

Christian Counseling Ministries of WNY, Inc.

910 Union Road, West Seneca, NY 14224

NEWSLETTER

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WINTER 2000

Dr. Timothy P. Chambers, Executive Director

HIS ABIDING PRESENCE

By Cheryl Chambers

We don't expect sudden halts to come into our lives and bring change. I, for one, dread such halts and spend a good part of my prayer life petitioning God to keep me, my family, and my friends from having such things happen. And yet, I have found that when they do happen, I am always amazed at how less dreadful they are to go through than they are to fear. Perhaps I am learning the meaning of Jesus' words when He said, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." (Matthew 6:34)

Over the last five months I have experienced one of those dreaded halts. I had been actively living my life, actually with more vigor than usual, in that I was training to compete in the 100 meter race at the Empire State Games held the last week in July. Just four days before my competition I was literally stopped in my tracks when I ended up in the hospital with a blood infection, rendering me totally incapable of running that race.

I can still remember the feelings I had. *This can't be happening; I am so ready to run after just finishing my last day of training at the track. I can feel the excitement as I explode out of those starting blocks and race to the finish line. I can see and feel that coveted gold medal around my neck. I've got to run that race!* But it was not to be. When my doctor appeared in the emergency room I begged him to get the antibiotic into my system quickly so that I could get to those Games. I could not believe that I would miss out on the Empire State Games after all the months of training I had endured. I was dismayed that a blood infection would decide to surface at such a momentous time.

Why now? Why not next week when the race was over? It didn't make any sense to me until...until the rest of the story unfolded. In ruling out the cause of the blood infection, a CT scan revealed a large brain aneurysm ready to rupture at any time. When the aneurysm was finally removed in October, the neurosurgeon was amazed at its size and condition. Had I run

that race, it most likely would have been with my last breath. Why the aneurysm hadn't ruptured at that point in time can only be explained by one thing. God had spared my life and had His hand of protection over me.

One doesn't always get the opportunity in life to see God's hand so obviously or clearly as I did through this whole experience. More often than not, we are left out of the bigger picture and never see the reasons for our disappointment or suffering. We usually find ourselves in painful or threatening situations wondering if God is even there at all. We try to satisfy our questions with such promising truths as Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways, declares the Lord." Or Proverbs 19:21, "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." Or more commonly from Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose."

We also may reconcile the conflict we feel by proclaiming that God may not have had anything to do with our situation at all. We contend that He is only allowing things to happen because of the consequences of a sinful world and that He is deeply grieved and torn along with us. We wrestle with the "hows and whys" as our humanness tries to make sense of eternal truths. Either way we view our struggle, it is still God at the helm. I was fortunate to have had an experience that clearly saw Him there.

I need to let you know that I struggle with how God revealed Himself to me so clearly because of the fact that it isn't always so obvious. Our tendency as humans in trying to understand God's ways is to generalize how God works from one situation to the next and predict what He will do the next time or for someone else. The reality is, however, that God's children die of brain aneurysms everyday and tragedy affects Godly people who have never left the protective hand of our Heavenly Father. We have all seen too much suffering and death to say that God will always answer our prayers the way we expect or desire.

Cut on dotted line and attach to your computer

CHRISTIAN COUNSELING MINISTRIES OF WNY, INC.

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Christian Counseling Ministries wishes you a blessed Christmas
as you celebrate our Savior's birth.

May your celebrations be filled with His presence
as you extend His grace to the people He places in your path.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of us!

I do not share my story with you so that you see the outcome of what God accomplished by sparing my life. I share it with you so that you will focus on the One who reaches down and touches our lives in ways that we don't always get to see, and for purposes we cannot always know. I refuse to cheapen His grace by trying to come up with any specific why or purpose for what I have experienced over the last several months. Job never did learn that his suffering was part of a spiritual battle and proof test between God and Satan. Obviously, God spared him that piece of information for a reason. Knowing how we humans think, Job was probably left in the dark because the truth would have been a hindrance rather than a help to his faith. Most likely, if we knew the purposes of why we suffer the things we do, we would not be very grateful. Whenever we try to explain why God allows certain things and not others, we end up minimizing God to the small box in which we like to confine Him. God is much larger than anything we could ever put into words. He has a bigger picture of our lives than we could ever fathom.

All we do know is the reality of God's love for all of His children as revealed to us in His word. Nothing we experience falls short of His grasp. It is not what He does in our lives that explains any circumstance in which we find ourselves, but that He is a God of love, goodness and justice. The greatest service we can provide the people whom God puts in our paths, is to give them permission to keep asking questions of God when life doesn't make sense. When bad things happen out of our control, our answers need to be rooted in pointing others to Christ not in trying to solve the questions that arise. There are no easy answers other than the simplicity of the gospel.

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I share with you a passage by Roy Lessin that a dear friend sent to me prior to my surgery. "The shield of God's presence covers you from every side. He covers you in the midst of every difficult thing you face. The assurance that comes from God is like a gentle hand, placed under your chin, that lifts your head so that your eyes can gaze into His face. In that gaze you see the strength of His character...the love of your Father...and the depth of His caring heart." (Based on Psalm 3:3 - "You are a shield around me, my glory and the one who lifts my head.") What a joyful reality we have as His children to be shielded by His abiding presence in every heartache, struggle, or difficulty we face. Someday we shall appear before His full presence in the throne room of Heaven. Perhaps then we will see the bigger picture of our lives. *(Cheryl Chambers is the Associate Director of CCM and one of the therapists.)*

THANK YOU

We would like to thank all of our donors who have so graciously given to the needs of our Center throughout this year through individual donations or through the United Way Donor Option Program. Please keep us in your hearts and prayers as you consider your year-end tax deductions. CCM is a not-for-profit tax-exempt charitable organization. We offer all of our services on a sliding scale so that we can benefit as many people as possible to receive the help they need. It is with all of our clients in mind that we extend our gratitude.