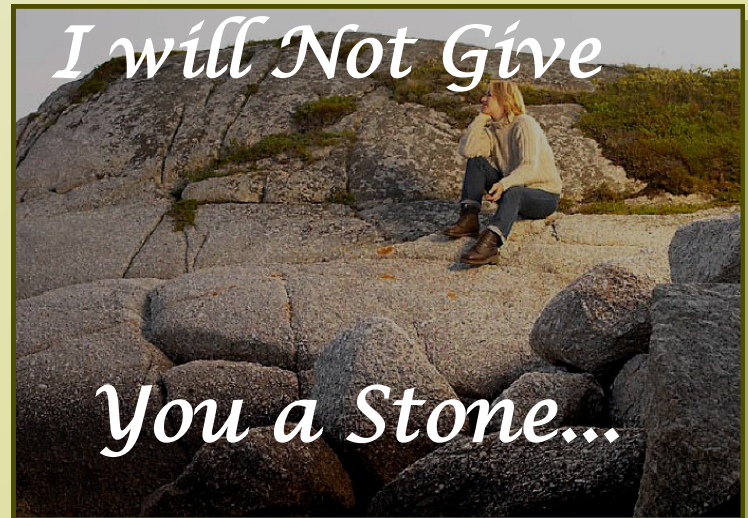


The Encouragement Newsletter



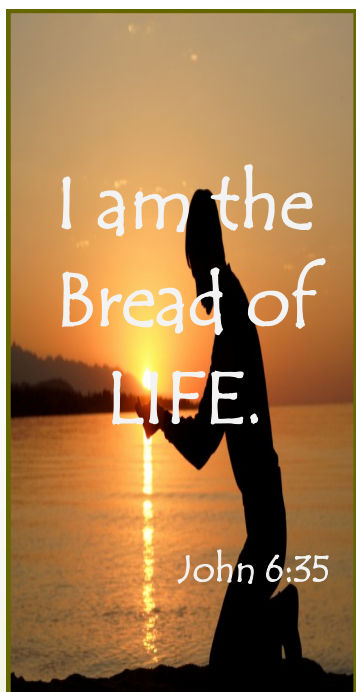
When I thought about this title and using it in a newsletter, I was thinking about the issues faced in life and petitions we all pray. In a conversation with my husband, I began expressing how it seems like God does not give us bread when we ask for it, instead it feels like He gives us a stone. Bread is necessary food. It is what we believe necessary to sustain us or improve our well being and it is what we pray for to God. A stone or a rock, even if it is smooth, is something hard. A stone is the total opposite of chewable digestible bread. These are the things in life that are hard to deal with and have the potential to knock us out. We will never naturally ask for a stone nor expect a stone as an answer to a petition, but sometimes that is what it seems like we acquire after earnestly seeking God. As we continued to talk, I reflected on his journey to fulfill a very passionate dream.

Prior to getting married, my husband was in the military, but his heart was not set on having a long term career in the military. His plan was to get out of the military and become a Maryland State Trooper. The plan was filled with a passion and he did not want anything to distract him. Including marrying me. This was fine with me because I was more of a stable person. I was not interested in the constant uprooting associated with the military lifestyle. So, we married with this goal in mind. A year or so before it was time for him to get out of the military, he inquired about the process to become a Trooper. He learned that he could not begin the process until he was out of the military. Well, he was not going to wait around, he applied to get early out of the military early. Incredibly, That request was granted and before we knew it, we were on our way back to the state of Maryland, after living in Germany for a few years. With his goal in mind and a strong sense that this was God's will, he did not waste any time beginning the process. While going through this process, he worked in the tool section of a hardware store. A few months into the process, he received a letter that he interpreted to mean he would be in the next



academy class. With much excitement, he decided to quit his job to spend time with me and the baby I was now carrying, before going away for the training that would take him away from us for several months. Weeks went by and he did not receive any further instruction for reporting to the police academy. His heart sank after he called and was told that he was not in the next class. In fact, there was a hiring freeze and there was no date set for the next academy class. However, his name would remain on the list of eligible candidates for the next class. His prayer to be a Trooper was unanswered. Now, here he was with no job and a child on the way. I was working, but I did not make enough to cover our living expenses. Fortunately, our finances were sustained for a while because we managed to save quite a bit of money while preparing for civilian life.

Devastated by a crushed dream and the thought of being unemployed, my husband chose to fall on his face before God. He spent a lot of time praying to God for direction. Because faith without works is dead, he did not stay on his face. He was constantly looking for employment. One day after a time in prayer, he sensed the Lord telling him to look in the paper. There he saw an employment advertisement for a driver. He pursued the opportunity and was hired. He settled in this job, but it was not the bread he asked. It was more like we had received a stone. We did not have the necessary income and the savings was depleting...quickly. Along with this, we had a precious big baby boy; and, as you may know, no matter how precious babies are, expenses increase significantly. We received cut-off notices, ordered checks were stolen and



someone was writing checks for thousands of dollars. Identity theft was unheard of and the banks blamed us, even when the signatures did not match. As a consequence, checks were bouncing, overdraft fees (*that we could not afford*) were assessed on our account; tithing along with all giving was a BIG challenge. We were distraught with the stones of life we seemed to be receiving in place of the bread we requested. It was rough, but my husband and I remained faithful and thankful to God because he is Faithful.

One day after a conversation with his barber, my husband was encouraged to apply for a position at the Pentagon. Hearing about this position,

offered hope to our financial situation. Thanks to James Darby, who submitted his application and provided a good reference, he was employed. This brought an enormous amount of encouragement to us. Not only was he employed, but after a while, he was promoted into another position.

It was now several years since asking, knocking and seeking for bread, but the dream of my husband's heart had not diminished.

The verses found in Matthew 7:7-9 and Luke 11:1-13, teach us what to expect when asking, seeking and knocking. There must be boldness and persistence in asking. This does not mean there is a lack of faith because you and I ask more than one time. There are, however, those times when after requests have been laid bare before the Lord, the answers seemingly come back in the form of a rock, rather than the bread we expected. Things get harder or the situation becomes harder to deal with. It feels like the answer is a biting scorpion. The experiences after genuine prayer just do not add up to the answer to the request. Have you ever asked for what you know to be bread, but did not receive it? Oh, how it hurts when the expectations are unmet. It is a hard pill to swallow.

For some requests, it may take many petitions because we are really fighting opposition that is either within and without. For example, in Daniel 9, Daniel was praying for an answer to the condition of Israel. The answer appears to be brought to him speedily by the angel Gabriel; but turning to the next chapter, Daniel 10, we find him setting himself aside to seek the Lord because of the burden of his soul after a vision he had received. It took weeks before he received a breakthrough. Gabriel, the angel with the power to strengthen and give him more revelation was delayed because of the spiritual warfare and opposition in the

Jesus Christ is the Author & Finisher of My Faith
 Veronica B. McCray, Co-Author
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heavens. We can expect the same thing as we ask, seek and knock. There will be opposition. Count on it! Do not be discouraged by the knocking that may have actually turned into pounding. The times of prayer is doing more than we can see with the natural eye. We are being changed from the inside out and our eyes are opening to see the Lord in a different way. Persistence and consistency builds more spirituality and vitality than we realize. The real bread is not really the answer to the petition. Rather, the real bread is coming to know the Bread of Life. St. John 6:35 expresses, "I am the bread of Life. Whoever, comes to Me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty". Thus, consuming this Bread will bring life and sustenance for eternity. After tasting and seeing that He is good, we will be like the woman in St. John 4 who asked Jesus for water so that she would never thirst again. She became a worshiper that announced "Come see a man!" She was transformed, many believed her pronouncement and a whole city was changed. Is this not what a life with Christ will produce? Transformation that affect others.

My encouragement to you is this, we need to consistently and constantly ask, seek and knock. But, leave the timing, way and method for giving bread up to the Lord. He knows better than we what is best and when we need to receive the requests of our heart. Or, if we need to receive it. Yikes... Also, recognize that delays do not necessarily mean NO...although it may mean no. Alternatively, it may mean "Not Now" because there are other things that are important on God's agenda for your life. This is the bread He is providing at this time. Look at the situation through another lens. You will see that what you call rocks is actually bread. Do not call His bread rocks. Although it may taste like hard rocks. Keep chewing, it will bring nourishment, strength and endurance.

Did my husband receive the bread he requested? Oh Yes!

It took three years for the fullness of time to materialize. Indeed he experienced many highs and lows before receiving the bread he asked for, but it came to pass in the timing of Omniscient God. It was the will of God for him to receive bread, but it was more of His will for him to receive the Bread of Life. He received more of Jesus and His Word, which imparted into him the endurance he needed for the future. The lessons learned while waiting for the desire of his heart were vital to his career as a Trooper. The career of his heart were filled with more highs, lows, disappointments, challenges and triumphs. He would not have made it through had he not experienced three years of delay.

He has now retired and is in a third career. Looking at this life event, almost 20 years later, the life lesson is, God did not give the bread at the time expected, but he gave the Bread necessary for the fulfillment of His purpose and plan.

Truly, if you ask for Bread, He will not give you a Stone...

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

If this newsletter has been an Encouragement to you, please let me know by e-mailing me at - **The_EPlace@yahoo.com**. I would love to hear from you. Also, this newsletter along with other writings are available at **TheEncouragementPlace.com**.