



Abundant Living Ministries

Encouraging Christian Living since 1978

March 2018

Dear Sharon,

You may remember when I called you about my marriage dilemma. You were so gracious in sharing your encouraging thoughts with me and praying with me over the phone.

I felt I wanted to share my miracle with you, so am enclosing an e-mail with the details...

Dear ALM,

About 25 years ago, we attended one of the Sweetheart Banquets there in Brickerville. We have not contributed to ALM's ministry since then but we wish to do so now.

We really enjoyed the Christmas letter!

Dear John, Sharon and staff,

I'm writing this sincere thank you years late. You both spoke to my wife and me truthfully, while offering hope.

We came to experience a closeness that had been missing for a long time.

Thank you for using God's gifts to help others!

It brings us joy when we hear reports of lives changed... because of Christ! Yes, sometimes it is 25 years later but that's okay... God is at work, still doing the impossible, more than we can ask or imagine! (Ephesians 3:20)

Thank you so much for the ways you support ALM's ministry of *encouraging others in their Christian living*. You do so with your prayers. I'm sure many of you, at least occasionally, join with our prayer team of over 100 who pray regularly for those who come for counseling. Although we do not provide names and all the details to our prayer team, they are able to pray specifically for the various individuals who come for help through ALM.

You also support ALM's ministry through your financial giving. You noticed, in the one letter reprinted above, that a couple sent a contribution 25 years after having enjoyed a Sweetheart Banquet here in Brickerville. Perhaps you identify with that couple... perhaps you or your family benefitted personally by Abundant Living's ministry years ago but have not yet participated with ALM through a financial gift. We invite you to consider helping in this way.

Although clients are encouraged to make a contribution when they receive counseling, many individuals are in very difficult financial situations when they come for their sessions. We understand. For example, when a husband has just walked out on his wife and the wife then comes to meet with one of our staff, she is usually not in a position to give as much as she would like, at that time. That's where your gifts help cover that gap. Thank you!

Your prayers and gifts are so appreciated. We see you as GOD'S HAND extended toward many, through ALM!

Thank you for partnering with us!

John Charles (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)



FRESH STARTS

By the time March rolls around, most New Year's resolutions have been replaced by old habits. Good intentions may again be resurrected in 2019, but again will most likely fall by the wayside. Why is that? Well, old habits are hard to break and establishing a new habit is certainly a challenge... but definitely not impossible! In fact, with Jesus' help, successfully forming new habits is well within reach. Following are some fresh starts that can bring spiritual, emotional, relational and even physical benefits. Which will you start today?

START... taking responsibility for feelings! Quit saying things like, "He *makes* me so mad," or "My child *made* me upset." We *decide* to get angry, and we *decide* to be upset. God gave humans the ability to choose. Granted, the words and actions of people around us can be inappropriate, but how we respond is up to us. God doesn't hold us responsible for the actions of others. He does hold us responsible for our own actions and our reactions. When you're tempted to feel powerless in overcoming negative feelings, ask the Lord for help. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

START... saying, "Yes, I CAN!" One mother utilized this attitude with her child who needed to break a bad habit. Instead of scolding or lecturing, she simply asked him, "Can you do this (and she named the new good behavior)?" Then she encouraged him to reply, "Yes I CAN because Jesus will help me!" In just a few weeks of repeating this conversation several times daily, a new healthy habit had replaced the former bad habit.

START... thanking, no matter what! The Bible instructs, "Give thanks *in* all circumstances" ... not *for* all circumstances. When a difficult situation strikes, gratitude works wonders. In the midst of a tough challenge, the Lord is present, helping, comforting, strengthening, teaching. He brings good out of the most tragic circumstances and that is something for which to be hugely thankful! Start implementing this in small ways. For example, when stuck in a traffic delay, instead of fretting or fuming, say, "Thank You Lord, this is teaching me to relax and be patient." When your spouse is insensitive or unkind, say, "Thank You Lord for this opportunity to forgive and be kind to the one who has hurt me. I ask You to bless my spouse in some way today, and even use me to be an instrument of blessing."

START... making minutes count! People who accomplish great things have learned the benefit of making minutes count. Often people believe they don't have time to tackle a project, when in reality they have many minutes each day which are simply wasted. Make use of short breaks to think, plan, dream and do a little work on a project. For example, perhaps you've been putting off cleaning and reorganizing your kitchen cabinets because it seems like such a big job. But you could probably tackle one single drawer in as little as 10 or 15 minutes. Ask yourself, "What would I normally do and accomplish with those minutes?" It's quite possible that those 10 or 15 minutes would have just evaporated with nothing really accomplished. Why not make them count toward at least a small improvement?



START... carrying a bag of cheer! This doesn't refer to laundry detergent. It refers to cheerfulness. A pleasant attitude has a ripple effect. It affects *you* first of all, and then has a positive influence on those around you. Make it a personal project to smile rather than frown, whistle rather than whine, and sing rather than sulk. This can transform your home and work environments. Scripture tells us that "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Christians should be the most joyful, most cheery people because they know that they are loved, accepted and forgiven by

the King of the universe. You know in your heart that you love Him and that He loves you, and that is great cause for joy. But perhaps your heart has just not been doing a good job of communicating with your face!

START... loving your work! Whether it's mopping floors, changing diapers, driving a truck, designing buildings, or performing surgery, work is important. Scripture says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (Colossians 3:23-25). Many folks view work as a necessary evil, something to be endured for survival. What a miserable way to live! Choosing to be joyful can transform even the most distasteful task into something meaningful and rewarding. Post a sign, "Work is wonderful!" on your refrigerator, the dash of your vehicle, on your desk, or wherever you work. Tell others the benefits of your job. Hum, whistle or smile while working. Thank the Lord every day for the privilege of laboring for Him in your particular work setting.

START... praying relentlessly! Many people think that blocks of uninterrupted time are necessary for prayer.

While it is good to withdraw from busy hustle-bustle for times of concentrated intercession, a wonderful habit to cultivate is a running conversation with the



Lord all day long. When you first awaken in the morning, while you're eating breakfast, when you're driving, when you're on the job, when you're with your family, when you're ready to hit the sack... in your thoughts you can be chatting with Jesus. "Thank You Lord, for this new day." "Help me with this job, please!" "You are my very best Friend. I love You so much!" "Help me trust You and maintain a good attitude in the midst of this problem." "Lord, please bless this person who has come to my mind... Would you do something good for him/her? Thank You." These brief "prayer bites" can add up to a constant awareness of His presence. They will deepen your faith and increase your peace.

START... simplifying! Stress levels, in young and old alike, have sky-rocketed in recent years. In spite of advanced technology, with gadgets and machines to ease and streamline our lives, life seems only more hectic and complicated. It's time to simplify. Enlist the entire family to do a house de-cluttering. Be ruthless! Get rid of dozens

(maybe hundreds?) of toys. Children are actually calmer, complain less of boredom and become more creative when they have only a few things to play with. Limit screen time (TV watching, computer use, social networking), as these eat up enormous amounts of time and delay tackling much-more-important projects. Say "no" to extra-curricular activities that steal family-together time. Take a hard look at leisure... often the amount of time, money and energy expended for relaxation or fun, in the long run, ends up squashing both. Consider downsizing in order to eliminate some of the stress of maintaining a big house or property. Investigate changing jobs, if your current job leaves no margin for doing what you believe God wants you to do. So often, the pursuit of "just a little more money" encumbers and enslaves more than it enriches life. The apostle Paul wrote, "Godliness with **contentment** is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction." (1 Timothy 6:6-9).

START... believing what you believe! A wise man once said, "There are many believers, but few disciples." A disciple truly believes what he professes and acts accordingly. Many individuals give little more than a mental nod to belief in God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the truth of the Bible. In their daily living, the Divine has barely any practical influence. Each day, ask yourself repeatedly, "If I *really* believe that God is who He says He is, how will I act/react/think in this situation?" Purpose to tell at least one person each day about something that God has done for you, or is teaching you, or something for which you are trusting Him. Our actions and words reveal our heart. They also *change* our heart! Don't wait for a sudden wave of faith to sweep over you. Instead, increase your faith by making choices that reflect what you claim to be true.

Behavioral psychologists assert that a new behavior needs to be practiced consistently for about six weeks before it actually becomes a habit in our lives. Why not **choose one small improvement** you believe the Lord wants you to make? Write it on your calendar for the next forty days and make it a daily priority. If you miss a day, don't give up, simply restart the next day. These "fresh starts" are all possible, with God's help, and *any improvement* is better than none... so get the ball rolling... today!

Written by Sharon Charles

Keep your eyes open for her blog coming soon when we launch our updated website!



Coming Soon at Abundant Living

Open Arms Childbirth Class

Five consecutive Thursdays at 7:00pm
April 5- May 3, 2018

Taught by an experienced childbirth educator, this class covers the same information offered in a hospital course, but includes a distinctively-Christian perspective. You will meet and connect with other expectant couples and gain many practical helps as you prepare for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course. Please register by contacting the ALM office (see contact information below).

Six Monday evenings
October 1-November 5, 2018

7:00 - 9:00 PM

\$120 per person or \$150 per couple
(textbooks included)

Designed for those who wish to be more-effective people helpers within the Christian community.

Please register no later than
SEPTEMBER 10th by calling the
ALM office at 717-626-9575

**Lay
Christian
Counselor
Training**

Contact Information

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