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WHOA WOMEN



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HOW TO HEAL FROM THE PAIN OF DIVORCE

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you can be a mother AND a lover

A spring-themed meal every Mom will love

THE JOYS OF SEX

It's not just for procreation

MISS KAY ROBERTSON

Ladies of *Duck Dynasty* speak their minds on sex, motherhood and much, much more



Spring 2016



INSPIRE *and* ENCOURAGE

Notes from our readers

My favorite magazine.

—Antonia Oliver

Just got it yesterday! A warm cup of tea and some quiet time!

—Teresa Villeda

I just got my first issue and love it!

—Nancy Gilmore

I like this magazine. Got it for a year!

—Dianna Longoria

I still have the copy with my testimony in it. I was so thrilled to have the opportunity to share it with so many others.

—Tammy McCardle

Great issue! Very inspiring articles, especially Jenny L. Cote's!

—Scents of the Spirit



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IN THIS ISSUE:



SHARE YOUR STORY

18 LIFE BEYOND DIVORCE
After 10 years of healing, she's whole again
by Julie Castro

22 CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC
It took guilt, courage and faith to overcome the power of plastic
by Karmen Smith

26 SHATTERPROOF
As troubles mount, look within for your God-given strength
by Wanda J. Scott

28 A FRIENDSHIP LOST
How '5 more minutes' undermined the best intentions
by Jenee Day

MIND

34 ENRICH YOUR CHILDREN
5 ways moms can instill financial independence
by Camille Gaines

36 MAKE YOUR LOVE LIFE SIZZLE
A satisfying relationship requires commitment and imagination
by Lynetta Jordan

38 BE BEAUTIFUL, BE YOURSELF
Forget society's pressures and celebrate your unique gift
by Dr. Catherine Hart Weber

40 RELATIONSHIP REVIVAL
Enjoy a healthy marriage even after baby arrives
by Joneal Kirby



BODY



46 FAMILY HOME AND TRADITIONS
What we can learn from mom
by Roxanne Hughes Packham and Hannah Packham

56 AN UNNATURAL STATE
Protect yourself from the toxins and chemicals that surround you
by Kim Alexis

58 FASHION IN FULL BLOOM
Add color for an easy update to your wardrobe
by Elizabeth Bergman

62 SPRING PRODUCTS
Look great, feel great, smell great
by Elizabeth Ortega

64 IN HONOR OF MOM
A spring meal for women who do it all
by Debbie Greenhill

SOUL & SPIRIT

70 BRONNER BRINGS HOPE
The new book by Sherri Burgess shows God's plan for healing
by Laine Lawson Craft

72 WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
Catching up with singers Deborah Allen and Lorraine Jordan
by Chuck Dauphin

74 LAUGH AND LOVE
For a long-lasting marriage, make fun a priority
by Dodie Osteen

78 CELEBRATING SINGLE MOMS
Going it alone, these strong women create lasting legacies
by Tammy Daughtry

80 THE WHY'S OF SEX
In God's plan, it's not just about procreation
by Marilyn Scott

82 SEX: GOD'S DESIGN FOR US
His plan encourages not only reproduction by marital bliss
by Lisa Bevere

84 THE JOYS OF SUB-MISSION
Marriages flourish when spouses put each other first
by Kathleen Cooke

86 SAVE THE CHILDREN
Prayer and perseverance can lead lost souls back to God, family
by Debra George

90 LIVE IN D-E-S-I-R-E
How single Christian women can deal with sexual desires
by Crystal McDowell

92 HEAL YOUR WOUNDED SOUL
God's power transforms past hurts into future hopes
by Joyce Meyer

94 2 HANDS, 2 HEARTS, 1 POWERFUL GOD
How to create a beautiful marriage that will stay that way forever
by La-Tan Roland Murphy

96 DANCING WITH A STAR
A child's cry slowed things down for a moment to cherish
by Kerri Pomarolli

98 LIVING IN RHYTHM
Is your pace too fast? 'Get away with me'
by Colleen Rouse

100 THE AFFAIR THAT REALLY WASN'T
David's treatment of Bathsheba was an abuse of power
by Leslie Vernick

102 SEX, SILENCE AND SHAME
It's time to acknowledge mistakes and learn from honest discussion
by Shea Wood

104 WHAT SEX MEANS TO SELF-ESTEEM
An unhealthy perspective can distort your view of life
by Susan Milligan

106 MAMAS, DON'T PLAY
Our children's spiritual health is well worth the fight
by Cheryl Lane

108 TRAVELS WITH MOM: A TRIP TO REMEMBER
One simple question led to an unforgettable journey
by Tammy Turnage

112 SOLVING THE INTIMACY EQUATION
How to make your relationships flourish
by Laine Lawson Craft

letter from the publisher



Dear WHOAwomen,

Why is it so hard to talk about sex when it's mixed with faith? Why are we so reserved when it comes to talking about being a better mother and building more traditions for our children?

That is why we love our spring edition each year. It's our opportunity to talk candidly about sex and motherhood. By honestly sharing successes and failures, our contributing writers will make both areas of our lives more meaningful and rewarding.

In this Livin' Lively with Laine Spring 2016 edition, my favorite woman of God, Dodie Osteen, shares on her successful marriage to John Osteen for more than 44 years before he went to be with the Lord.

You'll also find other amazing articles that will inspire, guide and teach: dealing with sexual desires as a single woman; enduring loss and finding hope in it; building a great marriage after becoming new parents; creating a healthy sex life in the marriage bed, and so much more.

I can't say enough about what the *Duck Dynasty* women mean to me. I treasure any time I get to spend with the lovely subjects of this edition's cover story. I have never been around more successful women who tell it like it is with love. They are passionate about using their wide-ranging life experiences to find healing and success, and I know you will learn from their incredible insight.

I was so excited to see the new Livin' Lively with Laine logo on the cover! This launch of Livin' Lively with Laine has been in the works for quite some time. We were just waiting on God to lead us on when to make this name change. As we continue to expand, we hope that we all will learn how to live lively in every area of our lives and be better equipped to influence others with this new passion and knowledge.

If you or your organization needs a speaker for an upcoming event, please contact me. I will be glad to share my personal story of hope, one that shows how you can have resurrection from the dead places in life and end up with the bounty that God always planned for you.

I know you will enjoy this powerful edition of Livin' Lively with Laine. Please let us know your thoughts and comments, and connect with us through our social media. We also want to hear your story, so email it to us today.

Enjoy the fresh winds of spring and the longer, warmer days. I pray that you will be blessed and that you will stay connected to us. Be a part of this growing community women who love one another and celebrate all that life has for them.

*Livin' Lively with Love,
Laine*

Laine Lawson Craft

LAINE LAWSON CRAFT
publisher & editor-in-chief



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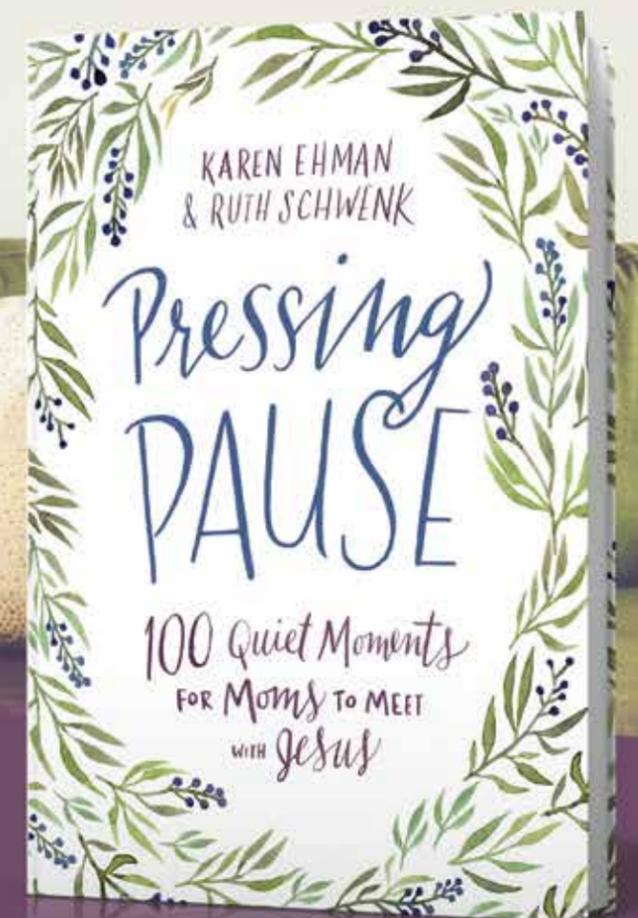
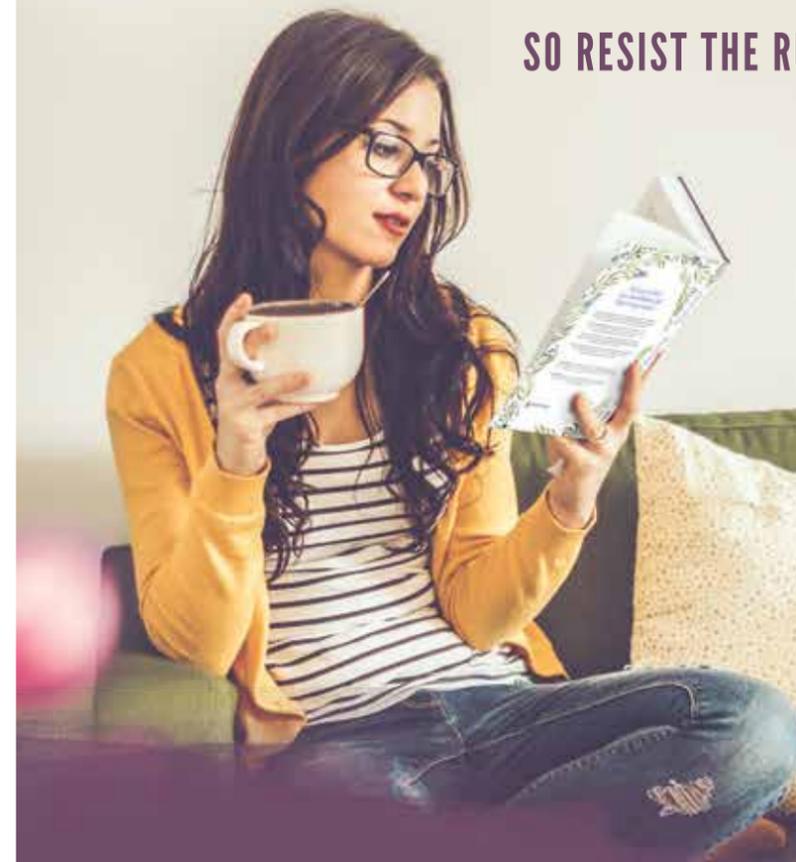
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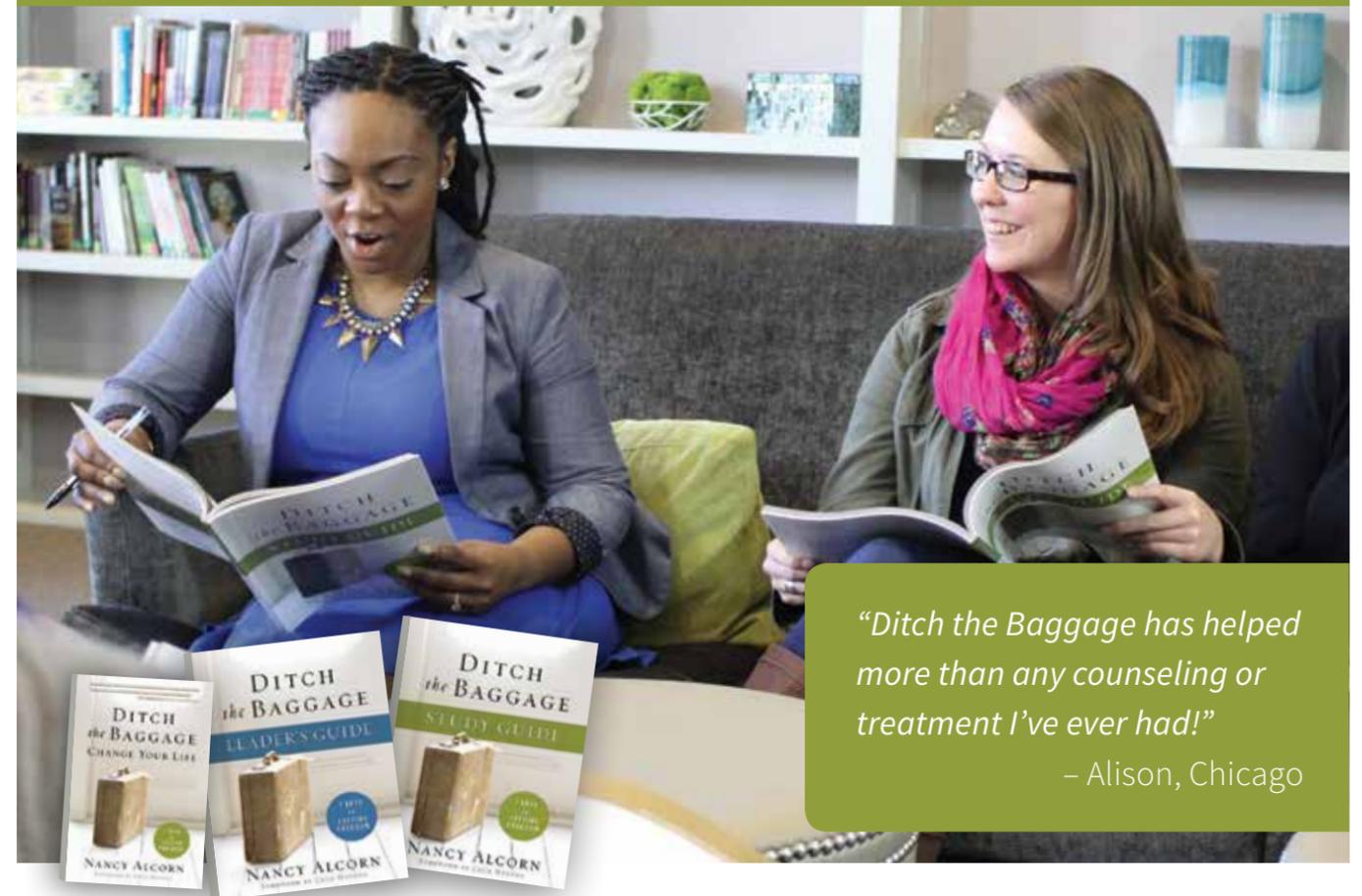
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Real. Open. HONEST

The women of *Duck Dynasty* don't mince words when it comes to sex, marriage and motherhood

BY LAINE LAWSON CRAFT

We are so excited to feature our favorite ladies of *Duck Dynasty* again. I was able to spend intimate pockets of time with them over a few days, and it was so beautiful. They love the Lord but also are passionate about sharing their lives—the good, the bad and the ugly—so that others can learn and grow closer to God's love. We shared on mothering tips, sex and so much more.

On my first day, I was able to sit with Miss Kay, the matriarch of the family, and Lisa, Alan Robertson's wife, at Lisa's home in West Monroe, Louisiana. We laughed and shared on the tough times we live in today and the many issues in front of us.

We first shared on marriage and sex. Miss Kay talked about a tumultuous 10-year stretch in her marriage with Phil. He was a very difficult man to stay with, but Miss Kay was not going to give up on their marriage.

"I never wavered with my vow to him for life with God between Phil and I. It was a heart covenant," Miss Kay said. This commitment to marriage and family has impacted every generation of the Robertson family.

Then we started discussing healthy sex in marriage and the problems with sex today. Lisa jumped right in and said, "The world and media have sensationalized sex. God didn't intend it that way."

She continued with a challenge for her generation. "We as older believers have to say sex was designed for marriage. You can really not have sex before marriage—and yes, not having sex before marriage is obtainable." Purity is definitely something we all need to talk about more. Lisa continued, "God set an ideal way to be in the Bible: one man, one woman for life with no sexual relations until you are married. God didn't set this standard to be a mean God; just the opposite. God was protecting us so there would be no disease, unwanted babies, no comparison and no guilt. God set it that way and it is obtainable. He wouldn't ask it if it wasn't. You have to set your mind at an early age to remain pure. Virginity is a gift—something you can't give twice."

We then discussed all the ways people try to justify having sex outside of marriage. Miss Kay agreed when Lisa said, "Kids



believe the lies: You need to know if you are sexually compatible before marriage; living together saves money before we can afford to marry; and if you love me you will have sex. You don't have to have sex before marriage. That's just an excuse because your wedding night can be your first time to have sex."

Lisa shared that her uncle abused her for seven years. Sex can mess a person up for life. "Sexual abuse—it becomes your value," Lisa said. "That's what you can offer and leaves you looking for love that you didn't receive."

What blew me away was that she was able to forgive her uncle and move forward. That is where her healing became whole. "My uncle doesn't even remember abusing

me," she noted, "because he was high most of the time during those years."

Her testimony gives all of us hope that one can find healing after sexual molestation and abuse. God has really blessed Lisa. She and Alan have the most amazing marriage now, and they have just released *The Duck Commander Devotional for Couples*, a must-read.

Lisa and Miss Kay had some great insights on how couples can have better sex. Miss Kay shared that even she and Phil still desire one another. She laughed and said, "We may not have sex as often but it is still so intimate. We snuggle and hold one another so much more now."

Lisa said couples need to know more about sex and to be honest with

one another. "Every married couple needs to explore one another's body and find out what you like and don't like," she explained. "Just explore, because just because you see it on television or read about it one way doesn't mean that you too will like it. Also, some women now have no idea what an orgasm is. That tells me that the husband is not doing his job. He needs to know how God made her and what ticks for her to sexually satisfy her."

"The only way you find out is by experimenting. This way you can decide that you may not like this or you might like it in another season. Another thing: Oral sex is not wrong. God didn't say that. But if it grosses you out, then don't do it but continue to search on other

ways to please one another. Keep experimenting in your marriage sexually. People don't realize how important it is to explore."

We then shifted our focus to how to be a better mother and a better parent today. I loved what Miss Kay had to say: "For everything we did right, we did several things wrong along the way."

So we talked about the things that we could do to make us all better mothers. First and foremost, you must live in honesty and truth. Miss Kay said, "I wouldn't take a million dollars for not living in the truth with my kids. ... Lying is never pretty."

"As a child," she continued, "I would sometimes dramatize the truth and then I might have been

a pretty little liar, but lying is never right or pretty. As parents we must own up to our mistakes and help our kids so that they don't repeat our mistakes."

Second, to be a better parent you really need a personal relationship with Christ. If He is the first in your life, all of the other parts of life trickle down from Him. It makes parenting and life so much easier.

Third, save time for your husband. So many times after working all day, dealing with kids and the busyness of life, we just don't have the energy left for our mate. But try really hard to love your husband and give him time so that he feels needed and wanted. Marriage and being a good parent is so difficult, but with a few of these tweaks and

adjustments, life can be so much more blessed.

As our conversation expanded on parenting kids today, we discussed the fight over good versus evil for our children today. How in the world can we help our children have more success in life? Miss Kay offered some great tips.

"First, know where your kids are hanging out," she said. "In my time I thought I knew everybody and today we really need to know who the parents are and what kind of places are our kids hanging out."

Lisa said, "Find out who their friends are and their parents are; know who they are hanging out with."

"Where are your kids? Who are they with? Know these answers not



to control your children but because you love them,” Miss Kay said. “My grandmother told me a long time ago I see so many people worried about their things that’s nothing compared to souls. ... You can replace things but if you don’t give enough time to the entrusted souls you have been given, you can’t replace that. So put the time into your souls that you are raising.”

Lisa added, “We try to give our kids too many things and we try to buy them things so that they are not in our hair. We just give kids too much stuff and let them think it brings them happiness, but it does not.”

As we finished our time together, we were so thankful that God had touched each of us in our lives. Both Lisa and Miss Kay have had many trials and tribulations to overcome in life—sexual abuse, infidelity and so much more. But they both know that God healed them and gave them blessings beyond their own imaginations. Now they are passionate to pay this forward.

They are transparent with their own struggles so that others can find hope in their stories. Whether it is to have a successful marriage, become a more effective parent or to just find a better way to live life than what the world offers, they are always there to share the hope and love of God to all they encounter.

It is the next day and early in the morning I caught up with Missy Robertson just before she led an incredible worship for the Heartfelt



Ministries Conference. Missy is an amazing woman of God.

She is so strong and such a great representative of Christ. I could not wait to interview her because Lisa and Miss Kay said that Missy was the perfect example of how you can be a virgin when you get married. So, I went right into the interview with these questions on virginity.

Missy married Jase Robertson when she was 19 and he was six days from 21. Missy said right away, “The enemy lies to us that a virgin is impossible to find but Jase and I both were virgins. It was very difficult. I am not going to lie. It was hard so we had to be strategic in seeing each other or not at certain points.”

She shared that she had just discussed this matter with her son the night before we met for the interview. “I told Reed this last night. He’s just newly engaged and they have been dating a long time. I thought it’s so good Brighton (his fiancée) went back to college right

now because one of the biggest lies and the biggest ways the enemy can get you” is to make you think that now that you’re engaged, it’s like you’re married.

So she encouraged him to stay strong and pure before the wedding day.

I asked her what made her want to stay a virgin. How did she know the importance of purity?

Missy answered, “I can remember as I was growing up not to have sex before marriage. I was taught at church and being raised in a Christian home I was taught to do this because of God. I wanted to keep myself pure because I had high expectations for my husband—not that he was going to be a millionaire or anything like that, but I had a lot of self-respect.

“I didn’t want to give myself away and I knew what I wanted. Today I want to instill in (daughter) Mia, and I hope all girls, that they have so much value. God made

them valuable and you don’t have to get from the world or boys.”

“My dad played a big role in my life and spent a lot of time with me by helping me with homework, etc. I didn’t look for that attention anywhere else. So when Mia was little, Jase would take her out and spend time with her so that she too would have this time with her dad.”

I asked Missy, “What was sex like after you had stayed a virgin so long and saving yourself for marriage?”

She answered, “Do you know Jase and I saw a sex scene just the other day on a movie and we laughed. It was nothing like that. We said, ‘Where is the towel?’ Sex is wonderful glorious and great. Jase is the only one I had sex with and I am the only woman Jase has had sex with, too. We figured sex out physically together. We didn’t even have sex on our honeymoon because it was too complicated. I was dejected and I was so scared, but Jase was so patient. We had the rest of our lives to figure this sex life out and it finally happened.

“I will say we have had a pretty regular sex life through it all—C-sections and surgeries, of course, you take time off—but in 25 years we have been pretty active. I think the magic of our sex and our strong relationship is because of Jase. Jase compliments me all the time. It’s funny. After about 20 years, I looked at him after he told me ‘You are hot’ and I rolled my eyes, but he said, ‘If you would just believe me, I think you are the most beautiful woman

in the world. I wish you would just believe me.’

“Now after hearing him compliment me after 20 years, you know what is crazy? I told Jase, ‘I really think you believe that I am hot and so if you do I am awesome with it!’ ”

She continued: “The best thing I have learned in ministry is purity can be found at any time of your life. Jase and I have such a heart and mindset for ministry. We had people in our home sharing Jesus right after we got back from our honeymoon. At first I was a little uncomfortable and I felt inadequate to relate to them, but Jase encouraged me.

“I learned to listen, and I realized so many people didn’t have it as easy I did with the Christian background and great parents. They are searching and have so many holes that they try to fill them and look to so many ways to fill them with sex etc. But God! Then they learn about the love of Christ and are made brand new in Him.

“My friend is a perfect example: She was baptized, had three failed marriages, three kids from three different men with one not even her husband, but she declared she was a virgin in Christ and she is doing wonderful.”

As we were finishing our time with Missy, Korie and Sadie came and we sat down. We briefly caught up and tried to touch on both generations. Sadie was laughing as her mom and I talked about sex and such, but Sadie had some awesome

thoughts.

Sadie is 18 years old and she is dating a sweet guy. I asked Sadie, “Why do you think so many young women are so eager to give away their purity?”

Sadie answered, “I think because if you don’t know God and you don’t have a relationship with Him, then why not? Everywhere and everybody is talking about sex—every song is singing about it, every television show is doing it in front of you, and so there is a pressure there. If everybody is doing it then why can’t I do it?”

“But if you know God, then you don’t want to do it. God doesn’t want you to have sex outside of marriage and it’s not Him being mean. But having sex before marriage doesn’t really work out too good for you.”

The allure of temporary happiness, she said, creates pressure and concern that “he won’t like me if I don’t have sex with him. But if he really is that ‘guy’ putting pressure





on you, you shouldn't be dating that guy."

Korie jumped in and said, "The Robertson family isn't too quiet about sex." We all laughed and agreed. She explained, "I think your sex life is very important to marriage. It's something you need to work on and commit to. You also need to have fun in it and in your relationship so it comes more natural."

"Go golfing, go on dates, take time to write a little note and little surprises. It is very important in a relationship to keep it going on ... Have fun together!"

We quickly shifted to our last topic: being a good mom. With Sadie alongside Korie, it was great to see such a loving daughter-and-mother team. They genuinely have a beautiful relationship. I asked Korie if she could share some tips with us on how to be better moms.

First, she said, "I think it's about love, that unconditional love like God has for us. Kids will disappoint us but there is that unconditional love. Nothing will separate you from loving your kids. A lot of parents maybe feel that way but they don't say it. So tell

your kids how much you love them and show your kids what God love looks like."

Then she added: "Talk a lot with your kids and be totally honest even if it's not pretty. Teach your kids the lessons you made from mistakes so they don't have to repeat them."

Sadie said, "Isn't that great? Now I can be helped by them and they are transparent. Some parents want their kids to think they are perfect but then the kids can't come to them with what their problems may be. I am so

thankful my mom is relatable."

Korie closed the conversation by sharing her philosophy on kids. "We just always believed that realness, openness and honesty were the best way to help our children succeed," she said.

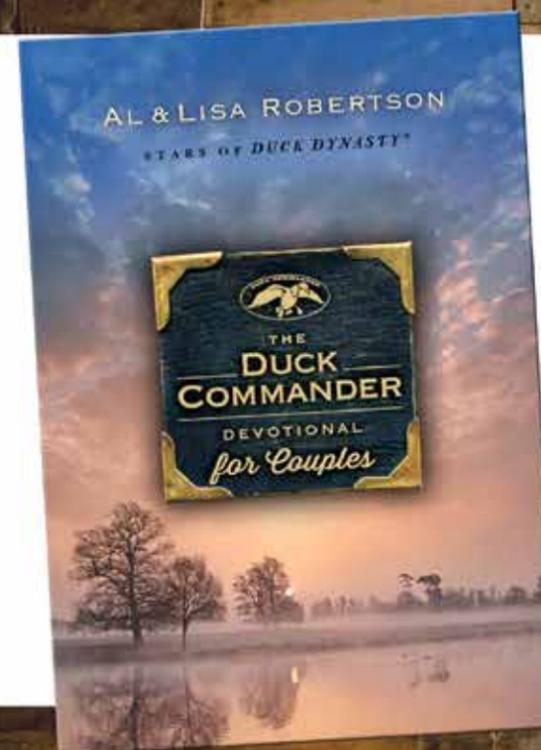
For Korie, Sadie, Lisa, Missy and Miss Kay that approach isn't just for dealing with children. In all they do, you can be sure they will be real, open and honest. It's the *Duck Dynasty* way. 🌸



SHARE YOUR STORY

These are first-person stories by women who have achieved a victory in their lives. If you have a story to share, please send it to share@WHOAwomen.com and it could appear in an upcoming edition.

Write Your Own Love Story



*When couples do things together,
good things can happen.
But when God is added to the mix,
the possibilities are endless.*

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Devotional for Couples at
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LIFE BEYOND DIVORCE

AFTER 10 YEARS OF HEALING, SHE'S WHOLE AGAIN

By Julie Castro

I didn't listen to the counsel that family and friends gave me about marrying the man I chose to be my husband. I lived with the consequence of a bad decision for 12 years before God released me from the marriage.

There were plenty of good times, but they were outweighed by the bad. The marriage broke down because of spiritual, emotional, cultural and familial conditions. Not one to look at the past, I move forward and share my experiences of restoration, healing and life after divorce.

Having been awarded full custody of our son, I did not ask for child support or any financial assistance. It was a clean break and allowed us to move to a new city and begin the restoration process in new surroundings. The physical restoration of a new home, job and school was easy to get accustomed to; my son settled into school and made new friends. I worked and was home in the evening to be with him.

Our home life was now different; there was no more yelling, defending myself against the verbal abuse and addictions in the home. It was peaceful and quiet, and my son and I lived in harmony.

Healing took place in my son quickly. God brought solid men into his life to mentor, educate and guide him into the man he is today. I spoke Scripture to reinforce life's lessons and give him understanding of what he was experiencing and what he could look forward to, as he matured and started living his life outside of "mom."

Busy raising my son for the six years after the divorce, I never thought about the restoration that was needed in my life. In fact, I didn't even know that the hurts of a bad marriage were being masked; I needed to be strong for

the family unit during the marriage and after it dissolved. A few years after the divorce, I could begin to admit that I was verbally abused. It's not that I was in denial. I just chose to keep moving forward, looking to the future God had for me.

I had a good job, we lived in a nice house and we even had some disposable income, allowing opportunities for some outside activities. It wasn't until I lost my job that we had to cut the amenities. My son learned a valuable lesson about money and why God gives it to us. In fact, the job loss was the catalyst for tithing, as I had never given the full 10 percent before.

My son didn't understand it, but I knew that if I was faithful to Jesus, He would be faithful to me. And He proved His faithfulness. I tithed my way to a new position, which paid 20K less than the job I lost; a lower house payment due to a lower interest rate; and a new level of trusting God to meet all our needs.

It wasn't until I was instructed to write a book that God started to address the past hurts. I started to write and God started the inner healing process. It was a process that I didn't even know I needed until I was already in it for a few months. I had suppressed the hurts of the verbal abuse from my ex-husband, but as God brought people into my life, I began to heal. The more I shared my testimony, the more I cried. The more I cried, the more I healed.

And when the healing process was over, God started to do a "new thing" in me. It was the understanding of my One, True Husband—Jesus. I began to understand the Song of Solomon when I read the book *Song of the Bride* by Jeanne Guyon. I had experienced every aspect the author wrote about. I came into a deeper relationship



“AND WHEN THE HEALING PROCESS WAS OVER, THEN GOD STARTED TO DO A ‘NEW THING’ IN ME. IT WAS THE UNDERSTANDING OF MY ONE, TRUE HUSBAND—JESUS.”

and understanding of who He is to me and how He has everything predestined and ordained, if I will walk in His will, not mine. I began to understand *Proverbs 3:5*: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.” (NASB)

I also began to understand what was happening in my life. I have come to a place of walking it out, and when a door opens, I go through it. I can knock, but if it doesn’t open up, I keep moving forward toward the destiny in which I have been called.

Arriving at the place of complete trust in Him allows me to walk in the fullness of my calling. I made a mistake of marrying the wrong man, but *Romans 8:28* says: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (NASB)

Shortly after the divorce, I came to realize that a spiritual release needed to take place between both parties. I had released my ex-husband from the marriage, but he had not released me. I had forgiven him during and after the marriage, but I had never told him. Many years later I acknowledged a text he sent me asking for forgiveness; replying to the text, I wrote that I forgave him and he needed to move on with his life.

I didn’t understand it at the time, but in the natural, I was released from the marriage through the divorce decree, but he had not released me spiritually. I continued to receive texts, but never opened or acknowledged them, as the enemy could use a response as a way to give hope of restoring the marriage. And there wasn’t any hope.

I moved on with my life in the natural and the spiritual. Recently, almost 10 years after the divorce, I

received a text from my ex, but this one I opened instead of deleting. This text said something different and I responded with the words “move on with your life, I have.” I haven’t received a follow-up text, so I believe the marriage is finally over spiritually and both our lives can now move forward.

As humans, we believe we know when the process we are in is finished. But God is omniscient, all knowing, and over a year after I thought the healing process was finished, a song triggered memories that led to tears and my complete healing. After a healing process of close to 10 years from start to finish—divorce decree to final memories—God has made me whole again.

The process is finished. That chapter of my life is closed and a “new thing” is beginning. Doors are opening up and I walk through them. There is life after divorce in the natural and spiritual, but God needs to be the center of it. Without Him, we have no life.

... “For in him we live and move and have our being.” ... *Acts 17:28* (NIV) 🌸



JULIE CASTRO
Julie resurrected Fiesta Publishing, the company her mother co-founded over 20 years ago in order to publish the book she wrote, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, a Personal Allegory. It was the catalyst for her call to ministry, a call she didn’t know existed until a few years ago. Obedience to God’s instruction to write the book opened the door for Julie to assist with the women’s ministry at her local church where she was responsible for minor tasks; this led to her current position as the women’s ministry director. Her faithfulness with the small things then opened doors to minister at local churches, pray for the Body of Christ and serve other ministries. Being unconventional in her walk with Jesus, Julie does not limit how the Lord wants to use her and the messages she shares. She passionately pursues Jesus and her relentless fire for the Holy Word of God is leading her toward her destiny.

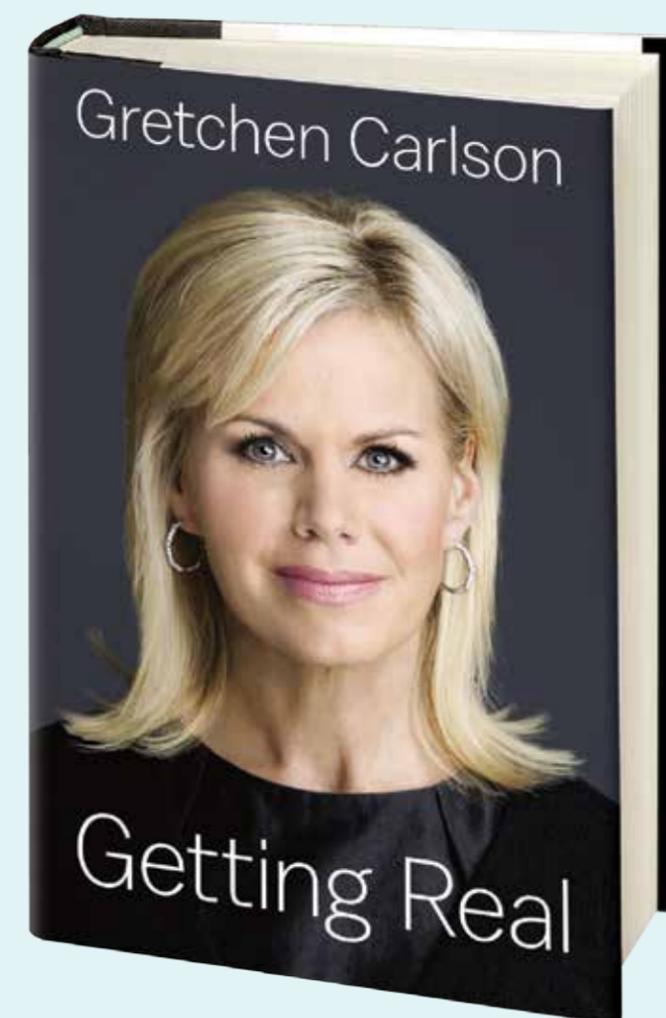
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CONFESSIONS OF A SHOPAHOLIC

IT TOOK GUILT, COURAGE AND FAITH TO BREAK FREE FROM THE POWER OF PLASTIC

By Karmen Smith

When asked what sound comes to mind when they think of a shopaholic, most people would probably answer “cha-ching.” But they would be wrong. The real sound that surrounds shopaholics, or at least this shopaholic, is silence.

As a young wife to my beloved Cowboy Dan, with no children and having just landed my dream job, I loved buying pretty things. This obsession with “stuff” began in 1999 and lasted nearly a decade. Buying clothes, shoes, accessories and knick-knacks for my home became my favorite pastime, and I was good at it. It was nothing for me to drop a \$100 on a dress or a pair of shoes. My standards were high, so only the best would do.

Eventually, the mall and my favorite boutiques couldn't contain me. I began shopping online and over the phone almost daily and at all hours, spewing the digits of my credit card number from memory as if they were my birthday or my mother's phone number.

Just as quickly as boxes were delivered to the door, they were unpacked and my new items would slip in with the laundry or décor, or be tucked away in a cabinet somewhere that Cowboy Dan didn't frequent. I didn't want to explain and he never asked.

The credit card statements came each month, tucked between catalogs that screamed for me to shop their pages. We were robbing Peter to pay Paul, and my teacher's salary never quite covered all that I managed to charge.

Still, Cowboy Dan and I never spoke about the mess I was putting us in. I felt the occasional twinge of guilt and halfheartedly asked my Sunday school class to pray that I would be less greedy. But mostly I looked forward to the next time I could get my hands on brand new, sparkly anything.

One December, the Christmas lights twinkled and

the festive window displays greeted my friends and me as we embarked on our yuletide girls' night out. Sales and incentives lured me as I walked into one store after another, collecting my parcels and packages as if they were trophies. While a few items were masked under the guise of Christmas gifts, most were, as always, for myself.

This trip ended differently than so many others. This time, after I said goodbye to my friends and walked to my car, the weight of guilt was much heavier than the weight of the shopping bags. As I drove home, I began to feel sick as the packages mocked me from the backseat.

I was not aware at the time, but this twinge, this pulling on my heart after keeping up my disastrous charade for so long, would be the beginning of the road to recovery from a very real addiction.

Guilt took the shape of tears when I arrived home that night, and I wept for hours. When Cowboy Dan came home, I somehow found the strength to confess.

“I have lied to you,” I told him. “I have stolen from what we have built. I have a shopping addiction and we are in a mess.”

Would he scream? Become irate? Walk away? I wasn't prepared for his reaction.

He wrapped his arms around me. He enveloped me in his Christ-like love and forgiveness.

I suddenly began to feel a shift in my heart. I was ready to break the bondage of plastic. I was ready for a change only He could bring.

That night, Cowboy Dan and I spoke more candidly about our finances than ever before. We developed a plan to leave my addiction to shopping behind us and embrace a healthy financial situation. We closed all credit cards and sought help from wise counsel. We vowed to spend less, be honest and give back.

This process wasn't easy, and my habits certainly

CHILDREN EVERYWHERE DESERVE TO SMILE, LAUGH AND PLAY...

and our desire is to make more happy faces like this one.

We just want to share Christ and love people where they are—even if that means holding a carnival to encourage struggling families or feeding kids after school.



Joyce Meyer Ministries is a nonprofit organization called to share Christ and love people all around the world. Each year, Joyce shares the message of hope with millions through her *Enjoying Everyday Life*® TV and radio programs, conferences, books and resources, teaching people how to apply biblical truth to every aspect of their lives.

Through our missions arm, *Hand of Hope*, we provide global humanitarian aid; feed the hungry; clothe those in need; minister to the elderly, widows and orphans; visit prisoners; and help as many hurting people as we possibly can.

Want to see more smiles like this one?

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didn't change overnight, but each time I faltered, instead of being sent on a guilt trip, I continued traveling on my grace trip.

We chipped away at our debt and evaluated everything we thought was "necessary" and "nonessential." I worked full time and cleaned houses on the side while Cowboy Dan worked as hard as he could so that our family could undo the damage done by my shopping addiction.

These days, Cowboy Dan and I, along with our two sons, lead a life that isn't measured by stuff. Our blessings, the things that truly matter, are abundant. I am so grateful I am finally in a place where I can recognize the importance of these things that cannot be bought in a store. We choose to fill our life with experiences, time with God and time with each other.

It is Christ who has set me free from the grip of greed. I now sing His praises knowing that His forgiveness and grace, and His hand equipping my husband with those

same qualities, is what has delivered us from the bondage of plastic.

God says in *Psalm 50:15*, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me."

By calling on Him, breaking my silence and seeking forgiveness, I was delivered and have been granted a whole new outlook on "stuff."

What could He deliver you from if you just called on Him? 🌸



KARMEN SMITH
 Blessingsbeyondthebarnyard.com
 A storyteller in love with the Truth, Karmen is a speaker and author pursuing all God has for her life and encouraging other women to do the same. Her new book, *When You Pray Big Things Happen*, is a 6-week prayer journal that encourages readers to allow God to lead them into times of prayer. The wife of a cowboy, she is a former public school teacher now homeschooling her child. She and her family are living life to the fullest on a farm in Alabama.

SIGNS YOU MAY BE A SHOPAHOLIC

- Feeling a rush or excitement after a purchase
- Shopping whether or not there is a need
- Spending beyond your financial means
- Hiding your purchases
- Experiencing guilt after a purchase
- Feeling depressed or frustrated when you can't shop

Compulsive shopping can be caused by many emotional and situational reasons. While there are no concrete treatment plans like other behavioral disorders, recovery is possible with the help of family and friends you trust, a pastor or a licensed counselor.

STEPS TO COMBAT COMPULSIVE SHOPPING

- Step away from that environment and begin a new task
- Establish a "thinking period" to decide if you really want the item you're considering purchasing
- Use cash only with a strict monthly budget
- Confide in an accountability partner

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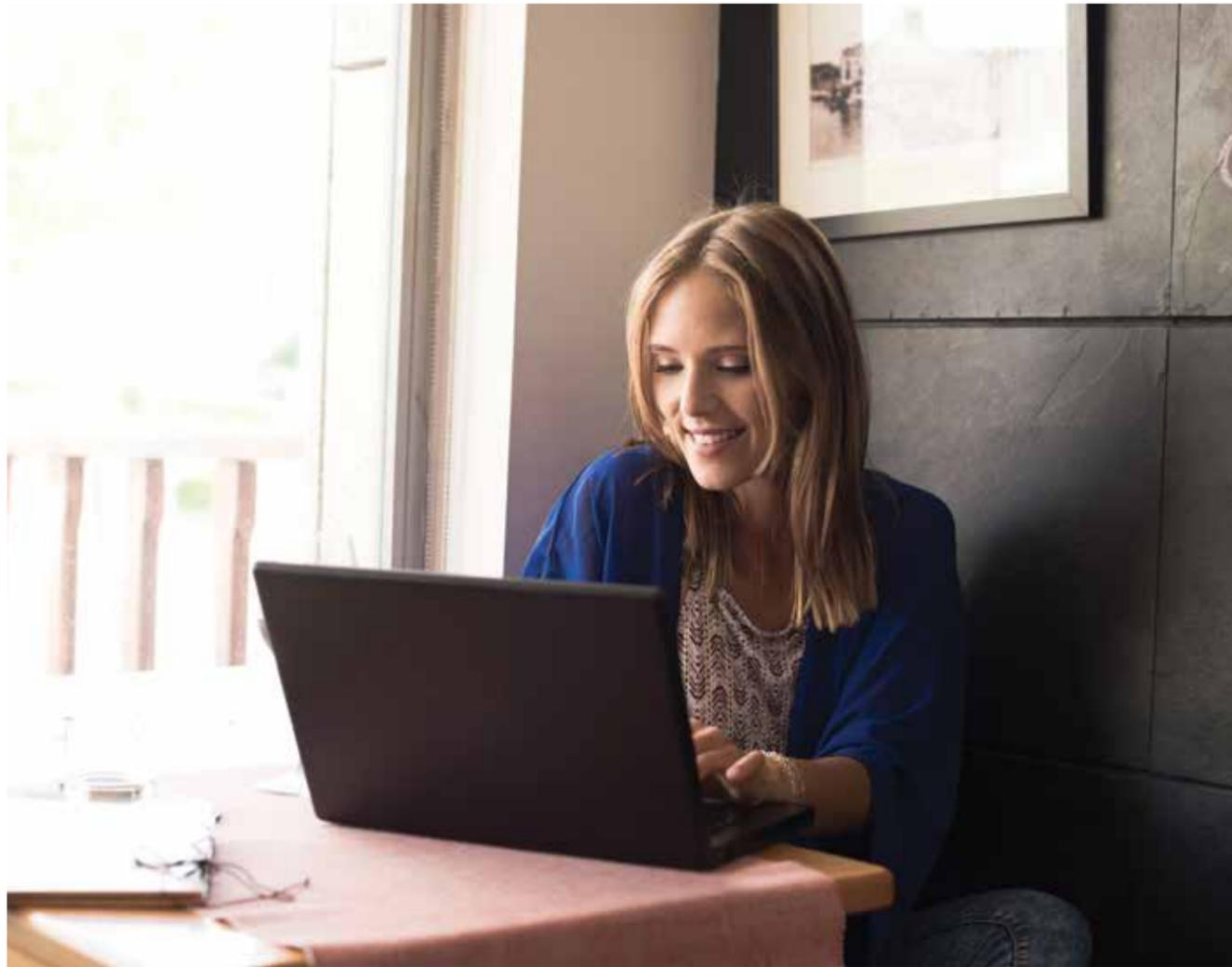


Dawn Pulgine, President Getting Real Ministries | Mia Robertson, Missy Robertson's daughter | Chrissy Cymbala Toledo, Author, Speaker | CONCERT BY: Nicole C. Mullen, Recording Artist | WORSHIP BY: Bridgette Hammers, Worship Leader



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BECOMING SHATTERPROOF

AS TROUBLES MOUNT, LOOK WITHIN FOR YOUR GOD-GIVEN STRENGTH

By Wanda J. Scott

2009 had ended on a high note. I had received a promotion at work from part time to full time. My book, *Poems From The Heart of Grandma Ruth*, was printed and sent out to all the family and friends. We had celebrated a beautiful Christmas. The New Year lay in front of us as a blank page, a new chapter of life waiting to be written. Life was good.

Just as we were settling into the new year, the

volcano erupted. I came down with a sinus infection that stopped me in my tracks. Because of the stimulus program, the reduction in my withholding tax left us with a huge tax bill. I also received a hospital bill that the insurance hadn't taken care of.

In March my brother, who appeared to be in good health and had just passed his physical to drive trucks for another year, died of a heart attack at the age of 59.

I knew it was not God's will for him to die that young.

The lava of the enemy was consuming my strength, my finances, my health and my emotions. It appeared that everything Jesus had purchased for me on the cross was being whipped away. The door was open for the enemy to take me at will. What started out as gray area had suddenly slipped into darkness. When my life became so entangled in this maze of attacks, I became fragmented.

I began to doubt God's calling on my life. Was I really supposed to write and teach? Were the words I received from the Lord for me now or were they history? Had I gone beyond the timing of those words?

Romans 11:29 says: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He does not take them back even when I neglect to use them." *2 Peter 1:10* says to give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never fall.

I was trapped in a holding pattern where there was no forward or backward. It was a place of nothingness.

Life can throw us plenty of curveballs; we are blindsided by everyday life and derailed by the cares of this world. We look back on the "should've, could've and would've" in our lives and wish we had done things differently. That time is gone, as my GPS says. I must recalculate and re-evaluate my course of action.

The bottom line: I was failing God because I knew my ministry calling and I was not fulfilling it.

I knew it was time to focus on bringing order in the midst of chaos, to restore order to my spiritual life and to move on with what the Lord had called me to do. In my prayer time the Lord said, "Look within and let the clamor of the world fall where it may." When I started to focus within and not on what was going on around me, my world changed.

Over the years in Bible studies, I had many Scriptures thrown at me for every situation that someone thought I should be able to handle. The most popular one was *Philippians 4:13*: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me." The Amplified Bible says "who infuses inner strength into me."

This is God's helium. It enables me to fly high

above the battles. As long as I continually allow Christ to infuse me with that inner strength, it won't matter how many holes the devil tries to punch in my balloon. I will still be able to stand strong.

This verse doesn't mean my strength will last 24 hours a day as everyone tugs and pulls me in 100 different directions. It means I have strength for the things that God has designed for me to do.

When I try to fulfill this verse in my own strength and wisdom, God is crowded out by the things of the world, and I deflate.

The battles are still raging and the enemy is always ready to take me down. These battles have no warning signs; they cannot be seen. The devil doesn't knock on my door and say, "I'm coming to your house today so get prepared." I must be prepared at all times. My only defense is prayer, fasting, worship and the Word.

In order to become Shatterproof, I must trust in God's wisdom, not my own. I must believe He is who He says He is. I must believe He will do what He says He will do. There are two things I must remember: "I am the only one who can change me and I am the only person I can change. And where I am going is much more important than where I've been." 🌸



WANDA SCOTT

Wanda is a Christian author and speaker whose ministry focuses on helping abused women find healing through Jesus Christ. She also ministers to the wives, daughters, mothers and sisters of military personnel through a free Pamper Yourself Spa Day. She and her husband enjoy spending time with their blended family of five sons, a daughter, 14 grandchildren and two great-granddaughters. Her book, *From*

There To Here Prayer Diary, was published in 2014. Her first novel, *Follow Your Dreams*, and a children's book, *Jerry's Special Day*, are in her agent's hands, awaiting response from the publishers.

A FRIENDSHIP LOST

HOW '5 MORE MINUTES' UNDERMINED THE BEST INTENTIONS

By Jenee Day

When I was younger, I was not a morning person. My family often teased me about my “5 more minutes” in the morning. I would sleep until the last possible instant and rush to get ready for school, which sometimes caused me to miss out on a spectacular Southern breakfast of eggs, grits, biscuits, milk, orange juice, bacon—the works.

I was always upset when I missed breakfast, but the next morning, without fail, I was back to old habits. “Please, just 5 more minutes, I’m so sleepy.” Was the extra sleep worth missing out on breakfast? No. It never was.

As an adult and parent, I am now a morning person. I love waking up early and being productive. But I still struggle with the “5 more minutes” mentality in other areas of my life, particularly my walk as a Christian.

THE BIRTHDAY LIST

I met Miss LB on my 35th birthday. Instead of having a party or opening presents, I wanted to spend the day doing nice things for other people. Inspired by ideas I had seen on Pinterest, I had compiled a list of 35 acts of kindness that were affordable and logistically possible, since time was limited. I knew I might not get to all 35, but I wanted to do as many as I could in a day.

The list included things like purchasing someone’s coffee anonymously at Starbucks and taping coins to vending machines so that the finder would get a free treat—nothing earth-shattering, but carefully considered good deeds that would make each person smile and spread a little joy. Many items on the list were things I would enjoy myself.

The day was fun. We all know that giving feels better than receiving, but the accuracy of that statement is often minimized or not considered at all. It feels amazing to see other people’s faces light up because you took a few minutes to brighten their day. After completing just a handful of tasks, I felt high on life and full of joy and

gratitude. It was shaping up to be the best birthday ever.

One of final acts on my list was to take flowers to someone in a nursing home. Having grown up with my grandparents, I have a heart for the elderly. I also am acutely aware that our society does not value them as it should.

We happen to live near an assisted living home, so after buying some flowers and a card, we drove there. My husband waited in the car because I wanted to do this one myself. Walking in, I didn’t know what to expect. Would it be depressing? Would I see lots of drooling older people watching TV waiting to die?

What I found surprised me. I saw a clean, well-lit lobby that looked similar to that of a hotel and smelled like whatever delicious lunch was being served. All sorts of people were milling about. Some were watching TV, and some were dining and laughing together. Not depressing at all.

THE FIRST MEETING

My eyes immediately went to a small, white-haired lady on my right. She was dressed in a navy blue blazer and slacks, seated in a wheelchair, watching me intently and smiling. I smiled back. She pointed to the flowers and said, “Are those for me?”

“Well, of course they are!” I responded enthusiastically. I bent down to hug her and she hugged me back. I don’t know why I didn’t stay to talk, except that talking to strangers is not my forte, and I hadn’t quite rehearsed how this would go.

The other acts of kindness required minimal conversation, but this one required real human connection. That scared me. Still, when I left I felt happy. I had spent the day well and been rewarded emotionally for it.

As the days and weeks passed, I thought about Miss LB. I decided to see her again on Easter. I didn’t know her family situation—I still don’t—but I got the



She’s hurting, hopeless, heartbroken.

SHE NEEDS

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impression that she was alone a lot. This time, I would drive myself and stay with her to chat if I felt up to it.

Miss LB wasn't sitting by the door when I walked in, so I asked the receptionist where I might find her. The receptionist graciously guided me to Miss LB's "apartment," where I waited in the hall. Eventually I was led to the back, where the sweet lady I'd met a couple of months earlier was in her bed, watching some game show on her television.

I couldn't help but notice on the wall a huge oil painting of a grinning young serviceman, dressed in his Army uniform, brown hair combed neatly to the side. Her husband, I presumed, but didn't ask.

This was only my second visit and I didn't want to get too personal. The receptionist, who I realized by now was actually a nurse, was trying to coax Miss LB into joining the others for lunch.

Miss LB declined the food, but my company was welcomed, so I put the flowers on her nightstand. "These are for Easter," I told her. She told me she was glad to see me again. She had thought about me since that first brief meeting, and she so loved to receive flowers.

The receptionist-nurse was ever-present, though, and the pressure of a supervised "getting to know you" conversation was heavy. I didn't stay long but I was glad I had gone.

OPPORTUNITIES MISSED

In my daily life, I often contemplated the perceived randomness of life—why things work out the way they do. For instance, why it was Miss LB who was there on my birthday, who asked about the flowers and then collected them. I don't believe in coincidence; I believe in purpose. I was sure God had led me to Miss LB on purpose.

Days passed, then weeks, then months. Spring turned to summer and summer to fall, and I had not been back to see my new friend. I wondered how she was doing and even prayed for her, but didn't visit. I meant to. Honestly, I did. But my good intention was often followed closely by a good excuse: I'm tired. I don't have enough money for flowers today. I'm too busy.

As the holidays approached, I felt a real urging in my spirit to see Miss LB. "I need to go," I would tell my

husband, and then I'd fall right into my daily routine of driving past the assisted living home, promising myself sincerely that I would go as soon as I had time.

I knew that God was asking me to do this thing. There is a distinct feeling—a knowing—in one's heart and spirit when it's God who is speaking. As He persisted, I resisted, repeating the excuses that had appeased my own conscience a hundred times.

Christmas passed, and I thought about her. I considered whether she had family, whether she received any gifts or cards or hugs or flowers. I didn't go see her. New Year's went by, and I thought about her. Does she like to watch the ball drop on TV? I didn't go see her, absorbed instead in my own selfish "to do" list.

Today is Jan. 3, 2016. Today I finally had time. I decided to take my 6-year-old with me to run errands, and I thought it would be nice for him to meet Miss LB. We went to the store and he chose the flowers and signed the card. I drove to the assisted living community, mentally patting myself on the back for showing my son how to love others and be unselfish.

We walked in and asked a nurse whether we might see Miss LB. She paused but didn't say anything, so I repeated myself. "Miss LB? Her last name is _____, I believe. We just wanted to give her some flowers."

The nurse excused herself, made a phone call and then told me, "Miss LB is in hospice care. I'm so sorry."

Bam. A I felt like I had the wind knocked out of me, but knowing that my son was watching, I took a deep breath and asked where she was.

"We'll just go there and see her," I told him with a faint smile. The hospice facility was only a couple of miles away, so we went there and inquired about Miss LB. The orderly at the desk checked his book and led us to a nurses' station. He whispered, "Is Miss _____ up to having visitors? Is she still talking or anything?"

The nurse shook her head. Miss LB can't speak anymore, she told him. We would need to leave the flowers with her. I thanked them and then held my son's hand while we walked what felt like miles back to our car. While he asked questions, I fought back tears.

UNDERSTANDING OBEDIENCE

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In a sermon that spoke directly to my heart, our pastor once said that delayed obedience is disobedience. Do you understand, he said, that when God asks you to do something, He means right now? I never forgot those words, because so often I mean well. I want to obey but then I procrastinate.

When I finally do what God has asked, I congratulate myself when in reality God isn't happy with me at all. I haven't done what he's asked; I've been an insubordinate fool and likely missed out on untold blessings. God can use the willing, but we please him and grow spiritually only when we pair a willing heart with an obedient mind and spirit.

My heart aches today. Miss LB was a special lady. God gave me a rare opportunity to connect with someone, to bless her and have her bless me. Now I have to live with musings and daydreams of the conversations we'll never have. All because I assumed that tomorrow would be fine. All because I wanted 5 more minutes. It was absolutely, unquestionably not worth it.

- He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." *Luke 1:28*
- But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. *James 1:25*
- Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." *Luke 9:61-62*
- If you love me, you will keep my commandments. *John 14:15* 🌸



JENEE DAY

Jenee is a freelance Writer and stay-at-home mom in Georgia. She has written for various Christian publications, including *Devotion Magazine* and *Unselfish: Love Your Neighbor as Your Selfie* (available on Amazon). Her goal is to encourage others in their spiritual growth while cultivating her own relationship with Christ. Jenee can be reached by email at JeneeDay@yahoo.com.

MIND

34 EMPOWER YOUR CHILDREN WITH LESSONS OF FINANCE

"Financial empowerment fuels financial independence. With that independence, your daughters and sons can have that same nurturing home that you have provided."

36 GIVING COMES FIRST IN LOVING YOUR MATE

"When a woman thinks love is exclusively about what she wants, she often neglects to give her man the same attention and affection she desires."

38 WANT SATISFACTION? APPRECIATE YOUR BODY

"So developing a healthier body image and appreciation for your unique body and beauty is crucial for life satisfaction."

40 MOTHERING DOESN'T MEAN AN END TO YOUR SEXUALITY

"Some may think marital sexuality and mothering shouldn't be mixed. But if you look at this Biblically, they do pretty good side by side."

enRICH YOUR CHILDREN

5 ways moms can instill financial independence

By Camille Gaines

The gifts that mothers give their children are many. Mothers provide nurturing and love naturally, and they give the more tangible and obvious gifts of a loving home and nourishing food.

Yet there's another, often overlooked gift that lasts a lifetime, well beyond the time that children leave their nurturing childhood home. It's the gift of financial empowerment.

Financial empowerment fuels financial independence. With that independence, your daughters

of the question for a woman to even want financial independence. The popular TV show *Father Knows Best* demonstrates that prevailing belief. Even when Father didn't know best, which was often, everyone had to pretend as though he did.

The bra-burning days of the 1960s brought financial independence to light as a remote possibility, but it took decades to bring it to potential normalcy. You were alive during this time or, more likely, your mother was living this. If nothing else, in the past, women were taught not to be different, for fear of never attracting a man.

It's time for mothers to release lingering invalid and perhaps unconscious beliefs around money that could keep your children from living fully while embracing their financial prowess.

and sons can have that same nurturing home that you have provided, maybe even for life.

Frequently and unfortunately, finances are seen as boring and perceived as the man's domain. Financial wellness also is often bypassed in the busyness of running a home or generating an income.

The truth is, however, that if you have money, you have finances related to the care of that money. And even in the midst of the current political incorrectness of wanting wealth, is there anyone who truly doesn't want money?

The past provides valuable perspective, so let's take a short walk backward. In the 1950s, it was out

Different equated to strong. Strong equates to being financially independent.

You've seen the evolution since those days. Women as the less sophisticated family financier seems a bit crazy at a time when women have made their own way into the Forbes 400. The reality is that we take on our parents' mindset around issues, whether or not it's spoken, because it takes several generations to flush out dated paradigms that are carried down through parents and grandparents.

The unique capabilities of women as leaders and even moguls, I am glad to write, have finally made it to the clear light of day. It's time for mothers to release



"Treat your daughter as though she will be responsible for her own financial security."

lingering invalid and perhaps unconscious beliefs around money that could keep your children from living fully while embracing their financial prowess.

Here are five actions for mothers to promote financial empowerment to their children:

1. Look at your own deep-rooted beliefs around money. Discover the unspoken dogmas that prevailed and influenced the power around money in your childhood.
2. Declare your own beliefs around money and live from that declaration. Model good money habits.
3. Examine your role around money in your own home. Are you only a spender? Or are you the catalyst to track and grow net worth, or to call family meetings for establishing guidelines around your money?
4. Treat your daughter as though she will be responsible for her own financial security. After all, she will be, since this is an outcome of her choices and actions. Encourage her to always have a way to support her current standard of living, no matter what she does day to day.
5. Let both your sons and daughters know the

value in raising a child, and that this role as a full-time endeavor holds at least as much value as a career, if not more. Motherhood is the responsibility for lives beyond a mother's own, and that is no small calling.

For Mother's Day this year, give your children the gift of financial empowerment. This can be done regardless of who earns the money or what your career and skills are. It's simple: Be a part of tracking the money, that comes in and out of your accounts, and increasing the assets that you have.

As a free gift for *WHOAwomen* readers, you can get my Wealth Creation Launcher at <http://bit.ly/WHOAgift>. It will take you through action No. 1 on the list above in an enlightening and simple way. 🌸



CAMILLE GAINES

Camille, best-selling author and founder of *FinancialWoman.com*, motivates women to discern what they really want, and then gives them simple yet life-changing solutions to get it. Through her programs, she shares her proven process for helping women live a "rich life" while fulfilling important financial goals.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR LOVE LIFE

Sizzle

A SATISFYING RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES
COMMITMENT AND IMAGINATION

By Lynetta Jordan

"A Great Relationship Is Worth The Work" was one of the most popular messages on my *Spoken Words of Love* Christian radio broadcast. It certainly takes effort to make a relationship great, but have you considered that relationship building is not entirely our husband's responsibility? Selah—meditate on that. It is true.

If we are honest, we know that sexual satisfaction makes our overall marriage satisfaction soar, too. For us ladies to experience deeply satisfying spiritual love-making—not just monotonous and routine sex—we must dig deep, be refreshingly creative in the bedroom and possibly get our French tips dirty to make marriage sizzle.

Quite a few of us have an "it's all about me" philosophy about dating and marriage. We elevate getting the materialistic items we want as more important than giving the sexual fulfillment our husbands need.

If that's you, do you realize that you are limiting your opportunities for satisfaction?

When a woman thinks love is exclusively about what she wants, she often neglects to give her man the same attention and affection she desires. So let me reveal a secret: Giving precedes getting. Consistently sowing sweet love into your husband and focusing on fulfilling his sexual needs in unforgettable ways can lead you to reap overflowing returns.

In my book *Love Without The Drama*, I show women how to experience success in life and love as I teach and empower them to apply God's word to their everyday lives. You may have heard that the Bible is filled with wise words and vivid parables to instruct us in parenting, finances and godly living.

But did you know that within the treasure of its pages is golden wisdom for our romantic relationships as well? Yes, God cares about your marriage success. His wonderful Word affirms that women are a powerful force

in nurturing and improving marriages. Journey with me as I share the wisdom of *Proverbs 14:1* and introduce you to the Shulammitte lover in the book of Song of Solomon. You will be amazed to know you have power to make your marriage more fulfilling and sexually satisfying, too. "A wise woman builds her house, but a foolish one plucks it down with her own hands." *Proverbs 14:1*

Proverbs 14:1 informs women that we are more influential than we may think. Did you realize just how much your efforts and the loving—or unloving—environment you create impacts your relationship success? You can build your man up or tear him down with your own hands. Practically speaking, that means your words, actions and attitudes. I encourage you to use your persuasive power and femininity to speak life and show abundant love to the husband who is worthy of your praise. Implement the wisdom of the Word of God and, woman, build your house.

The Shulammitte lover in the Old Testament book *Song of Solomon* knew how to build her house. She romanced her man so beautifully that I believe he had no choice but melt in her arms like butter on hot biscuits. That sister paid careful attention to and commented on almost every detail of her man's physique. He observed every fine detail about her, too.

Their sexy love talk includes statements like, "Your breath is the scent of apples" and "kisses are like the best wine." They express the beauty of each other's eyes, teeth, lips, necks, legs and more. It may help you to take notes on their delightful, detailed expressions of admiration and adoration all highlighted in Song of Solomon's eight chapters. Can you believe that is in the Bible? "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me." *Song of Solomon 7:10*

As I teach in *Love Without The Drama*, the drama-free woman should never minimize the importance of generously sowing seeds of love into the drama-free man who shows he truly cares about her well-being. Your man likely craves and desperately needs your attention, affection and praise. Truth is, he would rather receive it from you than even think about seeking it elsewhere. But

if you are selfish, tear your house down with negativity and refuse to praise and encourage him—even in the bedroom—you could lose the God-given husband you don't want to be without.

So ladies, take pride in being your man's No. 1 love. Take joy in spending time with him and make your intimate time together thrilling and leave him desiring an encore. Wives should lavish love, love and more love in the bedroom. With gratitude galore, you should shower your man with respect and appreciation, passionately speak life into him and encourage him from the depths of your heart.

Cherish and compliment that outstanding man and make a big deal out of the things he does for you both publicly and privately. You must be sure not to leave any voids that another woman could fill. "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise the wife unto the husband." *I Corinthians 7:3-5*

Your relationship destiny does not have to repeat your history. God wants you to experience love without the drama. Every woman must personally invest in the success of her relationship if she wants to have satisfaction and fulfillment. When she emphasizes posing for, playing with and praising the God-ordained man she wants to lead her, listen to her and love her exclusively, their relationship satisfaction can soar. When she reaps the benefits and begins to experience the relationship of her dreams, God's ordained couple will agree that a great relationship really is worth the work. 🌸



LYNETTA JORDAN
LynettaJordan.com

Lynetta, "The Motivator," is a speaker, author and life coach who builds women's confidence in God and themselves. A former college queen who graced the pages of *Ebony*

magazine, she motivates the masses at church, corporate and community events. The founder of Lynetta Jordan Ministries, she has been heard on Rejoice network, and her book, *Love Without The Drama*, has been featured on CBN.com and Women.com. She holds a master's degree from Regent University and bachelor of arts degree from Elizabeth City State University. Connect with her on Facebook (LynettaJordan) and Twitter @LynettaSpeaks TODAY!

BE BEAUTIFUL BY BEING YOURSELF

Forget society's pressures and celebrate your unique gifts

By Dr. Catherine Hart Weber

Every age and culture has a normative social definition of beauty that sends the same message pressuring society to conform: “You are not all right” or “You need to change to be beautiful.”

We all know deep down that this is not true. That is why we desperately need our mothers and other wise women and men to nurture us into a healthy perspective of beauty, reminding us of God’s truth so we can become the best version of our most authentic self. “You are uniquely created in God’s image” and “You are loved and accepted and beautiful.”

OUR IDEAS OF TRUE BEAUTY

We are also all aware of the relenting, distorted social pressures bombarding women from the time they are young girls: How you look according to society norms matters a lot. Women’s bodies are sexually objectified to sell everything from tacos to tires. This exploitation diminishes value and true worth, leaving most women vulnerable to a myriad of confusing and damaging problems.

Pressures to be “skinnier” and attain “perfection”

in America send the message that fat is the new ugly. As a result, 91 percent of all college women try to control weight through dieting and eating disorders. Recent studies show that this desire to be thinner does not diminish across age ranges. Neither does the preoccupation with being overweight or satisfaction with appearance. So we poke, inject and cut our bodies up to conform to unrealistic expectations.

Eventually despairing that they are not good enough, never able to match the media stereotypes and feel accepted, many women struggle with low self-worth and unhappiness.

FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR BODY

This was verified in the SexinChristianAmerica.com research I am involved with. We asked questions about what factors affects sexuality. Overwhelmingly, the top answers for women included “how I feel about my body,” “how much I weigh” and “how fit I feel.”

Another result revealed that in women, body satisfaction is a stronger factor for sexual satisfaction than either life happiness or marital happiness. So developing a healthier body image and appreciation for your unique body and beauty is crucial for life satisfaction. This

begins with appreciating and accepting your God-given uniqueness and beauty. It means taking good care of yourself.

Comparing ourselves according to repeated exposure to unrealistic images of ideally attractive people results in the “contrast effect.” This sadly leads to devaluing our unique beauty and even reducing our attraction to “real people.”

This is illustrated in the *Dove Real Beauty Sketches*, a short film produced in 2013 that shows how women are more beautiful than they think they are by comparing self-descriptions of those of strangers. Many women dislike their physical features. Women tend to have a distorted perspective of themselves.

A HEALTHIER BODY IMAGE

Ladies, we need mothers and other brave and wise women and men around us reflecting back our true value and beauty. Our young women desperately need us to join in with the new revolution of truth bearers who are pushing back and reframing a new standard of respecting and accepting our unique natural beauty.

Israel has banned all digitally enhanced images displayed in public. In America campaigns have

emerged like “Healthy is the new skinny,” “Strong is the new sexy,” “I am perfectly unperfected,” “Miss Representation” and “It’s okay to be curvy. Accept who you are.”

May we continue to courageously encourage one another on the healing journey of forgiving and accepting ourselves. Being grateful to God for the bodies we have and respectfully practicing daily good self-care. With God’s love and grace, working through and healing our shame and disgust.

Believing that “I am the beloved,” created in God’s image.

“I AM ACCEPTED.”

“I AM ENOUGH.”

“I AM BEAUTIFUL.”

Let it begin with us. 🌸

“May we continue to courageously encourage one another on the healing journey of forgiving and accepting ourselves.”



DR. CATHERINE HART WEBER
howtoflourish.com

Dr. Weber is a licensed therapist, life coach, retreat leader, speaker and author of several books, including *Flourish*.

Relationship REVIVAL

Enjoy a healthy marriage even after baby arrives

By Joneal Kirby

For most women, becoming a mom is a dream come true, an answer to prayers, a much-wished for culmination of childhood fantasies. It is almost as good as marrying the man of your dreams and fantasies.

Yes, a woman adores her boyfriend, is passionate about her fiancé, loves her groom and admires her husband. But something almost mystical occurs when her newborn is placed in her arms for the first time. All feelings, thought and prior attachments fade as mama and baby's eyes meet. Becoming a mommy trumps all experiences.

But what happens to your marriage in the midst of such grandeur and splendid emotion? Husband becomes a father and lovingly will embrace the wonder of the new baby. As overjoyed as Dad can be, the significance of baby's attachment to Mom surpasses his devotion and efforts. Mom has had her heart overtaken by another. Her life as wife has changed forever.

It all started in the beginning. Creation gave us Mother Eve, the original. Before she was our mother, she was Adam's wife. And one of the first things we learn about her after she and Adam leave the Garden is that they had sex. In Genesis 4, we're told, "Adam had

sexual relations with his wife, Eve." So, there it is.

In Bible language there's not a lot of fluff romancing the act. They just did it. Then "... she became pregnant." Before we're told of any other things about her—her personality, talents, responsibilities, thoughts, or feelings—we are told the First Woman of all the human race had sex, got pregnant and gave birth. In Biblical ways, sex and mothering were almost synonymous.

Some may think marital sexuality and mothering shouldn't be mixed. But if you look at this Biblically, they do pretty good side by side. After all, mothers and sex have much in common because you can't have one without the other. Can we just acknowledge that for us married parents, this is usually a blessing? I mean, it's good to have fun in the bed before Junior takes up space in the middle. Seriously, we just need to get into this a bit deeper. We need some conversations about sex and mothers and marriage.

Things have gotten a bit more complicated for women in the 21st century. With science helping us manage our reproduction plans, we can have a sexual relationship with our husbands just for sex. As long as we want this, we can just keep having fun and being happy.

But when the decision is made to bring a baby home,

things can get icky-sticky for us mothers who were lovers first. We have crossed a new threshold in our marriage and struggle to see ourselves as lovers.

Blake and Abby had crossed that threshold into the parenting world. With two babies in two years in a 3-year-old marriage, this couple changed rapidly from a fun-loving, devoted couple to frustrated and unhappy parents. Before babies, they began with sparkly love at first meeting and moved quickly into being best friends. Marriage soon followed.

When they had their babies, something happened to their relationship they were unprepared for. When they came to see me, neither was happy with the other and they were extremely frustrated. They wanted to be excited about their family and desired to celebrate their children enthusiastically, but the energy just wasn't there.

As Christians, they wanted me to know they were seriously committed to their marriage and their family, but they felt "stuck" and puzzled about what to do with new negative feelings. The intimacy and closeness in their relationship were suffering. Why would they feel so bad about something that was meant to be a good thing?

It's a puzzle to professionals and couples alike that bringing home baby creates an ongoing struggle for a marriage. The baby's arrival becomes something to manage rather than a continuous celebration to enjoy. What seems so natural often feels abnormal and can create distance between husband and wife. Highly respected marital researchers John and Julie Gottman have proved this to be true for many couples. A long-term study showed that 67 percent of marriages go into dangerous decline in satisfaction during the first three years of their baby's life.

From what I've seen in my own counseling practice,

most couples relate to the 67 percent. Don't you wonder what is going on with the 33 percent who don't struggle? Have we learned anything from those who apparently have mastered this major change of life fairly quickly and easily?

Let's look at what is going on in a married couple's life as children enter the scene. "Children are a blessing and a gift from the Lord." *Psalms 127:3*

While believers know the Bible encourages and supports families, life with little ones seems way too crazy to be all good. For those of us who study, counsel and teach about such things, we've seen some common issues when baby and children move a couple into family life.

Blake and Abby struggled with most of the common issues of parenting: Mom is tied up breastfeeding and baby is learning to sleep. Dad, and often Mom, must leave baby for jobs. New bills will accumulate, new burdens of chores and housekeeping are constant and baby is fussy,

baby is demanding, baby is ... being a baby.

What Blake and Abby wanted to know, although they didn't know how to ask, was how do the 33-percenters do it? Why do their relationships thrive? Could intimacy and enjoyment ever return? Is there a way to restore joy in their relationship? Obviously, couples whose faith in God centers their marriage will have confidence and hope beyond their own abilities. Yet they still need for real-life answers to these logistical problems. Wise counsel is a smart way to go.

Based on their research of the 33-percenters, the Gottmans developed a program called the Bringing Baby Home Workshop. They based the content on key behaviors the 33 percent had in common. In the workshop, couples learn skills to help their marriage become close again by going deeper into the relationship

"AS CHRISTIANS, THEY WANTED ME TO KNOW THEY WERE SERIOUSLY COMMITTED TO THEIR MARRIAGE AND THEIR FAMILY, BUT THEY FELT 'STUCK' AND PUZZLED ABOUT WHAT TO DO WITH NEW NEGATIVE FEELINGS."



and building a strong bond. More of the research and workshop information is at gottman.com.

Blake and Abby experienced what most new parents go through. When couples do bring baby home, the change that follows is usually swift and dramatic. Women go through enormous changes, both emotional and physical. A shift like this can create frustrations as well as stress for the couple as well as the individual. See if anything on this list resonates with you as a mother.

- She feels as if her husband doesn't value her in her new role as a mother.
- All of her time is full of baby's needs.
- She's sleep deprived. Mothers who breastfeed may feel this most deeply because Dad can't help with nighttime feedings.
- She has extra household chores—laundry, dishes, cleaning—because of baby.
- The physical changes lead to decrease in sexual desires or interest.

All can lead to feeling overwhelmed in this new role. It seems logical that a woman may then withdraw from her husband to decrease his demands on her energy and time. Then there's the possibility she may resent his

lack of involvement or his lack of understanding of her needs. But dads feels stress, too. Why?

He has extra demands on his time and energy.

He feels left out or ignored by his wife, who now gives time and attention to their baby.

The decrease of couple privacy leads to lack of recreation and lack of meaningful conversations, which lead to a decrease in couple intimacy.

Then come financial and career adjustments for one or both.

While all of this is disconcerting, it is also absolutely normal. According to the Gottman Relationship blog post by Carolyn Pirak:

“For most couples, the transition to parenthood is challenging. While the end of pregnancy is often filled with excitement and anticipation, the arrival of the new baby is typically a time of significant adjustment. Sleep schedules change, postpartum adjustment takes place, and the relationship has to find a new normal. With a new baby in the house, there is more of almost everything: more stuff, more visitors, more household tasks, and even more fun! Yet, for the relationship, there can be more disagreement, more frustration, and

ultimately, more conflict.”

A few goals of the Bringing Baby Home program are an improving mutual respect and couple closeness, learning to work through conflicts and increasing of affection. Here are a couple of key solutions for wives to try at home. If you are struggling with your marriage before you read this, take a deep breath. Give your efforts at least three weeks to see any results. Be encouraged, too; these do work.

1. Eliminate criticism. That nagging thing? Give it up. It doesn't work and creates a climate of hostility that leads to resentment and worse. Instead, find something positive to think about and learn to handle negative emotions.

I know that feels like more than one thing, but believe me after working with hundreds of women, I know the impact that learning not to criticize your husband will have on your thoughts and feelings. If you make this one change, I promise you will feel better about everything.

2. Treat your husband as if he is your best friend. Don't question his motives. Asking “Why would he do ___?” isn't helpful. Assume he has the best intentions. When we assign motives to anyone, but especially to our husbands, we create a big mess.

3. And one more thing. Kiss every day. Kiss before you part for the day. Kiss when you see each other when back together. Kiss before you go to sleep. Mothers do this to their children all of the time. Even grandmothers kiss their grandchildren. So, kiss your husband. Encourage, don't deny, his affection for you.

If you do all three for three weeks, you will have some nice habits now building up your marriage. You will be working on a strong foundation of friendship and mutual respect. Building and keeping friendship in their marriages is the secret of the 33-percenters.

It was what they used to weather the stresses that normal family living brings, as well as the more disturbing changes that may come. The intimacy of close friendship in their marriages increased their sexual enjoyment and fulfillment. The closer they were, the more mutual joy was in the marriage.

All mothers want our kids to have many good, joyful days to remember from their childhoods. We want them to live in a happy home. We know this will best prepare them to live healthy adult lives, full of faith in God.

To make these desires reality, we have to accept that when our marriage is better, life is better for our kids. The most important thing we can do for our kids is building a deep, intimate, close friendship with our husbands.

After almost a year of off-and-on counseling, Abby and Blake were much better. A routine had normalized a lot of their daily life demands. They had refocused their attentions to take better care of their relationship. One afternoon, Abby sent me a message. She encouraged me to help couples understand the concentrated work it takes to keep married love alive in the middle of the puzzle of parenting.

“Tell the couples to love each other well for the sake of your marriage, but also for the sake of your children,” she said. “They are watching closely and the way you behave towards one another is how they will learn how to treat their future spouse and how they should expect to be treated. Create the kind of marriage that your kids would want to have someday!”

RECOMMENDED READING:

The First Five Years of Marriage: Launching a Lifelong, Successful Relationship by Phillip J. Swihart, Wilford Wooten

Rekindling the Romance, by Dennis and Barbara Rainey

Five Steps to Romantic Love by Willard Harley

Love Talk by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrot. 🌸



JONEAL KIRBY
Joneal holds a doctorate in marriage and family therapy and is the founding director of the women's program Heartfelt Friends, a multi-generational ministry based on Titus 2. Her newest book is *Heartfelt, A Woman's Guide to Creating Meaningful Friendships*. She and her husband will celebrate

40 years of marriage in 2015. They have three amazing adult children with a super son-in-love and daughter-in-love and five awesome grandsons.

BODY

56 DANGERS LURK BEHIND ALTERED ENVIRONMENT

"A lot of what we deal with day to day has been altered from its natural state in the earth. Is this a bad thing? I believe it can be."

58 GET READY FOR SPRING WITH A SPLASH OF COLOR

"Adding colorful pieces to your existing winter wardrobe will help you feel ready for spring without too much effort."

64 WOMEN WHO NURTURE ALSO NEED NURTURING

"We as women are so good at recognizing need. We have to be careful, though, to also recognize our own needs."

Inspired Design

The interior design book filled with hundreds of tabletop ideas from eight generations of design royalty.



"With my daughter, now in college, writing Inspired Design and founding Inspired31.org together was the best investment I ever made. Looking back I can tell you that spending time serving together with your daughter is one you will never regret. Inspired Design will inspire you with beautiful and practical ways to welcome others into your home and make memories that last a lifetime."

- Roxanne Hughes Packham



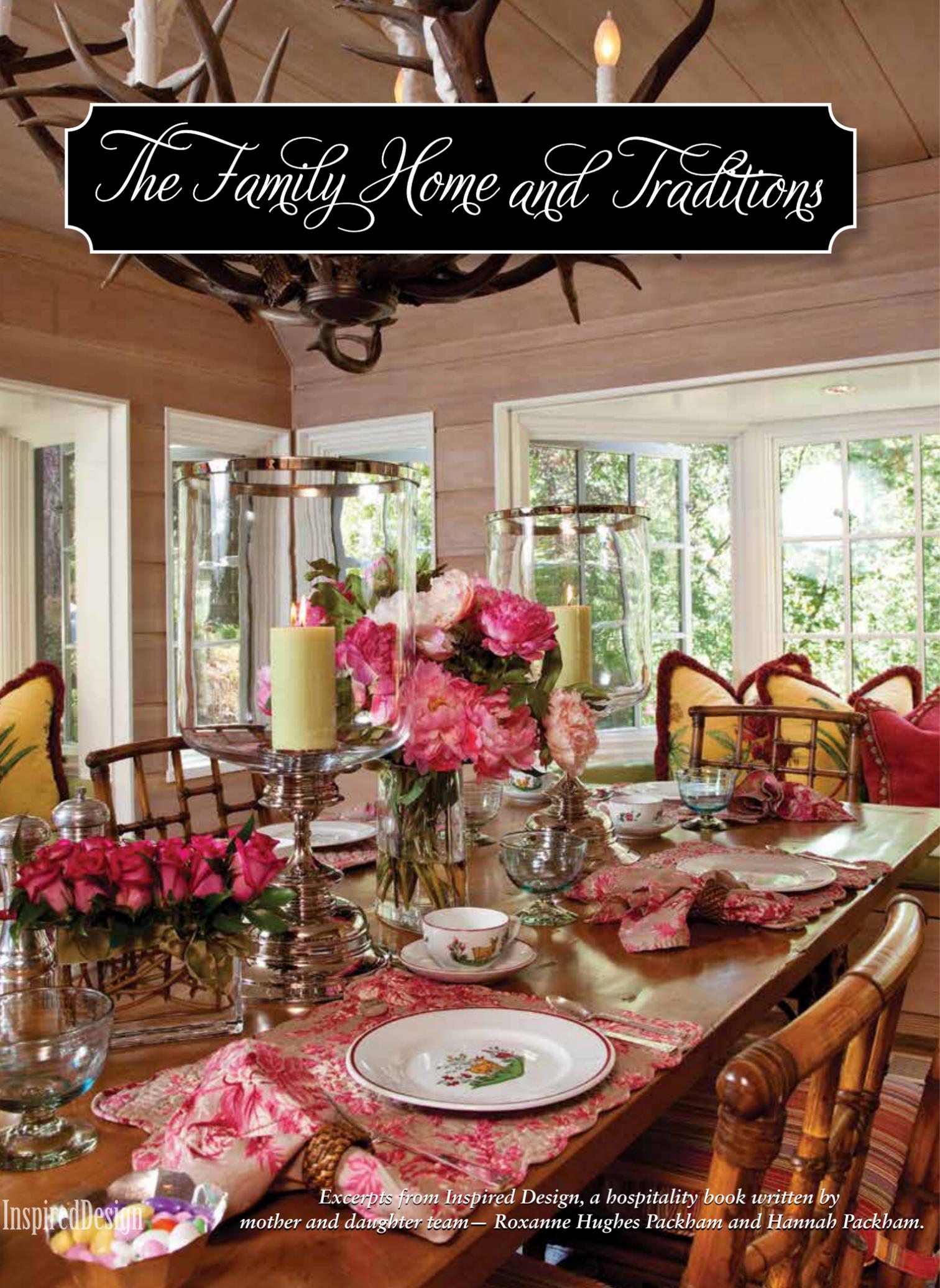
Written by mother and teenage daughter authors
Roxanne Hughes Packham and Hannah Packham

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The Family Home and Traditions

The Family Home and Traditions

LEARNING FROM MOM

I am a visual learner, and growing up, I watched my mom get so much joy from making occasions special memories for my sister and me. She has the world's best taste, and she taught me much about design. But what made her exceptional was that she expressed her love by setting a magnificent table.

She prepared spectacular decorations for holidays and left no detail untended. She was a homemaker, and she took pride in making a warm and enchanting home. Even in the early years, when she didn't have much, mom went to great lengths to make sure things were just right. At the time, I didn't have much of an appreciation for the love, time and hard work that it took. Now that I'm a mom, I do.

My favorite family tradition—and Hannah's too—is Rolly Pancakes. We had them for breakfast almost every Sunday morning. It made no difference whether we were on the "Shawnee" (My grandparents' beloved sailboat), at Catalina Island, California, or at our family home in Lake Arrowhead.

Mom would start by making French crepes (Hannah and I love anything French) and a delicious orange sauce. Then she served them with powdered sugar. When mom made Rolly Pancakes for our large family, it usually took two or three hours.

Excerpts from Inspired Design, a hospitality book written by mother and daughter team— Roxanne Hughes Packham and Hannah Packham.

The ornament of a house
is the friends who frequent it.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson





If you have only one smile in you, give it to the people you love.
- Maya Angelou



Since I am now in charge of this endeavor, I fully appreciate both the little darlings who are sitting at the table, hungrily waiting their turn to eat a crepe, and the cook who is in the kitchen, making between 30 and 50 of them. Both are special memories, and I love them! What's more, I will never forget the laughter and bonding around the table, as the meal was slowly being prepared and served.

Traditions that are uniquely your own create special memories that will be passed down to your children, and theirs. Our traditions revolve around the table, table settings and family memories, as do many of yours I'm sure. Our children look to what we do more than we realize. As we go along in our day, cooking, setting the table, wrapping gifts, lighting candles and getting the guest room ready for company, little eyes are wide open, soaking in instruction. Every act of kindness, and every effort to make something a little nicer for someone else, is something our children will pick up, and learn from.

Rolly Pancakes

Crepes

2 cups flour
4 eggs

2 cups milk
Dash of salt

Sauce

2 cups fresh or frozen orange juice
1/2 cup butter
1 tbsp powdered sugar
1 tsp. Orange Rind (fresh or dried) as desired

PLACE ON TABLE:

Bowl of powdered sugar to sprinkle on crepe, and on the inside if you like it sweeter

ORANGE SAUCE:

Make this first, so while this boils, then simmers, you can make the batter.

DIRECTIONS:

Put all the ingredients into saucepan, bring to just a boil, then reduce heat to simmer, until sauce thickens. I usually allow about 15 minutes, but you just want it thicker than regular orange juice. I always make a bigger batch, then freeze some, and put some in the fridge, since my kids get this most mornings for breakfast! Microwave it, and in two minutes it's ready!

CREPE:

Mix ingredients for crepes with a whisk, making sure the lumps are out of the batter and that it doesn't get too thick. You can add about 1/4 cup of milk if you want them to be thinner. High altitude does affect the proportions, so add more milk as necessary. Use oil not butter in the crepe pan, and fix like a crepe. (Thin, roll the pan so the batter is spread thin, stand right there, flip when bubbles appear) You want it to just turn brown, not really brown like a regular pancake.

No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.

-Aesop



God could not be everywhere, so he created mothers.
~ Jewish Proverb

Hannah's POINT OF VIEW

I feel blessed to have the house in Lake Arrowhead. I love it because it has been in the family for a while. I appreciate it because of the memories I have there, and also for the memories that my family has. Just looking at the pictures that line the wall, I get a glimpse of everything that has happened here over the years, and it really feels neat.

My memories are mostly just being there and relaxing. I also remember countless laughs that I have had while on the dock with my friends, and while in the house with my family. I love how when the sun comes out I can go down to the beach and swim. I love that I can go outside to sled when it snows. I know that no matter what the weather, I can always come back to a warm cozy home. I love walking in the door, just knowing that now I can relax and forget whatever stresses might have seemed so horrible before.

— Hannah



An Unnatural State

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE DANGEROUS TOXINS AND CHEMICALS THAT SURROUND YOU

By Kim Alexis

I believe that our bodies were designed to work best with the most natural, unaltered fruits, vegetables, meats, grains, seeds and nuts. I am a firm believer in trying to eat foods as natural as possible for my health and energy levels.

Unfortunately, it isn't enough just to put pure foods into our bodies in order to keep them running efficiently; we have to be aware that toxins and chemicals can enter our bodies through our skin and lungs.

We live in a world that is filled with additives and chemicals. A lot of what we deal with today has been altered from its natural state in the earth. Is this a bad thing? I believe it can be.

We bombard our bodies with added toxins and foreign chemicals without even knowing it, thinking it can make our lives easier, more efficient and more beautiful. We microwave frozen dinners for a quick meal and dye our hair to be more beautiful, but it can wreak all kinds

of havoc on our health. Our bodies can handle only so much.

Is this a new thought for you? Did you ever think to read the labels on the toothpaste and shampoo that you use daily? How about the cleaners you use to do your floors or clean the countertop each night? Did you ever read the labels on the makeup you wear each day or the sunscreen you apply religiously?

Notice the chemicals; they're everywhere. I even stopped using dryer sheets in the dryer because the smell gave me an instant headache. Coloring my hair also gives me a headache that lasts for the rest of the day. Chemicals may be used to make our life easier and more comfortable for the moment, but what about long term?

In this season of our lives, when we look around us and think we have our diets under control and our lives running more smoothly, we have to start looking at everything that touches our skin and be aware of



"Chemicals may be used to make our life easier and more comfortable for the moment, but what about long term?"

everything we breathe in each day.

Remember that our skin and lungs are two of our biggest organs to help the body rid toxins. Be on the lookout for the air freshener plugged in your outlets at home or in your car vent. Consider what you have in your bathrooms like hairspray, "odor eliminator" and cheap perfume. I don't want to even start with what we all keep under our kitchen sinks.

Does the pest guy come to your house monthly to spray for bugs? You will be breathing those chemicals for the next month. Do you walk barefoot on grass that has been fertilized? I remember my sons playing football and coming home all sweaty with the smell of fertilizer on their legs and uniforms from the turf. What does that do to our bodies?

Start being aware of all the toxic bombardments that you are around each and every day. Your body has to deal with them whether you are aware of them or not, and clearing them out of your system is a stress on

your energy levels.

So this spring, do more than just the spring-cleaning of your home. See if you can start to eliminate some of those toxins. If you can give your body a rest from toxins and chemicals, it may free you up to have more energy for your loved ones. Plus, you will probably live longer, too. 🌸



KIM ALEXIS
KimAlexis.com

One of the most recognized faces in modeling, Kim has graced the cover of more than 500 magazines, done countless commercials for print and television, and appeared in six *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issues. Kim has broadened her brand to encourage women of any age. She has written fiction and nonfiction books, speaks on women's issues and serves as a spokesperson for products she believes in. Kim also has been fashion editor for *Good Morning America* and maintains her love of fitness, having completed eight marathons and three triathlons to teach other women that if she can finish, so can they.

Fashion in full bloom

Spring fashion is a breath of fresh air after the endless dark colors of winter. Adding colorful pieces to your existing winter wardrobe will help you feel ready for spring without too much effort.

By Elizabeth Bergman



Rebecca Taylor Off the Shoulder Floral Print Dress Nordstrom and nordstrom.com

JEANS

{THE SPRING EDITION}



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Colors & Flowers Everywhere!



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Trench \$49.99
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Yellow Sandals \$59.99
H&M and hm.com



Bow Blouse \$27.99
Minimal Moto \$44.99
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Gathered bardot top \$24.99
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Elbow Sleeve Linen Tee \$17.99
Printed Trench \$44.99
Skinny Scarf \$14.99
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Maison Jules
Floral Print Fit and Flare Dress
\$69.50
Macy's and macys.com



Pineapple Top \$17.99
H&M and hm.com



ELIZABETH BERGMAN
msclassicglamour.blogspot.com

Elizabeth is the youngest certified Christian image consultant in the nation and was formerly a photo coordinator and copy editor for *Designed to Flourish Magazine*, a Christian women's publication. Elizabeth also has a style blog that encourages women to look and feel their best, hoping to bring out the celebrity in every woman.

Spring Products

By Elizabeth Ortega



CHANEL

MOUSSE CONFORT RINSE-OFF RICH FOAMING CREAM CLEANSER

Comfort your dehydrated and sensitive skin with the depollution power of Tulip Tree Extract and the moisturizing properties of Arum Lily Extract. Non-drying mousse formula thoroughly and comfortably cleanses, soothes and tones, with deeply moisturizing effects.



KLORANCE

EYE MAKE-UP REMOVER WITH SOOTHING CORNFLOWER

To care for the skin around your eyes, Klorane Laboratories first selected its own organically cultivated cornflowers. From these, a floral water with soothing qualities was extracted. This floral water, with a pH close to that of human tears, is very gentle and paraben-free. It is an ideal makeup remover for those with the most sensitive eyes, even if you wear contacts. It removes makeup easily and leaves a pleasant, refreshing feeling. The skin is soothed and decongested. Tested under ophthalmological control. Formulated to minimize the risk of allergic reactions. Made in France

EMINENCE

WILD PLUM EYE CREAM

Eminence Wild Plum Eye Cream reduces the appearance of puffiness and dark circles to promote a youthful, well-rested look. Formulated with wild plum juice, it brightens and nourishes while green tea extract delivers rich, antioxidant protection to combat free-radical damage. Grape oil and vitamin E hydrate as wheat protein retains moisture to diminish the look of fine lines and wrinkles.



ORIBE

CÔTE D'AZUR LUMINOUS HAIR & BODY OIL Experience Oribe's signature scent in a luxuriously sheer fragranced oil. Calabrian bergamot, white butterfly jasmine and sandalwood delicately scent hair and skin, while a restorative blend of nourishing oils, including sweet almond, meadowfoam and starflower, impart a satin glow and silk-finish softness. It envelops hair and skin into a veil of fragrance.



M·A·C

STUDIO TECH

M·A·C Studio Tech is a tri-system blend of water, emollients and powder that glides on as a soft, creamy emulsion. The innovative formula provides a full range of coverage, allowing for true-to-skin shading from very light to very dark in a natural matte, powder-perfect finish. Light-diffusing properties soften lines to create a fresh, flawless texture for all skin types. Apply to your face using a sponge or a brush. Blend well.



LIBRARY OF FLOWERS

SILKY SUDS

Treat yourself to a tub of bubbly and soak in the bliss rich in replenishing cocoa butter and skin-pampering green tea. A special blend of soothing ginger and lemongrass melts away worries while lavish moisturizers envelop your body in exceptional softness.



DIOR

ADDICT SMOOTH LACQUER LIP POLISH

Dior Addict Smooth Lacquer Lip Polish is a revolution in gloss. An exclusive spinning applicator mimics makeup-artist application, rolling over the lips like a primer and gloss in one. This spinning action uniformly spreads and smooths the gloss to deliver fresh, long-lasting, layered brilliance to the lips.



ELIZABETH ORTEGA
makeup4realfaces.com

Elizabeth is a professional makeup artist who believes that all things work together for a common good. She feels we are all called to care for the world we live in, effect meaningful changes and give back heart and soul.



IN HONOR OF MOM

A spring meal for the women who do it all

By Debbie Greenhill

She keeps an eye on everyone in her household, and keeps them all busy and productive. Her children respect her; her husband joins in with words of praise.” *Proverbs 31:27-28*

I love the story of the Proverbs Woman. She was a busy woman just like the women of today. I think sometimes we feel that we are busier in this day, but this Scripture shows us just how many hats this woman wore.

She did not only for her family but also for her community: working, serving and meeting needs. We as women are so good at recognizing need.

We have to be careful, though, to also recognize our own needs. We cannot take care of others if we do not take care of ourselves. We as moms and wives work hard to take care of our family and pour into them emotionally and physically every day. What a privilege God has given us as women to have such an influence in our family.

Like many of you, I do not take this responsibility lightly, but with much prayer and help from God I meet this challenge each day. I want my family to praise me, but I know that I could not do this without God.

So embrace this role that we have been given and seek God daily. Ask Him to meet your needs and be with you as you meet the needs of your family.

I have a wonderful menu to share with you to honor the special women in your life. It’s a Mother’s Day luncheon using a spring pretty-in-pink theme. A lovely small quilt that I found at one of the discount stores is perfect for a tablecloth. Then I added the finishing touches, with flowers, inexpensive pearl necklaces and the pearl bracelets I used for napkin rings. The bracelets-napkin rings can then be a gift for your guests.

The entrée is one of our favorites, Poppy Seed Chicken, easy to prepare and so tasty. I have made a salad using the fresh strawberries and asparagus that are abundant in the spring.

Stuffed tomatoes are such a pretty and delicious addition to this menu. I also prepared an easy butter-parsley rice and popover rolls. I made a honey butter to go with the rolls, which I shaped into hearts by putting them in a candy mold. The little extras add such a special touch.

The Sugar Cookie Fruit Pizzas are a delicious, elegant presentation of fresh fruit.

I hope you will take the opportunity to prepare this menu for the special women in your life and thank God that they are a part of the celebration of the Family Table. ✿



POPPY SEED CHICKEN

8 SERVINGS

- 5 whole chicken breasts, cooked and chopped
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 1½ cups sour cream
- 1 sleeve butter flavor crackers, crushed
- 1 stick melted butter
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds

Arrange chicken in a lightly greased 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Combine the soup and sour cream in a bowl and mix well.

Spread over the chicken; sprinkle with the cracker crumbs and poppy seeds that have been mixed together. Drizzle with the melted butter. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes or until bubbly.



SPRING SALAD

6-8 SERVINGS

- 1 bundle asparagus
- 1 cup fresh strawberries
- 1 cup grape tomatoes
- ½ cup herb flavored feta cheese
- 12 ounces package of baby arugula

Bring water to a boil in a medium-size pot. Remove tough stems of asparagus. Chop remaining spears in small pieces and blanch for 2 minutes in boiling water. Remove and cool.

Slice strawberries and tomatoes. Crumble feta cheese. Combine all ingredients in a salad bowl and toss with Sweet Balsamic Dressing.



BROCCOLI STUFFED TOMATOES

6-8 SERVINGS

- 6 medium tomatoes; scoop out, sprinkle with salt, turn upside down to drain
- 1 10-ounce package chopped broccoli, cooked and Drained well.
- 4 ounces Swiss cheese, shredded
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped onions
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs

Mix broccoli, Swiss cheese, mayonnaise, onions and bread crumbs together. Stuff mixture into tomato shells.

Place in a baking dish and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. I like to sprinkle a little extra cheese the last few minutes on top and brown.

TIP: An easy way to bake tomatoes is to place in a muffin pan.



SUGAR COOKIE FRUIT PIZZAS

MAKES 9-12

Bake your favorite sugar cookie recipe or buy sugar cookies from the grocery baking section.

ALMOND CREAM FROSTING

- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 1 stick butter, softened
- 3 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 teaspoon almond flavor

Cream together the cream cheese and butter; add the almond flavor and mix well. Add confectioners' sugar one cup at a time and mix until well combined. Spread on top of sugar cookies. Top with fresh fruit such as raspberries, strawberries, kiwi and blackberries.



POPOVER ROLLS WITH HONEY BUTTER

MAKES 9 ROLLS

- 1 cup all purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 eggs

In a blender, combine all ingredients and mix until smooth. Pour into well-greased muffin cups, about half full. Bake at 425 degrees for 25-30 minutes.

HONEY BUTTER

Combine 1 stick unsalted softened butter with 1/3 cup honey. Chill and serve with pop-over rolls.



RICE WITH BUTTER AND PARSLEY

6-8 SERVINGS

- 1½ cups rice, uncooked
- 3 cups water
- 1 stick butter
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Cook rice in 3 cups water according to package directions. When cooked, using fork add butter and fluff gently until melted in the rice. Place in a serving dish and sprinkle with parsley.



DEBBIE GREENHILL
thefamilytable.debbiegrenhill.com

Debbie is a loving wife of 30-plus years to Mike Greenhill, mother of three children and grandmother to Bryce. Debbie uses her gift of hospitality to provide physical and spiritual nutrition for God's children by service in inner-city missions. She is the author of the devotional-cookbook *Fun, Food and Fellowship at your Family Table*. She is available for speaking and cooking demos. Email debbiebg@gmail.com.

SOUL & SPIRIT

84 ONE HEART, ONE MIND LEAD TO THE BEST SEX

“When you are of one heart and mind, there is no better sex. It takes on much higher level from a mere physical attraction and need.”

92 NOBODY'S PERFECT, AND GOD KNOWS IT

“A good place to start is admitting you need God's help. It's OK not to be OK—God helps the humble.”

94 FINDING THE BALANCE AS TWO BECOME ONE

“Every couple must balance their individual lives so their lives as a couple can also be balanced.”

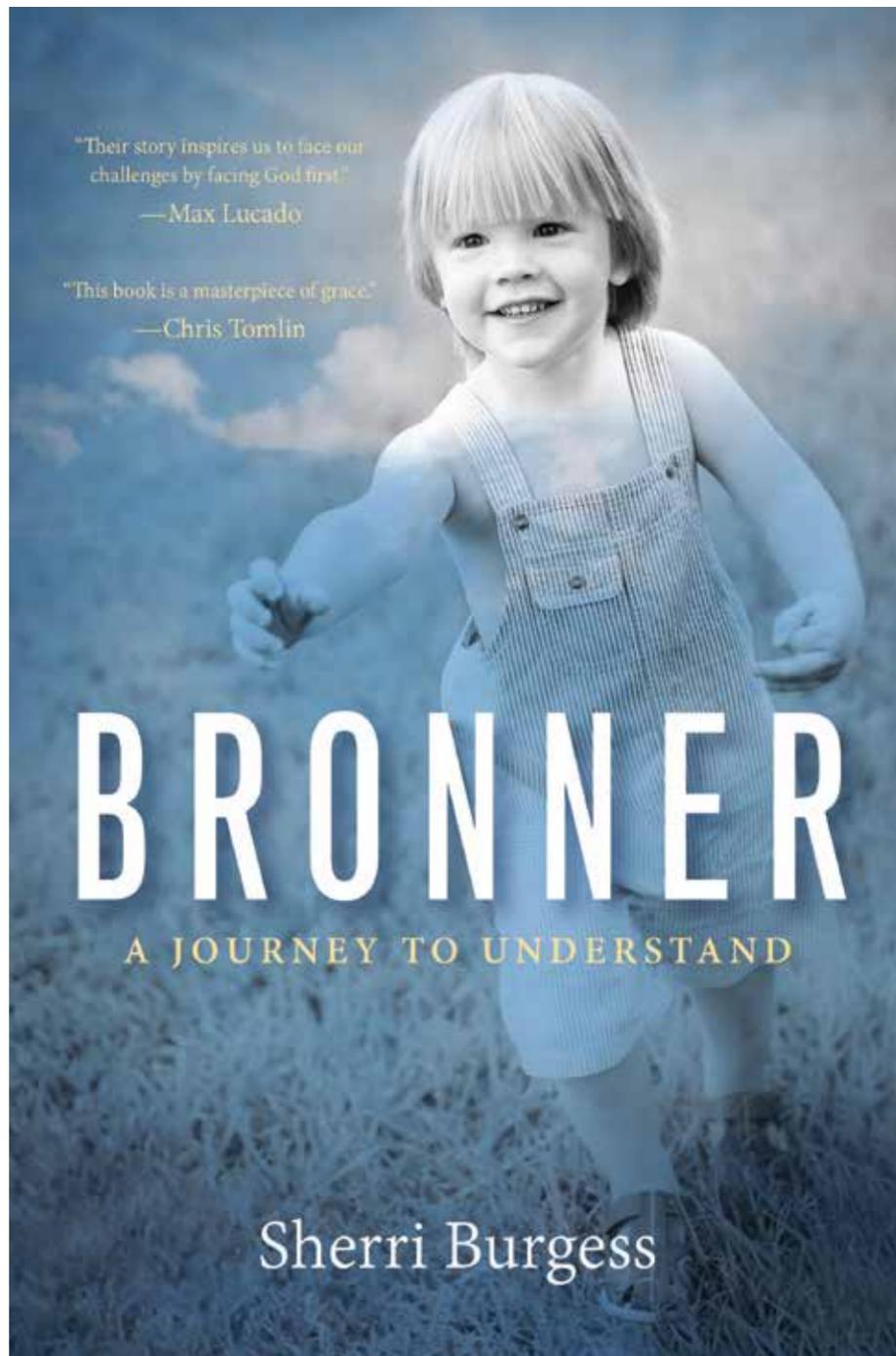
102 ON SEXUAL MATTERS, SILENCE IS NOT GOLDEN

“The confusion about sexuality is perpetuated by our silence. The church as a whole cannot continue to be silent.”

Bronner brings HOPE to those grieving a loss

THE NEW BOOK BY SHERRI BURGESS SHOWS GOD'S PLAN FOR HEALING

By Laine Lawson Craft



As we were planning the Mother's Day edition for spring 2016, I felt led to reach out to mothers who may be grieving the loss of a child or nurturing a child in great need. I read the most amazing book, *Bronner: A Journey to Understand* by Sherri Burgess.

Sherri is the wife of Rick Burgess of the *Rick and Bubba Show*, a nationally syndicated talk radio show. They lost their youngest son, Bronner, at 2 ½ years old. Her book captures her journey through the process of healing. It is a must read for everyone as the power of God is seen on every page.

It is a great book for those who have lost loved ones, but it also a great read for those who want to know God deeper. I could not wait to tell you to go buy this book and for her to share with us from her story on how to find wholeness after loss.

Sherri's love and compassion to share that her story can help others understand God doesn't do anything to hurt them, but He allows suffering to occur in life to form them into the people He meant for them to be—people who love and trust Him with a devotion that can withstand any trial. Sherri gave her readers five amazing heartfelt thoughts to help us find wholeness after loss:

5 STEPS TO WHOLENESS AFTER LOSS

1. Run to God with everything you are. He holds the answers. He holds your loved one, and He alone can restore them to you. One day, He will.
2. Believe in God's promise of eternal life for all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and rest in that assurance.
3. Find the purpose and meaning behind your pain. Look for the good that has come from it. There always is good.
4. Allow people to minister to you. When people ask how they can help, they really do want to know. Embrace the comfort and see it as genuine love from your fellow man. Through this process, you may gain some precious friendships that can last a lifetime.
5. Continue living. You don't have to have your whole life sorted out in the beginning. Just live. Live

for God and live for the people you love. You are going to come out of this stronger, smarter and better than ever before, and then you will be able to help so many through their own struggles.

I strongly urge you to go and buy this amazing book today. It is much more than retelling of one family's story. *Bronner* includes a readers' guide that will be an empowering and in-depth resource for grief support groups, book clubs or small group Bible studies.

Readers will learn how the author believes the Lord has used suffering for good in her life: teaching her, refining her, and even helping her overcome worldliness, self-reliance, and pride. "There are two ways to go in a situation like this," Burgess shares. "We can either run away from God and be destroyed by the pain, or run to Him and be transformed by it into the person He really desires us to be. God has taught—and is still teaching—me so much through my pain."

Learn more about *Bronner* and Sherri Burgess at www.burgessministries.com. 🌸





WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Lorraine Jordan: Faith, family and bluegrass music

By Chuck Dauphin

As the lead singer and mandolin player for bluegrass group Carolina Road, Lorraine Jordan continues to draw inspiration for her life from many of the Gospel songs she grew up on as a child.

“One of my very favorite Gospel songs of all time is ‘Just As I Am,’” she tells *WHOAwomen*. “That song has always a good meaning to me and for most Christians who go through phases.”

She says she tries to live her faith on stage through her music. “We always try to make sure we play two or three Gospel numbers each night, and try to do a Gospel record every few years.”

One song in particular seems to be very popular on the festival circuit: “Will The Circle Be Unbroken.”

“A lot of times if you have more than one band and they are going to come out and play together at the end, we’ll do that song together,” she said.

In the world of bluegrass music, she feels a responsibility to live her life in the proper light. “I am a Christian, and try to be faithful to that,” she said.

Jordan says the family unit, with its traditional value, is unique to the genre. “I think I see a lot of families at the shows. You see the same folks at bluegrass festivals. I’ve been playing them for years, and I think I see a lot of the same people each time I play one. There’s a

lot of the same groups that come back year after year.”

While she enjoys playing both the country and bluegrass circuits, the singer says there are some differences. “I’ve been on both sides. Both are good, but different. With the country dates, I typically get picked up at the airport and chauffeured over to the hotel, and then taken in for makeup and lights,” she said.

The bluegrass circuit, though, is a lot more “down home.”

“At a festival, I get off of the bus, someone hands me a pie or some brownies and invites me for supper. Then, someone else will invite me for supper, and I’ll have to eat three suppers. The fans will mingle with you and they’ll talk. You get to know that person one on one, and when you play, there’s no makeup or no lights,” she said.

She says that she doubts if she would be even pursuing a career without her belief system.

“I wouldn’t even go out my door if I didn’t feel like I had my faith with me. I wear a cross around my neck every day, and always mention when I’m on stage that we’re Christians,” she said.

“We don’t hide it, but at the same time, we don’t preach on stage or try to push anybody. We just let them know we have our faith. We know that when we’re in that bus going down the road

all the time, we’ve got the Lord with me.

“We’ve had the bus break down in the middle of the night where we didn’t know where we were, we’ve had traffic accidents, but we know he is always there. We try most nights to start out our show with a prayer.”

There’s no doubt that being herself has made Jordan one of the most beloved artists on the scene. Along with her band, the SPBGMA Entertainer of the Year and Traditional Female Vocalist winner has a long list of successful and acclaimed albums, including 2015’s *Country Grass*, which featured collaborations with acts ranging from The Kentucky Headhunters to T.G. Sheppard. The album also contained “You Can Have Her,” which was the last studio recording to feature the late Jim Ed Brown.

She says the closeness of her fans is something that touches her, especially in the darker times. “I’ve even had some people who will come up to me and pray for me if I’m sick or going through something. That’s an amazing feeling. We’re all one family, and I would say that 99 percent of us go to church or have faith. I think we’re all on the same page and look out for each other. You need that, and I am very blessed to have it.” ❀

Deborah Allen: Inspiration, miracles and walking with God

By Chuck Dauphin



Deborah Allen believes that one can receive divine messages. In an interview with *WHOAwomen*, the songstress cites her mother as an inspiration by telling a story that took place before she was born.

“When she was pregnant with me, she would pray for me—as she did with the others—but, with an afterthought, she would also ask ‘Please let this baby have a strong singing voice,’” Allen says with a smile.

“The day that I was born, she started thanking the Lord that I was OK, and all of a sudden, the letters of what to name me appeared like a rainbow over me: D-E-B-O-R-A-H. Then, she said that all these lights started to flicker around each letter, and it was so cute the way she said it—‘like out in Las Vegas.’ She said there was a bunch of family in the room, but she didn’t let any of them know that she was having this moment with God.”

A few years later, young Deborah made her mother realize that God had heard her prayer.

“I remember being in the car with her. I said ‘Mother, can you keep a secret?’ She said ‘Sure, your mother is your best friend. You can tell me any-

thing.’ I told her I wanted to be a singer, an actress or an entertainer. She told me later that her heart just started pounding because she knew that was an affirmation from God.”

Allen became one of Nashville’s top singer-songwriters, penning several No. 1 records and cuts for artists such as LeAnn Rimes and the late Conway Twitty. Though she enjoyed a diverse performing career, working with everyone from Tennessee Ernie Ford to pop icon Prince, she said there were moments where she considered doing something else with her life. But those moments were fleeting.

“The music business is something I’ve been doing for over 30 years, and knowing that story, and literally that my voice was a gift from God made me aware that he has a purpose for me,” she said. “I’ve had a thousand reasons to quit and do something else, but I feel that would not only be giving up on myself, but also giving up on God, and would be a slap in the face to Him.”

Indeed, one night in the late 1970s, God put Allen exactly where He wanted her to be. “I had been hanging out with my friends at Tree Publishing, and Dan Wilson had a No. 1 party for some friends of mine at his house. They started passing the guitar around, and I sang.”

The next day, her phone rang. “Les Ladd, who was producer Bud Logan’s engineer, called and said that Bud heard me singing at the party, and thought my voice would be perfect to sing on the Jim Reeves duets, to which I said ‘Isn’t he dead?’”

Indeed, Reeves had been dead for 15 years, but Logan was looking for a female singer to overdub her vocals onto some of his old tracks. “Those recordings were, from what I understand, the first ones where they used the overdub technology to sing with someone already gone,” she said.

The singles—“Don’t Let Me Cross Over,” “Oh, How I Miss You Tonight,”

and “Take Me In Your Arms and Hold Me”—each hit the top 10 on the Billboard charts in 1979-1980.

Allen also developed as a songwriter, thanks to the encouragement of the late Shel Silverstein. She helped to write “Don’t Worry ‘Bout Me Baby” for Janie Fricke and “I’m Only In It For The Love” for John Conlee before topping the charts with the massive 1983 hit “Baby I Lied,” which became one of the biggest crossover tunes of the early ’80s.

Allen admits it was very scary time, but her faith was key to making it through, knowing that God had blessed her with many talents. That, in effect, kept her grounded.

“The foundation of my career, which is my songwriting, is what has sustained me for all these years. I just started writing like crazy. I just loved it, and incorporated it into everything I did.”

Allen today is putting together a new TV series and album. But she knows that life can still throw a curveball every now and then.

“In 2013, I had a small tumor growing underneath my jaw,” she said. It was diagnosed as cancer. Once again Allen turned to her faith. “I believe God puts us in the right place at the right time.” Miraculously, the cancer soon disappeared. Coincidence? Allen says no way.

“I know I was healed by God, and that he still does miracles every day. There is nothing impossible with Him if you believe, and there’s nothing that you need in your life that He doesn’t know about.

“I believe we’re all connected through God’s Holy Spirit, and believe there is nothing on earth—any need in your life—God walks every step with us. That’s a wonderful testimony that I would not have had if I hadn’t gone through that.”

After going through the storm and coming out on the other side, what is her philosophy? “Everything that you go through happens for a reason, and that is to bring you closer to God.” ❀

Laugh & Love

For a long-lasting marriage, make fun a priority

By Dodie Osteen

(Excerpted from Dodie Osteen's new book, *If My Heart Could Talk*, available April 5, 2016.)

I was married 44 years, 4 months and 6 days to John Osteen, the love of my life. I was blessed with an amazing husband and marriage, but just like everyone else, John and I had our times of disagreement. During those times, I learned what it takes to make a marriage work. Forgiveness ranks high up on that list.

For some reason, most of our arguments seemed to start in the car, and usually on the way to or from the church. Imagine that! With five small children in the car, no wonder we were on edge.

In the middle of an argument, I'd often set a focal point for it to stop. I'd say, "OK, do you see that billboard down the road? When we get there, we're going to stop this and start laughing." And we would. Of course, our laughter was forced at first, so we felt silly. But that would make us laugh even harder, and we'd forget about why we were ever arguing in the first place.

Laughter is really what ended many of our petty disagreements. One day when all the children were in school, John and I got really frustrated with each other. So he was giving me the silent treatment as he usually did when we argued, because he knew that's what an-

noyed me the most. I kept trying to get him to talk to me, and he just kept ignoring me. Finally I got so tired of it that I went into Joel's room and hid from him.

After a few minutes, John came down the hall on the way back to our bedroom to look for me. He kept yelling out, "Where did Dodie go? Has the rapture happened, and I'm still here?"

When he walked past me, I jumped out of the room, hopped up on his back and cried out, "Now I'm not getting off your back until you talk to me and tell me you're sorry!" Pretty soon we both started laughing and totally forgot what we were mad about.

These are examples of petty disagreements, but sometimes couples encounter serious issues that require forgiveness. John and I had some of these as well. So early on, we decided on two things.

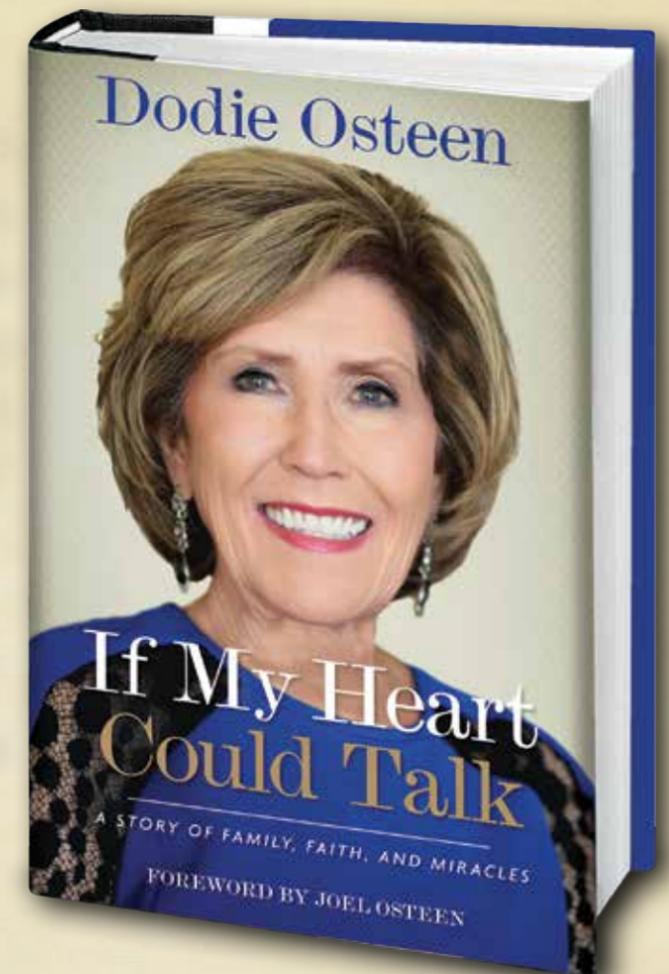
THE FIRST WAS THAT WE WOULD ARGUE ONLY "FROM THE NECK UP," NOT ALLOWING THE AGGRAVATION TO SETTLE IN OUR HEARTS.

No matter how much you love someone, it's still easy to get disgusted and disheartened with them, especially when you live with them. That's why we must always

"There is a lot of my mother's life, example, and wisdom in this book. The lessons she taught me have changed my life, and these simple truths can change your life as well."

— Joel Osteen

Senior Pastor of Lakewood Church and New York Times Bestselling Author



“Over the years, people have often referred to me as Pastor John Osteen's wife. He was the founder of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, and a remarkable husband, father, and man of God. Now many refer to me as Joel Osteen's mother! But I'm just Dodie, a lady who loves God and

people and a mother of five wonderful children who all happen to be in the full-time ministry. I hope that as I share bits of my story with you, you will be encouraged and blessed.”

—Excerpt from IF MY HEART COULD TALK

If My Heart Could Talk
A Story of Family, Faith, and Miracles
by Dodie Osteen

On sale wherever books are sold.

FaithWords
A division of Hachette Book Group



be kinder than we feel like being. After all, we are to be imitators of Jesus, even toward our spouses. We should be lenient with them, never allowing resentment to enter into our hearts.

SECOND, WE DECIDED TO FOLLOW THE BIBLE'S INSTRUCTIONS TO NEVER LET THE SUN GO DOWN WHILE YOU ARE ANGRY AND TO NEVER GO TO BED ANGRY AT EACH OTHER.

I can't tell you how many times John rushed home from work because it was almost sundown on the days when we had been arguing.

He took that verse seriously, and I was glad, because when you go to sleep angry, you wake up angry. With true forgiveness, every day truly feels like a new day. If you and your spouse disagree a lot, consider setting these two rules. They helped us tremendously.

No matter what was going on in our lives at the time, there's one thing John and I always made sure of: We always had a good time. We had a date night about once a week. Usually we'd go out to dinner, just the two of us. Once I became a mother, there were times when John had to pull me out of the house, but I was always so glad

when he did.

If you want a healthy, lasting relationship with your spouse, I encourage you to make having fun with them a priority. Set aside time to spend together. Life gets so busy that we must schedule time together and hold each other to it.

Marriage is not always easy, but approaching it the way God has instructed us makes it so much easier. *Colossians 3:14* reminds us, "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."

Waiting on God, trusting His timing and treating your spouse with love causes marriage to be a phenomenal blessing rather than a huge burden. 🌸



DODIE OSTEEN

Dodie founded Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, in 1959 with her husband, John Osteen. God miraculously healed her of cancer in 1981 after she had been told that she had only a few weeks to live. She is author of the best-selling book *Healed of Cancer*.

Living Lively

WITH LAINE

Inspiring • Instructing • Engaging

Introducing Laine Lawson Craft, small in stature, but feisty and powerful in spirit. This southern belle is passionate about people. She is very purposeful about inspiring and instructing others through the process of being, doing, and having a lively and abundant life! She uses her personal life experiences along with her humor and wit to bring practical application to your everyday life. Very personable & approachable, you will not leave the same once being in the presence of lively Laine.

Invite Laine to your next event because she desires to spread this abundant joy and lively living to others. Also, be sure to sign up for her lively and encouraging inspirational email. She can come to you and you can keep up with her on all her social media sites. Whatever your chose, just join the movement!



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Visit www.LivinLivelywithLaine.com to learn more about Laine.



CELEBRATING *Single Moms*

GOING IT ALONE, THESE STRONG
WOMEN CREATE LASTING LEGACIES

By Tammy Daughtry

“Let her sleep for when she wakes she will move mountains!” —Napoleon Bonaparte

Single moms, we are not alone. A recent demographic study tallied over 9 million single moms in America who are raising families after death, after divorce, by adoption or the choice not to marry.

Single moms are some of the strongest women I have ever known. It does not come easy to be the head of the household, the sole disciplinarian, the master of homework, the taxi driver, the party planner, the banker, the chef, the organizer, the plumber, the trash-taker-outer and, yes, the nighttime snuggler.

I was a single mom for over eight years after my divorce. My daughter, now 16, was 2 when we divorced. She is amazing, beautiful and successful in school and has more friends than anyone I know. Her dad and I have been co-parenting and working together on giving her the most complete and healthiest childhood possi-

ble.

Being a single parent was one of the hardest but most rewarding experiences of my life. I endured many lonely weekends and quiet Christmas mornings while she was at her dad’s house. But I am absolutely convinced that being a single mom can be done well, with stability and with complete enjoyment.

I often found myself pioneering a new pathway but was proud of the decisions and life experiences I was giving my daughter. She never lacked for anything and she was always loved and secure. She has always been given the freedom to love and celebrate her father, and she has never heard us argue or fight. I’m thankful for my life as a single mom and I will always be grateful for the “village” that walked the journey with me.

Without a doubt, single mothers have raised some of the most successful individuals I know.

One is Dr. John Trent, the founder of Strong Marriages International, a counselor, an educator, a best-selling author of more than 20 books and a sought-after

speaker on traditional family. Guess what? He was raised by a single mom. John was an adult when he first met his dad and discovered that his mom had told him only about his father’s positive characteristics.

John asked his mom about this one day. “Mom, why didn’t you tell me more of the truth about all the negative side of my dad?”

She replied, “I knew that every time you looked in the mirror, half of the genes looking back at you came from your dad. I never wanted you to wonder about yourself, so I just told you all of his great aspects.”

John cites her smart decision as part of the reason he grew up so stable and went on to break the cycle of divorce in his family. He is The Gary Chapman Chair of Marriage and Family at Moody Bible Institute and travels the globe advocating for healthy marriages and families. Kudos to Dr. John’s single mom.

Also raised by a single mother was Bruce Koblisch, president and CEO of The Worship Network. He is also the past president of the Gospel Music Industry and the one who took the Dove Awards to national television. A strong and stable woman, his mother enlisted the support of her local church and two sisters to raise Bruce and his four brothers, all of whom have had very stable lives.

I have heard Bruce tell how the men in the church embraced his family and took the boys fishing and hunting, taught them how to work with pocketknives and influenced them toward their manhood. Bruce’s single mom ultimately became a teacher who influenced young people for decades through her kind-hearted conversations and listening ears. Kudos to Ms. Koblisch.

Lisa Harper, world-renowned author and speaker, adopted a beautiful little girl from Haiti in 2014 and has a wonderful story of single motherhood. Her vocational resume includes six years as the director of Focus on the Family’s national women’s ministry, where she created the popular Renewing the Heart conferences, attended by almost 200,000 women, followed by six years as the women’s ministry director at a large church in Nashville.

Her academic resume includes a master’s of theo-

logical studies with honors from Covenant Seminary in St. Louis. Now a sought-after Bible teacher and speaker, Lisa was on the Women of Faith national arena tour for eight years and speaks at many other large multi-denominational events as well as at hundreds of churches all over the world. Lisa is not only a successful woman but a successful single mom.

One of the greatest books for single moms was written by Angela Thomas. A quick excerpt about *My Single Mom Life*: The day she sold the only thing she had—the diamond from her engagement ring—to take care of her kids was the day she began to believe they were going to make it. In that decision, the faith she had always talked about became the faith she was going to learn how to live. In the years since, God has given Angela a passionate desire: to live an amazing life, even while raising four kids as a single mom.

In this book she shares her hard-earned wisdom on loneliness, dating, finances and parenting, encouraging every solo mom. “As a gift to our children,” she says, “we can become healthy moms who are strong and amazing women in spite of our circumstances.”

For this season and for every day, I simply want to applaud and celebrate the single moms who are raising a family alone, as well as the generations of amazing single moms who have gone before us. Thank you for being strong, stable and tenacious in your love for your children and for yourself. Happy Mother’s Day! 🌸



TAMMY DAUGHTRY
CoparentingInternational.com

Tammy is the Founder of Co-Parenting International, an organization dedicated to addressing the critical impact of co-parenting on children of divorce and in remarried families. Her book, *Co-Parenting Works! Helping Your Children Thrive After Divorce* released nationally through Zondervan/HarperCollins July 2011. Tammy is the executive producer of the new DVD series, *One Heart, Two Homes: Co-parenting Kids of Divorce to a Positive Future*. This multi-media resource includes 33 other guest experts and explores many different scenarios of co-parenting; it can be used in a small group setting, a seminar or by individuals at home.

GOD'S PURPOSE OF SEX
WAS IT PROCREATION *or* PLEASURE?

THE WHY'S OF SEX

By Marilyn Scott

From the beginning, sex in the eyesight of God had a dual purpose. At first indication in *Genesis 3:16*, sex was designed to remind woman of her role in ushering sin into the world by having her bear children with pain.

To the man, it was a reminder by seeing the death-like suffering of his wife during childbearing. Yet God's plan was to have a people who would obey His rules by populating the earth. This population plan continued until and after the great flood when Noah was instructed to repopulate the earth with his seed.

However, there were women in the Bible, such as Sarah and Hannah, who were barren for quite some time before God opened their wombs and allowed them to conceive and bear children. During their barren period there was sex, but no children were being born. Did that mean they were not to indulge in sex? Absolutely not.

Now Sarah overheard God telling her husband, Abraham, she would have a child. God's purpose went flying directly over her head. She laughed and asked, "Considering that I am waxed old, will I have pleasure?" *Genesis 18:12*.

There is a flip side to a woman's punishment, the

first part of God's plan. God also made sex to be enjoyable, fun and even exciting with all the bells and whistles. He planned for married couples to enjoy sex, too. Therefore, sex is by indication purposeful to God with dual results.

"Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished (or thrilled, filled with pleasure) always with her love." *Proverbs 5:19*

Paul spoke more about this. He said that if single people could not exercise self-control, it was better to marry than to burn with passion for sex. Passion to have sex for what? Is it to have children or to enjoy one another or both? It is both.

He also wrote to the married couples: Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence (affection or sex); and likewise also the wife to the husband. He told them not to deprive one another from having sex with each other, unless with permission for a time, which may be during a consecration, or fasting and praying.

He also said, and I like the way my husband puts it, "Come together quick!" This is so Satan will not tempt you to be out of control. In other words, so we will not commit adultery or bring infidelity in our marriage.



"LET HER BE AS THE LOVING HIND AND PLEASANT ROE; LET HER BREASTS SATISFY THEE AT ALL TIMES; AND BE THOU RAVISHED (OR THRILLED, FILLED WITH PLEASURE) ALWAYS WITH HER LOVE." *PROVERBS 5:19*

So, there you have it. We are to do both—to come together and have children, if it's God's will, and to have pleasure in sexual affections for each other.

God made us to have that sensational feeling. If you are single and start to burn, you ask God for either self-control or pray that the man He has prepared for you find and marry you. To the married couple, we are to take care of one another.

Unfortunately, sin has caused sex to be so out of control that it appears to be normal for a woman to conceive a baby without getting married. But that was not, and still is not, God's purpose for sex.

If we don't stay in God's Word, the world will make us believe that we can have sex when we feel like it and with whomever we please. We think it's our body and we can do with our body whatever we want. Again, that's

not God's purpose for sex. *Romans 12:1-2*

God had a sacred plan for man and woman getting married and having sex. He gave us all the do's and don'ts of how to handle our bodies when it comes to sex and the purpose of it.

Let's not get it twisted. 🌸



MARILYN SCOTT

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Marilyn is known as a praying woman who exercises the gift of prophetic dreams and intercessory prayer. She is the author of *God Speaks: Discover How He Communicates through Dreams and Visions*, which also has

been published in Nigeria. Marilyn has more than 30 years' experience with companies such as IBM, Xerox and American Airlines. She is married to Nathan Scott, a minister and an author. Email Marilyn at marilyn@blesscott.com.

Sex: God's Design for us

His plan encourages not only reproduction but marital bliss

By Lisa Bevere

...Oh, lover and beloved, eat and drink! Yes, drink deeply of your love!

—Song of Solomon 5:1 NLT

Scripture is not shy in describing God's plans for lovemaking. In fact, it is rather explicit and at times borderline erotic. If you don't believe me, just spend a few minutes reading Song of Solomon with your spouse and see what happens.

Unlike many of us, God isn't ashamed of sex. He delights in its beauty and celebrates its purpose. God wants to be intimately involved in our intimacy. Sex within the marital context is not just good and permissible—it's sublime and encouraged!

"Drink deeply of your love!" says Song of Solomon. In other words, sex is mysterious and profound; there is no reason to settle for a superficial experience. Taste and enjoy intimacy's unparalleled satisfaction.

Sex is like hitting a relational refresh button, so it is not surprising that Scripture often uses water as a metaphor for sexual pleasure and fulfillment. Water is essential to the continuation of life. It provides refreshment and vitality.

A healthy sex life isn't the full substance of marriage, but its value cannot be overstated. God intends for lovemaking to be celebratory, a wonderful reminder of the profound covenant that intertwines two lives.

Reproduction is one purpose of sex, but from the be-

ginning God designed it to also be a source of bliss. "Let your fountain be blessed," Scripture directs, "and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love." *Proverbs 5:18-19 ESV* Other translations of this verse say: be enraptured (NKJV), be exhilarated (NASB), and be thou ravished (KJV).

Clearly God is no prude. He created the sexual organs and is not embarrassed by their functions. He made sex and hardwired its sensations. Our pleasure is His delight. He doesn't want to curtail our sexual desires. He wants to sanctify them.

SANCTIFIED SEX

Sanctification is the journey of holiness, which we also could say is the journey to God's best for our lives. Think of it as the extraction of the human nature and the infusion of the divine. Developing an awesome sex life—which is part of God's best for us—starts with embracing God's call to holiness in the bedroom. In doing so we will discover sexual gratification that transcends the limits of human imagination.

But God can sanctify, or make holy, only what we offer Him. Sadly, many of us refuse to present our sexuality to Him because we are ashamed of past mistakes or

held captive by past abuses. These experiences cause us to view our sexual natures as unholy, so we try to shield these shadowed realms from the Holy One. It's surprising how quickly many forget that the Creator of sex has the power to redeem it and make it holy.

Shame wants to keep the focus on us and away from God. It entraps us in an attempt to cause us to reject God's mercy and grace. Ultimately, what looks like shame initially can actually turn into a form of pride. We insult God's mercy, as though what He did was not enough to heal this intimate area of our lives.

We continue to hold our pain close rather than release it to the light of love. Those who feel God neglected to protect them in their sexual past are often afraid to invite Him into their present. The fact is, God didn't fail you; what happened was the consequence of fallen humanity. Don't let the shame of sin or abuse keep you from enjoying the full extent of marital intimacy and sexual bliss. God longs to heal every broken place and make it whole.

Neither heritage nor failures can disqualify God's children from establishing a new sexual legacy. But only God can sanctify our sexuality and redeem our mistakes

past, present and future. And only by His grace does the marriage bed become a shelter of fulfillment and love. Acknowledge your brokenness and give it to God. He will transform your sexual nightmare into a beautiful dream.

This article was adapted from John and Lisa Bevere's book, The Story of Marriage. To learn more about the message and enjoy free marriage resources, visit MSeries.tv. 🌸



LISA BEVERE
LisaBevere.com

Lisa believes in women and empowers them by weaving the practical with the profound truth of God's Word in award-winning curricula and best-selling books (*Lioness Arising, Fight Like a Girl, Nurture, Kissed the Girls and Made Them Cry* and more). Her heart breaks over social injustice. As an advocate for change, she rallies others to be an answer to desperate problems near and far. She and her husband, John Bevere, co-founded Messenger International, an organization established to teach, reach and rescue. Lisa is the mother of four sons and grandmother of three.



The joys of SUB-MISSION

Marriages flourish when spouses put each other first

By Kathleen Cooke

One of the questions I frequently get asked when I am traveling and giving speeches with my husband, Phil, is, “How are you able to work together so well?”

Trust me, it didn’t happen overnight. Both of us had our initial career choices that we thought would be our life’s work. I graduated from college with a double degree in elementary and special education. Phil graduated with a film production degree but soon discovered that he needed to learn to write.

Our career paths began to fuse as I realized my true hidden passion wasn’t to be a schoolteacher but to be an actress and involved in the media business. I remember that my favorite toys as a child were costumes so I could create characters and plays. I had a passion as a child that was never fully realized until Phil loved me so unselfishly that he gave me the freedom to see it come into reality when we moved to Hollywood.

Unselfish love allowed our lives to merge and flourish.

In our culture today, I see young couples trying to figure out how to survive with both of them having full-time careers while raising a healthy family. It’s challenging.

For Phil and me, one person had to step aside for a time and drop the personal agenda. Phil would leave for many weeks at a time to shoot projects all over the world.

There were no cellphones then, so it was challenging for me as a mother of two small children with no family close by to help. I would go for weeks even not knowing if he was OK.

It was only after he returned that I learned about some of the perilous things he had endured, like almost falling out of a helicopter or battling the water with paddles upstream to keep piranha fish away so he could bathe in the Amazon River.

In *Ephesians 5: 22-30*, women are told to submit ourselves to our husbands. How can you have a vibrant marriage, life and career by doing that? How does that work in our “it’s all about me” culture today?

It works by focusing on the last part of that same verse: “as you do to the Lord.” Do you have a relationship so committed and secure in God that you can trust your earthly protector, your husband, with your needs, dreams and desires? Have you built and secured that impenetrable relationship with your Heavenly Father first?

A few verses down, in verse 28, we are told that husbands are to “love their wife as Christ loved the church.” How much is that? It was so much that Christ was martyred with one of the most agonizing deaths that a man could endure. That’s about as unselfish and unconditional as you can get.

When you have this kind of relationship with each other, we aren’t talking about submission but a sub-mis-

sion. It becomes a journey of walking beside each other, working in tandem and putting the other one first by laying down your wants, needs and ambitions for each other.

Your husband’s mission in life becomes your sub-mission. Suddenly, his passions become birthed in you and you willingly want to take an interest, become involved and assist him in making his dreams a reality because they are also yours.

It means you enthusiastically and willingly step aside to see him flourish, and he does the same for you. When husbands and wives love this deeply and selflessly they become as one—one mind and one heart, just as Jesus

talks about in *Mark 10: 7-9* when He says “the two shall become one.”

Many times, Phil will would

then step in for me while I was on a set shooting a commercial, film or play. He put aside his agenda to see that I could flourish in my career as an actress, and he continues to do so as I fly around to speak and teach regularly.

When you are of one heart and mind, there is no better sex. It takes on much higher level from a mere physical attraction and need, and it changes the dynamics of those intimate encounters. Sex, then, isn’t about satisfying your own needs and desires; it’s about satisfying those of the love of your life.

Your minds have already reached a unifying state, which enables you to reach a place in your physical being that is attainable only because of your selfless desires. It’s magical, breathtaking and a taste of God’s riches. It’s the most fulfilling love for us that we can ever experience on earth.

During our earliest dating talks together, Phil and I agreed that we wanted to grow old together with shared life experiences. So we made it a point to clear schedules and travel together whenever possible. By doing that, we saw and shared cultural experiences and challenges and could relate and communicate because of them.

Through the years we have become tuned into the same frequency and know what each other is thinking without speaking a word.

Two years ago we co-founded the Influence Lab (influencelab.com) and are now developing and shaping this nonprofit organization to tell stories and develop media within the digital age.

I believe this could have happened only because we made it a point to do things together—to make each other’s sub-mission our own mission. Our unique talents and skills have developed over the years to complement each other. Only two souls committed to God and then to each other can do this.

“When husbands and wives love this deeply and selflessly they become as one—one mind and one heart...”

When you marry, your greatest mission as a wife or husband is to make your partner’s desires, am-

bitions and needs your sub-mission. If you’ve chosen the mate God has for you, and you love him as deeply and unconditionally as you do God, and he trusts and loves you, his wife, as God loves His church, there’s never a dull moment or a dead end path.

Are you willing to embark on a sub-mission? It will ultimately be the greatest mission of your entire life. 🌸



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An actress, writer and speaker, Kathleen is a founding partner with husband Phil Cooke at Cooke Pictures in Burbank, California. Kathleen is responsible for casting and creative consulting for CP’s projects and productions, which include some of the country’s leading nonprofits and ministries. She is on the advisory board for the Hollywood Prayer Network, Hollywood Connect and the National Board for the Salvation Army. She is founder and former director of Christian Women In Media Association Hollywood/West Coast. She and Phil recently launched The Influence Lab, focusing on global missions. She is the editor of the monthly publication of Influence Women, influencelab.com/women. Twitter: [kathycooke](https://twitter.com/kathycooke), Instagram: [kathleencooke](https://www.instagram.com/kathleencooke)

Save the children

Prayer and perseverance can lead lost souls back to God, family

By Debra George

We had been out on the streets winning souls many times, but tonight would be different. One young girl's destiny was at stake, and we would have the privilege of leading her to Jesus Christ.

It seemed like a normal night when a caravan of soul-winners I had trained from New Destiny Christian Center, with Pastor Paula White, drove down the Orange Blossom Trail in Orlando, Florida. We had planned on going farther into the area when I saw a beautiful blonde sitting alone on a bench next to the street. We turned around.

I walked toward her with my friend, Rachel, and another friend. We approached her, introduced ourselves and found out her name was Winona. We shared *John 3:16* with her and told her how much Jesus Christ loved her. She was receptive and prayed with us, asking God to forgive her and inviting Jesus into her heart. It was a

glorious moment.

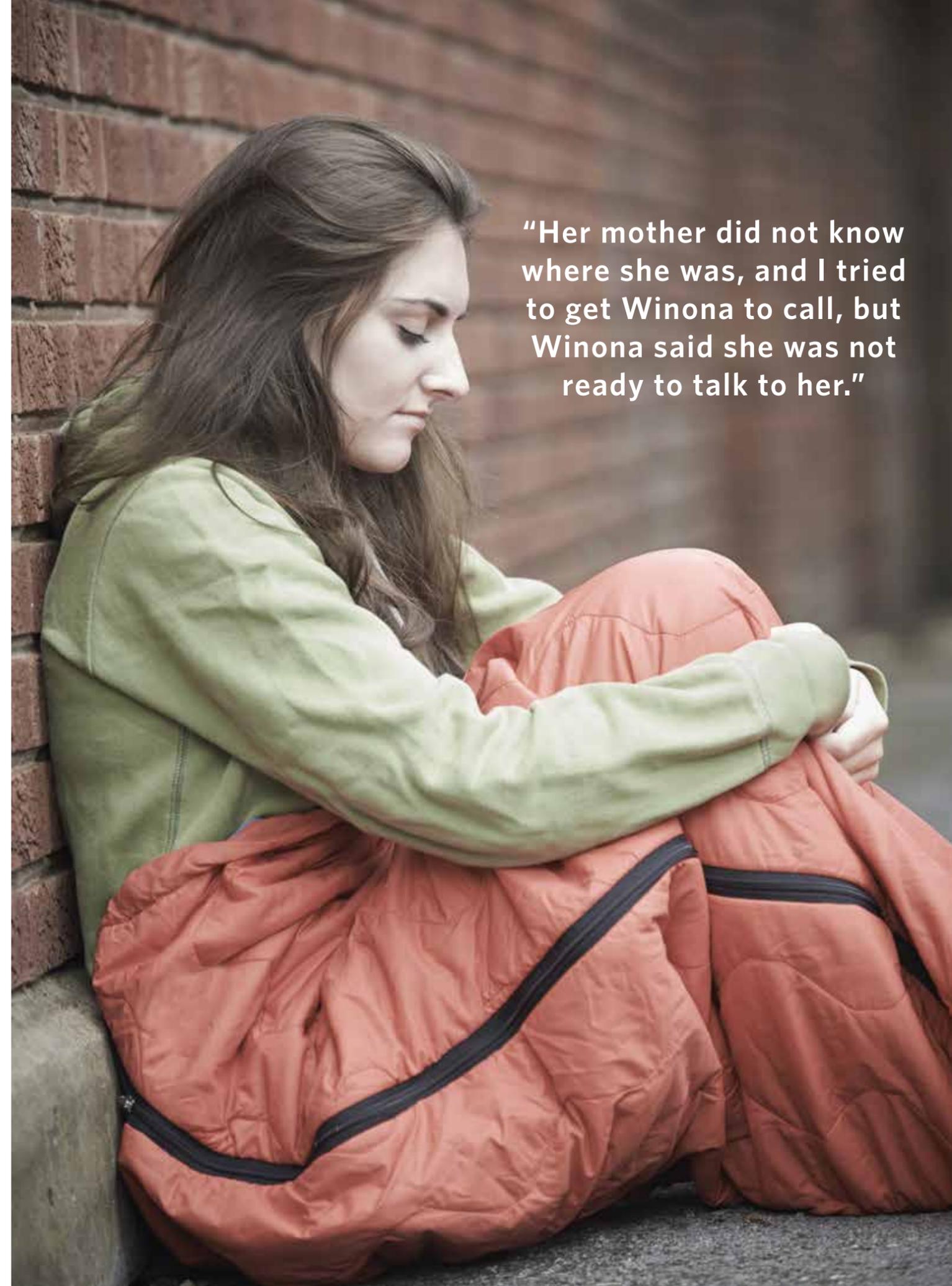
At one time, Winona said, she had served God and that her mother was a strong believer, but now she felt trapped in a life of prostitution and crack addiction. She told us she sold her body for money to buy crack and then did the crack so she could bear to sell her body.

But that night, it seemed as if that cycle was coming to a screeching halt. We wept as we listened to her story. I wondered what it would be like to be addicted, alone and hopeless.

Her mother did not know where she was, and I tried to get Winona to call, but Winona said she was not ready to talk to her. I got her mom's number and decided to call her within the week.

Before we left Winona that night, we hung a lot of bling on her, which is what we always do in the prostitution district, and gave her candy. I declared over her that she was coming out of prostitution and crack addiction

"Her mother did not know where she was, and I tried to get Winona to call, but Winona said she was not ready to talk to her."





“Others simply vanish, never to be seen again. We must take every precaution to safeguard our daughters from predators.”

and that she would serve Jesus Christ and fulfill her destiny. It was a very moving night.

We continued on the Orange Blossom Trail and led many drug addicts, drug dealers and prostitutes to Jesus Christ. But we could not get Winona off our minds and continued to pray for her.

Two days later, I called Winona’s mother and let her know that I had met her daughter. I said, “Your prayers for your daughter are working.” She began to cry as she shared with me how she had called out to God asking to hear from Winona that night.

I marveled at the faithfulness of our God and the timeliness of the phone call. I let her know that we would continue to pray for Winona. She was so touched and thankful.

The night we met Winona, she allowed us to film our encounter with her, and we posted the video on my YouTube channel. Several months later, when we were out winning souls, we ran into Winona. We prayed with her again and encouraged her to come off of the streets,

but she wasn’t ready.

But what Winona shared with us that night astonished us. She said she had found the video and that when her clients came into her hotel room, she would tell them she had a video she wanted them to see.

Expecting pornography, the clients were surprised when it turned out to be her Jesus video. Her clients, she said, were so moved that they would leave money on the table and depart, saying they got what they needed.

When we met Winona, she had been living on the streets for seven years. We wanted to see her fulfill God’s plan for her life. During the next three years, we continued to minister to Winona; not only that, in every church I spoke in across the United States I asked God’s people to pray for her. And pray for her we did.

Winona was in my heart. She was in her mother’s heart. But more importantly, she was in the heart of her Heavenly Father.

Weeks ago, I received a call on my cell phone. It was Winona. Tears welled up in my eyes as I heard her voice.

She said she had returned home to her mom and her son and that she was off of crack, free from prostitution, on fire for Jesus Christ and serving God in her church. What a victory!

Maybe your child is away from God. Maybe you are praying for someone just like Winona. I want you to know that there is power in prayer. Jesus said in John 14:14 that we can ask anything in His name and He will do it. That’s what happened when we prayed and refused to give up on Winona.

Today, a lot of Winonas are living on the streets, selling their bodies and experiencing drug addiction. Many young girls are being forced into the sex trade every day, and God desperately wants us to reach them. We con-

tinue to take teams into the darkest places of our cities across America to reach the Winonas of our world. You can help by praying with us and connecting with us.

I am joining my faith with mothers around the globe to pray for our children. I encourage you to pray Psalm 91 each day and thank God that the blood of Jesus Christ covers over them, their homes, their automobiles, their schools, their churches and their comings and their goings.

If you have a child who is bound by an addiction or is missing, contact us and we will pray. You can connect with us at debrageorge.org.

“I believe total freedom is coming to you and your family.” *John 8:31-32* 🌸

How to keep our children safe

About 700,000 children 18 and under go missing every year in the United States. Some are abducted and tragically murdered. Others simply vanish, never to be seen again. We must take every precaution to safeguard our daughters from predators. Here are a few ways we can help.

1. Know your children’s friends and be careful about whose home you allow your daughter to visit. Sometimes, no matter how nice people seem, behind closed doors are people who are involved in sexual perversion.

2. Talk openly and honestly to your daughter about her social media. Monitor the pictures she posts. Instruct her not to give out personal information about herself such as her cell number, her home address, her school or where she works. Many times grown men and women pose as high school students when in actuality they are predators. Many have already served prison time for sex crimes.

3. Make sure her friends list on social media

contains only people that she knows. When you open yourself to people you don’t know personally, you are playing with fire.

4. Do not allow your daughter to be out walking alone, even during the daytime and in her own neighborhood. I see young people walking by themselves while talking or texting on the phones and oblivious to their surroundings. It takes only seconds for a car to pull up, grab your child and drive off.

5. Check the websites that show where the sexual predators in your area live. You may be surprised by what you find out.



DEBRA GEORGE

Debra has devoted her life to winning souls and raising up a soul-winning army for Jesus Christ. Whether Debra is walking the streets of the inner city to spread her message or speaking in a church or at a conference, her mandate from God is to bring hope to people from all walks of life.

Live in D-E-S-I-R-E

How single Christian women can deal with sexual longings

By Crystal McDowell

For 23½ years of marriage, I enjoyed sex with my husband. Unfortunately, my marriage ended, but my desire for physical intimacy did not. The absence of sex didn't hit immediately, but after a while ... I missed it. While marital sex wasn't always a Hollywood romantic experience, it was a significant and consistent part of our relationship.

Many single Christian women feel this loss. Let's be real: Sex is good. Sex in marriage can be great. God created sexual intimacy within marriage as beautiful, pleasurable and memorable. Yet sin pollutes the original purpose of sex, resulting in fornication, adultery and other acts that usher in judgment. Our sex-saturated culture tries to convince us that we have the right to fill our desires in any way we want. They label our conviction to abstain as archaic and old fashioned.

Yet we aren't held hostage to the deceptions of the ungodly; instead, we freely choose the complete surrender of our sexual desires to Jesus Christ. As servants of God, we willingly—not grudgingly—recognize that He doesn't command us to abstain from sexual immorality to punish us. Rather, as a loving heavenly Father, He wants to protect our spirit, mind and body.

Having the desire for sexual intimacy isn't wrong; it's acting on that desire outside of marriage that makes it sinful. How do single Christian women deal with our sexual desires without deviating from living righteous lives? The answer is found in the acronym D-E-S-I-R-E:

D: Determine to love God with all of your being. "You shall love the Lord your God with

all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." *Matthew 22:37, ESV*

When we make up our minds to live for Christ no matter what, we don't fall carelessly into sexual sin. Our desire to please God becomes greater than our desire to please ourselves. This is established in our personal, consistent and private time of prayer, reflection and meditation in God's word.

E: Expect the desire for sexual intimacy to show up. "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." *James 1:14*

To deny that we have sexual desires when we really do is setting ourselves up for future failure. Instead we expect times when our sexual desires may be aroused, and we deal with it immediately with honest prayer to God, accountability with a godly girlfriend-mentor and a renewed commitment to purity.

S: Subject your thoughts to Christ Jesus. "Take every thought captive to obey Christ." *2 Corinthians 10:5, ESV*

As soon as we recognize impure sexual thoughts, we speak to ourselves the truth of God's word. We use the weapons of truth to kill every imagination that isn't glorifying to Him and subject our thoughts to obedience in Christ Jesus.

I: Involve yourself in meaningful and purposeful activities. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." *Ecclesiastes 9:10, ESV*

Many of us can find unhealthy ways to cope with our sexual desires, and this can lead to other issues. It's better to seek out opportunities that keep our hearts,

"Yet we aren't held hostage to the deceptions of the ungodly; instead, we freely choose the complete surrender of our sexual desires to Jesus Christ."



minds and bodies engaged in building God's kingdom, whether at work, school, church or in our communities.

R: Resist anyone or anything that tempts you toward sexual immorality. "He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability." *1 Corinthians 10:13, ESV*

We make selective choices in our recreational activities that don't set us up with frustrating and unmet sexual desires. We also need discernment from the Holy Spirit to separate ourselves from anyone who seeks to entice our sexual desires with words, actions or both.

E: Engage your faith in God's ability to grant your desires. "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." *Psalms 37:4, ESV*

If we have the desire to be married and enjoy sexual intimacy, God knows. He will grant our desires as we first make every effort to delight ourselves in Him by being faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

Following the steps of D-E-S-I-R-E is a process that will take time. We must be careful to not beat ourselves up over this issue. There is grace for those who long to

please the Lord with obedience and purity in their sexual desires.

My own journey continues as I keep my steadfast focus on my Husband (*Isaiah 54:5*) to keep me in His perfect peace. Hope remains for the single Christian woman as long as her trust and faith is in the Lord to meet all of her needs according to His riches in glory. 🌸



CRYSTAL MCDOWELL

Crystal is a writer, speaker, and teacher with a passion to encourage women to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. She's a published author of numerous Christian curriculums and articles covering spirituality, motherhood, and relationships. Crystal writes daily devotionals at daughtersofthecreator.com. This expanding global ministry with thousands of subscribers continues to reach women from all walks of life. Crystal's first book, *Seriously God? Spiritual Insights When Life Suddenly Changes*, will be released in 2016.

HEAL

your wounded soul

God's power transforms hurts of the past to hopes for the future

By Joyce Meyer

The most important message I can ever share with people is that God loves them and has good plans for them through life in Christ. We all need to have a revelation about God's love for us, because until we get this, we'll struggle to have true, lasting love, joy and peace in our everyday lives.

The world is full of wounded, heartbroken people who have been mistreated or abused in some way. And they're pretending to be OK, desperately hoping other people will think they've got it all together.

The truth is, none of us are perfect, and we all go through hard times and get hurt by someone or something. It's amazing the things people can do to others, but it has helped me to understand that hurting people hurt people. And many times when people abuse others, they are acting out of their own pain, so it goes on from generation to generation.

But I have good news: If you've been hurt in the past, you don't have to spend your life being miserable, angry, bitter, resentful or full of self-pity, hurting others. Through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you can receive complete healing in your soul—your mind, will and emotions. God can restore your life and make you just as if it never happened.

Going through the healing process

I know what it's like to hurt so much that you don't think you can stand it anymore and you don't have hope

for a better future. For most of my childhood, my father abused me, and I never knew growing up what it was like to feel safe, secure and loved. As a result, I became an angry, suspicious, critical, judgmental adult.

When I left home at 18, I thought I was leaving my problems behind me, but I came to realize there were many problems in my soul that were left over from the abuse in my childhood. I desperately needed the healing love of God to restore my life!

Isaiah 61:1-3 (NKJV) says Jesus came "to preach good tidings to the poor ... to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn ... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ..."

Thank God for His Word and His promise to heal the brokenhearted, comfort those who mourn, and set the captives free! Now, I'm not going to tell you it's easy to go through the healing process; it takes time, diligence in studying the Word and lots of prayer to walk out the healing that is yours by virtue of the blood of Christ.

But as believers in Jesus, we have the authority of His name to overcome sin and access the power of God in our lives so we can experience the promises in His Word.

And the promises of God belong to anyone who is born again.

"And the promises of God belong to anyone who is born again."

Making the divine exchange

When we come into a relationship with Christ, a divine exchange happens. He takes our sin and the messes in our lives and gives us His righteousness, peace and joy (see *Romans 14:17*). He gives us joy for mourning, beauty for ashes, praise instead of depression, forgiveness instead of blame, righteousness instead of guilt, hope instead of despair—on and on. All we have to do is give up our ashes and receive God's beauty.

A good place to start is admitting you need God's help. It's OK not to be OK—God helps the humble. (See *1 Peter 5:5-7*.) We need to let God take us apart before we fall apart and then put us back together again. We need to pray, "I love You, Lord, and I appreciate my salvation, but I am a mess! I want the truth in Your Word to set me free from deception and the bondage of sin and pain in my soul. Please help me ... open my eyes in any area where I am deceived and teach me Your truth."

Then we need to commit ourselves to study the Word and grow in our faith in Christ. As we renew our minds according to the Word, we will trust God more completely and believe what He says more than what others say about us or to us, more than our feelings and more than our circumstances. That's when we live in His beauty, filled with His love, free from the prison of our past, and healed in our soul.

I want to encourage you today to humble yourself

before God and take Him at His Word. He loves you more than you can comprehend, and He wants you to be free to walk in His good plans for your life. Take time every day to study His Word, pray and cast your cares on Him because He cares about you and wants what is best for you. When you do, you'll find that life becomes a beautiful, wonderful, amazing journey.

For more on this topic, order Joyce's *Beauty for Ashes Action Plan*. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, *Enjoying Everyday Life*, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries. 🌸



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2 hands, 2 hearts

1 POWERFUL GOD

How to create a beautiful marriage that will stay that way forever

By La-Tan Roland Murphy

I see my mother's hands at the end of my sleeve. It's uncanny how much my hands look like hers. I am thankful I will be able to look to the end of my sleeve all the days of my life and remember the amazing, servant-hearted woman who gave me life—the woman who used her hands to bless the lives of many.

One of my favorite memories from childhood is the many times I climbed onto a chair to eagerly watch mom prepare yummy Southern goodness to share with others: a cake for sister so-and-so, food for a family friend who lost a loved one, a meal for any extra folk she might randomly invite home for lunch after Sunday church.

Her hands moved with intention, purposefully preparing for “just in case” moments that occurred often. I remember her saying, “I better make extra (just in case) someone unexpected shows up.” Not only were her hands prepared to serve, so was her heart.

I am so thankful for the beautiful woman I lovingly refer to as “mom.” She truly is a steel magnolia. She's beautiful, tough, sassy, honest, loving, compassionate, prissy and service-driven.

Her hands never were idle. Her unspoken motto: Always something to do, someone to do for.

Another poignant memory tucked away in the pockets of my heart is the many times I watched mom's tired

hands move slowly across my father's bedbound body after Parkinson's disease took him hostage.

Ever so carefully, she shut the world out and focused on bathing, applying lotion from head-to-toe, keeping bedsores at bay—her hands soothing the forehead of her true love with cold cloths when feverish.

The strong man she had once depended upon now depended on her. God gave her strong hands beyond her human ability to keep going. Her hands moved with intention—determined to keep his bed sheets and his diapers perfectly clean. The same hands once used for making love to him now made love to him with beautiful, Christ-honoring strokes of care.

What I want you to know, friends, is this: Every shared moment leading up to their senior years, every word spoken to each other, every conflict resolved with tender love instead of hate, every daily decision to choose respect over disrespect—all stacked up like firewood reserved for the bitterly cold winter sure to come.

These kept her heart aflame during those exhausting days of service when her physical strength felt weak and she felt like giving up. The look in his eyes spoke desire to the end. And the sparks between two old lovers created an invisible wild fire of passionate love—enough to keep her heart ablaze. Two hands, two hearts and one powerful God equipping and helping.

In today's society, we want a marriage of love, respect and passionate sex, but we don't want to have to work for it. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Here are six ways we can create a beautiful story with a beautiful ending:

RESPECT: Everyone wants to be respected. Many times we respect others way more than we respect our spouse. Many times we treat the people who “use and abuse” us better than we treat the one we were appointed to respect above all others, our husband. Respect takes two people working together, not one bearing the weight of it all. A fantastic book to read on this topic is *Love and Respect* by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs.

SERVE: Everyone wants to be served, but few want to serve. Serving one another in love creates a spirit of oneness no one can sever. In the bible we are challenged to serve others. A few bible verses to look up: Proverbs 11:25, Matthew 23:11, Luke 6:38, 1 Peter 4:10, Romans 12:9-13, Galatians 6:10, Luke 6:35, Acts 20:35, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 3:23-24, Matthew 25:40, Isaiah 58:10

LIVE INTENTIONALLY: Live and love like it's your last chance. If you think a kind word, say a kind word. Intentionally create ways to express your true feelings to those you love most. A great book about this is *Intentional Living (Choosing A Life that Matters)*, by John C. Maxwell.

FORGIVE: Remember, anger kills passion. After 17 years of misery, authors Laine and Steve Craft threw out the marital mess they'd created and created a new menu for restoring wedded bliss. Read *Start Again from Scratch (A No-Fail Recipe For Reviving Your Marriage)* by Laine Lawson with Steve Craft.

BALANCE: Every couple must balance their individual lives so their lives as a couple can also be balanced. Life demands our attention and we run hard and fast. This leaves little room for the relationships that mat-

ter most. For a healthy life with loving relationships, we must work hard to live a balanced life. Read God's Holy Word, The Holy Bible. Read it daily. It has transforming power when two people mutually claim its power.

BECOME: Never stop growing as an individual. Work hard to learn new ways of becoming all God intended you to be.

Are you satisfied with the woman you have become or do you find yourself emotionally sleep-walking through each day, just going through the motions, feeling as though life has passed you by? Determine in your heart to keep growing as a person.

You are becoming what God intended you to be. Your life shouldn't look like someone else's life. God's plans for you are unfolding—even now, as you read this article. Read my book *Becoming a Woman of Interior Elegance*.

The picture of my parent's hands on the Bible is a treasure to my heart. Two imperfect people decided to dedicate themselves to living by the truth of God's Holy Word. When two hearts made a single decision to put their faith in one powerful God, everything changed for the better. Every mess they had made up to that point became a powerful message of God's redeeming love.

The history of their lives came together before my father passed away. They had created a strong foundation of faith that gave courage in the end and, in doing so, created a beautiful final chapter for their children and grandchildren to reflect upon for years to come.

Two hands, two hearts, one powerful God, leading and directing their steps. 🌸



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DANCING WITH A STAR

A child's cry slowed things down for a moment to cherish

By Kerri Pomaroli

"I will be with you when you pass through the waters, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. You will not be scorched when you walk through the fire, and the flame will not burn you."

—Isaiah 43:2 (HCSB)

I know this issue of *WHOAwomen* is about balance. I had to laugh as I thought about it. Will I ever master the art of balancing life as a writer, comedian, actor, mom, wife, short-order cook and, don't forget, evangelist who travels 40 weeks a year?

I remember being on a tight book deadline one night when I heard my 3-year-old crying out to me from her bedroom. It was about 9:30. When I went to check on her, she was standing in her crib with her arms wide open, waiting for me to pick her up. A praise CD was playing in her dimly lit room while her older sister lay fast asleep. Ruby didn't want to sleep; she wanted me to hold her and dance.

Ruby's nickname was "Party in the Crib" because she never wanted to sleep. She would just sing to herself and jump around until she passed out. Even though she was 3, she also was my second child. So I did whatever I could to keep her my "baby."

She's also petite, so I like to pretend I can still cradle her even though she hates it. She wants to be free. When she does want to be held, even for a second, I'm there. I'll take it when I can get it. The older they get, the cuddles seem so fleeting.

She looked at me and said, "Up, Mama?" So I picked her up and held her tight in my arms. I smelled her hair and instantly had a flashback of listening to this same worship CD while, as an infant, she was in the neo-natal

intensive care unit at UCLA hospital.

There, I wasn't allowed to dance with her or free her from the wires and machines that were literally keeping her alive. We were practically living in the hospital, and my emotions were on autopilot. I knew if I played any kind of Christian music, I would lose my mind and might not recover.

One day, while home resting, I cried out to God and turned on this very CD. I immediately hit the floor sobbing. I cried out to Him and, as my tears hit the wet carpet, I was moved to pray. Those prayers helped me to fight for my daughter.

I believed that I could trust God in this very scary situation. I brought the music to her crib in the hospital and had it playing 24 hours a day. She needed her Mama to be strong, and I wasn't going to let her down.

The doctors said that Ruby had several incurable health problems that would require her to have oxygen and medications for years to come. They also said she would require leg braces or a walker, but I asked for healing. I stood on God's promises and trusted in Him, praising Him.

At first, I didn't see why I should praise Him, but I praised Him anyway. I praised Him from the floor and that was OK.

And as I held my healthy, bobbing, beautiful, singing Ruby Joy that night, we danced. The lyrics kept repeating, "You're beautiful to me. You're so beautiful." I sang



it to my daughter, but I knew in my heart that God had me come into that room so He could sing to me, "My daughter Kerri, you're beautiful so beautiful to Me."

God was calling me to have a moment with Him in that room. I'm glad I listened. I would have missed one of the best slow dances I've had in a long time if I had been too busy. Even now, when my big 5-year-old girl bounces into my bed like Tigger, I have to resist the urge to get up and scramble some eggs and rush to get her hair brushed and teeth sparkling clean.

Today we sang songs and I marveled at how funny she is. She changes the lyrics to make me laugh—yes, a chip off the old block. So, yes, she went to school with a cold bagel and grapes in her lunch, but we had a great dance party and sing-along that I wouldn't trade for anything.

I'm still learning to do this "dance" as "Mom-Jack of All Trades" but, as they say, we're never finished. We're just stumbling through and singing along the way. One day we will look up and see that it's over. I don't want to say, "I missed the good stuff."

You never knew how much your life will change when you became a wife and a mother. I'm sure in the beginning you thought about the possible loss of freedom, but look how fulfilled your life is because you trusted Him.

I'm sure that you, like me, have learned so much and can actually say you are thankful for the challenges that

you have faced with your husband and children. I know it might sound crazy, but because of those challenges you are better equipped to parent them for future trials.

Just know that you can trust God and that He is always in your corner for whatever fight you might have. He will never let you go it alone.

Take a moment to think about these questions:

1. Are you going through a "pass through the waters" moment right now, where you can't see the outcome? Have you done so in the past? How did you get through it and what have you learned?

2. What has God used to get your attention? Music? His Word?

Dear Father God,

Thank You for allowing me to experience moments with my kids where you show me how infinite your love is for me. Thank you for reminding me that I can "pass through the waters" and not drown, even when my tears seem to overtake me. You are my Strong Tower. You are my Deliverer. Thank You! Thank You!

Amen 🌸



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and *General Hospital*. Her latest book, *Guys Like Girls Named Jennie*, is being considered as a motion picture.

Living in Rhythm

Is your pace too fast? 'Get away with me'

By Colleen Rouse

I imagine disappearing for a couple of days, tucked away in a quiet hotel room with curtains pulled and a “do not disturb” sign hanging on the doorknob. If you’ve longed for a respite like this, you’re not alone.

I know what it’s like to desire an escape from the many responsibilities as a wife, mother and pastor. I can even recall a time when all I could do was feel sorry for myself because of the unrelenting demands covering my life.

I was once that weary soul in a perpetual state of busy. But God opened my eyes to a more sustainable and peaceful way of life, teaching me to conserve my heart energy and avoid burn out.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” *Matthew 11:28-30 MSG*

Priorities: First things first

It begins with the right priorities. My phone is not permitted on my nightstand. Why? It’s because I had developed the habit of checking it first thing upon awakening. Then the Lord asked me, “Are you more connected to your device or your Deliverer?”

I realized it wasn’t about who needed me but about who I needed. As capable women, we can unintentional-

ly deny ourselves what we truly need—to come to Him.

Establishing right priorities means maintaining a daily habit of directing my first thoughts to Him, my Savior and Lover of my soul. Those first moments belong to Him, as I quietly declare Who He is in my life.

Refueling: Time with Him

If His yoke is easy and His burden is light, why are we so exhausted? I have in the past relied too much on caffeine-induced energy when what I truly needed was real energy from “real rest,” which isn’t something you grab as you dash out the door. It is a work of refreshing He does in your spirit and soul when you are still.

“Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest.” He desires to restore us back to vitality through an intimate refueling process. The good news is that process doesn’t necessarily require silence, and neither does it mean we have to hide out in a hotel room.

I have learned to choose a “Selah” over a Starbucks, pausing to turn away from busyness to focus on Him and keep the connection I establish in the beginning of the day. Getting away with Him refuels our heart energy and gives us a heightened sense of focus not found in caffeine.

Pacing: The rhythm of grace

As high-capacity women, we can push ourselves to the brink of exhaustion simply because we normalize our warp speed pace of life. In my former life, my attention was focused on the most pressing issues and

“Establishing right priorities means maintaining a daily habit of directing my first thoughts to Him, my Savior and Lover of my soul.”

the most demanding people. As a result, my heart became drained and my creativity suffered. I needed a new gauge for what was normal: the rhythm of His Grace.

Rhythm sets the pace for music, a measured flow or movement. “Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.” The passage is in present tense, implying careful and continued observation. Rather than moving to the driving beat of the world’s system, we must identify the pulse of His grace.

I began to notice where His grace was in operation, and if I found it lacking, I ceased my efforts. As we develop the sensitivity to see and focus where He is working, we begin to defuse the sense of urgency to answer every demand and see greater results.

Fitting: God’s custom design

There is no such thing as one size fits all, but you and I have the opportunity to enjoy custom-designed attire by the Spirit of Grace. He promises, “I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.”

There is, however, one challenge: You must dispose of your current wardrobe, the way you operate, before putting on the new apparel.

Before my salvation, I was a highly independent woman. I discovered that I had gifts and was quite proud of them. Unfortunately, the pursuit of self-success brought a heavy weight of dissatisfaction.

When I discovered Jesus, I found that true freedom is found in interdependence, not independence. I also learned that I was not the owner of these gifts but merely a steward and accountable to Him. This means we put on the custom, tailored yoke of His guidance and then He is able to lift and carry the weight of responsibility for our daily lives.

Jesus said that in order to find your life, you must first

lose it. The more we yield and come under His direction, the more freedom we enjoy. We are not wired to be pushed around by the world but to be led by the Spirit. When we live interdependent on Him, we are free to live in the moment and enjoy this dance called life.

So, what about you? How’s your rhythm?

Without IT music lacks breath, clarity and harmony.

Without IT life becomes depleted of pause and devoid of momentum.

IT esteems quietude as highly as utterance.

IT rewards measured intentionality with vitality.

IT produces the space within which joy and peace can thrive.

IT reminds us to do this life interdependent on Him.

IT holds true to the essence of Sabbath.

IT is the cadence of the wise set by the Divine.

What is IT? IT is the Rhythm of Grace. 🌸



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The AFFAIR that really wasn't

DAVID'S TREATMENT OF BATHSHEBA WAS AN ABUSE OF POWER

By Leslie Vernick

It was a regular Sunday morning when my husband and I attended worship at our home church. Our senior pastor was on vacation, so our associate pastor was preaching on *Psalm 51*, David's prayer of repentance.

My pastor described the backdrop of what led up to King David's prayer. He told about David's adultery with Bathsheba and how, after Bathsheba became pregnant, David covered up their affair by having her husband, Uriah, put in the front lines of battle so he would be killed.

This was not the first time I felt sick after hearing David's sin described as an adulterous affair. This may surprise you, but David's relationship with Bathsheba was never mutual or consensual. It was not an affair. It is best described as David's lustful craving coupled with an abuse of his power. David took Bathsheba to his bed because he could. How do you say "no" to the king?

As victims often are, over the years Bathsheba has been blamed for tempting David. After all, she was bathing on the rooftop. But in that culture, that's where people bathed. When you have no indoor plumbing, drain-

ing the basin by tipping it over into the rooftop gutters was the quickest and easiest way to empty the water. She was not engaging in seductive behavior.

David knew of Bathsheba. He had seen her before that fateful evening. Uriah, her husband, was one of David's faithful fighting men, and he was away fighting for his king in battle. After that fateful night, there is no record of David ever speaking to Bathsheba again until she sent him a note telling him she was pregnant.

David's first plan was to cover the whole mess up by calling Uriah back from battle and giving him time with his wife so that he would think he was responsible for the pregnancy. But when that scheme failed, David abused his authority and sent Uriah back to the front lines of battle so that he would be killed. (For the story read 2 *Samuel 11 and 12*.)

Nathan, God's prophet, confronted David by telling him a story about a rich and powerful man who selfishly used his power to take something from someone who was helpless to stop him. At hearing the story, David became outraged at such injustice. When Nathan told him, "You are that man," David saw himself anew. His heart broke and thus came his prayer of repentance.

After our Sunday service was over, I said to my pastor, "I know your sermon wasn't primarily about David and Bathsheba, but do you honestly believe Bathsheba had a choice?"

Surprise engulfed his entire face. Humbly he said, "I never thought of it that way."

I explained that in the Bible, Nathan defined David's sin as an abuse of power, not of sexual misbehavior. Bathsheba is never held accountable by God or by Nathan because she was a victim, not a willing participant or mutual adulterer. (For God's vindication of Bathsheba, see Christ's genealogy in Matthew where it says David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, verse 6.)

Sexual abuse by powerful leaders has always been rampant. Sometimes we are tempted to blame the victim or misconstrue the relationship as consensual and mutual when it is nothing more than abuse of power. Jesus

knows that those with power are tempted to abuse that power to dominate and control other people. He saw the political and religious leaders do it and sternly warned His followers against embracing this form of leadership.

He said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." *Mark 10:41-46*

Biblical headship or leadership never entitles one to misuse his authority or position to get his own way, whether it is in a church, a company, a community or a family. These roles are given to us by God to humbly serve those individuals or groups that have been entrusted to our care, not to have our egos stroked or to bully others to get our own way.

If my seminary-trained pastor had never thought about David's sin as an abuse of power, perhaps it's time we talk about it more publicly. This past year we've read stories of women who have come forward to say that Bill Cosby, a powerful and popular public figure, abused them. For a long time few people believed them. They were laughed at, discredited it, vilified. It's hard for us to believe that someone we all know and love could be guilty of such heinous behavior.

If Bathsheba had told someone what happened that night, would she have been believed? I doubt it. Christian women all around have silently endured sexual abuse from a Christian leader because they were afraid to tell the truth. If she told you her story, would you believe her? I would and I hope you would too. 🌸



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Sex, Silence & Shame

It's time to acknowledge mistakes and learn from honest discussion

By Shea Wood

How important is sex in life? Does sex earn you a degree? Does it build your character? Does it draw you closer in your faith walk? Really, did I just ask those questions?

I am serious. Sex is such a grandiose topic that it deserves serious thought. Our society has made sex into this vastly important issue. We should be able to sleep with whomever, whenever and however we choose because it is our right. Right?

The daily sales pitch we get from the media reinforces this idea and emphasizes the importance of it. This is where it gets messy and confusing. When I read my Bible and see what God has to say about sex, it looks nothing like what I am being presented. Yet, when I go to church I hear nothing about sex. Huh?

So, all my lessons about sex come from TV, movies and school? A topic so important that people lobby to

marry same sexes and yet we as a body of Christ have nothing to say? We are not teaching and sharing from our own mistakes so that others can learn and understand how their faith is directly impacted by the sexual mistakes we made.

The confusion about sexuality is perpetuated by our silence. The church as a whole cannot continue to be silent. I am not advocating that we spew hatred and anger, but we should live lives that are open and transparent to share with those in the darkness.

This also means several of us must come out of our own hidden darkness. Many of our lives could have been changed and set on a different course if we had not been shamed, looked down upon or had a finger wagged in our face for sexual sin. Some who point the finger had the same sexual sin in their lives, and yet chose to shame instead of help.

Their mistake could have enabled them to reach

out to those around them. Pride keeps us in this trap of shame and guilt and says to us that we must keep these secrets in the dark or we too will be shamed and cast aside. It's like the saying goes, "Hurting people hurt people."

If we are guilty and have unaddressed, unhealed sin, it's easy to look down and shame those around us. When we refuse to look at ourselves and what we did, we are silently approving of the mistakes of others.

There is too much sex out in the world for us to simply say "Don't do it" and not offer help by digging deeper into the issues that surround the sexual sin. Do we hide our own sexual sin from those that sit on the same pew with us on Sunday morning? Do we desire to live closer to God? How can we fix a problem if there are not those willing to open up and share?

There are three main traps we fall into with sexual sin. Think about the following and ask God to help you search your heart about these traps:

1. We say to ourselves: "I can watch sex in a movie and not be affected."
2. "Sleeping with someone before marriage is like driving a car before you buy it. You want to make sure it's right."
3. We pretend there are no scars or residual effects from previous sexual encounters, either forced or consensual.

I have fallen into all three of these traps. I have seen other women fall into these traps. I have also seen women walk free from all three traps, including myself. The Lord has great plans for us, including sexual wholeness

and purity. He loves us and gave us guidelines to live by so that we would not be deceived and led into a pit away from Him.

Sex is a tough topic and can be very touchy to talk about. The deception comes when we don't speak, leaving those around us to flounder in the dark. This is not about judging; it's about being honest before the Lord and allowing Him to lead us. We need His guidance now more than ever, and I want every woman to know

the power and love He has given us to overcome these sexual traps.

"No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a washtub or shoves it under the bed. No, you set it up on a lamp stand so those who enter the room can see their way. We're not keeping secrets; we're telling them. We're not hiding things; we're bringing everything out into the open." *Luke 8:16-17 (Message)*

If you made your share of sexual mistakes when

you were young, it often set you on a path that made it hard to find your way back to God. The shroud of shame and guilt, not to mention the pain of broken relationships, haunted you. It followed you everywhere—into marriage, raising children and even interacting with those around you. There is a great hope. This hole can be filled and repaired by Jesus. He makes all things

"There is too much sex out in the world for us to simply say 'Don't do it' and not offer help by digging deeper into the issues that surround the sexual sin."



new, including sex. 🌸
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WHAT SEX MEANS TO Self-esteem

An unhealthy perspective can distort your view of life

By Susan Milligan

Did you know that your self-esteem can be directly tied to your sexuality? What a thought! How can sex influence the way you feel about yourself? How I discovered this truth is a story I would like to share with you.

I became sexually active at the age of 16 through an unwanted encounter. It was not a violent rape, but it was something I did not want and I verbally expressed that desire. The young man ignored my request and proceeded to take what he wanted.

“No” means “no” and unfortunately, because of our sexual culture, many do not understand that simple truth. Over the next 10 years, I fell victim to three additional rapes, including a violent gang rape. By the time I came to the end of myself and sought help, I was riddled with self-hatred, had no self-value and, adding to my hopelessness, had a wrong perception of God.

Through a deep journey of healing, I discovered that my sexuality had been influenced by my exposure to pornography at a very young age. Seeing images of women’s naked bodies in magazines changed not only my idea of beauty, but it also began to redefine my idea of what a woman is put on this earth to accomplish.

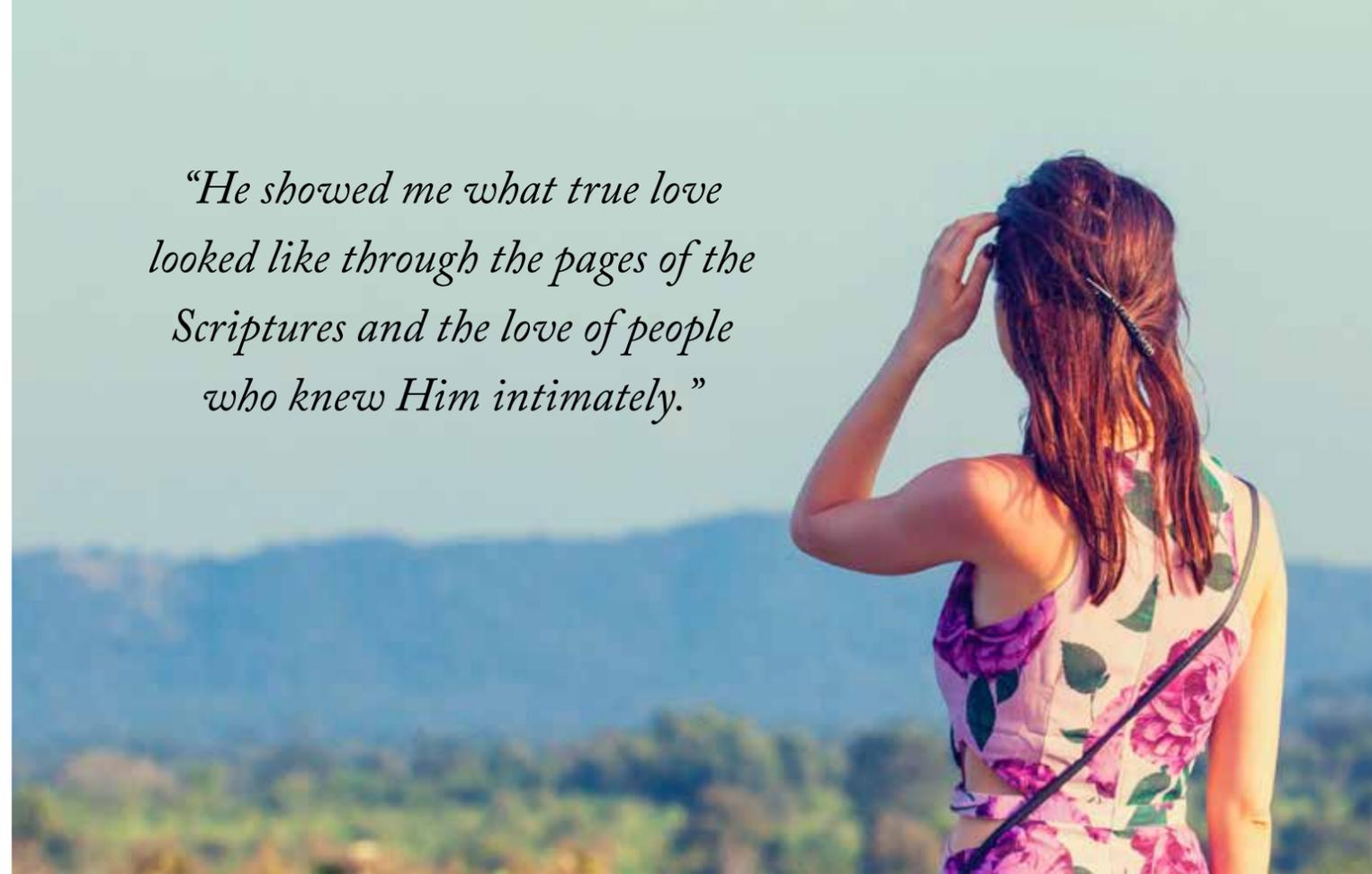
No longer did I see myself as a valuable creation of God with a unique purpose, but I began to believe that I was put here to pleasure men. I didn’t understand the full extent of that lie at the tender age of 7, but the seed was planted in my mind. No longer was my mom the most beautiful woman in the world; the women on those pages were, and I began to strive to imitate them.

I wanted to be desired, and that desire fueled my self-esteem. With that perception, it is easy to see how I thought sex equals love. When your self-esteem is based on whether you are desirable and you don’t fit that bill, you believe your life is over.

But God began to redefine my image of beauty and sexuality as He guided me in my healing journey. He showed me what true love looked like through the pages of the Scriptures and the love of people who knew Him intimately.

I discovered that shame—not God and His truth—was defining my idea of love and sexuality. God began to wash away the shame of my past and my wrong thinking and replace it with His honor and truth found in His original design. The journey continues, but my value is no longer in my sexuality. Rather, it is in my identity in Jesus Christ.

“He showed me what true love looked like through the pages of the Scriptures and the love of people who knew Him intimately.”



God’s original intentions for sex was to create life and for us to find pleasure with our spouse. For some, the latter is a dangerous thought, but I encourage you to read Song of Solomon in the Bible. It may change how you feel about how God views pleasure.

Let’s not ignore the flip side, where our culture focuses on sex only as pleasure. Balance is the key, and we can’t take either of these valuable reasons for sexuality—life and pleasure—out of the equation. Sex is a way to be one with your spouse and invite the mystery of God into a human act.

The reward is not only the potential of human life, but a renewed life in your marriage and yourself. When sex is done right, your self-esteem is renewed when you are one with your spouse and God is with you. There is no room for shame, but only the sweetness of His design.

If you can relate to any part of my story, please know there is hope and the best is yet to come. It requires surrendering to the one who created your sexuality. Don’t let shame hold you back—the double honor that awaits you is beyond your imagination.

Today I can say that I have moved from self-hatred to God-confident, devalued to valued and broken to whole. I want to leave you with two Scriptures that brought me hope in my journey:

Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours. *Isaiah 61:7 NLT*

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine. *Ephesians 3:20 NRSV* 🌸



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Susan, along with *WHOA*women contributor Shea Wood, is a co-founder of Lock and Key Ministries, and they are co-authors of *Moving Him In*. Susan is the child of an Army colonel and is a fan of Windex. A licensed minister, she lives in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

MAMAS, DON'T PLAY

Our children's spiritual health is well worth the fight

By Cheryl Lane

I am sure most of you mamas and grandmothers are a lot like me. I am pretty easygoing, but let me tell you, “Don’t dare mess with my kids or grandkids!”

I am not one who thinks my children can do no wrong (although my grandkids are pretty perfect). Seriously, I hope they all know I will stand with them through any situation, even if they caused it by making wrong choices, as we all do at times.

I think God built within us mothers a desire to nurture and protect those He has put in our care. We have heard amazing stories where moms risked their lives for their children:

During a terrible tornado, a heroic mom grabbed both of her children, ages 8 and 5, ran to the basement and wrapped them in a comforter. Though she saved their lives, she lost both of her legs as a result of being crushed in a mound of debris.

In another tornado, a 39-year-old mother died shielding her 15-year-old daughter in a bathtub.

Another mom was trapped in a car that burst into flames, but somehow she managed to hand her children to the rescuers before she sadly burned to death.

One young mom, holding her 18-month-old son, jumped from a burning building. She saved his life even though she was unable to walk after the incident.

Now I want us to think about caring for and protecting our children and grandchildren not only physically but in a spiritual way. *Nehemiah 4:14* says, “Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your

houses.” Many women would wrestle a bear to physically protect our children and grandchildren, yet they don’t even think about fighting for their children spiritually.

What do I mean by “fighting spiritually”? I am talking about being a Godly mother and using the weapons of warfare that God has given us. I am talking about speaking the Word of God over your children daily, praying over them and binding the enemy from their lives. Listen, ladies, this is not weird, flaky stuff. This is what God expects us to do.

We are called to demonstrate faith in every area of our life and to pass that faith to the next generation. We are to pray about everything and worry about nothing.

Philippians 4:6-7 in the Message Bible says, “Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.”

It is a natural thing for people to worry, but it is supernatural when we choose to fight the good fight of faith and believe God instead. We are called to teach our children that nothing is too hard for God and that even when we are not around, He is still with them.

In *Exodus 2* we have a great example in Moses’ mother, Jochebed. Determined to save her son, she put him in a basket in the river at just the right time so that Pharaoh’s daughter would find him. That decision kept Moses from being killed with the other male babies.

Because of Jochebed’s tremendous faith and courage, God’s plan was fulfilled in her son’s life. God was able to use Moses to save His people, and Jochebed and her husband are listed in the great “Hall of Faith” in *Hebrews 11*.

We need to understand that successful parenting is not just about raising an educated person who makes a lot of money, or who is well known. Successful parenting is raising a child who knows God personally, knows who they are in Christ, knows how to pray and is determined to fulfill God’s plan for their life. Mama, you don’t know it, but you could be raising another Billy Graham.

You may be the only one speaking the Word and praying over your children, but do it anyway. Dare to be different from the world’s way of parenting. Jochebed refused to allow a godless system to take her son’s life. She was courageous enough to put him into a position to be used of God even if it meant risking her own life.

We live in a world where it looks like the enemy is out to destroy our families. Refuse to allow him to have his way. Take the authority that the Word of God says

we have and use it against the enemy. Just as you would fight to protect your children physically, do whatever you can to protect them spiritually, and to have God’s plans fulfilled in their lives.

Prayer and faith in God can change anything. Mamas, don’t play around when it comes to the lives of your children and grandchildren. 🌸



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Cheryl is a co-pastor with her husband in Texas. She writes a weekly newspaper article and is a women’s ministry conference host and speaker. After overcoming breast cancer, Cheryl has published her first book, *What To Do If It Happens To you: The Path From Devastation To Celebration*. Her book extends beyond battling a disease and can be applied to every area of life. It is Cheryl’s desire to help others continue to stand with God during life’s sometimes devastating situations, and find hope and healing through the power of His Word. She has been a featured guest on local TBN and Daystar Christian television.

“Successful parenting is raising a child who knows God personally, knows who they are in Christ, knows how to pray and is determined to fulfill God’s plan for their life.”



One simple question led to an UNFORGETTABLE JOURNEY

by Tammy Turnage

It was a hot Mississippi summer morning when my Mom and I decided to “head up the road” for about a two-hour drive to the little town of Mize, Mississippi, to visit her older sister, Leslie.

Aunt Leslie is a joy to visit. With more than 90 years of wisdom, she’s always full of stories recalling a household of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We all ended up laughing and giggling until our sides hurt, and as the day ended, we reluctantly got in the car to go home.

Aunt Leslie has played the piano in her church most of her life and is a wonderful pianist. When my daughters and I would go on a trip in the car, usually driving to their college and back home, we often would call Aunt Leslie and ask her to play some hymns on the piano for us so we could all sing together as we were traveling. And she would! She would play on her old brown upright piano, and we would sing along.

The miles would pass by much more quickly when we were singing. We didn’t seem to have a care in the world.

Like Aunt Leslie, Mom is an amazing woman. She is a leukemia survivor of more than 10 years. (I wrote a story about her a few years ago in the Volume 3, Issue 3 of *WHOAwomen*). She is a true miracle that even doctors can’t explain.

Yet God had a plan. Not too many years after Mom’s health was restored, our precious Dad was diagnosed with dementia. From his initial diagnosis until he breathed his last breath, Mom was with him every step of the way.

With endless doctor visits, making the heart-wrenching decision to move Dad into an assisted living home, and providing all the emotional support he needed, she was a shining example to everyone around her. She showed what true love and “until death do us part” really mean.

On this particular day, Mom and I were traveling the highway from our house to Aunt Leslie’s when we started talking about Mom’s upcoming October birthday. I asked her, “Mom, has there ever been a place you have always wanted to go, but have never been?”

She looked straight ahead and said without hesitation, “I’ve always wanted to go to Dollywood.” My sister and I had no idea Mom had always wanted to go to Dollywood. “Mom, we will just have to try and make that happen!” I quickly called my sister and said “Hey, guess where Mom has always wanted to go? Dollywood! Want to go?”

She said, “Sure! Let’s get our calendars together and make some plans.”

The next few months were a whirlwind of phones

calls as we set a date, made hotel arrangements, coordinated travel plans and developed a detailed itinerary for our trip. Those few months went by rather quickly as we got everything in order. Finally, in October, my sister flew from Texas to the airport near our home. Our trip was now becoming a reality. We packed our suitcases in the car and headed “up the road” to Dollywood.

All week long we shared laughter, singing and even a few tears as well. One early morning, we were driving through the mountains where the crooked road seemed to follow right along the stream. Then “Welcome to My World,” one of Dad’s favorite songs, came on the radio.

It was as if he were right there with us. It brought tears to our eyes, and I’ll always be grateful to God for that sweet memory. And as my sister shared with me, we so often felt Dad’s sweet presence with us during our trip together, which made it even more memorable to us.

The mountains were beautiful. The fall leaves were changing from green to red, orange, and yellow. We enjoyed lots of meals out, shopping and two days at Dollywood. We had a great time with the many shows,

restaurants, shops and all the many things there were to see and do. One day we traveled to Gatlinburg for a wonderful breakfast, and were so happy to be there at the perfect time of year for a local crafts festival.

Very early one morning, I put my headphones on and headed outside for a walk. As I looked up into the sky, I realized the stars were still faintly visible. Then, what a stunning sight it was as the morning sun began to appear in the distant horizon just above mountaintops.

I turned the corner and was enjoying all the beauty of this cool morning when the inspirational song “I Can Only Imagine” came on the radio. I couldn’t help but think of my Dad in heaven. I looked at all of God’s amazing handiwork in the sky, and the mountains, and I thought of how glorious heaven must be.

As I walked, the tears flowed and my heart was grateful once again for God’s sweet way of touching my heart that morning.

Mom’s favorite part of the trip was actually one that was not planned. On the way home, we decided to stop by Billy Graham’s Conference Center at the Cove





in Asheville, North Carolina. It just so happened they give tours and we were able to have the most wonderful tour of the stunning chapel, peaceful prayer room and a small conference meeting room where we saw a short film on the life of Billy Graham.

We went up to the main sanctuary area of the chapel, where the staff invited my Mom to sit at the piano and play. And if you can't feel close to God in the mountains hearing my Mama play the piano in Billy Graham's chapel—well, then something's just not right. We had the most memorable visit and were so glad we stopped by for a tour.

You know, life goes by so quickly, and we often have the best intentions to "take that trip one day." Yet we get so busy with family, school, jobs, church responsibilities, ministries and friends that we don't stop to follow through with our dreams of "one day we should..."

Let me encourage you to make time. Today, take one step toward that dream or that trip with your parents, children or grandchildren. For my sister, mother and me, it was a trip we will never forget.

We now have precious and cherished memories etched in our minds and our hearts that we will forever treasure, and hearts overflowing from time spent together. And to think it all started with one question: "Has there ever been a place you have always wanted to go, but have never been?"

Happy travels! 🌸



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Tammy began studying the piano when she was 3 years old and has a degree in piano performance. As a pianist, organist and vocalist, she has been featured as a soloist with symphonies, solo concerts, and church and local theater productions. Her new piano CD is *Classical Praise*. She writes and blogs from life's experiences and is working on a new book. Making their home on the Mississippi Coast for over 28 years, Tammy and husband Kendall stay busy with daughters Kristen and Maria, son-in-law Brian and granddaughter Summerlyn. Follow Tammy on her blog, Pinterest, Facebook and Twitter.

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Solving the intimacy equation

How to make your relationships flourish

By Laine Lawson Craft

I wanted to express my heart in this thought today about intimacy. There are so many parts to intimacy that I have created a type of equation.

Despite the abundant and glorious experiences of intimacy, some of us don't know how to experience it. Intimacy is a gift from God. We were created in His image with intimacy as a part of what He wanted us to experience while living here on earth. And that's not just in an intimate relationship with Him but in all of the relationships in our lives. Intimacy on earth is just a brief taste of what we will experience when we finally meet Him in heaven forever.

Intimacy is defined as a close, familiar and usually affectionate or loving personal relationship with another person or group. I wanted to touch briefly on each of these dynamics of intimacy so that we all can have stronger and deeper relationships.

The first part of intimacy is closeness. If we aren't close, intimacy can never be realized. Closeness would indicate constant communication going back and forth in the relationship. I love to ask how good a friendship would be if you caught up a few minutes a year. How could you have a close relationship if you never see or talk to one another?

That leads us to the second part of the intimacy equation: familiarity.

How can you be intimately involved in relationships without being totally familiar with them? You can't have a deep, meaningful relationship without being comfortable and safe. If you can't be accepted as who you are, you can't go very far into your feelings and emotions.

Familiarity means being well acquainted with someone. So being close, coupled with being familiar in relationships, allows us to be the last part of the equation: loving and affectionate.

In order to truly love in a relationship, there has to be a deep understanding of the other person. With this knowledge, affection and actions naturally overflow. Many people confuse sex and intimacy. Sex can be an action that grows from the sum of the other parts of the intimacy equation. But sex is not intimacy.

One must be able to be closer than ever, familiar, safe and loved before intimacy can really be fully realized. Love is the greatest commandment from our Creator, who told us to love Him first and to love others with the love from Him that flows through us. That is what sets us apart from this dark and cold world.

I pray that you have intimacy with God in your personal life. I pray

you are close with Him and spend a lot of time with Him each day. We can't show God in the darkness unless we first know God. This comes through intimacy that He created us to share with Him uniquely.

When we are close, familiar with and safe in Him, we are more than able to love out of the abundance of intimacy we experience in our hearts from Him. Then this level of intimacy is demonstrated through every one of our relationships. We become better mates, mothers, daughters, friends and followers of Christ.

Intimacy is just a decision away. Choose today that you will draw close to God. Be familiar with His ways and demonstrate your love for Him through the way you live your life daily. Allow His extravagant love and intimacy to flow to you so this love can flow through you, allowing intimacy in every area of your life. 🌸



LAINA LAWSON CRAFT

Laine wears many hats: author, founder of WHOAWOMEN, publisher of *Living Lively with Laine WHOAWomen* magazine, and host of an upcoming television program. Her passion is to bring broken parts back to life through the process of being, doing, and having a lively and abundant life. Laine and husband Steve have been married for more than 29 years and are blessed to have two sons and a daughter.

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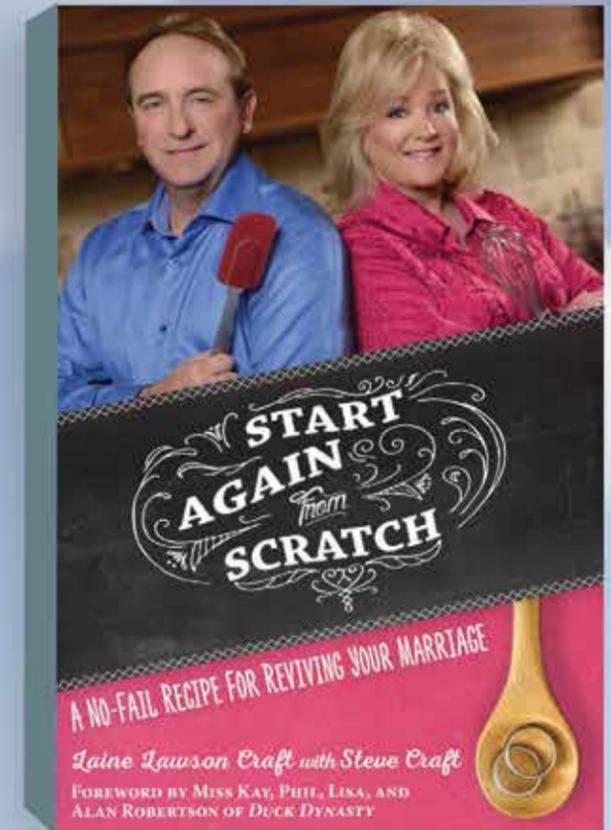
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