



April 2007

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Flo's Thoughts - Consider the T

Whenever I enter the sanctuary, my eyes focus on the cross. Riveting my gaze there allows me to ponder afresh the sacrifice Christ made for me. Having come to faith as a child provides a rich heritage, but it also presents some potential pitfalls. Whenever I feel like I want to learn more than I might from studying a Gospel, I stop and realize what serious trouble my faith has encountered. The same spiritual overhaul must occur when I don't pause to consider the cross daily in a meditative way. That's a key reason for my appreciation of the stained glass window at SPEP. It illustrates the stark simplicity of the cross overlaying swirling circles that I can't follow to completion. That always reminds me that the cross covers all the twisting spirals that represent my everyday life.

This Lenten season the Lord has called me to ponder what the cross looks like as it overlays the unknown circles of impeding surgery. I have asked some folks, via prayer requests, to hold me accountable for going through this experience to God's glory; however, I don't know exactly how that will look. Musing about this, I stumbled upon one truth that all trials move people toward or away from Christ; difficulties purify or putrify. The English Oxford Dictionary does not recognize putrify as a verb, but the word's origin is from the Latin for to rot. Quite the opposite, purify is to cleanse or refine.

As I prepared for worship a few Sundays ago and looked up at the cross after I prayed, a curious word play crossed my mind. I realized that the only difference between purify and putrify was the letter t, the very shape of the cross. That idea grew and I've returned to consider the power of the cross repeatedly since then.

People don't totally ignore God, even in postmodern America. Yes, people may avoid giving Him serious thought, but when trials come, the cavalier or intellectual attitudes quickly fall away. People, whether dealing with fear, pain, depression, or loss, find themselves calling out for aid, usually from someone greater than they. Still, as the trial unfolds, people either move toward the Lord or angrily write Him off as ineffectual.

Now that makes me wonder. Have I missed my greatest opportunities for my own spiritual growth and for genuine evangelism to those outside the walls of the church by failing to see the centrality of the cross? Have I taken its presence and power for granted? And can't I meet other people in their crises of life with the true message of real help?

It's Easter and I can surely invite friends to come to church. But I can also meet hurting people any day and walk alongside in their pain. Leave the t unnoticed in the middle of a word like putrify and decay and rot result. But pull out the t and hold it up as the cross of Christ. May the Lord to make our lives and the experience of others refined and cleansed, purified. *Flo*

Gossip - Good Questions!

When is what I say gossip? Is it gossip when you tell something to your one spiritual advisor person, whom you discuss everything with? Is it gossip when you tell your parents? Is it gossip when you share what's going on with your youth group leaders, or your small group leaders?

And what is an example of something that is not gossip?

A definition of gossip is sharing personal information with parties not involved in problem or solution. A useful motive filter is Psalm 139:23-24 – for the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked! (And too often delights on enjoying and sharing tasty morsels)

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Parents often need to know details, for they are an authority over a child who may be privy to troubling info – so, too teachers and pastors, and youth workers. The difficulty for authority figures is dealing with some forms of info – learning not to freak when a child unburdens his or her heart is skill I struggle with, even now.

Me, telling my husband of an issue troubling me may or may not be gossip, depending on my motive. If I were in counseling, relating the matter to a counselor might be very important, or not, depending on my motives – and it is never wrong to pour out your heart to the ONE Counselor who has the solution and a tight lip! ;)

So, when someone wants to share, before details are revealed – offer to take it into the Throne room – Lord God, _____ is troubled by a matter – please calm her anxious heart, and lead her on the right path, and give her wisdom and kind words. In Jesus' name – Amen! *Barbara Smith*

Quilt of Holes

As I faced my Maker at the last judgment, I knelt before the Lord along with all the other souls.

Before each of us laid our lives like the squares of a quilt in many piles; an angel sat before each of us sewing our quilt squares together into a tapestry that is our life.

But as my angel took each piece of cloth off the pile, I noticed how ragged and empty each of my squares was. They were filled with giant holes. Each square was labeled with a part of my life that had been difficult, the challenges and temptations I had been faced with in every day life. I saw hardships that I had endured, which were the largest holes of all.

I glanced around me. Nobody else had such squares. Other than a tiny hole here and there, the other tapestries were filled with rich color and the bright hues of worldly fortune. I gazed upon my own life and was disheartened. My angel was sewing the ragged pieces of cloth together, threadbare and empty, like binding air.

Finally the time came when each life was to be displayed, held up to the light, the scrutiny of truth. The others rose; each in turn, holding up their tapestries. So filled their lives had been. My angel looked upon me then nodded for me to rise. My gaze dropped to the ground in shame. I hadn't had all the earthly fortunes. I had love in my life, and laughter. But there had also been trials of illness, and wealth, and false accusations that took from me my world, as I knew it. I had to start over many times. I often struggled with the temptation to quit, only to somehow muster the strength to pick up and begin again. I spent many nights on my knees in prayer, asking for help and guidance in my life. I had often been held up to ridicule, which I endured painfully, Each time offering it up to the Father in hopes that I would not melt within my skin beneath the judgmental gaze of those who unfairly judged me.

And now, I had to face the truth. My life was what it was, and I had to accept it for what it was. I rose and slowly lifted the combined squares of my life to the light. An awe-filled gasp filled the air. I gazed around at the others who stared at me with wide eyes.

Then, I looked upon the tapestry before me. Light flooded the many holes, creating an image, the face of Christ. Then our Lord stood before me, with warmth and love in His eyes. He said, “Every time you gave over your life to Me, it became My life, My hardships, and My struggles. Each point of light in your life is when you stepped aside and let Me shine through, until there was more of Me than there was of you.”

May all our quilts be threadbare and worn, allowing Christ to shine through! (*Circulated on the Internet*)

This Month in History

April 26, 1777 - American Revolution heroine Sybil Ludington, 16, rides 40 miles by horseback from town to town during the night to warn the Connecticut countryside of invading British troops.

April 6, 1954 - The TV Dinner was introduced by Swanson.

Thots and Things

New Books:

Spiritually Single Moms: Raising Godly Kids When Dad Doesn't Believe

by Nancy Sebastian Meyer (NavPress)

On Our Own: Help and Hope for Single Moms

by Lela Gilbert (NavPress)

Own Your Faith: The Adventure of Following Christ in College by Mark Tabb

Find out more about these titles at www.navpress.com

A Poem (printed with permission)

Generations of the Dead

by Mary Beth Cole (11th grade student of Flo Wolfe)

When I was first to sin's Desire wed,
The beauty of his troth did blighted be.
So bred we generations of the dead.

In childhood from the Father's house we fled,
To feast on fruit torn from God's sacred tree,
When I was first to sin's Desire wed.

And in our youth did tender feet first tread,
Through gated paths once bound with lock and key.
So bred we generations of the dead.

While honeyed words through serpent's jaws were led,
My once-chaste vows did drown in shame's broad sea
When I was first to sin's Desire wed.

By fruitless passions spurred, to famine sped,
My gutted womb cried out for children free.
So bred we generations of the dead.

I lay my newborn dreams in stillborn beds,
Torn from their sickly screams by selfish plea.
When I was first to sin's Desire wed,
So bred we generations of the dead.

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letters”

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