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EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP

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♥ THE KENDRICK BROS.
OVERCOMER

♥ THE BEST REASON
**TO LEARN
TO SAY, "NO"**

♥ **TORI HARPER**
INSPIRING REVIVAL

♥ **FORGIVENESS
CHANGES
EVERYTHING**



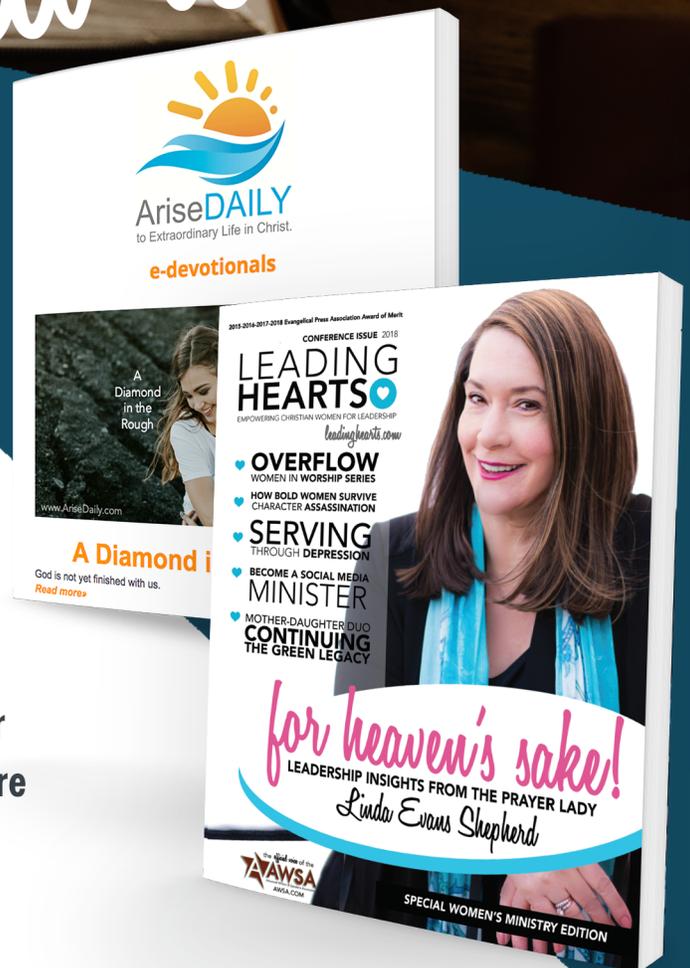
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to **Loving Well**
WITH PAM FARREL

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Linda Evans Shepherd



i found my secret power

AS A TEEN, I SOMETIMES SAT AROUND THE CRACKLING

CAMPFIRE watching the glowing faces of my friends singing sweet harmonies of how the world will know us by our love.

I wonder, is that saying still true?

How do we stay sharp in our faith-walk in a world filled with trouble, accusations and hate?

Do we hide in our churches, stay silent in public, and walk quietly through life in disguise?

Yes, I've done it. I mean who needs to incite a hate mob, right? But how are we going to love others if we are in hiding?

So, I've decided to sharpen my witness by sharing my love, and the results have been phenomenal.

Now, when I go out in public, amazing things happen. I hold hurting strangers in my arms, I pray for people I've never met before — in public mind you. I even share my faith with strangers!

I didn't think such things were possible. But I discovered my secret power of Mama-Love.

The younger generation is especially starving for Mama-Love.

All it takes is a loving smile and a word of encouragement spoken in Mama-confidence. "You doing okay?" "You look so nice." "Good job."

It happened again a few days ago, when I was checking out of my hotel. The young woman at the desk looked stressed. "Sorry for the mistake, I took

the inadvertent charge off your credit card. You'll see it, but you won't be charged."

She looked as if she thought I would explode in white-hot wrath. I just gave her my Mama-Love smile. "I know these things work out. I'm not upset."

She was incredulous. "You have no idea how many people get angry when this happens. What sign are you?"

"Well, I was born in July, but actually I prefer to say I am under the sign of the cross. When you're under the sign of the cross, you can access love, peace and joy — like I'm doing now."

A big grin spread across Stephanie's face. "That's my sign too. And thank you. Thank you so much for reminding me. I've had a rough morning, and I needed to remember that."

Wow, had Stephanie and I really just had an intimate conversation about our shared faith? We had, and all it took was some divinely inspired Mama-Love.

And Mama-Love is transferable, even if you've never been a mom. All you have to do is pray and ask that the Holy Spirit flow through you as you interface with others. Then He'll bring you opportunities to shine.

And this love also works as Sister-Love, Daddy-Love, or even Brother-Love as you begin to see others as the very ones God has sent you to love. So, whoever you are, you have no excuse. Flow in the power of God's love and go out there and love your neighbor. *LSH*

Love,

LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD
PUBLISHER, LEADING HEARTS MAGAZINE

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**WANTED
TO WRITE**
FOR TV OR FILM?



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IN A
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- ♥ RELEASE YOUR INNER CREATIVE
- ♥ WHEN GOD CALLS THE HEART TO REST



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FROM THE EDITOR
amber weigand-buckley

what's eating you?

I HAVE THIS FOE. IT'S CALLED DISCOURAGEMENT, AND IT LIKES TO EAT ME UP ON THE INSIDE.

It can take everything good in my life and drill it up with all sorts of negative things. Things that are not going well. Things that I have looming on my to-do list. Things I want to preempt (but I'm already internalizing as discouragement because I'm anticipating the struggle before it even happens).

We let discouragement distract us. Worse yet, we allow it to detour the reality of God at work in our lives.

This morning, I was struggling with thoughts of my oldest daughter. She is now a high school graduate and will soon be heading out of state to attend college — hundreds of miles from home.

In prayer I said, "God, continue to draw her close to You. Help her to see herself for the awesome young woman of God that You have made her. Help her to make good choices so she can receive all the good things You have in store for her."

I clearly heard His reply:

"Don't let worry cloud your vision. My plans for the one I've created are taking her to a place where she can learn to live beyond the static of this life to her higher call. I'm taking her to a place where My love for her will outshine what she is

doing. I am building my daughter to overcome what's happening in the world around her and am transforming her into a world-changer."

Yes, it's true that "in this life we all have many troubles." We can expect troubles, but we believe in the One who pulls our eyes away from our troubles and longs for us to rest in His love.

He beckons us to a not-of-this-world place, a place where all static is gone, a place where we can concentrate on soaking in the spa of His love.

In a world filled with trouble, we can live in anticipation of all the loving blessings He's

packaged. He speaks peace to our mind and to our heart.

Father, help me live there, above the static.

I hope this issue of **Leading Hearts** takes you to a place beyond the static "what's not

going quite right" trials. Instead, focus on living above it all, living for the call God has for you, the delight He has in simply abiding with you and pouring His love on you and through you.

This love and care He attends us with is the same love and care He pours out on the people we care for so dearly. And the attention He showers on us in those discouraging not-going-so-right moments is just an opportunity for more love to be poured in.

Don't let discouragement eat you up on the inside and cloud your vision of the future. *AH*

Love,

AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY
EDITOR, LEADING HEARTS MAGAZINE

choose joy!
unlocking love in relationships



by pam farrel
WWW.LOVE-WISE.COM





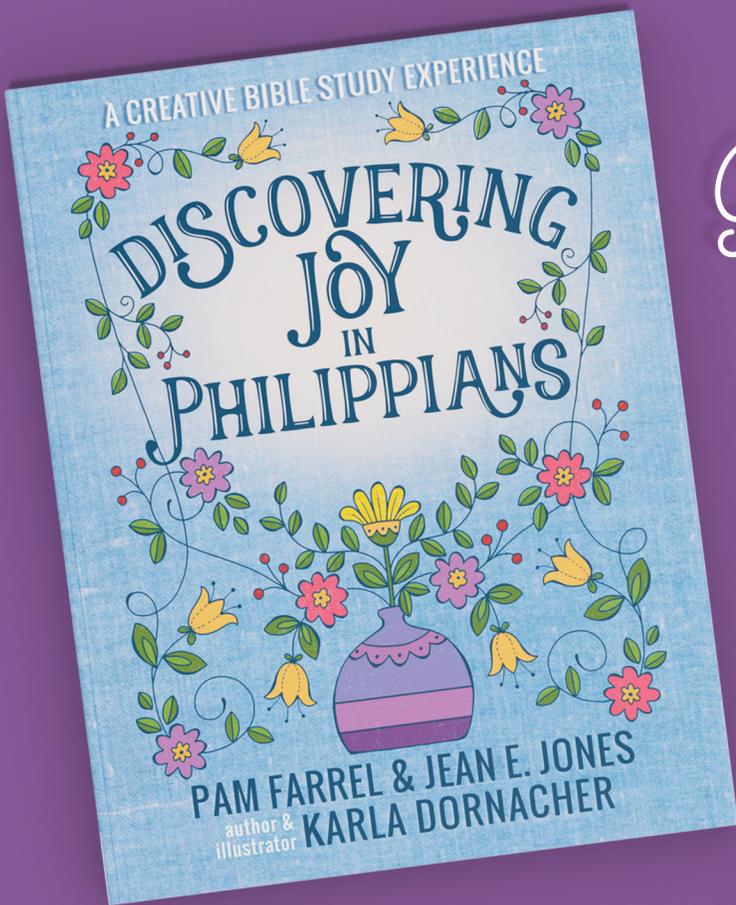
PHILIPPIANS IS A BOOK ABOUT JOY — and it is also a book about practices that bring joy to relationships. In my book [7 Simple Skills for Every Woman](#), I share: “If your vertical relationship with God is healthy, your horizontal relationships with people will be healthier too.” To make sure this happens, I spend time with God’s Word in fresh ways so that it washes through me and into all my relationships. In our newest book, [Discovering Joy in Philippians: A Creative Bible Study Experience](#), three authors (Jean E. Jones, artist Karla Dornacher and I) offer numerous creative ways to explore and experience God’s Word. One of my favorites is to fall asleep to Scripture. It calms my fears, fuels my courage and refines my heart, mind and spirit. Recently, I immersed myself in an audio version (ESV) of Philippians. Hearing it read, like the letter it was penned to be,

highlighted how much the Apostle Paul had to say about relationships.

Philippians 1:3 — *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.* People can tell when you appreciate them. We want to live in such a way that when people think of us, they light up with delight. Also, thanking God for someone, with this “attitude of gratitude” builds a sense of deep respect, honor and gratefulness toward the person. In short, we like people more and are willing to stay in their life with a steadfast love when we’re praying for them.

Verse 4 — *always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy.* We are drawn to people who express joy when they see us. Knowing someone is praying for you, with JOY, can build a relationship. That’s why praying for someone is one of the greatest gifts you can give.

Verse 7 — *It is right for me to feel this way*

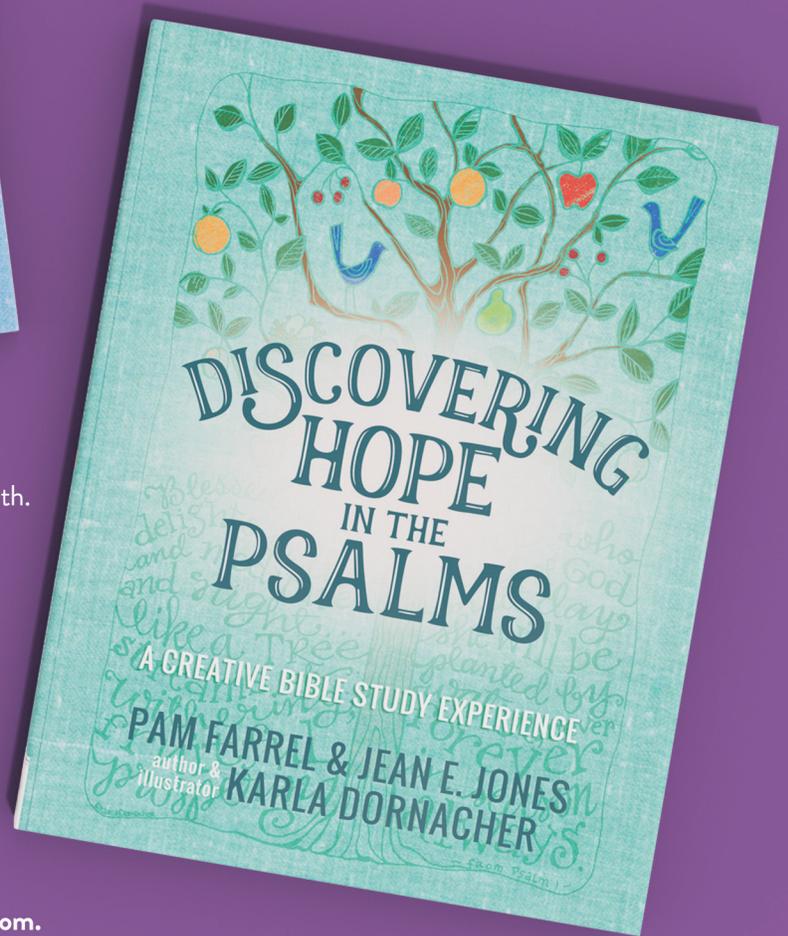


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PAM FARREL



JEAN E. JONES



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about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace. Our goal is to be “partakers of grace,” and we can do this as we hold others in our hearts. This means we choose to NOT make a relationship about a list of behaviors. Instead, we carry them with constant love, giving the benefit of the doubt to another’s intentions or motives. When a relationship is based only on behaviors, *no one* can stay good enough long enough to succeed. Love’s grace trumps human imperfection.

Verse 9 — And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment. We can deepen our understanding of a verse by reading it in a few translations or paraphrased versions. I find joy in the expanded vocabulary definitions in verses 9 and 10 in the *Amplified Bible*:

“And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more [displaying itself in greater depth] in real knowledge and in practical insight, so that you may learn to recognize and treasure what is excellent [identifying the best, and distinguishing moral differences], and that you may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ [actually living lives that lead others away from sin].”

I also cherish these verses in *The Message*:

“So this is my prayer: **that your love will flourish** and that you will **not only love much but well**. Learn to **love appropriately**. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that **your love is sincere and intelligent**, not sentimental gush. Live a lover’s life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of.”

LH

by karen porter
WWW.KARENPORTER.COM

never let waiting lead to quitting



THE HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

WAS FULL. Across from me was a middle-aged woman who fretted with items from her purse and struggled to sit still. Worry was visible in the deep lines on her forehead. Two chairs down from her was a young mom trying to engage and entertain a toddler full of energy. At the end of the row, a grandmother sat in a wheelchair crying softly; her pre-teen granddaughter rubbed

comforting circles across the old woman's shoulders. In the corner, a quiet cowboy stood patiently first on one booted foot, then the other and turning his hat round and round in his hands. Near the windows, a man in a business suit tapped fast messages on his phone, feverishly taking care of business while waiting.

Waiting is hard — and sometimes feels hopeless. Like the people in that waiting room, we may worry and fret like the woman, lose ourselves in caring for others like the young mom, cry like the grandmother, retreat into our thoughts

INTHELEAD

like the cowboy or frantically try to work like the businessman.

Have you ever wanted to quit because the waiting is too hard or too long? Maybe you've tried to lead your organization to reach a new goal or expand the business or ministry, but the timetable you planned has stretched into months, perhaps years. Waiting, which is postponed again and again, leads to quitting.

Permanent weight loss is slow and tedious. Starting a new venture requires hours and hours of planning, and delays are inevitable. Finishing your education program seems never ending. Methodically training for a marathon leads to disillusionment. Leading your company or ministry to a new level is as if you take one step forward and two steps backward.

Most of us want answers and solutions quickly, so when we enter the waiting room, we want to quit — to move on to the next big plan.

What can we do to keep our motivation for the work? Research suggests three actions.

First Action Step. Celebrate small victories.

Your brain needs to receive an award. One of your key leadership tools is to remind your team (and yourself) how far you've come since you started. Keep a journal or a log. Review it often and as you see small wins, communicate them to your team. One group committed itself to healthy living, eating right and exercising. The leader wisely reported the total pounds lost each week. Everyone was motivated to keep trying. Paul wrote, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (**Galatians 6:9**).

Second Action Step. Let failure or mistakes go.

If the team didn't meet a deadline or everyone was late to a meeting or didn't read an important email, let it go. Start again with new enthusiasm. Failure is amplified with inner dialogue and self-blame. Instead learn to take a step forward past the disappointment and focus on the goal.

Remember, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (**Philippians 4:13**). One group leader realized that every team member was weary because they had worked too hard on the project, and the weariness contributed to mistakes. She told each group member to take a weekend off from the work of the project and to take a nap on at least one day of the weekend. The team came back to the task on Monday with vigor.

Third Action Step. Discover who feels overwhelmed and offer help.

Feeling overwhelmed may be the reason most people quit. When we are too busy, we feel overwhelmed. When we don't sleep, we are easily beaten. When we eat too much sugar and carbs, we become exhausted. Without exercise, we are sluggish. Spend time with your group discussing how God's will fits into the plan. Remind the group that God's priorities should become our priorities. "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength" (**Isaiah 40:29-31**).

Restate the vision for the group. Share your heart's desires and motivations. When one leader saw his team lose its energy and vision, he called the group together and read the story of Mary and Martha from Luke 10 aloud to the group. They discussed the busyness and frustration that Martha felt and then asked hard application questions about their current work. Then they imagined what it might have been like for Mary to sit at the feet of Jesus, even though there was work to be done. Then they brainstormed ways the team could re-energize by spending time in Bible reading and prayer. They set aside a time each day for spiritual reflection and renewal. The productivity of the group expanded so fast, they finished the project ahead of time.

The hotel tycoon, Conrad Hilton said, "Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit." Next time you enter the waiting room, instead of quitting, try these action steps: Celebrate small victories, let mistakes go and spend time for spiritual rest and renewal. *LT*

FROM THE CREATORS OF WAR ROOM

WHAT DO
YOU ALLOW
TO DEFINE
YOU?



ALEX
KENDRICK

FUNCKIA
SHIRER

WRITTEN BY
ARON
WRIGHT-THOMPSON

OVERCOMER

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
ALEX KENDRICK



ALEX KENDRICK, ALONG WITH HIS BROTHER STEPHEN, HAVE CREATED FIVE WELL-KNOWN FILMS IN THE CHRISTIAN FILM INDUSTRY, including *Fireproof*, *Facing the Giants* and *War Room*. Their sixth film, *Overcomer*, is coming out August 23. I talked with Alex Kendrick about the film.

It's been 15 years since the Kendrick brothers started filming *Facing the Giants*. "It did more than I ever thought it could do," Alex says, "but *Overcomer* is a step up in quality, a step up in production value, and it's framed with a message that I think today's audience needs to hear."

The Story

Coach John Harrison (played by Alex Kendrick) has just finished a great season with his basketball team, but his dreams of a state championship crumble. The town's largest manufacturing plant

shuts down and thousands, including many of his best players, are moving away. To top it all off, Coach Harrison is then tasked with coaching the cross-country team, which has only one runner, and she is asthmatic. "He's frustrated," Alex says, "and he feels like he has no opportunity to win."

Coach Harrison must navigate these new obstacles in his journey, while he also wrestles with his identity, a core theme of the movie.

"The movie follows this 15-year-old girl and the coach as they both learn more about their identity and what it should be placed in," according to Alex. "Society today talks about your identity coming from your feelings or your circumstances or what others think about you. We would say with this movie that the Creator gets to define His creation.

"Coach learns that the foundation of his identity is in the Lord; it changes his perspective on everything else. His identity is not in being a successful coach; his value comes from the love God has for him. The same thing goes for the young runner, Hannah Scott. She learns God loves her and has a plan for her, and her life is not summed up in her circumstances or her feelings."

A Decisive Moment

Alex describes the moment he decided that identity would be the core message of the film:

"In 2011 I was watching my kids run a cross-country race. And I'm watching all of these dads cheering them on. It struck me that running a long cross-country race is similar to our life as a believer. The Apostle Paul talks about it: 'Run in such a way that you may win' (1 Corinthians 9:24, NASB).

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“We all want to finish well. Cross-country running is hard; you’re always waiting for that second wind to kick in and give you that extra boost. In life you sometimes get tired of your circumstance. You need that second wind. To have God, our ultimate Father, say, ‘I love you! I’m with you! I see you!’ is so encouraging. We wanted to portray that message in the film.”

Alex recalls that they wanted to show the power of what a father can do and the parallel between an earthly father and a heavenly Father, a Father who constantly coaches and encourages us.

When the time came for Alex and Stephen to pray about what they were supposed to do for their next film, God gave them a clear vision. “I kept feeling God was saying, ‘Remind my church I’m with them. Remind my church to put their identity in Me.’”

Ephesians 1 and 2 are the primary chapters the filmmakers pulled from to make this film. “When God says, ‘I love you, I’ve offered you salvation, and when you’re in Christ, you’re redeemed,’ why would we look to the world or any other measuring stick for our identity?”

“We don’t stop and preach at our audience,” Alex notes, “but these truths and messages are interwoven in the plot, in the lives of the characters.”





Working with Priscilla Shirer

Alex said that it's been a pleasure working with the well-known author and public speaker and hopes she will do more movies. "She's an excellent actress. I think that's a talent she did not know she had. She poured herself into *War Room* with acting coaches and things like that. She's such a pro and a great friend. We have really been blessed to work with her, and hope we continue to work with her."

A Tale of Two Coaches

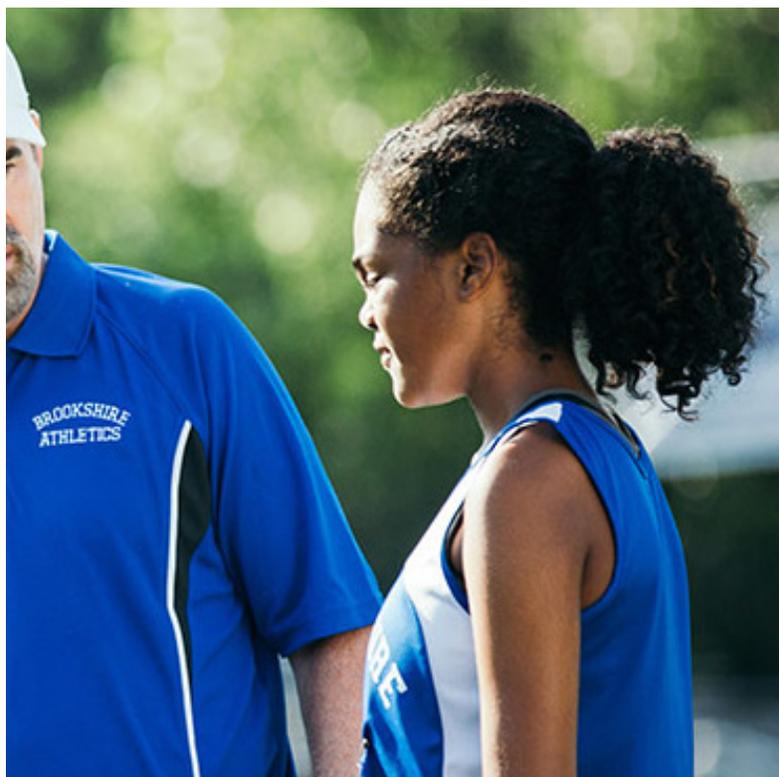
This isn't the first time that Kendrick has played a coach. In *Facing the Giants* (2006), he plays a football coach who has a losing team and follows

him as he fights for a victory. Kendrick said he enjoyed playing both roles. "These coaches start from opposite ends of the spectrum, but they both end up with a balanced view of faith and the role God plays in our lives." He notes that one coach starts with victories and has that stripped away; the other starts with loss and must fight for the win.

"We must find ourselves in Him," Kendrick explains, "in the value He gives us, being who He says we are. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He loves us more than we realize. He's the One who created us, so why wouldn't we take Him for our identity above everything else?"

"I had to ask myself, if I'm never able to film another movie, do I still know who I am? And I was able to solidify in my own faith walk that my identity is anchored in the unchanging character of Jesus Christ and what He says about me."

Kendrick and his fellow filmmakers have a goal in mind for the *Overcomer* audiences. "It's a very entertaining and inspirational film, but we want them to leave the theater asking themselves the right question: 'What or who gets to define who I am?'" LH



by grace ayers
LH INTERVIEW





forgiveness
changes everything

WWW.DEBBIECUNNINGHAM.NET

by debbie cunningham





“Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a commitment. It is a choice to show mercy, not to hold the offense up against the offender. Forgiveness is an expression of love.”

—Gary Chapman

MY FRIENDS JASON AND PENNY HAVE BEEN

MARRIED 38 YEARS. Their story is a little more delicate in the area of forgiveness. They had some happy years early on. They struggled through infertility and then adopted a son. They enjoyed being parents and raising a family even though it had been complicated at times. From the outside looking in, they seemed to be a perfect balance for each other. However, about 20 years into their relationship, they hit a long, rough patch in their marriage. They were both very involved with their church at the time. Penny said,

“We were typical, church-going, comfortable Christians. We had never really needed to apply God’s Word to see if it worked or not.”

Jason began the story, “One night, I sat on the bed praying to God for courage while Penny was in the bathroom. God, I can’t tell her. It will crush her. I’m sorry for what I’ve done. I want to make it right, but if You want me to tell her, You’re going to have to do it. I don’t even know where to start.”

Penny had been praying too. She knew something was wrong in their relationship. They weren’t connecting, and they were arguing and frustrated all the time. She asked God to show her what to do. The Lord spoke to her in her heart and said, “You don’t know everything, and you need to ask him.”

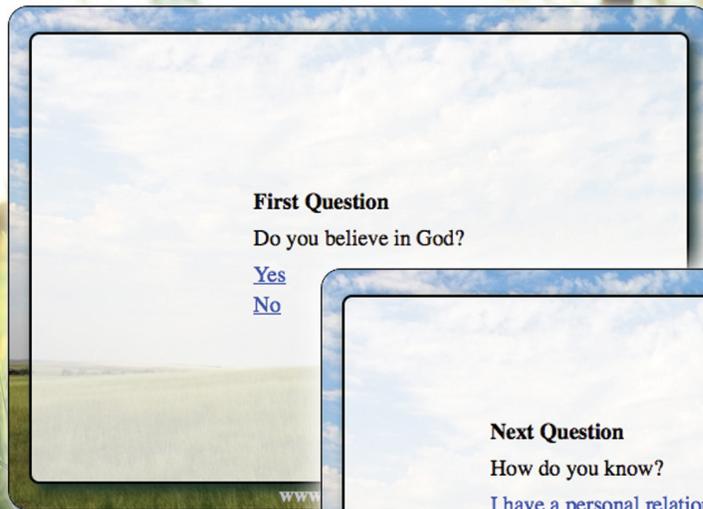
So that night, she walked out of the bathroom, looked at Jason intently and said, “Did you have an affair?”

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How Well Do You KNOW God?

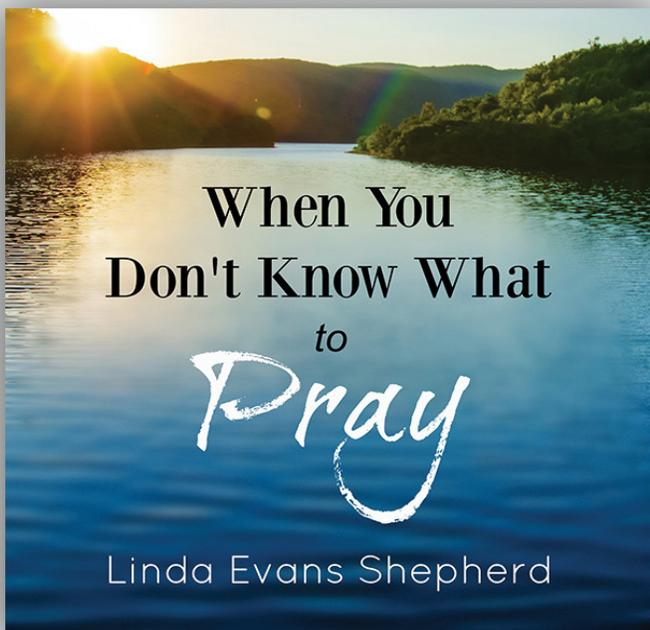
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—Thelma Wells, author & president
A Woman of God Ministries



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“Yes.” He said. “Six years ago.”

His words were mixed with tears as he spoke to her then. “Penny, I am so sorry. I was wrong, and I’m willing to bear the consequence. It was six years ago and one night. I am truly sorry, and I love you and I want us to stay together, but I realize this is your choice. Biblically, you have every right to divorce me and I will accept that. Although I know I don’t deserve it, if you forgive me and want to stay married, I want you to know I do love you and will do whatever it takes to show you I am truly repentant. It’s completely up to you.”

At that moment she looked at him and said, “You need to leave — right now.”

Penny said to me, “He left. I sobbed and screamed to God. I was hurt and angry and every emotion in between. I had a physical pain in my chest that I had never felt before. It hurt so deeply and nothing could take it away but time and God’s healing. It was awful.”

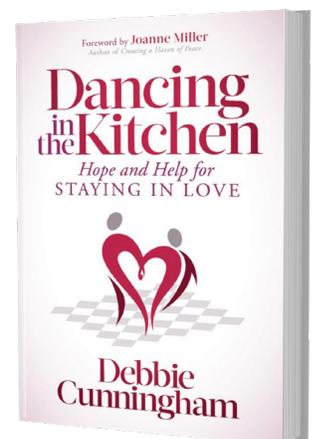
She told her closest friends and asked for prayer. Ultimately, she didn’t know if they would stay married or not. Regardless, she knew she needed to forgive him because that’s what God’s Word says, but it was going to take some time. Matthew 6:14 says: “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

They sought counseling and prayer and wrestled with God’s truth in all of it. What did forgiveness and restoration look like after an affair? Was it even possible at this point? What did God require of them biblically?

After seeking God and searching her heart, she chose to move toward forgiving him. But that didn’t make everything perfect again. She was willing to work on their marriage but he had broken her trust, and she didn’t know if that could ever be restored. They began the hard work of rebuilding their marriage. The process to rebuild was long and arduous. They had started counseling together while they were separated. He moved in a month later; however, it was a long time before they were physically intimate again. They had weekly marriage counseling and homework for their relationship, which included a lot of reading books and discussing how they truly felt.

Penny shared this recently with me: “Before the affair, I was a typical, comfortable, Sunday church-going Christian. I was truly saved, but I didn’t have the kind of faith that comes from applying God’s Word to see if it was really ‘true after all’ kind of authenticity. If this marriage was going to be healed, it could only come from God because I didn’t have it in me to forgive and restore if God didn’t do the work in me first. And God’s Word made all the difference.” *DH*

For more stories of real life couples and how they grew lasting love even through adversity, see *Dancing in the Kitchen: Hope and Help for Staying in Love* by Debbie Cunningham, www.debbiecunningham.net.



RECEIVING

tori harper
inspiring revival





I want the hurting people to know that God does have a good plan for their life and right now that is revival.

THESE DAYS IT'S HARD TO TURN ON ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICE AND NOT BE OVERWHELMED BY THE NEWS OF WARS, RUMORS OF WARS, NATURAL DISASTERS AND ONGOING NEED.

Certainly, we're in a time where we desperately need God to intervene in so many situations.

So naturally, many Christians are calling on God for a revival in their communities around the world, and it just so happened that a young, up and coming Nashville native and singer-songwriter Tori Harper decided to write a song about it.

Now is the Time

Tori says she actually wrote the timely "Revival" a few years ago, but many encouraged her now is the time for the powerful anthem that encourages brave boldness leading to individual inspiring revival. "I had so many people tell me now is the time. Now is the right time for people to hear this, and I have been seeing it all over Nashville,"

"The enemy tries to look big and powerful, but

God will always have the victory, and I think He's showing that right now. There's been a lot going on in our culture, and I think God's not just waking up Nashville. All over the country, I have seen people move to pray for revival."

Awaken Nashville

The spring release of Tori's "Revival" followed the release of *Revival Starts Here*, a book by Pastor Dave Clayton who also launched the "Awaken Nashville" movement.

"We had this movement called 'Awaken Nashville' where over 400 churches gathered together and prayed for every single person in Nashville for a whole month. God is stirring something new. He is just awakening His church. He is reviving. That is something that I want to share and be a part of," Tori says.

It Starts in Us

"I think it's really neat how God orchestrated the release of my song and the release of his book to be so close. My song kind of gives the general message that God is bringing revival, and revival starts in us. But his book kind of gives more

-continued on p. 25-

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September 2013
Happy Birthday to the USA!!!

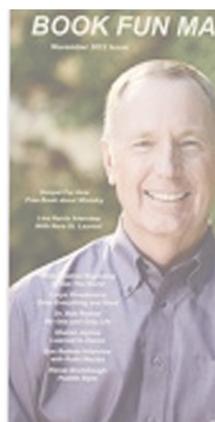
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Happy July!!!

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-continued from p. 23-

detailed (explanation) of how we do revival, how do we foster the fire that God gives us.

“Pastor Dave talks about prayer and fasting. It’s a really great book. It’s small so it’s easy to read, but there’s a lot in there. It inspired me again, and I love it. So, I am so honored that God orchestrated that the way He did, so they could be released together.”

A Fire Getting Stronger

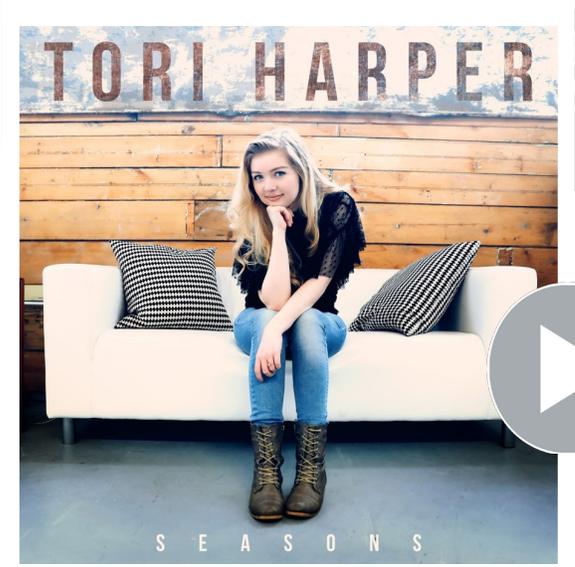
Tori is sharing the message of “Revival” and her other stirring songs while performing at various music festivals throughout the summer. “Everyone just seems to know that there’s something coming. I know that is the breath of God waking up people everywhere.

“It’s spreading, and that’s the thing about fire. When you let the walls down, when you let people see it, it can spread. If you don’t contain the fire, then it can spread, and it is spreading. I’m very excited to go to these places like Atlanta and see what God is doing in person,” she says.

I Want to Be a Revival

“I think my songs are for people looking for hope and feel lost and hurt. I’ve really been through a lot myself, and I really have a heart to share that life gets better. That’s really what I want.

“I want the hurting people to know that God does have a good plan for their life, and right now that



is revival. There are so many things that God just wants to wrap us up in His arms and take care of us.”

I Wanna Go Where You Lead

In between performances, Harper continues to work on future projects as the Lord leads in her life, and she hopes to release another project soon. “I’m so excited to see what God chooses to say next. I like to think of songwriting as a partnership with the Holy Spirit,” she says.

“I’m just a girl who’s telling her story. Things get better, and I’ve seen it. It doesn’t always look good, but God can always turn it in to something beautiful.” *LH*

by jenn taylor
PROFILE CONTRIBUTOR



INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER &
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF OVER 30 books
-Linda Evans Shepherd-

*"I'd love the opportunity
to share the life-changing
power of prayer with you!"*

-Linda



"Thank you for speaking at our conference,
Linda. My heart is forever changed."
—Conferee, Warner Robins, GA

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book I have read about prayer!"
—Reader, Gayle Radavich,

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the big question

Q: Why does God call himself Father?
I had a terrible father, and I cannot relate to God.



with *cynthia l. simmons*
WWW.CLSIMMONS.COM

YOU POINT OUT A REAL PROBLEM. THOSE WITH AN ABSENT OR ABUSIVE FATHER

struggle with understanding God. Josh McDowell's father raped him over and over, so he hated all fathers. He traveled all over the United States and Europe trying to prove God didn't exist, but while researching in a library, he realized he couldn't succeed. As he studied the Bible, he found healing. Let's talk about how you can overcome the barrier you face.

First, realize God hated what happened to you. He saw the whole thing, and your father's choices made him angry. Notice what Jesus said to His disciples about children: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6, ESV). That's serious.

Second, God won't ignore the problem because your father sinned against Him too. Look at Romans: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord" (12:19, ESV). If I had to choose a penalty, I might be frustrated and overreact or feel compassion and let the person off too easy. But I can assure you, God knows the exact way to handle the situation with your father. Since you can trust God's righteous judgment, you may forgive and relax. Whenever I must forgive, I imagine handing the whole dilemma to God. He wants to take your pain. See what the Psalmist said: "You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?" (Psalm 56:8, ESV). You might need to forgive more than once because letting go takes time. I guarantee you, God understands.

Third, spend some time in the Bible so you can learn about the perfect Father who won't hurt you. Look at what John says about Jesus: "For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16, ESV). Grace means something that brings delight, joy and pleasure. Notice the wording. Jesus gave us grace and then put more on top of that, sort of like piling up scoops of ice cream. You can depend on Him the way the Psalmist did when he proclaimed, "Your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!" (Psalm 40:11, ESV). The Lord longs to mend the ache.

Lastly, forgive and allow our perfect Heavenly Father to restore your soul. Then find a way to share the hope God gave you with someone else who had a horrid dad. Josh McDowell started a ministry sharing facts that prove God's existence. He has blessed many lives, and you can too. *JH*



ESPRESSO IN BUSINESS AND MARKETING by penelope carlevato

WWW.TIME4TEA.ORG



WHEN I'M ON HOLIDAY, I'M ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT for tea rooms or tea shops. And even though I realized Italy is a coffee- and espresso-drinking nation, I pursued my search. I have to say, I liked my cappuccinos, espressos and lattes, but I really missed a good cup of tea.

Our trip to Italy had produced minimal opportunity to drink tea, as there is a coffee shop on every corner, not only in the cities but also in little villages. Those Italians love their coffee, and I was not surprised to hear that Italians only drink tea when they are sick, and then only in the privacy of

their own homes. What's a tea drinker to do?

On the last day of our trip, our friend Grazie took me to tea. I was elated. A tearoom in Italy?

On our way to the tearoom, we drove through narrow cobblestone streets in and out of villages with beautiful buildings at least 400 years old. We arrived at the tearoom, Esedra, in the village of Bairo in northern Italy. It was magical and whimsical, nothing like a typical English tearoom, but the charm and ambiance were intoxicating. We shared a first-class tea as we dined on delicious pastries and chocolates, all handmade by the owner.

I was interested to know how the owner's business was surviving in a culture not known for being tea lovers. We had a fun time communicating in our native tongues, since neither of us could speak the other's language. Grazie did a little interpreting, but the owner and I did a lot of hand signs and pointing to communicate.

She is a lovely Christian lady who is successful in her business because she loves people and desires to share hospitality with all her customers. We found we had much in common. She started her business as she felt called to it. We both feel we have been called to be ambassadors for tea, hospitality and participating in the importance of being good stewards of God's calling. We both concur tea isn't just a drink, but a way of life.

We confided in each other that marketing our calling is difficult. It's hard work and often takes us out of our sphere of comfort. We often put off doing what needs to be done until the deadline looms in front of us. The biggest issue appears to be when we need to work and discuss money! It's hard for

us creative types to use the business module for our ministry.

I have been reading a book by my friend Kevin Cullis, *How Would Jesus Do Business?* He shares that just as Jesus did business following the Torah, so should we as Christian businesswomen follow God's teaching for our marketing and promotion. That is the key component of two women, one Italian who was swimming upstream running a tea business in a coffee-dominated country and one American woman sharing her English heritage to a fast-paced American culture.

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

Hebrews 12:11, NIV

One of the yummy cookies we had was an anise shortbread. I love shortbread, and this one was exceptional. Anise gives a subtle flavor of licorice to the wonderful flavor of buttery shortbread. It is used in many Italian recipes, such as biscotti and other desserts. I suggest you take a break, brew a pot of tea and enjoy some quiet time while sipping and nibbling on two of my favorite things.

Anise Shortbread Cookies

1/2 pound butter, softened
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon anise extract
1 1/2 cup flour
1 cup cornstarch

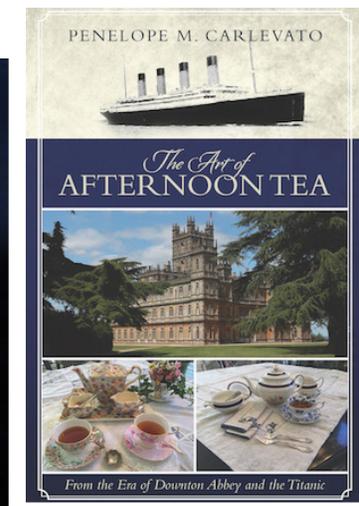


Preheat oven to 325° F

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Cream together butter, sugar, and anise extract until smooth and creamy. Blend flour and cornstarch into the creamed mixture. Knead lightly and press into a shallow baking tin (6 1/2 x 10) and prick top with fork, or roll between two sheets of plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Cut with cookie cutters and place onto parchment-lined cookie sheet. Prick top with a fork. (If using baking tin, bake, then cut into fingers.)

Bake 30-40 minutes at 325 degrees. While warm, cut pan cookies into fingers, and sprinkle with sugar. Don't overbake. Cookies are done when pale golden tops feel dry. *PH*

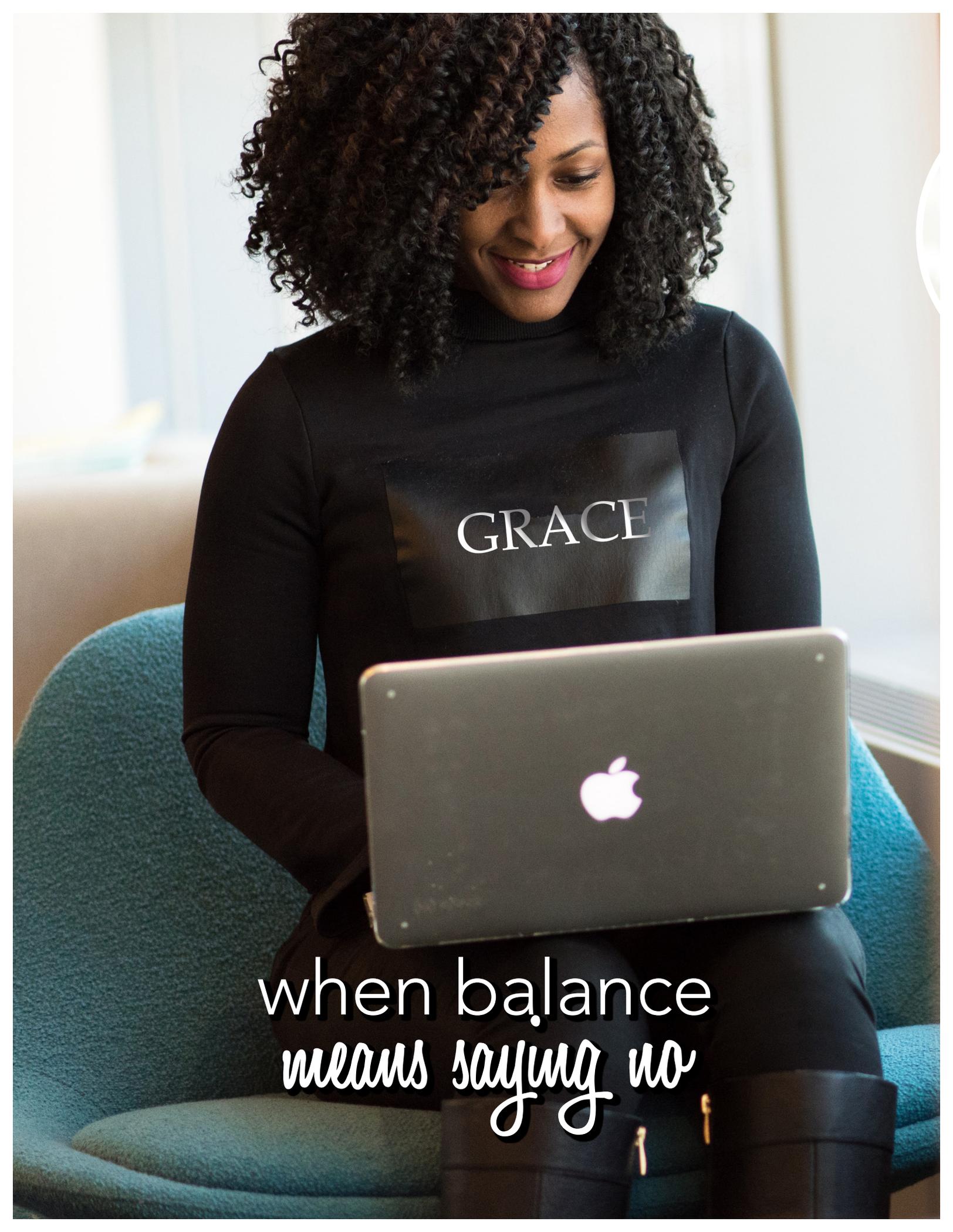


Find great recipes like this in

Penelope's book:

The Art of Afternoon Tea: From the Era of Downton Abbey and the Titanic.

Available autographed from time4tea.org

A woman with voluminous, dark curly hair is seated in a teal-colored armchair. She is wearing a black turtleneck sweater with the word "GRACE" printed in white, serif capital letters on the chest. She is smiling and looking down at a silver laptop computer resting on her lap. The laptop's lid is closed, and the glowing white Apple logo is visible on the back. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a window with light coming through. The overall mood is calm and focused.

GRACE

when balance
means saying no



by edie melson
WWW.EDIEMELSON.COM

NO, NOT NO
TO GOD. BUT
IN MY YEARS
OF MINISTRY,
I'VE DISCOVERED

the need to safeguard my time and energy. I've also come to realize that can't be done without learning how to say no. We all only have so much time in a day. And if you're like me, life is filled to overflowing. So that means constantly guarding our priorities.

There are a couple of areas where I've had to develop discipline in this regard.

NO to the Good Things to Leave Room for the God Things

I'm bad about seeing a need and equating that with a call to serve. The truth is, God doesn't call me to fill every ministry hole. He has specific things He wants me to do at specific times in my life. If I say yes to every opportunity I come across, then He can't use me in the ways He has planned.

To help me evaluate what to become involved with, I've developed a few steps I go through before I say yes.

I pray over the opportunity. I'm a yes-girl to the core and a card-carrying people pleaser. By acknowledging that, I can put safeguards in place to help me stay on track.

I run the opportunity through my mission statement. By developing a clear statement of what God is calling me to, I've put in place a filter. It helps me focus on the calling God has placed on my life.

The truth is, God doesn't call me to fill every ministry hole. He has specific things He wants me to do at specific times in my life.

If there are any doubts after steps 1 and 2, I get wise counsel. I have a team of prayer warriors who pray for me and my ministry. Because they talk to God on my behalf, they also offer good insight and clarity when I'm unsure.

NO to the Time Wasters

This is where the discipline comes in for me. I've discovered that as valuable as social media is for ministry, it's also a huge time sinkhole. I can become mired on my favorite networks and waste several hours in one sitting.

I am NOT saying we shouldn't engage on social media — quite the contrary. I believe that God created me for this specific place and time, and that includes social media. It excites me to see the worldwide reach I have through these networks.

However, that doesn't mean I can't get off-track when I'm online.

To help me remain in control of my schedule, these are some things I do.

I pray before I go online. Just like I practice prayer walking before I speak or

visit a place for ministry, I do a mental prayer walk before I venture onto the streets of social media.

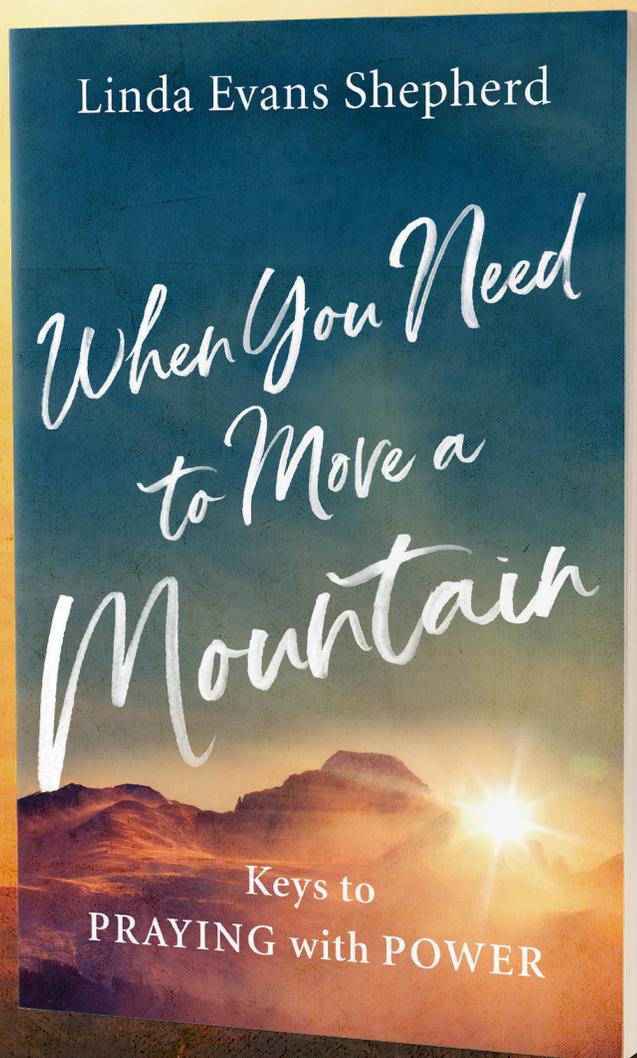
I set a timer when I go online. I can get lost in social media and on the World Wide Web. Setting a timer helps with keeping me focused.

I evaluate what posts to engage with. There are some people out there who seem to delight in stirring up trouble pursuing fruitless arguments. I've learned not to get drawn into things that God doesn't call me to.

I'm always amazed at the things God does when I yield my life to Him, and this holds true when I turn my schedule over to Him. With these guidelines firmly in place, I am free to follow God into the places He has for me and enjoy the peace that comes with His balance. *EH*

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ENERGIZE YOUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

by *karen whiting*
WWW.KARENWHITING.COM



FOR A HEALTHY, MOTIVATED TEAM, add a little inspiration and freshness. The most effective ideas are often not costly.

1. Remind members of your purpose. Share stories of children and families helped so they recall why they serve and see the difference the team's efforts make.

Share and repeat the ministry's vision. Post a few goals so people know there's direction.

2. Create a friendly atmosphere. Make it friendly for parents. Set up an area where parents can meet and chat after dropping off children and before pickup. Have simple refreshments and invite parents to donate goodies. Post photos of staff with notes about the individuals so parents can get to know them.

Make it staff friendly. Have a spot for staff to gather. Add a bulletin board to post notes of appreciation that celebrate members. Designate a spot and note

cards for staff to post notes. Include a suggestion box to gather ideas of what else to implement.

Be available and open to talking with all members of the staff. Listen and let them know you care. Schedule a social time or party to celebrate the ministry and reasons why you are all involved.

3. Express the positives until you realize them. Speak joy and positive words out loud. That will lift the spirits of people around you and in turn boost your own feelings and energy.

Simple thoughts inspire people, such as "Today is an opportunity to change a child's life." Or "With every smile you reflect God's love."

4. Celebrate your workers and the ministry. Take time to start with prayer and give a minute of thanks for an act of kindness of a staff member. Share mini stories of how a child responded or changed because of the team's efforts.

Post a bulletin board in a hallway for all to see. Post photos of staff at work, notes of what they did that made a difference and thanks from parents and children.

If your church bulletin has space, write a short note at times to recognize workers and the impact of the ministry.

4. Focus on right now! Busy people don't want detailed plans. They really want to know what they need to do now and maybe what is needed next.

5. Lead by influence. Show the workers how you want everyone to act.

6. Mostly, love and pray for each member and the children you serve. Ask God to motivate your team. Remember, a happy team is the best way to grow the ministry and energize its members. *KH*

A man wearing a dark suit and a light-colored fedora hat is sitting on a wooden bench, viewed from behind. He is looking out over a body of water towards a distant shoreline with buildings. The scene is captured in a soft, slightly desaturated color palette. The text 'learning to love george' is overlaid on the image in a mix of sans-serif and cursive fonts.

learning to
love george

WHEN GOD CALLS THE HEART

by michelle s. cox
WHENGODCALLSTHEHEART.COM



WHEN GOD IMPRESSED ON MY HEART, *I want you to love George and tell him how to find Me, I*

immediately thought, *Can't someone*

else do it?

God replied, "Why not you?"

I knew He had me there. George was wealthy, but his caustic tongue drove people away. I grumbled, but finally said, "Okay, Lord, if that's what You want, I'll try. But this is going to be tough."

I'd first met George when I took over the top slot in a community organization. He was about 70 at the time. Being around him was *not* a pleasure. I'd never before met anyone who took such joy in being rude, and he couldn't stand Christians. I dreaded working with him.

Over the next months, our paths crossed frequently. I learned his wife had a terminal illness, so I began calling him. "George, how's your wife? Just wanted you to know I'm praying for her and for you."

Time passed and his wife's condition deteriorated. I called George again. "What can I do to help?"

I knew God had already started His work in George's heart when I heard him say, "Just pray for her." And I knew God had already started His work in *my* hard heart when tears plopped onto my cheeks because I knew George was hurting.

He was pitiful after his wife's death. I checked on him frequently. Then after I couldn't reach him for

a few weeks, I learned he'd moved into a nursing home.

I went to visit the following day. Over the next few months, George and I shared many hours just talking, and I realized something. Behind the grumpy exterior lurked a lonely old man who needed somebody to love him.

God burdened my heart for George, and I prayed fervently asking God to soften his hard heart. I enlisted one of my pastors and a friend, Larry, to visit George. All of us talked to him about God.

A few days later, George called me, "I have cancer and I don't have long." I was devastated. George was running out of time — and he wasn't ready to meet God in eternity.

I visited him later that day. I pulled a chair beside his hospital bed and just sat and held his hand. Tears dripped

down my cheeks, "George, won't you accept God before it's too late?"

"Maybe later," he responded.

I watched George steadily lose ground. On the last day that he was able to speak, Larry visited him. He sang that old song about how beautiful heaven must be. There were tears in George's eyes, and before he left that day, Larry had the privilege of praying with George as that dear old man accepted God's gift of heaven.

Two days later, George's life clock ran out of time. I'm grateful for the lesson in love God gave me. You see, I thought I was going to touch George's life. Instead, he was the one who touched mine.

SH

*Excerpted from *When God Calls the Heart to Love* by Brian Bird and Michelle Cox. Used with permission from BroadStreet Publishing Group.



by *sandra dalton-smith*
WWW.ICHOOSEMYBESTLIFE.COM



finding work-life peace

THE MORE DOORS GOD OPENS IN MY LIFE for ministry and leadership, the greater my understanding of Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians 16:9:

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (KJV).

As leaders, our peace is constantly under attack. Busy schedules and family obligations daily vie for our attention. Rest becomes an afterthought, and our time *with* God is sacrificed for doing more work *for* God. It takes courage to set healthy personal boundaries. It takes strength to have a plan for ongoing self-care.

For years I have fought to find work-life balance. Little did I know, I was fighting a losing battle. To balance work and life would mean I would have

to place my career on one side of the scale and my family on the opposite side. The only way for there to be balance would be for me to divide myself between the two, half-heartedly giving of myself in my work and in my relationships. This is not God's best. This is how families get torn apart. This is how gifted people get burned out. This is not life more abundantly.

Work and life cannot be balanced, but rather they should exist in harmony with each other, integrated in a way that allows each to mature and blossom to its fullest potential. They should create a beautiful melody in your life. They should echo God's grace and stand as a testimony of God's mercy. Work and life cannot be balanced, but they can be at peace with one another.

Our work for God is more satisfying and joyful when done in a state of inner peace. Resist the temptation to be a victim to your momentary reac-

tions to everyday ups and downs. Pull away during those times you feel overwhelmed and incorporate a few of these simple life hacks. They will enable you to return to a place of peace.

- 1. Practice Peace in Motion** — Walking is a great way to get rid of the tension you build up each day. As little as 30 minutes of moderately paced aerobic exercise will improve blood flow all over your body and give you an emotional boost from the endorphins released. You will instantly feel a sense of peacefulness as your body cools down from the exertion and as your muscles release.
- 2. Blend Up a Peaceful Concoction** — Does going to the beach or the pool make you want a frozen beverage like a virgin daiquiri or piña colada? The psychological connections between water and peace are wonderful. You can enjoy the relaxing feeling of sipping on a frozen blended drink on any stressful day. I suggest the following healthy versions below, full of ingredients which have been shown to increase a peaceful mood.
- 3. Focus on the Peacemaker** — Whatever you focus on in life becomes the gateway through which your perspective originates. If you focus on your battles, you will become discouraged and filled with hopelessness. But if you choose to focus instead on the One who fights for you, you will find yourself feeling strengthened and empowered.

- 4. Make Peace with Yourself** — While you may fear criticisms from others, your harshest critic may be the one staring back at you in the mirror. Nothing disrupts inner peace like internal negative self-talk, so pay attention to your thought patterns, and notice when your inner critic rears up. Be quick to practice self-compassion and allow yourself the same grace you extend to others.
- 5. Pray Peace-filled Scriptures** — Prayer can be difficult when God seems far away and you cannot feel His presence. When you don't know what to pray, pray God's Word. Praying the Scriptures is a powerful way to transform your prayer life. Below is a sample prayer using four peace-filled Scripture references.

A Prayer for Peace:

Father, I thank You for Your peace You've given me. Do not let my heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. In this world I will have problems, but I will never be without hope because You have overcome the world. You will keep me in perfect peace while my mind is stayed on You, because I trust in You. So, I will be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let my requests be made known to You. I gratefully receive Your peace which surpasses all understanding and know it will guard my heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Amen. (See John 14:27, Isaiah 26:3, John 16:33, Philippians 4:6-7.) LH

Peace Colada Smoothie (serves 1)

- 1 1/4 cups fresh pineapple chunks
- 1/4 cup light coconut milk
- 1/4 cup sweetened flaked coconut
- 1/2 tablespoon honey
- 1/2 cup ice cubes

Blend until smooth and enjoy.

Berry Peaceful Chiller (serves 2)

- 2 1/4 cups frozen berries
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 large lemon or lime, squeezed
- 1 fresh banana

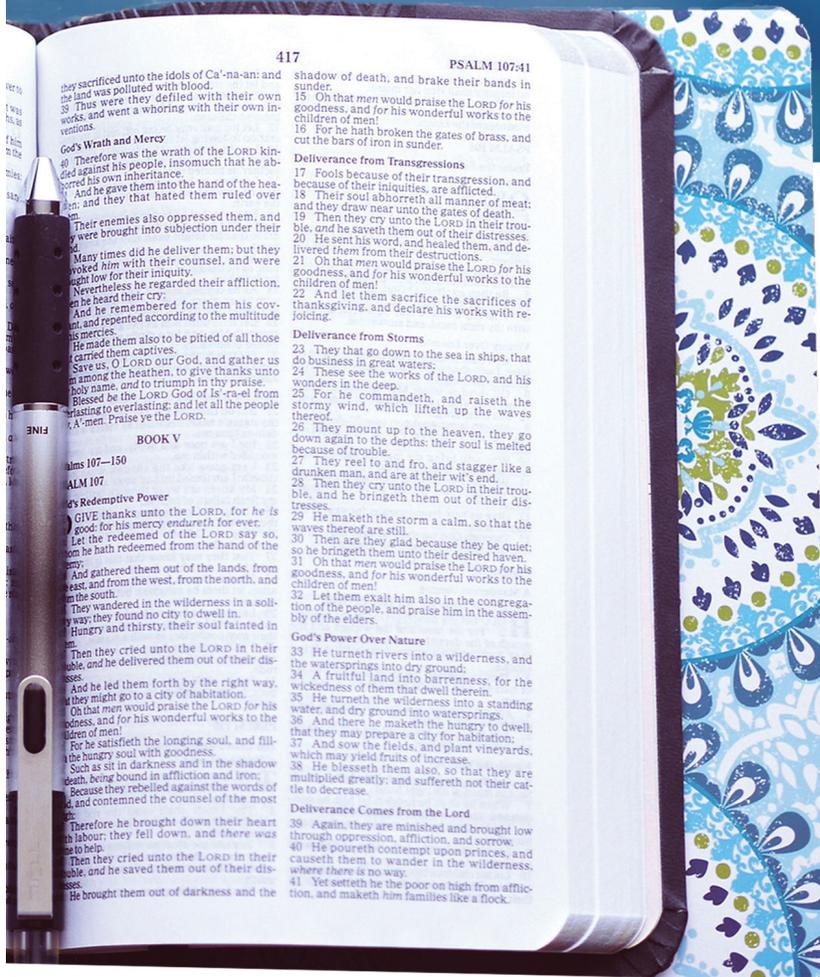
Blend until smooth and share.



"Arise, Shine...

the glory of the LORD
rises upon you."

-Isaiah 60:1 (niv)



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no prayer is too small



“STOP! YOU CAN’T PRAY THAT!” A YOUNG WOMAN ORDERED.

She had just expressed her extreme fear of snakes as we walked through a wooded area.

I had responded by bowing my head and praying, “Dear Lord, please protect us from snakes. May they not harm us, bite us or be seen by us. I pray this in the name of Jesus.”

After being shushed by Ellie’s command, I turned to her. “Stop my prayer? Why?”

“God is too busy for such an unimportant thing.”

“But our fears are not unimportant to Him.”

“Prayers like that are not praying in His will.”

My jaw fell open. “You think God wants snakes to bite us?”

“What I mean is, it’s not His will for us to pray about such small things.”

“How do you know that?” I asked.

Ellie couldn’t answer, because my friend believed a myth: *God can’t be bothered and will even refuse to answer us if we ask for small things.*

My experience with God is so very different from Ellie’s. My prayer life is so personal, so precious and often, so inconsequential to all the important things happening in the world.

But I know that the God of the universe stands outside of time, longing for me to include Him in even the inconsequential moments and needs of my life. True, He’s God of the whole universe, but a loving God who has the time and desire to make small talk with me.

That is amazing. And it’s in line with Scripture: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God”* (Philippians 4: 6).

If you want to sharpen up your prayer life, here are seven secrets you need to know:

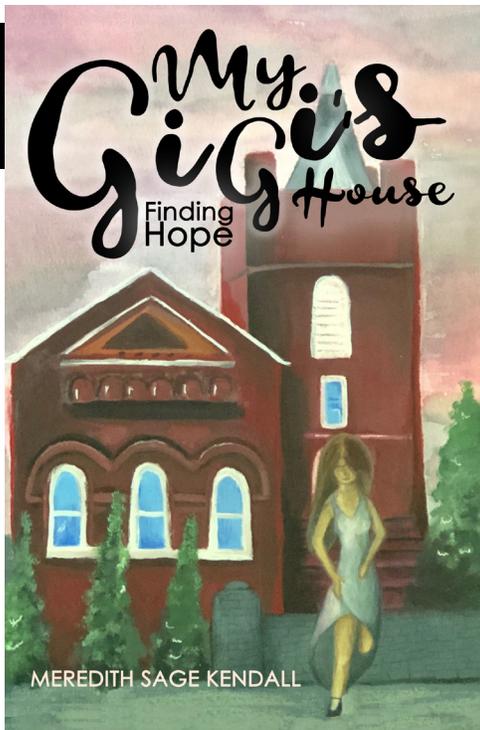
1. *God wants you to enjoy a personal relationship with Him.*
2. *Approach God on the small matters.*
3. *God loves you and has time to listen.*
4. *God will answer; in His time and in His way.*
5. *The more you bring the little things to God, the more you will build your relationship with Him.*
6. *As God answers your prayers about the little things, the more you will understand that He really does care for you.*
7. *The more you practice prayers about small things, the more faith you will have to pray about the big things.*

Dear Lord,

Teach me how to bring You the small things in my life, so that I can enjoy a deeper relationship with You. In Jesus’ name, Amen. LH



BOOKSTOREAD

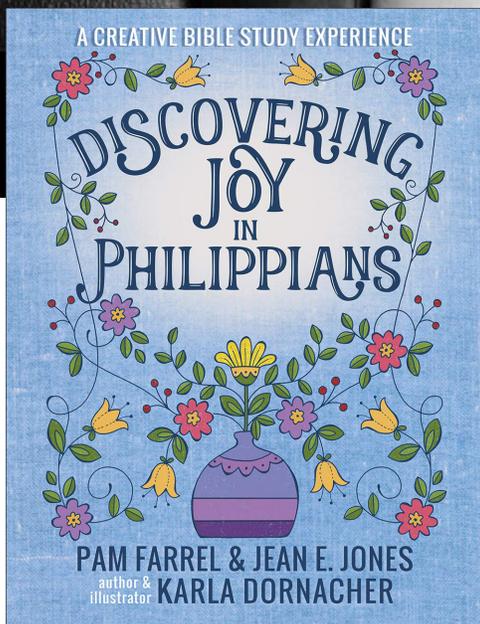


MY GIGI'S HOUSE: FINDING HOPE by Meredith Sage Kendall

My GiGi's House by Meredith Sage Kendall is the only book I've ever read in one sitting, and I felt every emotion. From the very beginning, I was hooked. As the story progressed, I saw myself and so much of what I had gone through after having an abortion.

This book is so full of hope and love it made me realize that I was continuing to allow my past regrets to control my future. I have never taken control back of my life until just now. I always thought I had screwed my life up too bad to ever be "fixed" or truly loved.

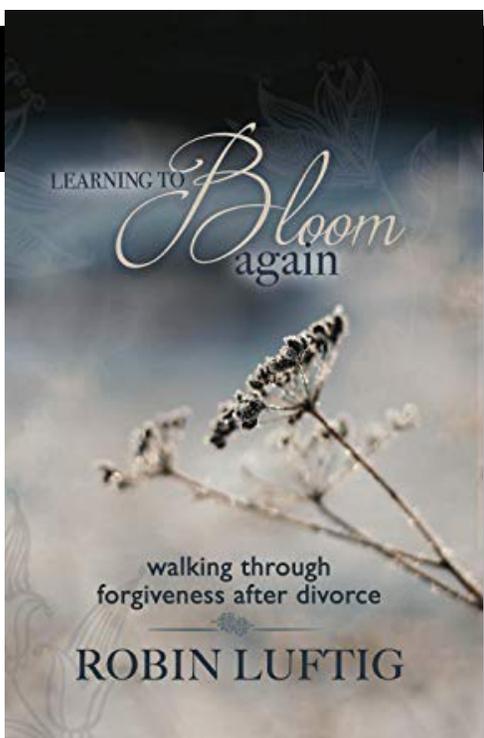
The message of *My GiGi's House* helped me realize God truly is the only One who can give me everything I need to heal and move forward. —Anonymous Reviewer



DISCOVERING JOY IN PHILIPPIANS

by Pam Farrel, Jean E. Jones, Karla Dornacher

Wow, you're not going to want to miss this one! Pam Farrel, Jean E. Jones and artist Karla Dornacher are taking us on the best kind of Bible study joy ride in *Discovering Joy in Philippians*. Practical, blessing-filled devotionals that pack a deep and scriptural happy-punch, paired with fun, creative activities that help bring those principles to life in our hearts. Strap yourself in — we're talking about a joyously wild ride right here! —*Rhonda Rhea, TV personality, author of Messy to Meaningful and Turtles in the Road*



LEARNING TO BLOOM AGAIN

by Robin Luftig

Learning to Bloom Again: Walking Through Forgiveness After Divorce is an Amazon re-release of author Robin Luftig's personal journey of divorce and the journey of walking through healing to finding freedom in forgiveness.

"This story is not an easy read. It's brutally honest and transparent about the reality of pain and brokenness. But as you take this journey with her, one thing is unmistakable — the love, mercy and companionship of Christ."

—*Sheila Walsh, inspirational speaker and author, In the Middle of the Mess*

by heather van allen
LH STAFF REVIEWER



MUSICREVIEWS



SARAH KROGER *Bloom*

Worship leader and songwriter Sarah Kroger has released *Bloom* (April 26, 2019), her debut album, through Integrity Music.

Bloom sets a calm pace for the duration of the 13 tracks. Mellow and full of worshipful moments, Sarah's slightly breathy, wispy vocals deliver each song like prayers set to music. Her voice finds its greatest strength when it escalates during the climactic moments of tracks such as "Wildflower," "Pieces" (featuring Audrey Assad), "Overcome" and the live version of "When I See You."

"My heart comes alive when I'm leading worship," Sarah says. "It's my hope that this collection of songs will lead people to an encounter with God, whether they're in their car or at work or a church event or even at their lowest place and need something that will bring a moment of respite and peace."

If you ever like to take time to put on some music and just lie still and relax while soaking up the beauty of the melodies playing, *Bloom* is a great choice for that. With this album, you can take a break from the demands of your day and just be present with God.



NASHVILLE LIFE MUSIC

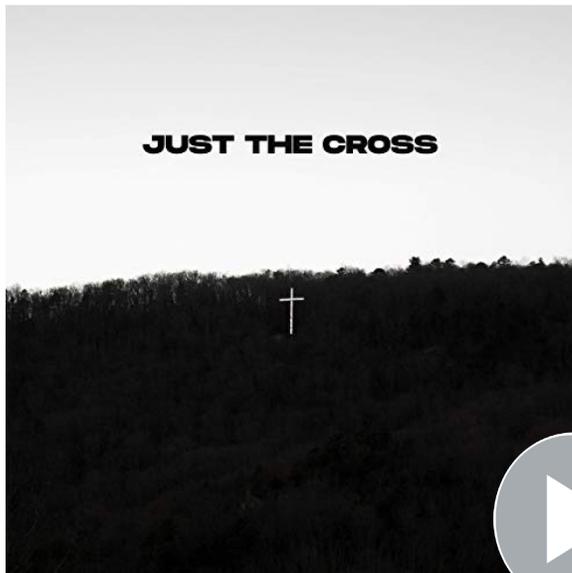
Taylor House Sessions

Nashville Life Music, of Nashville Life Church (led by senior pastors Alvin Love and CeCe Winans Love), has released a six-track EP, through Integrity Music, titled *Taylor House Sessions*, named for the studio where they recorded the EP. Nashville Life Music is a diverse group of musicians, including outreach director Alvin Love III (son of Alvin and CeCe), worship director Dwan Hill and others strongly involved in the church.

What began as around-the-piano singing sessions in the living room has evolved into something that has been in-

fluencing and reaching their church and will now reach a broader audience with the hope-filled message of Jesus.

You won't want to sit still during *Taylor House Sessions*. This isn't just toe-tapping music; this is up-on-your-feet, whole-body-moving, clap-along, raise-your-hands praise music. These energetic artists know how to celebrate the amazing goodness of God and inspire others to want to join in.



INFLUENCERS

Just the Cross

Influencers, of Influencers Church (Atlanta and Australia), has released *Just the Cross* (May 17, 2019), a 13-track collection of live recordings put together over the course of two years. They come out of worship experiences in both Haiti and the United States.

Just the Cross carries the type of authenticity, from start to finish, that draws listeners to freely lift their hearts in worship to God. Vocally, musically and lyrically, each song deeply engages and focuses attention in all the ways effective worship music should. For most of the al-

bum, a certain sound familiarity threads from one track to the next, which is comforting. "Believe Again," on the other hand, is a particularly stand-out moment, as musically, and especially vocally, it is more distinctive than the rest of the recording.

These 13 tracks, from this group whose heart is simply to serve those they come across, would be worth adding to your collection.



in step—two, three, four
with Jesus



I'M NOT ONE TO DANCE LIKE NOBODY'S WATCHING.

Mostly because I don't want to watch it either.

But I do sing loud. And big.

Sometimes with motions. So

while I might not necessarily dance like no one is watching, I have been known to sing like I'm vacuuming.

A couple of months ago, I did accidentally bust a few new moves, but it was because a bug flew into my hair. That was some sweet choreography. Embarrassing, sure. I didn't even know I had those moves. A couple of my kids saw it, as a matter of fact. And then they begged me to put those moves away and never pull them out again. It was worth the bug in the hair just for that.

I heard it was Charles Baudelaire who said, "Dancing is poetry with arms and legs." He obviously never saw my moves. Either that or he was super bad at poetry. So hold on, Charles. Sorry, but this could be one more little proof that we can't believe everything we hear.

When it comes to walking out this life in faith, we can't believe everything we hear there either. Those who don't follow Christ will tell you that if you do all your stepping just so — if you have just the right look, the right family, the right houses and cars and things; if you have all the right moves in all the right places — then your life will be a graceful dance. They'll tell you that when you know the right people and can say the right words in the right way, that's when life will be good.

Sadly, you don't have to try the world's way for very long before figuring out that those moves make up a dance that's everything awkward. It ends not just in embarrassment, but in emptiness.

Relying on things and power and self to make us happy will always end in that vacuum. With no singing.

How do we find the remedy for that emptiness, in the most graceful, spin-and-swing-and-whirl-of-joy way? Not in our culture. Not on our own. It begins in His Word.

Make my steps steady through Your promise;
don't let any sin dominate me.
Psalm 119:133, HCSB

Our choice here? Let evil govern our steps. Or let the Lord. "Through Your promise" means "by Your Word." And the indication in the original language is that the Psalmist isn't actually talking about our own sinful nature here, though that's a battle we never take lightly. Instead, this refers to sinful influence. He's asking for deliverance from the dominance of evil people.

All too often in life's dance we take our cues from others who would love nothing more than to lead us off in some wrong direction. In that same Psalm, we read:

I have kept my feet from every evil path
to follow Your word.
Psalm 119:101, HCSB

It means literally "I hold back my feet." Hold on, feet. Do the right thing. We have to give the Word of God a place of prominence and let it lead us in how we think and act and live — every step.

As we do, oh what a difference!

Abundant peace belongs to those who love Your
instruction; nothing makes them stumble.
Psalm 119:165, HCSB

It's the difference between peacefully and gracefully moving through a day and stumbling embarrassingly out of control.

Poetry in motion. Or plummeting in an awkward commotion. Because seriously, some moves are never meant to be busted.

RR



by cindi mcmenamin
WWW.STRENGTHFORTHE SOUL.COM

finding your quiet place
during a season of weariness



I REMEMBER WAKING UP ONE MORNING AND THINKING I DON'T FEEL LIKE FACING THIS DAY.

I didn't feel like doing anything on my to-do list. I didn't feel like getting out of bed.

I was exhausted from a busy schedule, tired of all the noise and in need of a quiet retreat.

I dragged myself to the Psalms that morning because I had nowhere else to go. In those songs of Scripture, I sensed the heartbreak, the happiness, the frustration, the elation and the desperation of those songwriters — all human beings who felt many of the same emotions I did.

In those songs of Scripture, I sensed the heartbreak, the happiness, the frustration, the elation and the desperation of those songwriters — all human beings who felt many of the same emotions I did.

And there in Scripture's songs I discovered a pattern. Throughout the 150 Psalms, the phrase "I will" was sung 140 times. And that told me that despite the way the songwriters *felt*, there were certain things they were determined to *do*. And I realized that there were, as well, certain things I needed to say "I will" about, whether I felt like it or not. One of those "I wills" has stuck with me through the years: "I *will* not forget your word" (Psalm 119:16, CSB).

As I poured through the Word of God that morning, letting its words penetrate my soul, I found I was refreshed and renewed. I experienced what the Psalmist did when he wrote Psalm 119:25: "Give me life through your word" (CSB).

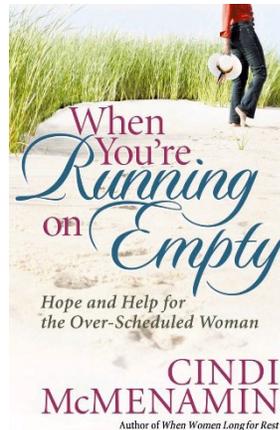
On those days when I don't feel like facing all that I have to do, I now turn to God's Word first. There I find not only refreshment and renewal to get me through the day, but a place of quiet retreat, too. In Psalm 32:7, God is called our "hiding place."

Do you need a place of quiet retreat? A "hiding place" to which you can go and be renewed and refreshed?

Then make Him and His Word your place of quiet retreat — that tower of refuge to which you can run, that shelter in which you can hide.

Hide away with Him and His Word. Listen to what He has to say to you in the pages of His Book. You'll be refreshed, renewed and reminded of the One who's been waiting to get away with you.

God, draw me daily to the strong tower of Your Word where I can find refuge, the green pastures of Your Word where You can feed my soul and the spacious places in Your Word where I can find rest. Thank You that Your Word is my quiet retreat and the place where I can be renewed. JH



Cindi McMenemy is an award-winning writer and speaker who helps women strengthen their relationship with God and others. She is author of 17 books including *When Women Long for Rest*, *When You're Running on Empty* and *Drama Free: Finding Peace When Emotions Overwhelm You*.

For more on her books and resources to strengthen your soul, marriage and parenting, or for more information on her coaching services to help you write the book on your heart, see her website: www.StrengthForTheSoul.com.

Join the conversation at www.arisedaily.com. Do you have a place of refuge and renewal?



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columns

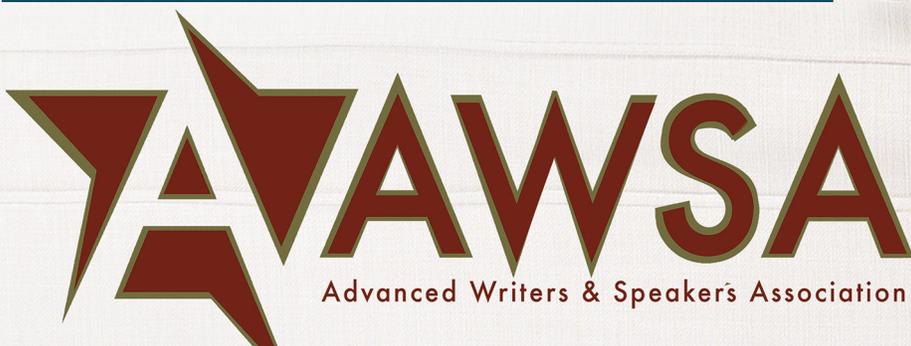
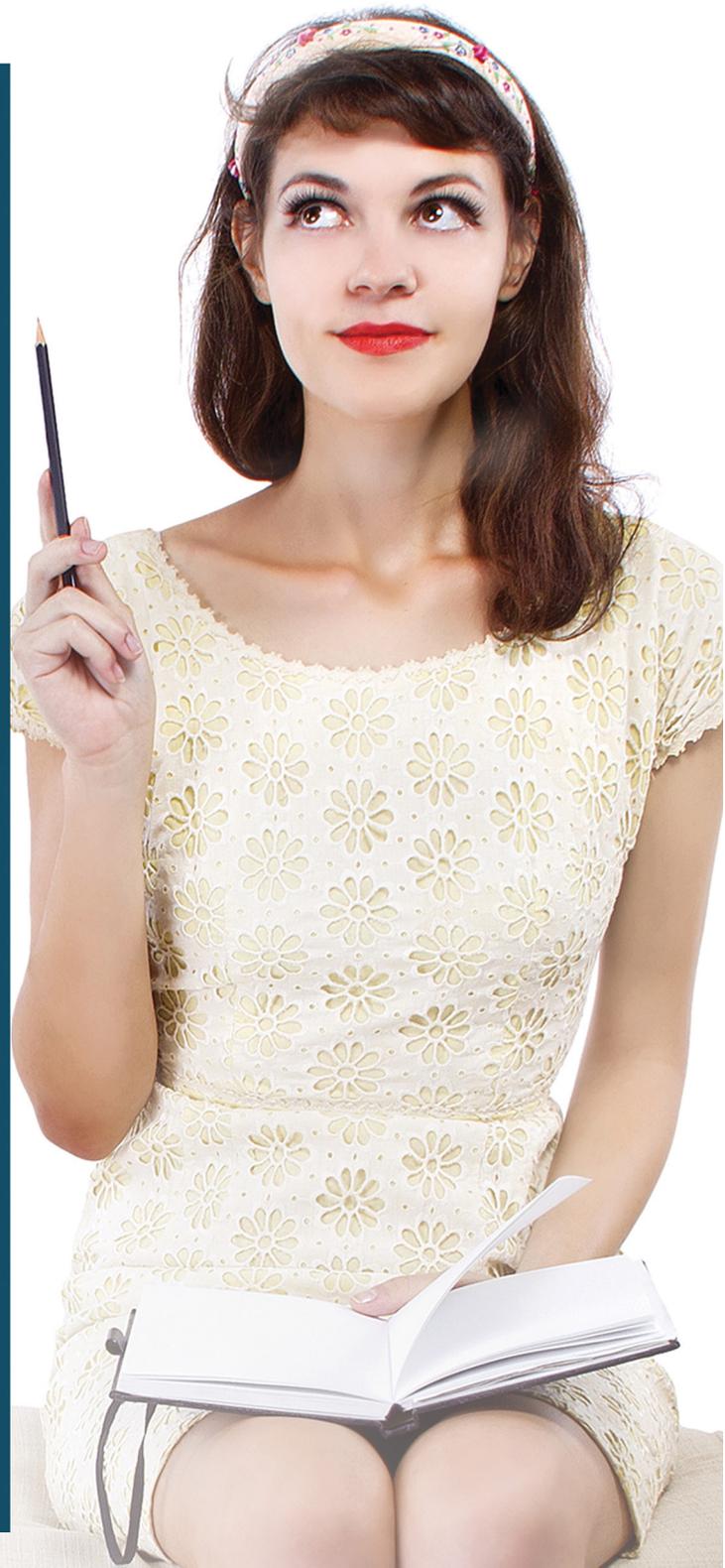
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