



The Meaning of Christmas

Dear Beloved Fellow Servants for Christ,

In this holiday season, the Lord is showing me a few new ways to think about the meaning of Christmas from 1John1:1-4. Christmas is a story about love. As Dorothy Sayers, a female Oxford graduate who wrote detective stories in the 1930's and 40's, featuring Lord Peter Wimsey, fell in love with her famous character, wrote herself into the story, as Harriet Vane, God wrote himself into our story. The teaching of Christmas is about "His story," the One who created the world and created us, and knew that we had gone astray, away from him and lost. He looked at the world that He created and at us, the main character in this world (the human race), and He loved us so much that He wrote himself into our story. That is why he was born in a manger. He came to save us – to live the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died, in our place. (Keller, The Meaning of Christmas). What a wonderful idea!

And the MMI Story continues! What a joy and honor it still remains, to have this opportunity at Merciful Ministries Inc. (MMI) to walk alongside many women struggling in seasons of their lives. Looking back in the recent history of MMI (a little more than 6 years now!), I have counseled over 60 women, some for up to and over 2 years, depending on what their need has been. God has hand-picked each one that has come into my office. Most who have graduated are walking with Jesus better than when they started. Your heart felt prayers and support have been monumental to allowing MMI to keep making this biblical counsel available to women who can't

afford counseling in the Rock Hill/Charlotte area.

New News: In the fall/spring semester I was trained at my church to be a "Steven's Minister" (a form of lay counselling for Westminster Presbyterian church in Rock Hill) and now am a **Peer Supervisor**, & oversee 5 new Steven's Ministers, meeting bi-monthly. Our time together is for encouragement, accountability and discussion about how to best give "distinctively Christian care" with confidentiality maintained. These women help me stay connected, current and accountable. We all value this time!

In March, as my mother's passing is still an ache, I was able to visit her parents' cabin with my sister Ruth, where we spent our summers as a child. And the Lord graciously orchestrated healing relationships with several estranged family members. Relief and joy fill my heart!

In April a counselee and our ROC computer genius helped get the MMI's **new web site up** and running. Please go to Mercifulministries.com to see the fantastic work these two kind friends have created. Though not perfect yet, it is now possible for counselees to print out intake forms, **and we even have a "Pay Pal" account for easier donations! PTL!**

October 13-15th I attended the CCEF conference in Frisco, TX. The topic this year was "Family: Embracing the Blessing, Facing the Brokenness", which inspired, encouraged and "re-equipped" me to walk alongside my women facing real challenges in their families. Connecting with other fellow counselors encouraged and uplifted my very soul as well.

Testimony: One new counselee writes...

"I am incredibly grateful for Merciful Ministries. I was referred by a friend at a time when I felt like I had nowhere to turn. I had financial concerns on top of the deep heartache I was experiencing. Walking into Lizabeth's office, I immediately felt safe and free to share and explore what I was feeling.

The Lord has used my time with her in to strengthen, challenge and equip me. I never feel that I am being instructed; rather, I have a new sister in Lizabeth who walks alongside me and holds me accountable. My sessions with her help me to refocus and quiet my mind. I am able to share freely without meeting judgment, and a small weight is lifted in each session.

My circumstances haven't changed, but I have learned tools in Lizabeth's office that I carry with me, specifically the reminder to go to the Lord in prayer and in reading His Word. Every week I am challenged to stand up tall, knowing where my identity truly lies, and am energized to be a reflection of Jesus to my husband, son and any who come into my life. I am so grateful to Lizabeth and this beautiful ministry for making a place for me and so many other women and families in my community, and for being a part of my healing and growth."

Thank you dear one!

Financial Update: Thank you for your prayers, support and gifts!! Because of your wonderful ongoing care throughout this year the deficit for the year is **\$24,000.00 or \$2000.00/month** still needed. I am truly grateful for your involvement in this ministry. Remember when you give, you literally are counseling vicariously through me. Please know **God is faithfully sustaining MMI** this year through your faithfulness. God bless you!

Please remember all gifts and donations are tax deductible & need to be dated by December 31, 2017.

Prayer requests:

1. For these women to have eyes to see their own hearts, to turn to Him, and grow, softened by the Holy Spirit.
2. My back issues have plagued me all year, so that mostly what I've done all year is counsel and try to fix my back issues. Please pray for healing totally.
3. For ROC, (Renew Our Community) the non-profit that cares for the needs of homeless and jobless & who allow me office space. I'm so thankful for them.



*Christmas Regards,
Lizabeth Swayne*

Financial Request: I recognize that funds are tight everywhere, but unfortunately this level of counseling is mostly unattainable for hurting woman. **Won't you prayerfully consider how God would have you help with a gift** to come along side these women in need? Year-end gifts are greatly valued however regular giving is best for ongoing needs.

For tax deductible gifts & support, please make checks payable to "Merciful Ministries" 919-489-1011
Send to: Merciful Ministries c/o Hamilton Financial 3710 University Dr., Suite 330, Durham, NC 27707,

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