

In this issue

- . The Face of God? - A devotional from Focus on the Family
- . Pine Lodge Opens - A Message from Timberline Knolls
 - New Faith-Based Hospital Programs
 - Spring is in the Air

A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

By JoAnne Crough, MA, LPC

Have you ever thought about how many life or death decisions you will have to make in your lifetime? I'm not referring exclusively to the life or death decisions that you might encounter in a hospital or crisis situation. I'm talking about the kind that come to us camouflaged in the ordinariness and busyness of our daily lives. In their simplicity and cumulative power, they affect not only the direction of our development, but they ultimately have eternal consequences. How aware are we really of what we actually believe about God, the world, our place within it, and our true value?

According to Christian teaching, there are really only two paths from which to choose: the way of death or the way of life. We choose where to place our feet with every decision we make in our life. If the path of death is about lies, deception and distortions of the Truth, then the path of life is nothing less than that which connects us to the Truth.

There are some key ways we can steadily become diverted from Truth - ways that elude our conscious awareness and keep us from the fullness of life, intimacy and greatness for which we have been created. We can learn to believe we are bad, unlovable or worthless based on our experiences with others. If we have lived through high tension or trauma in our youth, are currently living in a highly stressful situation, or are experiencing many changes or losses in our lives, we can be more vulnerable to believing the lies that distract us from the path of life.

It is actually pretty common for us to be drowning in old patterns of responding to others and God. This is a fallen world; we can and should expect that there will be trouble here. We were not created for such a place. Moreover, we are told in Scripture that there are forces working against us, deceiving, seducing and ensnaring us into the diabolical trap that self-sufficiency and worldly success will bring us happiness.

Our culture constantly bombards us with messages that our value depends on our monetary worth, our job, the car we drive, how we look, the clothes we wear, the grades we made in school, our productivity, performance and even the brand of our jeans. We compare ourselves with others and believe we are "less than" or, conversely, more entitled to God's love. Can our worth actually be calculated by human means? Can we really do anything to cause God to love us more or less? What does Scripture tell us? How important it is to be aware of how you answer these questions before you choose the path on which you walk!

If you believe your value depends on what you do, you will tend to believe the lies that come with that belief. You are convinced that you need to please other people to feel good about yourself; that you can't turn down a career advancement to spend more time with your family; that you need to keep adding to your own portfolio to experience a sense of security; or that it really doesn't matter what you do because nobody really cares anyway. You don't notice the words God speaks quietly into your heart - that you are loved, that you should never fear, that you are never alone, that He resides in you, and that you are powerful when you are weak. What do you choose to believe? Which path do you trust? How does your life reflect that trust?



JoAnne Crough is the Director of the Meier Clinics in Pittsburgh, PA, and also is a Licensed Professional Counselor. She provides marital and individual counseling on a wide range of issues including anxiety, depression, grief/loss, mood disorders, panic attacks, and women's issues. JoAnne has been happily married since 1984 and is the mother of three children. If you are interested in counseling with JoAnne or any of the other Meier Clinics counselors across the nation, log on to www.meierclinics.org or give us a call at 888-7CLINIC (888-725-4642).

A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH (Continued)

Sadly, we can easily be utterly unaware of the far-reaching effects of the choices we make. We can't change the choices we've made in the past, but we can learn from them. We have the option of changing our minds and the path we are on, but the present moment is the only time we can do that. Ask yourself the following questions. Your answers will help tell you on which path you are choosing to place more of your faith.

- Does your life seem out of control with responsibilities, time pressures, and fractured relationships? Do you feel trapped?
- Does it seem that you're on a treadmill, in constant motion but going nowhere?
- Does your life lack meaning, purpose and joy?
- Do you feel more dead, numb and isolated, than alive, energized and connected?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you probably need to examine your decision-making at a deeper level than you have before. There may be some external things about your life that require change, but more than likely it's the internal workings that need some attention. Take some time to prayerfully examine with a trusted person or counselor what you believe and how it is affecting your life. This practice is not only a valuable tool in seeing the struggles in this life as opportunities for greatness, but a key part of planting your feet on the solid and worthy ground of the Truthful path.

The Face of God

By Bev Henry, LCSW

Catastrophe struck Haiti in January. Thousands were killed as the rest of the world looked on in horror and shock. "Where is God?" many cried. "God has deserted us" reverberated through our homes from the evening news. Many of us wept as we prayed and tried to figure out how to help. We're assured from Scripture that God had not deserted the Haitians even if it felt that way. We know we live in a fallen world filled with catastrophes, and they strike unexpectedly in all kinds of ways.

Seven days after the quake hit, a seven year old little boy was pulled from the rubble with his arms outstretched and a smile on his face—hope in the midst of despair! He exemplified to the world the face of God amidst the rubble, as did the woman pulled from the rubble singing hymns. God was and is present in Haiti in the lives of His people and in the tireless efforts of the relief workers—those who dug relentlessly and found survivors as long as ten days and even two weeks after the quake hit, those who are still handing out food and water, the doctors and nurses who are trying desperately to save lives.

Psalm 46 tells us that God is a very present help in trouble—even "when the earth changes, the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, its waters roar and foam and the mountains tremble with its tumult...the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." The earth changed in Haiti. Many of God's children have helped and are still helping in the aftermath. Many more of us around the world are praying and contributing to relief efforts, wishing we could be there to help.

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Timberline Knolls Opens Pine Lodge in Response to Increased Demand

Timberline Knolls Residential Treatment Center, a residential treatment center for adolescent girls and women with eating and co-occurring disorders and substance abuse, announces the opening of Pine Lodge on its Lemont, Illinois, campus. Scheduled for completion in April 2010, Pine Lodge increases resident housing from two lodges to three and expands overall capacity from 52 beds to 84.

"Our focus has always been about developing programs that meet the needs of those women who seek treatment and need our help," said Kim Dennis, M.D. and medical director at Timberline Knolls. "Adding additional housing offers so many wonderful opportunities for our residents - giving them living options they did not have before that can benefit them socially and functionally."

The planning for Pine Lodge began in early 2009 at about the time Timberline Knolls began seeing more women in their 30's and 40's seeking treatment for eating disorders. "We went, literally, from having zero at any given time to having a subgroup of anywhere from five to ten. . . It's a big increase," said Dr. Dennis. Since its opening in early 2006, Timberline Knolls has served more than 900 adolescent girls and women of many ages who have needed treatment for eating disorders, substance abuse, mood disorders and co-occurring disorders.

In conjunction with the opening of Pine Lodge, Timberline Knolls has partnered with former Miss America, Kirsten Haglund, and her foundation, the Haglund Foundation, to assist women all over the United States to become educated about the necessity of treatment for eating disorders. During the Pine Lodge opening ceremonies, Timberline Knolls will donate the first bed to the Haglund Foundation which will identify a woman who is currently in need of treatment yet treatment has been beyond her reach.

The Face of God (cont.)

Our role, also, is to be the face of God to those around us who are experiencing their own personal catastrophes, whatever they may look like. We represent the One who offers hope in the midst of hopelessness. Let's be there for the neighbor who is ill or has lost a loved one, the friend whose husband or wife has left, whose child has a serious illness or whose teenager has gotten into trouble yet again. Let's be there to offer hope when people are desperate for it. We are the face of God to those around us.



Bev Henry is a retired school social worker and therapist. She currently works part-time in the counseling department at Focus on the Family.

For more information about FOTF, visit www.focusonthefamily.com

Timberline Knolls is a residential treatment center for females, ages 12 and older, nestled in a wooded area in a southwestern suburb of Chicago. Meier Clinics provides Christian counseling services for those residents who request it. For more information about Timberline Knolls, visit www.timberlineknolls.com or call them toll free at 877-257-9612.

Spring is in the Air;

flowers are peeking up from the ground, robins are building their nests, and the earth is coming back to life after what was a hard winter for many across the U.S. Did you know, despite the renewal of life in nature, there has historically been an upswing in suicide during the spring months? You can help provide hope and healing to those who are in such despair that ending their life seems to be the only option to ending the pain, hopelessness, and emptiness.

The staff at Meier Clinics thanks you on behalf of those whose lives you impact through your generous donation so they can receive the quality, Christian counseling care they desperately need.

Phone: 800-848-8872

Online: www.meierclinics.com/donations

Mail: MCF, 2100 Manchester Road, Suite 1510, Wheaton, IL 60187-4561

MCF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Donations are tax deductible within IRS regulations

NEW FAITH-BASED HOSPITAL PROGRAMS

Meier Clinics is pleased to be partnering with Ascend Health Corporation in starting faith-based inpatient programs at University Behavioral Health in El Paso, Texas, and Cedar Hills Hospital in Portland, Oregon. Patients who request the Meier Clinics Faith-Based Program will be using the *Journey to Joy Workbook* that was created by Meier Clinics staff to assist patients in their healing process.

For more information about this hospital program, contact Meier Clinics at 888-7CLINIC (888-725-4642).

We trust God will bless the lives of those who come to our Christian Inpatient Programs with new hope and healing at very difficult times of life.

"HAPPY EASTER" from the entire Meier Clinics staff.

We pray that you and your loved ones have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection we celebrate this month. If you have not experienced the peace, power, joy and freedom that comes from placing your life in the Savior's hands, we encourage you to do so today.

"...I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies..."

John 11:25

Thank you for taking time out of your day to read our newsletter. We hope it has been encouraging and enlightening. If there is a topic you would like us to address in the future, please feel free to contact us at info@meierclinics.com.

If you would like to speak with one of our staff members, please call us at 888-7CLINIC to be directed to the Meier Clinics nearest you. Or you may contact us by e-mail at intake-post@meierclinics.com.