

Fall 2005

The
Color
of
Light



Spiritual Encouragement For The Exotic Dancer

The Color of Light

*Created for the heart
of the exotic dancer!*

LIGHTDANCERS

P.O. Box 223

Anthony, Kansas 67003

Or

Come visit us at

www.lightdancers.org

[lightdancers @ lightdancers.org](mailto:lightdancers@lightdancers.org)

"WHO ARE THEY?!"

The Faces Behind the Pages...

Lisanne McMurray
Tammy Dahl
And the grace of God!

Contributing Writers:

James Bradford
Celestine Colon

Submissions By:

Darrin Hufford

Special Thanks:

Jahnee McMurray

This season we'd like to thank
Charles Albert McKamey
for allowing us to use two of his most
intriguing pieces of artwork entitled,

"Feelings of Emotion"
And
"Passion"

for the cover images of this
very special edition of
The Color Of Light.

Publication With Purpose

Welcome to *The Color of Light*, the quarterly publication for LIGHTDANCERS, a spiritual support ministry for exotic dancers. It is our desire to bring the love of Jesus Christ into the world of the dancer by simply supporting the heart of the woman.

Our purpose through this publication is to serve the exotic dancer emotionally, physically and spiritually through articles of encouragement, people of integrity, and a variety of services and resources.

We encourage each of you to write, or e-mail us with any thoughts, ideas, or concerns that you may have. Hearing from each of you helps us to be able to better serve you on a more personal level.

The Color of Light emanates from the heart of each one of us in a unique way...the way that God intended. He is the One who illuminated the darkness of our lives, and it is our desire that through this publication, His light will be reflected unto you.

SEASONS OF LIGHT

Requirement

Normally when I am directed toward a particular season for the ministry, it is immediately apparent why this is so. However, this was not the case this time around. When God first conveyed to me that this was to be a *Season of Requirement* I was puzzled...at least momentarily. "Season of Requirement? I need a little detail here Lord." And it didn't take long to get it. By way of my dear friend Jeanne, I was quickly reminded of the scripture in *Luke 12:48* "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; And to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." Ok, I understand that one. It has been applied in my life on numerous occasions. So then I picked up my handy dandy dictionary and did a little research on the word "requirement" and this is what I found: 1) *Need or necessity* 2) *to order or enjoin to do something* 3) *to place under an obligation* 4) *ask for authoritatively or imperatively* 5) *to make necessary or indispensable* 6) *something that is needed for a particular purpose* 7) *something that is obligatory or demanded.* And that's when it began to make sense! Special seasons call for special measures and this is definitely one of those seasons!

It's been an interesting year to say the least. The Spring months brought with them a burden for a new vision that just won't leave me alone. The Summer months brought with them multiple opportunities to put feet to my faith with journeys to the very first *Big Dog Tornado Rally* in Wichita, followed by an extra special trip to the *Sparks America Bike Run* in Oklahoma and then God sprung a wonderful surprise on me and escorted me to the granddaddy of biker events - *Sturgis!* We were not in attendance at the *Gentlemen's Club Expo* in Las Vegas this year due to a conflict of schedules, but when God is in control you have to be willing to bend.

This season, there are several things that are unfolding. As you may have noticed, my choice of artwork for the cover of this issue is a unique piece that differs from what you have seen in the past. That is because it is representative of the most prominent change - the reality that in my own personal life, the union between Tom and myself has come to an end, which has thus far proved to be the beginning of a season of great loss several times over in a variety of ways ~ but sometimes that is part of the requirement. Contending with the harsh reality of such loss has taken me through many varying degrees of ups and downs, with every step of the journey moving me closer to God in the process. Life rarely takes the path we envision and for that, I can only thank God for unanswered prayers. For the true joy in the journey is not in seeing our dreams executed and fulfilled by our own hand, but rather in seeing God's plan for our lives unfold in all of it's fullness, for there is still an abundance of joy to be found in the valleys as well as on the mountaintops of life.

Happenings within the ministry range from speaking at the *Haysville Assembly of God* in Haysville, Kansas in September for which I am both honored and grateful to have this opportunity placed before me to share with some of the women of Wichita and the surrounding area about the work that God is doing in this area of ministry, to the attendance of the *Eazyriders Bike Show* in my old stompin' grounds of Phoenix, Arizona, as well as Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Throughout the summer I have had several people inquire as to whether or not we have redirected our outreach efforts from the exotic dancer to the biker and I want to assure you that this is not the case. The biker's world is a wonderful means through which to reach the dancer. And actually, that burden that the Spring months brought with them has nothing to do with the bikers or the dancers and everything to do with the youth. So, as I stand in prayer over this new vision, please be in agreement with me that I would hear the voice of God Himself. For if I am to move in what I believe He is leading me in, it could essentially change the fabric of the **LIGHTDANCERS** ministry to a certain degree.

I believe that there are many people beyond just me standing in the balance, sitting on something they believe they are suppose to do but whom have not found the means or the courage to move in it yet. We are all real good with coming up with a thousand reasons and excuses as to why we can't, why we aren't equipped, why this isn't the right time, why we don't have the funds, why we aren't the right one for the job. But as the old blues song goes, "When my God gets ready, you gotta move!" Being faithful in the small things, opens the door for the next step on the journey and the greater things of life. Up-ping our responsibility level can be pretty uncomfortable...and that's exactly where God wants us! Totally dependant on Him. No more plush cushions of velvet in our little satin boxes of complacency and comfort. For if each of us were fully equipped in the things that God was directing us towards, then we wouldn't much need Him at all, now would we? So as God moves you toward your *Season of Requirement* revealing that which He desires of you, remember the simplicity of the words of *Micah 6:8* : "He has shown you, oh man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" It really is that simple!

REFLECTIONS

The Path of Least Resistance

I find it interesting how people can think in the same vein, desire the same goal, and yet arrive at that place of destination through such varying and different means of motivation. Last week I was following a friend of mine in my car as we drove from Andover to Wichita. Our journey took us about a half an hour to make during which time we meandered through the heart of the city. I noticed as we toiled along that his choice of roadways to travel was not governed by certain elements. It was not governed by road conditions, nor by time constraints. It was not governed by traffic, nor by that which was the longer or shorter route to take. No, his choice of travel was motivated by the path of least resistance. He paced himself. He paced himself well and in doing so, met each curve and each crossroad with a timing that allowed us a smooth and enjoyable journey. The congestion enroute was minimal, the view pleasing, distractions few. I found the drive peaceful and relaxing. We arrived at our destination safely and without incident, ready for the next portion of our journey. This of course, is merely my perception. Charlie may have seen our travels differently, but from my vantage point I was able to gain

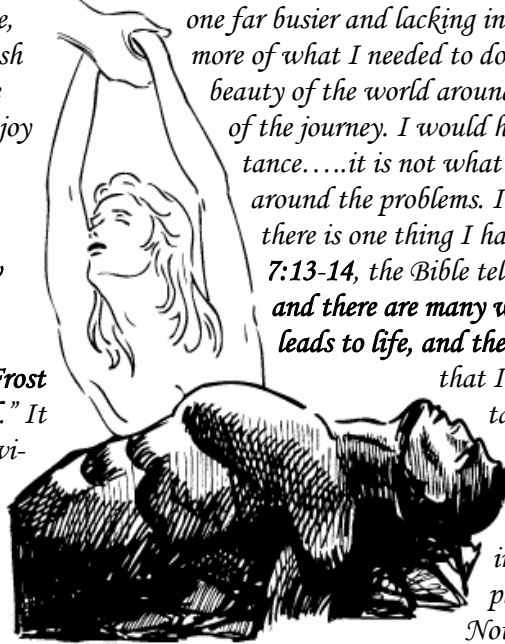
taken what I felt to be a faster route, my time and allowed me to accomplish in doing so, I would have missed the of the day. I would have missed the joy

The path of least resistance is the simpler way. It is not the way the shortest...or the least costly. If ways are not our ways. In **Matthew 7:13-14**, the Bible tells us **"For wide is the gate and broad and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which**

There is a poem by **Robert Frost** It is called **"The Road Less Traveled."** It in life and how taking the not so obvious in the world. If two paths are set to access and clearly well worn and and without the appearance of having would you pick? I think most people

most easily accessible, the one you don't have to struggle on to traverse, where the path is wide and smooth and you can see for miles without hindrance. The one where it is clear others have gone before and where your foot is sure and swift. But a path such as this offers many options, many choices, many diversions. A wide open path often has no restrictions, no boundaries, no limitations, and therein lies the downfall of following down such a road. With no limitations placed upon an individual anything and everything then becomes permissible. And while contrary to popular belief, God's desire for us does not include a lot of rules etched in stone, His love for us does include boundaries used to guide us that we might have a more full and joyful life. For the end result of having a life without boundaries is always destruction and the end result of destruction is certain death ~ be it death of spirit or of the physical body, death is always the outcome.

So what for the narrow path? The path whose view is not completely revealed? The path that may appear untouched by most, and that's because it is! The path that despite it's obscurity and it's not immediately apparent obstacles, offers life and liberty and a freedom that can never be found by following the wide open road. That is because the narrow path requires a level of obedience, wisdom and trust.



a new and fresh perspective on our journey. I personally would have one far busier and lacking in stoplights. One that made the most of more of what I needed to do in the time I had available to me. But beauty of the world around me. I would have missed the wonder of the journey. I would have missed God.

tance....it is not what one might commonly think. It is not around the problems. It is not the way that is the quickest or there is one thing I have discovered with God it is that His **7:13-14**, the Bible tells us **"For wide is the gate and broad and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the leads to life, and there are few who find it."**

that I have been partial to since high school. talks about the choice of paths to take ous choice makes all of the difference before you, one wide and open, easy the other, narrow, slightly obscured, ing been previously trod, which one ple would probably choose the one that Notice I said "appears." The one that is

“I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble.” Proverbs 4:11-12 This is God’s assurance to us in choosing the right paths. It is not always the most obvious. It will not always be the most clear and unhindered and mostly, it will not always be our way. Actually, more often than not it will not be our way. This is because God sees the big picture. Think about it...when you take your first steps down a pathway you’ve never been, what do you do? Do you look as far ahead as possible trying to anticipate your next step or do you look to see where you are placing your feet? As you walk on, do you kind of go on “automatic pilot” because you are feeling comfortable enough with what you can see or do you proceed without caution because your mind wanders and you become preoccupied in thought? Anyone of these possibilities is merely just the result of you only glimpsing a small portion of what lies ahead for you. But God, the God of the universe, God of this world, the God who created you, He sees the big picture of your life in it’s entirety. However, someone once said that sometimes we “can’t see the forest from the trees.” And no truer statement applies when we are in the midst of our distress. We tend to immediately be consumed by tunnel vision, seeing only the magnitude of our problem rather than the way in which God is desiring to work out the kinks in us through the situation.

On my daughter’s 16th birthday we set out to secure her drivers license for her. Not wanting to drive in the big city of Wichita, we drove on to Andover which is it’s own smaller town, more representative of a suburb of Wichita on the extreme east end of Wichita itself. Mind you, this is about 80 miles one way from where we live and despite the fact that I got her out of school an hour early, it was still 15 minutes before closing by the time we arrived. However, the workers were quick to point out that all testing ends at 5:00 even though they don’t close the doors until 5:45. I was not taking to this woman’s words and was absolutely livid. I went totally ballistic with my flesh completely leading the way. Definitely not the Christian response. Nope, this girl totally lost it in a big way and by the time I was done not only had I ranted and raved, and thrown my sunglasses (making a dead ringer into my sunroof and breaking them on the way), but I did such a number on my car door that I couldn’t open it! I must be honest here. I can’t tell you when I have ever felt such rage rise up inside of me. It overtook me and I succumbed to it’s calling. It was not at all a pretty sight and being a woman of much patience and a never-ending optimistic outlook, it kinda freaked my kids out just a bit that Mom had taken one step closer to the cuckoo’s nest. These are rare moments in my life indeed. Very rare. But just because I am a Christian does not mean that I am perfect. Mistakes are made by the best of us and that day I made my share of them.

In all honesty, Nikki’s birthday hasn’t represented the happiest times in life. One year Tom found out that his Dad died the night of her birthday, the next year it fell in the wake of the September 11th tragedy and the following year her other Grandpa’s funeral was the day before her birthday. Then this year she spent it minus someone very important to her for circumstances outside of her control. So promising her her drivers license was important to me...and despite my efforts, I failed. I felt horrible. It seemed like such an easy thing to do and yet it was unattainable. Though all wasn’t completely lost, they did let her take her written test which she passed with flying colors. So for that, I tried to find the good and be thankful.

It wasn’t until three days later that we were able to try once more. Again, Nik declared her reluctance to take the driving test in the big city, so despite the fact that I had silently declared, no **loudly** declared, that I would not **EVER** return to that office come hell or high water, I subdued my attitude and agreed to try in Andover once again. So, after sitting at a traffic light for 10 minutes because of road construction, and having my gas light come on, we pulled in the parking lot to see a sea of people pressed up against the windows of the drivers license bureau. Again we returned, facing the same situation, the same people, only to be treated with the same disdain and shot down once again. We wasted 15 minutes of precious time trying to negotiate a reprieve from our vain efforts days before. In the end, Jahnee, my youngest said I got loud, while Nikki said I walked out without saying what I really wanted to. All I know is that I felt that same rage rise up inside of me as what I had experienced days before and it wasn’t good.

So with 15 minutes left, I knew the only hope we would have would be to at least give it our best shot to get to the west side drivers license office. Then there was that pesky gas light that came on again which meant I had to stop on the way to fill up. I was doing 60 in a 35, ziggin’ and zaggin’ in and out of traffic and that’s when I looked at the clock, 5:10, and turned to Nikki apologizing for failing her once more. Tears filled both of our eyes. But something rose up inside of me and I became determined that I couldn’t stop just because it looked like it was all for naught. I told the girls “I will beg. I will leave my attitude and my anger outside the door and I will humble myself and I will beg.” By the time we arrived, it was 5:30. Closing was in 15 minutes, all testing had ceased at 5:00. But true to my word, I

begged. The lady seeming to understand my plight, but in the end, still told me "Sorry. There's nothing we can do. But you can check with the supervisor. He's over there." And with that, she pointed to a man across the room. I made a bee-line for this poor, unknowing soul. Once again, I explained our dilemma. He looked at me. He looked at the girls and he addressed Nikki, "What do you have for ID?" He then proceeded to log onto the computer, process her, and direct us out the door where he himself gave her her driving test. There was no time for her to get nervous. She was driving in the big city after all. And as they headed off into the sunset, I paced and I prayed, and I thanked God for His incredible faithfulness. When they returned, I searched Nikki's face for the outcome as she signaled to me that she did indeed pass. I went up to that man and I hugged him big, big, big, big! And it was then that I got the most incredible lesson that I have received in a very long time.

All odds were against us. The officials refused us and said it couldn't be done, we were running out of time and in the end, were way past the time of possibility. We were detoured, lost our way picking our trail down back roads all the while headed in the right general direction the long way around, we had to backtrack, encountered slow cars, rush hour traffic, strategically placed police, and darn near ran out of gas. But we fought through the tears, and pushed forward despite what it looked like the chances were. We didn't give up with each obstacle we encountered. Instead, I drove faster and harder and more determined than ever to reach my destiny even though from my own lips came "We're not gonna make it." also came the words, "I will humble myself and I will beg." Why? Because I wanted something for my child that I was not capable of giving her. I was at the end of myself. I did everything I could possibly do to no avail. I pushed on because in the end, despite how it looks and despite whoever may come against you, when one perseveres to take their authority and claim that which they cannot see in the natural, in the end, all it takes is God to move on one heart and change the course of eternity.

It was a wonderful lesson of encouragement for me directly from the heart of the Father! I know how bad I wanted this for Nikki. And when I was at the end of myself, when I stopped contending with swine and walked away, pushing into the battle by means of another direction, the victory was fought for and given to us, not by my own hand, but by His sovereign hand. That is the path of least resistance. It is the one you would never take up for yourself. It is the one you cannot ever deem as having any sort of a positive outcome. It is the one that rises up against the odds to take the victory by no doing of your own abilities. It is the means by which you drive yourself through the darkest and blackest night without any regard for what circumstance dictates. It is the fight that rises up in your spirit when your flesh dies in it's fullness. It is the long way around found only by the letting go. This my friends, is the path of least resistance. Walk it out with joy for it is filled with lessons of life that you would never choose to learn any other way.

*With All of My Love,
Lisanne*

OBSERVATIONS FROM AFAR

God's Will vs. God's Plan

Recently, I have had the pleasure of getting to know *Darin Hufford*. Darin has written 2 books that I highly recommend. In fact, both of them are in my top 10 list. Those books are "*The Relationship Code*" and "*The God's Honest Truth*." Both of these books are available for purchase through www.darinhufford.com or www.outofexile.org. He has a true gift of communicating God's incredible love in such an understandable way. If you are someone who struggles with the whole God thing or you are someone who has been messed up by "religion," these books will challenge you and set you free in many aspects.

Through an e-mail conversation Darin and I had recently, we were discussing the plans of God vs. the will of God. He made a statement defining the two. It was a "WOW" moment for me! It made so much sense. As I shared this with Lisanne over one of the "frequent" and "many" conversations we have, she was like "WOW," as well! She immediately wanted to post it in this month's newsletter. Before I share with you his wise and profound statement, I want to ask you some questions.

Have you ever questioned God? Have you ever wondered why certain things are the way they are and you wonder if God even hears your heart's cry? I know I have! We are all on an incredible journey finding our way and continuing the healing process. Sometimes you come to a fork in your personal road that you've been traveling and you just sit down on a rock and stare at this fork. You begin to ponder your life and destiny, your dreams and desires. It's actually a very good place to be, although sometimes difficult because the only way you can benefit, I mean truly benefit from these moments, is to look at yourself and be completely honest and real. This is very hard to do, especially if you think that you got it all together and your OK. Let me tell you something, NOBODY HAS IT ALL TOGETHER. We all have problems and issues and stuff in our lives that we need to work through and heal from. If it's not a healing journey it's a growing journey and changes must happen in the growth process. Change is difficult, but necessary for growth. God created us to grow and mature. This is a never ending process. Sometimes in the midst of these defining moments in life or your fork in the road, it feels like you take 1 step forward and 2 steps backward, yet I find that this is the time that should be embraced. These are the times you gain momentum. You minimize to maximize!!!

Have you ever believed God for something specific and you feel God totally spoke to you and confirmed what you are believing Him for? Then, for some reason it just didn't happen the way you expected it would. You feel let down and question your ability to hear God. In fact, you even questioned God in the midst of your brokenness. I reflect on Job's life (*Job 41* I believe) where God literally asks him, do you think your more righteous than me? The fact is that what happened to Job had nothing to do with God. God didn't allow or give the devil permission to make Job's life miserable, despite what religion teaches us. The devil already had authority in Job's life because Job was operating out of fear instead of faith and also, you ready for this...because Job lived on rumors of God. My pastor made the comment the other night that anything you hear, be it from your pastor's, or literally from anyone, it is just a rumor. It remains a rumor until you experience it first hand. That is why it is so important to know God for yourself.

Have you ever prayed for God's will in your life? God, I want your will above anything, yet we can't even be obedient in the simplest of things. Just because you pray for God's will in your life doesn't mean that it will come to pass.

God's "will" and "plans" are entirely different things.
Plans are more of an outcome in the end. Will has to do with the steps along the way.

God's plans have to do with future events. He can manipulate any event and determine the outcome no matter what. If His plan is for you to bring revival to the KKK you should be able to marry a black man and it will still come to pass. That is one thing that is not in the realm of choice.



We all should want God's will for our lives and we should take the steps needed to live in God's will but again there is human choice involved. Our choices, other's choices, etc. Knowing that God has a plan for your life (**Jer. 29:11**) good is really where the resting in God can happen. Be still and know that I am God. You can be sure that ultimately HIS plan for your life will come to pass **WHEN** you call on Him!!

Jeremiah 29:11-14 - The Message

29:11

I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out - plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.

29:12

"When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen.

29:13

"When you come looking for me, you'll find me.

29:14

I'll make sure you won't be disappointed." God's Decree. "I'll turn things around for you. I'll bring you back from all the countries into which I drove you" - God's Decree - "bring you home to the place from which I sent you off into exile. You can count on it.

Always remember that **God Loves You Unconditionally~**

In His Grip, Grace and Strength,

Tammy L. Dahl

BATTLE ZONE

Perseverance

“Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy.”

~James 1:2 (NLT)

Let me tell ya, that is a hard one to swallow! Do you ever have times when you feel like you've been kicked in the head twenty times over for the same ol' thing? When you've been knocked down and you find yourself trying to rise up once more to peel the pavement off of your back yet again? When you find yourself staring at the same old scenery because you've been around this same block a hundred times before and the only thing that has changed is the day? How about the mornings when you ask yourself very realistically, "Lord, why do I have to go through this?" It's a cold, hard place to be to realize that you are yet again making the same mistakes in life and repeating the same patterns. Especially when you know there is something more out there. When you see other people around you with something better and yet it seems as though your life is stuck in neutral or maybe even reverse! How do you find the sunshine through the rain? The silver lining among the dark clouds of life? The rainbow beyond the storm that is currently rocking your world? How do you rise above?

The Bible tells us in *1 Peter 5:10* that ***“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”*** That means that regardless of what it looks like now, there will be an end to it. It also tells us that at some point God will pour out His grace and not only alleviate our sufferings, but bless us as well. All we have to do is persevere. But what is it to persevere through the trials of life? Have you ever looked upon a situation in life ten times over and seen the same thing again and again and then you look at it for the eleventh time and suddenly everything is new? That's persevering. It's holding on 'til the last hand is played, 'til the last word is spoken, until no stone is left unturned. It's keeping steadfast when everything around you indicates that you should run, NOW! It's fighting against the odds, hoping against all hope, loving when others choose not to. It's battening down the hatches and riding out the storm rather than jumping ship and bailing out when the going gets tough. It's pressing in rather than running away. It's believing against the odds and standing for that belief when you know you don't stand a snowball's chance in hell.

Perseverance is a funny thing. When I think of the word, I get this picture of a pitbull with something appealing between it's teeth. The thing that strikes me is it's physical inability to let go. A pitbull will fight to the death. Trust me. I know. I once made the mistake of placing my hand between my dog and a pitbull to break up a fight. Bad choice. The end result was several stitches on my left hand. But that's how a pitbull operates. It is sheer instinct. He does not run on a deliberate choice of "Will I?" or "Won't I?". He just lays in with everything he's got and we are left simply to watch in horror as the drama unfolds. Our lives shouldn't be filled with the horror of what our perseverance brings, but rather with the joy that is the result of such tenacity. Yes, the joy!

There are times when life just simply doesn't make sense. When no amount of logic or analyzing will ever break it down in ways that we can understand it. The truth is, we don't get all of the pieces to the puzzle. God gives us enough grace to get through each day...sometimes only through each hour...or each moment. He unfolds the puzzle of our lives one small, fragmented piece at a time. It is far easier to persevere in a situation when we believe in something. When we believe in our abilities, when we believe in a God greater than our abilities, when we believe in hope, when we believe. But what happens when we have been drug across the pavement so many times and the hurts run so deep that we no longer have what it takes to hold onto those beliefs? Or perhaps, we never had them to begin with? What

happens when we get to the point of simply wanting the release that comes with giving up? When there is no more desire to try left in us? When death sounds more comforting and far less stressful than the idea of rising up once more to push through this mess we call life? This may sound extreme to some of you, but others know first hand exactly what I'm talking about. Life can become a burden rather than a gift in a moment and suddenly you find that you are capable of thinking and feeling things that you never, ever in a million years thought you could or would.

There is a wonderful scripture found in the Bible that gives us insight into the importance of perseverance and what it causes to unfold in our lives. It is found in **Romans 5:3-4** and reads like this:

***“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations,
knowing that tribulation produces perseverance ;
And perseverance, character,
and character, hope.”***

This tells us clearly that ultimately, the tribulations that we endure in life are intended to be the catalyst that produces good and lasting things within us. With each tribulation that we face we have a choice. That choice comes new and fresh with every set of circumstances that we go up against. The choice to give up for our own lack or to push through in spite of it. If we choose to push through despite the appearance of the outward circumstances, we will reap something personal that cannot be garnered any other way. That something is character. Character is defined in many different ways. Moral strength, reputation, condition, or that special quality that makes something different from the others. There is a quote by *Dwight L. Moody* that goes like this; *“Character is what you are in the dark.”* Think about that. When no one else is around, when you think no one else is watching, or perhaps when you are alone with that one special person, character is what you choose to be, to do, that defines you from the masses. It is the deepest part of your nature revealed in it's fullness. It is how you carry yourself, how you respond, how you receive. It is the very essence of who you are. And that character, once tried and proven, will produce in you the very thing that you may have felt you didn't have to enable you to persevere in the first place, and that is hope. And hope my dear friends, is a very wonderful and powerful thing! For **Hebrews 11:1** further tells us;

***“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen.”***

In all actuality, hope is the key to faith. Hope is what is needed to believe outside of ourselves, outside of our own abilities, outside of our circumstances. Faith is what happens when we find enough hope to believe in the things we cannot see. Faith is the actual evidence that we garner when we stand in the hope of something more than what our current circumstances dictate. Furthermore, we are left with a visual concerning the power of faith in **Matthew 17:20** which states:

***“He replied,
“Because you have so little faith, I tell you the truth,
if you have faith as small as a mustard seed,
you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move.
Nothing will be impossible for you.”***

A mustard seed is perhaps one of the smallest but hardiest seeds that exist. If you doubt, go to the spice section of the grocery store, purchase a jar and dump a few in your hand. They are extremely tiny...but they produce one of the largest and most pungent plants you will find when compared to their size. That is all it takes! You don't need to have it all together. You don't need to have all the answers or have all of the details worked out. All you need is faith as small as a mustard seed. With the smallest portion of faith, which is derived from your hope, which is had by way of your character, which is the result of your perseverance through life's tribulations, the Bible says that you can move mountains. That means that you can face the most tremendous of obstacles and overcome them, for *nothing* will be impossible for you. **NOTHING!** Grab a hold of that! Grab a hold of that and don't let go! When you find yourself in the midst of the darkness, being tried, being tested ~when you desire to do nothing more than let go and give up because you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel ~ when you have been run over so many times that it is no longer a matter of peeling yourself off of the pavement but rather of picking the pieces of pavement out of your skin, that is when you must persevere. That is when you must dig deep

and find just enough faith to allow you to push through. Faith no bigger than the size of that mustard seed is all it takes and in that exists the ability to overcome everything you face and more. A mustard seed's amount of faith is just enough to open up the windows of heaven to pour out on your life the grace and mercy and the power necessary for you to overcome that which stands before you.

Ultimately, God requires great things of us. But He uses the little things to get us there. He alone knows our limitations. Life is filled with so many moments when we feel tried and tested and pushed to our absolute limits, when we scream "I can't handle this!", when we yell out "Why?!" in our lack of understanding, when we just want to drop to our knees and give up, those are the moments when God says, "You can do this. I know. I created you. You can get through this. Just trust me. I will supply your need. I will fill your lack." His ways are not ours. His plans for our lives are not remotely in the same vein as what we would want for ourselves. His values are different. His insight is greater. His love surpasses anything we are individually or collectively capable of. On top of that, He expects us to consider these trials joy! We should be walking through our trials praising God every step of the way. The greater the trial, the greater the praise. Like I said, His ways are definitely not our ways. **James 1:2-4** is our blueprint for this.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Why? Because it tests your faith and that is what develops perseverance! And why do we need to persevere? The Bible spells it out clearly ~ ***"so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*** The end result is a new level of maturity. A new level of maturity that equips you with what you need to develop your faith and keep your focus for when the next trial approaches. Remember, tribulations produce perseverance, perseverance produces character and character produces hope. This does not mean that you are capable of walking through such trials in your own strength. It means that as you learn how to lean on the Father for your strength, how to praise Him through the fire, He will equip you with all that you need through these experiences so that you will not lack anything that is necessary to see you through the deepest, darkest, most challenging trials of life.

Let's face it, we run an endurance race that we call life. He doesn't want sprinters. He wants marathon runners. Those who have learned how to pace themselves, keeping their eyes focused on the high calling of such participation and the prize that awaits those who, despite the odds, can maintain the steady pace that is necessary to reach the finish line. Each encounter we have that requires us to push through and persevere helps to condition us and train us to see the world from a different perspective that reaches beyond the self imposed restrictions of our own limited world and ways. It comes down to changing a mindset. A lifetime of looking at things as though your entire world is caving in around you can be replaced with the peace of knowing that God will use this to strengthen you and establish you for the long haul. But that only occurs when we have had the experience of His faithfulness in our weakness. As we see and experience first hand, God being God and manifesting His mercy and His grace and His victory HIS WAY in the trials of our life, we will become more confident in the One who created us and in His abilities to see us through anything that may be set before us.

The truth is that your faith is a contagious affliction. When someone else sees you moving in peace through the chaos of life, responding contrary to how the natural mind tells them you ought to be, it sparks a curiosity and creates a desire for the how and why of it all. The opportunity to share your faith with others is in itself, a faith building process, rather like a circle that eternally effects one life after another by our ability to persevere through whatever may come...in spite of ourselves. Therefore, remember always ~

***"In every thing give thanks:
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
1 Thessalonians 5:18***

*Staying Pliable In His Hands,
Lisanne*

PIECES OF MY HEART

The Treasure

God's treasures in life come in all shapes and sizes, in all colors and textures, in all forms. They can be people, memories, objects, dreams, opportunities. Sometimes we don't recognize the value of a treasure when it is placed before us. Other times it's value is quite obvious. Realizing that such a treasure is a gift to us can take time. Perhaps that is the reason why God allows them to remain buried sometimes, for to unearth a treasure before God's appointed time can be perilous if the recipient is not prepared to handle it with the utmost care and regard for it's origins. Below is the story of one such treasure: it's value-priceless, it's origins-divine, but that which held it was opened too soon, too fast. Light has a strange effect on those things that are kept locked away in the darkness. Sometimes it brings life...but sometimes it destroys the very thing it was meant to illuminate. Perhaps some of you can relate. A word of caution: regardless of it's form, never take the receiving of a treasure, for granted. For that which was gifted you today, may exist in your care but for a fleeting moment in time only to become a treasured memory that can only be held in your heart.

Sometime ago God showed me a Treasure. A Treasure I was not searching for. That Treasure rode into my world one warm spring day on a beautiful white steed. It had only been 2 months and 7 days since the King had set my feet upon solid ground and begun to establish my life solely dependant on Him alone.

glimpse the beauty of His which had all of the at-love, my Savior. I thought God for revealing this journey of learning wings and discover who I



That day, God let me Treasure; a Treasure tributes of my greatest it beautiful, thanked to me and went on my how to spread my was.

Flash forward, 1 year, 2 months and 3 days later when God, in His infinite wisdom and perfect timing, placed me at the precise spot I needed to be when He brought that Treasure before me once again. Only this time He moved a little closer with it and through a willingness to communicate, left me with the ability to seek out the Treasure on my own. Then He did something that He's only done once before in my life

to such a degree, He manifested His love for His Treasure in my heart. And in the days that followed, God enabled me to see His most precious Treasure through His eyes and with His heart. All I had done was glimpse it, and I knew that my life would never be the same again. How could it? I had felt the heartbeat of my Lord.

I remember seeking out the Treasure elated that one so precious to the Father would remember the encounter with this servant. And then, as I prepared to step out on a limb, my heart leapt and my hands shook at the thought of sitting in the same proximity of the Treasure to deliver those things that God had me preparing all week long. In the hours that followed, I marveled at the beauty of the Treasure that sat before me, listening, learning, observing, immersed in the magnificent presence of one so blessed, so honored, so loved. Yet again, I departed knowing I had done what I was called to do and pushed on to do the things I must do to complete my day. But the Treasure was never more than a prayer away.

It was two days later when to my surprise, my God delivered the Treasure to my very door! And in the twilight it arrived once again on a white steed, but this time the Treasure was covered with the insignia of the King. My heart leapt for joy! I was more than touched that this time, the King's most precious Treasure would seek me out! Closer still I found myself moving to this amazing and most intriguing Treasure of God's.

In the short time that followed, I made my first journey with the Treasure. It was an honor to bask in the presence of such a wonder and that's when something began to stir within me. Having opportunity to observe the facets of it's great beauty from different angles, watching the

sun dance off of it, touching it's exterior ever so gently and cautiously, I began to find a stirring begin within myself that would soon overwhelm me. It was a warm and comfortable feeling that the Treasure's presence was invoking within me yet at the same time, I was challenged to step out of my comfort zone. Still, I knew I could not shy away from receiving one of God's most precious Treasures of my life.

In the weeks that followed, I found myself tending to the Treasure often. The jewels were beautiful but some had been covered over by dust and others had lost their luster. I discovered that it takes no more than a little care to bring out the true beauty that lies beneath such things. Then weeks turned into months and something amazing happened. God was gracious enough to open His Treasure just enough to allow me to see inside! I was awed. For the Treasure that lies on the inside far surpasses the beauty of the exterior, which in itself was exquisite. And as I marveled at the Treasure within, I found myself being drawn to it more and more. Yet even in all of it's beauty, my concern was with that which lies at the bottom of it, at the center of it, at the heart of it. For that which is hidden and unseen among the Treasure is far greater than that which can be seen by all. Yet I knew that it wasn't all who were able to view the King's Treasure and so it was that I was humbled to be able to sit among the presence of that which was so highly esteemed and valued by the King of Kings.

Then something even more awesome occurred! I was given the ability to touch the Treasure. To take it into my hands and hold it and caress it. I spent hours entwined in it's beauty, reaching into it's depths, experiencing it from the inside out in the most intimate of ways. These were moments of pure bliss, filled with joy and peace and a growing

love for the Treasure I held in my hand. I held it in my hand and I marveled at it and I marveled at the Creator for His beautiful Treasure and His willingness to share it with me. Peace flooded my entire being every time I found myself immersed in the same room in which it was kept. I spent much time gazing in adoration at this exquisite Treasure God had set before me, and even more time gazing up at my Lord, telling Him of how much I loved His Treasure and how thankful I was that He had placed something so precious to Him in my care.

But perhaps I spent too much time in this fashion, for then something happened once more and the lid that had been opened enough for me to peer into, was suddenly, and instantly, closed to me. It wasn't withdrawn and it wasn't removed, but it was closed. No longer could I glimpse it's deepest Treasures. No longer could I touch it with my fingers and hold it in my hands. Suddenly I was back to gazing from a far. And though I knew all along that I couldn't hold the King's Treasure for long, this sudden restriction distressed me greatly. And I could feel the longing in my heart causing it to break, not into pieces, but instantly and with the bone crushing strength of a thousand warriors, I felt my heart being crushed into a fine powder to be sifted and purified once more.

*"For where your treasure is,
There your heart will be also."*

Matthew 6:21



SCRIPTURES TO STAND ON

Life

**“The fear of the Lord leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction;
He will not be visited with evil.”**

Proverbs 19:23

**“Enter by the narrow gate ; For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction,
and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads
to life, and there are few who find it.”**

Matthew 7: 13-14

**“Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy
which you have shown me by saving my life;
but I can not escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die”**

Genesis 19:19

**“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God
through the death of His Son, much more, having been
reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”**

Romans 5:10

**“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words
of his life.”**

Acts 5:20

**“Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with
lovingkindness and tender mercies.”**

Psalms 103:4

**“Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go;
Keep her, for she is your life.”**

Proverbs 4:13

**“The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid.”**

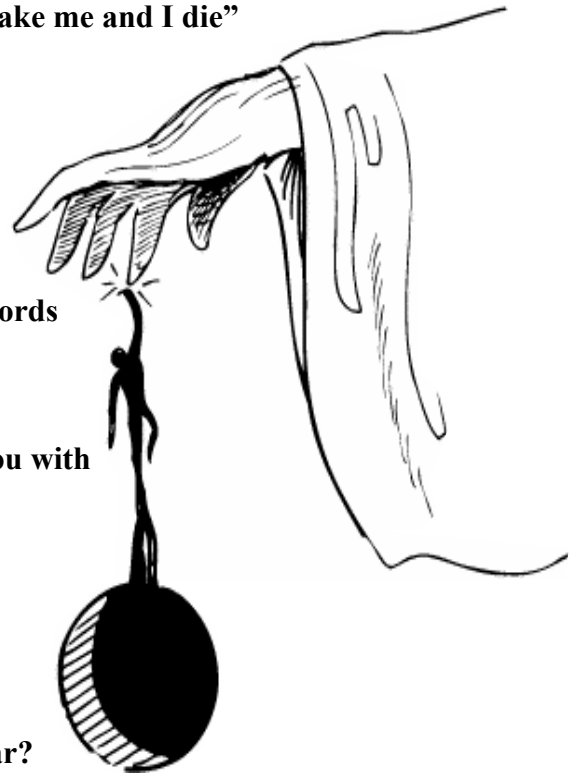
Psalms 27:1

“And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”

I John 5:11

**“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him
should not perish but have everlasting life.”**

John 3:16



FROM DARK TO LIGHT

Poetry

The Empty Path

This journey I have traveled
has lead me to this path in life.
Not sure of which way it will turn.

In my heart I feel
so much pain and anguish.
In my mind I have raging thoughts.
I have loved for so long
and now I feel the need
to be loved back.

I have shared
but now I want to be shared.

Here I sit in hate, anger,
pain and confused.
I feel my life missing the love
and I so bad need to feel
it once again.

But have I lost it forever?
Why do I feel so used and mistreated?

Why do I sit here so alone
in my thoughts
looking at this empty path in my life?
Where else is there for me to go?

All I see is;
no where.

By
Celestine Colôn

My Love

**My love is hidden from the world.
The world is judgmental of others.
Would never,
Could never,
Understand.**

**Open the lock
and see the light of my eye.**

Her touch....

Her kiss....

Her look....

Her smile....

Unbearable to me.

Can't touch.

Can't kiss.

Can't look.

Can't smile.

**My love and the world....
so judgmental.**

James Bradford
9/1/05

**WHAT'S CRAZIER?
LIVING AND EVEN DYING
FOR A CAUSE YOU REALLY BELIEVE IN?**



**OR
JUST RUNNING WITH THE RAT RACE UNTIL YOU DIE?"**

LEE STROBEL