



“The Vine”

Growing Together in Christ

Newsletter for New Hope Christian Fellowship

An Issue With Heart

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From Pastor Dennis

“To Bind Up the Brokenhearted”

In late 2002 and early 2003 we were led to create a new mission statement that would fit the spiritual gifts and passions of our congregation and be relevant in the community where God has placed us. First God led us to the scriptures which would help us form our mission statement. In Luke 4:18-21 Jesus announced his mission of hope, as he quoted from the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah 61:1-3. From those scriptures God led us to our mission to be “a family of hope for all people.” God led us to choose the new name for our local congregation a few months later, New Hope Christian Fellowship.

Let us look on one part of Jesus’ Gospel message of hope - Isaiah 61:1-3 - “...He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted...to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” (NIV)

One of the most neglected areas of teaching is how to deal with loss and grief. We all go through many losses in a lifetime. The death of a loved one is a huge loss that a person may grieve for years. Other losses that hit us hard are the loss of a friend or job, separation or divorce, a miscarriage, relocation, financial setbacks, illness or disability, death of a pet, loss of a possession, etc.

In his book, *Experiencing Grief*, c. 2004, H. Norman Wright writes: “In a culture that doesn’t like to acknowledge loss or talk about the impact, it’s difficult to grieve. When losing a loved one, perhaps you’ve been told, ‘Get over it as soon as possible’ or ‘Isn’t it time for you to move on with your life?’ Everyone needs to understand the process and normalcy of grief.”

The Bible expresses that grief and mourning are normal responses to loss. There is “a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance...” (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

But How
Does One
“Bind Up”
A Broken
Heart?

Jesus called the Holy Spirit our Comforter (John 14:26-KJV). A significant work of Jesus is to comfort and encourage people when they experience loss, and everyone will. Paul reminds the church that God equips and expects us to heal the brokenhearted - 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

When a person breaks an arm or leg, that limb is “bound up” or given a protective sling or cast until it is healed. But how does one “bind up” a broken heart? That can only be done by the Great Physician, Jesus Christ. He does it through the presence of His Holy Spirit directly and working through Christians like you and me. We have the opportunity to come alongside people. Sometimes just being quietly with someone is more important than anything you could say. God wants to use each of us as instruments of his healing and hope.

The Vine *Growing Together in Christ*



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Reclamation



To A Lost Sister

It has been many years since we last saw each other. I do not know where you are now. I've been wondering about you lately.

I remember those times when we were together in church - the duties and obligations we performed religiously; every activity we joined; the places we went on different occasions. How active we were in our efforts to do what was expected of us.

What drew us closer was our refraining from things we were constrained not to do, something which led acquaintances to think of us as rather weird. I recall those times when we would lock ourselves in our rooms when friends and relatives came to visit because we could not entertain them or join them in their activities during certain days.

Even in our work places we were regarded as different. We felt no misgivings when we could not be counted on for our presence, for our help and cooperation when we had to give priority to our church activities.

How separate we felt from people outside our church. But we could not have cared less. We were special people, or so we were made to believe.

Then it happened. A series of doctrinal explosions rocked the church, jolting everyone. Brethren were stunned, confused, and scattered, like lost sheep in the meadow of shock and disbelief. Those who stood on a seemingly solid foundation found themselves gliding in mid-air and landing on splintered groups, to hold on to their traditions or to continue with their shaken beliefs. Most pitiful of all were those members who had given up everything. They looked upon the church as the center of their lives. They were left to nurse their wounds alone, frustrated

and sometimes bitter. It was then that I lost track of you, my dear sister.

Long years have elapsed. I'm sure you have recovered by now. Have you found a church where you consider yourself more blessed than before? Or, are you in a church, just getting by, careful not to get too involved so as not to get hurt again. Or, are you content where you are - independent, unchurched, uncommitted.

Do you sometimes think of the church that brought us together? It might interest you to know that that church has become non-exclusive, opening its doors to anyone who wishes to enter therein. Alongside its invitation to people of different cultures and nationalities there is, hovering upon its entrance as it were, an invisible "Welcome Home" sign for those who were once part of it.

Should you feel the urge to heed its call, you will come back to the same church that is no longer the same - to a transformed church that has been rebuilt out of the rubble of its old doctrines - to a new hope that gives new meaning to life.

Here you will now find something that is astonishingly wonderful, a freedom in Christ that will change your attitude about life forever. Freedom from the shackles of imposed duties and obligations, freedom from endless works and attempts to earn God's favor to remain in His good graces, and freedom from feelings of guilt when you fail to live up to God's expectations.

You will know the freedom to be your own true self in worshipping God; the freedom to follow your heart in giving, helping, serving; the freedom to do all things, not out of compulsion, but out of pure love alone.

Dear sister, you have gone through spiritual turmoil. Emotional scars can vanish for all time once the heart finds new inspiration to motivate itself to rekindle a languishing hope. In this heavy-laden world there is nothing more exhilarating than breaking loose from the bonds of worldly traditions and of legalism and start living a life of freedom within the perimeter of God's limitless love through Christ.

- By Divina A. Castillo



New Hope Teens

SEP Inspires and Changes Lives

My personal experience at SEP was emotional, spiritual, and it brought me WAY closer to God. That is why I decided to get baptised. Actually, I had been thinking about it for a while before camp and I just knew that it was the right time, it was like God was grabbing my hand and taking me with him into my new life and new beginning. I am excited!

In Big Bear I learned several valuable tools to make my relationship stronger and to help others begin or strengthen their relationships with God. I learned that you NEED to have quiet/alone time with God everyday or else your problems that build up during the day will continue to pile up inside of you. Eventually you are going to burst unless you let God take care of your problems. My counselor, Katherine Carter, told our dorm that everyday God is sitting on your couch with a bowl of popcorn waiting for you to tell him about your day, and even if you choose to ignore him, he continues to wait for you to come around to him. He does not force us to spend time with him, but he sure does want it.

At SEP there were too many activities to count: waterpolo (my favorite), Christian living with Mr. May, volleyball, basketball, dance class, where we learned the rumba and swing, archery, riflery, canoeing and paddleboating, praise and worship with Randi and Marly Brown (it was AWESOME!) and so much more. The way Mrs. Houston thoroughly summarized the "Princesses and Knights" evening we all went through on Wednesday was overwhelming.

I will NEVER forget what happened that night. It impacted me immensely and I am sure it did the same for everyone else who participated in the crowning of the Princesses or the sword making for the Knights. But the best part was getting to walk under fifty plus swords that were crossed above my crowned head. I'd have to say that this year at SEP was the best, and always will be. Thank you *New Hope Christian Fellowship* for allowing me to go to SEP SO CAL 2006! - *By Jessica Morgan*



SEP: Highly Recommended

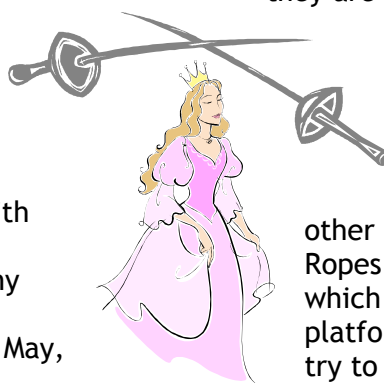
SEP was great this year. On the first day, after getting all settled in, we got to play the Novelty Olympics. It was great fun going from one thing to another not knowing what would come next. There were tons of things, like assembling a scripture from cards with words on them, spinning around with a broom over your head, walking a tarp forward, and getting the whole dorm to stand on a wooden board about 3' by 2'. It was a really fun night.

But the opening isn't everything; in fact the best part was the week itself. One of the first highlights of the week was the Purity Session. The boys and girls were separated and the girls went to their dorms while the boys went on a FOUR HOUR HIKE! (It was exhausting.) The boys were told how it's their job to protect the souls and hearts of others, especially women. The girls were told how they are special and not dirt. Then the two groups met and the boys did this sword arch thing and said sorry for all that any guy had done to the girls. Afterwards we had communion.

Aside from the Purity session the other event highlight for me was the High Ropes Course. I got to do the leap of faith which is where you stand on a wooden platform about 50 feet off the ground and try to jump and grab a pole that looks a lot farther away than it is. The other one I don't know the name of but you have to stand on a wire and reach over to a rope that you can't reach and jump to it. Then you walk to a pole and do it over again.

The last day is baptism day which is always really special. This year I got baptized and this is how it felt. You had to lock your arms and then say that you believe in God and stuff along those lines.

Then someone (in this case my dad) dunks you and you feel great. When you get out of the water it's like that was it? But then they pray for you and then you feel extra good. That basically sums up SEP. I wouldn't recommend any other summer camp. It is so awesome! - *By Alex Stevens*



Bible Study

Is Jesus Your Deliverer or Savior?

Our pastor in a recent sermon made the following statement, “Simon and most of the Pharisees believed that because of their ‘righteous’ lifestyle, they deserved the blessings of God. Because they were ‘good’ men, they didn’t need a spiritual Savior, they needed a deliverer to give them freedom from Rome.” I would like to share with you what I discovered in thinking on that statement.

The religious leaders of Jesus’ day taught that the coming Messiah as prophesied in Scripture (especially Daniel 7) meant the end of the present Age and that God would rule in power and glory and purge the earth from all evil. The Messiah would also restore Israel to its rightful position of authority since they were his “chosen people.” So the Jews of the first century, including the disciples of Jesus, expected the Messiah to be either a conquering Davidic type King or a heavenly supernatural being who would destroy Israel’s enemies and usher in the Kingdom of God.

Some of Jesus’ followers could not understand why Jesus would not declare himself as King even though he performed many supernatural healings and wonderful works. So after the feeding of the five thousand they tried to force his hand. “After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who has come into the world.’ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.” (John 6:14-15 NIV)

So convinced that Jesus would establish God’s prophesied kingdom within a short period of time the mother of James and John asked Jesus for a special favor. “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.” (Matt. 20:21)

Even after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, the disciples apparently didn’t fully grasp the purpose of Jesus’ first coming. This is the very last question they asked Jesus just before he ascended into heaven. “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) All during the years of Jesus’ ministry the disciples continually worried about God’s prophesied

kingdom. When would it come? What would be their role in it?

But the kingdom Jesus spoke about was a spiritual kingdom to be established in the hearts and lives of believers through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That’s why Jesus in answering their question told them to wait in Jerusalem so they could receive the Holy Spirit.

On the eve of the Last Supper, Jesus prophesied to his disciples that the Holy Spirit “will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26) He also said, “But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” (John 16:13, 14)

And that is exactly what happened on that eventful day of Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Peter, the other disciples and followers were miraculously transformed. Their understanding was no longer clouded. Carefully consider the words of Peter’s message to his fellow countrymen.

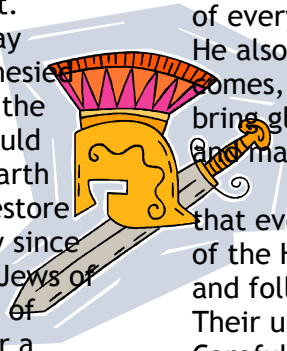
Peter first quoted Joel and said his prophecy about the coming of God’s Spirit on all people has occurred. He then ended his quote from Joel with these words: “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Acts 2:21)

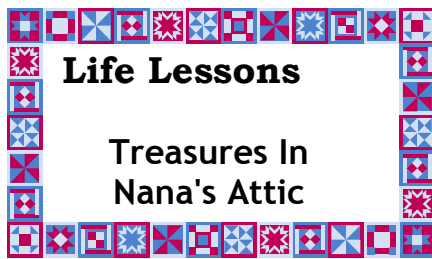
Peter concluded his passionate message by saying: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.’ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’” (Acts 2:38-40) Peter now fully understood that Jesus came to earth to be our Savior not the Jewish people’s deliverer from Rome.

A few days later Peter told Annas, the high priest, and members of the Sanhedrin about “Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

Now what about us almost 2000 years later? As we walk along our Christian journey, how do we perceive Jesus? Have we become so comfortable in our Christian way of life that

See Savior on Page 7





Life Lessons

Treasures In Nana's Attic

Ever have a project that you've wanted to complete, but just never seem to be able to get it done? Every now and again you wake up in the middle of the night and your mind is circling through the events of your day or the past week, and all of a sudden, out of the blue, you start thinking... *I still haven't completed that project.*

Well, my project was started almost 100 years ago. I found it about 25 years ago, and I finally completed it the end of last year! Now you may be thinking, Diane, I've heard of putting off projects, but this is taking things a little too far! Let me tell you my story.

Over 25 years ago I was visiting my grandmother, Nana, in Glastonbury, CT. She had lived in this house for over 40 years. It was the house my mother grew up in. As children, we loved going into the attic. It was a dark, musty and mysterious place, filled with old photos, clothing and other pieces from another time. Now, as an adult, I asked Nana if it would be okay to go up in the attic. Sure, she said.

While rummaging through some things I noticed a bag that was filled with fabric. On closer look I could see that someone had started a quilting project, but never completed it. I took the bag and showed the quilting blocks to my grandmother. She wasn't sure how long they'd been up there, but she thought her oldest sister, my Great Aunt Dolly, would have been the one to sew them together. She was the only one who did those kinds of things. Amazing, I thought. These were fabrics worn by relatives two generations ago! I asked if I could have them. She said yes.

Now, I've never been much of a seamstress and even less a quilter. But I thought maybe one day someone could show me how to assemble the blocks and make them into a quilt. So, I took the blocks home with me to California and, like my predecessor, put them away in a bag in my closet. Sometimes I would bring them out and

look at the variety of colors, prints and types of fabric that had been hand sewn together into the blocks. *Who wore that piece fabric? Did that one come from a shirt? Now that one had to be someone's pajamas!*

Last year my very good friend Mona asked me, "Diane, I've been meaning to ask you, what did you ever do with those quilting blocks that you got from your grandmother?" Well, I had to admit they were sitting in my closet in pretty much the same state I had found them. I just didn't know the first thing about assembling a quilt, and with the age and condition of some of the blocks, mistakes just couldn't be made! She told me about a quilting store in her neighborhood and the nice ladies at the store. So together we brought in the blocks and asked for help.

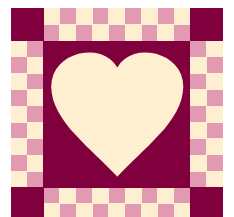
Over the next few months, with the patient guidance of the quilters at the store, I sewed the quilt top and the backing. I then sent it off to a professional quilter for completion. Two months later the quilt was returned to me and I completed the edging around the quilt. So far, I have completed two quilts from these blocks, one for my mother and the other for a cousin.

I learned many lessons from this experience, about how dear our inter-generational family relationships are and the importance of friends. It also made me think about our Church Fellowship. Our lives are like the little pieces of cloth in a quilt that if left on our own would soon fray and disintegrate. But we are joined together in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit binding us firmly in love and fellowship with one another.

The hymn "One Faith One Love" says it like this:

*"Our many lives are woven, fitly blended
as tapestry created by Thy hand.
Within each thread, Thy glory is extended,
with ev'ry color, quality, and strand.
Upon Thy loom, our differences become one;
A pleasing tribute to thee and Thy Son.
From many lands we raise our
eyes toward Thee, our voices
joined as one great family."*

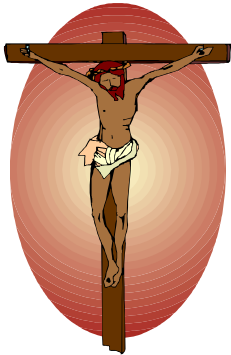
- By Diane Siston



Savior from Page 5

we look upon Jesus as a God who will deliver us from our trials and from this evil world? Or do we think of him as our Savior, whom we need to go to and confess our sins and receive his forgiveness and grace every single day?

If we are not careful, we will only view Jesus as a deliverer who will separate us from the sinners of the world so that they won't taint us in any way. Or we can focus so much on "end time" prophecies that we just think of Jesus as our deliverer who will take us away and protect us from the coming tribulation and the terrible "Day of the Lord."



May God open our hearts and minds to more fully understand that Jesus is our great and compassionate Savior who loves us more than we can ever imagine. May we also see how much we need Jesus involved in our daily lives. (1 John 2:28-29) - *By Larry Omasta*

Reasons Why Jesus Came Into The World:

- To save humanity from their sins. (John 1:29 When John the Baptist saw Jesus Christ for the very first time, he was inspired to say, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world")
- To give us eternal life. (John 3:16-17)
- To reconcile us to the Father. (Col 1:21-22)
- So that we could be empowered by God's Spirit. (John 14:16-17) Jesus predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit after his ascension into heaven. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth."

These are the reasons why Jesus became God in the flesh. We should never minimize them nor forget them. It's because Jesus is our Savior that:

- We are no longer slaves to sin. (John 8:34,36; Romans 6:17-18)
- We have been transformed from children of darkness into children of light. (Col. 1:12-15)
- We are being purified from sin. (1 John 1:5-10)

Evangelism

Ten Surprises About the Unchurched Understanding Their Hearts & Minds.

Part 2 in the series

Surprise No. 4

Very few of the unchurched had someone share with them how to become a Christian. And Christians have not been particularly influential in their lives. The surprise is no longer a surprise in light of the previous

discussion. If Christians do not invite non-Christians to church, we cannot be surprised if they do not share the gospel with or influence the unchurched. *For rest of article see*

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