

Christmas is still at the stable

By Julie Woodley

*"Jesus Christ is of no importance
unless he is of supreme importance."*

Rabbi Abraham Herschel



Some of you may remember that 6 years ago at Christmas I was in the middle of thyroid cancer treatments. I was in isolation from my radiation treatments and wrote a Christmas letter to you all called "Christmas at the Stable."

I spoke of the desperate place I was in, filled with fear of life tomorrow or eternity, a tide wave of emotions as I faced the deepest, darkest questions of my life. I felt "shipwrecked at the stable," lost in the cosmos, adrift on the open sea, clinging white-knuckled to one solitary plank. It was so very odd that all of the past thoughts of Christmas (the tinsel, the special Christmas teas which I deeply loved, pulling my hair up and wearing a velvet dress, buying random gifts for the garbage man, teachers, etc.)

all of these trappings of Christmas just didn't seem to matter anymore. I became captivated, transfixed with the pearl of great price who is wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Everything else felt "cheap, fake, of no value." I became overwhelmed with the awe and wonder with Christ Himself-as over and over I would say "I want to see Jesus."

You see, I had nothing of myself to rely on anymore. My physical stamina was gone. -I couldn't even lift my head up off the pillow, or go to the kitchen to help myself much less go Christmas shopping. My bed became my ship adrift on the sea of my Lord-my greatest worship became my tears, and yes-I began to see Jesus in everything - my tears, my dreams, he took every thought and part of who I was captive.

My life became filled with intensity of desire. So you may ask yourself, well that was 6 years ago have you gotten past that and enjoy the trappings of Christmas again? My answer is yes and no. Yes, I love the glitter of Christmas and the joy in my children's faces as they open their gifts and experience the love to God together in our family. So YES! I am so happy to be ALIVE, full of joy

and gratitude over the top. But the answer is also no, everything has so changed, I may be physically stronger now (praise God) but in other ways I am still so very "shipwrecked." I find that the shipwrecked have little in common with the landlocked. The landlocked have their own security systems,-their big homes, credit cards, self-interests and investments intact. They never really find themselves lost. But yes, I am still shipwrecked (maybe like some of you). Please let's cling to the solitary plank with desperation together with vulnerability and helplessness. We know there is absolutely nothing any of us could do to remain afloat. We become like dependant children,-incompetent to stay adrift without Jesus.

I don't want to settle for Christmas being bland,-routine prayer or comfortable secure compassion and well-behaved worship. If I give into this boredom, I part company with the shipwrecked and those that are looking for the TRUE meaning of Christmas. -I may look good-with my well-polished clothes and make-up intact with my gifts of the trappings of Christmas. -I don't want to part with the shipwrecked. -I so desire to be beside you,-you that are alone. Your life may have fallen apart and the loneliness may suffocate you (especially as you walk into a beautiful church where everyone seems so happy). Please know Jesus is there with you, and there are others who long to love you. Speaking on behalf of the board of Restoring the Heart Ministry as well as the leaders of "In the Wildflower's," you are loved way beyond measure!

Please read the story below-it is one of my Christmas favorites. It is my lifelong wish that you have a joyful loving Christmas.

In 1880, the day before Christmas, Richard Ballenger's mother in Anderson, South Carolina was busy wrapping packages and asked her young son to shine her shoes. Soon, with the proud smile that only seven-year-old can muster, he presented the shoes for inspection. His mother was so pleased, she gave him a quarter.

On Christmas morning as she put on the shoes to go to church, she noticed a lump in one shoe. She took it off and found a quarter wrapped in paper. Written on the paper in a child's scrawl were the words, "I done it for love."

When the final curtain falls, each of us will be the sum of our choices throughout life, the sum of the appointments we kept and the appointments we didn't keep. The glory of the shipwrecked will be that they "done it for love"-may you belong to the shipwrecked this Christmas. Hop aboard let us love together, you're not alone Beloved!

The God We Hardly Knew (Oscar Romero) No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of God-for there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God. Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God.

Restoring the Heart Ministry is humbled to work with the truly "poor in spirit" please help us by coming alongside us as we love the broken. We are operating on a shoestring right now and humbly ask for your prayers and financial assistance (NO gift is too small!) P.O. Box 2772, Setauket, NY 11733.



"In the Wildflowers"

is a 10 part DVD series with accompanying curriculum targeted at counseling professionals for use with people who have experienced the pain of childhood sexual abuse. There is also a bonus DVD included which will help family, counselors and churches to come alongside those who have been sexually abused. The series will be marketed to counselors, churches, prisons, universities, para-church ministries, and seminaries. [Read more>>](#)

[Watch the Wildflower Video Promo](#)

QUICK LINKS

["In the Wildflowers" Project](#)
[How you can Help](#)
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FUTURE RELEASE

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

Our hope in creating the video series "From Darkness to Light" is to offer a visual tool with curriculum for the people that have suffered from the atrocity of 9-11, as well as the many of the faces of trauma in virtually any form (i.e. Hurricane Katrina, Sri Lanka, Columbine, Oklahoma City and those who have lost loved ones due to war.

[See More>>](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, 2/7/ 2009
Annual Dinner
Three Village Inn
Stony Brook, NY
(Honoring the families of fallen soldiers)

Monday, 2/16/2009
10-week Wildflower group begins
St. Joseph's
Prayer Center
Patchogue, NY

Thursday, 3/5/ 2009 to
Sunday, 3/8/ 2009
Wildflower Facilitator/Participant Training
Enders Island,
Mystic, CT

Thursday, 6/4/ 2009 to
Sunday, 6/7/ 2009
Wildflower Facilitator/Participant Training
Bon Secours
Spiritual Center
Marriottsville, MD