



FLOWERS FROM GOD

I got home late from work and that made me late for teacher training meeting. Was teaching Sunday school really worth all this hassle? My commitment felt never ending and not all that significant. I was exhausted.

I grabbed my mail, dashed out to my car, and predictably got stopped at the longest red light in town. I fumed as I shuffled through my mail: bills, “to occupant,” and one letter with a return address I didn’t recognize. I ripped it open.

Dear Marlene,

You probably don’t remember me, but years ago you were my Bible teacher. Thank you for teaching me about Jesus. Thank you for making me feel as if I could survive that difficult year, that I might be someone God loved.

That was the year I decided I would give Jesus my life. You played a big part in my decision.

I’m now a pastor’s wife and a mother, but more important to you, I suspect, is that I’m also a Sunday school teacher!

The light changed, and so had my attitude. It was as if God had sent me a bouquet of flowers, and He had chosen the perfect evening to deliver them. I could hardly wait until the next red light to “smell” them again. The letter continued with phrases that God knew I needed to hear: “You made a difference . . .” “I watched your life and . . .” “You helped me think through . . .”

Flowers from God! I get them. You get them. Every volunteer whose story is told in this book gets them. But sometimes we're too busy to realize that flowers have arrived. We miss the precious moments in the Sunday rush to get the puppets out and the paste put away and the potty breaks in before it's really too late and the answer given to that question we weren't prepared for and . . .

There is no greater calling than teacher, no more important job in the church. This book celebrates Christian education volunteers like you and like me.

May God use these stories of real teachers to make us more aware of the flowers He wants us to receive.

On-Time Flowers

Montgomery, Alabama. God planted the seeds for flowers He knew Marsha would need over four decades before she actually received them.

In the worst week of her ministry, three of her faithful teachers died. One mother died in a swimming accident. She was the teacher who volunteered to clean the bathrooms after VBS because, she said, “That job won't get



many takers.” Another mother died of cancer much sooner than anyone expected. A father died in a car crash.

Marsha said, “I just put my head down and cried, ‘Lord, I quit. I can’t direct this ministry. It hurts too much.’ To my surprise, God guided me to my childhood Bible. It’s an inexpensive white children’s Bible that I still keep on my shelf as a reminder of why I work with children today. I opened the Bible and there on the first few pages were verses written in my fifth-grade handwriting—the exact verses of encouragement I needed that very day.

“I remembered that in 1955 my Sunday school teacher had suggested I write them in the front of my Bible because I might need them someday. That day came decades later. Those verses were God’s direct message to me: ‘Keep serving Me, no matter what.’”

Rock Flowers

Los Angeles. Lanie didn’t know how to be a parent. She had grown up in an abusive home and her parents were never around. At sixteen, she was thrown out. Through a series of miracles, she ended up in college, met Christ, and married a Christian man. This is Lanie’s bouquet to her daughter’s pre-school Sunday school teacher:

When I became a parent, I was totally unprepared. I’d never seen good parenting and had no idea how to help my daughter understand about Jesus. So when a friend suggested my two-year-old Amy should be in Sunday school, I enrolled her. If that’s what good parents did, I’d do it.

One day I overheard Amy singing, "The wise man built his house upon the rock." She sang that one line over and over and over because it was the only line she remembered.

"Mommy," she finally asked me, "what comes after rock?" I'd never been to Sunday school; I had no idea. But I did know that a good mother finds answers for her daughter.

I called Amy's Sunday school teacher. "Hey," I blurted out before we'd even said our hellos, "what comes after rock?"

That teacher cared, not only about Amy, but also about Amy's parents. She was instrumental in bringing me into the Sunday school program. God knew I had empty holes in my life that didn't prepare me for being a parent. He used that willing Sunday school teacher to show me how to fill them up.

Success

North York, Ontario. Rosita knows she's a successful teacher in the eyes of her young teens and in God's eyes, but it's not because the flowers are all that easy to see. She explained, "Those boys never tell me. Not one word about having a wonderful time in Sunday school or what a great teacher I am. They never say thanks. But they do come back every week. Their parents smile at me a lot. Best of all, my boys keep bringing their friends. So, who needs words!" Anyone got a vase for the flowers?

