



That they may teach the
young women ...



Of Wading Ducks and Emotional Women

Sarah Raber

So what do wading ducks and emotional women have in common? Unfortunately, often very little!

We've all heard the phrase "Like water off a duck's back." We've all seen how ducks can merrily wade through puddles or go for a swim without it affecting their protective coat of oiled feathers.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could apply some of that oil to ourselves for life's situations?! But it seems many times, instead of deflecting things, we sisters can be quick to "absorb" the comments and situations we encounter rather than seeing them from their proper perspective.

It's the men who are often the example of letting the words, stinging comments, or tricky situations just fade to the background without allowing it to take them for a ride. I often look at them and wonder, "How do they do it?"

A few Sundays ago, I came home from the service with my emotions taking me for a little spin. It had nothing to do with the service ... it had been a wonderful meeting. But at the closing, a courtship was announced. I was thrilled! Courtship announcements are always exciting! No sooner was it announced, than my sister got a call from one of my nieces from another church letting us know that she also had also just started a courtship with a young man. I was thrilled about that, too!

As I headed home soon afterward though, I became aware of some strange things going on inside. I was puzzled. Wasn't I excited about the announcements? Yes! Wasn't I content being single? Wasn't God bringing fulfillment into my life in many ways through the gift of freeness and availability to be in His service in a special way, through the opportunities that singlehood offers? *"Absolutely, Lord! I'm happy with where you have me in life ... I sense your presence, your guiding hand, your love. You bring rich fulfillment and satisfaction. I am content with where you have me in life. Truly I am! I'm surrendered to whatever your desire and plan is for my life."*

And then—to my own bewilderment—I promptly lay down and had a little cry!

What had happened was that in one month's time two different sisters in the church, whom I had lived with temporarily in the past, both happened to get engaged. Then my first niece got engaged; then one of my best friends since I was fifteen years old started a courtship; and now the second niece had just announced hers.

Five people that I had had close connections to ... all within a month's time. I was thrilled for each one of them, and yet confused at the conflicting emotions it brought. There was a fresh awareness of other people's lives changing and taking different courses, ... and it made me feel strange, in a different world from theirs ... tempted to feel lonely.

But I *thought* I was content, where did these funny emotions come from? I didn't know!

So I cried it out for a few minutes. Then I got up and emailed a married friend of mine and just dumped out the silly emotions that had gotten the better of me; and then ... promptly felt better!

I was happy once again being single. Wait a minute! Hadn't I been fine with being single all along? (Chuckle!)

Are any of you sisters relating to this "typical women's technique" of working through confusing emotions? Relieving some pressure through tears ... being able to share with someone, and finding that talking about it—just being heard, having someone listen—seems to fix the problem without any fixing having been done?

We women are certainly complicated creatures sometimes. Yes, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Sometimes the *fearfully* seems more true to me than the *wonderfully* part! But I know that God has created us in His infinite wisdom. And also that he has an instruction manual for us as well. Now that's a comforting thought!

While we tend to be emotional creatures, I am discovering that we are certainly not as entirely at the mercy of all those emotional impulses and tendencies as I used to believe. Sure, there are times when it brings a natural release to be able to let some emotional stress or pressure out through tears and by sharing our hearts. I fully believe that has its place.

But I've also recently begun to discover a secret about guarding my emotions from some of those unnecessary conflicts, which is something I wish I had learned years ago!

Recently I made a phone call, and over the course of conversation asked what I thought were caring questions meant to express love and interest in someone. The response, however, ended up leaving me feeling rather "blah," and well, to be honest, a little hurt too. The person had refrained from answering, in a way that seemed to me to indicate that she felt I was being nosy or that it was none of my business. I say "seemed," because it's very possible that she just was not free to answer the question.

But I was tempted to look at the things that she could have said differently. If she really had understood that I was expressing care, couldn't she just have graciously shared that she appreciates my heart for the situation, but regrets being unable to give any information? Feeling slighted and misunderstood, I found myself thinking, "I would be fine with her not being able to communicate about the situation, if she would have just done it in a more sensitive way, instead of making me feel that I was wrong to care, that I was being a busybody ... when that was the farthest thing from my mind!"

I hung up the phone, trying to push away the thoughts and the "blah" feeling. "Lord, why does it seem that life throws so many difficult, unpleasant little things? Why are there so many hurtful situations?"

I happened to be walking through the hallway as I was praying, and even now recall the exact spot where I was when the Lord suddenly spoke to my heart so clearly that it completely arrested my attention. "You tend to *absorb* everything in life, Sarah. You need to learn to *deflect* things more." I stopped in mid-step. He couldn't have described it better! That was *exactly* what I did! I absorbed everything! I never recognized it before.

"But Lord, how do I not absorb these things? How do I just ignore it and keep things from hurting?"

"By stopping to see whether what has been said or done is actually according to truth, according to reality. The truth is, you were not being nosy or a busybody. You were genuinely caring about that person. If the other person did not think accurately of you, the problem lies with them. Perhaps she was not even thinking in the way you perceived her to be. If so, then the issue doesn't even exist. But *if it does*, you can leave it with her. Why then are you allowing it to cause sadness for you? Is your body not the temple of the Holy Spirit? Why then do you allow thoughts that are not according to truth and reality? It will only drain needless emotional and spiritual energy.

Profane not my temple with things that are not according to truth and light. Deflect those things ... release those situations to me. Allow yourself to rest in truth."

Oh, the wise and gentle guidance of the Lord! The truth of it all seemed to just beautifully unfold before me. I did not *have* to be at the mercy of life's situations; I did not need to be under the control of the actions of people around me, nor my imaginations! As He ministered that truth to my heart, I found myself completely free from the temptation to feel slighted and hurt by the sister's response! If the Lord was telling me that it was wrong to even let it cause me hurt or sadness, how much more reassurance did I need that I was indeed *free*! I saw too that I could apply this principle to all of life's difficult little—and *not so little*—situations.

If there was truth in the matter, I needed to humbly receive it. If it was not according to reality, I could simply let it go. I shouldn't even let it rent space in my brain! It was none of my business! How liberating that was, how stress relieving! To know that I didn't have to *absorb* everything anymore! Like the ducks merrily splashing along through the water puddles and even going for a swim, they can still get out, shake themselves off and go along their merry way. The water just rolls off their backs.

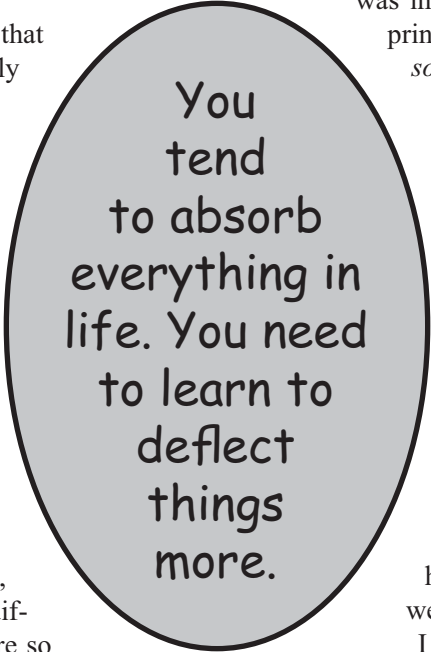
And now, marvelously, I found that God had provided a type of oil for *my* feathers as well!

I have been so delighted to begin to walk in this truth; to know that God has provided such an *oil* for our life to protect us as well, and has given us many promises that, if claimed, are able to deliver us from the temptation of giving in to the troubling emotions of care, stress, worry, etc.

Earlier, on the same morning that I had made that phone call, as I was preparing for the day, a burden that I had been carrying pressed down so heavily that I found myself feeling completely overwhelmed. I stopped whatever I was doing and just sat down. "Lord, I know that I've said again and again that I believe you have answers for *everything* we face in life, no matter how difficult. But I admit I'm losing hope that you have answers for *this problem*. It has seemed to hang around for so long with *no visible solution*. Do you have an answer for this too? Why do you not resolve this problem?"

As I sat there in quiet meditation, a scripture from Psalm 121 came to mind: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help; my help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth."

My attention was drawn to, "My help cometh *from the Lord*." and then suddenly it narrowed down to "My *help cometh!*"



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“My help cometh, Lord! I do not see an answer *right now*, but it does not mean you are not aware of it! You have told us to wait upon you ... and now I see that you have also told us that “Our help cometh! Yes, Lord! I will rest in the fact that my help cometh!”

The burden lifted and I got back up suddenly infused with new energy. If help was on the way, then things were going to be okay! And what was *really* exciting was to realize that not only did that promise apply for this particular situation, but it was something that I could claim anytime I needed to in the future. If I could believe at any time that my help cometh *from the Lord*, then it was equally true that I could trust the fact that “*my help cometh!*” What a delightful promise!

Several more such promises that have become very precious to me are found in Mark 9 and 10. When the father brought his son with the dumb and deaf spirit, the disciples were unable to deal with the difficult issue. The extreme desperation of the man’s heart is reflected in the simple and few words he utters before the Master after relating his son’s condition. “But if thou canst do *anything*, have compassion on us and help us!”

I can’t think of any words that would more reflect the heart of desperate mankind when they are at the end of their rope. A helpless casting of one’s self upon *one last hope*. And Christ does not disappoint him. He responds with words equally simple, yet profound. “If thou canst believe; *all things* are possible to him that believeth.”

Don’t those words just make your heart leap with expectation! Is Jesus not the same yesterday, today, and forever?

In the very next chapter, the ministering heart of Christ finds yet another troubled soul in dire need: the blind beggar that everyone was trying to quiet and hush up. But Jesus, hearing his pitiful cries, calls him to Himself and utters what to me are some of the most incredible words in all of Scripture. The supreme and all-powerful God of the universe *humbles* himself, calls the beggar, and with great love and compassion proceeds to ask him a stunning question: “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?”

He is, in a sense, giving Himself and all of his resources completely to this man of low degree.

Most of us probably have heard about the fabled genie lamp. If by some chance a person gets into their possession an oil lamp inhabited by a genie and “rubs” this lamp, the genie comes out and grants them three wishes. This, we all know, is nothing but a fairytale.

But here in Luke we suddenly encounter the real thing. “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” What need is

there in your life? What is too big for you to handle? What do you need help with? What situation looks impossible?

Is Jesus still the same yesterday, today, and forever? Are we not allowed to take the words spoken to the blind beggar to be our own?

I had come across this verse at yet another time in my life when I was faced with a difficult situation. I had always taken that portion of Scripture simply to be the personal words of Christ to the beggar. But this time it seemed the message leaped right off the page. It was as if the Lord were saying, “These words are for *you, too*; if you dare to claim them. It is my heart toward *all* of mankind. No, I am not some

kind of genie to grant all your wishes, but I will meet your needs ... I am your heavenly Father and you have the right to come to me any time you have a need. My heart toward you at all times is “What wilt thou that I should do unto you? Tell me. I will do for you what you cannot do for yourself. I am available to you at all times. I am approachable. But there *is* one requirement. Faith ... expectation. You must expect to receive, or it will not happen.”

Jesus’ response to the blind man’s request of “Lord, that I may receive my sight!” was simply, “Go thy way, *thy faith* hath made thee whole!”

And so I am discovering that we are permitted at *any time* to come to the Father and make our needs known to Him and then rest in the anticipation that “Our help cometh.”

So why should I be fretting? Walking in that, and also learning that I no longer need to absorb everything that transpires around me, has simplified my life tremendously. To absorb *only truth*; everything else I am given the liberty and the instruction to simply deflect, to release them. What a freedom that brings!

May we learn from the splashing, diving, carefree ducks to cast all our cares upon Him, for “He careth for us.” Yes, for *each one of us, who are so fearfully and wonderfully made!* Lord willing, in the future we sisters and the ducks may have more in common, right?

I’ll end here with two notes of interest. God orchestrated things in such a way that I later discovered that the aforementioned sister had not been thinking at all that I was being a busybody. She simply was not free to answer the questions. So the issue hadn’t even existed. It had been my own imagination and sensitivity.

Secondly, a week after God ministered to me the truth of “My help cometh,” He also brought the answer and resolved that whole particular issue, for which I am still rejoicing!!

Truly my help cometh, for it cometh from the Lord!~

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