



MEMENTOES AND MILESTONES

by Pamela Stephens

One gift this Christmas took me back to my high school days and the box of mementoes I kept hidden under my bed. Gals, you know the one—with the ticket stubs, football programs, pressed petals, love notes, photo strips from the photo booth for 25 cents, the handkerchief he gave you to wipe away the tears, the key chain with a VW insignia, and many more! And it also brought to mind the sterling silver charm bracelet given by my parents for my 16th birthday that accumulated soldered charms over many years, such as: a cheer megaphone, a car, a diploma, a wedding cake, baby booties, a house, etc.

This gift I held was the latest version of that bracelet - making memories tangible - recounting events of meaning - preserving them forever. It's a marketer's dream, these trinkets of emotion, and evidently I am not the only one who is a sap for things like this, because you see this bracelet on the arms of females everywhere. This darling gift came with its own 90-page catalog of additional baubles and beads to add over time! Perfect, it keeps on giving and spending!

While I love the sentiment and idea of commemorating moments of our life, maybe I need to spend some time thinking about those spiritual milestones that brought those "ah ha" moments and so much growth spiritually!

- A) The time when I first heard, during a sermon that "without faith, we cannot please God." (Hebrews 11:6) Being a people-pleaser even then, it upset me that God wouldn't be pleased with me. What had I done at age 9 to displease God? After talking with our pastor and hearing about "original sin" and the plan of salvation, I prayed to make Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior from that day on, professing my **faith**.
- B) The time when a lady named Grace knocked on my door and asked, "If you were to die tonight, why should God let you into heaven?" (As a young married couple, we had neglected regular attendance at church and were living a pretty selfish life, ignoring my earlier decision to follow Jesus.) After this encounter, my husband and I went back to church, renewed our commitment to Jesus and rededicated our lives to Him. God's **grace** was evident; He was faithful even if we failed to be.

- C) The time when our 5 year old was hospitalized because of an allergic reaction to a drug and nearly died. We were brought face to face with God's promises of **peace** in Philippians 4:5-7, "God is near. Be anxious for nothing; but with prayer and supplication, along with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." We prayed and He brought us His peace.
- D) The time when God showed me I had "an anchor for my soul, a hope both sure and steadfast " in Jesus, no matter how my boat was rocked on the Sea of Worries, whether for my loved ones or finances, or anything else this world offers. He was my **Anchor of Hope**. (Hebrews 6:19)
- E) The time when I was first called on to serve at church in a leadership position. I Timothy 1:12, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his **service**."
- F) The time when God showed me that it was His plan for my life that I was to follow, not my own plans. I could **trust** my Creator to work out His plan for me! "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11

The milestones of Faith, Grace, Peace, Hope, Service, Trust ...they are better than sterling... they are pure gold!

"These stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever." Joshua 4:7

Reflect and Respond

- 1) Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned about God this year. Often we learn these lessons during difficult times bringing the most growth!
- 2) Think back to a time when you may have been shown something about: Faith in Him, God's grace, the need for His peace, the source of your hope, your call to serve Him or when you put your trust in Him. These are your milestones!
- 3) Whisper a prayer of thanks to Him, or take a few minutes to write one!
- 4) What do you need from Him right now? Just ask the One who waits for us to call His Name!



Pamela Stephens speaks for women's retreats and events and has taught Bible Studies since the 1980's. She loves writing and is a contributing author to four different books.

Pam and her husband, Bob moved to NW Arkansas five years ago from Southern California, and they love it! They enjoy traveling, have two grown daughters, and two grandsons. They celebrate their 42nd anniversary this month!

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