



Lent A Lenten Diary
by Barbara White

LENT

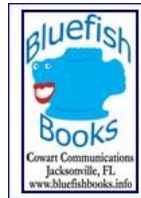
A Lenten Diary

Barbara G. White

With nine

Illustrations by Lyn Lazarus

John W. Cowart,
Editor



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Illustrated

by

Lyn Lazarus

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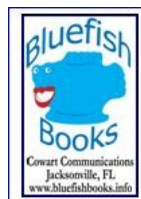
by

Helen Cowart

Elemental Gallery & Studio

Jacksonville, Florida

<http://www.elemental.name/>





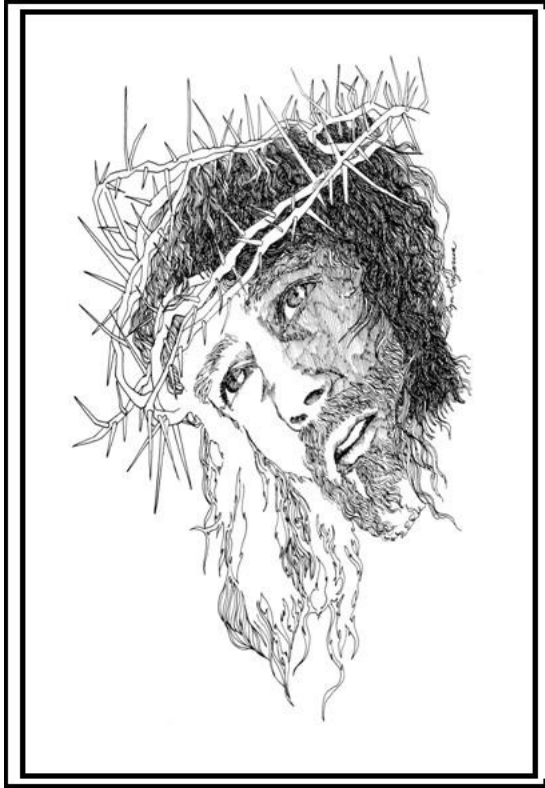
Isaiah 53:3-6

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.



LENT

A Lenten Dairy

Looking At The Center

Who rules our lives? Who or what do we put in the most important place?

I read something this week that made me aware of my desire to be "stage center," to run my own show and hear the applause.

A friend has been trying to get me to read something by Annie Dillard (her first book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, won a Pulitzer Prize), but somehow I never got around to it.

But Sunday I took home my friend's copy of Dillard's latest book, *Holy the Firm*. The book is, in one sense, a journal kept during a stay on

Northern Puget Sound; in another, it is philosophy, theology and poetry all rolled into one.

And I was moved not only by *what* she said, but by the way she said it.

Take this example from a description of going to church:

"We had a wretched singer once, a guest from a Canadian congregation, a hulking blond girl with chopped hair and big shoulders, who wore tinted spectacles and a long lacy dress, and sang, grinning, to faltering accompaniment, an entirely secular song about mountains. Nothing could have been more apparent than that God loved this girl. Nothing could more surely convince me of God's unending mercy than the continued existence on earth of the church."

And this:

"We are most deeply asleep at the switch when we fancy we control any switches at all. We sleep to time's hurdy-gurdy; we wake, if we ever wake, to the silence of God. And then, when we wake to the deep shores of light uncreated, then when the dazzling dark breaks over the far slopes of time, when it's time to toss things, like our reason and our will; then it's time to break our necks for home."

But mixed with my enjoyment of her message was the wish that I had written all that myself.

Well, that thought reminded me of compliments received on articles I have written, like one on intimacy. The trouble is that I didn't write it. Well, I *wrote* it, but I just wrote what Keith Miller said, so the compliments weren't really mine. And I wished I had thought it up, not just reported it.

And that made me think of John the Baptist.

I thought: How could he bear it, to be so important — and then to be less than the least in the kingdom? How could he bear to send his followers after Jesus, to want them to go, but then to watch them walk away — to know who Jesus is and then to doubt?

How could he stand it?

How can I? You see, I don't much want to be the one who prepares; I want to be stage center. I don't want to be the announcer; I want to be the star.

I don't want to be the prophet. I want to be the Lord? Is that what I'm saying? Is that who is at the center of my life — me?

And so, acknowledging that, how can I learn to do what my Lord wants me to do, not what I want to do — especially if it leaves me in the shadow?

John was faithful to his God — to death.

I'll think on that this Lent.



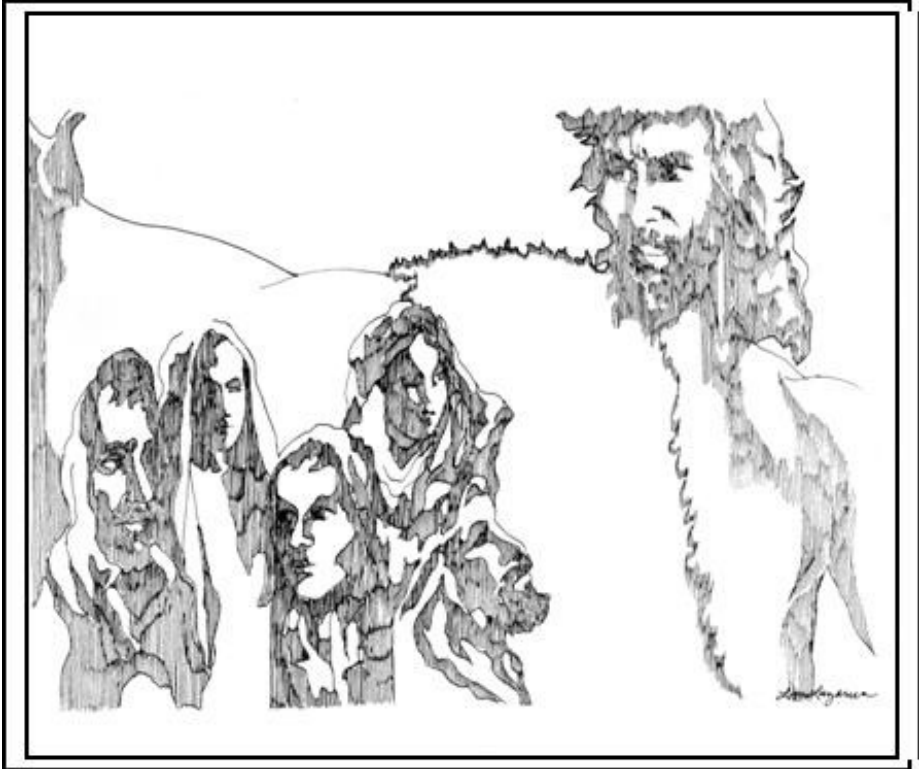
Jeremiah 29:11-14

I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

In those days when you pray, I will listen.

If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.

I will be found by you, says the LORD.



Seeking The First Death

To make room in your life for Someone other than yourself, parts of yourself must be emptied, be "killed" off. That point was driven home by a nail last Sunday.

Not all martyrdoms are alike. Not everyone is called upon to be Peter or James or Joan of Arc, but each of us is called upon to see — no, to seek — the death of anything that keeps us from putting Christ first.

I have often said — often enough to become a bore — that I personally like the changes in the service, but that I don't like balloons. I like the new words, the new ways, but with dignity and decorum.

Well, we had clowns in church last Sunday: Raggedy Ann clowns, hobo clowns and one that looked like a Chinese laundryman. Under the makeup were members of the congregation, mostly unrecognizable.

Leading then were a visiting United Methodist minister and his wife from Columbia, Md.

The word “clown,” according to the Rev. Gerald Goethe, comes from the word “clod.” Clod means earth.

When God created man, He took earth and breathed His Spirit into it.

Being a clown gives us a chance to be free of the expectations of others. It allows the child in us to come out and play, Goethe said, to let the Spirit in us show in new and unexpected ways.

The clowns led part of the service, using mime. When the time came, they gathered in front of the rest of us and helped us experience absolution through ablution, gently wiping our hands with a damp cloth and directing us through gestures to do the same for our neighbor.

We helped one clown blow up a red balloon (in pantomime from our seats, very self-consciously). On the balloon were the letters -L-O-V-E. The clown hugged it and gave it away — to us — and we did the same.

Then came the offering. Out of a gift-wrapped, ribboned box came large, pointed nails.

Amid a spreading silence the clowns came into our midst, carrying nails. One clown slowly pressed a nail onto my palm, closed my fingers around it.

I sat, looking at the nail, a symbol of Christ's crucifixion.

But as the soft, multicolored glow of stained glass became the consuming fire of self-revelation. I saw it was also a symbol of my death.

Must I be crucified? Not just die, but be killed?

I don't know about a final martyrdom, but I'm sure of the many current deaths through which my self must go. Even the self that said, “Oh, no! I'm sick of balloons. Where is the dignity and the decorum?” on seeing the clown costume-draped chair at the front of the church.

The self that wants it “my way or I won't play” had to die — and did as the gift was given.

That wasn't such a hard death.

Now, as I grasp the nail, its edges sharp against my fingers, I am certain there are other, harder deaths ahead of me and I'm not even sure what they are.

I don't know if I can find them by myself. But then, I don't have to. If I keep my eyes on Him, the world will manage to find them for me — and drive in the nails.

Lent is preparation for Easter, my nail points the way to the Good Friday through which I must go to get there.



Luke 23:24-49

Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.
... He delivered Jesus to their will.

And as they led him away... there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

But Jesus turning unto them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry"? ...

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do". And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. ...And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, And saying, "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself".

And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us".

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"

"And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss".

And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou come into thy kingdom".

And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise".

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit": and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man".

And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.



Mark 14: 3-9

As he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, "Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor".

And they murmured against her.

And Jesus said," Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

"For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

"She hath done what she could:

"She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

"Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her".



Trying To Witness

What is the relationship between the words “witness” and “martyr?” The author of a study guide to the Book of Acts used the words, if not interchangeably, at least in conjunction. And I wonder about the connection.

One must be willing to be a martyr to be a witness, I thought.

Look what happened to Stephen. He was stoned for speaking out about Jesus.

But some people say they find no difficulty witnessing; they have no reservations about standing up for what they believe in.

I'd like to think it was because they have safe, secure worlds made up of people who will not reject them for their beliefs. I'd like to excuse my own hesitations on the grounds that I live outside the walled city, in the world, and I don't want to come on too strong, to look too pious and put the other fellow off.

But the truth is I don't want to be a martyr.

The best kind of witnessing, it seems to me, is not the type that occurs when you “talk” someone into accepting your version of who Jesus is or what He is all about.

That's fine for debates among those who already know Him, I suppose, though I'm not sure it's productive even there.

But for reaching persons who don't know Him, the best kind of witnessing is when you tell — very specifically — what knowing the Lord has done in your life. And that is to risk martyrdom.

The man born blind did not try to argue with the Jewish leaders about the finer points of scriptural references to the Messiah. He simply told them that once he had been blind, now he could see and it all happened when he met Jesus.

The woman at the well urged the men of her Samaritan village to come see Jesus because “He knew all about me.” Encounter, not argument.

And so, little by little, a glimpse here, a reflection there, I begin to talk about what Jesus has meant in my life.

But I don't rush toward martyrdom. It is hard for me to slay personal pride and put aside privacy. It is impossible for me to do by myself. The fact this is done at all is a witness to the presence of the Lord in my life.

In places of the world today men and women are dying for their witness. Some die little deaths of rejection and ridicule; others are tortured and slain.

But though Lent helps me understand the need for witnessing/martyrdom, only Easter makes it possible for me to trust and to try.



Romans 5:5-10

Hope makes us not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God shows his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.



Finding Strength In Weakness

The shadow of the cross grows longer, draws closer.
I try — and fail. The harder I try, the greater my failure.
It isn't just that I can't solve my problems myself. Even when I seem to succeed, I fail again.

Some have a faith that seems so simple, but so sure. I question. I struggle in the darkness of that shadow to see the way.

The only thing I seem to know for sure and certain is that I am loved and that Love goes with me as I walk, hesitating and stumbling through days and nights of beginning to respond to that Love and share it with others.

But again and again, I fail.

At night, lying awake, I struggle for the right thing to do. What can I do, how can I make it all come out right? Is there a step I haven't tried, a method of operation I haven't used?

I can think of nothing I haven't already tried — and nothing seems to work.

So finally I quit trying. I simply admit my inability to do it right, to solve the problem, no matter how hard I try.

If it's left to me, you will never know Christ, the breach will never be healed, the Way never known.

In utter helplessness I finally turn to the source of strength. "I can't; You do it," I cry.

And He does.

But even the lesson of this experience does not stay with me very long. In no time at all I am back "doing it myself," trying to do with my strength the things that "worked" when He did it.

But it is not in exercising my abilities that I grow. It is in recognizing where I am most likely to fail — if I try to do it by myself — that I learn the most.

It seems to me that the closer I come to the face of Truth, the more clearly I see the falsehood — in myself.

The cross grows closer. The burden more than I can bear.

But the cross has been lifted. The burden borne. And the Comforter, the Strengthener, is the Spirit of God.

In surrender is victory; in dependence, freedom; in acknowledged weakness, strength.

Enabled by that Spirit to want what He wants, the things said and done bring peace.



Psalm 22:14-19

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

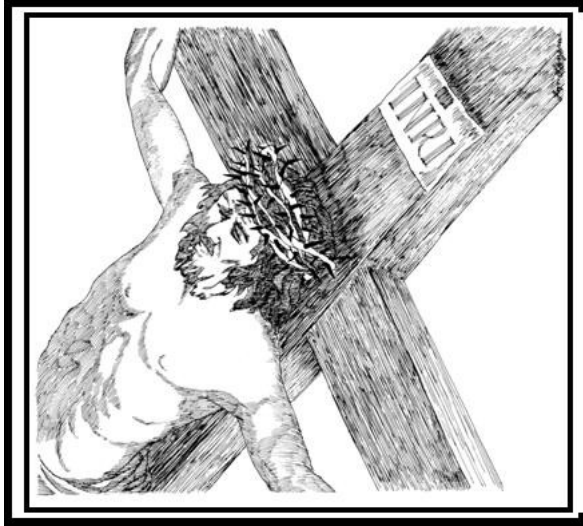
My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.



Balancing The Light

Trying to maintain a balance of belief is about as easy as trying to hold a bubble on the end of a finger so you can admire the light refracting within it.

If you push too hard, the bubble bursts. If you aren't firm enough, the globe of light, real and reflected, slips out of reach.

Why strive for balance? There are so many shades to the spectrum; sometimes we stare at only a part and insist that our vision is the only vision, our color the only true tint.

Light refracts and splinters, but is one. Faith is many-colored, but the true Light is one. And faith is not a bubble and is balanced on more than a finger.

I found a little book by John Stott, called *Balanced Christianity*. It takes less than 40 pages to consider "one of the tragedies of contemporary Christendom . . . polarization."

We hold the major tenets of faith in common, Stott says, but as the light splinters, so does faith. In the book he looks at some of the things that tend to separate us.

Take emotionalism and intellectualism. One says experience and feeling are everything; the other insists upon understanding, and distrusts warm emotion.

Consider the conservative and the radical. Is it better to save everything, the good and the bad alike, or to change it all, the good and the bad alike?

Compare the evangelist and the social activist. Should there be preaching of the Word or should there be ministering to needs?

I've struggled mightily to find the perfect balance between these poles, to find the thin thread that cuts across the gap, and to walk that line without falling.

Instead I have swung from one to the other, or fallen between them, never able to resolve the pull of both.

Now, suddenly, I am offered another approach.

Stott's premise is that it is best to be extreme — on both sides — not the temperate mean I have striven for. Not just to hold two points of view, but to hold them purposefully, intentionally, passionately.

It isn't either/or; it's both/and.

Instead of vacillating from one side to the other in these issues, Stott suggests, the Christian should bestride both.

We should be deeply touched emotionally and fiercely demanding of reason, "for nothing sets the heart on fire like truth;" passionately wanting nothing that is Scriptural changed and working just as passionately to scrutinize the faith for cultural intrusions which should be changed; desperately trying to communicate the Gospel and quickly responding to need.

Stott compares the golden mean of Aristotle and the passion of Paul by quoting from a letter written in 1825 by an English clergyman:

"The truth is not in the middle, and not in one extreme, but in both extremes.

“But, my brother, I am fortunate; I formerly read Aristotle, and like him much; I have since read Paul and caught somewhat of his strange notions, oscillating (not vacillating) from pole to pole ... so that if extremes will please you, I am your man; only remember, it is not one extreme that we are to go to, but both extremes.”



John 14:1-6

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know”.

Thomas saith unto Him, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way”?

Jesus saith unto him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”.



Learning To Be Thankful

How can I be truly thankful in the midst of trying situations? I can try to say the words, but can I mean them? And wouldn't that be just "formula" and fake?

I was standing in the hall waiting my turn to visit someone in the Duval County jail.

There is a small, rectangular window of thick glass through which you can see the person you are there to visit. Just below the window is a smaller, metal grill through which you can talk and listen. But it's hard to see and converse at the same time.

There were eight men in the cell, three windows for visitors, so I waited my turn.

As I stood there, attempting not to hear personal conversation shouted through the grill, I tried to think of anything at all for which I could give thanks in that situation.

I thanked the Lord that it wasn't worse — it was bad, but not deadly. No one was hurt. This, too, will pass.

And I thanked Him for the chance to learn from our mistakes, to grow. But it didn't really seem like thanksgiving.

Then I remembered suddenly that, though only for a short while, Jesus was a prisoner. He knew what it was like. He had been arrested. He had been questioned, abused. His back had borne stripes.

I thought, If I can care about these men, how much more must He care! If I am here, how much more must He be here — with those who need Him.

Then I thanked God for loving us, all of us, the prisoner and me, enough to be sentenced for us, to be executed for us.

And I thanked Him for living for us and with us, in whatever prisons we find ourselves, for whatever reasons we are there.

I thanked Him for the love that yearns to release the prisoner from his cell, the sinner from his sin.

Is this an answer to the question? Does it help?

Well, but how can I thank God for a child hurt, a family slain on the highway, strangers killed by terrorists or by natural disaster?

Perhaps by turning my eyes to Him and praising Him for what He is, for being there in the hurt, the death, the disaster, for making it possible for us to come through whatever it is to Him.

Is that formula? Is that fake?

I can only say that in the jail that day, the thought became reality and thanksgiving filled and overflowed.



Matthew 20:17-19

And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again”.



Living Anew With Him

The dogwood tree did not wait for Easter. It has already “risen” again, breaking into bloom and promising spring will come.

The world holds out such profligate promises.

It is no wonder we worship the resurrection that takes place in the world around us, the rebirth that nourishes and pleases us.

Is that what Easter is — another spring?

Spring came before the first Easter. Spring comes for everyone, the believer and the non-believer alike.

The earth is renewed. Man may be made new, too.

But not by the promises of the world.

Before He went to Jerusalem, Jesus went to Bethany. Before He went to His own death, He raised Lazarus. Before His own resurrection, He brought life.

Lazarus, brought again to life, again must die.

But the life called forth at Bethany was given another dimension on Golgotha. Jesus not only is victorious over the death that comes at the end of life, He is victorious over the death that stifles life every day for the living.

When I was young, I heard the name and fame of Jesus. I joined the crowd who followed and listened to His words. I even saw miracles and wonders, the sick healed and lives changed.

Surely, I thought, this is the One who is to come, this is the Lord.

And I gave allegiance as I was able.

Yet there was in me a body of death, buried deep inside, that no one — including me — was ever going to see.

Until Jesus stood before the stone that covered the tomb in my heart.

And I cried, “Lord, don't ask me to roll the stone aside. There will be a stench. All is dead within and I am afraid to let the light inside.”

But He commanded that the stone be moved and trembling, I consented. At the voice of Jesus, life was found in that tomb.

It came to the Light, wrapped in grave clothes surely, but alive in response to the call of the Lord.

And, because He not only called, but entered in that heart, the grave clothes are being unwrapped. Slowly, day by day, through the power of the Spirit which enables from without and within, my eyes are being uncovered so that they see things never seen before, my ears hear and tongue speaks.

Easter is more than spring.

Good Friday answers the question, “How much does He love me?”

To the question, “How can I live without Him?” Easter is the answer.



John 5:24-29

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.







John 20:1-18

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

Then she ran, to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said unto them, "They have taken away the LORD out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him"!

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

Then came Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

And they say unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou"?

She said unto them, "Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him".

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

Jesus said, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou"?

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away".

Jesus saith unto her, "Mary".

She turned herself, and saith unto him, "Rabboni"—which is to say, "Master".

Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God".

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the LORD, and that he had spoken these things unto her.



I John 4: 9-14

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the satisfaction for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another....

The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.





Philippians 2: 5-11

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**An Entry From
John Cowart's Diary
Thursday, April 14, 2011**

First thing Wednesday morning I stole a spray of roses.

Tuesday my friend Barbara White had phoned me from her hospice room. She asked me to come pick up some final copies of her diaries, notes, books and papers which had turned up as relatives and friends had cleaned out her apartment.

A few years ago Barbara entrusted her prayer diaries to me to publish. Beginning with her entry on May 9, 1976, I have (with the help of two of my daughters) transcribed as far as June 12, 1999—a tedious task but well worth the effort.

Recently someone asked if I were getting paid for this work. No. I'm doing it because I believe Barbara's writings contribute greatly to the body of Christian literature. I think her books and diaries will come to be spiritual classics as they portray a Christian life lived out in real time.

For about 15 years Barbara was the editor in charge of the local newspaper's religion magazine. And as part of her duty in covering varied faith communities of all sorts in Jacksonville, she also wrote a column called *Along The Way*, in which she revealed her own joys, trials, struggles, and awareness of God's love.

One time, management deemed that such a record of personal Christian faith was inappropriate in a daily newspaper and dropped her column; public outcry from every segment of the community, Christian and non-Christian alike, influenced management to reinstate Barbara's column within a week.

Barbara White's *Along The Way* columns are published in a series of four books at www.bluefishbooks.info .

So, yesterday morning I clipped a couple of roses from a neighbor's bush, drove my wife to work, and kept the

car to visit Barbara. At hospice, she looked as well as any terminal cancer patient can look. She is much weaker now. Can hardly sip from a straw or sit up comfortably. Her voice sounds weak but her thoughts strong as she gasps for breath between words.

She said her days must be numbered because she can no longer even tolerate solid foods. “John, when you can’t eat chocolate, you know the end is near,” she joked.

We talked about the papers she wanted me to have. She feels she will not be able to post any more diary entries—although she continues to pray for and minister to others.

For instance, when they cleaned out her apartment they brought her a few music and Bible study CDs. Over the weekend a young woman visited telling Barbara about a crisis situation in her life. Barbara said, “John, I can hardly move my head but I noticed that pile of CDs out of the corner of my eye and I knew in my spirit that the top one was just what she needed to hear. So I gave it to her to take home and listen to”

The next day the young woman called Barbara saying in tears how much that CD had meant to her, how it helped her cope with her problem and know that God loves her.

Barbara and I talked about ministry.

Often we minister to others without being aware of it ourselves. We don’t need to be aware of it. Barbara said, “Ministry is being available whenever God chooses to use you for something”.

I told her that the roses were my ministry to her—“With all these Christian friends you have, who else would steal a rose for you? Besides, my neighbor shouldn’t plant his so close to the fence”.

Many people have visited Barbara in Hospice, including a number of reporters and editors from the *Florida Times-Union*. One teased her

that they were gathering information to write her obit as soon as it's needed. Good friends all!

Barbara dictated a final *Along The Way* column to one of these newspaper friends, who printed it out from her laptop. Barbara gave me the copy asked me to post it online (she complained that her copy needed editing!)

So here (with the byline photo from one of her earliest columns) is Barbara White's concluding column:

Along The Way



I was 14 when I heard God tell me that He loved me. After I got over the awe of knowing God loved me, I had no idea what to do about it.

That was on a Saturday afternoon at Bartram Girl's School, where I was a boarding student. I was alone in the library. It was quiet. I asked myself, "What do you do when God says He loves you?"

I had no answer.

The next day they packed us all on the school bus and hauled us off to an Episcopal church on Hendricks Avenue where we sat glumly in a pew and waited for church to be over. (Years later a woman my age said she had been in the congregation and thought we were from an orphanage because we looked so sad).

That morning the minister announced that confirmation classes would begin soon for those who wanted to join the church. I said, "OK, that's what you do. You join church".

A week ago, I am now 81, a young woman asked me what I would like to say to Christians. There are so many different possible answers, but the one that came to my lips was: Try to find out as much as you can about the God who says He loves you.

She asked how would you go about that?

I said, read the Bible with that as your intention. Not to analyze, or figure out what it means to you, or the history of it. Just see what it tells you about this God who declares to me, to His Chosen People, and to all who would come, that He loves them.

Start out with a favorite passage, something that you are familiar with that is meaningful to you. Ask, “What does this tell me about the God who loves me?” If you are the kind of person who takes notes, make a note of what it was.

Look at everything in the world that God created and see what it says about Him as a lover of all mankind, of individuals, of yourself. Look at your life, your joys and sorrows, your pains and passions, and ask the Lord, “How can You love me with all of this”? Ask, “What Do You want me to do with them”?

This is not a quick study. So while you’re doing other things, ponder. Ponder, “Who is this God who loves me”? Make it personal, keep it personal. When I have been able to journal, which is sporadically, it’s one of the things I try to note. What am I thinking about God right now? What do I understand about Him now that I didn’t understand before?

During crises in my life, I’ve learned a lot about myself. I have learned things that made me wonder how God could possibly love me. Whether I can answer that question or not, He still loves me despite the awful things I found out about myself.

Saint Paul said, “The love of God is commended toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”.

I had a kitten poster that showed a darling kitten, and the words: God loves you just the way you are, but too much to leave you that way!

It’s been the most pleasure-giving study. How can it not be a pleasure to examine the love Someone has for you? When you can trust it, rely on it, know that it’s true, know that it’s deeper than you can understand, and that it will always, always, always be there.

As I approach the time, in days or weeks, to go to be with Him, I am at rest, at peace in this knowledge. I don’t know anything else that can give you this peace.

You say *bon voyage* when someone sets out on a long journey.

I don’t know what to say to you when you set out on this task of knowing the God who loves you, but, have a wonderful time along the way.

Barbara White

About The Author



Award winning newspaper columnist Barbara White, of Jacksonville, Florida, died on April 20, 2010. She had lived in a retirement community where she continued part of her Christian service in spiritual and practical ways in prayer, driving people to medical appointments, and looking for other ways to be useful.

Though in hospice care with cancer, during the last month of her life, she won a state-wide award for being Volunteer Of The Year.

For over 15 years at the *Florida Times-Union*, Barbara wrote a personal account of her spiritual journey. Thousands of readers followed her column, *Along The Way*. Her popular column profiles her own humble walk with Christ.

“I write about trying to live the Christian life and failing and trying again,” she said.

“God loves us just as we are — and too much to let us stay that way”.

Barbara White’s *Along The Way* series of books are published by Bluefish Books at ww.bluefishbooks.info .

— jwc



I Peter 2: 21-3:15

Hereunto you were called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously:

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd ...

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

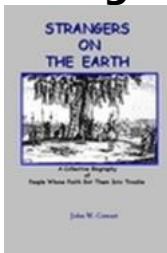
Other Bluefish Titles You May Enjoy



Bluefish Books specializes in old diaries & letters, history, biographies, memoirs, novels, inspirational books, and other works edited or written by John Cowart.

All Bluefish Books are available at
www.bluefishbooks.info
in both print and e-book editions

Strangers On The Earth



John Cowart's collective biography, *Strangers On The Earth*, offers miniature portraits of about 20 people who were radically different from the rest of us, people I find to be among the most fascinating characters who ever lived. Some told about in these pages are well known. Others you may have never heard of before. Each one exhibits certain other-worldly characteristics and values which you may find attractive, funny or odd — even repelling. Each of them acted out of place in this world, as though they were strangers here.... Among those profiled here are Astronomer Johannes Kepler, Aristocrat Jeanne Guyon, Farmer Seth Hubbel, Physician Eleanor Chesnut, Explorer Christopher Columbus, Housewife Mary Rowlandson, Saint Patrick of Ireland, Missionary William Carey, and a host of others who lived indeed as strangers on this earth.

The Lazarus Projects



In *THE LAZARUS PROJECTS*, by John Cowart, a team of modern scientists travels back through time to investigate the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the year 33. Miami businessman Lazarus Wienstien, multi-millionaire

owner of one of America's largest breweries, proposes this investigation. The bizarre death of his only grandson on the day Mr. Wienstien discovers his own cancer motivates him to initiate five research projects, one of which, he hopes, will insure his personal survival after death. These projects include experiments in cyronics, geriatrics, hypnotic regression, resuscitation and resurrection.

Rebel Yell: The Civil War Diary Of John Thomas Whatley, CSA



John Cowart edited this hitherto unpublished diary of a Confederate soldier. John Thomas Whatley's diary has been hidden away for almost 150 years and is here presented for the first time. Whatley, of Coweta County, Georgia, wrote in a bound farmer's ledger from March 2, 1862, till November 27, 1864. In neat Spencerian script Whatley's diary opens with his accounts while preparing for the defense of Savannah, Georgia; most of the diary's pages record events there. The diary portion of the text ends with his serving

near Petersburg, Virginia. Apparently, much of this time he served with General William J. Hardee's cavalry. The yankees killed Whatley at Bentonville, North Carolina, on April 14, 1865 — the same day President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

William F. Short's 1854 Diary



In 1854 William Short said more between the lines of his diary than he did in its pages. He'd proposed marriage to Sarah. But when he traveled to Jackson, Missouri, he was smitten by Amanda. Then at a Methodist camp meeting he met Martha, "My Temptation". Suspense builds as the young minister decides which girl to marry while at the same time he feels a deep heart hunger for God. His mix of confusion about love and dedication to Christ still appeals to readers

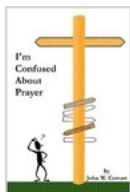
after 155 years.

Glog: A Dinosaur Novel—of sorts



John Cowart's Glog, a science fiction/humor fantasy, relates the adventures of a sentient dinosaur in the Chesapeake Bay area where he prays for divine guidance while being buffeted by adverse circumstances which confuse the creature to no end. Glog eats muskrats, lots of muskrats, and hunger motivates him more than anything else. He also illuminates the initial uncials in a biblical manuscript.

I'm Confused About Prayer



John Cowart, World's Foremost Authority on unanswered prayer, says, "I've prayed for more things and didn't get them than anyone else I know." But many other people also wonder why their prayers seem to get nowhere. So John's amusing book addresses such issues as: Is Anybody out there to answer prayers? If God is able to answer, then why doesn't He? Is God as mean as a snake? Is there something wrong

with my faith, my sins, my breath? If God did speak to me during prayer, would I hear him? If I don't have a whole lot of faith, will God answer me anyhow? Am I praying, or just wishing? And as John worries such questions, he presents his famous Skunk Proof for the existence of a loving God. He dedicates the book to his wife with the words, "I prayed 35 years ago to get over loving you. I'm so glad that God did not answer my prayer"

Heroes All: A History of Firefighting In Jacksonville, Florida



John Cowart's HEROES ALL traces the history of Jacksonville, my hometown, from the viewpoint of how many times the place has burned down--or been saved from burning down by heroic firefighters. From 1850, when bucket brigade volunteers grabbed their rifles to shoot an arsonist off the roof of a hotel, right up to the fire department's rescue of a puppy and some other animals from locked cages last year when 200 dogs died in the Humane Society Shelter fire, this book focuses on the bravery and courageous deeds of firefighters who save lives and property daily.

Crackers & Carpetbaggers: Moments In The History Of Jacksonville, Florida



John Cowart said, It all happened in Jacksonville, Florida: *Seminoles Indians, dressed in the costumes of Shakespearian actors, attacked Mandarin. *A letter from a prostitute lead Jacksonville's most popular minister to be aboard the Titanic when she went down (the ship that is). *Yellow Jack, a monstrous killer, decimated the city. *Gentleman Jim Corbett, Boxing Champion of America, fought and fought and fought in Jacksonville. *A pawnbroker buried eight chests of diamonds at Moncrief Springs; his treasure has never been recovered.. *In Riverside, a mule died in Mrs. E.C. Clark's kitchen. *A notorious pirate led a prayer meeting at Fort Caroline.... The Great Seaboard Earthquake, The Great Fire, The Great Freeze, The Great Telephone War, and many other events - It all happened in Jacksonville. *** "Hope you enjoy reading about it." --JWC

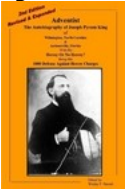


Letters From Stacy

Editor John Cowart said, "I bought an old wooden file drawer a few years ago at a yard sale in the Riverside section of Jacksonville, Florida. As best I recall, I paid three dollars for the file drawer and its contents. Inside I found this collection of letters touching on Little Rock, Arkansas', and Jacksonville, Florida's, history and culture from a man interested in family, cooking, gardening,

gunsmithing, computers, geology, wines, weather ... and gnomes."

Adventist: The Autobiography Of Joseph Pyram King



Edited by Wes Bassett, Joseph P. King's autobiography spotlights American life between 1846 and 1946. King tells of his boyhood in Wilmington, N.C., during the Civil War, his bout with Yellow Fever, and his love affair with his wife of 60 years. He also tells of his long service as a minister. Included is his defense when he was put on trial for heresy in 1880. This 2nd edition contains corrections, additions, and a section of newly

uncovered and collected photographs.

Along The Way



This is the first book in a series by award-winning columnist Barbara White, who describes herself as an insignificant person following a magnificent Savior; a weak person following a powerful God; a pilgrim following the road Home. She admits being a sinful person on the receiving end of incredible grace. She says, "I write about trying to live the Christian life and failing and trying again". Her modest yet

strong newspaper columns influenced thousands of readers as they followed her struggles and joys along the way; in her spiritual journey, they see their own. Readers from all walks of life and every religious persuasion identify with the transparent reality of her life and writing as they seek their own spiritual depth. Join her in her journey along the way; she's headed toward someplace we all want to go.

Further Along The Way



For over 15 years at the Florida Times-Union newspaper, award winning journalist Barbara White wrote a personal account of her spiritual journey. Thousands of readers followed her column, *Along The Way*. "I write about trying to live the Christian life and failing and trying again," she said. "God loves us just as we are — and too much to let us stay that way. This is the second book in a series of Barbara

White's *Along The Way* columns to be published by Bluefish Books.

Seasons Along The Way



For 15 years award-winning journalist Barbara White wrote *Along The Way*, a weekly column for the Florida Times-Union newspaper, chronicling her personal spiritual journey — 15 Easters, 15 Mothers' Days, 15 Thanksgivings, 15 Advents, 15 Lents, 15 Fourth of Julys, etc. Each column was to be read as a stand-alone piece, therefore they retain a timeless quality. This book collects samples of these outstanding columns related to various holiday seasons as well as a generous sample of columns

related to the fun, faith and frustrations Mrs. White experienced in her daily adventures *Along The Way*. This is the third book in Barbara White's *Along The Way* series. —jwc

Rejoicing Along The Way



In this fourth book of Barbara White's popular Along The Way series, she experiences joy on her spiritual journey in spite of potholes along the way such as her own cancer, a broken wrist, and her daughter's brain tumor. Her discoveries of rejoicing mirror the spiritual riches available in every reader's own life.

A Dirty Old Man Goes Bad



John Cowart's 2005 Blog

A Dirty Old Man Goes Bad, by John Cowart, records the humor and happiness of a frustrated writer. John's daily blog, Rabid Fun, bears the caption, "A befuddled ordinary Christian looks for spiritual realities in day to day living." Sounds like a downer. Yet, over 104,000 readers from 102 countries visited his website in 2005. A Dirty Old Man Goes Bad reveals John's happy joys as well as his struggles with temptation over bitterness, resentment, pornography, Microsoft, depression, laziness, Google, Blogger, pettiness,

sloth, Krispy Kreme Donuts, and anger. All in all, this is a real-time love story told day by day by a man who loves reality.

A Dirty Old Man Gets Worse



John Cowart's 2006 Diary

Have great reading fun as you track joys and frustrations in this light-hearted writer's diary. Laugh as this happy man wrestles with temptations and ponders the existence and nature of God. Smile at his antics over editing a Civil War diary and the autobiography of a 100-year-old man while at the same time caring for a duck attacked by a raccoon. Enjoy a year's worth of fun with his wild and rambunctious family. Be amused at the false and mistaken report of his death; and relish his abiding joy in life. Follow John's

exploits as he plans to write THE WORLD'S GREATEST BOOK ON HUMILITY! as a future project.

A Dirty Old Man Stumbles On



John Cowart's 2007 Diary

In this third book of John Cowart's Dirty Old Man Diaries series the author shares his fun-filled adventures as he takes his wife off for a romantic get-away weekend to an Indian burial mound. But it's not all fun as John wrestles with the problem of, "If God Loves Me, Then Why Won't My Lawnmower Start?". Readers share John's frustration as he worries over two sneaky 16th Century Puritans with the same name and as he turns a shopping bag filled with newspaper clippings into a book. And readers laugh as John

plays the part of the "Ugliest Virgin Ever" in a Christmas play when he tries to diaper a Teddy Bear amid clouds of baby powder. In the midst of these humorous adventures, John continually falls to temptations, yet keeps stumbling along seeking spiritual reality in everyday life.



John Cowart's 2008 Diary

A Dirty Old Man Sinks Lower

Readers laugh as writer John Cowart bogs down in tar when he paints his house. He also bogs down in muck

repairing his pool. And he bogs down in words as he finishes writing a history of his local fire department—a project he's tried, off and on, for 20 years. John says he's just a befuddled ordinary Christian who looks for spiritual reality in everyday life—and you'll laugh as he has fun doing that. You never know what the next page will bring. This book is the fourth in John's Dirty Old Man Goes Bad series.

A Dirty Old Man Goes To The Dogs



Once again writer John Cowart proves laughable as he ponders the serious business of life. In this fifth book of John's *Dirty Old Man* series, he thrills to uncover a century-old fingerprint. He struggles with matters of faith and theodicy as he recounts the tale of his friend the librarian's car being attacked by barely-clad nightclub strippers swinging swords. Only real life can be so funny and so serious at the same time.

Seeking A Settled Heart:

The 16th Century Diary of Puritan Richard Rogers



The diary of Richard Rogers, a Puritan minister in the time of the first Queen Elizabeth, resonates with features of my own life. Rogers lived between 1550 and 1618; his extant diary covers from February 28, 1587 to August 26, 1590. This present text is based on materials transcribed by Dr. M.M. Knappen. When I first encountered the Diary Of Richard Rogers, the man's search for God moved me to seek the Lord myself with more intensity and less pretense. The diary of this good and godly man inspired me in my own spiritual walk. That's what spiritual diaries are supposed to do.
— John Cowart

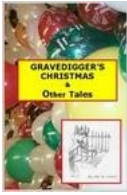
The Diary Of Samuel Ward, A Translator of the 1611 King James Bible



Samuel Ward, a moderate Puritan, lived from 1577 to 1643. His life spanned from the reign of Britain's Queen Elizabeth, through that of King James, and into the days of Charles I. Surviving pages of his diary run from May 11, 1595 to July 1, 1632. He served the Second Cambridge Company Translation Committee, comprised of the finest biblical and linguistic scholars of his day, to produce the 1611 King James Bible, the world's most popular book. Ward walked a thin line between Puritan and Established Church factions. While perusing his academic career at Cambridge, he preached solid

Puritan sermons yet rose to become the royal chaplain for King James, head of the Established Church. Ward's diary reveals that while he cared deeply about larger academic, political and church polity matters, his main concern was his own walk with Christ. He wrote to remind himself of his daily sins and faults, and also to remind himself of God's many blessings to him.

Gravedigger's Christmas



John Cowart's collection, *Gravedigger's Christmas & Other Tales: Fact, Fiction, And The Normal Daily Grind*, provides entertaining and amusing, yet enlightening, short stories, articles and essays related to daily life as well as to various holidays. Readings in the 230 page book range from "John Burns His Own Stupid Foot" for April Fool's Day, to serious meditations such as "The Ugliest Picture In The World" for Easter. In these pages love stories abound, such as "The Girl In My Shower" and "The Fig Factor". And the book also addresses deep philosophical and theological issues such as "Are There Reindeer In Heaven?" and "Was Jesus A Ghost?". All these chapters combine to make for light happy reading no matter what the occasion — even if it's just making it through your normal daily grind.



John Cowart's Daily blog can be found at
www.cowart.info/blog/

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