

**On A
Mission**

**Chantelle Hart
(With Lionel Hartley)**

On A Mission

By Chantelle Hart with Lionel Hartley

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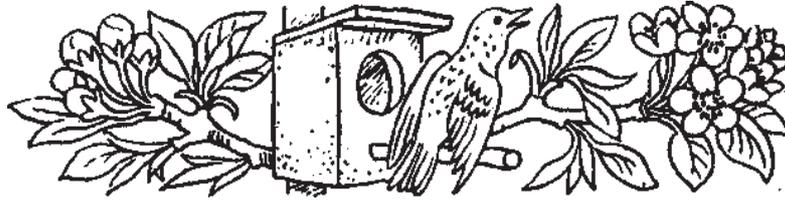
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Dedication

Thanks to the Lord my God who trusted in me. To my Editor who has not only supported and taught me, but been a most faithful friend and publisher — thanks also to his family who have loved me in their home. To my three delightful children, more precious to me than life itself. To my family, especially my sister and young niece. Thanks for everything! — Chantelle Hart



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He

gave me strength,
when I was weak,
He saw my need,
he wondered if I'd see!

He gave me hope,
where I had none,
He gave me courage,
for the things done,
He gave me light,
the presence of his love,
He gave me beauty,
where I should have none,
He even gave me brain cells,
where I should have come undone,
Yes I found a true faithful friend
in God Above,

His love Won!

Foreword.

In Chantelle Hart's first published work, *You've Got to Laugh Your Way Out*, we learned of the traumas that she overcame during repeated stays in psychiatric hospitals. In this, her second book, Chantelle Hart reveals something of the driving force that enabled her to overcome.

She boldly exposes her personality and hastily points the reader to the Source of Power in her life. A life that, though still filled with struggles, has a mission. As with her earlier work, in editing and illustrating this book I have endeavoured to stay true to her intent and yet retain her unique and refreshing style

Lionel Hartley, PhD

HERE'S SOME COMFORT

Do you know some of the greatest men of God suffered from depression? Painter Vincent Van Gogh, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, British Statesman Winston Churchill. How about Charles Haddon Spurgeon one of the greatest preachers who ever lived? Bible characters like King David “How long oh Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with thoughts and everyday have sorrow in my heart?” Psalm 13:1-2.

Another interesting character in Scriptures is Job. Not everyone has been made aware of how God is able to use characters in the Bible for the lessons of these days in which we live. It's true He is still able to help us identify with their experiences. We are able to

learn from these chosen men of God. Women also play a major rôle in Christ's life. It is encouraging to know we women are not forgotten.

Others have felt like characters of the Bible who give us hope to know we too are able to find our way back to joy by telling us how God is able to work in our lives. Sharing their prayers and experiences with us along the way is our helping hand. Job, for instance, shares his most intimate struggles, his heart even failing him when he received rejection from so many who were by his side. To the point that he wondered whether God also had deserted him. But no! Instead, Job found a God who was faithful. God was understanding towards Job, allowed him to voice his complaints.

Eventually God spoke to Job to comfort his soul. Not only did He explain his position but gave Job back ten fold

all he had lost. Only God knew the reason why Job had to go through this trial. Job was questioning God—there is a lesson to learn from this man, don't you think? Luckily we are able to learn from him.

We do not need to question God when we can read of characters in the bible who have had this sort of experience. It teaches us faith, it teaches us that God is approachable while we are going through difficult times, surely it teaches us that God is indeed faithful.

Many search for answers with quick fixes. Patience, or waiting on God, just at times seems too hard. (“Let's find a way to make it right ourselves.”) Well, God makes all things beautiful **in His time!** Christ is the real hope for healing— healing for broken hearts. Healing for lives that need a gentle touch and someone who understands the troublesome world in which we exist.

There is so much suffering these days we need a Healing Touch! Surely the God of heaven understands this more than anyone else could possibly imagine. In Psalm 77:1-9 a man cried out for help. In verses 10-20 all becomes positive. Even though a person can be downcast, speaking to God allows that person to turn things around and obtain an attitude that the Holy Spirit is able to spend time with him. The Holy Spirit's work is to draw us nearer to Jesus, taking us boldly to our heavenly father. Uplifting the heart is to meditate on good. Many do not know this yet it is true.

Prayer and reading the Bible are not such silly ideas after all. If you are reading this book and you have never known the Bible's Author, then ask for a Bible to read and enjoy the influence it can leave in your life.

We can all read and learn the things He

knows we need. Seek for yourselves, compare Scriptures and topics, with the assistance and desire to learn more that God is able to give to you.

Everyone has their good days and bad days. Highs and lows are not uncommon. Extremes can occur when weighty circumstances prevail. A man once said to me “Don’t you think there is a chemical imbalance?” When emotions are churned and tossed in large doses there is a change that takes place.

Doctors may prescribe medication to first release the tension. It is also possible they may presume to diagnose those people without looking further into the cause which caused the depression. Great stress can cripple indescribably as was my case. I will not bore you with the events that took place in my life that made me collapse under the pressures of events or the number of

years I was down, but the truth is, I did have shattered nerves. I am not ashamed of it, my body has since been turned around. Although there is so much negativity in the world, positive moves can be made— it is possible.

We must be aware that stories may either help or harm. Quite often you see true stories of success on television. Some lives so extreme that the negatives are focused on and not the positives. One side only of really severe life stories being promoted to the world is truly harmful. Please let me explain before any conclusion is made. Say, for instance, a woman was raped. If she was to watch a movie of that kind she would go through all the negative emotions through flashback. Her pain becomes someone else's enjoyment. How would this woman feel afterwards? If anything on television is too near to home for an

individual it may revive grief that has not been dealt with or faced. Many are in the world exactly in that position—watching terrible experiences can strike fierce measures.

“One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” was a movie that was extremely popular about twenty-five years ago. I was a young teenager enjoying myself like many others at the drive-in. I thought it was a fantastic movie. It is amazing what growing up with such experiences can achieve. I watched that movie out of interest like many others, yet when I asked a certain lady what she thought of it, she said, “A bit too close to home for me!”. She went on to explain that she was going through it in real life at the time. I felt terrible, it did not even enter my mind it would be painful for her. Doctors had suggested her future include a similar operation to that detailed in the movie. No wonder she was

fearful and asked for assistance from God to cope. My fun was her pain. Oh, if only we shared more love and compassion for others rather than concentrating on our own pleasure.

Emotional trauma exists, not just in hospitals, but in our society, in our world. Years ago I wrote a poem for a painting titled “Nutty”. I was asked by my father to look carefully at the painting and write down what I saw. It was great that he asked me to do this because it was also a healing process for me. Being the sort of person I was, to be able to write on this subject was enlightening.



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“NUTTY”

*What is nutty, I would like to know?
Are they dangerous to others
Or do they glow?
Do they hurt themselves or go wild?
Is nutty to you— a child?
There are nuts everywhere,
They rape, abuse, kill, lie, steal.
They don't care!
To me there are nuts everywhere!
So why lock up innocent ones?
Never mind, nutty people will see
It is not just mental illness—
But those who are poor.
Poor in love with no compassion at all!*

*Nutty people **can** see the light!
They have the hope like any other
To be righteous in God;
For darkness can overtake your heart
If you don't take time to start.
So light is what nuts need to see
Bless them, Oh Lord, and please bless me!
“Send your angels everywhere!”
“Send your angels everywhere!”*

At the time of writing, my life had not improved much. When that poem was written I saw something more than words. Did you? My father has a great imagination and placing those thoughts down on canvas is his way of expression, his gift from God.

Sometimes we need to understand the background of lives in order to dwell upon the characters formed. I personally admire creative people because I grew up with creative people. This quality in my Dad was always appreciated by us as children. A few, however, gave him a hard time about his artistic flare because he was different from most in those days. These days it is a popular form of art called *abstract*. I personally used to think I was useless at art, but It has been revealed to me that such was not true. In my high school days I received a perfect '10' mark, up until the teacher was told by a couple of girls who

had a problem with my ability that I had cheated. At the time it was very difficult for me because these girls were supposed to have been my friends. It was not easy being pretty and talented at the same time. I certainly did not believe I was smart when it came to school work or activities such as sports. I did not even believe I was attractive!

Chemical imbalances can start at a young age. It may slam down on us. It may enter our lives as we become older. It would be nice to share a story with you at this stage. A lady gave me a call to brag about a statement she made to a man although this woman was a Christian. They had been arguing. Something in which he confided to her was brought to surface as a weapon. He told her about a few-months-old child he had lost. When he lost his temper at her one day (I suppose you could call that a chemical imbalance.), she said

to him, “No wonder God took your child away, you didn’t deserve him!” She laughed. Kindly I informed her that such was a cruel statement and it was not true. “God did not take that child, **He allowed it**, there is a difference.” My heart went out to this man— although he was a total stranger. This woman had a false impression of God. She knew no better, she honestly believed that what she had said to him was true. Where did that belief stem from? I could not identify with this lady over this issue, so different from the God who personally helps me in my daily life. As much as I would of liked to rectify what she had said to him, it was to late, the damage had been done. Emotional abuse comes in many different forms.

The man who use to abuse me physically and emotionally heard my words of anger, “I hope you go down in a big way.” When I later heard he was not

going well, I was sorry I had even said those words. Sure, I was no longer interested in him, but I would not have wished such ill health on my worst enemy.

These were words spoken in haste. I can admit to that now. Also bearing in mind that he is now finally healthy and going well. I would not like it to happen to anyone you know. Why? Because I know what it feels like!

Denial is not good either. We are only deceiving ourselves and harming us alone. To lie also is destructive— both to ourselves and to others around. Dishonesty harms even if for good intentions. Lives will never improve while issues are not being faced.

So chemical imbalance may be a legitimate cause. For those that are being called crazy all the time— I've known how it feels. There is comfort to know

that one day it will all be opened— it will be exposed. God does not need a clinical name for shattered lives— He knows every important detail. He knows our reasons for highs and lows. There is no cure except to face them and pray for sustaining power. To overcome fear and pain by working through them is difficult. I won't pretend its not. However, I **can** say this—"You can do it!" Even if that means seeking some assistance from a counsellor. There would be more shame for me if I were to live my life that way and remain the same, causing a lot of unnecessary grief to those I loved.

This can be a painful journey, yet well worth it if you desire a normal life. As a Christian, God helped me cross this bridge. He too is able to give you the support and comfort you need to endure this road. He is more than willing to give you a helping hand, if that is

what you need! Do not look to others for answers or blame them, find solutions in your life. Find the direction that is right for you.

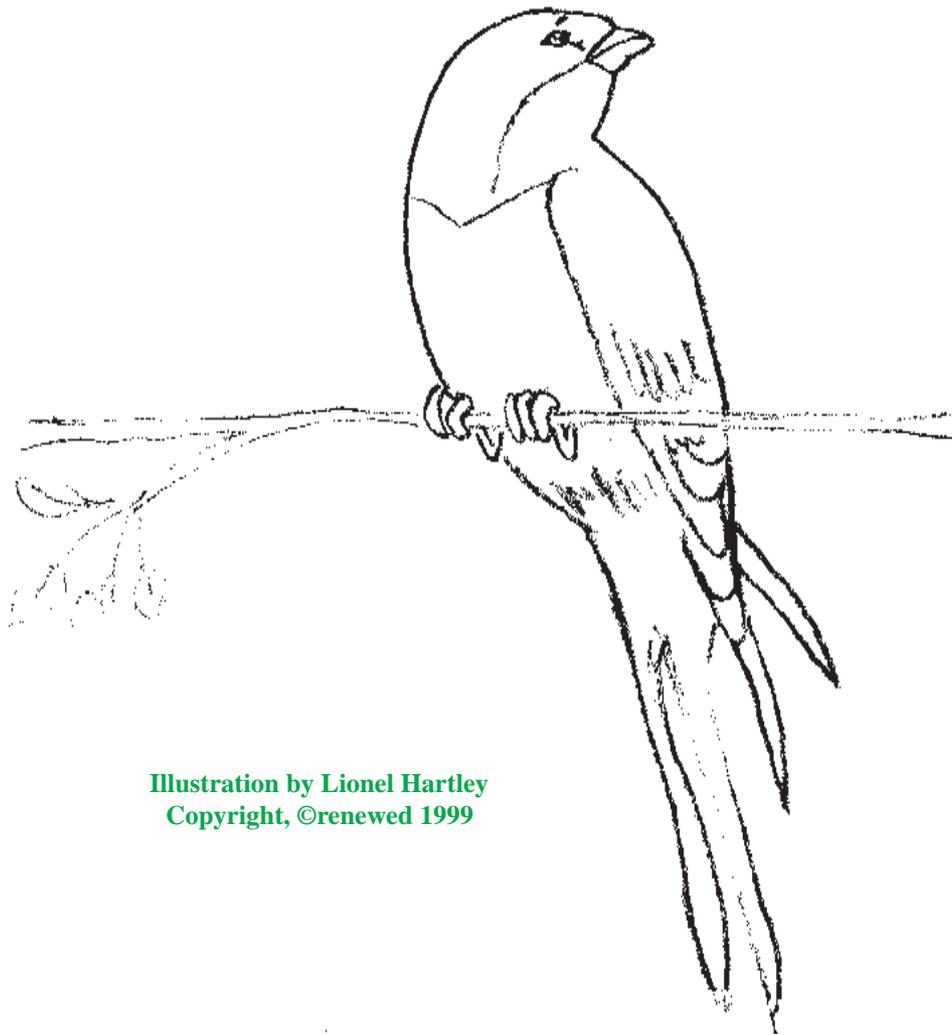


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You May Laugh

When I was writing this book I decided to try something that was suggested to me. For relaxation I placed water in the bath with a piece of wood across and begun to write. This really was a good idea, it was the longest I had ever stayed in the bath soaking. Normally, I can tolerate it only for a while then get bored. Thanks to my eldest son who gave me some bath salts and a nice candle for Mothers' Day, that is for now what I am enjoying (I am the sort of person that needs variety in my life, and that includes my relaxing bath habits).

So if today you are content, happy and have peace, then that's great. If not, and there are those times, we need to explore our lives and make changes. (This includes me too). To evaluate our lives is not really scary, it can be good,

because then changes can take place. Sure, some parts are hard, and it may not even happen instantly. If we at least **look** at our own defects, then that is a good start to be able to admit it—being truthful to ourselves and our God at least. To look into and beyond our circumstances and situation can often be a really beneficial. We need to be true to ourselves, and in return we become true to others who surround us. This gives us the satisfaction of peace entering our lives no matter our state. God does understand for He is understanding.

Years back a Mobile Home was a good means for us to travel. This Ex-British-Army diesel bus, thirty foot long, had all the means of a comfort within a home. It had electricity, gas, and battery power. It had a shower and toilet, so travelling to different places with different back yards and viewing

all sorts of sites was great. I must admit that was the good side of travelling. Once near Gympie, while heading towards Mosman, a rest from driving was needed. As it was pouring down rain I decided not to use the shower inside the mobile home, but instead changed into my swimmers and venture outside with soap, shampoo and conditioner. It was almost freezing, but enjoyable. Other people passing by thought so too, some smiled as they passed by in their cars, a few gave a wave, still some others laughed, some just stared with stunned looks of disbelief. For me it was nice.

Do you know that there are many who always live this way. In some areas creeks are used, others shower in the rain, some parents even bath their children and themselves by garden hose during the day, even in winter months. These people or families do not have

the means to choose going indoors for a shower. Some have suspended buckets with holes in the bottom, others small bags that can heat up through the day with the sun, leaving at least a short warm shower just before evening. These people are not mad, they just call it *an alternative lifestyle*. So sometime or another we may all do things that are strange. That's normal.

As patterns in our lives form, things become familiar to us. This is the case also for victims. Do many really understand the processes of behaviour? It is a area in which many really desire to understand and victims do not even know they are playing a major rôle. For instance, being an abused child can lead to allowing more abuse in their lives. Some even themselves become abusers, which is tragic since they know how it hurts to be abused. Although the behaviour of abusers is not something

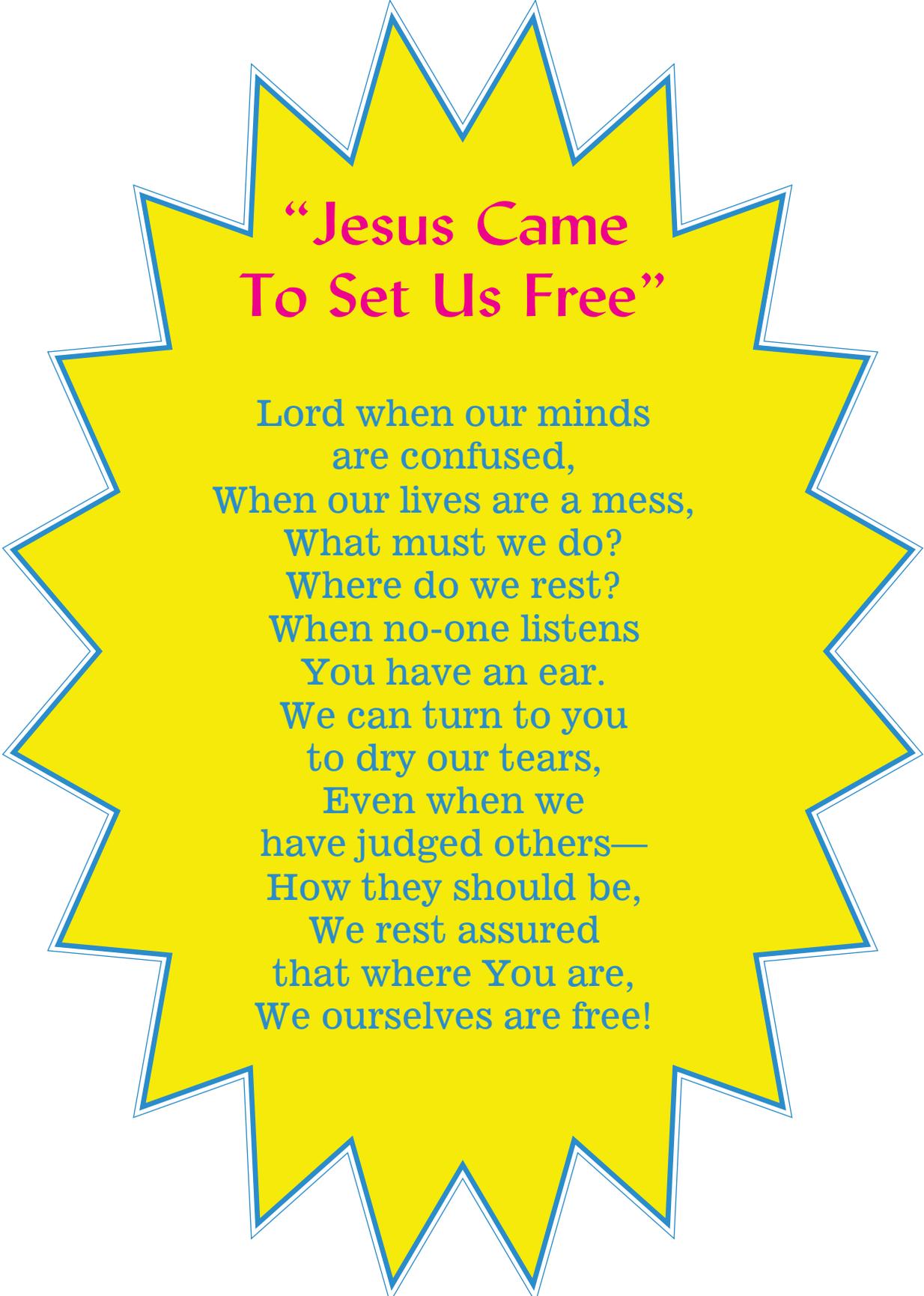
I can claim to know a lot about, they too, like the victims, have a lot to work through— understanding that they would be better people in doing so with more quality of life for those around them.

We may wonder why the world is such a mess. Is it because lives are being shattered in this manner more than any other form?

However, the victims making the first move will help abusers look deeper into their own lives. We often choose for ourselves the sort of treatment we allow into our homes and personal lives.



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“Jesus Came To Set Us Free”

Lord when our minds
are confused,
When our lives are a mess,
What must we do?
Where do we rest?
When no-one listens
You have an ear.
We can turn to you
to dry our tears,
Even when we
have judged others—
How they should be,
We rest assured
that where You are,
We ourselves are free!

Abusers will always return, because they know that the treatment has been accepted and will continue to do be accepted. It is this pattern which needs to be broken! Lives are being turned upside down with events that take place simply by compromising certain standards— anchor points that are needed within our lives. Breaking the cycle is extremely difficult, but this is where trained confidential counsellors are able to assist you. It is your choice alone in the end. “What sort of life do you desire to live?” is a very important question and needs to be assessed with all honesty. It is sad that more and more lives are becoming shattered. Pieces need to be replaced.

Laughter is good. It has been said that we should laugh at least ten minutes a day (and more is even better). It is easy for those who can laugh— to some it comes naturally. Those who can

laugh during difficult times acknowledge that the joy is a real gift from God.

There was a lady in the same hospital as I who tried to end her life, feeling that she was just a burden on her husband and children. She had not laughed in four years. As she spoke, the desire to laugh again was really strong, but she could not laugh. She wished laughter could enter her life again. After listening to her for a while I said “Do you want to go play a game of ping-pong?”

She looked at me with disbelief, she opened up her heart to me, poured out all her sorrow, and her wanting to be dead, my response was not what she was expected. However she decided (with a little encouragement) to come with me by my taking her hand and leading her to the games room.

What she did not know, was that the

thought of giving this lady some fun had entered my mind. When we began to play she was not overly excited about the game. I missed the ball and she laughed out loud and kept on laughing while I chased the ball to replace back on the table. She then had a smile, and laughing while playing and talking to one another during our game. We were both heavily drugged with medication so neither of us were any good at playing, but we were able to have fun!

She stuck with me after that, and when I was being moved to another section, she began to hold onto me and cried for me to stay. I had no choice, although a nurse did say I could come back and visit. Sadly, when the time came, patients were not allowed to visit other patients. Instantly I hoped and prayed that someone else would go to that lady to help her continue to laugh.

Find someone who needs to laugh and laugh *with* them. We all need a laugh, and it takes happy people like you to start it.

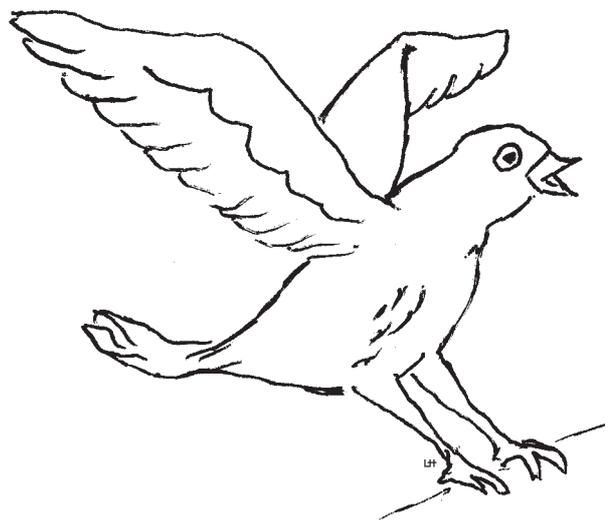


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Laugh Today

Like a toad sitting on a rock,
Making a tool to chisel the block,
Little by little like a head in the jam,
We make others laugh.

How? We don't care a damn—

We do whatever it takes:

Act like a clown?

Anything.

Anything to make people laugh.

Laughter makes the world go round,
If we make people (who are low) laugh as well,

The toad would be sitting in jam—

Sweet as sweet as it could be,

That's how I feel!

Jolly, Jolly bubbling with ease,

When you set someone on a laughing trip,

To some it is a breeze that flows through the air—

The happiness felt,

Making them laugh

Leaving their despair.

Laughter is what the world needs

in a good way;

So think of a way

You can make someone laugh today!

Yes, laughing is important, it is healthy, to the merry heart it is wise when we use it for good medicine!

Fond Times (The making of memories)

Fond memories are nice to have, really. I believe it is more important than many are aware. Often people mistake the past as something of sorrow and no benefit for the present. Treat the past as a friend and it will be kind to you! When speaking of the past to those around me in the mental hospital I believe that it was not for my benefit, but for the benefit of others.

To be able to express the past and be comfortable doing so, may be of great enlightenment for those who wish to enter into a world of acceptance. When in hospital there is little choice but to dwell upon the past—to fight it only makes it worse. Acceptance, and making the most of it while there, is far more practical and conditions can exist for coping with the traumas of the past.

There was an exciting time I can remember when an outing was being arranged. It is nice when you are in hospital for any length of time, to receive permission to go out. This time my father had telephoned the hospital to ask if the family could take me out for a few hours. When I received the news from a nurse, I was keen to get some fresh clothing and was excited about going on a outing with my family. They were travelling a long way to see me which made it even more special.

When they arrived I was ready. When my brother came in to get me I introduced him to a few patients and it was nice to see that he was so friendly to them. We went out to the car where my father was waiting for us and started to travel toward Ballina. When I asked my father where we were going he said, “To look at houseboats and see how

much they cost to hire.” It was thrilling to be talking to my father and brother both on the way and when we arrived at the nicest spot imaginable with water and houseboats in full view.

As we were stepping across onto a boat, I became so afraid. My senses were clouded with medication and I was not confident enough to step on board alone. My father noticed I was hesitating and reached out his hand. He took mine and helped me across. (Our father in heaven does exactly the same.)

As I gazed around the interior of the houseboat, I found the cutlery on display was shining brilliantly. It stood out as something beautiful. In contrast to what I had become accustomed to in hospital, I immediately noticed that the bed quilts looked so amazingly rich with their lovely patterns and colours. When

my father opened a cupboard by eyes were enlarged as I gazed upon the dinner set. After the plainness of the hospital, this was better than any motel. I bore the smiles, laughter, and excitement of a child in the fun company of my father and brother.

We then stepped off the boat, once again my father helped me step down before we went to a nearby shop. My father encouraged me to choose something for me to take back to hospital. I chose a few small gifts to add to the building of a memory. We went back to the car and returned to the hospital. When they dropped me off, I was extremely sad to see them go. Tears entered my eyes, even though I retained a smile on my face as I saw them off.

Then I went back into my room to be alone. As I placed the gifts on my table, I realised I had no reason to be

sad as a part of them remained with me. At that time I was even more fortunate, as a male nurse had arranged a room for me with what I considered the nicest view in all the hospital. I had a lot to be grateful for—in addition to my family—I had a God that remained with me simply because I asked Him to.

More memorable times were created when I was in another hospital when my mother came and visited me everyday without fail. She would catch a bus early in the morning, come and visit, and stay until the afternoon when visiting hours were over. Her effort and perseverance for so long was really amazing. That is real commitment. She has the patience of a saint. She taught me to sit and wait for hours if need be and not become frustrated. By observing her patience, I was able to learn mine. We did many activities together. She would help me to cover books, lis-

ten to me sing songs that I wrote while in there, come for walks with me, say prayers that were encouraging for both of us and played games.

We were a very limited in what we could do, but it made little difference, as we enjoyed each other's company. These precious times are worth remembering, don't you think?

My Nanna was in hospital for many years. She was a lady with a lovely personality—full of fun and life, I was told. That was not the Nanna I knew: I only knew of her as a woman with faith and love towards her God while she suffered for ten long drawn-out years on a hospital bed after suffering several strokes.

It was actually my experiencing her faith that taught me mine.

These are fond memories—memories for good. It is beneficial to weed-

out the fond memories and not dwell upon the destructive elements of the past. Fond memories have been a source of faith which I used to establish mine own faith as I went through my own hard times year after year. Now I hope to pass onto you that renewed faith and a new insight into God—that maybe He has not forgotten nor failed to see. From generation to generation, God is good.

Memories created through nature are lovely. A huge bold blue tongue lizard who used to come in from outside would wander around the hospital, even if visitors were present. I developed an appreciation for the shrubs (or weeds) that I kept in my garden, and the little flowers you could barely see unless you looked for them. The sun to enjoy, the rain for a nice change, different seasons during the year to make it more interesting for us by creating va-

riety in our lives— these things are for our enjoyment if we take the time to enjoy them. How sad when peoples lives become filled with whinging. Some do nothing but complain. I would hate to be in God’s shoes, trying to please everyone— I know I would fail miserably. Have you any fond times you would like to recall?

Can you believe: this I actually *enjoyed* filling up ten big garbage bags with weeds out of a garden bed I wanted to start. Mosquitoes hardly bothered me and the sand-flies I endured in masses. I am a very soft person, but life tends to toughen you sometimes. I am learning not to concern myself with small matters, or even some opinions: What people may say about a thirty-year-old lady who can appreciate nature better by sitting up in a tree as people are walking by. (At least her mother could say, “You always did en-

joy nature.”) Such behaviour was not to be different but simply to have fun—the same goes for life in general. It is our outlook that counts. We each decide for ourselves, although some need to work harder at it, it is worth it. The finished product is to be happy. Through reminiscing on fond memories, we can all learn to be content with our circumstances and situation.

Mental Institutions are ‘obligation houses’—you're obligated to stay in and make the most of it! If I had forgotten my past then this sharing would not have taken place. From past experiences we learn—learn to care and learn to share. We are like a garden, we need refreshing showers, we need an extra touch to be happy, we need the Son of God to shine into our lives.

There are weedy people who can grow too with a little loving kindness.

Yet sometimes a demonstration of love can set them back, as some are more provoked by love than revelling in the joy of receiving it, I believe it is because they may want something you have, or they are hurting deeply and lashing out because they find it is easier than trying to be happy, because they don't know how to be happy. They have not yet explored the calming breeze that cools you down, leaving tenderness behind. The key is allowing forgiveness to become centred in your life.

Through God's grace, we are able to forgive without being caught up in a web. To forgive abusers, ignorance, or whatever else that is needed is the result of God's grace alone, and it is sufficient. I think that everyone wants to like themselves more, and if they truly want happiness they will seek to find it! The memory of someone's kindness and gentleness will always remain a liv-

ing image to be remembered. People who support others become an important part of fond memories. Brightening lives of others along the way is the gift of God's presence. And it is the quiet times with Him that has taken me to such heights. He works within our hearts, changing us, making us new.

This is not some fault in God wanting to correct our lives, it is simply His mercy. It is His touch that filled my life with joy and He can fill your's too. I am able to love other people cause He first loved me, I am able to forgive mistakes because He first forgave mine, and I am able to share my experience because I know He cares for you too! The nicest part of life is God's love, that keeps us aware of his touch and faithfulness in our lives— how He is able to work through our lives to supporting another. God is always willing and able!

A Sermon In Hospital

I pause to recall a sermon I once wrote during a time I was not attending church. I wrote on a subject that was especially meaningful to me. I wrote on the seventh-day Sabbath. Although I am a Seventh-Day Adventist, my not going to church at that time did not diminish my belief on this subject. In fact I had, many a time, missed attending church over long number of years. In my heart I knew, that regardless of my church attendance, the Sabbath-day was still special time between God and me. At that time, I did not attend because many issues had to be resolved in my own life and I did not exactly blend in— or so I thought. But God remained with me and He and I had many moments together. Writing this sermon was just one.

I enjoyed writing the sermon, but the

guy I was living with at the time did not. He never saw beauty in my spiritual interest but only condemned me for it and made me feel like I was a total fool for believing in God. He was ready to admit me into the psychiatric hospital instantly, demanding that I was crazy and had a problem, simply because I had stayed up till late writing from my heart and enjoying looking up texts. He became infuriated and said “That’s it, girl, you’re going into the hospital.”

In response I became afraid and annoyed. I was not going to give this man the satisfaction dragging me in there again, especially over my writing about God's Sabbath.

While he was in the shower, I tried to make myself feel better by taking myself to the hospital. He came along later with what I had written and I was admitted! That, remarkably, is how

other nurses and even a doctor were able to read what I had written. One Christian nurse appreciated what had been written and encouraged me to continue. A certain male nurse asked if he could read it: somehow I knew this was not going to be in my favour, so I was hesitant to hand it over, but I did.

He read part of it, then looked at me as if to say, ‘she is crazy’. Another nurse must have heard about it, came and asked if she could read it, I trusted her a little more. When she returned the sermon she said she enjoyed it and it was good. That is what I regard as differences in perception— one was open the other closed.

There are other ways for a sermon into reach into people lives. My aunty (a counsellor) came in for a visit with the nicest bunch of flowers. After having a conversation with me she asked

me the question, “What have they got you in here for, you seem all right, you don't appear to be crazy.” When my cousin heard I was in hospital he came in immediately to see if he could take me home with him, and bring me back on a daily basis for medication and check ups. He mentioned something about knocking the doctor out and taking me and hiding me away.

I knew then I was to remain and I let him know that if God had me in there for a purpose it was all right, and I would stay. But my cousin could not agree and said he would keep in touch by phone because it hurt him to much to visit me.

The doctors did not often comprise with my family. Even a trip out to lunch with a family member was denied. Maybe my family were not use to the rejection, but by this time I knew what

to expect. Fortunate I had a family that cared. My family knew of my personality, my beliefs, and my outgoing nature. This was nothing strange to them. Another cousin (beside the one I mentioned) and his wife visited on a regular basis. Bringing me so many flowers I was able to share them with inmates who had none. I even dried some out for myself for the day I was to arrive home to remember the visitations.

A lady who lived next door to me, not understanding why I was in there in the first place, came to visit me and share some wonderful laughs and smiles. Maybe these seem like small gestures, but if you know someone who is going through this process now, then understand *they need you while they are sorting out their lives*. Many flowered my life, and that in itself was more of a sermon than any amount of words that could be spoken.

God was able to use me several times while I was in there. One lady I had the pleasure of being associated with had scars all over her body and been admitted for a whole year with no leave. She explained to me that voices she heard were telling her to harm herself all the time, they were entering into her head calling themselves by name. I simply said “You come and get me next time it happens.” She did.

As I spoke to her about the voices, I told her to ignore the voices if they were telling her to harm herself. I then asked her if she believed in Jesus and I suggested a prayer. Over time, she learnt to pray and ignore the voices. After one whole year of doctors treating her with medication and giving her no hope of ever returning to her family, that was all it took. (Plain and simple.) She gradually began to dress nicely and go

out on leave: one day leave at first, then a few days at a time. She was recovering. She was so much happier and friendlier.

A male nurse that had attempted suicide was placed within the ward. He was hard to get close to as I noticed that he especially seemed fearful of women. He did not carry a conversation as he was too busy staying distant. One day, when we were alone in a room, I said, “Have you had a hard time with women?” He admitted he did, adding that he was homosexual. He seemed surprised at my trying to understand and to be non-judgemental. I then asked him if he had tried to commit suicide because he was lonely. He looked extremely amazed at my straight forward question and replied, “Yes”. I do not know what made me say what I did (except maybe the Lord giving me the words).

So I learnt that he and I could become friends of trust. On the day of my leaving he offered to carry my bags downstairs for me, gave a kiss on my cheek and hugged me ‘goodbye’. There is so much more that could be shared, but these two will give you an idea with just how God is able to help. Maybe not all are acceptable to God's working, but some are prepared to try cause medical profession has given them no answers or solutions.

If people began noticing how these little things are able to help and encourage, then that would be like a sermon too. It is the little things that brighten our lives that makes the difference—how much more do people needing it appreciate it. Giving the lonely the opportunity to express themselves (a few never will because they are afraid). I really hope and have prayed that hearts will be touched. You can enjoy a good

life if you work towards it and never quit. By the grace of God I have been able to do it, by this I believe it is possible for you too. All things are possible with God.

When it is hard to work through or share with anyone, remember that God understands, and He can help you through until such time that you can face the issues that have torn your life apart. Do not be ashamed. Be brave and face what is shattering the life: the sooner it is done, the better you will feel. It won't happen instantly, overnight, but it will take place—and you will notice improvements. It is your decision, it is your life, just as my life is my decision—we all chose for ourselves, no-one else is responsible. So let us remember that no-one else is to blame—forgive ourselves and others for past mistakes and get on with living life and enjoying the glorious future.

Full On

There is no academic education in the things I share. Education often comes with life experiences, as it has with me. It is a different process but one which trains us in areas which books cannot teach. It may have been a rough way to learn, but I have no regrets if it has opened my mind towards God or toward others in similar circumstances.

Some time ago, I thought of becoming a counsellor and helping people through certain areas with which I knew I could identify. Although I made some initial inquiries but a part of me held back. Maybe I was aware that certain areas of my experience would run contrary to the textbook and that would have been difficult for me personally. I would then have been totally honest with some of the answers as well as myself.

Even though many encouraged me (including the G. P. that counselled me—he said that if I could get through the theoretical knowledge part that my past experiences would be a real benefit to counselling. Although this G. P. was not a Christian, he admitted that he believed Christian faith had helped me. I was one of his best survivors and he doubted I would ever fall victim again—the difference being whether or not I accept it back into my life. That will always remain my choice.)

What I do choose in my life now is just to love. It is not uncommon to admire people with a natural love. A family I know are so lovely, the mother in particular is the most gracious, loving person. She seems really different at first, but as you get to know her you realise that it is just her loving manner.

Other members of her family are the same because of the love they receive. Because of her love, they worship God together and have a loving environment. This family helps, acts, talks as though love exists (which it does). As you get to know them *respect* becomes no longer just a word.

Loving families seem rare these days, but loving environments do still exist. Sometimes, when it comes to really different people—people who may (to us) look or act strange—their lifestyle alternative makes it difficult for us to notice that these may be loving people. I used to live in a country town where people were so different to those with whom I was accustomed that I learnt to accept the most peculiar.

It helped me to be non-judgemental and loving too, but the experience taught me to be extremely careful with

whom I associate. Company does make the difference—for better or for worse. It still continues to be our choice—to accept people for what or whoever they are is nice, but to allow the unhealthy influences in their lives to combine with ours is dangerous, especially if their influence has been in an area that you have successfully fought your way through.

When people around me go through a difficult time, I enjoy slipping them a poem, writing letters of encouragement, or even making up some little treat to take to them as I visit. My own experience has made me the sort of person I now am: that which is now my calling. When my children often asked why I come in contact with so many that are ill I try to help them to understand that it is my area of ministry (only God knows why).

Not all are easily touched by kindness: it takes different people to reach different people with different needs. I think it is kind not to gossip. Some with a different perspective may not agree. It is strange now looking back at my time in hospital when I wanted no gossip. I was hardly realistic.

Gossip can be destructive if we pass it on it. I personally try not listen to gossip and I tell myself that I find it boring. I tell myself that I can have much more fun talking about things other than what others are doing in their lives (or being asked what is happening in mine).

Have you ever been more comfortable with some more than others? The faithful friends are the ones you know will not gossip—these are the ones you can feel free to open up too. These are the ones you can trust.

Good gossip! We need more good gossip! A most interesting determiner of gossip is “If you can’t say something nice, maybe best not to say it at all.” Many do not even go to church because of gossip. Gossip is very opposite to what love is: Love does not run people down. In the end you may find out the gossip was not true. Gossip is not usually gospel. In fact if you hang around gossip (this has happened to me in the past) you become no better than the gossippers.

We cannot always make people aware if they are doing it— I tried that once and it was not successful. In an article I was once shown, it said “You have to cut out the heart because its rooted so deeply.” Things are not always how they appear to be so we need to be careful if we wish to begin choosing sides.

I reckon the only good thing about gossip is that the truth may be finally revealed. Did you ever hear the words of Eric Clapton's 'Tears in Heaven: No-one Knows You When You're Down and Out'?

“Would you know your name if I saw you in heaven? Would it be the same, if I saw you in heaven? I must be strong, carry on, 'cause I know I don't belong here in heaven.”

We all do belong, and we also belong to one another, because what we do to each other we do to our Lord. He feels and bears the pain. He carries those that are left alone.

Heaven is a promise made to us— a place the Lord has prepared where there will be no more hurt, pain, sorrow, suffering or death. It will be a place

of sincerity and love, full of delightfully enjoyable times, no more nasty insults, no more accusations. Exciting times exist ahead.

I personally believe we start here and now with the love found in our Lord and God. Responding to love ourselves and in return loving and forgiving ourselves because God forgave us. As a natural response we then desire to forgive others while lovingly impressing upon them the distinction between right and wrong. For love is honest, and truth is like a kiss on the lips.

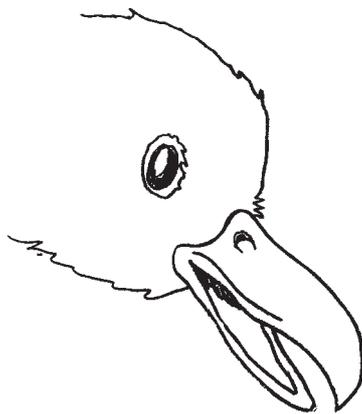


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Most Important!

Ever wonder about time? Since I was a child, with a different health problems, I have been in and out of hospitals. Only the hand of God could have sustained me through such trying occurrences.

But it was never a waste of time. It was enduring and testing, but never a waste. In retrospect I have found it to be a blessing, not only for me but for the many others I met throughout those years. No-one but God really knew just how it would work out. At the time, it was something I could not fully understand—I just took everything as it came along (as I did the people I meet along the way). I guess we all do that in our own way.

You will be able to relate to different pressures that have occurred with your own life— how you have been there for

them, or who have been there for you. Life works that way doesn't it? So we are not alone in that process.

So when we start to realise we are aging and that the years fly by, and we wonder where our years have gone—how quickly the days begin and come and go, we can look back in our lives in one way or the other and say, “Well it's been jolly good”. A hand up above has been there to help us and we did not even realise it at times. I may not have even believed the way I should have, but God is good after all. He's been in and through my life.

*Time is valuable
and there is a time and
season for everything!*

Time is a healer, and our bodies are magnificent in restoring. If I have accomplished, by the grace of God, any

sort of improvement in my life then that alone was something to be eternally grateful for, or if others were touched along the way, then that is something to appreciate and admire God for too, and so our time goes on... we all have times in our lives when we have been blessed all round.

Little things in our lives— they are all there to fulfil a purpose. Our growth, helping others, learning so much as we go along— it may be forgiveness or loving— when we can capture the beauty that God is able to mould out of our experiences along the way, then time is valuable.

How do you feel, about your time? How do you feel about your state? Believe me, looking at ourselves, is not the key. If we look at ourselves for too long, it could be rather discouraging and distasteful, even if we're a good person.

Looking to the Lord our God, (now that is someone worth looking at) will enable us to have those special times.

If you are ill and going through a really difficult time, recognise that God can help. I am being honest here. You're doing great, the biggest accomplishment you can achieve while ill in general is to cope with it, and if you're in that circumstance now, then recognition of God belongs also to you. Feel important about yourself regardless, because you are important to God. I **know** you are!

Well, everything falls into place. We all have short lives, yet we can certainly make the best of our time along the way. Valuable time—learning to rest in God's care is so wonderful.

Do you lack motivation? Ever think why? Do you want to hang around

those successful? Jesus has been that success. I will be honest here. When someone who has gone through a hard time becomes well one day, (there are those stories and dreams that do come true), it can be so difficult if we do not allow God to clear the stage. What I am trying to say to those who have been there, for you— along the way— are certain people who are special in your life. God has been special to me— He was on call twenty-four hours a day. Others are just as special some of the time too time.

We all have so much more to learn, and love is the greatest lesson. Time is most important, yet money takes an other prize. How dreadfully sore, for those who are struggling, when support is so desperately needed more than anything, and we hold back. Yes, there are some who may abuse it, but should that stop us?

If a favour is done, we ought to expect nothing in return but a thank-you and appreciation for the effort. Kind acts are sometimes misunderstood but God above understands the sincerity behind it— sincere hearts with right motives that act to help. To know that if God even loves someone like me then, believe me, everyone can be loved by Him.

God does not see any of us as ‘nuts’, we don’t grow on nut trees. If we were meant to be nuts, we would be hanging on a tree right now in full nut swing. God understands, cares and loves people in every part their lives. Just because I believe in God does not make me strange. Just because He has written messages on my heart, even the commandments. To all of us God's care is a safeguard. A life-saver!

God himself has feelings. He has had to survive watching us go all different

directions, trying to find our own solutions and answers for everything, when he has been there all along waiting, with a great deal of patience.

Life is a sweet challenge. God is in control of our lives. He is the Commanding Officer who plays a rôle in reaching out his hand to you! Capture his love and you will never have any regrets nor will you ever be put to shame. Our trust in God is definitely not in vain. Pride has no part in it—being humble before God does, it has major rôle.



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“Of Most Interest”

“There was a journalist in South America who heard about a certain prison and the really terrible things that happening inside to the prisoners. With a journalist's interest in searching for stories, he wanted to know more about the happenings that were taking place. So his idea was to enter into that prison to find out for himself what really took place. A sort-of ‘behind-the-scenes case’.

This journalist told his family and friends he was going on a holiday, a vacation. However, he in reality entered the jail system and went through the most horrific experiences. No-one knew he was a journalist.

But the length of time he stayed there was long enough to write a story and reveal what people needed to know.”

What stands out to me most about this true story is that *he volunteered*. He knew that it was going to be rough, even horrific, yet he still went in by his own free will. He was willingly taking on trauma to reveal the truth. He helped a lot of people by his brave mission.

“Wow!” Who would volunteer to do something so drastic just to find an article? That was a good reporter. His experience was the best research. It makes you wonder if his still recovering. I somehow hope he is having a real holiday this time. When someone is literally being forced into a mental institution (this needs to be a clear picture.) There may be screaming, kicking and praying for help.

I would like to share with you just one instance where God personally helped me. I was to have shock treatment. By

doctor's request he asked me to sit down and wait on a chair beside another lady. There was no time for lost control, or even tears. This was, however, a place to lift a prayer. "What do I do Lord?" With a soft answer implanted in my memory bank, "sit still and do not fight or talk". When there is a room with horrific-looking equipment visible through a clear window, what else could I do but go by any voice that was prepared to help me.

At the time I was not sure if this was God or if it was going to help me or not. But it was the only answer that came to me.

Sitting still, not panicking, with my hands placed calmly in my lap. I sat. Like a sitting duck. Waiting. The doctor came up to me and said, "You seem all right now, you can go, we won't give you shock treatment." All I could say

was, “Thank-you” as I slowly walked away in relief.

One other time it was recommended that I needed shock treatment, but somehow that close encounter passed by as well.

One very burly gentleman that came into hospital was angry. He had been accused of doing something that he claimed he had not done at all. Doctors laughed at him whenever he tried to let them know it was not him. He said he did not know what they were talking about for they had him mixed up with some one else. Well, that was his story.

This man was annoyed, and looked at us who were patients, and said “How can you people take this treatment? Why don’t you fight back? There are more of you!” This seemed like a solution. But being the outspoken one I said

“ You'll soon learn that you obey the rules or else you're in worse trouble.” He looked at me in disbelief.

He remained with us for two to three days before he was dismissed from hospital with an apology they had made a mistake. They had sought after some one else, and they had picked up the wrong man and accused him falsely. He challenged, “How is a ‘sorry’ good enough for what you have put me through.” As he walked out with his bags. I turned to a person near me and said “ That poor guy”

The best time I think I ever had in hospital was when I suggested to all the patients we sleep outside on the courtyard for the night. Late one afternoon many of us were talking sitting on the grass and the conversation moved to spiritual matters with lots of questions, different points of views, and even a Bi-

ble for us to read from (One guy who was not a believer offered to fetch it for me). There we were having such a nice time, we must have gone on for many hours because the stars were out and it was getting late. There was only one male staff member on duty and he was off to the side waiting for us to retire to bed, acting totally bored and reading a book. He did come over several times and said we should go to our rooms and get some sleep, yet none of us were tired. We were alive and right into deep discussions on spiritual matters.

It was getting really late and once again the male nurse came and asked us to go to bed. This time in a more demanding voice. “Hey! Lets go get some blankets and our pillows, and sleep out here for the night,” was my suggestion. This male nurse could not believe it, we had taken our medication yet nothing was working for him. So we slept outside

under the stars! With the late night we had, when we awoke the next morning, we went off to our own beds and slept throughout the day. The nurses commented that it had been great for them because they had a nice peaceful day with all of us sleeping.

It only takes one day of difference to motivate. It helped me to be able to talk to and fit in with these people. To open up the truth where it has been long overdue. To have the institution appear to be fair and just would be a great help to many.

Afterword by chantelle:

‘If what I have shared has helped you, it has been worth it. I would like to see you return home safely.’ *CH*