

Given and Forgiven

By Rebecca Maslow



I've worked as a nurse for the last five years in a large hospital. I grew up in an environment where comfort and security were normal. I am still frequently struck by how different my world is compared to many of my patients.

I cannot imagine growing up without a stable parent in my life. It's unfathomable that I would have no one close to me, no support system. When I ask my patients who they have in their life who can help them when they discharge home, and it's not infrequent that they respond, "no one."

Recently, I cared for a boy in the pediatric unit. This teenager had a mother who had lost custody of him years ago and a grandmother who had custody of him, but the boy currently lived with his pregnant girlfriend's grandma, the most stable person in his life.

The chaos of his situation was daunting. One day, the boy's grandma came to see him in the late morning. She was relatively pleasant but appeared unstable seemingly from substance abuse. Her companion appeared even more so. They stayed briefly and left.

Later, the mom came and appeared to have been drinking. Her emotions quickly escalated, and she became verbally and physically threatening. I experienced two conflicts in my mind and heart: anger defensiveness at her accusations, swearing and shouting; and hurt, by what seemed like vindictiveness that had come out of nowhere and was undeserved.

I took a deep breath. I watched her more closely. She repeatedly stooped over her son's bed, grasping at his arms and touching his face.

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INSIDE: REFLECTIONS

The Gift of Mercy

Remember, Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. (Psalm 25:6)

The Hebrew words "racham" and "chesed" are often paired together in the Old Testament. Translations frequently mix mercy, compassion, loving kindness and steadfast love for these two words.

It is clear God's mercy (racham) and compassion (chesed) are interwoven in his nature. Neither are passive but both are active, linked together and focused outward to the lost, helpless, alienated, and broken-hearted.



While compassion implies a deep heartfelt empathy to alleviate suffering, mercy infers the power to treat people differently than they'd expect. This month's reflections are stories of men and women doing just that.

As they make his mercy and compassion tangible and visible, their actions create space for life and blessing to those in need.

May these stories inspire conversations on how we make tangible God's compassion and mercy to create space for life and blessing.

April Reflections: Pg 2-4

REFLECTIONS WEEK 1

Called to Mercy

By Michael Pingel

But You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. (Psalm 86:15)

My friend Jack was diagnosed with cancer, deteriorated quickly, and died at age 63. Deeply grieving the loss of his father, his son Bob was unem-ployed and struggling in his mar-riage. He needed a job and a home. Typically I avoid employing a clearly troubled person, but God gave me the strength to say “yes.” I offered Bob work and a place to live, and he happily accepted.

Though enthusiastic at first, his work was sporadic—sometimes he didn’t show up when he said he would and he didn’t always complete projects. I learned that Bob battled depression and other mental health issues and he often struggled to make sound deci-

sions. I thought I was being generous in giving him a place to live and work and time to deal with his grief. But over time it became clear that this was a mission of mercy.

Bob called one day to say he had swallowed a bottle of prescription medication. After he hung up his phone was unresponsive. I called 911 and drove all day looking for him. Going home, I said a prayer and hoped for the best. I learned later that night he was alright.

My patience and sanity were tested. Bob was not just a case of someone grieving. He needed constant acts of mercy, and by the power of the Holy Spirit I was able to be the vehicle for that mercy. Though my help was often rejected, I loved him the best I could.

I was actively involved in Bob’s life for about seven months. He was blessed and helped, but I couldn’t fix everything, only God could. Christ said that he did not come to heal the well, but to take care of the sick and the most needy. My ability to love more and grow in mercy were ex-panded. I am grateful for this expe-

rience and I know I was the love of Christ to this son of God.

Mike Pingel is the owner of Finer Point Renovations, Inc. kitchen and bath remodeling. He is married to Angela, a designer, instructor, and author. They live with their daughter, Caitlyn, in South Bend, IN. He can be reached at mike@finerpointrenovations.com.

PRAY

Help me to continue loving and showing mercy despite the unexpected challenges I encounter.

REFLECT

When have I attempted to show mercy, only to find myself in circumstances that at first were not apparent? How did I respond?

DISCUSS

How do we know when it’s time to continue extending mercy and when it’s time to let go?

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REFLECTIONS WEEK 2

Mercy for Mistakes

By Amy Cramer

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51:1-2)

We are often our own worst critic. When we make a mistake or fall short in some area, we often feel ashamed, beat ourselves up, and maybe even try to hide. This internalized shame can cause us to expect others to respond to our shortcomings with condemnation. I know that when I mess up at work, I expect others to be mad at me and require much explaining and recompense even if it was an honest mistake.

One such example was when I was learning a new process at work. I got busy and missed a step in the process and it created quite a bit of additional work for someone else in my office. I felt terrible about the extra work I had created. I apologized and offered to help fix the problem.

My colleague responded with kindness and even offered me additional support in learning the process. When I am met with mercy and understanding instead of blame, it leaves a lasting mark. The gift of mercy from others allows me to stop ruminating and move forward, finding a solution to my mistake. It frees me from shame and enables me to experience deeper connection with others and with God.

Amy Cramer lives in Indianapolis, IN. She is a licensed clinical social worker and has provided individual, family, and group therapy to a wide variety of

populations, including sex trafficked youth. She currently provides short-term therapy and crisis intervention services. She can be reached at aecramer2@gmail.com.

PRAY

Jesus, you are always ready to meet us with mercy and compassion when we sin. Help us turn to you rather than hide in shame.

REFLECT

How have I experienced mercy from others in the workplace? What impact has it made in my life?

DISCUSS

How can we create a greater culture of mercy and forgiveness in the workplace?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 3

The Work of Mercy

By Michael Pingel

Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

I once heard a story that stuck with me and challenged me to have a bigger heart. The owner of an industrial engineering construction company in Louisiana was talented at construction. He had a huge heart and when he saw a need, he would immediately respond to it. He learned of a widow who needed a new roof so

he organized a group and replaced it free of charge. I recognized how incredibly generous and merciful he was but I didn't know if I was capable of having such a kind heart.

Years later, I was in a similar position. When a man named Jerry was dying of cancer, I was asked to help with his house repairs. That way, if he passed, his wife wouldn't have to worry about their home. I gladly organized my company crew and a few other men to help. While we were working on the house, Jerry rapidly deteriorated. Throughout it all, he continued to smile and was incredibly grateful to God for his life. His faith in God was amazing to witness.

One of the things on Jerry's checklist was a master vanity that hadn't been working for a while. After we repaired it, Jerry's wife was appreciative. Despite being extremely

weak, Jerry made it up the stairs and was beaming after seeing the repair work. We showed mercy to Jerry, but really his joy was pouring out to us. Jerry died peacefully in his repaired home three days later.

PRAY

Lord, show me where I can share your mercy and love with others.

REFLECT

Has the Lord put anyone on my heart in need of my mercy? How can I extend that mercy to them?

DISCUSS

What obstacles within my heart prevent me from giving freely as the Lord does?

REFLECTIONS WEEK 4

The Gift of Mercy

By Amy Cramer

“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ‘But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ (Luke 15:19b-24)

This story comes from my time working with youth who were being sex trafficked. Often, they become involved with sex trafficking after running away from home in an attempt to escape a hard

situation. Running away becomes a coping strategy—youth continue to run away even once they are in treatment due to the emotional distress of their trauma.

It is common for youth to return to their trafficker a few times before they are ready to leave that life behind for good. As their therapist, my role was to re-engage them in treatment each time they returned. Upon returning, they are often angry that they were found and feel a great deal of shame for their choices. They would lash out at me as a result.

Each time this happened, I would remember the story of the prodigal son and ask the Holy Spirit to allow me to respond like the Father, welcoming them back with open arms. This response was a game changer. These youth were expecting to be met with anger, shaming, and punishment but instead were met with genuine care and mercy. While they were initially skeptical, they

eventually learned to trust this gift of mercy. Mercy allowed them to move past their own shame over running away, re-engage in therapy, and make lasting changes.

PRAY

Thank you Lord for the mercy that you have shown us. Help me to show that same mercy to others.

REFLECT

Think about all the interactions and relationships you have in your place of employment. Where do you have an opportunity to show mercy to others? Ask God to show you how.

DISCUSS

What is our initial response when others mess up or cause hurt? How can we move towards responding with greater mercy?

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Conference
Highlight:

Grant Snyder

An investigative detective in human trafficking for 20 years, Grant Snyder recovered over 600 victims and arrested thousands of people on a variety of felony charges. Says Grant, “It’s really tempting to buy into the idea that I represent the good and they the bad, and that between us there is a vast chasm and to see myself as judge.”

In his work, the Lord has shown him the importance of humility. “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full

acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”(1 Timothy 1:15) Grant has learned that crimes do not happen in a vacuum and often horrific personal histories are tied to perpetrators’ crimes.

In 2014 Operation Guardian Angel began as an attempt to break into the demand side of sex trafficking: the buyers. For Grant, their stories have revealed the crushing reality that their actions wreak devastation on their lives and the lives of all those they love.

It has also revealed to him God’s mercy as he considers the truth that, “My sins are no less than yours.” Reconciling his need for humility and mercy, God inspired Grant to run a small group for men struggling with lust. This work has shown him that despite all the preconceptions and differences between cop and offender, in God’s eyes, sin is sin. It has also allowed him to develop deep friendships even with individuals that he has arrested.

Grant has learned the centrality of relationships. Far beyond any concerns for ordinances and statutes or judicial processes, God cares about people. He cares about community and relationships. On the verge of retirement, Grant was searching for a way to serve that was less polarizing. “I was done with locking people up,” he says.

In obedience to God, he took an opportunity to start a homeless outreach unit. Now he spends much of his time working in human traffic, under bridges, and in homeless encampments, building relationships with people who have no one and nothing.

This work has been a milestone for Grant in his relationship with God, his journey of humility and obedience have shaped him and continue to shape his work. Grant continues to “fight the good fight of the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:12)

Grant Snyder is a Lieutenant in the Minneapolis Police Department overseeing homeless outreach and police recruitment. Grant’s sharing at the 2019 Annual Conference will be available later this year at WorkLight.org.

Continued from page 1

She was trying to love and hold on to him as best she could. I saw how her physical contact made him increasingly agitated.

I leaned towards her and softly said I thought he was getting overwhelmed and he might need a little space.

She began repeating with increasing frantic intensity, “You can’t tell me about my son. I know him, you don’t know him. You’re trying to take him away from me.”

I saw a woman who had grown up in a world of brokenness. I saw her fear of being separated from him, shadows of past conversations with social workers and judges that resulted in her no longer being his guardian. She struggled with the hurt and shame of losing him. And as my heart ached for her, I understood God’s heart for them all.

I helped her calm down and she left. The familial dysfunction greatly affected this young man. He hadn’t grown up in this environment unscathed. For the millionth time since I started nursing, the thought crossed my mind, “Lord, help me to never judge.”

The mother’s inappropriate behavior was her attempt to love her son when no one had taught her how to love. Although tempted to judge, that day God’s slow work in my heart helped me to see her with new eyes and to know that I’m not superior to her. I’ve been given much and forgiven much.

In that moment, God invited me again to keep mercy at the forefront of my nursing. Mercy is his gift to all people.

Rebecca Maslow lives in St. Paul, MN, and works as an RN at one of the metropolitan hospitals. She can be reached at rlmaslow@gmail.com.

Guidance of the Spirit

By Diana Banister

It's been years since we stocked up on bottled water and canned foods to prepare for the imminent Y2k apocalypse. Now we remember back in decades instead of individual years. With the reality that we're getting older comes another one—our parents are aging as well. Many of us face a dilemma of how to take care of our parents while meeting the demands of our careers. Trying to manage a parent's health and welfare, often from afar, is an added stress to our lives.

Parents don't want to give up their independence and often cannot come to terms with the fact that they can no longer keep up with their homes or take care of their own needs. We ask if our parents should enter assisted living. Can they live with family members, should we hire a caregiver? Who will manage their medical and legal directives? These questions can cause strife and disagreement among siblings and between parents.

Years ago, I noticed my mother's unwillingness to play Scrabble with my family. It seemed as if she experienced a foginess at night, along with confusion and fear. I suggested she get

checked for Alzheimer's, but she didn't want to hear it.

Many friends face similar situations, pleading with their parents to get help for dementia or other debilitating diseases, or to consider in-home care or assisted living. When parents resist, their children are forced to take a more aggressive approach or make the decision for them.

After my mother was officially diagnosed with Alzheimer's, I spent hours researching resources in her community. I arranged seniors' services to come to the house twice a week to clean and eventually hired a part-time caregiver.

I also traveled to visit her for a week every other month, and eventually every month. Thankfully, as a partner in a public affairs firm, I could telework from my mom's home in Colorado. Yet, running a business from afar was a difficult balancing act.

Many adult caregivers don't have that flexibility—either they can't afford to or are not able to work remotely—and may not have time to find the right fit for their parent. Most communities

have senior resources available but the time it takes to research them can be overwhelming. Some employers offer family leave to take care of a loved one. Sharing your needs with others, including your employer, can bring ideas and resources and help.

In my mother's case, eventually caregiving in her home was not enough. The debate among my siblings about the best solution for her care caused disagreement and strain. I ended up moving my mom halfway across the country to live with me.

There are no right answers. I told myself that I would never choose work over family. Unfortunately, most of us have to do that every day—on a conference call when a spouse calls or traveling for work when a child is in her school play. We cannot make these decisions on our own, but must seek the Lord, seek the advice of friends and family, and rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It has now been three years of taking care of my mom while working in a highly stressful job. The stress and frustration is outweighed by the moments of joy, the smiles and laughter, and the opportunity to care for her in her deepest need.

Diana L. Banister is president and managing partner of Shirley & Banister Public Affairs, a Washington based public relations, crisis management and government affairs firm. She can be reached at dbanister@sbpublicaffairs.com.

NEWS

WORKLIGHT STORYNIGHT LAUNCHES IN MINNEAPOLIS

One of the most inspirational sessions at the fall Annual Conference was Friday afternoon's WorkLight Gathering. The personal stories of 12 speakers combined for a powerful impact on attendees. From that experience, WorkLight StoryNight was born.

Jeremy Stanbury, founder of Open Window Theatre, offered his new space for the inaugural event on February 18. More than 50 people attended with board member Luke Cahill serving as host.

The presenters had previewed and rehearsed their stories so they were sharp and well told. Attendee Perry Benson shared his experience.

"Afterward," Perry recalled, "I couldn't stop thinking about the last verse from John's gospel."



adding new chapters to the stories we read in the gospels."

They included a photographer, whose gig as an Uber driver lets him shine the light of Christ into the lives of customers when they most needed it; a young nurse who has found the grace to serve her patients with compassion, mercy, and humility (See cover story.); a theater manager sharing about his personal journey away from a culture war mentality to finding God in all things and all

people; and a government employee sharing how God was working on him to find meaning and joy in the mundane, everyday demands of his job.

"These were not fictional stories told by professional actors. We were seeing real people like us telling stories from their own lives. And the stories were fresh, some happening less than a week prior.

"A young guitarist started the event with two songs bringing us together as a group. It helped permeate the evening with the Spirit of God.

"WorkLight StoryNight was uniting people from many denominations around what we hold in common. Because it was just stories, not preaching, we were free to invite people at all levels of Christian commitment and understanding. Who isn't interested in hearing

inspiring stories from real people who have found more meaning and more joy in their work?"

WorkLight is planning additional StoryNights and chapters interested in conducting their own events should contact us to learn more.



"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." (John 21:25)

"These storytellers were the hands and voice of Jesus in their own workplaces,

EVENTS

MEN'S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS

Salinas Valley
May 1-3, 2020

Salinas Valley
November 13-15, 2020

WOMEN'S CHALLENGE WEEKENDS

Gilroy/Morgan Hill
April 17-18, 2020

Fresno
April 24-26, 2020

2020**APRIL**

*"I have been crucified
with Christ and I no
longer live, but Christ
lives in me."*

Galatians 2:20

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Father,

You are my Lord and Creator.

You entrust me with a place of stewardship in your creation.

Fill me with your Holy Spirit:

That he may teach me to pray and live in Christ and as Christ;

That he may teach me love for family, friends and all people.

A love that is selfless, humble, and wise;

*That he may teach me stewardship of the talents, time, money and
possessions you have given me.*

A stewardship that serves, is generous, and brings honor to your name;

That he may teach me faithfulness to your call to Christians in Commerce.

A call that unites us and builds your Kingdom in the marketplace.

Through Jesus Christ who is Lord.

Amen

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- Building strong brotherhood and sisterhood
- Serving God and expanding his Kingdom in all aspects of our lives

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