

Congratulations!

by Bethany Notgrass

Sometimes I feel like I can't do this. I can't manage so many things at once. I'm afraid I'm going to end up doing a really bad job. I feel like I can't be the daughter, sister, and friend I want to be. I really want to do a good job, but I come up short time and again.

Am I supposed to be joyful all the time? Sometimes I feel really down or have an all-out crash-and-burn session. And then I feel guilty for getting so upset. I don't let people see how many times I cry. My heart has been broken by things that have happened in my life--and things that have not happened. I've been really disappointed. There are people that I've lost that I miss a lot. There are hard things I really wish I could change. It bothers me a lot when people don't act the way they should.

I see other people so confident and doing amazing things for God. I'm just a simple girl. I look at myself and don't see a prayer warrior, a dynamic leader, or a sacrificial missionary. My life is disturbingly normal and boring. What is my place in the Kingdom? Can God use me? I mean, really use me, not just give me a job to make me feel better?

I don't know God and Jesus and the Spirit like I want to. I really want to know, honor, and obey them, but I don't know how to get there. I try to look in the Bible, but so often my eyes glaze over and I start thinking of 100 other things. What am I missing? What does God really want me to do? How can I root out the sin in my life and fill up those places with good fruit? How can I stop bad habits and replace them with good ones? When will my good in-

tentions finally stick around and turn into accomplishments? I really want to do the right thing. I have great ideas and resolutions, but it's so hard when it gets down to it--when I get busy or tired or distracted. What can I do about all this? I feel like so much less than God wants me to be.

I don't do any "really bad" things that would end up in the newspaper or ruin my family's reputation, but people don't know what goes on inside my head. Sometimes I get really angry at my parents. Sometimes I have bad thoughts. Sometimes I feel jealous. Sometimes I wish things were just different--that I was just different.

I really want to help other people, but I don't know how. I feel so bad for people who are hurting and mourning and suffering, because of their own sins and the sins of others. I wish I could help people and make a difference. I really love the people around me and I want to be there for them. I want people to know peace. I wish I knew peace better myself.

I have tried hard to make good decisions, but I feel like such a weirdo. Other people just don't understand why I do what I do and why I don't do stuff just like everyone else. Sometimes I have a hard time remembering that myself. Are they all right, and I'm being an idiot? But surely not. I can't just give up these convictions. It's really not easy being alone. I wish I didn't get so many rude questions and blank stares.

Sometimes I feel like a hopeless case. Am I?



God has an answer:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The word translated "blessed" in our Bibles means something more like "congratulations." What? Congratulations? Jesus is congratulating us for some things we don't see as particularly congratulatable. I'm a mess, a frequent failure, a sinner, and there are people who don't like or understand me, and You're telling me, "Congratulations?" Yes. He is. People who don't know they need God are hard to work on and hard to transform. When we get to a place where we know we're weak and we really can't do this ourselves, God gets excited. He can really, really do something with that. So, you don't have it all together? Congratulations. Be still, smile, and see what God is going to do with that!



about this issue

September 2009
Volume 9
Issue 9

about the editors

Editor:

Bethany Notgrass

Assistant Editor:

Mev Notgrass

Contributing Editors:

Annalisa Perry

Amy Puetz

Rachel Starr Thomson

about amie

amie is the monthly newsletter of the **amie** network for Christian homeschooled teenage girls.

web site:

www.notgrass.com/amie

mailing address:

amie network

370 S. Lowe Ave.

Ste. A

PMB 211

Cookeville TN 38501

e-mail:

bethany@notgrass.com

Let us
consider
how to
stimulate
one another
to love
and good
deeds.

Hebrews 10:24

All Rights Reserved. Content may not be reproduced without permission from the editor.

Scripture taken (unless noted) from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

© 2009 amie network.

The Courage of Dr. and Mrs. Whitman

by Amy Puetz

A beautiful bride stood before the altar. Her face shone with a radiant smile as she said her vows. When the ceremony was complete, the minister presented the couple to the assembly, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you Dr. and Mrs. Marcus Whitman."

Narcissa Whitman was a kind-hearted Christian, a beautiful woman, and a determined individual. For many years she had had a desire to become a missionary, but the American Mission Board turned her down because they wanted couples. Marcus was also rejected because he was unmarried. Their common goal of becoming missionaries and the idea that they could be more effective together led them to marry. The day following their wedding, the bride and groom started their journey west that would bring them to the fertile soil of lost souls.

The Whitmans were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Spalding, another missionary couple. The year was 1836. Their destination was Oregon. Their goal was spreading the gospel. Along the trail Narcissa kept a journal, which she sent to her family back east. One journal entry reads, "Do not think I regret coming. No; far from it. I would not go back for a world. I am contented and happy notwithstanding I get very hungry and weary. Have six weeks steady journey before us. Will the Lord give me patience to endure it? Feel sometimes as if it was a long time to be traveling. Long for rest, but must not murmur." Another journal entry reads, "We are now on the west side of the Blue Mountains, crossed them in a day and half. Dearest Mother, let me tell you how I am sustained of the Lord in all this journey. Yesterday and for two or three days past I have felt weak, restless, and scarcely able to sit on my horse—yesterday in particular, but see how I have been diverted with the scenery and carried out of myself in conversation about home and friends . . . This morning my feelings were a little peculiar. Felt remarkably well and strong, so much so as to mention it. But could not see any reason why I should feel more rested than on the morn previous. When I began to see what a day's ride was before, I understood it. If I had had not better health today than yesterday, I should have fainted under it. Then the promise appeared in full view, 'as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.' (Deuteronomy 33:25) And my soul rejoiced in God and testifies to the truth of another evidently manifest, 'Lo! I am with you always.' (Matthew 28:20)" Narcissa Whitman and Eliza Spalding accomplished a feat that had never been done by any other white women: crossing the Rocky Mountains. Unknowingly they paved the way for thousands of other women to follow. The path to Oregon was now open to families. The missionaries arrived at Fort Vancouver on September 12, 1836.

Not only were the Whitmans full of charity for the Indians, they also displayed love for the many whites who were now coming west. A picture of their Christian virtue was painted by the story of the orphaned Sager children whom the Whitmans adopted. When the Sager children lost both their parents on the journey west, the wagon train planned to leave the children at Fort Hall with enough money to pay their passage with a caravan

of traders heading east in the spring. Leading the Sager family now was a strong-willed, 13-year-old boy named John. John had formally been known for his practical jokes, laziness, and disobedience. After John's parents died he took the responsibility as head of his family very seriously. He became responsible, hard-working, and dependable, as though he was trying to make amends for his former slothfulness. Intensely, John wanted to go to Oregon to fulfill his father's dreams. On a cool and quiet night, John, his brother, and his five sisters slipped out of camp with the intent of following the wagon train and then rejoining them when they were too far along to send the children back to the Fort. Many adventures confronted the children. When they stumbled into the Whitmans' mission they were frail, famished, and fatigued, but by the providential hand of God they arrived there alive. Bravely John had led them over 1,000 miles through the wilderness. A daughter had been born to the Whitmans, but she had passed away. Marcus and Narcissa took the Sager brood into their home and loved them as their own children.

As the years went on, more and more white men began settling in the Oregon region. With them came disease. In 1847 an epidemic of measles broke out among the Indians. Dr. Whitman did all in his power to alleviate the suffering, but despite his efforts, large numbers of the Indians died. The Indians blamed the Whitmans for the misfortune that had befallen them. Receiving many warnings of the Indians' unrest, the Whitmans decided that come what may, they would remain at the mission. They had come to proclaim the gospel. If the Cayuse Indians were plotting to kill them, they knew that God was able to save them. Even if He chose not to save them, they would still serve Him. In a merciless act of hostility, the Indians massacred the Whitmans and twelve others who were staying at the mission. Like the martyrs of old, the Whitmans gave their lives for the cause of Christ. They have left us a precious testimony: a testimony of courage, faith, and pressing forward even in the face of insurmountable odds. Giving up everything for God, they sacrificed their lives for the advancement of the gospel. The Whitmans are a reminder to us that until you find something worth dying for, you are not really living!

Amy Puetz, a homeschool graduate, loves history, sewing, and working as a graphic designer for her company A to Z Designs. She is the author of an e-book series for young ladies called *Heroines of the Past* as well as a growing number of historical books. Visit her website at www.AmyPuetz.com to see many resources relating to history. Join her mailing list and receive a free e-book!

© 2009 Amy Puetz. This story originally appeared in *Heroines of the Past—Pioneer 1775-1912* (e-book) by Amy Puetz.



We Have Seen His Glory

a study of the book of John, part 9

1. Read John 13:1-20. What does Jesus teach us by washing the feet of His disciples? Why do you think Peter protested? What were the disciples supposed to learn from the example of Jesus?
2. What happens when leaders serve in unglamorous ways?
3. What does it mean to “receive” someone sent by Jesus, and thereby to “receive” Jesus and the Lord (verse 20)?
4. Read John 13:21-30. Write about what you think it means that Satan entered into Judas.
5. Read John 13:31-35. Why do you think Jesus gave His disciples this new commandment at this particular time?
6. Read John 13:36-38. Peter’s thoughts seem not to be aligned with what Jesus is teaching and doing in this chapter. What do you think Peter was hoping for and expecting from Jesus?
7. Read John 14:1-6. Try to put yourself in the place of one of the disciples who did not know what was going to happen. How would you interpret what Jesus was saying?
8. How do we get to the Father through Jesus?
9. Read John 14:7-12. Do you believe that the Father is in Jesus and that Jesus is in the Father? Why?
10. Read John 14:13-20. List what we know about the Spirit from what Jesus taught here.
11. Read John 14:21-31. What did Jesus say to comfort His disciples?
12. What are the results of knowing and keeping the commandments of Jesus?
13. What can we learn from chapters 13 and 14 about who Jesus is?



**In that day you will know that I am in My Father,
and you in Me, and I in you. John 14:20**

Letters from Rachel Starr Thomson

Voices

“The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

There are fireflies in the trees tonight. They light up the dusk in a thousand little candle-flickers. There are fireflies in the trees; and the cicadas and the crickets and the frogs are chirping, and an inordinately large beetle, which drones as it flies like a tiny dive-bomber, keeps flying up and hitting its head on my window screen. It hits the screen and bounces off, flies around in circles until it gets its bearings back, and then does the whole thing over again.

Yes, and tonight I took a walk down the dirt road that looks almost white in the dusk, and I watched the deer bound across the field in a flash of white tail and leaping grace, while the beetles droned over my head and the first stars came out, and the smell of fresh-cut grass and wildflowers filled the air.

Here, where I live, I bless God every time I step out the door. Summer has come with its thousand secrets and I am here to see it and hear it and smell it and think how it all reminds me of Him.

The world, whose friendship is enmity with God, may have little to do with the Creator. But the Earth is still His. He is everywhere in it. He rides on the wings of the wind; He brings the rain and calls forth the harvest; He feeds the ravens and the lions; He is there when the deer calve.

Two years ago I lived in a very different wilderness: the Mojave Desert of California. There, too, we lived on a dirt road; and there, too, I would take walks in the dusk while coyotes called and ravens settled in on Joshua trees for the night. Life wasn’t always easy out there, no more than it is here, and sometimes when I walked I would do so with my head bowed, my eyes cast down, the dirt all I could see.

And then one day I looked up, and there were the mountains: snowcapped, glowing white and pink and purple in the sunset. The lights of the town sparkled in the dark foothills, but the light of the sun was still on the peaks. I heard the word then, and I give it to you now: Look up! Look up and know that no matter how great your trials, God is bigger; He is stronger; He will outlast them all, and so, child of God, will you.

There was another walk down that road when the sky was brown with dust. Even the mountains were hazy. But as I walked I saw clouds rolling in, and thunder sounded off in the distance; it began to rain, and as it did the dirt was washed down out of the sky, leaving streaks of clear blue behind it. Then again there was a word, and I wrote a song about it:

*Dust billows from the world around
And gathers itself in my soul
I will lay this burden down
As You come, and make me whole*

*O Desert Soul, you’ve gathered
So much pain
Now hear the thunder sound as you
Call on His name!*

And let the water fall down and down...

When I was very young I would sit in the crook of a wild cherry tree and listen to the birches around as they talked to each other. Of course I knew their conversations were all in my head; I was making them up. But the Earth and all its creatures do talk—if you listen you can hear them.

And what do they speak of?

As spring follows winter without fail, the voices of melting snow and sprouting leaf speak of resurrection.

As the birds believe that the earth will supply them with food; as the fields believe that rain will come; the songs of the birds and the scent of the wildflowers teach us trust.

As the butterfly that lives for a brilliant day and the tree that stands in silence for a thousand years, the quiet acceptance of life teaches us contentment with the time and the calling God has given.

The whole earth is a monument to the One who made it. So go outside. Take a deep breath—through your nose, so you can smell the summer air. Look around you. And listen. Always listen. The Earth is talking.

What does it have to say to you?

Rachel Starr Thomson is the oldest of twelve children, a homeschool graduate, and the author of several books including the fantasy *Worlds Unseen* and its sequel *Burning Light*, *Tales of the Heartily Homeschooled*, *Letters to a Samuel Generation*, and *Heart to Heart: Meeting With God in the Lord’s Prayer*. She is a believer in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and hope of the world, and she loves to write about His goodness and grace. Rachel loves long walks, good books, and the fellowship of God’s people. She is an incurable tea-drinker and a counter-culture revolutionary who thinks life would be far, far better if we all chucked our television sets out the window. Visit www.rachelstarrthomson.com

© 2009 Rachel Starr Thomson



Wings of Hope

the amie Writing Contest

Beyond Happily Ever After

by Brianna

Winner!

Since the beginning of time, people have pursued happiness, satisfaction, and success. Whether that meant owning a large sum of money, falling in love, wearing stylish clothing, buying an expensive car, keeping up with the latest trends, attending college, living in a luxurious home, or a number of other worldly pursuits was completely up to the individual's personal desires. However, were you to closely examine each of these pursuits, you would find one thing missing: the fact that after everything has been said and done, gained and lost, you would find there was nothing left to hope for, to reach for, or to have faith in. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death* (Proverbs 16:25). Life is so much more than just having a highly successful career or owning the most material items!

Life is too precious and too fleeting to worry about material things. We must put our faith in something substantial that will never fade, never disappoint, never forsake us, never lie or cheat, and will always love us no matter how unworthy we truly are. That something, or rather, *Someone* is Jesus Christ. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time* (1 Peter 1:3-5). Non-Christians seek to indulge in "self" for their futures, but believers seek to serve their Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

Entertaining selfishness ruins every man or woman and is the root of sin. Christ is the only hope of a sinner's heart turning away from its fallen, sinful state. *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins* (Colossians 1:13-14). He is the only hope any individual has of true joy and contentment. *You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore* (Psalm 16:11). He is the only hope of a person ever finding fulfillment in life's everyday drudgery. *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him* (Colossians 3:17). As it says in Philippians 4:13, we can do nothing without Him, but we can do anything *with* Him.

Having hope in Jesus Christ is much more than hoping to receive a certain gift for your birthday, to get a good grade on a test, for it to snow on Christmas, or to win a prize in a competition. It is a confident expectancy that cannot be thwarted. We all know that people, even our own families, will let us down. And no matter how hard we try, we will always let those around us down at some time or another. It cannot be helped. We are imperfect human beings. We don't know what to expect of one another or what others expect of us. Christ makes the difference. He is purely righteous and has never sinned: *Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth* (1 Peter 2:22). He is forever unchangeable: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). He is always truthful: . . . *Your word is truth*

(John 17:17). He will always be there for us: *And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you* (Psalm 9:10). He gives unconditional love: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). He makes it clear what He expects of us through His Word. Because He never changes, we also always know what to expect of Him.

What more could anyone ask for? Abiding in Christ makes life worth living! He is our motivation to do our best, to treat others with love and kindness, to give generously, and to deny ourselves. Jesus is the sunshine in our hearts, even on rainy days. No matter how stormy life may become, hope always shines through. *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (2 Corinthians 4:6). Our fellow believers can help to uplift us in this manner. When we are feeling lost, depressed, and doubtful, we can see the sunshine in their hearts reflecting in their faces, and it reminds us of the hope that we ourselves partake in. Their advice and encouragement helps to refresh us for climbing the mountains that are ahead. We must always remember that we are to exhibit the hope of Christ to the world, to shine our lights, stir a fire, to plant a seed that God will cultivate, and to always love one another as our Savior first loved us. We are to be a reflection of hope to the world as we may be the only Bible some people read.

I believe God has created little joys to remind us of the hope that we have in Jesus. Spring is one of the greatest examples of this. Everyone knows that after winter is over, there will always be spring. By the time April or May comes around, you are likely to see flowers blooming, dandelions sprinkled across lawns, baby birds learning to fly, fluffy clouds floating across a bright blue sky, rainbows after a thunderstorm, butterflies fluttering, and many more wonderful things. However, when you think about spring, what immediately comes to mind? *New life!* And what does "new life" remind you of? *Of new life in Christ!* There are so many things surrounding us in creation that can remind us of God's grace to us. *We just have to look for them!* By allowing small things such as watching flowers dance in the breeze or listening to a baby giggle to fill us with awe, we keep in perspective the awesomeness of God and His free gift of hope to us. Not to mention what a jolly mood it keeps us in! Never take anything for granted and life will be a joy to partake in.

Unfortunately, the truth of the matter is that most people enjoy stories with a happy ending. The problem is that everyday life is not full of happy endings, because life is a never-ending story. No matter how content we may seem with things as they are, things do not always go as we planned. Sometimes we fail or make a mistake and feel like the world is coming to an end, but it does not. Instead we keep trudging on, wondering where this road is leading us. What should we do? Where should we go? Who can we trust? The answers to all those questions (and more!) can be found in God's Word.

continued on page 6

A Message from My Heart

Interviews with women of God by Annalisa Perry

A Talk with Abigail

Describe yourself and your family.

I am 17 years old and a senior in high school. I am the oldest of 5 children; three girls and two boys. Two foster sisters are blessing my family temporarily, so there are 9 people in my house at the moment.

Tell some of the negative and positive things you face everyday.

Negatives first: Busyness. There are so many opportunities where I live, and I tend toward over-committing. Balancing my schedule and finding quality time for God and my family can be difficult.

Tired junk. Because of being busy, I feel like I give my family the leftovers of my attitude and energy, and I don't always treat them as kindly as I should (and want to). That's one I face every day--not being short in my tone, trying to be sweet. It's easy to sweat the small stuff.

Positives: I love my life and my family! Even though it's crazy, everything going on in my life has really been a gift from God.

The ability to be a Christian! I am so blessed to have a family of faith, and most of my friends are Christians. I love living in Christian community and getting to learn about God all the time.

What lesson has God recently taught you?

Sometimes we make plans and invite God to join us in them because they are good things. For example, since 7th grade I have planned to become a doctor because it was a logical plan, but this summer I realized it was my plan, not

God's. I am trying to step back and be open to what he wants me to do.

What standards have you set for yourself in regard to dating?

I have decided not to date in high school. I wanted to get to know myself and God better before I tried to make a commitment to any serious relationship. I don't believe high school is the time for dating. I think dating should be done with the intention of marriage, not just casual "boyfriend-girlfriend" stuff that ends up in a wreck after a month.

What do you love doing?

I love reading, singing, playing the piano, playing Ultimate Frisbee, dancing, talking, hanging out with friends, and doing school work.

What is the best way to encourage someone who is down?

Talk to them, let them know that you care, listen if they want to talk, let them know that they are special and that they really mean something to you.

Annalisa is the eldest of eight children. She enjoys reading books, writing stories, talking to people, and spending quality time with her family. Annalisa and her family were missionaries in Germany for five years and now live in Arkansas. She enjoys homeschooling because it gives her independence and unique opportunities. She is in 11th grade. You can write Annalisa at annalisaperry@yahoo.com



Beyond Happily Ever After

continued from page 5

One wonderful thing about being a Christian is that we never have to worry about our futures, having a roof over our head, food to eat, or clothes on our backs because God has promised to always provide for us! *Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you* (Matthew 6:31-33). While this certainly does not mean we should sit around all day doing nothing and expecting God to drop what we need in our laps, it also means we should not spend our days worrying and biting our fingernails over what lies around the next bend. As it says in Romans 8:28, Christians have more than just a hope, they have an assurance that while today may not have a happy ending, God will work all things *together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose*. A failure may be a trial to build perseverance, courage, patience, or even a push in an entirely different direction. A mistake is a lesson that

can be filed away in your brain as a reminder to never do *that* again. If we constantly put our trust in God and allow Him complete control of our lives, we will always have hope. *And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). When the world is falling apart, when mountains come crashing down, when we are injured and frightened, we will always have hope. We know Who is in control and that we will go to be with Him when He deems it time for us to leave the earth. Unlike in a fairy tale, the story does not end for Christians when they die. Actually, things are just beginning. *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit* (Romans 15:13).

(References NKJV)

Congratulations to Brianna

and Thank you to all entrants!