

Encourager MINISTRIES



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JAN—FEB 2009

From Mary Kay...



SPRING CALENDER:

- March 6, 2009 — Panhandle Women's Conference
- April 18, 2009 — Gideon Pastor Appreciation Banquet
- April 21, 2009 — Ladies Event
- April 25, 2009 — Pastor Appreciation Banquet

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2009 arrived with truly a “mixed bag” of potential. We inaugurated the first African-American President of the United States. We are also experiencing a financial crisis more serious than any since the Great Depression.

Our armies are spread thinly across several countries, and there are “wars and rumors of wars” around the globe.

Greed and corruption in both government and business continues to be exposed almost daily. Joblessness and homelessness are higher than ever before. Domestic violence and the breakdown of the family unit proliferates.

But...there is God. He is faithful and promises to “provide all our needs according to His riches in glory.” And in the words of an old hymn: “My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ Name.”

Christians can rest secure in whatever comes, as we trust God. It does not mean we will not experience difficulties; but God does promise never to leave us nor forsake us. Remember, neither the Democrats nor the Republicans, the liberals nor the conservatives, the ungodly nor the righteous are in control. **Our God reigns!**

New Year’s Day arrived quietly because by 10:30 p.m., I was too

sleepy to wait for the stroke of midnight!

Ilene and I continue our weekly (3 days a week) attendance at Curves, and have committed to lose 10 pounds in 6 weeks. A team of 4 people, each losing 10 pounds, becomes eligible to win \$1,000! Pray for us to lose (weight, that is).

My goal is to get off medication, and currently I have lost some weight, reduced my caffeine, and increased my exercise. I was on three separate blood pressure medications, but have eliminated one and reduced the others.

If you read our previous newsletter you know that Ilene’s eldest son, John, moved back to Missouri. God has been faithful, and we are learning anew the truth of Isaiah 55:89, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Since returning to Missouri, John has begun working and is very active in school. He works at a grocery store, lives in his own apartment, and is within easy walking distance of school, work, the library, and McDonald’s!

John was in the fall school play in

November, and we went home to Missouri to see him. His performance earned him a photo on the front page of the newspaper, and he not only danced, he sang a solo!

John will graduate high school in May. He scored a 1980 of a possible 2400 on his SAT, and takes the ACT in February. He is hoping to go to MIT or Cal-Tech on full scholarship, so please add that to your prayer list.

January is gone now and Ilene has been busy getting tax papers ready, and assigning “chores” for me. The Encourager Ministries Board of Directors met January 19; in addition to electing officers, we were able to complete a number of tasks from the previous year. We still need to add a board member; so we covet your prayers in this matter.

Nashville was my first out-of-state meeting of 2009. I had the privilege of sharing at the 2009 Gideon’s Auxiliary Presidents’ Dinner. Auxiliary members are wives or widows of Gideons. These women included Auxiliary Presidents from several foreign countries as well as

from the U.S. What a joy to share the redemptive impact Auxiliary members have had on my life.



John in the school play

Looking back on the last half of 2008



Megan K.

July

Counseling took up much of my time in July, although I did speak at a women's all day event in Wetumpka, Alabama, at Thelma Baptist Church. One of the blessings for me was seeing the sons and/or daughters of the correctional officers from Julia Tutwiler Prison—my alma mater! Many of those officers had a very positive impact on my life and meeting their relatives brought back pleasant memories.

August

Ilene and I did volunteer work at Lovelady Center, a recovery facility for women and children, with an eye toward taking permanent staff

positions. However, God had other plans and my travel began to increase significantly. We continue to work with some of the residents, and one young woman, Megan, is living with us. She is making very good progress financially and spiritually.

I traveled to Arkansas and east Alabama to speak at Pastor's Appreciation Banquets (PAB) for Gideons.

September

The month began quietly and then I went to California for several events. In 2 prisons we participated in OSL—Operation Starting Line—an evangelical outreach. One prison cancelled a chapel program after an

incident in the prison and it appeared that our schedule was hindered. However, God was still in charge; I attended services with PF Director Karin Arango and her husband, Cesar. They apologized for the change, but I assured them my time was not being wasted. Cesar spoke to the Pastor, who gave me 5 minutes to explain about Angel Tree. I had spoken about 3 minutes when the Pastor interrupted and informed me that he believed the Lord wanted me to take the whole service!

Just moments prior to the service, a young couple had arrived and were greeted joyously by most of the congregation. Later I learned that this was the Pastor's daughter and son-in-law!

During the ministry invitation an older lady came forward and, like me, was still adjusting to being a widow. We prayed and the Lord comforted our hearts. To the great delight of almost everyone there, the Pastor's daughter also came forward with tears of repentance and great joy resulting in praise and thanksgiving. The remainder of the day, I rejoiced in our Sovereign Lord. God knows exactly where we need to be each day and arranges divine appointments for his Glory.

October—November

The remainder of September, October and November included much traveling and for several weeks I was home less than 72

consecutive hours—just enough time to unpack, do laundry, and repack my suitcase. Trips included California (twice), Missouri, Tennessee, Arizona, and Alabama. I did several radio interviews, made visits to prisons, and spoke at schools, colleges (Dr. David Jeremiah's Bible College), retreats, worship services, and had numerous opportunities to share the Good News.

In south Alabama, I was invited to a county high school assembly with 200-300 students. As I left a young lady about 16 followed me down the hall and confided that her Dad had gone to prison just a few months before. She further commented, "... and I'm not sorry; I hope he stays there." I was able to step aside for a brief time and share with her that anger and unforgiveness would ruin her life.

She listened and then, with tears in her eyes, she thanked me and gave me a hug.

At dinner that evening, I met the school superintendent, who had given permission for me to speak, but had been unable to attend. She reported that both students and teachers had been significantly moved by the testimony and she praised God.

We had planned to spend Thanksgiving with my daughter in Illinois, but my granddaughter, Cassie, was hospitalized with a blood clot in her foot. She had to remain in bed, but the clot was successfully dissolved, and she returned to college the next week. Cassie is a senior at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana and will graduate in June.

My son-in-law, Bill, has recently had hernia surgery again. This has resulted in job loss, pain, and anxiety as he has had more than half-a-dozen surgeries. Please pray for Bill's **full** recovery and healing.

(Continued on page 3)



Joey's 12th birthday party on December 20

Prayer request

We need volunteers who will:

- Enter all our 2007 records into QuickBooks.
- Enter a large amount of contact information into Outlook.
- Enter an entire box of papers into Word.
- Do a major overhaul on Mary Kay's filing system in her FBC-Pinson office.

(Continued from page 2)

My twin great-granddaughters, Karley and Kaydynce, remain in foster care. Iowa is beginning the process to place them permanently. Born at 27 weeks, the girls are now 18 months old and are still dealing with some health issues. Please pray for wisdom for those who are making decisions.

December

My last major trip was to Dallas, Texas, for a women's ministry event and a women's prison. Actually, the "prison" was a county jail, which had housed numerous state inmates, and one dorm was specifically designated as a "faith dorm."

The program is completely run by volunteers and I had the privilege to meet and stay with Selby Harrison, who coordinates that program. Selby and her husband are both physicians who give of themselves—their time and energy generously.

The remainder of December involved some radio interviews for Angel Tree and a quiet Christmas at home. On December 20, Joey turned 12 and invited several friends for a sleepover. There was very little sleep, but lots of laughter and fun.

It had been several years since I cooked a big Christmas dinner, but I fixed a turkey and a ham with all the trimmings. We invited several people who had no other plans, and all 8 of us shared good food and fellowship.

House update— updated house!

Our house is no longer for sale; we took the sign out of our yard and have begun to move back in after putting nearly everything in storage while we painted.

All Spaced Out is a professional organization that has helped us by installing numerous shelves and storage units. The laundry room has been updated; Joey's room has a built-in desk with shelves for his karate trophies, soccer gear, and his extensive collection of Nerf guns!

Ilene's bedroom/office is equipped with floor to ceiling book shelves, and lots of shelves over her computer desk for paper, pens, tape, etc.

If getting organized is one of your 2009 goals, call Kim Sumpter at All Spaced Out.

Dealing with Bitterness series coming to DVD

During the holidays I was introduced to Randy Walker, a former deputy sheriff, who is involved in prison ministry. Randy's vision involves preparing inmates for a successful reentry after incarceration. Included in Randy's vision is the creation of lessons on DVD, which can be accessed by inmates even when the teacher is unavailable, providing a consistent and uniform curriculum.

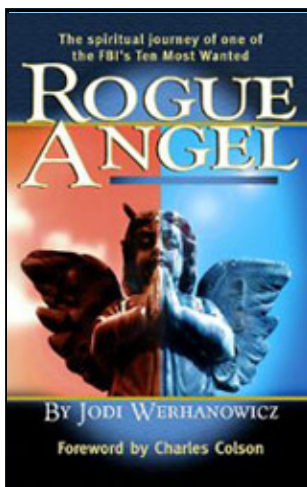
My seminar on Dealing With Bitterness will be recorded before a live audience, and a DVD will be available sometime later in 2009. We will update you via the newsletter when you will be able to obtain a copy. This is both an answered prayer and a prayer request as we begin the filming in February.



Randy Walker



Mary Kay teaching on
Dealing with
Bitterness for DVD



ROGUE ANGEL BOOKS AND AUDIO CDS CAN BE ORDERED ONLINE

FOR INFORMATION ON MARY KAY'S OTHER CDS AND DVDS CALL (205) 815-9991

DONATIONS ARE WELCOME—

We appreciate your contributions to the Lord's work through Encourager Ministries, Inc., which is recognized as a 501(c)3 organization by the Internal Revenue Service and your gifts are tax deductible.

You can make donations securely online through our web site (encouragerministries.com) or mail to Encourager Ministries, Inc., P.O. Box 94583, Birmingham AL 35220

Answered prayer

We acquired a copy of Quickbooks as we requested and Ilene is learning to use it.

Paul Barber has joined our Board of Directors to provide assistance in getting our finances properly recorded on computer and to maintain our annual reporting.

Steve Klose has evaluated our current computers and is also upgrading us to "wireless" capabilities. Both of these men have provided us their expertise, which is invaluable to both me and Ilene.

We have also engaged a woman, Sandi Lynn, who is "cleaning up" our database, assisting us with web site updates, and helping us produce our newsletter. Our current plan is to have 5 e-newsletters published in 2009. We welcome your comments and suggestions as we move forward.

God has provided volunteers to assist us with our data entry and also with some help with PowerPoint.

More answered prayer

You recall that we painted the inside of the house this summer. Several weeks ago I noticed some water spots on the ceiling of my bathroom. The roof was new when we bought the house in 2002, and I dreaded having a major repair expense. However a dear friend/brother, Wendell Roberts, found the problem and was able to repair it easily. He has also performed several tasks, e.g. installed a desk light for Joey, repaired the front storm door and replaced a ceiling fan.

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An Angel Tree Story



Finally, let me share one of my Angel Tree stories. On January 12, I spoke at a small church (37 people were present) near my home. Robinwood is a very poor neighborhood in what we would typically describe as “on the wrong side of the tracks.” A young man in his twenties led the singing and then sat in a pew near the back. I spoke of my own incarceration, the work of God’s Spirit in my life, and the founding of Angel Tree. At the mention of Angel Tree, the young man’s face brightened from serious to joyous. He nodded a couple of times, and at the close of the service he told of his own experience of selecting an angel from the tree each year and how delighted he was to deliver the gifts.

From others I learned that Berry was the product of a single parent family. The alcoholic father had little input in his life, but Berry worked hard and

graduated high school. Currently he is studying international law in New York and was at home for Christmas. Robinwood had always been his home church, and the members had been a source of help and encouragement. Berry said that he worked part-time in a neighborhood bar in New York that was not unlike his own neighborhood.

One year he had selected the name of a boy who wanted “a game boy with color” plus other items of clothing. Berry took his meager savings and purchased every item on the list. That night at work, he had taken the game boy to show his boss and tell about Angel Tree. While working, someone broke into Berry’s car and stole every other gift. Berry was crushed, but had one gift he could still give the child.

His boss, a somewhat gruff and profane man, asked Berry how much he had



Photo courtesy of angeltree.com

spent on the gifts. Berry still had the receipts in his pocket, but was almost speechless when his boss took the exact amount from the cash register and instructed him to replace the stolen items! Berry summed up his experience by saying, with a large smile, “Angel Tree touches the hearts of people who aren’t even Christians!”

Indeed, the love of God touches and transforms the hardest heart. I know, because he transformed my stony heart.

God bless you!