In order to combat this problem, I have started teaching a weekly pharmacy training course, focusing on topics that are very applicable to their job, while also teaching basic pharmacology to the staff. My goal for these weekly courses is not only to teach information pertinent to their job pharmaceutically, but also to try and instill compassion, energy, and a desire to glorify God in all the workers. At the end of each weekly course there is a short quiz. Then following the 6 months of training, if the technician has a cumulative score of over 80%, they will receive a new title as a Certified Technician, bestowing upon them more honor and respect in their culture. It has been encouraging to see how the staff has rallied around this information, and I am seeing a desire to learn unlike what I've previously seen in West Africa. In the country where I practice, if one has knowledge, he or she has power. Due to the power that knowledge brings, sometimes locals are reluctant to share what they have learned, in order to keep their power and keep themselves a step above their peers. However, my desire is not to lord my knowledge (power) over them, but rather to share it with them and help them grow in their profession. This has won the staff over and encourages them to show the love of Christ in their work.

We still have a long way to go until "showing Christ's compassion to every patient, every time" is the new standard of care. But I believe we are on the right track. My staff still looks at me as if I am crazy when I pray for a patient, or when I spend 45 minutes after my shift sitting with a patient outside on a bench - just chatting about their family or village. But we are on the path towards regularly showing God's love through the profession of pharmacy. We still have some workers at this hospital who view this only as a job, not a mission, and they are more worried

about their paycheck than God's name being elevated. However, God can touch any heart, even the hearts of senior workers whose ways are set in stone. When I chose to work here, I took responsibility for this pharmacy and how we treat our patients. The outpatient pharmacy is the location where the patients form their final impression for their whole hospital experience. We have the choice to either slow down while we talk to patients, 'have a tea' and show the compassion of Christ, or rush through the interaction with hopes of just getting to the next patient. Our mission is far from being accomplished, but praise be to God for His wisdom and direction as we seek to share the love of His Son.

Due to safety concerns, any information that could be identifying as to where the author practices, what agency operates the hospital, or the author's name will not be mentioned. The author is currently working at a Christian mission hospital in a hot, sandy, dry part of West Africa. The extreme majority of people in this area of Africa are Muslims, with mostly all of our patient population professing Islamic faith. The hospital has approximately 200 beds and our capacity ranges anywhere from 50% to 250% depending on if it is malaria season. Sometimes during malaria season, the hospital is forced to put 2 or 3 children in each bed, simply because so many of them show up with cerebral malaria and it's not possible to turn them away due to a limit in beds. The hospital sees many different types of tropical diseases such as tuberculosis, tetanus, typhoid bowel perforations, malaria, and many others. Currently, the pharmacy staff is providing rounding services to the surgical staff, operates an inpatient pharmacy, as well as 2 smaller outpatient satellites, one for adults and pediatric patients, and the other for infants.

# Fight the Good Fight of Faith By Jennifer Sands

"Fight the good fight of faith..." 1 Timothy 6:12 NKJV

### Editor's Note:

By request, the Morning Devotional that Jennifer Sands presented at the CPFI Annual Conference in May 2023 at Lake Junaluska, NC is included in this issue. Jennifer dressed up as the biblical character Jael (see photo), and the following article tells the story of from lael's Deborah perspective.

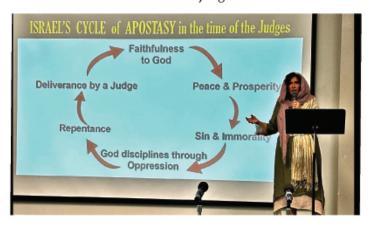


Shalom! My name is Jael. My story takes place over 3000 years ago, during the time of the Judges, between the years 1375 BC to 1050 BC. (I lived somewhere around 1200 BC, but you really don't need to know my exact age.) You can read about me in the book of Judges chapters 4 and 5. Back then, there was no king in Israel yet... this was before King Saul, King David, and King Solomon.

I lived during one of the darkest times in Israel's history - it was a horrible time of moral depravity. Sin, idolatry, and immorality were rampant; the Israelites were worshiping false gods and committing evil acts and abominations to the Lord. There are things recorded in the book of Judges that would shock you even in your day and age! Twice in the book it says, "In those days there was no king in Israel;

everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 21:25 NKJV). People only cared about pleasing themselves; they didn't care about pleasing God. And they didn't care about the consequences of rejecting God. When that happens, everyone in society pays the price. And from what I've seen, that's what you have going on in your country and your world today.

Since the Israelites were so rebellious, God had to discipline them... because He disciplines those He loves. God allowed the Israelites to suffer because He wanted them to repent and turn back to Him. Sometimes He'd use a famine, but usually He'd let them be defeated by an enemy. Then conditions would get really bad as they went through a time of oppression, so they'd repent and cry out to God for help; at which time, God would graciously respond by sending them a "judge." (It was nothing like your Judge Judy... it was more like a military or civil leader who would rescue them from the train wreck they had gotten themselves into.) The judge would lead the Israelites into war against their oppressors, and the Israelites would defeat them. Then things would get better and the Israelites would be faithful to God for a while... but eventually they'd fall away from God again and go back to that same disobedient, sinful, immoral lifestyle again and God would have to discipline them again. This was a recurring cycle, over and over - 12 different times with 12 different judges!



There were some famous judges. You probably know Gideon, since every hotel room has a Bible with his name on it. And you can't forget Samson, whose long hair was his secret weapon. But he foolishly let his girlfriend Delilah cut it off, and the next thing he knew he had no eyeballs and the Philistines were using him as entertainment.

Then there was my friend Deborah, who was a Wonder Woman of Faith. Out of the 12 judges, she was the only female judge - and she was also a prophetess (a female messenger or spokesperson for God.) Those were 2 very important leadership positions for a woman, especially in totally male-dominated culture. It was highly unusual, since women back then had very few rights and they weren't usually educated.

During 1 of the 12 times when the Israelites were rebelling against God, God allowed them to come under the oppressive rule of the Canaanites who were treating them very badly. So the Israelites did what they always did: out of desperation, they begged God for help. And God did what He always did: by His grace, He used a judge to rescue them. This time He used my friend Deborah.

Soon, a big battle was brewing: the Canaanites versus the Israelites. The Canaanite Army was led by a General named Sisera. The Israeli Army was led by a General named Barak (pronounced like the name of your former President Barack Obama). Sisera had a huge army of big, strong, mean, ugly Canaanite soldiers - more than 40,000 soldiers on foot. That's just on foot! In addition to that, the Canaanites also had the latest and greatest cutting-edge warfare technology: they had iron chariots. Yeeeaaah. And they had 900 of them. Nowadays, that would be like 900 tanks! Each chariot held 5 soldiers pulled by 2 horses going 40 miles per hour. (I know that speed is not impressive these days, with your Corvettes and your Teslas... but 40 miles per hour was really fast back then!) So if you do the math: the Canaanite Army had about 45,000 soldiers total, with 1800 horses pulling 900 iron chariots going 40 miles per hour. That was a force to be reckoned with!

The Israeli Army? Well, they had about 10,000 soldiers. And they had a few swords. Unfortunately, they didn't have any iron chariots at that point in time. But they did have one iron tent peg. Hmmm.

So, Deborah called Barak into her office (which was located under a palm tree that was named after her, see Judges 4:5) and she gave him a message from God. In Judges 4:6-7 NIV she said, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.""

God promised that He will help Barak in this war, and that the Israelites will indeed defeat the Canaanites. And God always does what He says He's gonna do, right? Well, this was Barak's answer to Deborah in verse 8: "If you go with me, I will go. But if you don't go with me, I won't go."

For the love of Pete. Barak won't do what God commanded him to do - he won't go to war - unless Debbie goes with him. I think that's called "conditional obedience" ...but let's get back to that in a minute.

Deborah responded to Barak in verse 9: "Certainly I will go with you... but the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman. So Deborah went with Barak..."

For the record, nowhere in the Bible does it say that Deborah was actually involved in combat. It doesn't say that she was fighting along with the rest of the Israeli Army. It simply says that she "went with Barak." She accompanied Barak. That doesn't necessarily mean she was on the front line. Sometimes in certain illustrations (like children's books), Deborah is depicted as a soldier in battle killing the Canaanites. And maybe she did - I wasn't actually there at that battle. But the Bible doesn't explicitly say that, so we really shouldn't assume it. It's more likely that Deborah was on the sidelines cheering for Barak and his army. Don't get me wrong: I'm not saying that Deborah wasn't qualified to be on the front line. Anyone who thinks that a woman can't handle the pressure of combat has obviously never been to Walmart on Black Friday.

Before we get to end of the story, let's look at Barak's words to Deborah again in chapter 4 verse 8: "If you go with me, I will go. But if you don't go with me, I won't go." It's conditional obedience... and if we're honest, we'll admit that WE sometimes put limits on what we'll do for God. I know I do. My 92-year old aunt lives a few villages away. Sometimes a thought comes into my mind (no doubt generated by the Holy Spirit): You need to visit Aunt Rivka. It's been a long time since you've seen her and she's not doing well. And how do I respond? With conditions. Okay Lord. But first I have to clean the tent. I gotta give the camel a bath. I need to make a batch of raisin cakes. IF I have some time left after I finish all that, then I'll visit her. Maybe next week. It's conditional obedience.

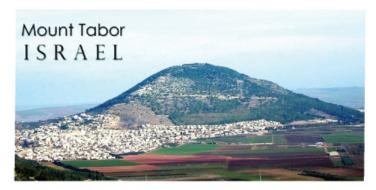
Barak was unwilling to go to war alone. He wanted Deborah to go with him. Was he a coward? Did he not trust God's promise? Did he think that Deborah was a good luck charm?

It's easy to criticize Barak and call him a wimp for wanting Deborah to go with him. But then there's the flip side. Think about this: Deborah was a prophetess; a spokesperson for God. I don't know about you, but if God is directly communicating through someone, I want to be around that person... and I want that person to be around me! Maybe Barak wanted Deborah there as a spiritual advisor, a source of God's wisdom and direction. In any case, they went to battle against the Canaanites, and Deborah went with Barak. Check out what happened:

In Judges 4:15 NIV it says, "At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot." Then in 5:21, referring to the Canaanite army, we read that "the river Kishon swept them away."

So first, God steered Sisera's army to the Kishon River which is near Mount Tabor in Israel's Jezreel Valley. Then, right on cue, God made it rain - a torrential downpour - and the Kishon River overflowed and turned into a flash flood. Ahem... horses don't handle flash floods very well. Iron chariots don't have 4-wheel drive. Chariot wheels tend to sink in mud. Get the picture? The entire Canaanite Army was destroyed. According to Judges 4:16, "not a man was left" - except for General Sisera. He jumped off his chariot and took off running.

The battle took place at the foot of Mount Tabor in the Jezreel Valley (see photo). The Jezreel Valley is an enormous



area in central Israel; the photo shows only a very small part of it. And in case you don't know: the Jezreel Valley has another name in the Bible: it's also known as the Valley of Armageddon. According to Revelation 16:16, when Jesus returns, the Valley of Armageddon is where the last great battle will take place. It's the location where Satan will one day be destroyed once and for all! Hallelujah!

And now for the exciting conclusion of Desperate Housewives of the Jezreel Valley: In Judges 4:17-22, we read that General Sisera escaped from his sinking chariot and made a b-line for his nearest ally, who happens to be his friend Heber, who happens to be my husband. In Judges 4:17, we see that there was an alliance between Heber and Jabin, who was the Canaanite King. And I have absolutely no idea why. Heber was a Kenite (not to be confused with Canaanite, they sound alike). The Kenites were related to Moses by marriage. In the Bible, the Kenites and the Israelites were always on friendly terms. But for whatever reason, my momo husband Heber was loyal to the enemy, the Canaanites. (Eye-rolling emoji here.) Anyway, Sisera ran to Heber's house (which was also my house), hoping to take refuge there. Actually, it wasn't a house like yours, it was a tent. We were nomadic people, we lived in tents and we moved around a lot.

My husband wasn't home, but I was. I heard someone outside, so I pulled back the tent flap to look. Imagine how shocked I was to see the enemy's mighty General Sisera standing there. I kept my cool and pulled off an Academy Award performance: "Oh, General Sisera! My goodness, you look exhausted. Why don't you come on in and lie down for a while." So he did. He came in and laid down, and I covered him with a blanket. (Just practicing hospitality). He asked me for cup of water, but I said, "Let

me get you some milk. It's got protein... we'll get you strong again." So there was Big Bad General Sisera, sound asleep under a blanket with a milk moustache.

And here comes my big claim to fame: chapter 4, verse 21. "But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died."

I didn't have any military weapons. I wasn't trained in combat. But I was pretty handy with a hammer and a tent peg! The truth is, I have to give God the glory. I didn't do that in my own strength; God gave me the wisdom and the boldness and the opportunity and the victory. He said He would deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman. And He did just that. And it wasn't even Deborah, the Judge and Prophetess! It was me, little old me! It was truly a blessing to serve the Lord and to be used by Him. But boy, was it a mess to clean up!

Seriously, if God can use ME to free the children of Israel and bring peace to their land, then He can use YOU for whatever He has called you to do.

By the way: my name (Jael) in Hebrew means "mountain goat." Yes, I realize you'd never name your kid "mountain goat" these days, or they'd get beat up for it. But in biblical times, goats were very valuable since they were the primary source of milk. Deborah's name in Hebrew means "bee," as in the flying insect that makes honey. So, Israel, the land of milk and honey, was saved by a mountain goat and a bee! God has a great sense of humor, don't you think?

Some people find it very disturbing that God would command an entire people group to be killed. We see that happen many times in the Old Testament. There are several reasons for it, which go beyond the scope of my story. Just remember that God is Sovereign; He alone has the power to give life, and He alone has right to take it. Sometimes it's necessary for God to purge the land of sin, which is what He did with the Canaanites in my day. But Scripture also tells us that God's true desire is for the wicked to repent rather than die! He says, "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" declares the Sovereign Lord. "Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?" (Ezekiel 18:23 NIV; see also Ezekiel 33:11). If the Canaanites had repented, there might've been a much different outcome. We'll never know.

And just in case you feel bad for General Sisera, please understand this: Sisera and all the Canaanites were extremely hostile to the Jews and most other people groups. Canaanites were known for being unbelievably ruthless and cruel, and they committed unthinkable atrocities to people they didn't like. In your day and age, think Hitler. Think ISIS. Think 9/11 terrorists. Sisera represented everything that is broken, wrong, evil and sinful in this world.

But here's the thing: we all have sin in our life. We're born that way, it's part of our DNA from fall of man. We all think and do and say things that are not pleasing to God. Romans 3:10 NIV says, "There is no one righteous, not even one." Verse 23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know

Sisera represents that which is evil and sinful. Therefore, we all have a little Sisera - we all have some kind of sin - in our heart. Sin starts out as a temptation; it becomes sin when we allow it to become an attitude or an action. I, Jael, recognized evil when it came knockin' at my door...and with God's help, I put that evil to death.

So here are my questions for you: When an evil temptation comes knockin' at your door, are you willing to put it to death before it becomes a sin? How fast do you fight back? How hard do you fight back? Do you even fight back? Or do you quickly give in to that temptation?

I confess that I don't always handle my temptations as seriously and successfully as I handled Sisera. Sometimes I keep yielding to the same temptation, and it becomes a recurring sin. How about you? When that happens, we first need to confess that sin to God, asking for His forgiveness and His help to change. Then we have to take our metaphorical hammer and tent peg, and we have to act boldly - with God's help and without hesitation - and we need to eliminate that Sisera/Sin in our life! For example: Is there something that's repeatedly distracting you and keeping you from spending time every day in the Bible and in prayer? Maybe Social media? TV? YouTube? None of them are sinful in and of themselves; but when they become more important than God, then it's a problem. It's called idolatry. God wants us to re-prioritize our time, our activities, our heart, our life... to seek Him first and value our time with Him above all else.

Or maybe it's not a matter of re-prioritizing. Maybe there's something in your life that absolutely must be eliminated. Maybe it's a hot temper. Gossip. Unforgiveness. Selfishness. You name it. Jesus said, "If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away... And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away." (Matthew 5:29 NIV). That sounds harsh and extreme, but Jesus was using hyperbole (exaggeration) to make a point... and so am I. Jesus told us what to do with the sin in our life, and He gave us the power of the Holy Spirit to do it. It's what I did with Sisera: get the hammer, get the tent peg, and get the job done! It might even help to mentally visualize a hammer pounding a tent peg into

that sin... there's great satisfaction when clobbering something that needs to be destroyed.

As believers in Jesus, we cling to the truth of 1 John 1:9 NKJV, that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But where did our sins go? Colossians 2:14 NKJV says that Jesus, having canceled our debt, "has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

Seven hundred years before Jesus was crucified, the prophet Isaiah foretold that Messiah would suffer for the sins of mankind. Isaiah 53:5-6 NIV says, "he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." As you read this, pause for a moment and thank Jesus for His incomprehensible, sacrificial love for us.

Other than the lesson of the Tent Peg, what else can we learn from this story?

- We can see that God is at work, even when it doesn't seem that way. Remember, my story took place during a time of moral depravity; but God was working behind the scenes. Let that be an encouraging reminder for you to know that God is at work in your world today, and in your personal life. God is at work in spite of the pathetic condition your country is in - politically, economically, and morally. God is at work in spite of all the tragedies from 9/11 to school shootings to tornados that level entire towns. God is at work in spite of what's going on in your own personal life...from the death of a loved one, to the stress on your job, to the biopsy that came back positive. God is at work...
- And nothing can stop God's purpose from being accomplished. In Job 42:2 NASB, Job said this to God: "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted." God will bring forth His perfect plan, one way or another... so we can either sit back and watch it happen, or we can let God use us and be part of the action!
- · God wants to use us in his Army. He certainly doesn't need us, but He wants to use us... just like He used me and Deborah. Neither of us were trained in combat, but we both used the resources, the opportunities, the discernment, and the strength that God gave us. And so can you. Our enemy was Sisera and the Canaanites. You have your own political enemies: those who hate Americans. But we all have one enemy in common: Satan and his cohorts. It's

been said many times: life is not a playground, it's a battleground. In order to fight our spiritual battles, we need to be equipped.

In Ephesians 6:12-18 NIV, the apostle Paul tells us how to be equipped: by putting on the full armor of God. Verse 12 says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Did you catch that? If not, read it again! Your angry patient... your difficult family member... your hostile coworker... they are not your enemies! Without even realizing it, they are being influenced by the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Without even realizing it, they're servants of the enemy - but they themselves are not your enemy! Remember that, the next time they get on your last nerve.

Continuing with verses 13-18: "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground... Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions..."

Obviously, Deborah and I didn't have Paul's teaching on the armor of God since our stories took place 1200 years before Paul even came on the scene. We didn't have Paul's teaching and we didn't have actual pieces of Armor; but we did have that which the armor represents: we had faithfulness to God, we had a relationship with God, and we had strength from God.

As Christian pharmacists, you have stressful jobs and many of you work under very difficult conditions:

- · You're filling high volumes of prescriptions and drug orders, with no room for error.
- · You work with unbelievers who do not share your biblical worldview.
- You were on the front line during a global pandemic.

Sometimes you feel like you really are in combat, right?

My prayer is that you will put on the full armor of God every day. I pray that you'll stay faithful to God, even when it's not popular. I pray that you'll maintain a close relationship with God, through daily prayer and Scripture. I pray that you'll always seek your strength from God and fight the good fight of faith.

And I pray that you'll sharpen your tent pegs, cuz you're probably gonna need them!



Jennifer Sands is a retired pharmacist and a lifelong resident of Point Pleasant, NJ, located on the beautiful Jersey Shore. Her life took a radically new direction after her husband was killed on September 11, 2001. Not only did she become a follower of Jesus, but she also became a Christian Author, Speaker, Bible teacher, and Israel Tour Leader. Jennifer has written 3 books about her spiritual journey since 9/11: A Tempered Faith, A Teachable Faith, and A Treasured Faith. She also regularly addresses audiences both nationally and internationally with her message of hope and trust in Jesus Christ. For more info on Jennifer's ministry, visit www.jennifersands.com.

# **Abiding in Christ: The Claim Versus the Evidence**

By Wagdy Wahba

### Introduction

The mission of Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International (CPFI) is to serve Christ and the world through pharmacy. CPFI's Core Values1 are excellent guidelines for Christian pharmacists to reflect on for guidance and application. Two of those core values exhort us: 1) to challenge and promote spiritual growth of members, and 2) to promote evangelism and the integration of faith into practice. These core values are essential ingredients for the CPFI mission to be successful and fruitful. However, some questions arise: What are we to do? How can we adopt and implement these core values? By claiming that we are serving Christ without abiding in Him, we are actually serving our own selfish ambition and the world. Thus, we observe that achievement of the CPFI core values of spiritual growth, evangelism, and integration of faith in every aspect of our personal and professional lives require intimacy and a strong connection with the Lord... to know Him, to be in Him, and to walk in the light. Jesus said in John 15:5, "without Me, you can do nothing." But as we abide in Him, we become more fruitful and we can say with confidence, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13).

In this article, we will look at some of the claims versus the evidence (manifestation) of our abiding. Claiming that we abide in Christ is only evident by knowing Him, by living (abiding) in Him, and by walking in the light.

## What is Abiding?

Webster defines abiding this way: "to remain in the faith (faithful); to continue to believe in; to trust or support someone or something when it is difficult to do so." Bible Expositions Commentary<sup>2</sup> defines it this way: "Abiding means that we are willing to do God's will. It may mean that we must deal radically with some sin or injury. If we abide in Him, we are prepared to do what He asks of us. It means we accept our present situations. We may not like it, but we believe in His Sovereign hand on our lives." The website www.Blueletterbible.org abiding this way: "To continue to be present; to be held; kept continually; endure." Another website, www.Abideproject.org states that abiding is "a firm commitment of faith; standing fast in your confession of faith." In John 15:5, Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

## Who are we Abiding in?

We have a choice to either abide in Christ or to abide in the sinful lifestyle of the world. Abiding in Christ is an essential foundation for spiritual growth, for evangelism, and for the integration of faith into practice. Jesus said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10). Such abiding produces fruit that is evident in our actions and interactions. This abiding is not founded on our own strength but requires that we remain steadfast in our faith in Christ, remain in fellowship with the Son and the Father, and stand firm on what we have been taught from God's Word (See 1 John 2:24-28, John 15:4-7).

### Evidence of Knowing Christ

My wife and I live in Florida. Several months ago, I received a random text message: "Hi I arrived at LAX airport, come and pick me up." I responded, "I am sorry, maybe you have the wrong phone number?" She immediately responded, "This is Jennifer. Maybe you don't recognize me because I am using my friend's phone." I replied, "I am sorry, but I can't help. We live in Florida." Of course, I don't know this poor woman who needed help but was seeking it from the wrong source. She and I are not connected in any way, and we were a long distance away from each other. This incident reminded me of the Lord's statement in Matthew 7:7-8 about asking and receiving, seeking and finding...all