Deliverance to Salvation

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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Abstract

As a young girl in Sunday school, I made many “salvation bracelets” to help learn about the gift that God gave to us in his son Jesus Christ. The bracelets I made were a piece of leather rope with seven beads, each color representing a different aspect of Christ’s gift of salvation. They were strung in the same order that they were given to us: black to represent our human sin, red to symbolize the blood Christ shed on the cross when He died for our sin, white for the forgiveness that came from Christ’s death, purple to symbolize our salvation by God’s grace alone, blue to signify our baptism by water, green to represent our life on earth, and yellow for the golden roads of God’s kingdom in heaven. As we strung our beads, the teacher explained the importance of each and what Jesus’ ultimate gift means for everyone on earth who believes in Him: salvation from our sins and eternal life in heaven with Him. Today I wear a different bracelet, made with Swarovski crystals and much prettier than the ones I made as a girl. But it still reminds me of the same thing: the sacrifice Jesus made for me because He loves me. This bracelet is the inspiration for my Honors Thesis, which is a dance concert of seven choreographed pieces, each to represent one bead on the bracelet. I have always been a Christian and all through high school I was very involved in youth groups and other church activities. Since starting college, though my faith has never wavered, I haven’t had an active walk with God. This project has been the way back to that path. God has blessed me with a wonderful family, amazing friends, and so many gifts and talents. I hope that creating this project to put the focus back on Him will be my humble way of thanking Him for all those gifts and for my salvation.
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- I would like to thank Terri Maxwell for designing my programs and posters. They were extremely helpful in advertising the performance and informing my audience about the project.

- I would like to thank all of the talented dancers who participated in this project. Their hard work and dedication made this creative dream a reality for me.

- I would like to thank my mother, Gretchen Heilmann, for doing the readings for my concert, for constructing costumes and helping me with costume design, and for inspiring me to realize this project to its fullest.
Project Explanation

As a young girl in Sunday school, I made many "salvation bracelets" to help learn about the gift that God gave to us in his son Jesus Christ. The bracelets I made were a piece of leather rope with seven beads, each color representing a different aspect of Christ's gift of salvation. They were strung in the same order that they were given to us: black to represent our human sin, red to symbolize the blood Christ shed on the cross when He died for our sin, white for the forgiveness that came from Christ's death, purple to symbolize our salvation by God's grace alone, blue to signify our baptism by water, green to represent our life on earth, and yellow for the golden roads of God's kingdom in heaven. As we strung our beads, the teacher explained the importance of each and what Jesus' ultimate gift means for everyone on earth who believes in Him: salvation from our sins and eternal life in heaven with Him. Today I wear a different bracelet, made with Swarovski crystals and much prettier than the ones I made as a girl. But it still reminds me of the same thing: the sacrifice Jesus made for me because He loves me.

This bracelet is the inspiration for my Honors Thesis. I took the concept of each bead on the salvation bracelet and portrayed it in dance that will form a seven-piece concert. Each piece has movement, music, costumes, lighting and other choreographic elements that represent each bead on the bracelet and its traditional meaning. I chose a scripture that illustrated each concept, which was read during each piece. For the color black, a group of dancers in all black are "bound", moving in tight and sharp movements to represent the prison of sin. Later, they break away one by one and become free to show they have rejected a life of sin. At the end of the piece, some come back to the bound movement, showing that some people give into the pressures of society and the temptation of sin. The music is *Hide and Seek* by Imogen Heap. For the color red, a solo dancer wears a red, flowing dress and moves in an elegant yet melancholy manner to a song entitled *Crimson* by Nichole Nordeman that depicts the pain Christ felt as he was crucified. For white, a soloist dressed in white dances an elegant and more uplifting piece to *The Sacred Romance*, a popular Easter composition for violin by Michael Smith that captures the joy of God's forgiveness with Christ's resurrection. For purple, a trio performs to *Grace Flows Down* by Passion Band. The movement flows with the music while the dancers help one another as they "fall." This symbolizes God's grace in that, each time we stumble, He is there to lift us up again no matter how badly we mess up. For the color blue, a group of five dancers in blue watercolors perform (delete a piece) with the feeling and music of an old African American hymn that expresses the passion felt as new believers are dunked in a river and baptized. The music is *As I Went Down to the River to Pray* by Allison Krauss from the motion picture *O Brother Where Art Thou*. The color green is performed by four dancers who represent those living life without God and a soloist who represents someone living with the joy of Christ in her life. The core dancers are dressed in a dark and drab green while the soloist is dressed in bright green. The music is *Awaken* by Natalie Grant, which expresses the person's desire to refocus her life on Christ. Finally, a soloist in flowing yellow dress rejoices in happiness at the perfection of eternity in heaven. The music is an orchestral piece by Tim Janis, entitled *Lighthouse Point*, and expresses the angelic, peaceful and joyous feelings Christians have in anticipation of their life in heaven.
The idea behind this project is to spread the message of Christ's salvation to those who don't yet know Him. This project is meant for a diverse audience. For those in the audience who have a firm faith in Christ, I hope that they will have reaffirmation of what they believe and be reminded of what salvation through Christ's death truly means. I hope that by seeing His gifts to us depicted through music and movement, they will have a new appreciation for what it means to be a Christian. For audience members who do not know Christ but are curious to learn more, I hope that my concert will show them what Christ has sacrificed all of us. I hope they will see that they are loved just as they are and without question. My goal is to present the glory of God and the salvation Jesus offers in a clear, non-threatening way so that those who are unsure will know that they can believe in Christ without any doubts. For others in the audience, I hope that they will simply be moved by the artistry of the dancers and beauty of the choreography and music. My hope is that everyone who attends this concert will be entertained, educated and enlighten by what they see, no matter what their beliefs.

In creating this project, I had hoped that I would also grow and learn from the process. I feel that I have accomplished those goals. I wanted to grow as a choreographer and gain more experience creating an entire dance concert. I learned how to direct a full-length concert with music selection, lighting, costuming, staging, and program and poster design. I also developed into a more mature choreographer. Throughout the process, I learned difficult lessons about time management, scheduling conflicts, and last minute artistic and casting changes due to injury and personality conflicts. There were times when I considered stopping the project because these problems seemed insurmountable. Then the most important goal came to the forefront. I wanted to grow in my own Christian faith as I created this concert and get in touch with the different aspects of that faith that I planned to incorporated artistically. Through my years at Ball State, I have felt very detached from my faith because I have been caught up in campus life, schoolwork, job, and social commitments. Then, at the beginning of 2007, I experienced some very difficult losses in my personal life that occurred right in the midst of working on this project. It was a very difficult time for me, but pouring my heart and soul into this project helped me to remember what is most important in this life. I learned about patience and rising above adversity to see a dream come to life. I learned about faith. It was much easier for me to get through those hardships, and in turn helped me to not only develop a beautiful work of art, but to get back to the roots of my faith and grow as a Christian. My experience was more than I could have ever hoped. Ultimately, the performance was what it was meant to be.