

...by the Way



ENCOURAGEMENT ALONG THE WAY

Our Greatest Strength

by Becky Rule

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*You seal up the sun.
Full of wisdom.
Perfect in beauty.
Perfect in your ways.*

To whom do the above descriptions from Scripture refer?

- Jesus?
- No.
- Believers in Jesus?
- No.

God used these words to describe our enemy, the adversary, Satan.

Ponder that a moment. These are not simply idle claims by Satan about himself. **God** made those statements. Roll them around in your head and think about the implications. Shocking, isn't it?

The whole idea has sobered me. As new creations and believers in Christ, we have tremendous spiritual beauty. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are available to us through Jesus. We are whole, complete, rich beyond measure. We have everything we need for life and godliness and the mind of Christ. That

is only the beginning!

However, like Satan, we also have tremendous potential for pride and glory. He began full, beautiful, perfect and wise. He had everything...except the humility and weakness required to safely handle his position.

Look at some of the other things

God said about Satan:

You think that you think like God.

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty.

You have spoiled your wisdom because of your brightness.

Your heart is lifted up because of your riches.

Do you realize how susceptible to pride we are? God said it was because of Satan's wealth and beauty that he became so proud and destructive. In the same way, our spiritual wealth and beauty holds great po-

tential for pride and destruction.

So is this some trick from God? The very things that bless us also curse us! Our strength is a weakness!

The spiritual beauty, the riches, and the wisdom we have are our most dangerous hindrances to the kingdom. Is it any wonder Jesus said it is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God?

It would be easy to feel betrayed by God, but this is no trick. Yes, pride is our enemy and we need deliverance and rescue from it. In the beauty of our holiness we are susceptible to lifted up hearts, and ultimately to destruction. But God has made a way...weakness. Weakness is our protection. Satan did not have a path of brokenness, suffering, and weakness to keep him low and humble. The result will be his final destruction.

(continued on page 2)

Wealth without weakness is a deadly combination...

Welcome to ...by the Way

Welcome to ...by the Way. Our main purpose in these occasional newsletters is to lift up Jesus, but in the process we hope you will be encouraged and informed.

You are invited to join us in a short Scripture study on the One who makes a way for us. As we share our individual struggles and victories, may you find hope and

courage for your journey with Jesus. You will also find a prayer corner, a financial snap shot, and LCMI's itinerary.

It is our prayer that, on

your way, you will know God, follow Jesus, and "in no way walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life." HIS life. (John 8:12)



Our Greatest Strength

(continued from page 1)

Wealth without weakness is a deadly combination — literally — both for ourselves and those around us. But, be encouraged! Our weakness is also our strength.

Just as Satan, our adversary, is the ultimate embodiment and expression of pride, Jesus is the supreme embodiment and expression of humility and love. God is not some arrogant glory-monger who demands attention and worship. He is not selfishly possessive in protecting His glory from us. When God says he will not give His glory to another, He is not afraid of losing His Kingdom to us; *He is guarding against losing us to our kingdoms*. Satan is the prime example of where glory, beauty, wisdom, discernment, splendor, and perfection can take us. The extent of the danger we face is displayed by the enemy. God in His mercy desires to protect us from destruction, and therefore, **MUST** give us weakness as the

antidote to the pride that would cause our ultimate downfall. He knows the final outcome, and in His great mercy He provides what we need in order to protect us from going there. Being kept safe is for **OUR** sake, not for God's. It's out of love that God shelters and shields us from the danger of glory.

Like Paul, we can praise God for our weakness. For the good of ourselves and those around us, we desperately need it. It is our greatest strength and our only protection from destruction in the midst of remarkable spiritual beauty. Weakness is for our benefit! Yes, it seems completely backward to our expectations, and it takes having our minds renewed before we fully accept it. We have been told to fight weakness, lack, and neediness in order to pursue strength, provision, wholeness, and resources. But that pursuit is at our own expense! Jesus, as the ultimate expression of love, will conquer

all. Satan, the ultimate expression of pride, will be completely conquered and destroyed.

The battle is not between good and evil. Those were both found on the same tree in the Garden. The battle is between life and death, God's glory and our glory. Praise the Lord, He has given us all we need to choose life!

But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am Jehovah, doing kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth; for I delight in these, says Jehovah.

(Jeremiah 9:24)

Scripture references:

Genesis 2:9

Deuteronomy 30:19, 20

Isaiah 42 and 48

Ezekiel 27 and 28

Matthew 19:23-26

1 Corinthians 2:16

2 Corinthians 5:17; 12:9-10

Ephesians 1:7-14

Colossians 2:2, 3, 10

2 Peter 1:3



ON THE WAY...WITH BECKY

What's The Point?

As I look around our home and office, I see innumerable possibilities, opportunities, options and potential. It is a daily struggle to discern distractions to be discarded from interruptions to be embraced. As I have pondered LCMJ's journey, it seems to be one of going in a particular direction, making adjustments, continuing on by a slightly different course, making more adjustments, moving along by yet another route after making some alterations.... You get the picture.

It appears as though we are perpetually headed in a wrong direction requiring correction. Sometimes the insecurity of it all overwhelms me, but I am gradually seeing that my outlook and definitions contribute to that view and my resulting frustration. On my journey with God, I expected the road to be straight without curves or turns...IF I am listening "properly." Because my path has not been arrow-straight, I have

concluded that I am doing something wrong. My frustration mounts when I turn to God only to hear very little from Him about preventing further course revisions.

Over and over again, Jesus has reminded Mike and me that we will discover where we are going as we journey toward the place He will show us. "Will show" means at least two things. One, I do not know where I am going. And two, I do not know what to look for. Only God knows those specifics.

I thought the point of our walk with Jesus was the destination. It isn't.

I thought the point of our walk with Jesus was the journey. It isn't that either.

For where I am today (and I will



By Becky Rule

likely understand something different tomorrow), I see the point of the journey is Jesus and me, together, regardless of the journey and the destination. In other words, the point is how I accept and receive interaction and cultivation from Jesus day-by-day, moment-by-moment.

Straight roads do not reveal the true state of my trust. Trust shows up more clearly when we hit unexpected bumps, curves, sharp turns, climbs, and declines.

I have the daily choice to either receive or deny Him. No matter what the journey looks like, no matter what I encounter on the road, no matter my weaknesses and deficits...the ultimate point of the journey is Jesus alone.



ON THE WAY...WITH MIKE

Assumptions on Sin

The Lord has been challenging me on many things these past few months, but the topic of late has been my assumptions about sin. He has begun to teach me many things and His word is coming alive in new ways about this misunderstood topic.

Please pray that my mind would continue to be renewed as He reveals His Truth.

It began when He gave me the thought, *Is it that God's holiness cannot look upon sin, or is it*

that in my sin I cannot stand to look upon His Holiness? I have looked at this in light of Genesis 1-3 and realized that God did not turn His back upon mankind after he fell; it was man who hid from God! It's almost like God gave man a chance to explain himself (or seek forgiveness). Only after that did God send them away from the Garden. He let the natural consequence of man's choice (sin) become their pun-

ishment. I see the same thing again and again in Scripture. God longs to save His people, but they refuse.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2 NKJV)

Has my sin caused Him to turn His back on me, or in my sin do I refuse to turn to God because I wallow in pride instead of choosing humility? I have begun to see that this thread runs throughout Scripture. God treats us according to the way we insist on relating to Him and allows the natural consequences, yet He still pursues us and offers Himself — and restoration — to any who will humble self. (See Mark 6:5 and James 4:10)

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;

By Mike Rule

The response of the sin pattern in our lives is to be ashamed and hide! I see this evidenced in my own life when I refuse to turn to Him because I expected better of myself and feel unworthy and ashamed. I fall into pride, then unbelief, then sin. I see that I am exposed (naked) and I am ashamed, so I hide. Seeing the contrast between my exposure and His clothing of righteousness and holiness makes me ashamed! Thanks be to God for Christ's willingness to meet us in our pride and to make a way for us if we will only believe it and receive it!

A friend and I were teaching in Brazil a couple years ago and he gave me this thought: When we have been away from true friends, we don't lament the time apart; we just pick up where we left off as though we had never been apart. Praise God that Jesus is our friend! Let's just pick up where we left off. Amen.



Prayer Issues

Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and by petition with thanksgivings, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

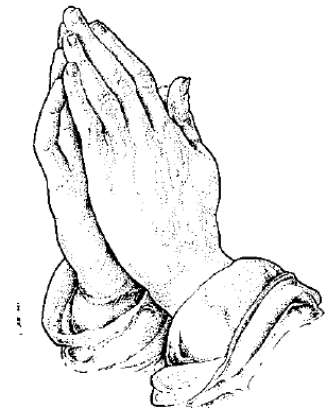
Praise and Thanksgiving

- Our Support Team Family
- God's daily presence, encouragement, and direction
- God prunes what needs pruning and restructures what needs restructuring
- After almost a year of paperwork, LCMI is now a non-profit organization

Petitions

You are invited to join us in praying for:

- Jesus to be lifted up (John 12:32)
- The many hurting people with whom we come in contact
- Orderly and efficient everyday operations in our homes and at the office
- Progress on LCMI's God-given focus for 2006: writing
- Wisdom to discern the difference between distractions and God-ordained appointments
- Wise management of all resources: Physical, emotional, relational, mental, financial, time
- God to bless LCMI's Support Team and Board of Directors and their families in all aspects of their well-being: spiritual, intellectual, emotional, relational, intellectual, physical



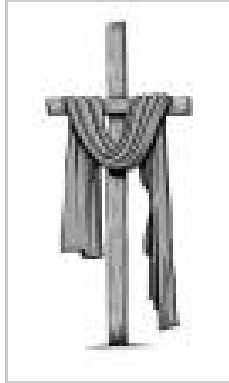
ON THE WAY...WITH JENNIFER

Sin: Failure, or Opportunity?

By Jennifer Wissman

As a believer sin cannot separate me from God unless I choose to doubt God and believe that sin is a barrier. As this has become more and more a reality to me I have puzzled over just what sin is. A quick Hebrew word study brought to light some interesting concepts. One of the most used Hebrew words for sin is translated into various English words. Those translations include sin, offend, loss, blame, fault, harm done, miss, trespass, as well as cleanse, purify, and reconciliation. A strange notion to my Western-thinking mind, one Hebrew word can actually encompass both a concept and its opposite. This is also true for the Hebrew word *bâarak*. It means *both* bless and curse. So how do you know which meaning to take?

How one views sin depends on each person's perspective. I can choose to see my sin as failure or as an opportu-



nity for reconciliation and needed cleansing. Beyond doubt, it is most humbling to open up my heart to what Jesus wants to do through my sin. In my pride I want to persist in condemning myself. "Just look how bad I am! I should know better than to do this again! I'll never improve! I'm such a failure!" The focus is all *ME!* Rather, this is an opportunity to see Jesus, to humbly receive the fact that I am already clean, and to rejoice in intimacy with Him.

Last week I attempted to manipulate a friend of mine to get what I wanted instead of truthfully asking. Confronted with my sin, what did I see? *My* failure, *my* wretchedness, and how much better than that *I* ought to be. I knew better but I felt entirely powerless to change. I had fallen in this same sin before. But what difference did it make that I had turned to Jesus then? I was in sin

again. What was the use of even listening to Jesus? I would always fail. Why even consider Jesus as a choice? Then, of course, I heard the enemy's lies: "Go ahead and doubt God. You already are closed to Him in unbelief, so what's the difference?"

It is at that point that I often simply act on what I am feeling and what I believe from the enemy about myself. I look for something that will make me feel better. I want to punish myself, believing I have no choice. But that night, at that point of running to my idols, Jesus gave me the clarity to see that I did have a choice. What I heard was no more than the enemy's lies and I did not have to believe him. I could choose Jesus.

Sin can be a failure or an opportunity for purity and cleansing based on how I choose to see it. It is the same as any other neediness in my life – a point of choosing Jesus or choosing to live out of my flesh. He is so much more attractive than my flesh!



Our God is... **HUMBLE**

You are invited to discover the humility of our great God as you meditate upon the following Scripture verses that either state or display Him as humble. May He minister to you, and may you see His heart.

Look up the following scriptures, focusing specifically on the way God expresses His humility. Meditate on the ways your life is impacted by the fact that God is humble. Allow Him to show it to you in greater depth. Think about the difference His humility makes in you and your life.

Definitions to consider

Humble: low, small, slight, akin to humus (soil, earth); not proud, not self-assertive; modest; low in condition, rank or position; lowly, unpretentious.

Humble suggests an unassuming character in which there is an absence of pride and assertiveness.

Meek stresses a mildness and pa-

trience of disposition which is not easily stirred to anger or resentment.

Modest implies the absence of pretensions, boastfulness and conceit.

- Genesis 3:21
- Isaiah 42:1-3
- Isaiah 50:4-7
- Isaiah 53:2-8
- Zechariah 9:9
- Matthew 20:28
- Matthew 26:39, 42
- Luke 22:27
- John 10:18
- John 13:14
- Romans 15:3

- 2 Corinthians 8:9
- Galatians 3:13-14
- Philippians 2:5-8
- Titus 2:14
- Hebrews 2:17-18
- Hebrews 4:15
- Hebrews 5:7-8
- 1 Peter 2:21-24
- 1 Peter 3:18
- Revelation 7:17



Training & Seminar Opportunities

The following opportunities are available through LCMI. From home meetings to large groups in auditoriums, the message can be presented formally or informally, depending on the needs and desires of your group.

Living: His Perspective Seminar

Discover who Jesus is and who we are created to be because of His work in our lives. Since we often misunderstand our behavior and problems, we look at our actions, why we act the way we do, and —most importantly— the One who sets us free. A full 8 to 10 hour seminar can be given, or each session's length and content can be tailored to specific situations (marriage, men's or women's groups, youth, etc.). Topics include:

- Understanding Yourself
- Idols
- Personality Issues
- Life on the Inside,
Life on the Outside
- Marriage and Relationships
- Problems
- Life with God
- Faith

Living: His Perspective, In-Depth Seminar

Fine-tune the message presented in the *Perspective Seminar* by participating in interactive lectures. Each presentation can include intensive small group time where participants personalize the message and examine their own issues to more fully discern how Jesus is working in their lives. This seminar usually runs 24 to 32 hours in duration and works well in a series of daily meetings or as a retreat. The *Perspective Seminar* is a pre-requisite.

Discipleship Counselor Training

This training series brings depth and insight into all relationships but especially our relationship with Christ. The most effective counselors are those who disciple from their own walks with Jesus rather than from concepts *about* a walk with Jesus. However, **THIS MATERIAL IS NOT ONLY FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO FORMALLY COUNSEL**. No matter your walk of life, you are a discipler. Every believer can benefit and grow by participating in this 140-hour training process. You will better understand yourself and those you interact with at home, school, church, work, and in your community.

Through a 5-segment series, participants more fully recognize what Jesus has done in their own lives and are equipped with tools to verbally and visually express how Jesus is real and practical in all of life. The five segments include:

- Living: His Perspective seminar
- Living: His Perspective, In-Depth seminar
- Personality Training and History Taking
- Diagram Training
- Biblical Studies

FINANCE CORNER	
2006 Annual Budget	
Income Needed Annually	\$118,800.00
Expenses	
Youth on a Mission Project*	\$2,400.00
International & Domestic Travel**	\$9,600.00
Salaries, Administrative, and all other Ministry Expenses	\$106,230.00
Total Expense	\$118,230.00

*This year's project will likely be home construction in Northern Michigan.

**Tentative travel plans for 2006 include Papua New Guinea and Australia.

To Host An Event

Ask
Call or email our office to discuss scheduling and other details.

Arrange
There is no charge beyond the limited materials necessary for an event. However, the provision of long distance travel expenses, local transportation, housing and meals is greatly appreciated.

***LIVING COVENANT
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL***

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*Living Covenant Ministries
International*



*Proclaiming the One True God
is Trustworthy*

Mission Statement:

Because of intimacy
with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
we stand ready as agents on behalf of Christ,
for Christ,
to minister to Christ
by comforting, encouraging, and caring
for His earthly Body, the Church —
particularly those frustrated,
hopeless-feeling, desperate believers
who yearn for deeper intimacy with God.

We do this through the following
four areas of ministry:
Discipleship Counseling
Teaching and Training
Preaching
Writing