



July 2008

## Pack Your Purse with THANKFULNESS

### Feature: "Recipe for a Thankful Heart"

Send out an invitation that has a "recipe" for a great meeting:

- Good Food
- Great Fellowship
- Grand Atmosphere
- Grateful Hearts!

Ask the women to bring with them a recipe that is special to their family, written on a card that can be exchanged. Spend some time in praise and worship, recognizing the importance of exalting the Lord with thankful hearts. Share with one another some things that you are thankful for, and what "ingredients" are necessary for living with an attitude of thankfulness. Divide the women into pairs and have them exchange their recipe cards. After they share with one another what is special about their recipe, ask them to write down a prayer request from their partner on the back of the recipe card they received and then spend a few moments praying for one another.

### Outreach Idea:

Prepare a basket of goodies for your local firefighters and/or police officers. Add a note thanking them for what they do for your community.

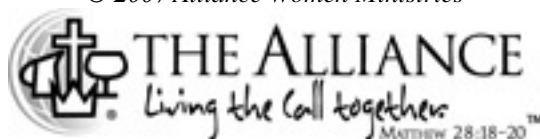
### Prayer Tip:

Pray for the marriages of those in our churches and for those serving and living in other cultures. I belong to a small group Bible study. When we took prayer requests one evening, there were three requests for the restoration of three marriages. (Remember these requests were from a small group about people that they were acquainted with.) This problem is as prevalent within the Church as it is outside. So that God's Kingdom can advance, we need to pray for His followers.

### Discipleship Thought:

The greatest reward as disciples of Jesus is not what we can get while we are on this world, but it is what we will receive in the future kingdom. Jesus told the disciples, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28).

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July 2008 Page 2

## Good to Go in Dakar, Senegal

### "Fill 'er up, please"

*By Jewel Evans*

Do you remember back to the days before self-service stations when there were gas station attendants? Do you remember pulling your car, with an empty tank, up to the gas pump and saying to the attendant, "Fill 'er up, please"? From time to time, I find myself in the spiritual condition of having an empty tank, and I find myself crying out to the Lord, "Fill me up, Lord. Please fill my empty tank!"

Besides crying out to the Lord, what should we do when we feel like we're running on empty and have nothing left to give??? I'd like to make several suggestions based on personal experience:

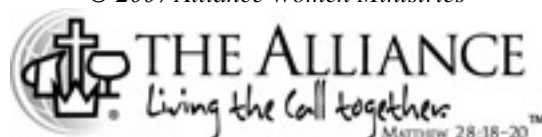
#### 1. **STAY IN THE WORD**

It is imperative that we keep renewing our minds with God's Word, even when we don't "feel" like it. I'm convinced that one of the enemy's main strategies when we are running on empty is to get us to quit reading the Word of God. God's Word is supernatural. It is living and active. Even though it was written so very long ago, God's Word can speak to our specific life circumstances as if it were written today as a letter JUST TO YOU FROM GOD HIMSELF. God wants to refresh our souls through His Word. He will reward your obedience so stay in the Word even if you feel like it's just routine.

#### 2. **SHARE ABOUT YOUR SPIRITUAL EMPTINESS WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST**

James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults to each other and pray for each other so God can heal you." We were never meant as Christians to be Lone Rangers. God Himself designed the Body of Christ and if the Body of Christ is functioning as it was meant to function, we need to be not only celebrating with each other, but we also need to be able to share deeply with each other when we are struggling. It takes courage to open up to people, but once they've earned your trust, take the plunge and be brave enough to be transparent with others and let them minister to you and pray for you. We ALL go through periods of spiritual emptiness. NO ONE runs on a full tank 100% of the time, so when you are brave enough to open up and ask for prayer support, it frees others to do the same. Oh, that we would learn to be REAL with each other and not wear masks. I don't know about you, but I can't relate to "perfect" people. I need to know that there are others out there who struggle from time to time like I do. I need to hear their stories of how God has helped them through and what they've learned in the process.

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July 2008 Page 3

### 3. **LISTEN TO CHRISTIAN MUSIC**

A strategy I've learned to use when I'm running on empty is the value of listening to Christian music in my home and in my car. Scripture choruses in particular really minister to my empty soul and are like a soothing balm to my wounds. Ps. 22:3 tells us that God inhabits the praises of His people. So, if you are feeling like God is far away, a sure fire way to sense His presence is to begin praising Him. He dwells in our praise!

### 4. **GET OFF ALONE WITH GOD ON A PERSONAL RETREAT**

When was the last time you grabbed your Bible and notebook and went off alone to be with God? Joan Fleming once wrote: "Of one thing I am convinced: personal retreat is not luxury or indulgence. It is a time of renewal. It is also an active choice we make to get to know God better. Just *wanting* to know Him better is not enough." I feel that getting off on a personal retreat with God from time to time is crucial. It won't just happen. You have to make it happen. Moms with small children, perhaps you could take turns watching each other's children in order to allow this to be a reality for you.

In conclusion, Ps. 63:1-6 gives us a good description of what strong, healthy spiritual vitality looks like. Verse 1 says, "*God, you are my God. I search for you. I thirst for you like someone in a dry, empty land.*" I am ministering in Senegal where there is very little green anywhere, just desert sand and dryness everywhere. I know what it's like to be parched with thirst. When was the last time you thirsted like that spiritually -- that you felt you'd just die if you didn't hear a personal word from God?

Verse 5 says, "*I will be content as if I had eaten the best foods.*" Think about Thanksgiving when we work long and hard to prepare that nice big feast and how richly satisfied we are at the end of the meal when we take our last bite of pumpkin pie. A feeling of contentment at having a "full tank" settles over us. When was the last time you can remember having that same kind of spiritual contentment, when you felt like God had filled your tank back up to overflowing?

Verse 6 says, "*I remember you while I'm lying in bed; I think about you through the night.*" When was the last time that your first thought when you woke in the morning was about God, and then you had a running conversation with him all day long and finally, fell into bed that night and the last thought you had before drifting off to sleep was about Him?

I don't know about you, but I'm not always experiencing this kind of spiritual vitality that David wrote about. And we know from reading the other Psalms that neither was David! But it encourages me to know that times of spiritual emptiness are only seasons in our lives and they always come to an end. And I strongly believe that we can shorten the season of dryness by applying the above strategies.

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