



## The President's Perspective by Vicki Goodrich

### Hopelessness: A New Beginning

Today I met with a precious young woman whose experience has reminded me of a principle that I sometimes forget. Hopelessness is really an opportunity for a new beginning. It can really be a gift...it all depends on my perspective...they way I think about it!

When this young lady began to share her situation, there was such a sense of despair and hopelessness that it was almost palpable. She was so discouraged because after two or so months of sobriety, she had relapsed. The anger and self-loathing was streaming down her face in the form of liquid pain. It was apparent that she was in a dark hole and feeling hopeless and helpless. How many times have we all been there? Here I go again...will it ever change? What is wrong with me? **Hopelessness.**

Her situation reminded me of a story I once read about a man who said he got sober at the corner of Hopelessness and Grace. What a powerful statement! He talked about hitting bottom and knowing he could not go on living life the way he was going. He had finally gotten to the end of himself. His hopelessness turned out to be one of the most important events in his life...because at the corner of Hopelessness, he found Grace and a new beginning became possible! Grace is defined as "unmerited favor." God, in His mercy, showed him *undeserved favor*. His hopelessness brought about his sober moment and it was a gift from God. In that moment, he finally realized he was totally powerless and that he couldn't do it alone, but with Christ in his life...there was hope! Colossians 1:7 says, "*Christ in me...the hope of glory.*"

As we talked through her relapse and allowed others to share their own experience, hope and strength, her countenance began to lift just a little. As this young woman left today, she had a little lighter step in her walk. While she was hopeless when she came in the door, I believe when she left, she was working on a new perspective....hopelessness is really just an opportunity for a new beginning! That new beginning is a part of her recovery journey and with God's grace, she can take the next right step. While it isn't going to be easy to start over, it isn't the end of her world...it is the potential for a new beginning! I love what Francis Frangipane once said..."***Desperation is God's hammer: It demolishes the stronghold of fear and shatters the chains of our excuses. When our desperation exceeds our fears, progress begins.***" There is HOPE!

This lady is only one of many who walk through the doors of Living Well Ministries. I only wish I could share with you the hundreds of stories...the miracles that have taken place in the many lives who have been through Seekers over these last

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**20 years! Yes, can you believe it?? This September, we began our 20th year of offering hope and healing to the hopeless!** Not only that, but we started with seven new classes rather than the typical five classes and we have a waiting list for the Winter classes that will begin in January! Without a doubt, God is still in the business of healing the hurts, habits and hang-ups that keep his people from living the abundant life!

The family, the very fabric of our society is under attack and it is our passion to see these individuals and families restored to God's original design. However, we are on the front lines of the battle and desperately need your support. **Will you please remember to pray for this ministry?** Please pray for those who attend the classes, that their breakthrough will be life changing and pray for our leadership team as they create an environment for God to heal wounded souls. Also, please pray that God will continue to supply the funds we need to provide our services ... to be able to offer partial scholarships to those who need it and cover the overhead for the ministry.

We are so grateful as we come into this 20th year of ministry. We are full of **HOPE for the future** and we celebrate God's faithfulness throughout the journey!

## THE CLOSET OF BONDAGE AND THE STAIRCASE TO FREEDOM

### STEP 2

In the last issue of Ripples I told you about that "Fibber McGee" closet under the staircase in the beautiful home I use to visit as a young woman. What a hopeless MESS it was! I guess that is one reason my friend never got around to cleaning it out... because it looked like such a *hopeless* job to tackle. She probably just never thought she could actually drag all that junk out, sort through it, save the good stuff and trash the rest.

That is just that way I felt when I began recovery and had to clean out the bondage in my life so I could climb that staircase to freedom. Last issue I told you about cleaning out the DENIAL under the first step and beginning to look at myself and my life with more HONESTY. It was hard; it was painful. I didn't like what I saw, because the next thing I saw, lurking under the second step, was my NEGATIVE THINKING.

I hated myself, my life, and everybody and everything in it. I blamed everybody and everything for my unhappiness. I had forgotten how good God had been to me in the past, couldn't see His Hand in my life, and certainly didn't think He had a good future in store for me. I thought I was so worthless and bad that He had given up on me. I was always looking at the hard and difficult things in my life instead of the blessings. I felt like everybody was better off than me; I was envious of the prosperity of others, and didn't believe God had anything good in store for me. In fact, I felt like He was mad at me and disappointed in me most of the time. I felt like my life on earth was ruined and would never get better...I just had to get through it somehow...and alcohol was my way to numb out the pain...My thoughts were filled with "I..." "I..." "I..." (did you notice how many times "I" showed up in this paragraph?)

Then the recovery program taught me that my *main* problem was not alcohol, but "I"!!! OH! That was so painful!! I learned that "I" would NEVER be able to deal with my problems, including alcohol, that my negative, SELF-centered thinking had to GO, and that the only way out of my hopeless mess was to "come to believe that a **power greater than myself** could restore me to sanity...to right thinking.

As I wrestled with that huge, unwieldy bag of NEGATIVE THINKING stuck under that second step, I really DID come to realize that I could not get rid of it and live life on life's terms without help, but that God was truly willing to help me, if I would let Him. OH! I can still remember Him helping me drag all that NEGATIVISM out to the trash and coming back with me to take that next step of HOPE.

Hebrews 6:19 says that HOPE is the "anchor of our soul" and I believe that with all my heart. Losing hope is a terrible, even dangerous thing. In the mental health world we have come to realize that it is when people feel helpless and hopeless that they are most likely to contemplate suicide. But scripture also assures us that Jesus is our unfailing, unchanging HOPE...that in Him is our sure HOPE for the future...for tomorrow, for next week, next month, next year, for eternity. Today, I stand firmly on Step 2 and the principle of HOPE as part of the secure foundation of my life. And guess what, negative thinking does not plague me anymore...in fact, I have even been called a "cockeyed optimist!"

Now, how about you? Have you taken a peak into your "hall closet" lately, the one under your staircase to freedom? Has any negative thinking been shoved back under that second step? Is your HOPE faded or shaky? Have you forgotten that there is a God and it's not you?...that you don't HAVE to deal with all the things that are disturbing your peace *alone*? What would help you restore your HOPE? For me it always helps to be around other hopeful people...people who have let "a power greater than themselves restore them to sanity."

Again, I challenge you to join me on this staircase to freedom. Go with me from the HONESTY of Step One to the HOPE of Step Two. Be pro-active and seek out other hopeful people...in a Twelve Step meeting, at our Sustainers Support Group at Living Well Ministries (see schedule on next page), perhaps in a small group at your church that focuses on healthy living. And watch for the next issue of RIPPLES when we will take another go at that messy closet of bondage and take another step to freedom.

**Barby Westmoreland**

## Holiday's Are Almost Here!

As the holiday season begins, we rejoice at the evidence of God's loving-kindness and his restoration power in the work that is going on in the lives of men, women and families who have committed themselves to the healing process. Marriages and families are being healed. We rejoice as we watch God take brokenhearted lives and **repair, restore** and **re-establish** them in their identity in Christ enabling them to walk out the calling of God on their lives.



Yet, Living Well faces challenges common to nonprofit ministries, especially now. We have some specific needs. **First** and foremost, please remember us in your prayers as we continue to minister hope and healing to those who seek our care. **Second**, we need your financial support. Many who seek our services are financially hindered. Your financial support enables us to help those who would otherwise never be able to consider reaching out for help. Of those who were seeking our help in the fall rotation, we saw an increase in scholarship requests from 30% to 43%. We try very hard to never turn one away because of lack of funds, but quite frankly we are being stretched to the max on our scholarship budget. We desperately need your help to offset these scholarship expenses.

At this time, the ministry's **greatest need is for individuals, churches and businesses to pledge support** on a **monthly or quarterly basis**. This helps us calculate approximately the amount of income we can expect and it enables us to plan our budget and spend wisely. **Would you prayerfully consider being a financial sponsor?** If you are already a sponsor, would you consider increasing your gift? As you consider your year-end giving options, please remember Living Well Ministries, Inc. Your tax deductible gift helps us extend God's hand of healing to others.

As 2013 comes to a close, we thank you in advance for your prayers and your financial support. All of us here at Living Well Ministries, Inc. wish you a holiday season that is **full of God's love and favor**. May He richly bless you, your families, your church and your businesses in the coming year!