My freshman year in college at Mississippi State University I was an architect major. This meant that I took 20 credit hours each semester and then I often stayed in the architect building working on projects till all hours of the night. Needless to say I was exhausted. To build time into my life, the easiest thing for me to give up was going to church, being faithful in my time with the Lord, and fellowship with other believers. It wasn’t a conscious decision but it was the decision that I made.

After my freshman year I decided architecture was not for me. I returned home for the summer between my freshman year and sophomore year and it was a sweet time with the Lord. It was a time of grieving my lack of commitment to my relationship with the Lord the previous year. And, it was also a time of renewed commitment to my walk with the Lord, fellowship at church and with my Christian friends. So as I returned to college for my sophomore year I was determined not to repeat the mistakes of my freshman year. I committed to go to church faithfully and then I joined every Christian organization on campus. I was involved in the Baptist Student Union every Tuesday night and Wednesday over lunch. Then the rest of the week I would go to Campus Crusade, RUF and, on occasion, I went to FCA meetings even though I wasn’t even an athlete. Well this became exhausting. Remember, I was still a college student who had lots of homework; I was in the marching band which required afternoon practices; and I was engaged in my church orchestra. It was just too much. I had replaced a freshman year that lacked time with the Lord with going to meetings about the Lord.

My second semester of my sophomore year I dropped out of all the Christian organizations except for one. I decided doing more to prove I loved the Lord was not the answer. The Lord wanted me to meet with Him - to let Him decide how I spent my time. It finally clicked with me and I started to have sweet time in the word with the Lord. I wasn’t trying to do everything. None of the organizations were bad, they were actually all good. But, I had replaced meeting with the Lord with going to meetings about the Lord.
The rest of my sophomore year led me to a consistent walk with the Lord, days where I met Him in His Word! No longer were my days filled with doing stuff to gain His approval or prove to Him how sorry I was for my freshman year. Instead I committed to my walk with the Lord, the fellowship of a church community and I picked one organization to involve myself in their discipleship opportunities. In the end this balance encouraged me in my walk with the Lord and I learned to enjoy meeting with Him.

So why do I share this with you? In this newsletter we are going to give you lots of opportunities to engage with the word of God. We have daily devotionals on our Briarwood Women YouTube channel. We will have weekly video posts of our summer Bible studies in Philippians. We will have opportunities to participate in scripture writing. We’re giving you a link to a wonderful prayer journal. We have a fantastic book that many of us will be reading over the summer. But, we’re not asking you to do all of these. That’s way too much. Instead we’re asking you to prayerfully consider how you would like to engage this summer. And then, engage fully in those one or two ways. We do not want you to be bogged down or guilted into checking off an activity but we would rather you be engaged with a God who wants to meet with you and who deeply loves you!

-Kristie

Start your day thinking on the Lord! Every Monday – Friday in the month of June and July we will post a new daily devotional for you from different women in the church. The devotionals can be accessed through: https://briarwood.org/women-of-the-covenant/daily-devotions-on-womens-youtube-page

The following is the schedule of the women who have shared a devotional for June 1-12. We pray that you’ll be encouraged as you hear from fellow Briarwood women as they share from the Word of God.

Amanda Skinner Monday, June 1, 2020
Sue Lewis Tuesday, June 2, 2020
Kelly Chadwick Wednesday, June 3, 2020
April Jeff Thursday, June 4, 2020
Karen Carlisle Friday, June 5, 2020
Donna Evans Monday, June 8, 2020
Kathleen Bunn Tuesday, June 9, 2020
Christian Terrell Wednesday, June 10, 2020
Amy Lattner Thursday, June 11, 2020
Chesley Peed Friday, June 12, 2020
Donna Evans | Sowing and Reaping

Last week I received an unexpected phone call from another Briarwood flower guild member asking me if I’d like to help with a guild project. I was confused at first because we haven’t been making flower arrangements during our two-month quarantine, but Judy quickly explained.

“Oh, it isn’t arranging flowers,” she said. “We’re planting them! The church groundskeeper tilled a small plot of ground behind the Caroline House. If we want to plant some summer flowers now is a good time to do it. Bring a hat and your garden tools,” Judy instructed.

I hated to tell her, but my “garden tools” consisted of a pair of Bruce’s work gloves, my florist scissors, and a small spade. I’m really not much of a gardener. My friend Judy, a Master Gardener, and another guild member arrived with tools, knee pads, and a whole array of flower seeds all neatly arranged in a gardening organizer. Judy’s flower seeds selection included asters, sage, cosmos, amaranth, Lilliput, and zinnias. Surveying the tilled soil Judy walked off twelve rows and created a 2-3 inch trench for each row. Judy then took each packet of flower seeds, decided where to place them based on the eventual height, and placed a seed packet at the end of each row. All of a sudden the “small” plot looked large.

“I really don’t know what I’m doing,” I confessed. Judy laughed, “Just drop a couple of seeds in each trench and space the seeds about 4-6 inches apart. You’ll be fine.”

Reluctantly I opened a zinnia envelope and was shocked to see dozens of tiny seeds in the packet. Dropping to my knees, I placed the first two seeds into the recently tilled soil. Suddenly a familiar verse came to mind: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.” Luke 8:5. I moved about six inches down the row and dropped two more seeds into the dirt praying “Lord, help!” as I planted. More sowing, reaping, harvest, and seed verses came to my mind and heart:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I planted the seed, } & \text{Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. (1 Corinthians 3:6)} \\
\text{A man reaps what he sows. (Galatians 6:7)} \\
\text{Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; (Hosea 10:12)} \\
\text{Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. (Matthew 17:20)} \\
\text{Some of the ground was very hard while other areas were really rocky. A couple of times some dried holly leaves stuck in my fingers and made me cry “Ouch!” Each encounter reminded me of one of Jesus’ most famous parables. The Parable of the Soils is a metaphor for the condition of our hearts. The seed is the Word of God and the sower is the one who teaches or preaches the Word of God.} \\
\text{The seed along the hard path represent \textit{stubborn} hearts that refuse to listen to the Word of God.} \\
\text{The seed among the rocks represents \textit{shallow} hearts who initially hear God’s Word, but fall away during trials.} \\
\text{The seed among the thorns are \textit{strangled} hearts that have roots, but whose fruit is choked out by the worries of life and deceitfulness of riches.} \\
\text{The seed in good soil are \textit{sincere} hearts that not only receive God’s Word, but also retain and reproduce it.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

All of the listeners heard God’s Word, but only one heart eventually was both rooted and fruited. The fate of the seed was dependent on the condition of the soil.

I’m not sure what kind of flower harvest our recent efforts will produce, but I do know the Lord of the Harvest promises that His Word won’t return empty without accomplishing His purposes. (Isaiah 55:10-11) Let’s pray for sincere and soft hearts to receive the good seed of God’s Word.

“Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20)

“Lord, help!” as I planted. More sowing, reaping, harvest, and seed verses came to my mind and heart:

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\end{align*}
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Rooted and fruited for God’s glory,
Donna
We are very excited about our summer study in the Book of Philippians. We know that this book will be a source of encouragement and a beautiful reminder of what we have in Christ! This summer our drop in study will look a bit different due to social distancing requirements. We will not be meeting in person (at least for the first few studies). This means that our video studies will be available online at https://briarwood.org/women-of-the-covenant/philippians-summer-study/ each Tuesday, June 9th – July 14th. If our social distancing requirements ease throughout the summer, we will keep you notified as to the changes.

Along with our summer study in Philippians, we would like to encourage you to participate in our summer Scripture Writing Plan for the book of Philippians. It is available to download from briarwood.org/women in the Philippians Summer Studies link. https://briarwood.org/women-of-the-covenant/files/2020/05/Summer-Studies-Philippians.pdf If you have never participated in Scripture Writing, I would encourage you to join us this summer. Writing slows us down to think on each word in a passage. It gives us the opportunity to reflect on a word or phrase that pops out as we write. In preparation for each Summer Study lesson, we would like to encourage you to join us in Scripture Writing Philippians.

Kathy Cheely | Testimony

I was raised in a normal 1950's environment. My family went to church, but I knew nothing spiritual, nor did they (my parents or the churches.) My life changed when I turned 13. We moved to Pensacola, Florida and mother sought out a church for us to attend, even though my father no longer went with us. Mother had been raised Presbyterian and so she took my brother and I to McIlwain Presbyterian Church in Pensacola where Don Graham was pastor.

My junior high school was one block from the church so each Monday I would walk over to the church after school for a Bible study with the pastor. This made it very easy to get involved with the youth program which included hymn sings in the parlor after Sunday night church, fun nights on Friday, and regular Sunday School attendance. I went to everything, even sang in the youth choir. And mother and I joined the church. A year or two later, I experienced my first youth camp. It wasn't Presbyterian. The evangelist preached on the seven sins of Jezebel. I, to this day, would argue with most of what he said, but when the invitation was given (I'd never seen one), I went forward to accept Jesus as my Savior. The lady that counseled me attended my church. I believe, to this day, that I found Jesus listening to my pastor and youth leader, but never had an opportunity to make public my decision. From that year on the youth in our church went to a Presbyterian Church Camp of our denomination. I eventually became a counselor. So, when someone asks when I became a Christian, I'll tell them I was 14 at a youth camp because I walked forward. Most people wouldn't be patient to hear the real story when Jesus got my heart in the pews and programs at McIlwain Church. I didn't even realize the difference until I grew in the Lord. I've never turned back. “Praise God from whom all blessing flow.”

Extra:  We got a new youth leader my junior year of high school. She was wonderful. She had gone to Wheaton College and from the day she mentioned it, I wanted to go to Wheaton. I had been accepted when our new pastor arrived my senior year in high school. It was Don Patterson, a well-respected pastor in our denomination. He had gone to Wheaton too. One day he shared with me that he had met his wife there. Then he told me about a young man from his previous pastorate who was going to Wheaton. I didn't think a thing about it. His daughter had a picture of this young man in her wallet and chose to show it to me. Within weeks I was on my way to college. The day we arrived I joined a group of girls on my hall and headed to the dining room for dinner. While waiting for the doors to open, we chatted and watched crowds go by to get in line. Then a group of 6 guys came up the hill and passed right in front of us to get in line about 7 people back. Thanks to my pastor’s daughter, I had seen a picture of Tom Cheely and they had given me his name. If you’re reading, you know I’m a people person. So, I walked back and asked him if he was Tom Cheely, told him who I was and the story about Don Patterson. The rest is history. Don Patterson married us four years later.  *My Dad became a regular at church under Don Graham when they moved to Panama City where Dr. Graham had started a church.
Prayer Journaling this Summer

Created for a Purpose is a ministry that shares the gospel of Jesus Christ through creative art projects, sound biblical teaching, worship and small groups.

This ministry has put together a Prayer Journal for the summer months. This journal provides you with a hands-on approach to the ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) prayer model. It can be used by a family for daily prayer or by an individual for personal prayer, or both! The journal is set up so that you can slip it into a three-ring binder. The process encourages the prayer warrior to use their Bible to look up passages and use God’s word as the basis of their prayers. The *Created for a Purpose Prayer Journal* truly is for anyone and everyone!

Download the Prayer Journal at: [createdforapurpose.org](http://createdforapurpose.org)
As an introvert my ideal imagined isolation looks like this - a quiet house filled with my favorite foods, books, music, constantly clean clothes and no one bothering me. Not so bad - current pandemic notwithstanding. However, as a wife and mother of four children (ages 9, 11, almost 13 and 14) it is a completely different picture.

First of all I have been with my children all day, every day for the past 70 days. I repeat 70 days! Secondly I still go to the grocery store, cook, settle arguments, etc - no actual isolation at all. Therefore I've chosen to call this time in our lives Intense Family Time, or IFT. Family time is great; it is a blessing. IFT should come with a warning label: May cause a ticket to Crazy Town!

Let me digress. In college I was required to take a class called “Death and Dying.” I may not remember anything from my math classes but still have memorized Elisabeth Kubler Ross’s five stages of grief - denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Why all of this is still committed to my memory I have no idea. I would never have thought that I was grieving anything during our IFT. Oddly enough though as I have reflected this week I have spotted all the stages.

When all of this started I was excited about the change of pace our family was going to experience - no carpool lines, ballet or baseball. (Children, if you are reading this please know that I do love all of these activities but sometimes I feel a little bit like an Uber driver.) Having homeschooled our children for years, with the youngest completing his last year at home with me, I thought it would be fun to have everyone at home again. Can you say, denial? It didn’t take long for me to realize my mistake. Don’t get me wrong I did love the change of pace and having them around but...they were ALWAYS with me! To top it all off around day 3 Neal, who was working from home, told me that we were too loud. Seriously!?! There are five other people living here. All. The. Time! There is going to be some volume, Bucko! I might not have responded that way out loud but then again, I might have. In case you missed it, enter stage 2: anger, though not with God but my family. Thankfully anger didn’t last too long. I quickly moved on to bargaining. It went something like this: Okay, we are all here; nothing is changing any time soon. We are going to love each other and say nice things to each other. I asked my older three children to begin helping teach their youngest brother’s school lessons. In an attempt to be reasonable and keep it fun I asked them to help with only the subjects they truly enjoyed and I looked the other way when a history lesson lasted over an hour or a math lesson ended with only doodles and games of tic-tac-toe until I intervened. The way I saw it Team Hatchett was getting along and I was thrilled. Next I figured if we were all stuck together we might learn some life skills. I tricked all four of them into learning to cook by asking them what their favorite meal was then telling them we would eat it but they had to cook it. After verifying that we had a functioning fire extinguisher under the kitchen sink, I sat back and watched biting my tongue letting them figure it out. My bargain with the family was simple: Be a contributing member of the family and get dessert. Since I was only acting as the fire marshal for breakfast and dinner prep I was happy to keep a stash of post dinner sweets.
If you are looking for a good summer read that you can take your time and digest one chapter at a time, I highly encourage you to join us in reading Linda Dillow’s *Calm My Anxious Heart*. Each chapter takes us to the Word, gives us practical examples, and also gives us a great example or visual to keep the point of the chapter fresh in our mind. She does this early on in her book with the example of steeping tea. If you leave your tea bag in the water to steep for less than a minute then you get light brown water that does not have much of a taste. However, if you let the tea bag really steep for a long amount of time, then the water turns dark brown and really takes on the flavor of the tea. Linda then reminds us that this is what it looks like when we just dip our toes in the Word of God rather than being immersed in the Word of God. The quick dip may open our eyes to a truth but the steeping in the Word transforms us and we start to really take on the character and flavor of the Word.

We would love for you to join us as we read *Calm My Anxious Heart* this summer.

Then it happened. Day 35. The children were too loud, sassy, stompy and selfish. Neal was not involved enough yet too involved. Hand me that ticket to Crazy Town! I felt like a cartoon character with wiry hair standing on end and googly, bloodshot, crazy eyes. I sat through a family lunch and didn’t say a word. The children never noticed. I realized they were so content and enjoying each other that they didn’t realize I was off my rocker. That afternoon I zoomed through stages 4 to 5, depression to acceptance. Acceptance that they were still going to leave their shoes by the coffee table, ask for more screen time, panic at the smell of brussel sprouts, and argue with each other; BUT we were loving each other, lingering at the dinner table playing card games, laughing together and creating dinner discussions by playing “Would You Rather” because no one was in a hurry. Imagine the conversation that is created by asking a group of children: “Would you rather face a bear or a lion alone in the wilderness?” or “Would you rather dance with your sister or sing a solo on stage in front of your whole school?” They were also thinking about others rather than themselves by teaching their grandparents how to video chat so we would have long distance games of “Name That Tune.” So for the last 35 days we have still learned to cook, helped each other with school and sometimes driven each other crazy but most importantly I’ve seen this time as a special gift with my family. A time when I worked on having patience with them and extending a large measure of grace. Hopefully they would say the same, or something similar; but ask at your own risk because they may tell you, “Mama, went to Crazy Town and back during COVID-19!”
Liz Entrekin | Prayer

Many women like to fix things: dirty or broken things, damaged relationships, unattractive areas, even ourselves! But what our world has been dealing with for the past 3 - 4 months is something that no one on earth has been able to fix so far. This Corona virus seemed to catch everyone off guard and came into our world bringing unwanted change everywhere! As much as I have wanted to fix this situation, there seems to be nothing that I can do to put things back into normalcy.

Although my Bible studies, Sunday School and ESL classes are not meeting at the church, we have been very blessed to figure out Zoom and still see our friends and encourage each other in the Lord. And we have one avenue of communication that cannot be taken away and that is our unbelievable privilege of coming right into the presence of God as His child and talking to Him about what is on our hearts. What a priceless gift this is, thanks to our dear Lord Jesus making this possible.

All of our Briarwood Sisters are doing their prayer times in various ways and I enjoy hearing suggestions from my Bible study group. Here are some of the things that I am concentrating on and ministries from which I am benefitting: After my daily prayer time for my family, I tune into WLJR 88.5 while I make breakfast. I enjoy several good teachers and also keep abreast of news items. Besides our church’s resources, I enjoy a news podcast called, "The World and Everything In It" and also "Pray the Word" by David Platt. These podcasts are free so you just download it from your phone and it comes new daily. Each morning I receive an email from Presidentialprayerteam.org so that I can pray wisely with information of our President's daily schedule. It is so interesting! I have been involved with this ministry for many years and have prayed for several leaders - some I voted for and some I did not. But praying daily for them, their staff and families kept me from bad attitudes. Here at our church we have a team that prays regularly for the Persecuted Church around the world and also the missionaries that we support. If you are interested, contact the missions office. We always need more intercessors! A new added blessing that I have enjoyed recently is Unite714.com based on 2 Chronicles 7:14 - it's a worldwide movement from many denominations uniting to ask God to heal our land and take away Covid-19. The leaders ask that we try to pray each morning and evening at 7:14 as a reminder.

Many of you are involved in many prayer gatherings and I'm sure we would agree that the benefits are many. One thing is certain: This virus didn't catch our Creator by surprise. He is not only aware of all of the ramifications of this disease and all of the statistics, but our Heavenly Father is sovereign over every molecule. May He get all the glory ~ whatever He does is indeed GOOD and PERFECT. Our job? To completely trust Him! After all, He loves us with an eternal, perfect and never-ending love.
We asked Dr. Chesley Peed to engage with a general scenario of how some of our women might be feeling right now. The following is the scenario and her encouragement to us as believers:

This social distancing has not brought a relaxed time with more hours in the Word. Quite the opposite – my days are filled with feeding children, homeschooling, constantly cleaning the house, constantly entertaining little children. I'm just exhausted and the last thing I want to do is be in the Word – help.

Dear sister, these are cries I have heard in my office during “normal” times; I cannot imagine how much the situations that cause them are exacerbated by a stay-at-home order. The first thing I want you to remember, because I know you know it deep in your transformed heart, is that God's grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is just as sufficient today as it was when He first called you to Himself and you first knew Him. It is just as sufficient when you make it out the door on time with everyone bathed and dressed, as it is when there is cereal on the floor and in your hair.

Being a mother is a holy calling. What you are doing right now, each day with your children is living out your God-given calling and being a reflection of the Gospel to them. Being in the Word everyday will look different in different seasons. Some days your quiet time could look like teaching your kids a simple verse like, “When I am afraid, I will trust in you.” Some days your quiet time will not have anything to do with quiet at all. Some days your quiet time could look like teaching your children hymns packed with doctrine and truth. Some days it might be turning your ESV or other Bible App on to read out loud to you while you shower – if you shower. Some days your cry might be, “How long, O Lord?” Help comes when we cry out to God – whether it is comic relief or genuine or both, cry out to the Lord for his help.

I once read where a certain female Christian author woke up everyday at 5 am to sit in her chair, drink her coffee, and spend time with the Lord. I have seen many women of all ages and stages try to hold themselves to that standard and then feel extremely guilty when they could not meet that mark. I hope this frees you up a bit if you are thinking along those lines – that is false guilt. This person did not have three or even one child running around her house depending on her, that stage was long gone. Should you be striving to spend time with the Lord, no matter what your stage in life, taking a hint from Martha and Mary? Absolutely. However, holding yourself to someone else’s self-imposed routine and then feeling guilty about it is false guilt.

Having mentioned Martha and Mary, let’s examine Jesus’ words to Martha. “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”

Does this sound like these words could be said to you? It surely sounds like they could be said to me at times. Since you are already wise enough to know that Jesus tells us, “one thing is necessary,” here is a question I want you to think about after reading that passage: What does “the good portion” look like for me in this stage of life? Don’t forget to think through the fact we are in a global pandemic, you have several small children, and not many respites for yourself.

Dear sister, this is a fleeting season that may seem like an endless one due to these extreme circumstances. Remind yourself of that when you feel overwhelmed. Also remind yourself that seasons change and that the Lord is with you. God bless you if you even had the time to finish reading this answer. You have GOT this, and the Lord will see you through and meet you along the way.
Here are a few more 50’s & 60’s inspired coloring sheets!
To print, see the PDF links available in the email body of this newsletter.