

the

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OUT OF THE DARK

BY BECKY BAKER

BECKY HAS BEEN PART OF STONEBRIDGE FOR 6 1/2 YEARS. SHE ENJOYS MUSIC, READING, BOARD GAMES, WRITING, AND TOLERATES EXERCISE. SHE ENJOYS HER TIME IN THE WORD, AND BEING WITH FRIENDS. SHE LOVES TO STAY WITH PETS WHEN THEIR OWNERS ARE AWAY SO THAT THEY CAN STAY HOME IN THEIR OWN SURROUNDINGS.

Today I have my life back. You see, this was not always the case...not until I let go of the reins and accepted that I did not know which direction to go once I came to the fork in the road. Making a decision came very hard at first, until I heard a gentle voice say, *I will guide you, I will be your strength.*

The unknown of what would come was very scary. I had to trust without seeing what was ahead. Looking back to how it was while under the bondage of addiction, I **then** thought I knew what was best for me. It is a hideous and insidious disease. It makes you believe in the lies that it tells: "Oh, just one more and all will be well." There is no such thing as "just one" of anything when in its clutches.

You see, the road that I was traveling I knew all too well, but I had to walk away from what was familiar into a world where there were others that were being guided by a power that is greater than their own. Jesus found me and was with me through all the mucky messiness of life that I had known thus far. I thought, *if I could only make the past go away through using substances...* CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUTTERFLY #11

BY BECKY BAKER

The past, how you linger
Until the day comes, while seeing a rainbow,
It occurs to you:
There is sunshine and rain to make it so,
Despite all the pain,
You have the courage to grow.

Inside of you there is an ache to let go -
That past that likes to steal, kill and destroy
Is no match, for you have a Friend,
A Warrior, if you like,
That will be there all the while
To let you know that there is nothing,
Absolutely nothing,
That you have to face alone.
Comes the day
The One that has held you in the palms of His hands
Gently whispers, "Fly, Butterfly, Fly".

With a heart of gratitude,
Becky



It gave me a false hope and it masqueraded as a friend; when all else failed, it would be there waiting. It took me to places that I never would have been had I not been using. It made me do things I would have never done if I were not in its clutches. Yes, I was a slave to it and could not live with it, or without it. I had given up hope for hope; and then lived through the consequences that always follow any decision we make, be it good or bad.

I surrendered to Jesus, who is greater than the addictions I had depended on to always be there. I found that He put other people in my life that were groping in the dark and we walked the road together to find and sustain recovery. It wasn't until I made that life-giving decision to walk away from that so-called "friend" and cling to Jesus and His will for my life that I finally had real hope.

So, you see that hope and life were freely given to me, not to keep only for myself but for others to get to know the same joy, gratitude, and life. All the praise I give to the one who found me in my despair and said to me that I no longer had to live there.

My life has not always been a walk in the park, but one thing I know for sure is that I never, ever have to walk in the dark. Jesus is the light of the path that I choose to follow. My prayer is that others, too, can come to believe.

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

BY KAREN RENZO

KAREN HAS BEEN WITH STONEBRIDGE SINCE 2013 AND HAS ENJOYED MAKING FRIENDS WITH MANY WONDERFUL PEOPLE THERE.



There was a time when most of my friends looked like me. Similar hairstyles, similar interests, same classes, and same approximate age. One day I realized that there was a sameness to my friendship life that was almost disturbing. What about people who were not like me? What an AHA! moment it was when I realized how much fun it can be to be around people who were *not* like me. Friendships with people who are different from our own lives can manifest in many ways, but for now I would like to talk about one kind of friendship that can be so mutually rewarding: intergenerational friendships.

How many of you love to be around kids? Yes, I see those hands! Their exuberance, inquisitiveness, ability to trust, and unselfconsciousness are components of the fresh air I love to breathe around kids. Some kids I know have become friends. Maybe that's true for you. Maybe for you it's a grandchild. Currently there are twin girls who live across the street from me that I spend time with. I'm known as their "third grandma". They come over to see me when they can, usually a few times a week, bringing homemade gifts and treats, and I send them back home with the same. They know they are loved by me, and I know I am loved by them. On the 20th anniversary of 9/11 they came over with flowers and treats, and played the piano and danced for me. I got up and danced too, feeling free to display my goofy side to them. When they left, we were all smiling.

I have also learned that younger women who are adults, but with a generational perspective that's different from mine, can be precious friends, too. How much I enjoy spending time with my younger adult friends! We love talking about a wide range of things. Sometimes I ask their opinion about something, and sometimes they ask me. We always have opportunities to love each other and encourage and cheer each other on in the things God is bringing into our lives. And I still have friends close to my own age, some with very different life experiences from me, and some similar, that I delight in, too.

Today it's a bit harder to find women a generation older than me with whom I can pursue friendship, but I have one special friend, Irma Lou, who is now in a nursing home in Pennsylvania. She is still passionate about serving God. In my most recent conversation with Irma Lou, who is 93, she currently plays the piano about once a week in her nursing home, giving residents a chance to hear the old, familiar hymns they grew up with. Even visitors have encouraged her with their comments. Irma Lou is a writer, having contributed many great articles for the monthly newsletter we published at our church in New Jersey. I encouraged her to keep writing, and she told me she had recently written an article about the nursing home's resident cat. The staff had it published in the nursing home's newsletter. CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

FOR YOUR KINGDOM (THE LORD'S PRAYER IN MY OWN WORDS)

BY CYNTHIA PATTERSON

CYNTHIA IS A SBKIDS TEACHER AND THE MOTHER OF THREE CHILDREN, AGES 10, 9, AND 6. SHE THE WIFE OF MARK,
AND HAS BEEN WRITING BEAUTIFUL POETRY FOR OVER 20 YEARS.

Dearest Father, I come before you as your daughter whom you cherish,
Though my sin is great your love has not allowed my soul to perish.

I appeal to you not based on any work that I have done,
But by the death and resurrection of your only begotten son.

May everything within me sing your praise now and forever,
To bring you glory through my life - let this be my great endeavor.

For who else is clothed with righteousness that demands my exaltation,
And who else can speak into existence every facet of creation.

The heavens sing your majesty and proclaim your praise to men,
And those whose hearts are humble echo back their song again.

So bring your kingdom here, for you know I'm not yet home,
Subdue my wayward heart and make it bow to you alone.

If I must suffer for your kingdom give me strength to thus endure,
Through your grace remind my soul that my salvation is secure.

May I do your will wholeheartedly, above seeking my own respite,
Give me strength to help the weak who so often feel so desperate.

Every deed and thought and word that grieves your Spirit, please forgive,
Let not my love grow cold or me my love for you outlive.

Protect me from the liar who whispers words that sound so sweet,
Protect me from myself so that your work be made complete.

Amen, I know you'll answer, for though men lie, you, God, are true,
And I'll wait with eager expectation to be filled with grace from you.

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, CONTINUED

For years Irma Lou and her husband Warren opened their home twice a month to church members who lived close by and wanted to join with others in prayer for the church and its members. One time I arrived at their home on the wrong day. They couldn't have been more kind and welcoming, and invited me in. I spent the next few hours enjoying their company and praising God with them for the things He was doing. It was a wonderful time! This husband and wife, who were in their eighties at that time, inspired me many times as I observed their commitment to Christ, and the wisdom God had given them through their years of seasoning.

I had another elderly friend, Rose, whom I met years ago through the bus ministry of my church in central New Jersey. She taught me how to make a delicious pork chop recipe that I've never forgotten. Because she was blind, she had to tell me how to do it from memory, and it must have been accurate because the result was delicious. We spent many happy times together, usually at my house. Her living situation was difficult but in spite of that, when anyone asked how she was doing, she responded, "I'm kicking' high!"

Rose was ready to meet her Lord when he called her home, but her niece, with whom she lived, was not.

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THE JOY OF REPENTANCE

INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, CONTINUED

As a young Christian, I remember the novelty of attending my first Bible study in someone's home. Everything was new and exciting about life as a Christian. During the course of the evening, one older woman declared at that meeting, "Oh, I just love repentance!" I could not understand what would make her so enthusiastic about repentance. Repentance, in my mind, meant that you had messed up, and you were now sorry, upset, or ashamed about it. It was hardly something to be viewed in a positive way. At the time, I filed her comment away for consideration at some other time.

And therefore it took awhile to discover what actual repentance was. It was not regret, or remorse, or guilt or sorrow. Instead, I discovered that repentance is the act of turning away from sin and becoming changed in your mind, heart and actions from the way you were going to the way God wanted you to go. This is the transformational work of the Holy Spirit as we grow in Christ.

The Greek word is *metanoia*. Biblically, it refers to a change in the inner man. As we learn and grow through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, God is renewing our minds (Romans 12:2). And it is that renewal that made my Bible study companion years ago love repentance. Repentance is an indicator that God is at work changing us (read Philippians 1:6).

But this is not something that automatically happens. We must get to a place where our will aligns with God's and we are *ready* to make that change in our direction or in our thinking. In repentance, we are cooperating with God in his transformational work in our lives.

As we surrender ourselves to his work in us and see in what ways we are changing, this yielding brings joy, as a friend and I discussed recently. Repentance brings change in us, and further, it brings God blessing! Let us rejoice in his work! *I love repentance!*
-Ed.

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She lived with a drug dealer and was hostile to the Christian faith. A few years later, Rose's niece called me at home. Somehow she had kept my number from our bus ministry days with Rose. Rose's niece told me she had accepted the Lord, and explained all the changes that had happened in her life. The power of Rose's testimony, even after her death, helped this younger woman to see that the abundant life was not about her pursuits of the "good life", but in a deeper, richer life with the Lord.

Without the salt and light of other generations living in tandem with us, we can miss so much God has to offer. I should state here that this is not about one-sided mentoring from older to younger woman. Because in friendships, we learn from each other. In friendships, trust is developed which allows us to speak into each others' lives honestly, but with the warmth of love and kindness.

The Bible has some wonderful examples of friendship across generations. The story of Ruth and Naomi is one example. There was mutual care and love in their relationship. The story of David and Jonathan is one of the most well-known examples of faithful friendship in the Bible. Did you know that David and Jonathan were not contemporaries? There was a considerable age difference between them, as well as a cultural difference. At the time that David killed Goliath, Prince Jonathan was a seasoned warrior, and King Saul's oldest son, whereas David was a young and humble shepherd of sheep, not royalty, not a warrior, and likely not far from his teens (see I Samuel 18:1-5). They could have been rivals for the throne, but the work of God in their lives made them close friends. Through Jonathan's wisdom and knowledge of things going on in the royal household, God gave him as a mentor, friend, and protector of the future king. And later, as king, David was loyal to Jonathan's memory as he cared for his son, Mephibosheth, even inviting the lame man to sit at his royal table with him. Jonathan fully exemplified what King David's son Solomon later wrote about friendship in Proverbs 17:17. Read it and see!

Regardless of where you are on the generational continuum, you can find friendships with women who are at another place on that continuum. Try spending time with someone who is not like you generationally. As we enjoy the differences, we will also find as Christians, that we each desire to love and obey our Lord, and pour His love into the lives of others, as God commands.

FOR THIS IS THE MESSAGE THAT YOU HAVE
HEARD FROM THE BEGINNING, THAT WE
SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER...
LITTLE CHILDREN, LET US NOT LOVE IN
WORD OR TALK, BUT IN DEED AND TRUTH.
1 JOHN 3:11, 16 (ESV)