

HEART-TO-HEART

We are reminded that Christ is in our hearts and we are in His and that love connects us all in unity.



May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 Corinthians 13:14

One Word: Love

Pastor Stan did a sermon at the beginning of the year asking us to choose one word that we will focus on for the year. He gave us the suggestion of perhaps choosing one of the words from Galatians 5:22-23 "...love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

The month of February is known as the month when we profess and celebrate our love for each other.

Those of us with experience know that we try to stay away from having "patience (forbearance)" as our word as we don't enjoy more situations to practice patience with. LOL

Did any of you choose "love" as your word for the year? Watch the sermon on January 26, 2025 as Pastor Stan pours out his heart about choosing the word "love" and what he's learned about the implementation of it.

Be bold in choosing your one word for the year!

IN THIS ISSUE

Joy In Living

Irritants to Pearls

Joy In Living

by Joan Doi

Her cheerful countenance and the warmth of her smile belie the age of this gracious and special lady we know as Helen. Having gone to drop off a birthday gift from the Women's Small Group that Helen was once a part of, she graciously invited me in to chat. I gladly accepted the invitation hoping to learn more about this remarkable centenarian. She had turned a hundred and two on December 10 this past year and here she was, still living alone in her comfortable, immaculately kept home in Pearl City. "How do you keep every thing so neat and tidy," I asked. "I do all my sewing in the room with no carpet. Easier to clean that way," she quipped.

Sewing? Yes, she does! Not only that, she was able to learn to use a newer model sewing machine when her old faithful one gave way. "There were no more parts to replace the worn-out ones," she explained. Although unable to attend worship services because prolonged sitting or standing can be painful at times, Helen faithfully sews beautiful patches of squares that are creatively assembled by Jeanne Nagatani and made into blankets. The blankets are given to congregants and friends of WOCC with special needs or as tokens of appreciation. Helping to make them gives Helen a sense of purpose and a way to give back to our Lord His gift to her of longevity and a fulfilling life of service. A long-time member of WOCC since the 1990's, Helen has contributed much toward the ministry of our congregants. Having served as Benevolence Chair in the past, she continues in this capacity in the best way she can by being part of the Blanket Ministry.

Reminiscing the past, Helen recalled how she and her late husband Ed loved to bowl. It was the sport that brought them together as well as connecting them to other like-minded friends. Ed had spent a short stint training with the 100th Infantry Battalion. As life would have it, his military service was cut short because of a physical disability. However, that did not deter him from continuing the friendships he had made while training on the mainland. He and Helen made many trips to vacation with like-minded friends bowling and fishing on the beautiful lakes in Minnesota and Wisconsin. They reciprocated by opening their home to their mainland friends as well. It was a great way to show ALOHA and overcome any cultural barriers between Whites and people of Asian ancestry. Asians were prohibited from competing in the sport of bowling during this time and I'd like to think that, in a seemingly small way, Ed and Helen's gift of hospitality helped open the door to allow bowling to become a competitive sport regardless of race or status.

Her secret of longevity? Helen doesn't have one; but I think it is her ability to never retire from life. Having raised three sons and ending her career as a billing clerk at Aiea Medical she went on to helping care for two grandsons, volunteered at the Pali Momi gift shop, and being the oldest of five siblings, took in a younger brother and sister who lived with her until they needed specialized care. What keeps her going is a selfless life of giving and of being active for as long as she can in the best way she is capable. Another, I think, is her appreciation of the simple things that give her so much pleasure; like enjoying the gladiolus blossoms that bloom in her flower bed. "So many different colors," she beamed. "I wonder what color will be next?"

Happy 2025 Helen! May each new morning in the new year ahead bring you word of God's unfailing love and, regardless of physical limitations, may you be spiritually renewed day by day!



Helen Matsueda - 2025



A couple of the flowers in Helen's yard.

Irritants to Pearls

by Alli Oshiro

According to the Natural History Museum, pearls are formed in marine oysters or freshwater mussels as a natural defense against an irritant that has entered their shell. Isn't it amazing that something so beautiful, valuable, and sought after is created by a natural defense mechanism? This explanation of how a pearl is formed caused me to pause and think.

2025 is a milestone year for me and my family and as I've been reflecting on all God has brought me through I kept coming back to the formation of a pearl. As we all have experienced, life is never without irritants or difficulties. As married couples know, marriage is not without irritants. As parents definitely know, parenting is not without irritants. As those in ministry know, any amount of work with people is not without irritants. And as an employee, the workforce is not without irritants. We will encounter these challenges everywhere. And while it cannot be avoided, it is our choice what we will do with these irritants and how we will let it affect us.

Before we determine how these irritants will affect us, we have to first identify what they are. So take a moment to write down all your "irritants" on a sheet of paper. Write them all on the left side of the paper, one per line. Leave the right side blank for now. I know, this isn't your typical church activity but just go with it.

If you need help coming up with your list, I'll share three of mine:

1. When people don't listen to me and I have to repeat myself. (For example, when a certain 6-year-old has to be reminded not to leave his Nintendo on the floor).
2. Hyper-competitiveness (For example, when a certain 9-year-old has to win...EVERY-SINGLE-ARGUMENT).
3. When dirty socks are left on the floor (This third person in my family will remain anonymous).

After you've thoughtfully made your list and identified your irritants, read the following passage from Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The next part of this activity is to decide, will these irritants damage us from the inside out? Or, will we use the Holy Spirit's defenses to turn the irritant into a pearl? Take a look at your list, next to the irritant (preferably in a different color pen if you have one), determine which fruit of the spirit you will grow in as a result of that irritant.

Here is my list again:

1. When people don't listen to me and I have to repeat myself.
 - **Patience through taking a breath and repeating myself again for the 100th time.**
2. Hyper-competitiveness
 - **Self-control, not giving into the emotional push of someone else's competitiveness.**
3. When dirty socks are left on the floor
 - **Joy, learning to laugh at the small things and not turn them into big things.**

(continued on next page)



"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls."

Matthew 13:45

Irritants to Pearls cont.

Will this be easy? Absolutely not. Irritants are labeled as irritants for a reason. But it IS and will be my decision what I will do with it. I can allow having to repeat myself to turn me into an angry person who blows up all the time, or I can choose to grow in patience. I can allow another person's hyper-competitiveness to make me so irritated I don't want to engage anymore, or I can grow in self-control. I can let dirty socks left on the floor steal my joy, or I can choose to learn how to laugh at the small inconveniences. (I also assume it is a lot easier to win an argument about socks being left on the floor as a joyful level-headed person rather than an irrational angry one).

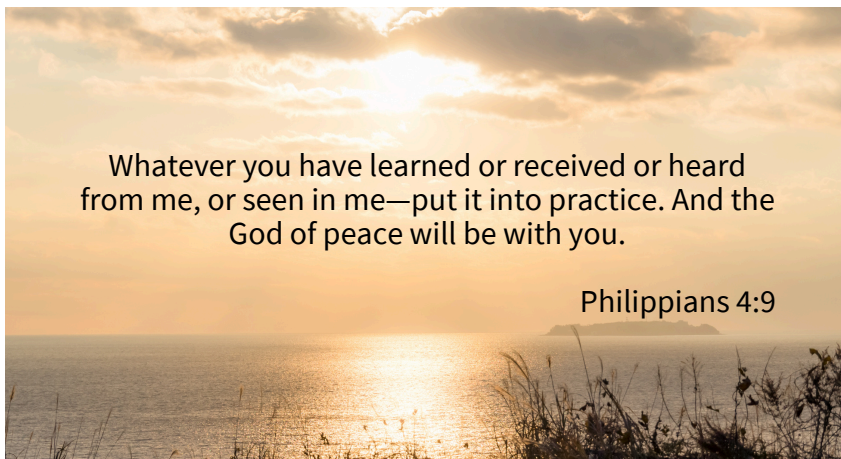
All in all, it comes down to choice—what do we choose to do with the things that are outside of our control, like other people's behavior? I encourage you to keep this list somewhere close and easily accessible because irritants are everywhere and pop up when we least expect it. But they are also opportunities to grow into the people God designed us to be. It is His chance to be our defense against irritants so that we may be as reflective, vibrant, and beautiful as a pearl.

****This article was not submitted with the intent of getting dirty socks off the floor, but I may let you know the progress in a future article. It's only February after all...**



I cannot always control what goes on outside. But I can always control what goes on inside.

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