



HOPE Ministries Highlights

April 2016

Special points of interest:

- Joann gives a sample of a chapter in her new book—p. 1
- Announcement about new devotional book that is now available—*God Is Gracious* - p.2
- Read a life-giving testimony about God's grace—p.3
- Board member Gene Miller talks about a courageous way of escape.—p.4

Mission Statement:

HOPE Ministries seeks to help individuals explore patterns that may have developed over their lifetime and provide opportunities to allow Jesus to bring healing and HOPE to their lives in fresh ways.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone:
620-259-9390

Office Hours:
Mondays: 9:00-1:00
Thursdays: 9:00-1:00

Email:
hope4yourheart@gmail.com

Website:
nisllyHOPEministries.com

Forbearing with Love— by Joann Nisly



Nevin & Joann Nisly

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;" Ephesians 4:32 (KJV)

"Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love." Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)

There was a time that I became frustrated when people would talk about being forbearing or overlooking other people's faults. It felt like they were wanting me to pretend that there was no problem with what was happening and just "shove it under the carpet." I had the assumption that it meant that one shouldn't talk about it or even remember that it happened. It felt like I had to be dishonest, and this was confusing to me.

I often hear individuals talk disgustedly about people who are close to or not-so-close to them. They believe their critical spirit is justifiable. Their attitude indicates that the other person really

needs to get their act together. I've heard people respond this way about the ugly things in family members, in children, in churchgoers, etc. I have been guilty of the same thing. If we were to forbear instead with these unloving people, what would that look like? Does it really mean just pretending nothing happened?

The Bible talks about forbearing with one another in love. All people are going to do unloving things at times. There have been times when I tried to help people when I unintentionally hurt them. They misinterpreted my motives or I misunderstood their needs. Then there are those times that I have gotten defensive and I hurt people out of my self-focus. People with whom I interact will likely hurt me at times, whether intentional or not. What will I do with them?

To forbear means to endure. That is what Jesus did. He saw the sins of the people. He saw the disciples and their selfishness, their arguing, their humanness. Yet He accepted them right where they were. His relationship with them remained most important. When we view people through the eyes of Jesus, our response to them will be softer. We will be able to think the best about

them instead of believing that their intent is always wrong. At times I can find myself unhappy with something that a person said or did. When I ask myself if I really believe they intended to come across in a hurtful manner, I can better control my reactions. Even if their intent was to hurt, I have Jesus who can offer comfort to me. When I take this approach, I am better able to accept them as they are without dwelling on the negative things.

People long to be understood and accepted. One of the best ways to put this into practice is to forbear. This would mean overlooking the unloving acts that they do and believe the best about them. Rather than pretending, it is admitting that their actions don't feel good. Because I have Jesus who is my comfort, I can look at their heart and love them in spite of what they did.

PRAYER:

Lord, is there someone that I have a hard time accepting? Is there anyone that I have negative reactions or a critical spirit toward? What would keep me from overlooking their faults? Do I feel threatened by them? If so, why would this be? Would You draw me a picture of what forbearing in love would look like? What does my heart feel from this person when they do those unloving things?

Testimony—continued from p. 3

Most of all, God longed for relationship with me. Out of that relationship would flow service to Him, but I could not gain His favor by doing many things for Him.

I gradually became more vulnerable with people at church and with people who thought differently than I did. While I freely said my opinion and beliefs with people who were safe, I was cautious about saying how I really felt with people who I knew might disagree with me. I was scared they would reject me if they knew I did not agree with them on something. Some days I would shut down when spending time with people that I did not trust. My husband encouraged me to keep being honest and to keep letting the 'real me' show through.

Talking to God and to my husband about how I was doing were two things that helped bring healing in my life. In counseling I learned to ask God what He thinks of me when I feel insecure, rejected, or like I am a failure. I learned to wait and listen for His still small voice to tell me that He loves me and that I am precious to Him. I learned to ask God for comfort. When I prayed in the past, I did most of the talking. In counseling I was encouraged to ask God questions and to listen to His voice and that He would speak to me.

Sharing with my husband also brought healing. My husband had purposed in his heart to love me as "Christ loves the church." His unconditional love and accep-

tance to me did wonders for my heart. When I hurt him or was unkind, he would tell me that he loves me just as much and even more than before. I would ask why and he would tell me it was because he had chosen me and I was his wife. God would remind me that this type of love was the way that He loved me – I didn't have to be perfect to be loved and valued by Him just like I did not have to be perfect to be loved by my husband. My husband also assured me many times that if I was doing my best and still made a mistake, then that was enough; that was all he could ask of me. His words helped soothe my heart, but it took a long time for this truth to soak in to my performance-driven mindset.

We became pregnant with our first child, but before we told many family or friends, I had a miscarriage. I was so sad. What was God trying to teach me? I felt like if I would be mature enough or spiritual enough, perhaps He would not have taken the baby. I felt like He must be trying to teach me some lessons. Some days I felt depressed and cried a lot. Joann encouraged me to tell God about my disappointment and that I want a child. She helped me see that I was trying to perform to get what I wanted. She also encouraged me to remember that life is about God and not me. When I had disappointment with God, it was easy to start to wonder if He cared. God wanted me to come to Him in my disappointment, but if I focused only on my

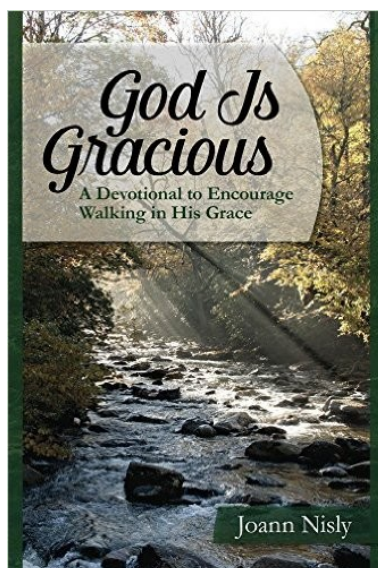
grief, life could become about me and not God. I learned to ask Jesus for comfort. We got pregnant again. The same thing happened. We were so shocked, yet I trusted God more. Healing was slowly coming to my heart.

Books also helped me in my journey of healing. *Grace for the Good Girl* by Emily P. Freeman and *Experiencing the Father's Embrace* by Jack Frost were two of the most powerful books that I read.

The process in changing and finding healing for my hurts has been long and hard. In fact, I am still on the journey. Yet as I look back on the last few years, I can see that I have changed and found so much more freedom and joy in my life as the truths I've learned have been sinking into my heart. I was privileged to be able to call Joann every month for a period of time. She had such good insights about what might be the root problem of my struggles. However, toward the end of my contact with her, she would often encourage me to ask God why I was struggling and why I was responding the way I was. He understands and knows me better than anyone else.

I praise God for choosing to reveal His love to me through counseling. When I agreed to go to counseling with my boyfriend, I didn't have any idea at the time, but my decision turned out to be one of the best and most life-changing decisions in my life.

Announcing...



God Is Gracious

This winter Joann worked on writing a devotional book and it is now completed! Each chapter has a verse, a reading, and a guiding prayer to walk one through resolving the particular subject addressed. The article on the front page is one of the chapters in the book.

Until May 15, the \$12.95 book is at an introductory price of \$10+tax/shipping (if applicable) if you order directly through Joann at jaropp5@gmail.com or 620-615-1361. For those requiring shipping, you can also get it for the same price at www.nislybooksales.com. Books are also available at Amazon and on Kindle.

Forewords by: Gary & Marilyn Damron and Julian & Bertha Nisly

Some Chapter Titles:

Feelings-Friend of Foe
Where's My Focus?
Fear Or Love?
Duty Or Relationship?
They Don't Understand!
Who Is Safe?
Fear of Failure
Life Is Overwhelming!
Comparison-A Killer!
The Blanket of Shame
Living in Forgiveness

In the last 3 months HOPE Ministries has had:

6 new couple cases
2 new single cases
14 follow-up 3-session cases
1 premarital case

Testimony of God's Grace—anonymous

I had a happy childhood, but at a young age I began to wonder if I had as much value as other people did. My sister usually had better behavior than I did and so I was considered bad compared to her. I didn't always feel accepted in school and I did not receive a lot of affirmation from my dad. My parents taught me that what God thought mattered more than what people thought. So I set out to gain God's approval in my life. I did not realize that as His daughter I already had His approval. Even though I would not have said that I thought God loved me less if I messed up and that He loved me more if I was perfect, that was the belief system that was forming in my mind and heart.

I became a Christian at the age of eleven. Over the next years, I tried hard to read my Bible, witness, and do what is right. However, I was never sure that I was doing quite enough to have God's smile of approval on my life. When I did make mistakes or sin, I would feel horrible and try harder than ever to do what was right. I did not realize that God was VERY gracious and just like the Prodigal Son's Father, He was ready to forgive and welcome me back with a hug.

Meanwhile my views on God were affecting how I related to other people. Just like I felt I could gain God's approval by doing the right things, I also noticed that if I performed well in my school work and sports, then I would get compliments and people would admire me. I worked really hard to be the best at whatever I did. I was very hard on myself if I messed up. It was up to me to prove my worth, so I couldn't afford to mess up. I thought God also must be very disappointed if I messed up. I knew He would forgive me, but I did not know how big and free His grace was. Since I was not experiencing His grace, I was not able to freely give it to others either. I also believed that I had to be perfect to measure up to God's standards and so I required people to live a certain way if they wanted my acceptance and love. I tended to have very little patience with people who did not have their act together.

I did not realize that anything was wrong with my life though. Sure, there were some areas that I wished would be different. I was easily irritated at people, especially my family. I also had a hard time feeling comfortable or getting along with people who

did not think like me. In reality, I was threatened by people who did not live the same way as I did or who disagreed with my opinions and convictions because I needed to be right to prove that I had worth. However, as I matured it appeared that I was a confident, friendly girl who had her act together.

However, God saw that I really was not experiencing His love and grace in my life.

I was never sure that I was doing quite enough to have God's smile of approval on my life.

He saw that I was living the 'try hard' life of performance to gain His approval. So He decided to send me a boyfriend who would turn my world upside down. The reason my boyfriend set

was because he was not like the boyfriend of my dreams. I did not want to admit it, but I also was worried about what other people thought of him. I knew that my boyfriend was a godly man and I knew that I probably would not find a nicer, kinder man. However, I struggled a lot with accepting my boyfriend for who he was. I did not have a lot of feelings for him either. Our courtship was very hard, but my boyfriend loved me anyways and my heart felt loved and cared for by him. So I did not want to quit dating even though I did not always feel happy.

When we were engaged, my boyfriend suggested that we go to counseling. I went into counseling wanting help to accept my boyfriend, but I really had no clue how many things God was going to show me about myself and my view of Him.

During counseling sessions, Jesus showed me many things. He showed me that He didn't want me to be like my older sister, but that I had different gifts and talents. He told me that I was valuable. He told me it was ok if I messed up and that He will love me even when I am not perfect. He told me I was safe and had nothing to prove. He told me that it was ok to need help.

I learned that Jesus wants me to be like a child – carefree, vulnerable, happy, dependent, and transparent. Those were not qualities that marked my life. I did not like being weak or needy. I realized that that was the reason that I didn't like sympathy from other people – because I was afraid that I appeared weak. I learned to look at my heart if I felt hurt by someone instead of just trying to be strong, focusing on the positive qualities of the person.

I learned that being annoyed is a form of anger. When I am annoyed at someone, who am I thinking of? I am thinking of myself and by my actions, I am saying: "You should be more like me." Pride was in my heart. I felt I was better than others and that I would not do the irritating things that others were doing. Since I felt I didn't have such annoying habits, I thought I had the license to be irritated and unkind to others. Joann encouraged me to ask myself why I was reacting or feeling annoyed. What was going on in my heart?

I learned that I needed to get my value from what God thought of me. I had known that truth all my life, but I never knew how God loved and valued me. A big reason I had so much trouble accepting my boyfriend is because I did not know my own value. I pick at other people if I don't believe that I have value. I needed to release my boyfriend from being who I thought he should be and to embrace who he was. He had many gifts and talents to offer even if they were not the ones that I had dreamed of in a man. I learned that true love is not based on performance. By not accepting my boyfriend, I was asking him to perform and to be someone that he was not.

Counseling made a huge difference in my relationship with my boyfriend. We now had tools to know how to work through problems and our differences. We understood ourselves and each other much better. We were warned that our habits and thought patterns would not change overnight. We found that to be very true. Yet God continued to bring healing.

After we were married for some time, I continued to struggle with trying to please God and gain His approval. I felt like I wasn't doing anything for the Lord. I would talk to my husband about wanting to do more for God and suggest doing things like witnessing or visiting the lonely. Some days when I was not busy, I felt guilty for being at home with so much free time. I felt that I should find more ways to serve the Lord. My head knew that I could serve God by being a wife and a keeper at home, but my heart just could not believe that it was enough. My husband would pray for me. God continued to reveal this truth: There was nothing I could do to earn His approval; He was simply pleased with me for being His beloved Child. My desire to serve Him was good, but it was being motivated by fear not by love.

From a Board Member:



Gene Miller

Way of Escape

Have you ever said or thought, "I wish I could just get away from it all!" This is a common sentiment in our fast paced society. Sometimes it is the desire for temporary relief from constant pressures and responsibilities. It may be a longing to be able to rest without

one thing after another being added to our load. Or it may be wanting to block out for a little while the voices—literal or figurative—that keep clamoring in the background. At other times it is simply shirking the duties that are rightfully ours.

Rest. Relief. Jesus led his disciples to a quiet place, instructing them to rest awhile. He would call us to the same, pulling us aside from endless demands to recharge so we can better serve again.

But when we turn and run when there is no real reason, when escape becomes an end in itself, it is a problem. It is so easy to escape to a book, food, internet, hobbies, music, sexual appetites, movies, and a host of other things in an effort to blunt the pain, disappointment, anger, or boredom we feel.

Paul makes it clear there is one time when escape is not just an option—it is

the only right one. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* When faced with Satan's most attractive lures, escape to Jesus becomes an act of courage. 'Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled...'

Escape. A way out. Deliverance. If it is getting us out of danger, escape is a prudent path leading from destruction to survival. May your escapes this month be ones that demonstrate God's strength.

Gene is an RN and waiter who enjoys choral music and interacting with his friends and their children. He is in his 4th year of serving on the HOPE Ministries board.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING:

FOLLOW UP DAY

March 12 over twenty people met in Partridge for a time of refreshment. We revisited concepts about caring for our own hearts as well as for the hearts of people around us. We had lunch together which provided some visitation time. It was a day of encour-

agement and it is exciting to see God continuing His work in His people! Keep your eyes open to the next Follow Up Day announcement.

DIRECTORS' RETREAT

April 5-8 we were privileged to attend a directors' retreat hosted by

Caring for the Heart. Counselors from the US, Canada and Mexico met for a time of renewal, refreshment, and inspiration. Author and speaker Bob Moeller inspired us as he talked about how to keep emotional connection in our marriages. We are blessed to have these times of encouragement available to us.

FINANCIAL UPDATE:

Our desire is that no one will be excluded from opportunity for sessions because of finances. All counseling is done on a donation basis, and this plus the gifts of God's people, allow us to be full time in this ministry. We are grateful for all who have stood with us in so many ways and do trust in God's continuing provision. As a 501(c)(3) organization, we are accountable to our board for the finances and the operation of HOPE Ministries. If you wish to know more details about our finances, please contact Julian Nisly, our treasurer, at 620-664-5304. As God leads you to think about HOPE Ministries, please pray for us, and if He prompts you to join in our financial support, donations can be made in several ways as stated below. Tax deductible receipts will automatically be issued for checks of \$50 or more.

Donations can be done in various ways:

Send to:
HOPE Ministries
Box 103
Partridge, KS 67566

Call 620-259-9390 to use Credit Card

Go to our website and use the donation button through Paypal.



HOPE Ministries Board Members:

Nevin & Joann Nisly—director
Lynn & Sandra Miller—Board Chairman
Julian & Bertha Nisly—Sec./Treasurer
Arlen & Gloria Mast—Vice Chairman
Ray & Gina Miller—Board Member
Gene Miller—Board Member