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Conquering Life's Mountains Together!

Personal Life Coaching

May 2007

Greetings!

Are you "feeling" the change in the seasons? We are here! It leads us to do all manner of cleaning, organizing and re-grouping if you will.

We are also well aware of the world events and the increasing stress we live in on a daily basis, not to mention the episodic crisis. And these kinds of crisis seem to be occurring more and more frequently, just as the Scriptures prophets foretold they would.

There will never be a better time to renew and refresh your prayer life. In Psalm 32, the psalmist, David, observed: *"Therefore, let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them."*

This month, our subject is coping with the distractions that try to hinder us from developing such a prayer life that we will not be caught in the rush of mighty waters. Some people think that they will just *have* the strength and ability to persevere when such flood waters come. Yet over and over again our Messiah and His Disciples encourage us to be built up in Him, to pray without ceasing, to grow up into what He has planned for us and ultimately "into" Him. Messiah Y'shua Himself spoke of having many things to share with those He called Friend but that they were not yet prepared to cope with them. We believe that giving personal attention and focus to the discipline of prayer is one way we *can* be prepared.

As we draw ever closer to the time of our Messiah's return, as the conquering King, may we be found where the rush of mighty waters can't reach us; right in the Shadow of His Wings. (*Did you know that Messiah's "wings" is a reference to the fringe or tzitzit on His prayer shawl?*) What a great place to stay in a storm!



Barbara Klika and Marilyn Guffey, Personal Life Coaches

Coping with Distractions in Prayer

Once we have decided to focus on growing or restoring our prayer life, we are often nearly overwhelmed by distractions. It can surely feel like a tidal wave of random activities that seem urgent, or a flooding of everyday concerns that don't recede quickly. Oswald Chambers has called it "the swarm of flies," meaning all the things you immediately think about that need to be done as soon as you settle yourself for prayer. If we really are going to observe Messiah's command to, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness;" then we do need to set aside our own thoughts, expectations and priorities as we make room for Him.



Don't get up to "swat the flies!"

Let them swarm.

As your ability to turn inward and listen to His Spirit develops, you will eventually find them less distracting.

If your determination has been to seek God on a regular basis throughout the day, no matter what you are doing, this may not be a problem; you are already developing the habit of seeking Him right in the middle of whatever outward circumstances you find yourself in. In Psalm 23, we are reminded that He has promised to prepare a table for us, where? Right in the presence of the enemy! We are to feast in His presence, even if the evil one is at hand.

Especially if the evil one is at hand!

If this season of new growth or renewal is about setting aside an extended time each day for quiet reflection, speaking to Him and listening for Him, the swarm of flies may be more of an issue. It may seem strange but often the best way to overcome this kind of adversary is to acknowledge its presence (that is, acknowledge there are other things to do) but then to move right on past this awareness and deliberately turn your thoughts toward Him once again.

If we wrestle with the distraction itself, we risk shifting our gaze and our energy away from the source of our strength.

We can find ourselves frustrated with our own imperfections, and with the best of intentions, end up self-focused rather than letting Him be magnified in our mind's eye.

Some people have found the ability to release these "flies," "floods" or "tidal waves" more effectively by keeping a pad of paper at hand to write down any task that comes to mind. Then, they can freely return to prayer, knowing that the task will not be

forgotten.

Others have found that writing out their prayers in a journal style is an effective way to stay on task. Should this way of prayer be used, it seems important to add that the writing is part of our **approach** to Him but does require that once you have settled your soul and spirit on Him, you set aside your written work and listen for His response. If you try this one, please be aware that you are writing for Him alone. If you find yourself writing in such a way as to represent yourself well should someone else read this, you have fallen off the track!

Sometimes our hindrance to prayer comes from ourselves. Perhaps we fear that our motives aren't quite "pure enough" or that we haven't got the right attitude to pray. While these goals are not wrong in themselves, the error comes in thinking that we will somehow make ourselves do or be the right thing all on our own. Our prayers might even begin with telling Him that we just don't feel like praying right now or about how we don't think we have the right attitude. In the very act of laying these concerns before Him, we can trust that He will come out to meet us.

If this is a common thing for you, it might be a sign that it is time for you to take some time away and do some personal searching of the heart while away from daily concerns. Sometimes the cares of the world do choke out our first love just as we were warned they could. By all means, don't wait too long if this is happening. Give Him the priority that you profess when you sing songs like, "I Surrender All." Put feet to your declaration of love for Who He is, not just what He does, and **enlarge the space in your life to wait for Him**, until you can again rest in that relationship. He may not appear manifestly in one day or two as you'd hope but He is forever faithful and has promised never to leave us.

No matter what you leave undone when you take such a retreat, you will not regret it.

Next time:

- What is really meant by "inward" prayer focus?
- What would "outward" prayer be then?
- How is the "manifest" presence of God different than His presence?
- Isn't He everywhere all the time?

Keeping Your Joy Full!



What does Fear have to do with Joy?

There is a lot to be said for some human fears, as there is for some kinds of pain. Fear can be healthy in playing a role that provides safety. Fear points out the danger zones, and makes doubly certain that our errors of judgment are corrected. Fear of failure provides the caution that tightens every bolt. Many of life's greatest achievements have been brought about by response to fears of one kind or another.

Yet in the end we must give our human fears a minus sign. They will never take home the medal or win the

trophies of life. Too often they are the weapons of that accuser, the devil, and we know that Jesus Christ at the cross delivered us from the powers of darkness. It is joy--often the joy of the struggle --that provides the motive to start and complete a great work. It is joy, not fear, that teaches courage and bravery in overcoming great obstacles and eventually bringing home victory.

When I look back over my years of experience, it seems that on balance joy usually becomes the winner over fear. That is because fears and worry are so often based on things that never happen. They are vapors that vanish in the light of day. Joys, too, can be ephemeral when they are earthbound, for they often have a way of disappearing, quietly or noisily. But the joy of the Lord--there is something that will last!

The message of the Bible then, is that joy is not blotted out by fear or adversity. It simply waits until the real cloud passes. It does not deny the existence of the cloud; it does not despise the cloud or fight. It waits, knowing that when at long last the sky clears, the joy will shine brighter than ever.

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ABOUT US

Barbara L. Klika, MSW, LCSW, Personal Life Coach is a licensed mental health professional and founder of Set Apart Ministries, Inc., who is trained to help people learn new skills and make significant behavior changes. She is a trained Bible Study teacher and has been mentoring people in their spiritual growth for many years. She has completed Life Coaching training through Mentor Coach, Inc. She is here to offer her skills in the areas of faith development, communication, problem-solving, and behavior change.

Marilyn T. Guffey, lay counselor, Personal Life Coach, worked in a church setting for ten years before joining Set Apart Ministries, Inc. in January 2003. She has received instruction through a variety of Christian lay counseling courses as well as working alongside pastors and professional mental health therapists. She has also completed Life Coaching training through Mentor Coach Inc. Marilyn has worked extensively supporting women --spiritually, emotionally and practically--through encouragement and prayer.

In Coaching, you come for help to make decisions and then implement them, in order to achieve goals that you have chosen for yourself. May we come alongside and encourage you along the way?

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