

I can trace God's fingerprint

By Josie Ramirez

In any ministry, change can be challenging. We are thankful God has provided a new Women's Leadership Studies Coordinator to take the place of Amanda Paragon, who will be focusing more on facilitator and curriculum development responsibilities. We'll let her introduce herself:

Hello! My name is Josie Ramirez. I am a native of Southern California. I was born in a semi-Christian home. My mom was a believer; my dad came to know the Lord when I was five years old.

Looking back, I can trace God's fingerprint over my life in many ways since I was very young. The fact that I grew up without a mother was one of the most definitive moments. It took me some time to adjust to and appreciate God's goodness.

My parents told me that I came to know the Lord when I was five. However, I was always troubled by the fact that I could not remember how I came to the Lord. When I was 16, I had a serious talk with the Lord, just to be sure. I still remember that day so vividly!

My mother died after battling cancer for 6 years. I was eleven. Loss is never easy, but looking back, I can see that God had a plan, even if the plan was not to my liking. It was necessary to mold me into who he wanted me to be. I recently read in a Bible study by Melissa Spoelstra that God cares more about our character than our comfort. Boy, was that ever true in my early years! And it still rings true today.

One of the things my mom did to prepare for my future was to put me in a Christian school. It became my home. The staff was a tremendous catalyst in developing my walk with the Lord. I went to the same school from kindergarten through 12th grade. The women there were such wonderful examples of being Jesus to others!

When I was going into the 7th grade a new teacher was hired. Wouldn't you know it, she had already walked where I was walking! She too had lost her mom at a young age. Coincidence? Definitely not! It was God's beautiful plan.

She was such a great example of relational ministry. She spent a lot of time with me, letting me help set up her classroom, piano lessons, and she always made me peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. What sweet memories! The key in all of it, though, is that she invested of her time.



Time is one of the things we as humans crave. Extra time to do things, more time with a loved one, etc. Being intentional with my time with others is a model I try to follow in my ministry. I do regret never having had the chance to know my mother, and I do at times feel sad that I missed out on so much. But I find comfort in God's presence, and peace in knowing that His ways are not my ways. He is such a good Father! He never allows anything in our life that He cannot use for His glory.

Because of this life change, I started ministry at the very young age of 11. First I helped my dad with his bus ministry, then spent some time in music ministry and transitioned into teaching children. For the past few years I have been working with women. I have learned many things over the years, but the most important thing I have learned is that ministry equals relationships.

As I mentioned before, that was something that was modeled in my life when I was young. Even though I did not realize it then, that would become the key model for my ministry. I found when I began working with women that if I spent time doing what they enjoyed, it was the best way to bring out really good conversations.

I have some interesting stories about my relationship-building adventures. For example, I had a friend who began attending our church. I really wanted to get to know her better outside of Sundays and Wednesdays. So I said, "let's hang out sometime soon." Little did I know that instead of coffee and donuts, she would choose lap swimming at the local pool!

Now swimming is a great exercise and a perfect way to cool off. However, I had one small problem. I am terrified of water!

My husband lovingly reminded me that in our weakness God is strong. I definitely grew closer to the Lord in 13 ft of water, but most importantly, I made a wonderful friend who now serves the Lord faithfully.

I really believe that relationships are the best way to reach others to Jesus, and the best way to disciple people. We can see throughout the Bible that the Lord modeled that for us in His ministry here on earth.

After doing ministry for a few years, with only on-the-job training, I had the privilege of meeting some of the ladies from the Women of Grace board. They were scheduled to come to our church to speak about updates to Woman of Grace. They shared about the Women's Leadership Studies classes. I was so intrigued by those classes!

I never thought it would be possible for someone like myself, who had no real ministry training, to participate in these classes. I thought, "I have to try to get in on this class."

My first class was Methods of Effective Bible Study and Teaching. I was nervous to take this class and had to overcome my self-doubt in order to go.

The class was absolutely wonderful! I learned so much! I was able to put in to practice much of what I learned almost immediately. I even did two classes back to back. I enrolled in the Women in Scripture that was being offered the following weekend in Spanish. I had expected that these classes would be over my head, but the teachers were down-to-earth and I was really able to grasp the lessons.

I was really motivated by the fact that they offer a certificate in Women's Leadership from Grace Seminary. Going back to school is more than likely out of reach for me, and I am able to use my training as a Spanish Interpreter for expanding my ministry reach, but knowing that I could attain an official certification in Women's Leadership was very encouraging to me.

After taking those two classes, I decided I would like to participate in the Facilitator Training Classes offered at Grace Seminary that summer. The week spent there was a little bit of heaven. The knowledge I gained was immensely valuable to my spiritual life and my ministry.

I am excited to see what the Lord has planned for this new journey. He has been immensely gracious to me in so many ways. Aside from carefully orchestrating my early years, He has blessed me with my very own little family, which includes my wonderful and supportive husband, three beautiful children, three dogs, and a cat. I treasure the time I get to spend with my family, which usually involves a lot of really loud talking and laughing and just being silly. In my quiet time, whatever that is, I enjoy reading, crocheting or crafts of any kind.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Woman of Grace, and I look forward to meeting many new ladies and hearing what God is doing in their lives.