

Discipleship

Romans 8: 28-39
John 14: 1-6

June 15, 2008

(I'm doing something a little different this morning with my sermon. This sermon is part of a Zacchaeus Weekend talk. It is a little commercial for the retreat.)

Hi. I'm Jann Orrell Wiener Martin. I was born on May 26, 1950. My parents are Marilyn Shaw Wiener and Allan Carl Schleicher Wiener. I am the oldest of three children. My brother Gary is two years younger than I am, and my sister Sharon is six years younger than I.

My parents were lovingly strict. We had rules we had to follow, but I know they really loved me because they would say no if it was for my own good. We went to church and Sunday school every Sunday. In the summer as a teenager I was always involved in the Vacation Bible School program. First it was as a helper, and as I grew older, as a teacher. I was also in the choir and very involved in the Luther League (the senior high youth group).

I had a lot of fun learning from my parents. Dad, helped me practice for my organ lessons, and we sang together in the choir and at home. Mom taught me how to knit, sew and cook. A Bible verse that was assigned to me in the third grade was Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." The training I had as a child has been the basis for my life, and I can't imagine a life without God at the center, although keeping Him at the center isn't always easy. My humanness gets in the way quite often.

When our oldest daughter, April, was about two years old, we found out I had some problems and needed some tests at the doctors. During one of the tests the doctor found a problem I had that would require surgery. I was to have a laparoscopy and I would not know until the surgery was over if they would have to do a hysterectomy. I was very scared, my mother had died from cancer when I was pregnant with April, and I was scared that I had cancer and would not be able to raise April. I tried to talk to my pastor, but his response was: it was silly to be afraid of having cancer like my mother. My surgery was scheduled, and I called the pastor to see if he would visit me in the hospital, but he had gone on vacation. The night before I was to enter the hospital, I lay on my bed and cried to God to please help me, that I couldn't handle this without Him. I immediately felt a heavy weight being lifted from me. I went to the hospital joking with everyone and, praise God, all went well. I found comfort in Romans 8:28, 38-39 which says ²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (1)

This was a turning point in my faith. I had always been faithful about going to church and being involved in many activities there. At this point however I really learned how important it

1. *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

was to let go and let God. We found a new church, and I began to do more in depth Bible studies and learned how to share my faith better.

In our lives we have many trials. They can be health related, financial problems, troubled relationships or many other areas. In Romans 5: 3-5 we learn that Christ is with us in all of life's trials. It says:³And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (2)

Through a series of events we ended up moving in with my father two weeks before our second daughter, Nicole was born. Dad had a two-bedroom condo. April had the other bedroom and Jim and I moved into the basement amidst all of our boxes. We literally had paths to get to the different areas of the basement. She came along at a time when I really needed someone to need me and keep me busy. Jim had gotten a job driving a semi for North American Van Lines. He drove commercial loads all across the country. He would be gone six weeks at a time, come home for four days, and then he was off again. His first few visits back, Nicole wasn't even sure who he was. When Nicole was a year and a half old, the girls and I were finally able to rent a condo of our own. Jim drove the truck for about two years. Then he was able to drive for a local trucking company and we were able to finally be together more.

He went to Bible study and Wally ball with a group of men from church and, unfortunately, re-injured his knee and needed surgery. He was then unable to drive a semi, so he was once again out of work.

I needed something from the store one day and decided to walk the mile there. The only income we now had was the pension Jim received from the Navy from the first time he injured his knee. As I walked to and from the store I prayed to God asking how we were going to make it. On the trip home I found a wallet with \$20.01. I tried to find the owner, but with no identification was unable to. I took the \$20.01 along with some money I had in the checkbook and got some groceries. As I waited in line at the register I prayed "Lord if this is from You, please give me a sign." When the cashier gave me the total, the amount of change I owed was .01. I thanked the Lord for His gift. This helped strengthen my faith's foundation which we can find in Luke 6: 48 which says:⁴⁸**"He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock."** (3)

A few days later I found a job working at an accountant's office, and Jim stayed home with the kids. He went back to school and became a Realtor and things were finally looking up. Then he got a surprising call from Great Lakes Steel. After five years of being laid off they wanted him to return to work. This was a more secure job with benefits and a regular check instead of commission and would have him vested for his pension with Great Lakes, so he started back right away.

2. *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

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When we moved in with my Dad, we began attending St. Michael Lutheran Church with him. Both Jim's and my faith began to grow stronger while attending St. Michael. I took several Bible study courses including Bethel, an in depth look at the Bible, Stephen Ministry and Could You Not Tarry One Hour?, a study on the Lord's Prayer. St. Michael was more contemporary than any church we had previously attended. I really learned how to be more open about my faith with those around me.

Several years later we felt it was time to move on at our church and began attending Holy Trinity Lutheran church, which also gave me the opportunity to express my faith and to grow. I was involved in Bible studies and small group discussions. It's hard to tell of your faith to those around you when you first try. But each time you do, you gain more confidence in your ability and can feel the Lord working through you. It's a wonderful feeling to see others begin to open and share their faith as well. I found in John 13:34-35 courage to go out and share my faith. It states: ³⁴“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (4)

This is how we can all be disciples for Jesus. We can use our experiences and lessons our Father has taught us to help those around us. By sharing our experiences we may touch on an area that someone else is struggling in. This may then open the door to talking and more sharing and the growth in faith for all involved. It's fun to let go and let God and then sit back and see what's going to happen once you have let the door open. Letting the Spirit guide our daily lives will lead to a more fulfilling life and a feeling of being more complete. Once you let the Spirit guide you, those around you will notice something different about you and will, hopefully, ask you questions and thus open the door for you to witness and to be a disciple for Christ. God has given us so much and a way we can give thanks is by sharing our faith with those around us.

You may ask the question “Who me?” Don't worry. All of us can be disciples for Christ. He is the way to the Father as it is referred to in John 14:5-6, which says: ⁵Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (5) He will lead us and give us the right words to say if we turn to Him for guidance in all situations. To witness we don't have to be able to recite Bible verses by memory. I know very few verses exactly as they are written in the Bible, but I'm not afraid to look in the concordance and find the area in Scripture that will support the idea I'm trying to get across. Sharing from the heart is a stronger witness than being able to quote verses and not have the feeling behind it. Don't be afraid to just reach out in love to those around you.

The opportunity came up for me to study and be commissioned as an Associate in Ministry in the Lutheran church. This was another way the Lord could use me to share His word with those around me. I served Him at Prince of Peace for five years, and I am now serving as Director of Family Ministry here at Faith Community. He has helped me grow tremendously through both of these calls. I am now preaching on a regular basis and learning more and more from each

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sermon. In my training to be an Associate in Ministry I didn't take a class on writing sermons, so this has been a real growth experience for me. I am able to share God's message and my faith with those who are in worship. I am thrilled to be used by God in such a way.

Once you have shared your faith, put your trust in the Lord to strengthen you and, hopefully, those you have witnessed to. God needs you to share your faith to those you come in contact with in order for Him to complete His plan for all of us. Christ is our guiding light. Follow the light of Christ and your life will have much more meaning.

Please join me. Close your eyes and imagine yourself as a child sitting on our Father (God's) lap. Now imagine yourself wrapped in the warmth of His love. It feels like the warmth and glow of a beautiful fire. Now open your eyes and carry His light with you. Remember that accepting His light through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only way to join Him in Heaven.

Amen.