

August 2009

RISE inside

Special LifeWell Conference 09 edition "ALL THINGS NEW"



Lead articles by Conference Speakers – Sy Rogers and Allan Meyer (A Valiant Man).

Other guest contributors include Australian authors Sarah Siu, Claudia Muñoz and Julie Flatt.

Warning: sexual themes are discussed in this issue. Make sure you read the content carefully and prayerfully!

Pash or Lash? How Far Should You Go?
(First published in Soul Purpose Magazine)

by Sy Rogers – Keynote speaker at LifeWell Conference 09
"Sy Rogers, a legend when it comes to knowing good stuff about sex, gives us some tips on everyone's favourite question: "How far should you go before marriage?" "
Soul Purpose Magazine

Christian young people today are confused about when exactly 'no means no'. Most of us have learned the mandate 'No Sex Outside of Marriage', but every year thousands of Christians end up going all the way - even though we don't intend to. And the consequences range from an unplanned loss of dignity, to unplanned pregnancy.

So what's going on?

We all know that we wrestle with pressures inside and out: A 'crush' is the perfect name for the crushing pressure we feel inside when we are physically and emotionally attracted to someone. Then there are the sexual expectations placed on us everyday by our sex-crazed society (and mates!). But these pressures aren't really as difficult to resist as you might think.

Believe it or not, many of us unwittingly encourage our own downfall. Here's some clues explaining why:

If you can get beyond the lovey- dovey descriptions in the Old Testament 'romance' Song of Solomon, you'll read sentiments as real as today's feelings between two people who are hot for each other!

Despite their real emotional and physical yearning, the repeated theme of the book echoes through to today: ' Don't stir up love (erotic love) before it is time. '

Indeed, the implication is that one CAN very well stir up love

before it's appropriate But many, many, many Christian young adults have two unspoken assumptions about dating. It goes something like this:

*As long as we aren't actually having intercourse, it's OK to get physical and mess around a bit.

*That's what you're SUPPOSED to do' when you're going out. It's just normal.

Oh really says who? Not God. Both of these assumptions are mistaken in my opinion and here's why:

It's not just a pash:

We have all sorts of nice names for it: ' snuggles', 'kisses and cuddles', 'touchy-feely' or the good old pash. We make it sound cute and seem to think it's OK as long as we're not actually 'doing it'. But the fact is, this is physical, sexual contact designed to stir up romantic and sexual passion.

It is also known as FOREPLAY, which is basically' sex before sex' -the stuff you deliberately do to prepare for intercourse. It's like jumping into a raging river when you thought you were just going to splash around in a stream. Before you know it, you will get swept away. It's no wonder you end up going all the way.

But it's the 'normal' thing to do

If that's what you believe, then who are you listening to? The fact that many who 'claim to follow and submit to God' get into sex before marriage causes me to think that Jesus isn't really Lord in their private lives like He needs to be.

Are you living by the values of your culture, or by God's culture? Our world heavily encourages sexual experimentation as normal, expected and desirable, AND generally disses the idea of self control. Youth culture spends far more time awash in these values through the media, than time absorbing God's values. And the consequences are all around us. Imagine how different the world would be if we just obeyed God and controlled ourselves in just this one thing called sex!

God asks very little of New Testament followers compared to the rule-heavy Old Testament days. But one of THE limits and boundaries God gives us today is "Make Your Body My Temple don't use your body for sexual immorality "-which is ALL sex out of marriage.

He knows we will wrestle with our emotional and physical yearning & burning but God who loves us, wants to protect us and others. Therefore, in spite of our feelings, the moral standard remains.

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RISE inside

Special LifeWell Conference

09 edition "ALL THINGS NEW"

(continued)

Throughout the Bible you can hear God saying 'Be wise, not sorry', and 'Love Me more than you love your partner and your own physical satisfaction' and 'Don't live like those who don't know Me -honour Me with your Body. I paid for it with My Life'.

Therefore "use your imagination and body parts for My honour - don't misuse your body, and don't stir up sexual desire in someone you aren't married to ".

Having said this then, here is some practical advice:
Respect Sex: Don't stir up love before its time. So when is it time to stir up sexual desire? When you can afford to: In marriage. Control sexual desire don't let it control you. Part of that self control includes what you feed your heart and mind with in private so trash the porn, guys -and ditch the romance novels girls you know that it stirs and feeds that appetite!

If you can't control yourself -and it can happen with sexual appetite -then don't be too scared to get counselling.

Respect Limits: You will be tempted to cross the line, so be prepared: make plans ahead of time not to put yourself and your date in such a situation.

Here's a good motto: If you can't do it in front of your parents, then you shouldn't be doing it at all!

Too strict you think? Then who are you listening to? I can assure you that many who have crossed the line, will tell you it's better to be too cautious than to wish you had been. And if you think I sound strict, just wait until YOU have your own children!

Respect Others: Make a commitment to God and your parents and your partner NOT to be sexually active before marriage. Outward commitments are a good inward anchor, helping you ride out the temporary pressures of temptation and you WILL be tempted. Every commitment you make -to God, to your spouse - will be tested.

Respect God: Not the so called 'wisdom' of modern, sexually- obsessed society a society filled with heartbreaking consequences due to a lack of restraint. God never said that

obeying Him would always feel good. He never said that obedience would get rid of sexual temptation. But obedience won't hurt you like disobedience!

Finally, if you have been crossing the line, it is not too late! God knows we are vulnerable and make mistakes. Sometimes we are too ashamed to admit to God what we're doing, but believe me He knows about it (even if your parents don't), and we certainly can't change without God on our side. God generously forgave me for my sexually active past, and helps me manage temptations today. I can trust His love and have learned to run to Him in times of struggle. God restores my dignity and helps me grow in my self control. Return to Him He is quick to forgive, and rich in mercy and understanding.

Make the journey towards restoration and newness of life – hear Sy Rogers at LifeWell Conference 09 – Adelaide 27-29 August.

August 2009

inside out

With You I'm Home



Author Claudia Muñoz talks to RISE Magazine about her new novel.

When Belen obeyed a prompting in her heart to move to London and work, she never imagined just how dramatically her life would change. After becoming the personal assistant to James Evans, the award-winning actor, she was confronted with an internal struggle of her personal faith and her undeniable emotions for James – a

man confronted with a new lifestyle of faith, and feelings for Belen he never saw coming. In *With You I'm Home*, author Claudia Muñoz takes readers through a classic love story with memorable characters struggling with decisions of life, love and true happiness, and presents the struggle we must all face when making a choice: Do we obey God above all things, even if it costs us what we love?

One of the greatest challenges single girls go through is the “waiting” time.

I am 32 years old and I know what it is to wait and to fantasize and I know what unrequited love is and to put it bluntly – it's not always very easy. Generally you are enjoying life being single, spending time with family and friends and working towards the goals you set yourself and most of all doing what God has put in your hand to do in this season of your life. However, being human, you get your bad days.

So on the way home from Church one evening, I was having one of “those bad days”. I had about a one hour trip to talk myself into an emotional frenzy with God, and by the time I got home I had red swollen eyes a runny nose and a heavy heart. However I really wanted to just write all these feelings down and through a story. As soon as I got home I got pen and paper and just began to write. I titled it “With You I'm Home” because I believe that when you meet the one God has for you, you really do feel like you are home, you have found the place and person you will stand by in life. Geographically it doesn't matter where you live as long as you are side by side, that is where home is. It's comfortable, safe, familiar and welcoming.

I have to admit that I wanted to live vicariously through this character of Belen (and that is why she is a lot like me and my

friends). At first I did not know where the story was going but over the next few weeks it began to reveal a lot of my convictions about not being unequally yoked no matter how tempting it may be. God speaks things for a reason and it carries with it the weight of power, authority, and wisdom and it will always bear good fruit if we apply it to our life. God never asks something of us just for the sake of it. He better than anyone knows what pleases Him and what is beneficial for us.

I had fun writing this story. It was a way to release my feelings through a story that combined real human feelings as well as a Godly romantic ending. I made a really extreme case of a girl from anywhere who captures the heart of a world famous actor. Okay, honestly girls who hasn't dreamt that? But, I know that we already have the heart of the One who matters the most, the heart of almighty God and the love and mercy of Jesus Christ and it is He who fulfills all our needs and desires according to His will, on this earth and all the way through into eternity.

Our Father God's eyes are on us and all we need to do is: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths” Proverbs 3:5-6*

August 2009

inside out

Ladybird Days



By children's author Julie Flatt
www.growingfaithseeds.com

We have had some visitors in our garden lately. We discovered them one afternoon as I was getting the washing in. My two girls, Olivia (five) and Rebecca (three) have been delighted by some ladybirds visiting our garden. For the last few weeks the ladybirds have been

spending their afternoons in our flower beds. The girls pick a leaf with a ladybird on it and wait for the ladybird to walk onto their hands. At the moment the ladybird walks on their hands, the girls are torn between squealing with delight and trying to stay calm to avoid scaring the ladybirds. When the ladybird flies away, the girls just find another one in the garden.

The ladybirds mustn't be too upset by my daughters, because they keep coming back for more visits.

It has been a great opportunity for us to talk together about the wonder of God. Isn't our Creator just awesome! Imagine designing something as delightful and intricate as a ladybird, with fully functioning wings and everything!

We have talked about some of the interesting animals that God has made. Kangaroos, with joeys in their pouch, flamingos with knees that bend backwards, elephants with their unusual trunk, our gorgeous guinea pigs, pelicans with their beaks that can hold water. God's imagination is beyond our comprehension. God has blessed the earth with such a variety, from the tiny ant to the blue whale. And then he has given us the responsibility of loving and caring for our earth.

What an honour to have the almighty Creator entrust us with the care of the plants and animals!

I have really enjoyed these conversations with my girls as we delight in the visits from the ladybirds. We remember that the whole earth is filled with God's glory. It is just a glimpse of the power, the wonder, the genius, the nurturing love, the grandeur and the infinite awesomeness of God.

Ladybirds in my garden are a display of God's genius and care. Did you know that ladybirds eat aphids? A beautiful visitor and a helpful visitor, all in one. I also read today that when

ladybirds lay their eggs, they lay fertile eggs and they lay additional infertile eggs. Some believe that the reason for this is to provide a food source for the ladybird's larvae. They have come to this conclusion partly because the ratio of infertile to fertile eggs increases with scarcity of food at the time of egg laying.

You just can't help but praise the Creator, the Living God!

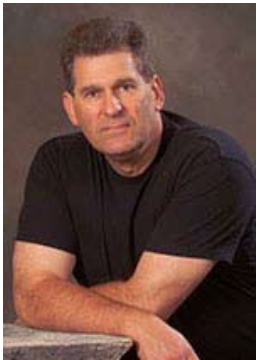
I wish you and your family the delight of discovering anew the awesomeness of God this week, as you go about your daily life.

Julie Flatt is the author of a number of children's materials, including My Faith Journey Through The Bible, a Bible Journal for Children, My First Bible Journal and The Gospel Activity Book, all designed to help children in their walk with the Lord. These and other resource materials are available through her website www.growingfaithseeds.com. The website also provides a variety of free resources for kids, parents and children's ministry workers.

Julie lives with her husband and two young daughters on the beautiful central coast of NSW. She is involved in worship ministry and a girls youth group. She is also currently undertaking theological studies.

August 2009

RISE people

A Valiant Man

By Dr. Allan Meyer, Careforce Church, Melbourne, Australia – Keynote speaker at LifeWell Conference 09

Developing and maintaining a healthy sexuality is a challenge for every man. Men are sexual beings invested with a strong and relentless sexual appetite, a reality demanding discipleship even in the most benign of environments.

Yet the environment in which men

of today must live and survive is extraordinarily provocative. We live in a highly sexualized and eroticized world and the pressure on male sexuality is high, thus the potential for men to develop distortions in their sexuality is also high. Learning to handle the pressure of male sexuality is one of the skills a man must acquire if he is to be successful in his personal life, his home life, and in his spiritual calling.

In 1978 during my first year as Youth Pastor I was invited to be Guest Preacher in another State for a man who was a hero in his denomination. He had come to Christ at the age of 47, put himself through Bible College, and felt a call to buy a tent and evangelize outback towns in South Australia. He and his wife had planted a string of churches across the outback including the vibrant church where I was invited to minister over a weekend. A few months after my visit my Senior Minister confided in me that the man was no longer in ministry; it had come to light he was involved sexually with women in his congregation. I was shocked by two things: firstly, he really was a hero of the faith - the churches he planted through his sacrificial ministry bore testimony to his love for Jesus. Secondly, he was nearly 70 years old - and even at that age his sexual appetite had brought him undone. I was just 30 years old at the time and I wondered to myself "Don't the batteries ever go flat - does this sexual pressure thing ever let up?"

In 1983 I was called to become the Pastor of Careforce Church (formerly known as Mt. Evelyn Christian Fellowship), the church my wife and I continue to serve to this day. My call to lead this church further underlined the need for sexual discipleship. In the late 1970's the charismatic renewal had touched this little church. It grew from 50 to around 350 in less than a year. They purchased 8 acres of land, planned a new worship centre, and were in the middle of an exciting move of God when the minister fell in adultery. It broke the heart of the congregation, but thankfully it didn't break their vision to serve God.

In 1992 my wife and I had founded Careforce Recovery Ministries, later to be renamed Careforce Lifekeys. It was a ministry that sprang out of our cry to find new paradigms of ministry, delivering pastoral care and discipleship to wounded people using a small group model and structured teaching process. It quickly became a potent tool for evangelism and church health. Within a few years our church tripled in size and other churches began to implement the ministry. While undertaking a Doctoral program with Denver Seminary I determined to undertake the development of another Careforce Lifekeys program to address the issue of Men's Sexual Discipleship. The Valiant Man course was born.

In October 2004, 122 men from all walks of life, some Christians, some not, filled a room at Careforce Church in Melbourne for the first session of Valiant Man and then broke up into 13 small groups led by 26 of my best Lifekeys Facilitators, all themselves willing participants in the first program. For the next ten weeks men listened, shared, journaled, cried, prayed together and pursued the restoration of their moral and spiritual purity.

Since that time 20,000 men have undertaken the Valiant Man course throughout Australia, New Zealand and even in the USA. I'm grateful for every single life that has been touched - but there are millions yet in need of undertaking that journey. Does it make a difference? Let me share just two testimonies from men who have done the Valiant Man course:

"I've just finished the Valiant Man sessions. I am astonished at how good they are. If this course had been available (for me) years ago imagine the pain and damage that could have been averted."

"Early sexual experiences had created significant distortions (in me) that almost destroyed our marriage. Valiant Man has transformed our lives and I am very passionate about presenting it to as many men as possible."

People need help in many areas of life. That's what Careforce Lifekeys is about, and that's what the Lifewell Conference is about.

We look forward with hope to the coming conference in Adelaide and trust that as a healing and restoring ministry is released in every local church that more and more Australians will discover that they, too, can do LIFE WELL.

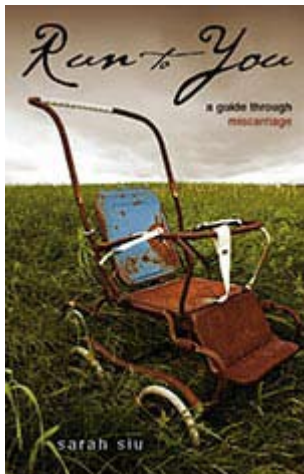
Make the journey towards restoration and newness of life at LifeWell Conference 09.

For more information on Careforce Lifekeys go to www.careforcelifelifekeys.org/aus

August 2009

smart living

A Remedy in Tragedy



By Sarah Siu – author of
*Run to You: a guide through
miscarriage*

Have you ever been there? You know. There. The place of doubt and pain. It's easy to get "there" when you've experienced or witnessed something tragic.

A young mother gives birth to a stillborn child, a family's home is devastated by fire, an impoverished woman is sold into slavery.

It is uncomfortable to face circumstances that seem to intrude on our happy existence. Most people hasten to escape such an awkward place. We swallow clichés and passive answers like, "It must have been his will." It seems that our minds and hearts cannot comprehend such horrible things, and we turn to question God.

When we look at the world today it is easy to wonder what God's will is. It is the quandary between suffering and God's goodness. But if we know him, we know he is good, and his intention for us is good. "For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to any human being." Lamentations 3:33

Perhaps a simple truth could remedy a hurting heart.

"Your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

Have you ever stopped to ponder this verse? I mean really ponder it? It's a simple verse we spout off in the Lord's prayer. Sometimes saying it like a meaningless mantra---YOUR KINGDOM COME YOUR WILL BE DONE..."

But there is a truth in this verse that Jesus alludes to. A simple truth that brings freedom to heal a hurting heart. He's asking us to pray for His will to be done.

Can we assume then, that sometimes his will is not done on earth, as it is heaven? He's saying the Father's will is yet to be accomplished on the earth. There are things that need to "be done."

The enemy is at work. Humanity is at work with all its wills. People are being people. Life happens. Time and chance factor into our circumstances (Ecc. 9:11), and nature at times, seems to have a mind of its own.

Nonetheless his will stands and he is sovereign. It is a "both – and" concept. His purposes and plans prevail and he is able to redeem anything that's out of his will. His will in Heaven AND its COMPLETION on Earth needs to be pushed through with prayer. It needs to be DONE, completed.

Maybe what you're going through isn't his completed will for your life.

We need to realize that he is not some angry God who desires that our babies die, our families live in devastation, or who delights in injustice. If we misunderstand his will and intention it can lead us to have a distorted view of His character. Leaving us no other option than to withdraw from him and miss out on the healing, grace, and comfort he has available for us.

We forget his heart toward us is good. When his will in heaven outworked itself on earth, it looked like love, it looked like the cross.

But the simple truth of knowing his will in heaven releases healing in our lives.

It's when we realize his will is to keep us, love us and give us life (Jn. 6:39-40, Jn 14-21, Jn, 10:10) that we can open our hearts to the compassion and comfort he longs to give us when we face the pain of this world (Is. 30:18).

There is so much in his heart, in his will in Heaven, that is yet to be done on earth. In many cases it's only a prayer away.

See the Tate Publishing link for information on Sarah Siu's book *Run to You: a guide through miscarriage*

August 2009

spotlight on the nations

One Woman's Experience In Lifehouse Australia



Lifehouse Australia is a purpose built residence established by Edwardstown Baptist Church with the assistance of the Pickard Group. Lifehouse offers six-month residential accommodation for women to help them work through life controlling issues under the supervision of trained counselors. Opened in September 2008, Lifehouse

is operated by a team of dedicated staff under the leadership of Director Hilery Keane. The staff of Lifehouse journey with women to help them make life-changing choices that free them from addictive and damaging habits. Self-harm, eating disorders and depression are the kinds of challenges that the residents and staff deal with in a Christian based program.

The following story was written by a woman who has recently completed the six-month residential program at Lifehouse Australia.

I entered the house a broken woman unable to function without the aid of others, and never really grasping independence. I can say with all honesty that I was ready to end my life. I truly believed my life was not worth the paper it was written on the day that I was born. Guilt, resentment, fear, pain and hate to name a few, were consuming me everyday. I thought there was no way out and no one would care. It got to the stage one day, with my family and a very close friend, where I had a massive decision to make. Either live the rest of life in nothingness or make a once and for all final decision to repair what I could.

Having gone through a rehabilitation program twice previously I had a fair idea what I was in for. The physical pain and emotional emptiness of substance abuse detox is undeniably hell in itself. Maintaining this is hardly ever achieved. I entered Lifehouse still in withdrawal. I kicked and screamed and tried my hardest to change the minds of my family, which I was good at doing. This time, no amount of resistance was to be tolerated and I had to face the inevitable. I hated everyone for "dumping" me. I hated Lifehouse and all it stood for. There was no way "this" place would be able to "tame" me, as no one had ever succeeded before. I had convinced myself I couldn't do it!

I was still in physical pain for the initial 8 weeks and once this

started to subside I began to get a glimpse of happiness. I was overwhelmed with the selflessness of people who never even knew me. I could not understand why anyone would want to put their time into improving me. Staff, volunteers and residents were giving me reinforcement that I was improving which I of course did not believe. Why did the outside world not see these traits in me? I soon realized the damage I had done was not only to me but also to the ones who loved me. This could never be repaired by words alone. I knew I had to do the things I said I would. After about 10 weeks into the program I had an overwhelming desire to serve others. I could not just sit back and allow the world to go by and I wanted to help out in as many ways as I could.

Having a limited knowledge of the Creator, I came in with an open mind and many, many questions. Many debates were probably instigated by me but I figured I am here to learn and without knowledge I could not grow. I got to the stage where I was satisfied to embark on my own personal journey as a new Christian and I am learning a lot. I was nervous to let anyone know of my decision but amazingly my friends have supported my choice and are happy for me.

God works in ways which you may not realize. Just being in the Lifehouse community has prepared me for the next stage in my life.

If you know of women suffering from the kinds of conditions mentioned in this article who are seeking a supportive environment to find healing and restoration we would love to hear from you.

Lifehouse is a non-profit organization that is supported by individuals and local businesses and needs funds to continue helping women in need. If you can assist please contact Lifehouse on 8277 1433. All donations are tax deductible. See the Lifehouse website at www.lifehouse.asn.au for more information.