



“...the ministry of the Word” Acts 6:4

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Teaching – Equipping – Training – Ministering

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“...the Dayspring from on high has come to give light to those that sit in darkness...” --Luke 1:78-79

Newsletter

The Necklace

Dearhearts,

The Bible is filled with stories. Stories of the rise and fall of both tragedy and glory in obscure and legendary lives alike. Stories strung together like pearls of God's dealings with humankind throughout history, fashioning a necklace of Divine treasure.

An obscure widow was visited by Holy appointment when a disheveled man knocked on her door asking for food and lodging. And a stealth God showed up daily for three years to keep her oil full to supply her needs, and Elijah's needs as well. What was her story before or since? It is lost. But a chapter of her story is written in the Book of the Ages.

God saw the eunuch sitting bewildered on a desert road struggling to understand the words on a scroll. Philip was sent to walk long, desolate hours to reveal to this man the mystery of Isaiah. God heard the longing of this man's heart and took Philip on a detour to write him into a larger story...A pearl strung on heaven's necklace.

A servant woman, carrying an illegitimate child, fled to a deserted place where she despaired for her life. It seemed she was alone, an insignificant grain of sand in a landscape of sand. It was then that heaven bent down and spoke to her of the God who heard her cries and who saw her need. It was then that God opened her eyes to see a well of water...to see the Divine provision her circumstances had blinded her to.

Into every story is woven those desperate places. Threads of aloneness where forsakenness seems to clothe us. And no one knows...or hears...or maybe even cares. The necklace of Bible stories strung over the centuries tells us that though we may walk in desolate places...we are not forsaken. Though we may walk in isolated terrain, we are never alone. It tells us that though our journey here may seem insignificant, we matter...and He notices. He is a God who sees. We are known. We are treasured.

Our story adorns his necklace.

Everyone has a story. Everyone has a story that needs to be told. And everyone needs someone to hear their story.

For some the story lies hidden in the secrets of their own soul...unheard even by their own heart. There are glimpses of the lines encoded there...unexplained flashes

of anxiety or fear or panic...memories lost even to their own memoir.

Some know their untold story...painfully so. But no one else does. Sometimes this is the greatest loneliness of all. A secret mote separates you from the rest of the known world. From family. From friends. And you are untouched. Unknown. No one knows who you really are because no one knows your story. No one knows where you have walked. No one knows the honor and courage of your life...perhaps not even you.

Our story is our life. When someone listens to it, knows what is written there, it validates our lives. It honors where we have been and what we have meant. We all need to be understood...to know that we matter.

We also need to understand someone else's story. To understand is to accept a person where they are and enter into their story. Not as some villainous thief to their heart but as the widow to Elijah. As Philip to the eunuch, not to judge his differentness but to impart understanding. The angel did not come to tell Hagar she should not have had sex with that man. He came to tell her of the God who sees...who cares...who provides. *He wants us to know Him, too.* For in that knowing is our hope...is the end to our isolation and aloneness.

Sometimes we need to ask God to open our eyes so we may see His wells of provision for our lives...so we may see His chariots of fire that have rimmed the mountains on our behalf in the face of daunting odds. (II Kings 6). Open our eyes to recognize Him walking beside us on our desolate road of broken dreams. (Luke 24)

God has been in every story. He has seen you in your deepest night. Heard the whispers of your heart. Look for Him in the pages of your script when you suddenly found the strength to go on...the hope to persevere. A phone call...critically timed. A thought that was not of your own making. A stranger sitting beside you on the plane, or a swell of love rising up from the depths of an ocean you did not know lay within you.

As our story adorns His necklace, so He adorns ours...whether we have known it or not.

I love you,

Great Religions Course Begins

*Thursday September 5
7:00 p.m.*



We invite you to stimulating conversations as Becky Elliston brings her passion for teaching world history to the Chapel on Thursday evenings beginning September 5. *“Come join the conversation as we explore the major world religions in order to gain a better understanding of their cultural impact on civilizations. To love our neighbor, we have to know him (and ourselves).”*

This marks the beginning of our new focus in offering courses of continuing religious and spiritual education for those who are interested in furthering their knowledge of religion, the Bible and of God’s workings in history.

Second “Mini-Course” Understanding Pagan Worship Tuesday October 22 and 29

Pat Townsend looks into the effects of **Nimrod** and the **Tower of Babel** in the rise of paganism and the debilitating effects it had on the Children of Israel. She will also look at how it explains all the many different religions that oppose the worship of the one true God and at the idols we all tend to erect in our own lives.

Mark your calendar for this fascinating two-part study on Biblical insights into the beginnings and nature of pagan worship. **Please Note the Change** (from Thursday) **to Tuesday for this mini-Course.**

Prayer Retreat in Glen Rose Nears Capacity

A few spaces for the prayer retreat at Country Woods Inn Bed and Breakfast may still be available as this newsletter goes to print. A few cancellations mixed with new registrants leaves the picture in flux. If you are interested in attending just let us know. If all slots are taken, we can place you on a waiting list.

With Brenda’s decision not to teach any more on a regular weekly or monthly basis, these bi-annual retreats and/or Bible Conferences will comprise her new teaching format.

Interest Sparked in Friday Night at the Movies

A great deal of interest has been expressed in our experiment with monthly movies designed to generate discussion of various aspects of our Christian experience. Selections will cover both old and recent releases as well as documentaries. Below is a schedule of coming features. Since the location may vary from month to month it is essential you reserve your place in order for us to keep you current on the details.

- September 27: *Lars and the Real Girl*
Community and Healing
- October 18: *Amazing Grace*
Commitment and Impact
- January 17: *Dead Man Walking*
True Story of a Nun and a Condemned Man.
- the Christian and the Death Penalty -
- February 28: *Ordinary People*
Tragedy and Family Dynamics
- March 28: *Les Chambon*
Documentary on a French Village in WWII
that saved 5,000 Jews.
- April 25: *Les Misérables* (1998)
The Impact of Extraordinary Living

Plants Dying Mysteriously Near Amy’s Garden

For several months we have been losing the battle to preserve plants of every sort around Amy’s Garden in the prayer garden. Regardless of our efforts, and in spite of the guidance of two area nurseries (one of whom told us we were watering too much and the other too little), two Rose of Sharon trees have died plus half of the star jasmine that have thrived for years shielding the garden pocket and the arbor-laden wisteria that has been there even longer.

So the normally secluded prayer pocket is open until we can solve the mystery and fix it if possible. The best theory has been posed by home gardener, Ed Rude, who suggested the possibility of a form of root rot. His description perfectly matched the way this area has died off over the past year. If it is root rot, we will need to replace what has died with a completely different kind of “rot resistant” plant.