiling fan whirling in soft circles, and wonder why my conscience isn't getting the hint to shut up. I'm tired of wrestling with myself, and would really appreciate it if this unsolicited interference stopped. But of course, it doesn't.

I was having a lovely time building dreams and plans, and staking my future on them. Everything was rosy. And then my conscience butted in and started prodding me to surrender. *But it's so scary to let my dreams go!* I whimper. Truth be told, I'm afraid of what will happen if I do. What will God's answer be if I give Him the final say? I don't like the idea of not being in charge of my future. I don't like having to trust completely Someone I can't see. And I really don't like the idea of maybe not getting the results I want. Besides, the place of surrender, at its core, is an extremely vulnerable place to be. It's uncomfortable. It's putting my life, my hopes, and my dreams on the line and then waiting to see what happens. And I hate waiting. Why does God leave us hanging like that?

I roll over and start thinking about the issue some more. After all, I reason, He doesn't want us to stop dreaming - because dreams are very precious. What He does want is for our dreams to be aligned with His. Otherwise, much as I hate to admit it, I know I'll end up crashing somewhere, either literally when my dreams don't work out or emotionally when I learn they don't satisfy. I finkered my bedspread and am reminded of my mother's analogies. "You are like a hand," she told me once, "and if you clench your fingers and hold onto what you want for dear life, it's only going to hurt worse when God has to pry open your fingers. Instead, leave your hands open so He can give and take as He chooses. Sometimes, He may ask you to give up a dream so He can give it back to you and make it sweeter than before."

But....what happens if He doesn't give them back? His purpose, after all, isn't for my happiness but my holiness. He'll give me what is best for me, but what if that's not what I wanted? Surrender means trusting that He knows what He's doing when He calls something "the best." And trusting is scary, especially since I can't look over His shoulder and see how it's coming along in the Dream Department - as if God were the UPS and I could track Him online.

That would really be nice, I think, and then interrupt myself. *What a terrible comparison! And my doubts look so terrible when I actually analyze them, too.* Really, now - I can dream better dreams, at seventeen, than the God whose existence is infinite? The creation has better ideas than the One Who created her in the first place? And by not trusting, aren't I calling into question the very character of God? And is trusting a choice that I'm consciously refusing to make, or am I just letting my emotions lead the train again?

"This is enough with the questions!" My voice startles even me. "If God loved me enough to crush His Son to save me, I think He loves me enough to choose what is best, whether or not I agree with it. I can't see all that's going on, or the future, like He can." And so, I give up. I give up trying to out-shout myself. God knows more than I do, and I can surrender my dreams to His ways.

The next day, as I read a blog, I stumble across words written by a girl after her wedding. "Moments were made more precious by the waiting and wondering, the tears and surrender that had come before," she writes. And I'm reminded of how God can create beauty from pain. There is pain in voluntarily uncurling our fingers and allowing God to give and take as He pleases, but great beauty and blessings can arise from the ashes. Today's tears may make tomorrow's joy all the sweeter.

Heroines of History

Darlene Diebler Rose

by Joanna Suich

While attending a church meeting, young Darlene Mae McIntosh felt a hand gently grasp her shoulder. She looked around and could plainly see that no one was there. In the message that night was a charge to take the Gospel around the world, and Darlene then knew God was calling her to carry the Good News to some of the remotest parts of the globe.

photograph from darlenerose.org



In August of 1937, 20-year-old Darlene and C. Russell Deibler, a veteran missionary, married. About a year later, the couple first set foot in New Guinea as missionaries. Training began first. Darlene was instructed in the Indonesian language and proved herself a quick learner. Then Russell left to go live with the people they would be ministering to, the Kapaukus, with the plan to have Darlene join him later. He shared the Gospel with the chieftain, but the man said he would not believe what the Bible said. When asked why, the chieftain said that he thought Russell was from the spirit world past the mountains, thus that made him a spirit. The natives followed their chieftain's example and said that they would doubt that the missionary was a real human being until they saw his wife with their own eyes. Apparently, the natives didn't think that Russell had been born of a woman and therefore when they saw no females with him, this reasoning seemed confirmed to them. As Darlene was reading these happenings in a letter from her husband, she prayed fervently. She knew that if the natives would ever believe the Good News, then she would simply have to travel to meet the Kapaukus. After she prayed, assurance came from the Lord and she soon left for New Guinea.

Darlene was the first American woman to enter the Baliem Valley of New Guinea. As she was making her way down valley to the Kapaukus, she began to wave her hands as tears ran down her cheeks. As she ran down the mountainside, she sang, at the top of her lungs, "I'm home! I'm home!" Once she reached the bottom, the natives crowded around her; they were as curious about her as she was about them. They had never seen blue eyes before, and they did not believe she was actually a woman until she took off her hat and let her hair down. Russell and Darlene ministered together and lived with the natives there, sharing the Gospel. Not long after, news reached the couple that the Nazis were invading Holland.

On March 13, 1942 the Japanese army took Russell away with no warning. Darlene never saw her husband again. Not long after, the army came for Darlene and took her away since she was an American. For four long, heart-breaking years, she lived in concentration camps in New Guinea, sometimes starving and barely surviving. While Darlene was living in inhumane and unsanitary conditions at a camp, the Nazi officials believed she was a spy and placed her on death row. However God miraculously spared her life and brought her out of New Guinea.

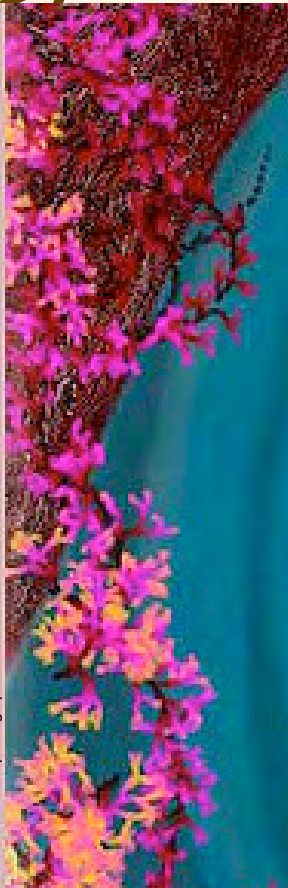
Darlene returned to the USA, with a tiny, wasted body much below her average weight, and without her beloved Russell. Her family was astonished to see her so malnourished. As she recovered, Darlene yearned to return to New Guinea, even after enduring so much in the concentration camps. God wasn't through with His daughter; He still had much for her to accomplish in His name.

Darlene remarried in 1948 to a man named Jerry Rose, and together they returned to Papua New Guinea. Once again Darlene was home. As her website says, "Side by side [Jerry and Darlene] worked together raising their two young sons, Bruce and Brian, teaching, preaching, building landing strips, delivering babies, standing against headhunters and leading them to Christ." Then, in 1978, the Lord led the Roses to the Australian Outback to work with the Aborigines. They stayed there for years, loving and ministering to the natives.

February 24, 2004 marked the special day that Darlene went home to be with her Savior. While Darlene, Russell, and Jerry may be gone from this earth, their legacy is not. One way their legacy continues is in the form of *Evidence Not Seen*, a book Darlene wrote that tells the incredible story of her life as she sought to be used by God to bring glory to His name. Her story continues to impact people around the globe, encouraging them to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.



photograph from creative commons



A Trip to the Well

Little does Miera know that an ordinary event will change her life.

by Megan Dutill

“Come on, Miera,” Rebekah smiled. “Are you ready yet?”

I hastily finished helping with preparations for the evening meal, and picked up my clay jug. My master’s lovely daughter never seems to mind carrying heavy jugs of water back and forth, even though it’s a task I despise.

As we walked towards the spring, jars on our shoulders, I looked over at her and smiled. I hate lugging the heavy jars of water, but I love walking with Rebekah. Some days we talk, but other times, like today, we just soak in the beauty around us. The hot days are finally becoming less oppressive, and soon it will be harvest time.

We neared the well, where all the other girls have gathered to draw water. Out of the corner of my

eye, I catch an unusual sight by the town gates. A man, obviously a traveler, is waiting for something with his caravan. I hope he’s bringing some goods to trade.

“Miera!” Rebekah laughs, interrupting my dreaming. I hadn’t noticed that she was already halfway up the path, and I hurry to catch up with her.

“Please, may I have some water from your jug?” We stop, startled, and I turn and see the stranger who had been by the town gates. He’s obviously tired, so Rebekah gives him one of her brilliant smiles and lowers her jug. He must have been traveling many miles.

Rebekah notices this too, and hands him her jug. “Drink all you want,” she offers, “and I’ll water your camels, too, for they also look thirsty.” Before

I can stop her, she snatches the jug from my shoulder and dumps it into the watering trough nearby.

I run with her back down to the stream, despite the fact that I don’t have a jug and can’t help her. “Ten camels! Rebekah! Do you realize how much water that will take?” I think she’s crazy, but I still need to show respect to my master’s daughter, even if we are good friends.

“They haven’t had water either, Miera!” she responds, swiftly filling the jug again and turning around. “Who knows how much farther they have yet to journey?”

By the time she’s finally finished, the rest of the girls have long since left the town square. The man stands there, silently watching, until all the camels have drunk their fill.

And then he hands her two golden bracelets and a nose ring. I've never seen anything so stunning, and I'm not quite sure what's going on. "Thank you so much," he says, and then quickly adds, "Can you please tell me – whose daughter are you? Who is your family? And is there room at your father's house for us to spend the night?"

"I am the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah and Nahor," she responds, sincere in the invitation she is about to offer. "There is plenty of room for you and your animals – please stay with us!"

"Praise be to Yahweh!" he cried reverently. "He has led me right to the door of my master's brother!"

Rebekah's smile brightens. "My family will be so glad to hear from your master," she says quickly. "Miera will show you the way, but I must run home to prepare them for your stay." She nods brightly at me, and then grabs her jug and takes off. She's forgotten to fill it with water to bring home, but I can't blame her.

I see Rebekah in the distance, as we walk slowly towards the house, surrounded by her mother and brother. She's gesturing wildly, and I can guess that she's excitedly showing them the gifts and telling them what happened.

The traveler, whose name, I learn, is Eliezer, is greeted by the excited family. I have to slip away, for I know the elaborate preparations that the other maids will be doing, and they'll need an extra hand. But my curiosity is piqued, and I do my tasks so mindlessly that I'm scolded. I do hope Rebekah will tell me what his business is.

As I'm serving the evening meal, Eliezer clears his throat. "I cannot eat until I tell you why I've come," he says, looking intently at each of the family members.

"Then tell us," Laban responds simply. He's very protective of his sister, and I know he's as eager as I am to hear Eliezer's story.

His tale is amazing.

"I come from the household of Abraham," he begins. "Yahweh has prospered him in every way, and his son Isaac will inherit all he has. My master's wife, Sarah, has recently been buried, and that is why I am fulfilling her role and seeking a wife for Isaac. Before I left, my master specifically instructed me to go to his hometown and find a wife among the girls of his family. As I entered the gates of your town, I prayed that Yahweh, who has shown such favor to my master, might bless him again and make this mission successful."

Everyone knows where this is going; and Rebekah looks thoughtful as she rubs her bracelets.

"I prayed that Yahweh would make his choice of a wife known to me, and that when I asked for a drink of water, if the girl offered to water my camels as well, that that would be the one."

I'm shocked, and I can tell Rebekah is, too. So her spontaneous kindness was not lunacy after all; but ordained by Yahweh Himself!

Eliezer paused to smile at Rebekah before he ended, "And you know how it ended. My journey has been blessed, and I have been led Abraham's own household, and to the granddaughter of his brother, no less! So now, please, tell me what your answer is with regard to Rebekah, so I know what plans to make."

I'm filled with awe at the way this plan was orchestrated and ordained. My masters evidently feel the same way, for her father and brother answer in unison.

"This is clearly from Yahweh; we have no say in the matter. Rebekah is yours; let her become Isaac's wife."

And the deal is made. I watch as Eliezer then presents gifts to Rebekah and her family. Gold and silver jewelry, silks, and clothing – I have never seen so many beautiful things! Even though Rebekah is used to much more finery than I, she too looks overwhelmed. I study her face, trying to understand what she is thinking, but it betrays nothing. I fear I am going to cry, so I slip away. I'm filled with wonder at Yahweh's intervention, but saddened at the loss of my friend and mistress.

Later that night, as I rub olive oil into Rebekah's hair, I seize the opportunity to ask her what she's thinking.

"Do you really want to travel so far away, and live the difficult life that Isaac lives, traveling around in a tent? We'll never see you again, Rebekah!"

She smiles, though her eyes are filled with tears. "I don't want to leave," she tells me honestly. "But you heard what my father said – who am I to tell Yahweh no? I have been chosen to be Isaac's wife. And that's enough for me, Miera; I will go."

She plays with her bracelets again, and then adds, "But I will need some maids to accompany me on my journey and in my new life. Would you come with me, Miera?"



Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."

The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?"

"Make sure that you do not take my son back there," Abraham said. "The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring I will give this land'-he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.

Then he prayed, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'-let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."

Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful...

To continue reading, see
Genesis 24:16.

Prayer Points for Romania

—Pray that a spiritual revival would take place in the hearts of the people of Romania.
—Pray for a better relationship between the Romany (Gypsy) people and the Romanians.
—Pray for protection and guidance for the missionaries in Romania. Pray that they would be able to actively share the gospel.
—Pray that the believers, already in Romania would have boldness to reach out to the lost and share the gospel.



Photographs by Joanna Suich.

> Culture

Adriana Stan, a friend of co-editor Joanna Suich, is a native of Romania and a recent university graduate who teaches French. The 22-year-old is currently living in Buzau, Romania, but will shortly be moving to the United States to work for a year. She answers some questions about Romania.

How do people in Romania view Americans?

Adriana: Most of the Romanian people would say that Americans are superior as far as the standard of life, human rights, opportunities, and mentalities are concerned. We view Americans as being pragmatic, open-minded, interested in renewal, respectful, trust-worthy, good neighbors, persons who dare to make a change, who act, rather than talk and talk and talk.

What is the food like in Romania? Are there any different foods they eat?

Adriana: The Romanian daily meal consists mostly in fresh food. Nowadays some people get quick meal at a fast-food place. But still, most of us eat regularly at home. We eat foods like chicken, pork, fish, beef, salads, green beans, mashed potatoes, mushrooms, cabbage and yogurt. We also eat soup - a special sour kind of soup, which does not have an English equivalent, is *ciorba*. As far odd things, a special kind of *ciorba* is made up of tiny slices of cow stomach, water, carrots and garlic dressing; we add sour cream. It's yellow looking and in my opinion, delicious. As for beverages, we drink plain water, juice, wine and beer.

What is the transportation in Romania like? What is the most popular way for people to get around?

Adriana: By car, by train, by bus and even for some by wagon—like the Gypsies, who live in the country. People also have been getting four-wheelers lately. The most popular way to get around is the car.

What is Romania's main religion?

Adriana: Our national religion is Orthodox. In Romania, there are many places of worship which are practically too small for the amount of people coming Sunday morning.

What is life like in Romania?

Adriana: Not easy at all, sometimes unfair, but we move on, we find the strength to search for what we metaphorically call the twilight at the end of the tunnel. One of our poets wrote, I quote: "Romania, a sad country full of humor".

Can you explain the differences in life between the Gypsies and the Romanians?

Adriana: The Romanian Gypsies, contrary to popular belief, are ones that possess a house, have a job, and pay taxes. Some of their kids go to school. Some of them may even not know the Gypsy language - they speak Romanian. The only thing that makes them Gypsy is the dark color of their skin, the form of their nose, the body built - women are mostly short; yet there are also Romanians who have dark eyes and hair.

Can you tell us about the landscape in Romania? Are there many large cities or mostly small towns? Is it mountainous or flat?

Adriana: Romania has a variety of landscapes from beaches to mountains, such as plains, hills, delta, lakes, rivers, seaside and hollows. There are a lot of forests and open fields. Towns are usually very crowded. There are a couple of really big cities, but not so many. As compared to other countries, Romania is a small one. Mostly in the town are usually 100,000 inhabitants and everything is in within walking distance. As far as I know there is 45% of rural-urban life, but the rural life tend to diminish in front of the urban lifestyle/ community. We have what you call suburbs to a small extent around big cities such as Bucharest, Ploiesti, Brasov, Timisoara, Oradea, Cluj, Iasi and Constanta.

What are the people like in Romania?

Adriana: We cannot reject our Balcanic origin: we like to talk a lot, but not act; we like to complain to ourselves rather than try to change something. Fortunately, some of us had the chance to go abroad and learn new things that would improve our lifestyle and mentality. The Romanian people are warm, open to new things, and fast learners.

Thank you, Adriana!

Romania

"A Sad Country Full of Humor"





Her Body, & Her Self, & Her God

The not-so-surprising difference in girls' diaries from the 1900's compared to the twenty-first century both reveal what remains at the center of many girls' hearts: self. How should God's grace to us transform the intense desire of others' approval?

The Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* (October 23, p. A18) carried Mary McCarty's review of Joan Brumberg's recent book, *The Body Project*. The book is about the difference between how girls saw themselves 100 years ago and how they see themselves today. Brumberg analyzes diaries of adolescent girls from the 1830's to the 1990's. Her conclusion, according to the reviewer: "In the 19th and early 20th centuries, girls' diaries focused on 'good works' and perfecting the character. In the 1990's, the diaries are fixated on 'good looks,' on perfecting the body."

For example, one diary from 1892 says, "Resolved...to think before speaking. To work seriously. To be self-restrained in conversations and actions. To be dignified. Interesting myself more in others." Contrast this with an entry from 1982: "I will try to make myself better in any way I possibly can with the help of my budget and babysitting money. I will lose weight, get new lenses, already got new haircut, good makeup, new clothes and accessories."

From a biblical standpoint, what is remarkable about this shift from 1892 to 1982 is that it parallels exactly the shift described in the Bible away from what God wills for women. Consider the shift of focus from "good works" to "good looks."

Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of *good works*, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. (1 Timothy 2:9-10)

Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God...you have become [Sarah's] children if you *do what is right* without being frightened by any fear. (1 Peter 3:3-4, 6)

Brumberg's diagnosis of the problem seems to miss the mark. She writes, "Today, many young girls worry about the contours of their bodies...because they believe the body is the ultimate expression of the self." That may be true. But it is not helpful, because it gives the impression that *something else* besides the body is the ultimate expression of the self. In other words, Brumberg seems to assume that *self* is the starting point, and expressing the self is what life is all about. The problem, then, would be just finding out what the "ultimate expression of the self" is.

The Bible has a radically different diagnosis of the problem. It has a radically different starting place. The verse I left out from 1 Peter 3 says, "In former times the holy women also, *who hoped in God*, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands" (verse 5). The biblical starting point in dealing with the fear of looking unacceptable is God. Does a woman "hope in God," or hope in the ap-

By John Piper. © Desiring God.
Website: desiringGod.org.

proval of men? This is the key to "not being frightened by any fear" (verse 6). This is the key to being free from bondage to the mirror.

The biblical goal of a woman's life is not to find the ultimate expression of the self (neither "body" nor "character"). The biblical goal in life is to express the all-satisfying greatness and trustworthiness of God. Expressing God, not self, is what a godly woman wants to do. Excessive preoccupation with figure and hair and complexion is a sign that self, not God, has moved to the center. With God at the center—like the "sun," satisfying a woman's longings for beauty and greatness and truth and love—all the "planets" of food and dress and exercise and cosmetics and posture and countenance will stay in their proper orbit.

If this happens, the diaries of the next generation will probably go beyond looks *and* character, and speak of the greatness of God and the triumphs of his grace. And they will more often be written from Calcutta than from the comfortable cabins of rural America.



Truffles and Tapioca Pudding

by lara bryant

Trusting in God's perfect skill of creating *you*.

How often in life do people wish they were someone other than who they are? For some people, the thought of being someone different has never taken priority. Then there are those who sometimes wish they were a different person, but can logically separate the dream with reality. Lastly there are those of us who could easily go through a whole day being miserable because they think life would be so much better "if only."

I happen to fall into that last category – big time. There were many people I thought had it better; first on the list came Shirley Temple. Not only did her life look appealing, but in every movie she got to sing and dance and have adorable dresses, and cute dimples, and... you get the picture. While she remained near the top of my list, a new person replaced her as number one: Pocahontas. She became the ideal, now I was determined that I should have been an American Indian. I had my mom make me a costume and I went to the toy store, and bought a Pocahontas play set – complete with her blue necklace and *black hair wig*. Along the theme of dark brown eyes and black hair, Mulan next became who I wanted to be. I learned how to speak a little Chinese, and could pretend I was a tiny- but strong- girl with slanted eyes and silken black hair from China. That is, until I passed a mirror and what did I see? A tall girl with blue eyes and dark blond curly hair from America; nothing I perceived to be glamorous.

Sometime in high school I came to the conclusion that I was never going to be Asian or Indian or any movie star I might wish to be. I started observing friends and wishing I was one of them. Being myself became especially trying after we all graduated. Each one had their college plans perfectly laid out, and then there was me.

"I would rather be what God chose to make me than the most glorious creature that I could think of; for to have been thought about, born in God's thought, and then made by God, is the dearest, grandest, and most precious thing in all thinking."

—George MacDonald

Very often I would wonder why I had to be the odd one out. Why couldn't I be the one going to the prestigious university and passing every class with flying colors? I didn't actually want to go to any school, I *wanted* to want to, but I didn't.

One evening, after a rough day of babysitting, then teaching theatre classes, then dancing, I came home and started sulking. After letting me alone for about forty-five minutes, my mom came in my room. Following my emotional blow-up on her shoulder– for the third time that week– on how I wished I was anyone but myself, she asked me this question: "If you were to spend hours to create, say, a fancy dinner, and you were so proud of how each one turned out, then if one of the dishes were to speak up and say to you 'I hate being truffles; why can't I be the tapioca pudding?' after all your hard work to put it together, what would you say to those truffles?"

I laughed and responded with a shrug; then I saw what she meant. God designed each person to be an individual, unlike anyone else, and when we wish we were another person, we're really saying: "God, I don't like how you made me." Now, I don't know about you, but if I put my care and energy into making those truffles, and they told me they didn't like what they were, I'd give them a good slap on the face. But God doesn't do that; instead, he provides us grace upon grace. He created each of us before the creation of the world and in His sovereignty planned our circumstances.

So instead of wishing you had straight hair instead of curly hair, or were short instead of tall, take what gifts the Lord has given you, and go out – for "this is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!"

Staff Sketches

meet two of our staff members!

Meet seventeen-year-old Jennifer Goggans!



As one of the magazine's photographers, Jennifer says she's considering pursuing this area further after her graduation in 2010. She also loves little kids, and wants to be a homemaker as well. But no plans are definite, and she has such eclectic interests and hobbies that she "could go in any direction." Some of her favorite activities include cooking, cake decorating, camping, sign language, collecting vintage clothing, and American Heritage Girls (a Christian scouting program). She lives in Tennessee

and loves outdoorsy fun, especially if it's with her siblings – three brothers, Christopher, Jonathan, and Daniel; and one younger sister, Laura.

She was four years old on the Easter that she decided to accept Christ as her Savior, although it wasn't until later that her faith started sinking in. Her favorite verse is Isaiah 40:31, "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up on wings like eagles; They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Jennifer says she found this verse shortly after her grandfather died, and "I feel God used it to encourage me during that emotionally wearying time in my life. Since then, it has been a constant comfort to me and has become my 'life verse'."

Meet fifteen-year-old Emily Lupo!

Also a photographer, Emily hopes to continue learning more about the art of photography in college. She also dreams of traveling Europe after college. But this tenth-grader has some other favorites, too – she loves writing and running. Over the summer, she joined the South Florida Heat, a cross country running team for homeschooled girls that competes with private schools. Beyond these activities and hobbies, Emily also has a tender heart for those in Africa suffering from AIDS, and she'd love to help them in some way in the future.

Emily is one of six children, with two older brothers and three younger sisters. Her father is a policeman while her mother homeschools the family. Emily shares, "By the time I was six, I had accepted Christ," she writes, "and I've been following him ever since." She says Proverbs 31:30 – "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" – is one of her favorite Bible verses. "As a girl, I naturally cared about what I looked like and oftentimes worried about it way too much," Emily explains with a smile. "But after reading this verse, I realized that knowing and fearing God is more important than spending hours fixing my hair."



So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow.
{1 Corinthians 3:7}

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