How many of you have ever done embroidery or needlepoint? I’ve tried in the past but wasn’t very good at it... Isn’t this an interesting piece? Someone spent many hours to put the colors in just the right spot – so that today we have something beautiful to look at. But, look at what happens when I turn it over – it makes no sense at all!
Testimony of Pat Shields
February 7, 2004

Title: The Tapestry of My Life

(Prop will be a piece of needlepoint or embroidery.)

How many of you have ever done embroidery or needlepoint? I've tried in the past but wasn’t very good at it. Isn’t this an interesting piece? Someone spent many hours to put the colors in just the right spot – so that today we have something beautiful to look at. But, look at what happens when I turn it over - it makes no sense at all!

I would like to quote a poem that I have carried with me for years that describes my life. It is called “THE TAPESTRY”

MY LIFE IS BUT A WEAVING BETWEEN MY GOD AND ME
I DO NOT CHOOSE THE COLORS – HE WORKS STEADILY
SOMETIMES THERE IS WOVEN SORROW, AND I IN FOOLISH PRIDE....FORGET HE SEES THE UPPER AND I THE UNDERSIDE.
NOT ‘TIL THE LOOM IS SILENT AND SHUTTLES CEASE TO FLY
WILL GOD ROLL BACK THE CURTAINS AND EXPLAIN THE
REASONS WHY.

THE DARK THREADS ARE AS NEEDFUL IN THE SKILLFUL WEAVER’S HAND, AS THE THREADS OF GOLD AND SILVER IN THE PATTERN HE HAS PLANNED.

My life actually looks a lot like this piece. Looking at me as I am today you may think that my life has always been easy and good. I’m a very happy person who is enjoying every minute of every day. I have a handsome and wonderful husband, grown children, cute grandchildren, a home that I adore with white picket fence, and even a miniature horse that brings me lots of laughs.......

But today I’m going to turn the canvas of my life over and share with you a picture that probably makes no sense - at least the way we envisioned our lives would be when we were 21. I had that fairytale life planned that included a handsome husband, a beautiful son and daughter, a storybook house with white picket fence and happiness everywhere. Well, it took a few unexpected turns getting there. So, today I want you to see how God can take a life that looks like a mess - and make a beautiful picture.

As far back as I can remember I’ve always had a heart for God, but I hadn’t given him control of my life. I hadn’t really been taught that God has a wonderful plan if we stay tuned to the right station. HIS station.

Two years after high school I fell in love and married. We had 2 beautiful little boys, Brian & Brad, and I enjoyed being their Mommy. But, the Christian principles I had grown up with became less important than some things “I” wanted to do. Through a crisis in our marriage I realized that my relationship with God was weak – very, very weak. The Bible tells us that
we have \textit{ALL} sinned and fallen short of God’s glory for our lives. God showed me that I was acting against his will, in that I had done things that were wrong. So, during our divorce I gave my whole \textit{heart} and \textit{future} to God. I began a daily relationship with God at the center of my life. This was a decision that would be crucial in the years ahead.

Eventually, I married a man with two children, a boy and a girl, and I became the only mother they had ever known. I adopted them and we began a life together as a blended family of 6. Very soon after the wedding my husband was diagnosed with kidney failure. We struggled through 8 years of illness, doctors, hospitals, kidney dialysis and eventually a kidney transplant.

One casual Friday evening at home while our 16 year old daughter was out on her first date, my husband suffered a massive heart attack and died. He was only 38 years old! Now I was left with 4 teenagers to support and a large home building business and real estate company to run. Can you imagine how alone, confused and worried I was? I asked God to show me what to do. Can I tell you that He is faithful. A support team helped me and we continued the businesses until the children were raised and on their own. In time the economy changed drastically and I was forced to take bankruptcy. But God was still faithful to supply all my needs. I was never hungry or without a roof over my head. Just not as BIG a roof – if you know what I mean.

Funny thing – even after 2 marriages I still wanted to be married. I really felt fulfilled as a wife and mother. I prayed to God that he would allow me another chance – but PLEASE God only a man that loves you. It didn’t take long for God to answer my prayer and he brought the most wonderful man into my life. When we met he had just returned from serving as a missionary to Australia. He helped me re-enter the real estate industry and
eventually we married. Finally my life was full of joy! My prince had come and life was good. Little did I know that my future held more heartbreak.

Not long after our marriage my daughter, Missy, was diagnosed with Crohn’s disease. Her husband had left her because of it and she came to live with us. There were many, many doctor and hospital visits – as this is a very painful disease. Despite all efforts her disease progressed over the years.

You know, that was very difficult to deal with on its own. But as if that wasn’t enough - just 4 years later on a beautiful Easter Sunday I was cooking our favorite Easter meal when the phone rang. I heard my son Brad say that my other son Brian had just been killed in a skydiving accident. We had just been to his college graduation 2 weeks before and he was looking forward to a career in the criminal justice system. My world crashed. The pain was almost unbearable. I cried to God and he heard me. He comforted me in many ways, one of them was knowing that God also had lost a son – His name is Jesus. After a time life became good again and Rick and I attended ministry school and began sharing our faith with others.

Then came Christmas 1997. My daughter’s Crohn’s disease had advanced and was taking her life. It was Christmas Eve and I was standing beside her hospital bed as she went home to be with Jesus. I prayed “Why, dear God, why?” Only the Lord knows and so I drew nearer to Him. Today I can honestly say “Thank you God that they are both in heaven with you”. You see, they both had believed in Jesus and accepted him as their Savior and Lord prior to their deaths.

Now, you might be thinking holidays are very difficult for me because one child died on Easter and one on Christmas, but through my relationship
with God I realize that these holidays are even more special. There are memories on those days yes, but no sadness.

After all this I took a deep breath and said “Thank you God that there are no more hospitals and doctor offices”. My life was at peace once again. But hold on to your hats ladies - Three months later I was at my doctor’s office for my annual check up. He got a concerned look on his face and said, “Pat, there is something here we need to check further”. I was diagnosed with very aggressive breast cancer. I prayed “OK God, enough is enough. Do you even know that I love you, and I live right here in Texas?’ I cried a lot, but in the end I was thanking God that he had gotten me to the doctor early enough. After chemo, radiation, a bald head, and the prayers of many friends and family – I am cancer free 6 years now! And I have a “NEW” carefree hair style.

After that everyday became precious. I really enjoyed working in my yard and watching things grow. Even during my “chemo” my husband and I continued to minister to others. For fun we even bought a Harley and started riding with friends. Life was good again!

Several years later after a fun trip to Arkansas on the bike I became very ill with high fever and weakness. After several trips to the Doctor and emergency room they diagnosed me with Meningitis and Encephalitis. I didn’t even know who my husband was, and I barely remember being at the hospital. I was very critical and they told my husband that I might not make it and if I did I might have permanent impairment. All of our Christian friends rallied around us and prayed for my recovery. Once again God came through and within 2 months I was back to normal. Whee – it’s making me tired just telling you all this.
Even though I have suffered the loss of a husband, a son, a daughter and a bout with cancer, and a critical illness - because of Jesus Christ I have peace and joy in my life. Ladies, none of us knows what the future holds, and I am here today because I want each of you to have that peace that only Christ can give.

Maybe the tapestry of your life it not what you planned. Maybe it has some dark threads and you can’t see what good will come of it. But, I can tell you God loves you so much and he wants to add some gold and silver threads. He wants you to spend eternity with him in heaven.

The Bible tells us that the only way to God is to believe in his son Jesus. That he died for our sins and God raised him from the dead and he is alive today. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ before as your Savior and Lord I want to give you a chance to do that today. It is so simple.

Right now I’m going to express some words out loud to God that you can pray quietly right where you’re sitting, and ask Jesus to come into your life.

Shall we pray...

DEAR FATHER IN HEAVEN,

THANK YOU THAT JESUS DIED FOR MY SIN SO THAT I COULD BE FORGIVEN. THAT HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD SO I CAN HAVE ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN. I INVITE JESUS INTO MY LIFE RIGHT NOW AND ACCEPT HIS GIFT OF FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE. THANK YOU THAT IN THIS VERY MOMENT I AM YOUR CHILD; AND I ASK YOU TO HELP ME CHANGE INTO THE KIND OF PERSON YOU WANT ME TO BE. IN JESUS NAME. AMEN
(In public conferences, the information below will be added)

If you have prayed that prayer today for the first time, can I tell you that the angels in heaven are rejoicing. You have now become a Christian. So that I can pray for you in the days ahead, and also give you a book, would you please do me a favor by taking the yellow card and placing an X in the 3rd box. Fold the card over so I can easily see the X. I will be standing at the door as you leave and everyone will be handing me their cards.

THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME COME TODAY, AND GOD BLESS YOU!

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