

Memo to Younger Self

btw...

Re: Those not-so-great expectations

By Dr. Jean Garton

A little rhyme has been floating around the church for years, and it goes like this:

Mary had a little lamb.
It would have become a sheep.
It joined the Lutheran Church instead
And died from lack of sleep.

It would be funny if it weren't so reflective of how busy our lives — both in and out of the church — have become. The Scriptures are filled with directives to “go,” but I don't think we are meant to “go” at a whirlwind pace.

As women look at their lives today, too many feel as if they are going in circles, going at triple speed, going down hill fast and, on some days, even feeling as if they are going crazy. We wear ourselves out trying to meet the many expectations placed on us: my husband expects this, my children expect that ... my boss ... my friends ... my congregation ... my LWML ... expects, expects, expects.

As I look back on earlier times, never in my activities in the secular world has the matter of attempting to fulfill expectations **just because they are there** been as pervasive and destructive as they have become for women in recent years. But, as a church leader, I missed children's birthdays, Mother's Days, many of our wedding anniversaries, and even the college graduation of one of our sons. All that busy-ness in the name of “serving the Lord.” I would never do that again!

However, the expectation problem isn't new. In the Eighth Century, B.C., one of God's people

named Micah was trying to clear up the confusion about how to live his life. “Just what does the Lord expect from me?” he asked. “Burnt offerings? Thousands of rams? Ten thousand rivers of oil? The sacrifice of my firstborn? Just what do You expect of me, Lord?”

The Lord's answer to Micah is not unlike that which He gives to us today:

This is what I expect of you — teacher, waitress, choir director, mother, nurse, homemaker, student, or whatever your vocation — that you act justly, love mercy and walk (not jog! not run! but walk) humbly with your God (Micah 6:8 paraphrase).

Whew! Isn't that a relief! We don't have to play God. The job is taken, and He does it 24 hours a day with no time off for coffee breaks or vacations. We don't have to save the world, the country, our schools, or even our congregations. We don't have to be another messiah. The One and Only has already come and finished the job. We can just follow in His footsteps and share in His ministry, beginning with our own families, because the home is, after all, the first church and the first mission field.

Lord, thank You for the many opportunities to witness to others about Your Son. Make all other demands on my time pale in significance to sharing the Good News of the Savior. Amen.

btw... btw is the acronym for “by the Way (Jesus).” It sets the tone for the current issue.