

## Focusing in . . . March 2011

“Woman, you are set free from your ailment. When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.” Luke 13:12 – 13

There is no picture in Scripture that I love more than this image of a woman bent and burdened with the physical and social prejudices and ailments of her day. Unable to look others in the eye, she has kept her eyes down and her story veiled for many, many years. She asked for nothing, yet Jesus saw her and he called to her, reached out and touched her. Immediately, she “stood up straight”. That is the moment of miracle for women everywhere. That is the touch that has made the difference in all of our stories – the touch of Jesus that gave us the dignity and power to stand straight and tall with faces shining for all to see. No other touch has done more for women around the world than the touch of Jesus.

But it hasn't been an easy road and many women continue to be bent over with oppression and abuse. Their story continues to be our story and the hand of Jesus is still the touch that has the power to free women to be everything she was created and called to be, in spite of religious practices and prejudices.

Tomorrow marks 100 years of celebrating International Women's Day and it is also day before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Lenten season. “Fat Tuesday” is traditionally the day to party and celebrate all the many blessings we have before entering a season of restraint, reflection and repentance. So I believe it is fitting to celebrate the many strides we have made as women, particularly in the last century while preparing to move into the reality that there is still so much work needed to set young girls free from ills such as human trafficking, poverty, sexual exploitation, subservience and abuse. The touch of Jesus is our in our hands.

Attached you will find information on International Women's Day from the Baptist World Alliance. You will also find a Lenten resource written by Alicia Dykstra of FBC, Calgary. It offers explanations as to the historical practices of Lent as well as some devotional reflections and practical application ideas for today. I think you will find it a helpful guide through the next 60 days.

I also want to invite you to join us at Assembly in Banff on Friday, April 29th. Rochelle Sato will be sharing her story with us of God's grace through a journey of unspoken bereavement, shame and reconciliation. In many ways, one woman's story touches all of our stories.

By grace alone,

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