

Living Water Christian Retreats **CONNECTIONS**

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A Ministry Is Born

When God closes one door, He opens another. This was the story of Living Waters Christian Retreats.

Debra Leewaye, the founder, began her ministry to women by opening Mi Casa in Pueblo, CO. It was the only therapeutic community in the world for domestic violence victims who were also chemically dependent. She worked nearly round the clock for nine and a half years with women who came to live there.

During that time God taught Debra and Erma Espinoza (the first Mi Casa graduate and now Certified Addiction Counselor) that only God can heal the brokenhearted. When the

home closed, Debra thought her meaning and purpose were over. She grieved and grieved, but God had a greater plan.

Debra's passion for helping trauma victims led her to volunteer at a therapeutic community for addicts in Denver. God showed her these women were also victims. Soon she received permission from the director to work with them on a Christian prayer level.

With God's help Debra led in an intensive twelve hour session with great success. That day Debra understood that God's healing could be used in a week-end retreat setting anywhere He would call

her. The women did not have to live in a home to receive God's healing. The door for Living Waters Christian Retreats began to open.

Through a "divine appointment", Debra and Mary Deans met and became friends, and Mary pledged her prayer support to the ministry. God began weaving their lives together in a miraculous way.

Debra traveled to North Carolina to attend a women's retreat held by Mary's church.. At the retreat, God called Debra to act on His idea of Christian retreats for women and He called Mary to walk beside her in this new ministry. (see page 4)



**Heart and Soul
Renewal...
Come and experience
God's Love!**

"It's been amazing to watch God's orchestration in bringing women together with common needs for each retreat," declares Mary .

Lake Gaston, NC Retreat

Who: 8 participants from MD, VA, NC, FL and CA. and 8 staff members

When: One gorgeous weekend in Spring 2009

Where: Lake Gaston, NC. Many thanks to Stan and Debbie

Figlewski for providing such a beautiful location at no cost!

What: The Holy Spirit ministered to all in powerful ways.

Thanks go to: Church on the Rise (COTR), Rocky Mount,

NC for providing boxes for the participants, Lisa Gurganus, pastor's wife at COTR, for her powerful ministry and the gift of her time, and to our Lord, Jesus Christ, for His unconditional love, and grace!



Our First Connection

Welcome to our first edition of *Connections!* The Lord has gone to great lengths to provide you with this newsletter so He must be very interested in you and keeping your connection to Him strong.

My only bond to you is through prayer and a friendship with Mary, one of the ministry leaders. I have never been to a retreat, but felt linked to you through a box I helped create for a participant in North Carolina. After that, God continually brought you to my mind. Then one Wednesday night at my church, He spoke to me clearly. *How do the women from the retreats stay connected to each other? Who encourages them in their walk with Me? Ask Mary.* Although I felt intimidated, I wanted to be obedient. Mary conveyed that she and Debra had been praying for a writer to help them, so my call to be the editor of this newsletter was confirmed.

Although greatly excited by the challenge, I was humbled and afraid. *Lord who am I that I should be called to this task?* Fear of failing Him and all of you gripped me and no words would come. Then one night at 3 a.m. my dog woke me and begged to go outside. I stumbled blindly out the door with her to breathe in the spring night air enveloping my home in the country. The sound of crickets and tree frogs greeted me and I noticed the bright moonlight painting milky shadows across my yard. I looked up at the half moon and noticed how bright it shone.

Right then God revealed His truth to me. The light from the moon dispelled the darkness all around me through no effort of its own. I realized the moon did no work. It reflected the light of the sun. It is covered in craters and imperfections and yet the light from it is pure, covering all its flaws. Reflecting the sun's light makes it both beautiful and useful.

Sometimes we all feel like the moon, full of craters and holes, but God calls us to reflect the light of His Son. The good news is we only have to be His reflection. He does all the work. When we obey, He will dispel the darkness around us, shine a path for others to come to the Light, and make us a beautiful reflection of Him.

Shine on, my sisters in Christ!

Millie Morris

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Getting to Know the Staff

Crystal Shepherd is passionate about women's ministry! "I was willing to do anything to minister (at the recent Lake Gaston retreat)...even sleep on the floor if I had to", Crystal explained. She knew the power of a retreat because she had been a past participant. At Lake Gaston, she ran the kitchen operation, and also shared her awesome testimony on repentance. "I have never been more excited about a ministry! I have begun to pray more, especially with others in mind and have begun to read my Bible on a daily basis."

Crystal is a wife, mom, and 5th grade math teacher. She attends Church on the Rise in Rocky Mount,

NC and formerly worked in the children's ministry before God called her to this new area of service.

Crystal's husband and children are very supportive of her involvement. "My husband has seen the change in



Crystal Shepherd at the recent Lake Gaston retreat.

my life. He knows my passion for this ministry and he feels that God has called me to it. My family is willing to sacrifice a few days for the retreats. I came back from this one changed yet again. I was so blessed by the women and by God. I am excited not only by my growth, but the change I see at every retreat."

When asked what makes Living Water Retreats different she replied, "The retreat gets deep into your body and your soul. It reaches into places you didn't even think possible. It is painful and it is hard. However, if a participant puts the work into it, they will be rewarded. They will be freed."

Meet a Retreat Participant

From the first moment you speak with Rosalinda you know you have met someone special. She is desperate for God, hungry for His presence and willing to sacrifice anything for Him. She recently traveled from California to the North Carolina retreat at Lake Gaston and received freedom that was the answer to her prayers. Her testimony is almost as amazing as her enhanced relationship with Christ.

“Just because you are in Christ, doesn’t mean that you are free. I was in bondage to the pain from my childhood. I shut myself off from good things happening to me throughout my life. I just needed guidance to the path of freedom in Christ.”

Rosalinda was introduced to ministry leader, Debra Leeway, through a friend and Debra invited her to the NC retreat. Rosalinda had been on a forty-day fast asking God for healing and freedom and now she was in a position to receive it.

Rosalinda went to her pastor and they explored the ministry website, www.livingwaterchristianretreats.org. After prayer her pastor gave her his blessing but how was she going to get all the way to North Carolina? “I didn’t even know where North Carolina was but I knew God was calling me. When I looked on

the map and realized it was all the way across the United States I was amazed.”

She was so excited about what God was doing, she told a coworker about the retreat and God moved on her friend’s heart to provide the airfare. Before she left, her church held a special prayer time for her and sent her out.

Once she arrived, Rosalinda found the tools she needed to secure the freedom she had been longing for. “How can we expect the Lord to fill us with His love when we are filled up with all this junk? We have to clean ourselves out! I discovered there was a way. There wasn’t something wrong with me and I wasn’t crazy. Jesus Christ healed and set me free from the bondage and the pain of my past.”

Since returning home, Rosalinda is on fire for Jesus. She wants to share her new-found freedom with others. “I’m here and now I can help others. It’s not about me anymore, it’s all

“How can we expect the Lord to fill us with His love when we are filled up with all this junk?”

Rosalinda

about Him and who He is.”



Rosalinda at Lake Gaston

After much prayer, Debra and Mary were led to have a retreat in California and Rosalinda recruited seven women from her church to go with her. She also catered and cooked to raise \$1500.00 to help pay for

it. Talk about putting actions to your words! Her dream is to have bilingual retreats in the future and now she is the West Coast coordinator of the ministry.

When asked about sharing her thoughts with any women contemplating going on a retreat she said, “It wasn’t until I laid it all before Him that I experienced that healing. I don’t want to be a victim..I refuse! The Lord had to show me that He could be trusted because I couldn’t trust anyone to love me. I just decided to trust Him. There is something greater and deeper that the Lord had for my life and He will do the same thing for you.”

Ministry Needs

Please keep these ministry needs in your prayers....



- ◆ Financial provision for retreat participants and team members
- ◆ Many family struggling with serious issues
- ◆ The Lord’s protection in spiritual battles
- ◆ God’s favor on all women who are seeking freedom from strongholds in their lives
- ◆ Strength for those returning to school
- ◆ Traveling mercies Sept. 16-21 for the Lake Tahoe retreat
- ◆ For the all hearts to be ready and for God to have His perfect way in the retreat
- ◆ Pray for more laborers to help with Living Water Christian Retreats
- ◆ The smooth transition to Spanish of retreat materials and content

Living Water Christian Retreats

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Contact us today!

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On the Mark

"If you expect God to reveal, restore and heal, this is one retreat you where you want to be. Never have I experienced anything before like I did on Saturday while I was in my childhood state. All I can say is that if you come expecting something, God is faithful to accommodate."

Participant 2009 Lake Gaston

Scripture Prescription

For Encouragement.....

Joshua 1:9—God is with you wherever you go

Isaiah 41:10—God will strengthen you and help you

Psalms 107:19-21—God rescues us from trouble

Zephaniah 3:17—God is delighted with you

John 14:1-3—Jesus is coming back for us

John 16:33—Jesus has overcome the troubles of this world

Romans 15:4—The Scriptures were given for our encouragement

Romans 8:38—Nothing can separate us from the love of God

Hebrews 10:25—Remember to encourage one another

Birth of a Ministry Continued

As Mary and Debra prayed together for the next two and a half years, God's plan for the retreats began to take shape as He brought people and resources together.

In October 2007, the first retreat was held near San Isabel Lake, CO. A couple with a heart for the ministry agreed to discount cabins for the retreat and gave the assistance needed to launch it. Since then, there have been retreats in both Colorado and North Carolina. The next retreat will be in Lake Tahoe, Nevada in September 2009.

God's provisions have also included the volunteer staff members, many of whom were first retreat participants. Debbie Romero joined them at that first retreat and has been an appreciated part of the ministry ever since. Each retreat has been evaluated and

refined. Debra and Mary have learned to rely on the Lord for each decision and provision. God bonded teams together and began to match the servant leaders with the participants.

"It's been amazing to watch God's orchestration in bringing women together with common needs for each retreat," declares Mary.

To date all of the participants have received a partial or full scholarship. Specific retreats dealing with trauma, grief/loss, and abortion have now been developed. Go to the website, www.livingwaterchristianretreats.org for future retreat dates.

Through this process everyone has learned that Jesus Christ is the answer to deliverance from a troubled past. Debra explains, "It is not about

the laborer, because God can work through anyone. It is not about the method. It's simply about God showing up and God having His way. Usually if the woman is surrendered and does the work, there will be a life change. It will be done simply and completely."

Usually if the woman is surrendered and does the work, there will be a life change. It will be done simply and completely," Debra Leeway explains.