

TouchPoint

The North American Baptist Conference Women's Connection Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2020

PURSUING Reconciliation

Jean Ewing
NAB Women's Connection

As women of God, we are called to seek the welfare of our cities, to love our neighbors, to be an agent of renewal in the communities where we live. Many of our communities are marred by racial strife, but at the same time are filled with people who long for unity. We often feel powerless to achieve it. Our churches have the answer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is when we intentionally cultivate a thriving and diverse community that we offer a model for the rest of the community.

One of the desires of our North American Baptist Conference of churches is to engage in ethnic and cross-cultural ministries. More specifically, member churches are encouraged to build cross-cultural connections and find ways of seeking racial righteousness. The process of reconciliation is critical as we move forward to achieve these goals.

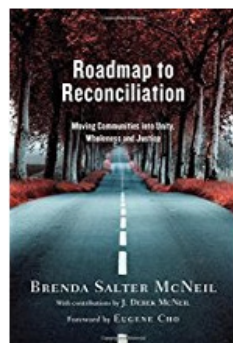
Racial reconciliation is one way we love our neighbors. By empathizing with the minorities in our community who feel marginalized and by creating a safe place for people from different walks of life to work through their

differences, we show the world that the church is a place where people from all walks of life are united by their love for Jesus and a need for grace.

We see the injustice and inequality in our lives and in our world and are ready to take action. But how do we do this? How does one reconcile? What we need is a clear sense of direction. I offer to you two resources to use on your journey or as you travel down

the path to understanding and pursuing reconciliation.

In her book *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*, Dr. Brenda



Salter McNeil shares not only her own journey, but gives a clear case for reconciliation as a way of life. "Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish" (p. 22).

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"Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at Him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and Him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you."

— The Message
2 Corinthians 5:16-20



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Our Vision

To connect with women of the North American Baptist Conference and help them fulfill their calling

Our Mission

To connect with women of the North American Baptist Conference, encouraging them in their desire to serve God, and providing them with valuable tools and resources to accomplish what God is calling them to do.

Our Core Values

CALLING AND WORTH

We value the essential role women play in ministry.

QUALITY RESOURCES

We value God's Word and seek resources that are Biblically sound, applicable and accessible.

BROADER CONNECTION

We value supporting the broader vision of the North American Baptist Conference and developing a connection among North American Baptist Conference women.

LEGACY & THE FUTURE

We value the legacy of women who have gone before us and are committed to engaging the next generation.

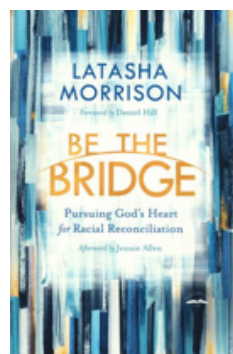
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Dr. McNeil proposes that the idea of a journey with landmarks and phases may be the best way to think about a transforming reconciliation process. She offers a practical course of action to achieve the compelling vision of reconciliation. Questions and action steps are included along the way, and in the end she offers some coaching about how to stay the course.

Also by Dr. McNeil is the book *The Heart of Racial Justice: How Soul Change Leads to Social Change*.

BE the BRIDGE

The second resource I have been drawn to is a movement called *Be the Bridge* (www.BeABridgeBuilder.com). Latasha Morrison had a vision for enabling racial reconciliation within local churches and developing resources for Christians who wanted to build cross-racial relationships. In 2014, Jennie Allen of IF:Gathering encouraged Latasha to form an organization and create a guide to give others some direction. Morrison developed a platform and presented



her guide at that Gathering, and since then *Be the Bridge* has exploded in size and now serves local churches by providing curricula and other tools that encourage bridge builders to foster and develop vision, skills, and hearts for racial unity.

Today over 400 groups of women gather together to work through the guided curriculum developed by Morrison. The 'Be the Bridge' Facebook group attracts over 8,000 to open discussion. Her desire is to mobilize and prepare people who have a heart to help heal racial division.

Visit the [Be the Bridge website](http://www.BeABridgeBuilder.com) or the [Be the Bridge to Racial Unity Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/BeTheBridge) group to learn more about the organization, access materials, or join the discussion.

The website describes the discussion guide as "designed to lead a diverse

"One of the foundational verses for Be the Bridge is John 17, which says that we should be one, so that the world will know who Jesus is. Jesus's heart is not for him to see us be the same. We can be uniquely whom he created us to be and still be one, because unification doesn't always look like agreement. It means putting the gospel of Jesus at the center of everything that we do. That's what we try to do at Be the Bridge—center the conversation on Jesus.

I do believe that the body of Christ is the only place that is equipped to do this well and do this right. Our goal with Be the Bridge is to be who God created us to be—that credible witness for his glory as it relates to racial reconciliation. We are all created in his image. We're called to love our neighbor regardless of who they are or who they look like."

— Latasha Morrison
January 2017 Christianity Today interview
nabconference.org/latasha-morrison

group of 3–12 people through a 9 session study on the key steps in the racial reconciliation process: Awareness, Acknowledgement and Lament, Guilt and Shame, Confession, Forgiveness, Repentance, Reparation, Restoration, and Reproduction. Each session involves studying a passage of scripture, reading background information, sharing personal experiences (and listening to those of others), and prayer. Between sessions, group members are expected to complete educational and experiential homework assignments."

Consider today how you can begin the conversation of how to live out the Gospel in the challenge of racial reconciliation. Read Dr. McNeil's book, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, or check out [Latasha Morrison's website](http://www.LatashaMorrison.com), Be the Bridge, and join in her study to be the bridge to racial unity. Be among those who desire to welcome diversity and healing into our communities.

Coping through Covid-19

THOUGHTS FROM THE WOMEN'S CONNECTION TEAM

We know that these are difficult times for us all whether we live in the United States, Canada, or are a part of the North American Baptist International Team. Your story of coping through this challenging time will be the same or different from the ones of Women's Connection team members, but we wanted you to know that you have been in our thoughts and prayers during this time.

We would like to share your stories of hope and inspiration. Just a sentence or two of how God have been faithful to you during this time will be shared in our next TouchPoint.

Send to jhewing@roadrunner.com



Jean Ewing
Williamsville,
New York

My faith is one thing I have relied on to get me through difficult times. I have taken comfort in knowing that God's plans for my life are better than my own. But as Covid-19 began its flight around the world, I became uneasy about what impact it would have on my children and grandchildren who live in Japan, France, Virginia and right here in the Buffalo, New York area. All I could do now was pray for God's safety, so instead of singing the 'happy birthday' song, as I frequently washed my hands, I prayed for each child's family, their well-being and that their needs would be met during this time.

I tend to be an active, independent person and to be a part of the determined 'target group' because of age was restrictive to me. My morning walks became longer and my car became my mobile sanctuary where I could feel freedom from our apartment walls.

It looked like keeping busy was going to be difficult. David and I could no longer travel to be present in the 32 churches in the Eastern Association, as the Canadian border closed to us and services were cancelled in all of our churches. I am thanking God for the ability to virtually worship with several of our churches each Sunday. We look forward to getting back on the road to cheer our friends on and even give a hug or two. In the meantime I try

*For I am the Lord, your
God, who takes hold
of your right hand and
says to you, do not fear;
I will help you.*

Isaiah 41:13

to encourage our pastors' wives with emails and notes.

Keeping up with the news of the devastating spread caused me to be filled with anxiety. It was necessary to balance that with filling my mind and soul with encouragement. Ever since our Blue Ocean cohort met in Vancouver, BC, the words of Mark Glanville (Grandview Calvary Church) kept coming back to me, "Our churches need to lament more – to validate those who struggling among us." I turned to the book of Psalms to voice my response to the pain and suffering in our world. In order to understand the beautifully appropriate way to voice my pain, I began reading Mark Vroegop's explanation in *Dark Clouds—Deep Mercy discovering the grace of lament*. Lament is how we bring our sorrow to God. It models what to do with strong/raw emotions. With the thoughts in this book and through the Psalms I began to lament, to bring my pain to God on behalf of a fractured world.

Yes, I know that God will help us through this time—but what a tragedy it would be if I missed the lessons He

wanted me to learn during through it. My prayer is that my heart and mind are open to His voice.

On March 21, in the midst of this pandemic, our tenth grandchild was welcomed to our Ewing family in Dijon, France. Welcome to our flawed world Timothy Jonathan Noah Ewing. I can't wait to meet you!



Heather Senges
Vancouver, British
Columbia

These are the most unique of times for sure. We have certainly learned to cope with entirely new feelings and activities. Harry and I are not at all fearful about this. We are careful though. We try to get out every day for a walk or bike ride, and we do spend time with one daughter and family. But it is boring, sometimes, not to be able to do our usual enjoyable activities. And the immediate future is not encouraging. I am a people person, so really miss getting together with family and friends. I am learning a lot!

We spend Sundays with our youngest daughter and her family, either at their house or ours. We used to go out for lunch on Sundays, but that is awkward right now, so we make lunch together and that is fun. We watch church together in the morning, and Harry and I watch another service in the evening. We miss the church community, but it's a blessing to still listen to good sermons.

My grandkids play a lot of musical instruments, and for the past few weeks have gotten a little band together to play on Sunday evenings outside a care home. We go to watch and it is such fun! All the neighbours come out to bang pots, the police cars roar by with sirens going, and the kids play - amazing!

I am so glad to see things opening up now - we are into Stage 2 here in B.C. It means we can see more people and maybe I can get a haircut!! But church is still limited to 50 people, widely spaced,

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which is odd for worship. Tennis courts are finally open again, for which I am truly thankful. I have learned to be tolerant and respectful of different people's level of anxiety and movement during these weeks. I have learned a lot about patience and loving kindness, even with my own family. I am going to miss summer travels and activities, but again, I am learning tolerance. And I am still shredding! It has become quite an interesting activity.

Blessings on you all. As our Public Health doctor says – “be kind; be calm; stay safe”



Fabiola Campos
Sacramento,
California

The first couple of weeks when all this started we thought, “We can do this.” It was not difficult to stay at home, and we saw it as an opportunity to spend more time with the family.

We started having live services on Facebook and meetings through zoom. My whole family had to participate in doing something to prepare what would feel like a church service, and it is a blessing to see Tony preaching right here in our living room with the same passion. We are trying to cope with everything at home and continue to be the church even in the middle of all this. But now that the lockdown has been extended, it's becoming difficult to stay at home. I don't really feel like we are in imprisonment like some out of desperation call it, because we can still go out and do some outdoor activities like walking at the park, riding our bikes, going out to get our groceries and even getting ice cream and coffee sometimes. Of course taking the safety measures.

We truly miss the fellowship with our brothers and sisters the most. Life in general has changed for sure, and I never thought I would hear my kids say they miss going to school! We are trying to encourage each other in the Lord to be wise and to live out of love and not fear, and to continue to take care of our communities and ourselves. I'm not going to lie, it has not been easy, but God is good and helps us with our anxieties, doubts and weaknesses. It

has also been a blessing to see the body of Christ continuing walking in faith, serving and blessing each other in any way we can. Even when some have lost their jobs, they still generously give for the needs of others. God is at work always!

This time has shown me so much about myself. I'm truly not that strong and that no matter how much I tried to plan ahead and have control over my life, that's far from happening. There's always something that will interrupt. But I take comfort in knowing that no matter what, my life is in the hands of the Person that never changes and who is in control of everything that happens to my family, this world and me. I hold on to His promises, that everything works for good for those who love Him. So I just need to continue to trust Him in hope and wait in Him patiently. I think when this is over; life is never going to be the same.

And I need to be okay with that.



Amber Dowd
Folsom, California

My quarantine adventure began at 2:35 p.m. on March 13- the moment I received the school district text that propelled my 3 kids into distance learning for the rest of the school year. That propelled me into a state of disorientation fueled by information overload, fear of the unknown and the realization of what was being asked of us. This was the experience of many around us. It took me several weeks to finally embrace the socially distant school-at-home facilitator-teacher-principal-cafeteria lady-janitor-I'm still your mom- job I had been handed. Watching my children accept the losses that came from school being instantly cut off was an especially painful process.

In those beginning weeks, the quieting and slowing down also had an element of sweetness. We got out board games and puzzles, we made amazing forts and went on long family bike rides, we engaged the kids in daily chores and cooking. One of the best moves we made early on was reading scripture with our children in the mornings and encouraging them to text a prayer to our family and friends, especially

those working on the front lines. It was always so encouraging when we received texts back with prayers for us in return. The draw to prayer throughout this time has always felt very gratifying.

The weeks grew busier as distance school picked up, and with that arose more squabbles and short tempers. A loved one also experienced some urgent medical issues, which due to the overlay of Covid-19, became increasingly stressful and required my attention. By the end of April I was feeling the tug of depression, low energy and lack of personal fulfillment. I often felt confused by the conflicting messages coming from the news and friends around me. These tensions drew me inward and induced stress as I struggled with second-guessing our commitment to the quarantine. By the time school ended this past week, I must admit I was ready to move on, both from school and from lockdown.

Spiritually, prayer has been like an anchor in this season of drifting and confusion. I've been reading through the book of Acts and love being reminded that the Holy Spirit is active. The best days were the ones when we parked our car across the street from our nearby hospital and prayed. Or when we saw an ambulance outside a Covid-19 hit retirement home and prayed from our car as the workers loaded an elderly patient. Shortly after this, my kids initiated prayer for an injured man at the park who needed medical attention. These are the soul-filling moments, when I see that I indeed have a meaningful role in this massive situation. My family and I, along with all believers, are capable of bringing all things before the throne of God through prayer. And on the many days when I drift aimlessly, He will walk on water to reach me.

Now my family is entering summer break. In this transitional moment I'm reminded that I have daily belonged to Jesus during quarantine, even on the days I didn't enjoy. I hold what remains of our summer plans loosely, but I cling to the truth that I am His. In all these things I hear the echo of Hebrews 12: the encouragement to run the race set before me; to fix my eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith; to endure and not grow weary; and to not lose heart. My hope is you will experience this encouragement as well.

Choosing to Lament

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing the Lord's praise,
for he has been good to me.

—Psalm 13 (NIV)

I was in my teens when I first came across Psalm 13 in my student Bible. I'll never forget the feeling of seeing words in print in my Bible that matched the swirling of emotion I felt going on inside me during a particularly challenging season of life. I had not been taught this in Sunday school; I thought surely that my questioning of God's presence – or, more accurately, what felt like an absence of God – in my life was somehow outside the bounds of what a "normal" Christian experienced. Yet I knew that these words were written several thousand years ago by David, a man after God's own heart. Maybe God could handle my questioning after all. Maybe by having these psalms of lament included in our Bible, He was in fact encouraging me to cry out to Him in times of trouble with what was actually going on inside of me, not with what I thought He wanted to hear, which at the moment would have been fake Christian platitudes.

I believe engaging in the practice of lament is essential to our formation into Christ-likeness. Lament is more than complaining to God but rather is an active process of bringing our true hearts before Him, crying out to God for His intervention, surrendering ourselves to His care, and then remembering God's faithfulness and provision. We don't authentically get to the end – singing about God's goodness – without moving through the lament. When we try, all we end up doing is stuffing down our feelings, which always seem to find a way to leak out elsewhere; in my case, I discovered years later that, while I still believed in God, maybe I didn't really

believe in a good God who had done right by me.

There is more to lament than personal lament, however. The Bible also contains numerous examples of corporate lament. We live in a liminal time – a time between the kingdom of God being ushered in and not yet being brought to fulfillment. There is suffering in this world – marriages are falling apart, children are dying, systemic injustice and greed lead to the oppression of whole people groups. The list goes on and on. What is to be our response as God's people? Do we bury our heads in the sand and wait for Jesus's return? Do we rush in and try to fix or explain away every problem? Or do we listen to the stories of suffering, cry out to God for His intervention, and in doing so remember the hope we have in the resurrection of our Lord and Savior?

How can we practice lament?

~ Maybe you're going through a desert season in life. Give yourself permission to write your own version of Psalm 13 to God. Be honest about how you feel, remembering that God is able to handle all of it. End your lament with a reminder about who God is, maybe a time in your past where He was faithful or some characteristic of God that you've experienced or know to be true. Whatever you do, don't rush through to the end, but give yourself time and space to pour your heart out to God.

~ Another great way to practice lament is to walk your neighborhood or even to simply go about your normal day, praying that God would give you eyes to see the brokenness around you. Pray that God would show you the things that break His heart. Maybe it's the homeless man you encounter or a person making a racist joke or a child who looks like she hasn't had a decent meal in a few days. Seeing and noticing the brokenness is the first step. In the same vein as Jesus in Matthew 33:27 longing to gather His people together as a hen gathers her chicks, allow yourself permission to feel the way God feels about this vandalism of His shalom and then cry out to Him for His intervention. Lastly, remember who God is and the hope that we have in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Dark Clouds-Deep Mercy...discovering the grace of lament

by Mark Vroegop



Lament is how you live between the poles of a hard life and trusting God's goodness. Lament is how we bring our sorrow to God—but it is a neglected dimension of the Christian life for many Christians today. We need to recover the practice of honest spiritual struggle that gives us permission to vocalize our pain and wrestle with our sorrow. Lament avoids trite answers and quick solutions, progressively moving us toward deeper worship and trust.

Mark Vroegop explores how the Bible—through the psalms of lament and the book of Lamentations—gives voice to our pain. This book invites us to grieve, struggle, and tap into the rich reservoir of grace and mercy God offers in the darkest moments of our lives.

~ Lament is also a great practice to engage in together as a faith community. Pick a day together alongside other believers to lament over a natural disaster, refugee issues, childhood hunger, sex trafficking, etc. Commit to fasting and praying as a group of believers for God's intervention and follow up with one another throughout the day: What is God stirring up in you both personally and communally?



Lisa is Administrative Assistant for the Missional and Formation Team. She is a new mom and on leave, enjoying her time with their new son Benjamin Picard Schmidt.

Book LINKS



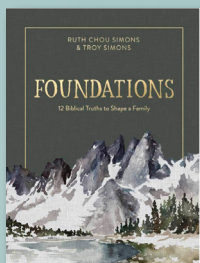
**The Lifegiving Parent:
Giving Your Child a Life
Worth Living for Christ**
by Clay and Sally Clarkson

Through the pages of *The Lifegiving Parent* you will discover how you can become a parent who gives your child a life worth living for Christ.

In today's world, it's easy to become overwhelmed and even paralyzed by the constant flow of parenting advice. We're flooded with so much practical information that we wonder if we're choosing the right way. And we may be missing the one thing God really wants us to give to our children: His life. God doesn't include a divine methodology for parenting in the Bible, but He does provide principles that can enable any faithful parent to bring His life into the life of their home.

In *The Lifegiving Parent*, respected authors and parents Clay and Sally Clarkson explore eight key principles—heartbeats of lifegiving

parenting—to shed light on what it means to create a home where your children will experience the living God in your family. Now parents of four grown children—each with their own unique personality and gifts—Sally and Clay have learned (sometimes the hard way!) that the key to shaping a heart begins at home as you foster a deep and thoughtful God-infused relationship with each child. Filled with biblical insight and classic Clarkson stories, *The Lifegiving Parent* will equip you with the tools and wisdom you need to give your children much more than just a good Christian life. You'll give them the life of Christ. (Don't miss the companion piece, *The Lifegiving Parent Experience!*)



**Foundations: 12 Biblical
Truths to Shape a Family**
by Ruth and Troy Simons

**Families are shaped one day at a time
through the Word of God**

You want your children to become Christ followers, obedient to His commands, and fruitful in their faith, but where do you begin? Though there isn't a formula or prescription for raising godly kids, what you desire for your family begins with heeding God's instructions to remember and declare His faithful works to the next generation.

Bestselling author and artist Ruth Chou Simons, along with her husband, Troy, are gratefully raising six boys on a firm

foundation of God's Word by preaching that truth to themselves and their family daily. In this book, they invite you to join them in the holy work of training children to know and love God for a lifetime.

Foundations will help you direct your family one day at a time, as you explore 12 key truths that will help connect your children's hearts—and yours—to the heart of God. With a simple, chapter-a-day format that includes Scripture, devotional thoughts, meditations, and discussion questions, this book will guide you in leading your family.

WE SITES to check out

www.lifewaywomen.com will introduce you to summer studies to do with your BFF.

www.polishedonline.org will introduce you to **Polished Women**—a network that gathers professional women online and in person to navigate career and explore faith together. The website creates conversations about the way that the gospel of Jesus intersects with our personal lives. Listen to the current series of podcasts 'Sheroes of the Bible'.



Blue Ocean Testimony

Meggan McFaden

VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
MILBANK, SOUTH DAKOTA

BLUE
OCEAN
GROUP

Please share a little about you—where you live, family, where you grew up, length of time in ministry, your ministry focus, what have you enjoyed most about ministry—basically anything you can share that will help our readers to get to know you.

I was born in Canada. Raised in northern Minnesota. I became a follower of Jesus Christ at the age of five. I married a young man from New Jersey who was following God's leading into full time ministry. We have lived in Iowa, Texas and South Dakota. We were in ministry for ten years when God called us to go to seminary. After seminary God brought us to Milbank SD and to the NAB.

We have four children. Three with us and one waiting for us in heaven. I am a new grandma. I have a heart for women and leading them to God's word.

How did you hear about Blue Ocean?

I heard about Blue Ocean during a GPA (Great Plain Association) annual meeting. I approached Kent Carlson about attending it. After he found my name and note in his Bible he reached out and invited us to be part of Blue Ocean 2019/2020!

If you were describing Blue Ocean over coffee with a friend what would you tell her?

Blue Ocean is where I realized what I thought was important in a person's spiritual life, really wasn't the most important. I was focused on making sure that people had a saving relationship with Christ, which is important, but now because of Blue Ocean my thoughts have changed to more of a missional focus. It is now important for me to see people (women) as growing, learning disciples

of Christ who in turn will gather and bring people along side them to become the same. It is a lifelong journey that I am thrilled to be on.

What has been your favorite topic? Which one challenged you the most?

Kent Carlson's "Gospel- kingdom living" was my favorite, but it also messed me up! It challenged me in a way that could only be from the Holy Spirit. As he is speaking I couldn't sit still. I was getting more agitated and finally it just came out with me throwing up my hands and crying out "I have done it all wrong". My focus had been getting people to cross a line, but not really focusing on their hearts and minds. Leading people to food but not teaching them how to fully eat. My desire now is to bring people alongside as I walk this path of loving God and loving others.

Have you learned anything new about yourself? How do you think Blue Ocean benefits you as a woman in ministry?

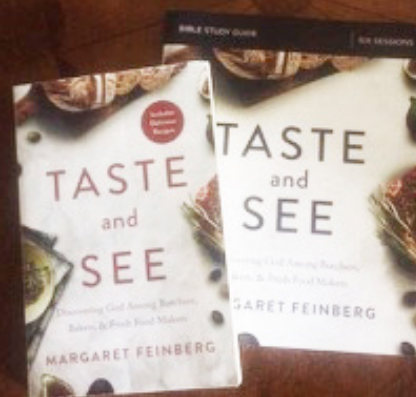
I have learned that I don't need a fancy degree to be able to teach and show God's love to others. Blue Ocean has given me an opportunity to rub shoulders with people who I may never have met, but yet these people have challenged and pushed me to strengthen my walk with the Lord and how I see His people.

Blue Ocean has given me the confidence to dig into God's word and to own it. To be who the Creator created me to be.

How would encourage other women who might be interested in attending Blue Ocean?

If you have the opportunity to attend—GO! You will not regret going and being challenged and growing. This for me has been the most life changing and life affirming time for me. I will never be the same.

OUR FEATURED *Bible Study*



TASTE and SEE – Discovering God among Butchers, Bakers and Fresh Food Makers

by Margaret Feinberg

Heather Senges
Bethany Baptist Church
Vancouver, BC

Experienced by the Women of Bethany Baptist Church in Vancouver, B.C.

It is always a joy to do a Margaret Feinberg Bible Study, for Margaret herself is a joyful person. We were not disappointed in her latest book and Bible Study, "Taste and See ... Discovering God's Goodness". The book is full of interesting adventures as she travels to the Sea of Galilee, Madera, California, Yale University, Redmond Salt Mine, Croatia and Dallas, Texas dining on incredible meals and excavating deep spiritual insights along the way. Taste and See is part cookbook, part Bible Study, part biography. Margaret shares her inspiring journey discovering there is more to biblical food than meets

For more information on Blue Ocean go to:
nabconference.org/north-american-missions/equipping/blue-ocean

Continued on page 8...

Consider This...

"In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider what parts of normal are worth rushing back to"

– Dave Hollis



If things go back exactly as they were we will have missed the opportunity to take the good from this bad.

The gift nobody's asked for is sitting here for us all to open — an opportunity to do some housekeeping in where we focus, who we spend time with, what we consume, how we work, what matters and most importantly what doesn't.

Take notes. We're getting a lesson we cannot forget when things return to whatever this new normal is.

Equipping Godly Women

from Bethany Ann

The truth is: We have a choice to make.

We can rush right back to life as usual. Go do ALL the things we feel we've missed out on over the last two and half months -- all at once.

OR we can take a minute to stop and re-evaluate:

What life do I want to rush back to?

Ask yourself: What do you want your life to look like this summer? This fall? By the end of the year? You get to choose!

- You get to choose if you make time in God's Word a priority
- You get to choose if you show up as that amazing wife you've always wanted to be.
- You get to choose if you show up as that loving, Godly mom you know your kids need.
- You get to choose if THIS is the year you finally conquer those dreams and goals you've had forever... or if you just give up and call in quits because the year got off to a rough start.

What are you thinking?
Time to make changes?
Need guidance?

Check out her 5-day online course Create Your Intentional Life eCourse.

equippinggodlywomen.com

This is a super practical, online course that includes strategies for determining priorities and time management and for making goals for the days to come. It includes 5 video lessons, a 17 page workbook and encouraging emails.

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the eye. This study also teaches you about deeper connections around a table:

"As we gather to eat, God wants to nourish more than our bodies; He wants to nourish our souls with transcendent joy and supernatural community and divine presence."

Each video lesson starts with a cooking lesson, and more recipes appear in the back of the book as well. We learned to make Honey Mustard Dressing, Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Cookies (gluten free!), 18 minute Matzo and Olive Oil Dip. We sampled a great variety of breads, olives and salts. Delicious way to start the morning!

It was interesting to learn that God is really a "foodie". Food is mentioned so many times in the Bible, from Adam and Eve in the beautiful Garden, to the basket of barley loaves and two small fish. Jesus Himself is referred to as foodstuff: the Bread of Life, the True Vine, the One anointed with olive oil, the Sacrificial Lamb, the One who knocks on our souls so we will invite Him in for supper.

With each lesson, we found new insights into scripture and ourselves. We learned how much we are dependent on God for everything. We also realized how much we are God's agents in this world – to be salt and light, a leaven for good, an oil of healing, a community of His people.

This study really did satisfy our souls, changed the way we read the Bible and approached every meal! Through it, we did learn to taste and see the goodness of God.

Jesus says, "I want to be the center of your table, the center of your relationships, the center of your community." He invites us to taste and see the mystery and sacredness of God. He invites us to feast on spiritual bread together, to share each other's burdens, to give the gift of our presence, and to know Jesus, the One who saves and sustains us-- the One our lives depend on.

The book itself took us on a wonderful, witty adventure to explore the world of food and the Bible. The Study Guide includes 6 video teaching sessions, discussion questions, tasting activities, personal study materials and recipes. All are excellent!