

November 6, 2008

As remnants of retreat echo in our minds, we are persuaded to recall some of the rich memories with you. Did you happen to see the box of seashells sprinkled with blue flowers that Doris Park artfully collected and placed together on Saturday during free time? Those shells are etched in our memories;

Scarred, cracked and broken pieces  
Shattered fragments, damaged goods  
Reduced value

If you're anything like the rest of us, you came to retreat with fragments of the above etched on your life, maybe some ---perhaps all, and when you left? If you're honest, you will say "maybe some --- perhaps all"... except for maybe the latter, reduced value.

Do you recall this statement? "The power of God is released in our brokenness." What amazing truths to come home with: "I don't have to be fixed to be useful," and "Brokenness is a requirement to receive the fullness of God;" the knowledge that the Lord is close to the broken-hearted (Ps 34:18), that he has appointed me to bring this good news (Is 6:1), that he heals the broken and binds up their wounds (Ps 147:3). Incredible!

If the message we leave with those we encounter in our day-to-day lives is hope, healing, and comfort and the knowledge that their wounds will be treated with love and acceptance, then praise God! We can throw away the lie that we have "reduced value," because we are made beautiful through his amazing grace! Because we live in the Day of Grace, not in the Day of Judgment, it is the brokenness in our lives that qualifies us to speak into another's life! Does that excite you like it does us?

So much freedom was released through the truth of God's grace. Despite all we have faced and endured in our lives, we are free from condemnation and released into his arms, beautiful in His sight; when He looks on us, He sees the reflection of His Son. The knowledge of this is good, but the reality of this is amazing! Just take a moment to gaze at the Sun in the sky and then dare to look at the one next to you; you will see only the reflection of the Sun.

With the conclusion of each retreat, we look in hindsight and wait to hear the words from our gracious Father: "Well done, good and faithful servant." This retreat allowed us to hear those words through each of you: through your testimonies, through the sweet expressions on your faces, by watching you pray one for another, by joining you in worship and together enthroning our Friend and Savior, in one accord with the angels. This has increased our faith. Those were amazing times spent together: learning and growing in Him, bringing our daily walk more in synch with God and with each other. It's a little like receiving a dose of 'Miracle Grow' in the rich soil that God tilled and tended during retreat. Our roots feel they have grown deeper with Jesus and with an incredible group of ladies we call our family.

No retreat is perfect. We will always have "Re-Do" wishes and pleas. One of our "Re-Do" wishes this year? We want to acknowledge those who graciously worked together to make the best of the "bed" situations. We apologize for any inconvenience you may have experienced finding a suitable place to sleep. We will endeavor to make adjustments next retreat, so that you will not be put in a place of discomfort and vulnerability again. May Jesus bless those of you who made the sacrifices needed at the time they were needed. You are awesome!

And thank you ladies for your input into the next retreat by filling out the evaluation form. You were very helpful with your honesty and encouraging words. We will take each opinion to heart and to the Lord. If you offered to help at our next retreat, would you please email one of us and let us know who you are? We neglected to leave a space for your name and find that many of you who volunteered to help are, as it were... nameless, and we know not who you are!



One final thought. Do you remember Tammy's caution? ...getting stuck in brokenness, that it's a choice we make? Getting stuck brings destruction if we stay there. We all go through seasons of brokenness. Those seasons take time and that's okay. The question is, what are you doing to get through the process, to get unstuck? Are you staying connected with those whom God has placed in your path this season? We are not made to walk it alone. We want to encourage you to take the step, stay connected with each other, visit, share and pray with one another; for God has appointed someone to bring you the good news that He will heal your brokenness and bind up your wounds. And He is calling you to do the same. Feeling shattered? Smooshed? You are qualified to be used by God to bring healing and hope to a friend who needs it.

God has asked us to gather and to be gathered together. Do you find it hard to walk this out? Try a Telephone Prayer Partner once a week for 3-6 months, or maybe a Mocha-Buddy who would be willing to volunteer with you in the nursery once a month where you can love on those new babies while sharing, encouraging and praying with each other.

What about coffee at Paris Café, or any of the Bible Studies or Support Groups through LWF? Join one together. It's free of stress and will unite your hearts. Will you make the choice for grace? Encourage each other and be encouraged!

To gather, to unify, and to encourage is what God has shown us, because He knows our frame; being broken together unifies us in His strength and makes us a stronger body, as one and as a whole.

When we look at you, we see the reflection of Jesus Christ in you! You are loved and we can't wait to hear what God is doing in and through you. Give one of us a call; let's have coffee together.

In His Amazing Grace,

LWF Women's Retreat Coordinators 2008  
'Broken and Beautiful'

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