



February 2007

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Flo's Thoughts

As a youngster, I knew January heralded a month of writing thank-you notes to all those who had remembered me with a gift at Christmas. Although a poor southern lady, my mother understood doing the right thing, and she wanted me to have manners. That translated into the following set up: a fountain pen, a stack of notes with envelopes, a book of stamps, and the dining room table (near her watchful eye as she cooked in the kitchen). After completing the proper heading, the structure of an acceptable 'bread and butter' note strained my brain, for these notes could not be mass produced with standard phrases. Once each note passed Mom's OK, she smiled in appreciation for my efforts. I licked each envelope, went to the mailbox in our front yard, put the flag up for the mailman to see, and came back into the house—fully satisfied. What ever happened to that tradition? Today, many of us, myself included, try to summarize our year in a Christmas letter. Photos tumble out of the greeting card, and we want to see faces and read of current adventures. The English teacher part of me hopes that writing letters will never go out of style.

This year I tried something new for our sons and their wives. I wrote a Christmas prayer for each couple. It included an element of looking back at what the Lord had taught them “through both joy and pain.” I prayed they might find deeper communion with Christ and a greater transparency with each other. “The refiner’s heat sometimes scorches but produces metal of finer quality for having endured the fire.”

I also prayed that, as a reflection of the triune God, they might find unity in each other and in Jesus Christ. I asked that they might be mindful to serve Christ in worship, each other in marriage, and others in their needs. “May you two use your gifts for sharing with those who seek to know Christ; remember to pray for the discernment to recognize those hungry souls.” In these days of feverish ladder climbing at work, I also asked the Lord, to “train them to like their work but to love each other.” Since both couples have a move in front of them this summer or next, I petitioned the Lord: “Allow them to leave their current jobs well, to enter new positions wisely, and to church shop diligently.” I closed both prayers with the apostle Paul’s wonderfully practical words from I Cor. 13.

After our “kids” left Maryland, I mailed them each their prayer and posted copies on our refrigerator. Whenever I open the door for something, a phrase of one prayer or the other pops out and I pray that for them. Valentine’s Day will soon arrive. How’s your stack of notepaper, envelopes, stamps, and pens? A letter lets you talk to the Lord and to your loved ones.

Flo Wolfe

Spring Bible Studies

The new studies for spring are already in the works. The last date to register is this Sunday (Feb. 4).

Spring Bible Studies

Registration for the studies and for childcare is in the Narthex after each Sunday worship service on January 14, 21, 28 and February 4. Please be prepared to pay for any class materials when you register. We want you to have your books before the studies begin.

Tuesdays 9:30-11:00 AM

All God's Good Promises: 10 Studies in Joshua

Cost: \$8.00

Dates: February 13-May 8

Childcare available: register early

This study will center on the book of Joshua. We will use Scripture to understand Scripture, as we spend time looking in other OT books to understand the context of this book and to see the account of God keeping his covenants. We will also look at NT passages to find the final fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus.

Under His Smile: Breaking Free from the Need to Perform

Cost: \$15.00

Dates: February 13-May 8

Childcare available: register early

This Bible study comes with meditation questions written by Dr. Tim Keller. Jesus said He would meet us in our weaknesses. When did we start believing we had to do it all perfectly to earn God's approval? Come discover the freedom of not performing, but living "under His smile."

Wednesdays 7:00 - 9:00 PM

All God's Good Promises: 10 Studies in Joshua

Same as the Tuesday morning study

No childcare available

Thursdays 7:00-8:30 PM

Before the Throne of God: Focus on Prayer

Cost: \$10.00

Dates: February 15 – May 10

No childcare available

Did you know that prayer is an act of worship? Right thinking about God can lead to prayers that are pleasing to Him. Join us as we study what is pleasing to God in prayer.

Get Up Off that Ice!

Several Olympic skaters showed me that no fall is so embarrassing that they could not pull things together and finish their competition. They began poised, proficient, making an amazing spin or leap, but failing to find their footing, they fell. Although they might have hurt more than their pride, they skated on, completing their program. Even if their costumes don't look as glamorous; their makeup, streaky from their tears—they finished. Afterwards, when they and their audiences watched their performance scores, marred by their spills, cameras with zoom lenses caught their faces—grim, determined, brave.

When I fall down, I am tempted to hide—hoping no one notices—while looking for someone else to blame, certain that someone withheld what they should have known I needed. Sometimes, I include my God as failing to come across.

Just like the skaters who fall, “failing to find their footing” after a salchow or triple lutz, I've taken some comparably embarrassing spills—mercifully not on the ice on worldwide TV! But, I have stumbled in front of really important people: my husband, family, good friends. Why the skaters and I founder have similarities,

though in widely dissimilar circumstances: underreckoning the challenge and overrating my ability—pride—which precedes all fall! Only rarely, have I fallen because someone else tripped me up, like the skaters who lock blades and tumbled. No, my most colossal blunders are tied directly to what I did, or could have avoided doing. But the aftermath is as uncomfortable as sitting bare-legged on ice.

Bruised, barelegged, and bereft on ice is not where champions stay—and it's no place for a child of God, either! Too, often I have lacked the zeal, conviction, and determination in picking myself up that Olympic skaters show.

How do I rise up, and resume my “program?”

Watching the bruised skaters, I gleaned from their determination a message Paul would agree with—Keep the prize in mind, and finish, not just somehow, but well. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) The cameras show them skating afterwards to the sidelines and waiting for the scores; I know I have Someone to run to, even before I finish— when failure is “burning” me, I can run home to one who always picks me up—when I repent and confess. (2 Corinthians 7:10) Even if I commenced my program in my own strength, He will give me a great finale when I turn back—no matter who is watching, or keeping score. Because of Christ, though I fall, He keeps me in the running; I have hope, no matter my bruises! Because of this genuine help, I have an obligation to do my part—for He is at work, even in my flops, making me a star! (Romans 8:12, 18, 28-29; Philippians 2:12-18)

Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. ~Psalms 119:105

Barbara S.

Thots and Things

Web site-ings

What does the Bible say about dating? Find out (<http://christianwomentoday.com/advice/datingchr.html>)

Study Bible online (<http://bible.crosswalk.com/>)

Six ways to encourage military families. (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/tc/2003/003/15.13.html>)

Thinking about online education opportunities? Baker's Guide to Christian Distance Education is now available online. (<http://www.bakersguide.com/kb/>)

Romantic Dinner for Two

Filet Mignon with Rich Balsamic Glaze

2 (4 ounce) filet mignon steaks

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper to taste
salt to taste

1/4 cup balsamic vinegar

1/4 cup dry red wine

Sprinkle freshly ground pepper over both sides of each steak, and sprinkle with salt to taste.

Heat a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Place steaks in hot pan, and cook for 1 minute on each side, or until browned. Reduce heat to medium-low, and add balsamic vinegar and red wine. Cover, and cook for 4 minutes on each side, basting with sauce when you turn the meat over.

Remove steaks to two warmed plates, spoon one tablespoon of glaze over each, and serve immediately. Serve with steamed asparagus and baby red potatoes

(allrecipes.com)

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letters”

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Micki Parkinson, Editor/Designer

