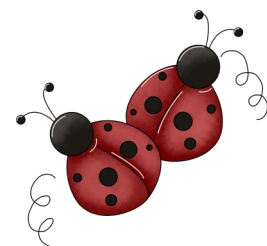


LADYBUG QUARTERLY

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Yes, that's right! Having served nearly 20 years in elementary education, I regard the fall season as the "new year," rather than our traditionally celebrated holiday that comes each January 1st. Although I've been out of the school scene for a few years now, I still tend to look at September as the time of new beginnings, a fresh start, and a chance to make *this year* the best ever.

However, just like I used to as a young girl and then later, a young woman, I sometimes face the "new year," with cautious optimism. I sometimes find myself asking at the beginning of a new season, "Will it really be different? Will I be able to have this year make the previous one's disappointment grow dim?"

As a painful season ends, we can allow that same cautious optimism to outshine the hope of a new one. Recently, an extremely painful season came to an end for me, and I can now look forward to a new one, anticipating good things to come. But because I have been through that painful experience, it would be easy to let the memories of hurt and anguish temper my future steps in relationships. It would be easy to allow myself to adopt a cautious "lessons learned" attitude toward the individuals involved in the painful season.

Yet, Scripture reminds me that our heavenly Father doesn't take this approach with us when we need forgiveness for the pain we've caused Him. *"The Eternal is compassionate and merciful. When we cross all the lines, He is patient with us. When we struggle against Him, He lovingly stays with us—changing, convicting, prodding; He will not constantly criticize, nor will He hold a grudge forever. Thankfully, God does not punish us for our sins and depravity as we deserve. In His mercy, He tempers justice with peace. Measure how high heaven is above the earth; God's wide, loving, kind heart is greater for those who revere Him. You see, God takes all our crimes—our seemingly inexhaustible sins—and removes them. As far as east is from the west, He removes them from us."*—Psalm 103:8-12, *The Voice*.

This Scripture reminds me that when the painful season ends, God doesn't cautiously wait for me to just mess up again in my relationship with Him. He doesn't hold back because He knows I'll hurt Him.

No, I'm certainly not God. However, the Bible tells us in many passages that I am made in His image, and have been grafted into His vine. If I believe that, then I must adopt His attitude toward forgiveness. That means when the painful season is over, *it is over*. It means not waiting for the other person to mess up again, so that I can say, "I knew it was too good to be true."

Although it is not in the Bible, Henry Ward Beecher's famous quote, *"A forgiveness ought to be like a canceled note, torn in two and burned up, so that it can never be shown against the man,"* is a passage that we should all memorize and keep close for those times when we are truly choosing to forgive. Because when we truly forgive someone, just like God does, it means letting go of the pain, adopting a "spiritual amnesia" toward the offense. It means not holding a grudge. It means ditching the cautious optimism and opening our arms to faith that this time it can — *and will* — be different.

It is my prayer that you enter this new season — or *new year*, if you will — with amazing faith that refuses to be tempered by past hurts. Amazing faith that will allow you to love again with your whole heart, and trust God with reckless abandon. Happy New Year!

~Lori Hartin

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“...ALL MEN SHOULD BE CREATED EQUAL.”



The year was 1911. Women in California had been working tirelessly to get Proposition 4 passed in that year's state election. They traveled hundreds of miles on dirt roads to reach out to farming and rural communities, they held rallies in the major cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco, and hung banners on anything that didn't move. On Election Day, you could find crowds of women at every polling place handing out leaflets to anyone undecided. Their cause had not made it on the ballot since 1896, and this was the second chance they had been waiting and working for. What was it they were fighting so hard to get? The right to vote.

It is easy to take our civil liberties for granted since so many of us have grown up having them all our lives, but it's good now and then to remember that things weren't always what they are now. It wasn't that long ago that a non-white man didn't have the right to be on a presidential ballot. It wasn't that long ago that people had to base their vote on what other people told them, never actually seeing or hearing a candidate themselves. And it wasn't that long ago that a women's political opinion was thought to be uneducated and pointless. We can be thankful we now live in an age where race and sex no longer determine your eligibility for office, and when we can watch debates and hear campaign speeches with our own eyes and ears. We can rejoice in a land that allows women and men to have an equal vote. After all, that was how God intended it to be from the beginning.

Genesis 1:26-27 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness, so that *they* may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; *male and female* He created them." (NIV, *emphasis mine*) God created both man and woman to rule over the earth and its creatures. We as women are co-stewards of God's creation. We were not created to sit by and let men do everything and make all of the decisions. We are to work together, both bodies, both minds, to accomplish God's will here on earth. God gave us an equal vote.

So, are you using that vote? Are you taking responsibility where you can for our environment, our economy, and our country's wellbeing? Are you looking out for the health and safety of God's creatures, both 4-legged, 2-legged and no legged? Are you informed and ready to physically cast your ballot on November 6th? If not, you still have time. Google the candidates in the big elections as well as in your smaller state, county and city elections, find out what they really stand for. Read the ballot measures, research through sources you trust and ask questions to those who may have experience in those areas. Think through issues like family, public schools, and small businesses. Decide what matters most to you and find the people and propositions that best support those things. Vote.

On October 11, 1911, with a margin that amounted to approximately one vote per precinct, California became the sixth equal-suffrage state in the U.S. They had done it! And with that one victory, the number of women's votes in America had doubled. The thought of that incredible victory brings me to tears and frankly, makes me want to go vote right now in the memory of those who fought for my rights. Don't let our sister suffragettes down, ladies. Don't let God down. He has created us and called us to take care of His creation, He send so many strong women ahead of us to pave the way for this election, and now it is our turn to do them both proud and vote for what we think is right. (P.S. – if you're still unsure, pray. God will give you wisdom and confidence in your vote. Promise.)

~Erin Hinton

As an independent distributor for [African HOPE Crafts](#), Erin knows the value of a missionary's work. She has been representing her father's foreign missions calling here on American soil. [African HOPE Crafts](#) was founded as a Christian job creation project ministering to poor and HIV+ men and women living in Masiphumelele, a township in Fish Hoek, South Africa. Erin currently serves on the Board of Directors at Ladybug Women's Ministries, as well as coordinating ministry to ladies in her home church.

I PRAYED FOR THIS BOY!

For the past two years I had the privilege of teaching a senior girls Bible class entitled "Noble Beauty" at the Christian school where I taught. Throughout the year we explored different themes of theology and our relationship with Christ. During the second semester we explored a variety of different themes that relate to being a noble woman of God. While some subjects are "easier" to teach for me (choosing a college, finances, etc.) one theme cut right to the core of something that is a constant surrendering point to our Lord: the topic of relationships.

I spend countless hours praying for my future husband, but this last year I felt that I was reminding myself of some of the same points that I was sharing with the girls. The pain of singleness can test the faith of the 18-year-old and the 32-year-old alike. I want and desire to find someone who loves God more than he loves me. Someone who is willing to tell *me* "no" because he is telling *God*, "yes." That is a man that I can JOYFULLY submit to. I want and desire to NEVER settle for less than God's best for me! Trusting that HE knows more than I do - I can confidently wait with expectation that my Heavenly Father, the one who loves me more than life, has the BEST for me. With this hope I can confidently wait. Wait until God's time. NOT my own. I want and desire to know how to guard my heart but yet lovingly embrace those that God has put in my path to love. I want to guard my heart in a way that only the one that the Lord has for me will know the intimate treasures of my heart, but not guard it in a way that keeps me locked up. I desire to wait... to remain pure... to keep the promises that I made to God and myself when I was 14 years old because obedience does bring blessing. Obedience DOES bring blessing.

As 18 years have come and gone since I made those promises to God and myself, I choose to continue to trust Him for His best. I choose to continue to pray daily for my future husband. I choose to continue to fast for him once a week. I choose to continue to write him love letters every week with prayers for him and thoughts for the future. And as I joyfully live each day, I choose to remain CONFIDENTLY hopeful that the Lord's blessings are right around the corner. I choose to TRUST in the One who loves me more than life.

Through laughter, straight talk, and beautiful words that came from God alone, that week of ministry was one of the sweetest experiences of my entire career. The Lord opened up conversations and thought-provoking times of prayer and reflection that were obviously all about Him. Nothing I could have done could have arranged for such a week. The Lord truly blessed and answered prayers beyond my imagination, and my faith was once again encouraged in the trust of what the Lord has in store, as I trust in Him.

Telling someone to remain pure and wait for God's best at 18 years old is as complicated as telling someone at age 32 the same thing. The waiting gets harder the older you are. The temptation to settle gets greater. The temptation to manipulate and orchestrate gets worse. And I run back to the Lord, I ask the Lord – no, I beg of the Lord – to bring my husband to me. I have learned that waiting is the hardest anguish. Waiting is the difficult anguish of my deepest longing and desire (to be a wife and mom) being unfulfilled and the bewilderment of unanswered prayer. I have also learned over time that God is in each day. God is truly in the waiting, with Psalm 62:5 reminding me – as I surrender my hopes and dreams the Lord grants me the strength and courage to face another day with joy as I wait.

That week was a small reminder that the Lord is in the CONFIDENT hopeful waiting. He knows the desires of my heart and He PROMISES to answer. As Romans 15:13 tells us, "*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" I trust that the Lord is still in control and is going to provide beyond my wildest dreams and imaginations. I know and am confident that I will rejoice with Scripture that states, "*I asked the Lord to give me this boy and He has GRANTED my request!*" (1 Samuel 1:27)

~Rebecca VanDeMark

Rebecca VanDeMark happily taught High School History and Bible classes in Virginia, Maryland, and Georgia for six years. She is passionately in love with Jesus and currently exploring additional dreams outside High School teaching that the Lord has given her, including pursuing a second graduate degree from West Virginia University and starting a creative arts company called "December Caravan," which donates a portion of all of its proceeds to charity. She loves creating things, spending time with friends and family, and following the Lord. She currently resides in Knoxville, TN and can be reached at rebeccavandemark@gmail.com or: www.decembercaravan.wordpress.com

"...and my Father is the gardener,"
John 15:1, NIV



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Please contact us if you would like to know more.

Thank you for your support of this ministry.

PROVERBS 17

RECIPE FOR LIFE BOX

Verses 1-9:

Gossip Destroys Friendships

*"He who covers a transgression seeks love,
But he who repeats a matter separates friends."*

- Proverbs 17:9, NKJV

Verses 10-15:

A Quarrel Begins like a Tiny Hole in a Reservoir

*"The beginning of strife is like releasing water;
Therefore, stop contention before a quarrel starts."*

- Proverbs 17:14, NKJV

Verses 16-28:

A True Friend Multiplies the Joys & Divides the Sorrows

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

- Proverbs 17:17, NKJV