
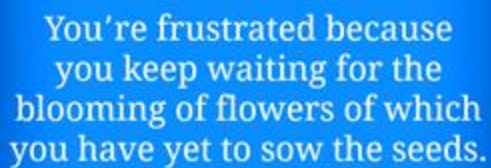


## Stewards of Grace Ministries Monthly Newsletter for May 2017



I must desire  
friendship with **GOD**  
more than anything else.



You're frustrated because  
you keep waiting for the  
blooming of flowers of which  
you have yet to sow the seeds.

### *Walking in the spirit. How do you know?*

Last week I added a "PS" to Tom's sermon: "How do you know....?" Just HOW do we REALLY know anything? When I first heard about there being a God who really CARED about ME I didn't know what to think! I lived in a family that went to a church where I had been taught that you go to church, follow the rules, respect your elders, don't sin, be good to everyone, confess your sins, do what you're told and when you die, God will be the one to decide if you're good enough to get into heaven. I did all that, and I still felt like something was missing. I didn't want a God who "kept me at arm's length" and never answered my prayers. I never knew if He could hear

me or not; I never knew if what I was doing was "good enough." When I was a little girl, I literally prayed that on Saturday night, on the way home from confession, we would get into a car accident and I would be killed! All because I just knew that I could not stay without sinning, even over night. I grew up, got married and had children, and my babysitter's mother began to tell me about a very different side of the God I thought I knew: She said God really DID want a relationship with each one of us. He wanted us to be able to communicate - for us to hear Him, and speak back to Him, knowing that He heard and was paying attention to us. **What we had to do to get this relationship was to BELIEVE** that He loved us enough to give His Son, Jesus, to die in our place; for our sin, so we could live, sinless, forever with God in heaven. We had to ask Him to come, personally into our lives/heart/spirit and then totally commit ourselves - all of us, our whole lives, our families, our workplace, everything we had or even wanted, into His care... because He knew what was best for us and would take care of us and every need we would ever have. Whew! For someone who was raised to be afraid of a God who would "get cha" for doing wrong, and punish you for everything you said or even thought that was sassy, or mean or disrespectful, this was a whole 'nother notion that I wasn't quite sure I could believe! A God who really LOVED me?? and wanted the best for me? and wouldn't punish me when I did something wrong? Yet I knew that I wanted MORE than I had... more knowledge, more understanding, more "Person-ability" - a REAL PERSON... not something - way far away, "in heaven" Who was always looking down and judging me and figuring out a way to punish me for what I'd failed to do... But I had to BELIEVE that when I told Him I wanted Him to take me just as I was: dirty, sinful, mean, ugly, nasty and unable to even help my own self get one iota better or holier by the things I did... that **He would DO IT ALL FOR ME! I had to BELIEVE that the things He promised, He would fulfill in my life.** Glenny began

showing me things in the Bible... I didn't even know how to read a Bible...didn't know that there were Books, Chapters and Verse numbers. But God began to put His Word in me, and I heard Him speak things to my heart, and when I would tell Glenny, she would say, "that's in the Bible," and show me where the verses were. All at once, God became REAL to me. He wasn't something "out there" away in heaven, but a REAL Person, living inside of me, directing my thoughts - most of the time, I didn't really realize it was Him - but that didn't stop Him from proving to me how much He loved me. One verse ***Isa 43:1 don't be afraid. I have rescued you. I have called you by name; now you belong to me.*** Then Glenny told me that God had chosen my name before I was born. I had been so beaten down by circumstances, belittled and teased, that I thought that everyone who knew me hated me. I felt worthless, dumb, ugly and fat. Yet when I looked up the meaning of my name, Darlene, I cried when I found out it meant "Dearly Loved." For someone who never felt truly loved in their whole life, God had given me a name that HE chose - before I was born - and He called me Dearly Loved - He loved me, more than just ordinary love... ***dearly loved***; and He proclaimed it in my NAME - and every time someone called me by my name, it proclaims that, in God's eyes, from the beginning of time, I AM DEARLY LOVED BY HIM! I let that sink in - into my very being and it was like a new stream running through a dry and dusty garden. ***I began to believe that if God could pour such refreshing in my dry and withered spirit, He could do any and everything in me!*** And I decided that I would do anything for Him! Our relationship had begun... just me and Him. And there were plenty of times I whispered under my breath: "Me & You, God, just me and You!" I was no longer afraid that I wouldn't go to heaven when I died, because I believed His Word when it says in ***Isa 43:25 "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.*** I found out that no matter how I felt, God was always with me; it was the Holy Spirit who was now comforting me and encouraging me, for He says: ***Psa 147:2,3...He gathers together the outcasts...He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. 11 The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.*** I found out that if I stayed close - kept my mind on what He wanted me to be doing - that I would not believe the lies of the enemy who came to dissuade me of believing in Him. ***John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved...10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. 11 "I am the good shepherd [who] gives His life for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*** So, now, can you answer the question, ***"How do you know?"*** The synonyms for the word **BELIEVE** are trust; have faith in; be certain of; have confidence in; accept as true; rely on; consider; think; suppose; deem; suppose; imagine; **TRUST** is: faith; belief; hope; conviction; confidence; expectation; reliance; dependence. I don't know if you've had someone in your life who lied to you, but God is TRUE-***Num 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie...Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"*** So, ***How do you know??*** By settling in your mind exactly **WHAT you want to believe** - the **TRUTH of God** - expounded upon in His Word, the Bible. But when you decide, ***write it down.*** Write down every Promise that God gave YOU, Personally. Just like my name is my main promise, I also have a "Life Verse" where God changed my life by speaking this to me at a time when

everyone else was telling me one thing, but I felt God was telling me just the opposite; that verse is *Jerimiah 29:11 I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. 12 "When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen. 13 "When you come looking for me, you'll find me. "Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, 14 I'll make sure you won't be disappointed."* *God's Decree. "I'll turn things around for you. I'll bring you back...I'll bring you home..."* So when you look at your life, measure it not by the lives of others - because you'll always find lives and situations better than yours and worse than yours - but they don't matter TO YOU; you need to use the Bible, the yardstick of Holiness to find out where you are. Don't be afraid to see if you "measure up" to God's expectations, because He is a forgiving God... and as long as you keep trying to please Him, He will keep helping you do just that! He is the BEST FRIEND you could ever want! Not only will he sit with you when you're feeling down and beaten by the world, but only He has the answers to how to get out of that place and shows you how to live "In the Heavenlies" beside Him. **Eph 1:20 All this issues from Christ: God raised him and set him on a throne in deep heaven, 21 in charge of running the universe, from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from His rule. And not just for this time, but forever. 22 He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. 23 The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence. Quit GOING to church & start BEING the Church!**