

WHOA

W O M E N

Livin' Lively with Laine

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comfort with
our super soups*

*Three R's for a
**STRONGER
MARRIAGE***

DREAM BIG
think small, see results

**How to
find purpose
from failure**

**FEELING STUCK?
GET PAST
YOUR PAST**

ALI LANDRY

*Beauty and beliefs: The former Miss USA
models love for God and family*

\$5.99 US \$5.99 CAN



61>

WINTER 2016



We all have a story to tell – be it struggle or victory, pain or praise. In WHOAwomen, you'll find stories that will motivate and inspire you to build a more fulfilling life, whether you're a homemaker running a household or a CEO leading a business.

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I am now free to be excited about the miracle of marriage and determined to live up to it, for there is no need to fear. Marriage belongs to God. It's all about Him – to honor, worship and glorify God by being in every way the vessel of His love that He created me to be.

-JULIA POSEL

I said a prayer, and at that point my whole life changed. I became very hungry for God and started changing personally. I saw life from a whole new perspective. I was taken out of the dark and am now in the light, and I'm excited because everything looks alive.

-ROSEMARY FISHER



Share YOUR STORY

You can contribute to the WHOAwomen experience by:

- Emailing us your personal stories at share@WHOAwomen.com
- Joining the conversation on our blog at WHOAwomen.com
- Signing up for the weekly WHOAwomen notes from Publisher Laine Lawson Craft



It is amazing how God has reassured me of His presence through my illness. My friend says He has given me "fresh eyes." I see His glory and majesty surrounding me daily, through the stunning sunsets, the delicacy of the brilliantly colored flowers and the beautiful songs of the birds.

-LOUISE DICK

"I can do all this through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13 (NIV) See yourself as God sees you-favored! He is with you. By His power, you will propel past paralyzing fear as if your life depended on it.

-PAMELA D. HALL

Education, partying, people and travel never quenched my thirst for a purpose bigger than myself.

Nothing satisfies the soul like surrender to Christ. I do not deserve His grace and love, but He gives it freely to anyone who asks. The problem God solved, through Jesus Christ, is my separation from God.

-KAYLA FIORAVANTI

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Ali Landry's career has taken her from a small town in Louisiana to the bright lights of Los Angeles. For our cover story, Publisher Laine Lawson Craft interviewed the former Miss USA about her roles as model, actress, beauty queen and, most important, mother. You'll learn not only about Ali's career but how her faith has guided her along the way.

Share YOUR STORY



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letter from the publisher



Dear WHOAwomen,

Happy New Year! WHOA! Can you believe we are in another new year? I hope that your holidays were filled with joy and blessings.

As we enter into a new year, we are entering into a new season as well. I have so much expectation for 2016 for all of us who are a part of WHOAwomen. I feel strongly that this year is going to be an overflow of God's goodness. We will see many miracles, signs and wonders from God.

Many of us were challenged in several areas of our lives in 2015, and some may still be waiting for a breakthrough. Today I declare and believe that the New Year 2016 will be the year of answered prayers in overflow. In this Winter edition of *WHOAwomen Livin' Lively with Laine Magazine*, you will find many applications on how to make 2016 your best year yet.

If you are a single parent, you will find ways to achieve peace in co-parenting. If you haven't really thought about your financial future, then you will find great tips on how to plan your life financially.

If you suffer from depression or feel you may have depression, we have a fantastic article full of incredible and useful information for you. You also will find

encouraging articles on celebrating small achieved goals, stepping out of your comfort zone, rebooting your marriage, overcoming offense and so much more! I know you will love reading every article.

We are so thankful for you at WHOAwomen. We hope you have connected with us on Facebook, Twitter, WHOA Notes, and our WHOAwomen blog. If you haven't joined us, we hope you will be a part of this amazing community of women around the globe. Just visit WHOAwomen.com today.

Also, I personally invite you to follow me for daily inspirations and encouragement on all of my Livin' Lively with Laine social media. Look for me on Facebook, Twitter @LivelywithLaine, Instagram, and my website, LivinLivelywithLaine.com.

We love you and we are here for you 24/7. Please let us know if you need anything, because we are here to help. Please let us know what you think about our articles, and if you have any suggestions, please let us hear from you!

Also, we would love to hear your story so send it today to share@WHOAwomen.com so you can inspire others with your testimony of overcoming!

Happy New Year!
Livin' Lively with Love,
Laine



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Love the magazine!! Easy to read articles!! Extremely encouraging!

TONYA GIBSON ROBLES 

Great magazine, I love it!

SYBEL BOSS-AYME 

I like this magazine. Got it for a year!

DIANNA LONGORIA 

Can't wait to read this issue - Woot, Woot!

MELISSA MORLEY 

I so love Reba! The issue looks great!

@JP09DISNEYROCKS 

Thank you for picking my story! All glory to God for his faithfulness.

@TRICIASLLEONG 



7 Keys TO LASTING FREEDOM

Learn to Walk in Lasting Freedom... and Help Others Do the Same!

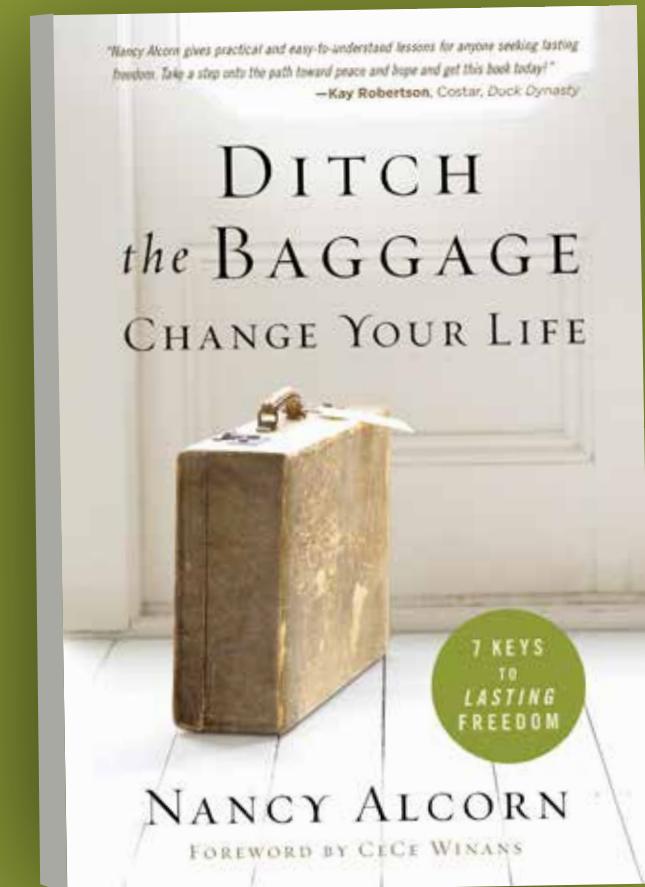
You were born to live free by God's grace!

For some people, freedom means walking away from a terrible memory or experience. For others, freedom means getting unstuck from life-sapping thoughts or behaviors that keep them from flourishing in their relationships and walk with Christ. In her brand-new book, *Ditch the Baggage, Change Your Life*, Nancy Alcorn shares 7 pivotal keys to learning how to walk in lasting freedom.

A Study Guide, Leader's Guide, and 8 video teaching downloads are also available at www.MercyMultiplied.com/DitchTheBaggage.



Nancy Alcorn
Founder and President of Mercy Multiplied, a nonprofit Christian organization that provides a free-of-charge residential program to troubled young women ages 13-28.



Get your copy today!
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or your local Christian bookseller.



Beautiful BELIEVER

Former Miss USA Ali Landry opens up on her successes, tragedies and family values

BY LAINE LAWSON CRAFT

Although Ali Landry has been called one of the most beautiful women in the world, I must tell you: She is the most beautiful woman from the inside out. As we shared on her story, the boldness of her faith overflowed in discussing every area of her life.

Ali is an actress, model and entrepreneur who serves as such a beautiful example of knowing who she is and how to conquer new things without fear. In our interview, Ali discussed her life and how faith has made such a difference in it.

It all started in the small town of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, where she was surrounded by family. Both of her parents were from large families; her mom had eight siblings and her dad had 10. Ali shares that all but one of those family members stayed in the same area all of her life.

Family, especially her parents, has always been important to Ali. Being the eldest in her family, Ali always felt compelled to succeed in everything she did. She also knew deep inside that she was made to impact many in her life. This inner knowledge and drive led her to find opportunities to enlarge her influence.

In her small hometown, opportunities were very limited. Dance classes were the greatest outlet for her to do something in her life. She studied dance for over 15 years. This training later would land Ali a job that put her on the map forever.

From modeling to pageants

While in college, Ali landed a modeling contract that took her to Paris, New York and Miami. Realizing it was not for her, she returned to college and decided to compete in the Miss Louisiana pageant. She felt that if she could win, she would have the opportunity to travel around the state and secure a job for when she graduated. She ended up winning Miss Louisiana, which took her to the Miss USA pageant.

I asked her what it was like to compete with all these beautiful women. She answered,



"I knew they were all very smart and beautiful young ladies, but I tried not to allow myself to get caught up in it all. We were there for two weeks and I knew it was going to be a mental competition, so that's what I focused on.

"Two weeks is a long time. I started seeing girls drop off mentally. I stayed focused to the end and did not even attend our last gathering the night before the live competition in order to gather my thoughts, pray and really visualize what it would be like to be on live television with millions of people watching. It was very important to me to represent myself and the sweet town I was from as best I could without letting my nerves get in the way."

Her strong faith was evident here because she said to herself, "If it is meant to be, then it will be." And it was—she won the 1996 Miss USA crown.

I asked her, "What did it feel like to win Miss USA?"

She replied, "What meant a lot to me was that I am from a small town in Louisiana and people at home gathered in houses and watched television together and they were so excited." This touched her so greatly because it was bigger than herself.

Success in the city

After winning Miss USA, Ali was required to move to Los Angeles, home of the Miss

Universe Co. Ali remembers that it was lonely in the beginning. She was living across the country from her loved ones, and the big city was overwhelming.

Brian Edwards, a talent agent from Louisiana, had watched Miss USA the night she won. He was working in Los Angeles at one of the biggest firms, the William Morris Agency, and was determined to sign her. So he tracked her down.

He arranged a big meeting with the decision-makers. Ali came in and they offered her a contract. Her first call was a soap opera part and she booked it. She even memorized the lines, she said with a laugh, when all she had to do is read them off from the side.

Next, she had a Doritos commercial audition that was supposed to air during the Super Bowl.

She had no idea what a big deal the ads were during the NFL's championship game, so she was a bit reluctant to go on the audition. It was raining that day and she was still not completely used to driving around Los Angeles.

But Brian told her that she really should go because they still had not found the right girl for the ad. She did go, and I asked her what was it like looking back on that particular casting call.

"I went in, and as usual the room was lined with beautiful girls," she answered. She waited her turn and saw the board

showing the sequence of how the ad would be produced. She saw where the girl would dance and catch the Doritos chip in her mouth at the end of the commercial.

Her dance background really helped in a small space. She ended up doing a front flip and a cartwheel into a split. She booked the commercial, which remains one of the most famous Super Bowl commercials of all time.

Brian, who was now her dear friend, told her that after it aired she should brace herself and maybe change her phone number because he predicted that her career would change. He was right. The day after the commercial aired during the 1998 Super Bowl, the phone in fact did not stop ringing with opportunities for almost everything.

Ali shared, "Looking back, I know that there was a path for my life. I resisted the whole way. I feel like I wasn't convicted in my faith enough. I know I didn't pray fully depending on God. Yes, I was a believer, but I just wasn't in a deep relationship with Him." But this relationship with God soon would move to a deeper level because of a very sad experience.

Rising from despair

Ali's first marriage was annulled due to the infidelity of her husband, Mario Lopez. They were married on April 24,



2004, and the annulment came only two weeks later.

She explained, "We met in a very busy season in my life with work and ... I was raised to trust. It never crossed my mind that he would be unfaithful, ever. We dated for six years and we never lived together. I didn't go out, I worked a lot and my friends were all strong Christians. My friend and makeup artist, Davia Matson, brought me closer to God. She was there for me every step of the way helping me heal after this terrible betrayal."

"My heart started changing inside. Looking back on our dating days before I married Mario, I should have called it off. However, the wedding was planned and I didn't want to disappoint my friends and family. The annulment was like the rug was pulled out from under me."

After that experience, she turned to Scripture.

"Nothing would work but my Bible," she said. "I read my Bible, and it kept me from anger and comforted me in my sadness. I was trying so hard to understand how this happened to me and how I

could prevent it from ever happening again. I would ask questions and read the passages and those questions would be answered immediately. The Word gave me immediate peace. I did have sadness and mourned the loss, but I was never angry, and for that I am grateful."

She also found help in the *Purpose-Driven Life* workbook, which allows readers to write their own answers to the questions. "All of this made me realize that I am not alone," she said. "It helped me by writing, praying and staying in the word. I became fully surrendered to Jesus."

"I decided to take the blinders off and ask God to please hold my hand," she continued. "Then I asked God to please help me hold myself together and for Him to see me through because I was so sad and I didn't know how I ended up like this. I needed God to lead me into what was I to do in my career and my image."

Ali had prayed, "God, I want you to be first, and Lord I want you to bring me my future partner so I won't be hurt again. When you know, Lord, that I am whole and healed again and ready to love again. Dear Lord, find the man that is going to hold my heart in his hands and

From that moment on, she said, "Every single thing changed. I wanted to be a part of projects that mattered and made a difference. I wanted my image in the business I was in to reflect my heart. I wanted to find a partner whom I respected, have no sex before marriage and be equally yoked spiritually."

God was faithful to Ali. It wasn't long before she was introduced to her future husband, film director Alejandro Gomez Monteverde. They met at a theology class led by one of Alejandro's business partners, Leo Severeno. She was introduced through another of his business partners and fellow actor Eduardo Verastegui, who was going to the theology class as well.

Ali was hungry for God's Word and for fellowship. Alejandro wanted the same things for his life and marriage.

"Although this was a very difficult time in my life and I was very sad, I heard God's voice so clearly. I guess it is because I stopped all the noise in my life and put full dependence on him."



cherish it and care for it."

Ali knows that God led her to Alejandro. They married on April 8, 2006, in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. They have three children: daughter Estela Inez (born July 2007) and sons Marcelo Alejandro (October 2011) and Valentin Francesco (July 2013).

make shopping smarter, easier and more efficient."

So she took matters into her own hands and joined forces with her partners to come up with what she calls "the perfect solution, Favoredby."

Coping with more tragedy

Ali and I briefly touched on a very sad time she is facing now. It is such a fresh heartache and very difficult for her to talk about. Her father-in-law, Juan Manuel Gómez Fernández, and brother-in-law, Juan Manuel Gómez Monteverde, were found dead with fatal head wounds in Pueblo Viejo, in the Mexican state of Veracruz, on Sept. 19, 2015, about two weeks after they were kidnapped from their home in nearby Tamaulipas.

"They were amazing people," Ali said. "My father-in-law was a devout person that was so full of life and love. He was one of the brightest lights you have ever seen." She was transparent as she shared how hard it is to understand this tragedy.

"I have three children. I can't stay holed up in my house. We have to keep

moving forward even though this is a slow healing process. We are dealing with life plus trying to understand this and mourn the loss. Prayers are still needed for my entire family. We know the Mexican government is doing everything possible to catch the people who did this and we trust this."

Then Ali said, "You think one way about the world in life and you are not really affected. But now, when something like this happens and you are dealing with such evil and you really don't know what you are dealing with, it is very hard ... now your perception of the world and for yourself and for your children and in the way you live in this world is completely changed. You can't move around in it like we did before. It is just different now."

I assured her we would pray fervently for her family for God's comfort, His healing and His answers. I know God will touch them in a mighty way because of their incredible faith in Him.

As we ended our interview, I asked Ali, "If you could leave us with one thought or if you could state what you would want your legacy to be, what would be your answer?"

Ali replied, "My greatest legacy is my children. I don't live my life measuring my success by the amount of followers I have on Twitter and likes on Facebook. I measure my success on my family, my relationship with my husband, being available and present to nurture my children and the relationships in my life that mean the most to me. That, for me—and I am sure my husband would agree—is the important thing to us."

"But the foundation to all of this is our relationship with God, because it makes all of those balance so much stronger and really allows all of those relationships to flourish and helps us make the right decisions in every part of our life and to have our priorities in order. The foundation is God and the focus is the family, and the family always comes first in our lives." 



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.

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.

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 **HAND OF HOPE**
JOYCE MEYER MINISTRIES WORLD MISSIONS

'Sweet sister, we've got your back'

BY ZEE DEAN

My story at first glance may seem quite ordinary. But it depends on how you define extraordinary. I am a unique woman, wife and mother of five boys. My husband and I do school at home with my boys.

My passion is encouraging women, especially moms, to redefine perfect; to stop comparing; to stop battling, biting and devouring one another; and to find themselves again by resting in Him, being confident in who He created you to be and knowing that you are enough because He is enough.

I myself have been on a mission a mission to find myself. Somehow between school, laundry and meals I got lost. One night while on a mini-vacation, God would not let me rest. I had to pour the words on paper. I hope they will be a blessing to some mom.

To the sweet, sweet mamas

Single mama, new mom, mom who longs to be, mom in the middle, mom that feels so lonely, hurting mom, crying mom and tired mom, to the caregiver, chauffeur, nurse, counselor, encourager, back rubber, the chef, and the storyteller,
To the cheerleader, the before and after school greeter
To the tear wiper, rear wiper and to the one affectionately called "Mommy"
To moms in every land—to the dear sweet mama who feels she can no longer stand, mom at the hospital waiting for the last breath, mom on her

knees, mom whose experienced oh so much death and has wept and wept, mom who is crying out why and Oh God please!

To the Saras, Esthers and Rahabs
To the Eves, the Hagars and Deborahs
To the Tamars and Dinahs
To Tabithas, Orpahs,
Marys and Elizabeths
To the ones who remain nameless
To the one who feels ashamed and downtrodden
Don't you give up cause we've got your back
We're all here beside you to take up the slack

Peel off the old, step into the new
Be encouraged, my sister, you are not alone
Reach out, reach out, your situation is not too far gone

You don't look like me and I don't look like you, yet there is a bond that draws us closer than glue. Let's stop the fighting and not be fooled
Let's stop the hating, the comparing, and even the faking
Let's band together
Let's be perfectly real
My sweet, sweet sister, let's make a deal to come alongside proclaim a deal one another and lift each other up
You help me and I'll help you
With God and one another we can make it through

Grab a sister, hold her hand listen my sister we must help her stand
Reach out, reach out stretch forth your hand

Sweet sister, we've got your back
We'll help you stand
Put on your gloves, your fighting gear
Now bounce around and hear the cheers
Put on your oxygen mask, take care of you
If you don't there's so much you won't be able to do
Remember, breathe some fresh crisp air and every day you can, get plenty of sleep
Say your prayers and express gratefulness, Be still and get refreshed
Now, you're ready to face the day, with a great big smile on your beautiful, sweet face.
God and other moms are cheering you on saying girl you got this, get up, go on.
Cheering you on, sweet, sweet mamas! ☺



ZUCCHINI 'ZEE' DEAN

Zee is the mother of five fabulous young men and wife of 23 years to Calvin Dean. She fondly calls herself "Uniquely Zee," and her passion is writing from the heart and encouraging women on the journey of life. She is a contributor to the book *The Early To Rise Experience for Moms: Start Waking up to a New Life (Early To Rise Series)* by Andy Traub. She is working on getting back to her blog once again @uniquelyzee.blogspot.com.

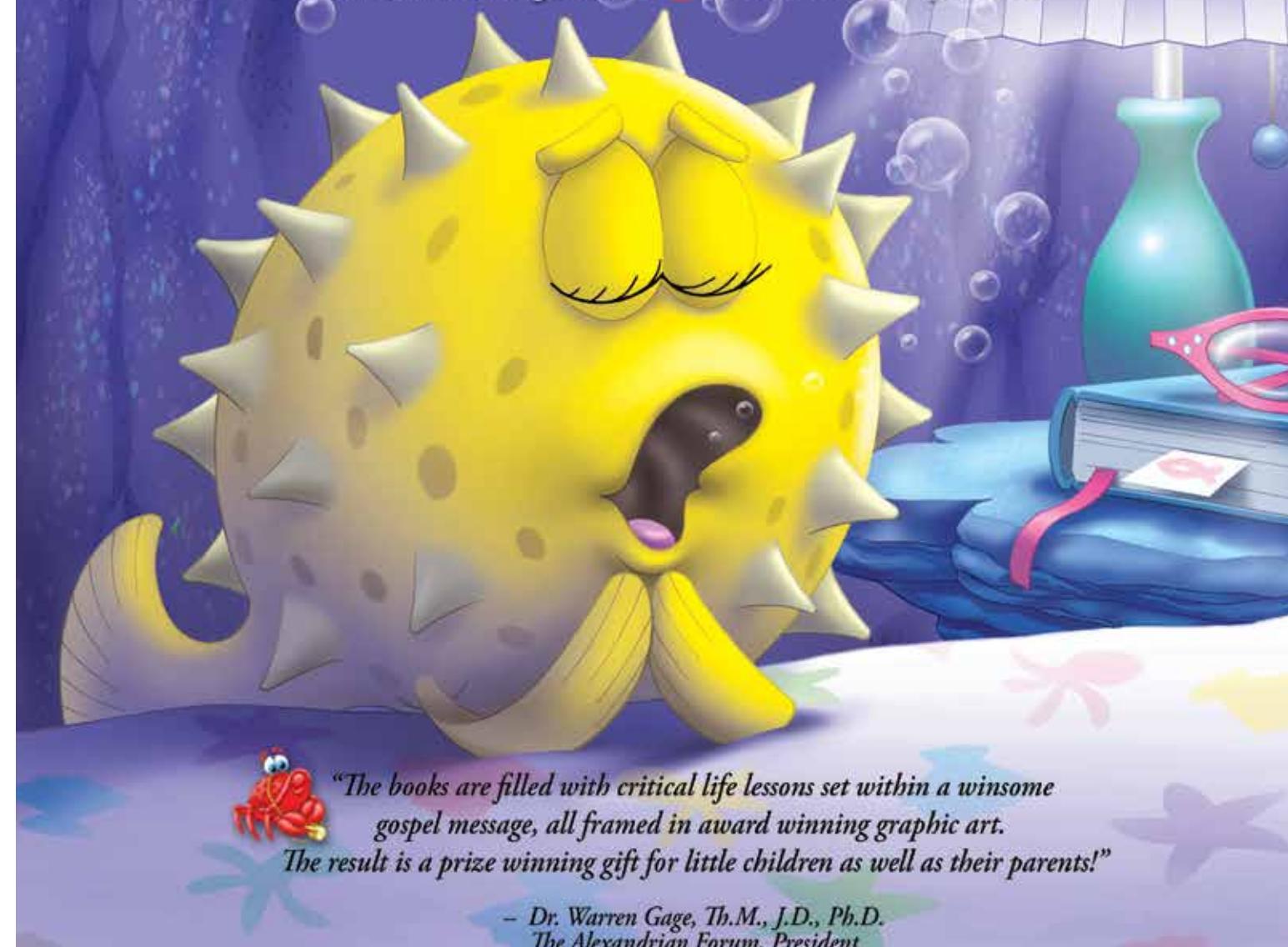
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"Remember, kids, to say your prayers and always have Jesus in your heart.
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— Dr. Warren Gage, Th.M., J.D., Ph.D.
The Alexandrian Forum, President

The children love them!

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The day He saved my life by making me invisible

BY LUANA MATTOS

A few months ago my friend and I were waiting at the bus stop after work when two young men approached. One of them was holding a gun and told my friend to give him her purse, while the other one went straight to the other five women at that bus stop.

I looked into my friend's eyes, and in my mind I told her not to hand over her purse, I told her this wasn't happening, that it had to be a joke. But when I realized that it wasn't a joke, I froze.

It felt as if I were watching the whole thing from above. I saw the other guy taking the women's purses, and I saw the women begging for their stuff. I thought to myself, "No, my purse—no! I won't give you my purse!" There was nothing of value in that purse, but my first reaction was to protect what was mine, even that big umbrella I forgot I was holding fiercely.

Then I did what people always told me not to do: I ran.

I can't figure it out whether I was brave or just dumb enough to do that, but I turned around the corner and realized that the street was completely deserted. There was no one I could call for help, except for a car parked with open doors waiting for those guys to come back.

I turned back and saw that they were coming toward the car, and somehow it was as if they didn't see me there. I don't know whether I was miraculously invisible or if they were too busy to mind me, but they got into the car and sped away.

Luckily they didn't hurt any of the women, and they didn't steal anything from me, at least not my stuff, but they did something worse: They stole my peace. They stole my hope, they stole my faith in people, and I couldn't trust anyone anymore, not even the old lady seated next to me on the bus that I took right after the guys drove off.

I have never thought of women as easy targets. I grew up surrounded by strong women, so when I arrived with my friend and saw five other women at the bus stop, I felt safe.

But what are seven women against two men with a gun?

That afternoon I found out that we are the targets, not because we are weak, but because we are not cowardly enough to use guns to defend ourselves. As much as I hate any kind of fight, I give credit to the fights that don't use guns but rather people's skills of defense and attack.

At least it is fair, and at least you get to fight for yourself instead of having your whole life taken from you in a blink of an eye.

Although the circumstance had cast me as a victim, I know I am not the only one; the guys who robbed my friend and the other women are victims, too. They are victims of the system, of a society that cares more about trivialities than education.

In Brazil, the government cares more about building stadiums for the World Cup than building a good education or health system, and the results are there on the streets: robbery, assaults, homeless people and drug dealers. I am not taking the responsibility out of these

people, because to be good or evil is a choice, but some people feel as if they don't have the power to choose.

So I started to think about those guys, back when they were children. I bet they didn't dream about becoming a robber or murderer; something went wrong along the way. But I believe in change, I believe in rehabilitation, I believe that, as Anne Frank said, "people are really good at heart."

Most people may find this silly or even meaningless, but ever since that night, I have been praying for these guys and for all people who feel as if they don't have a choice, that they can't afford to be an honest person because, trust me, it costs a lot to be good, to tell the truth, to be selfless and honorable. But the result of all these things is priceless.

And as a Christian, I must say that this experience increased my faith in the Lord, the same Lord who that made Daniel invisible so the lion couldn't see him. I now believe He made me invisible that day, too. ☺



LUANA MATTOS
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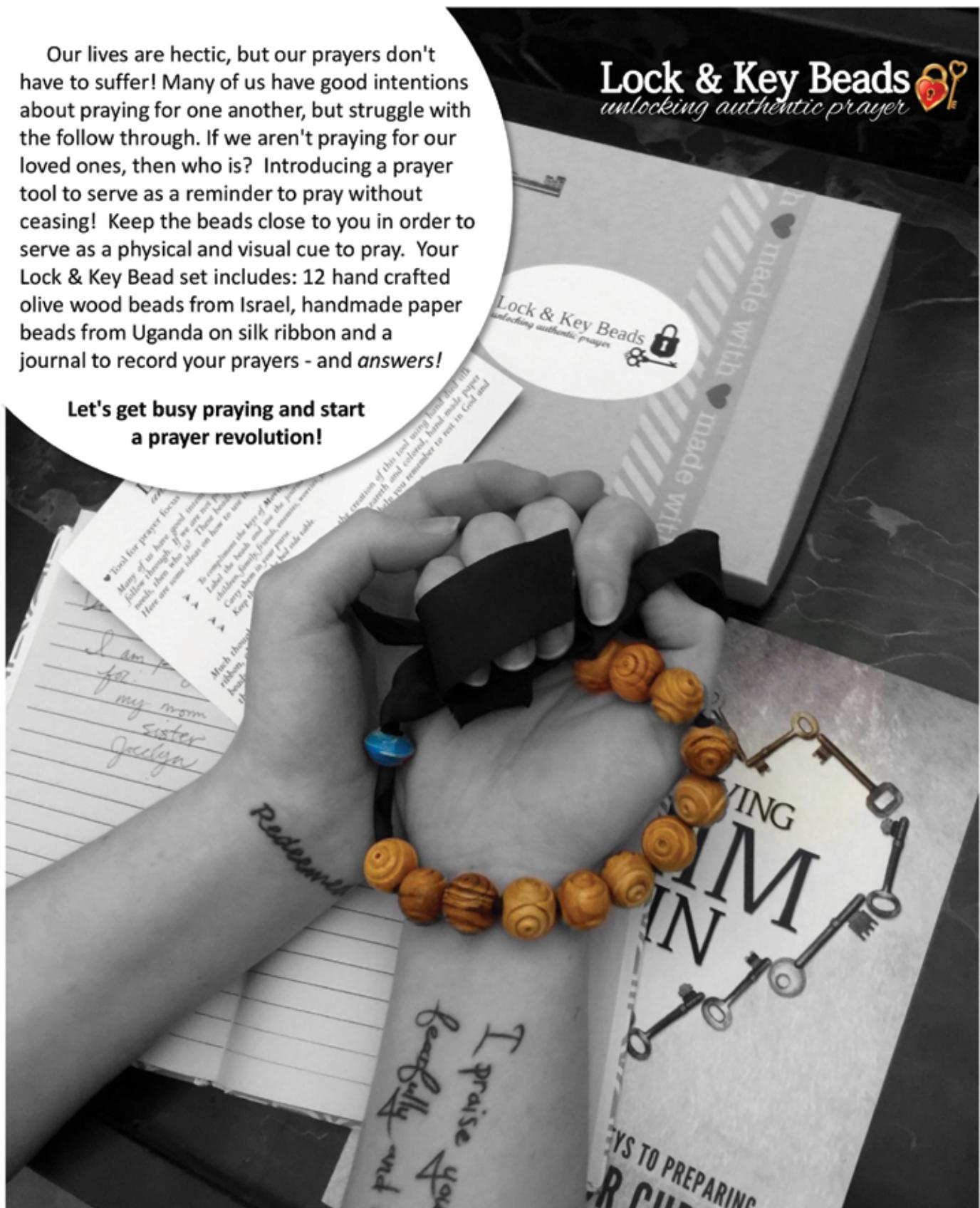
Luana is a Brazilian Christian girl whose motto is Romans 12:2. She

is a contributor to the websites hollywoodequi.com and iamthatgirl.com. She is working on her first novel, *Rising Star*, and manages her website, where she shares inspirational stories of girls and women who are making this world a better place.

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Visit lockandkeyministries.org to order your set today!

Starting over: The long journey to answer His call

BY ANJOY MCCANTS

I have always known that there was more to life than what I saw with my natural eyes. And after receiving the Lord at the age of 9, I felt that there was a special call on my life. I received prophetic words that God would use me to lead others to Him.

Those kinds of prophecies can be exciting but also scary, especially to a young black girl, born in a small Southern town to parents who were not well-educated and with a father who struggled with addiction to alcohol.

But it was something so powerful about God's love that I continued to serve Him and believed that there was a special calling on my life. However, it would be 40 years before I understood the magnitude of this divine assignment and how hard it would be to fulfill it.

But I have learned that God often hides our true destinies in order to protect and prepare us to do what He

has called us to do. It was both awesome and overwhelming to leave my full-time, comfortable career in education and health care to answer my calling as a pastor's wife, church planter, evangelist and writer.

When the Lord asked me to give \$50,000 that I had saved to help complete our church sanctuary, I began to question what was occurring. "Surely, this is the devil," I thought. It was easy to say yes to the calling, but the road to seeing it all come to fruition, especially emotionally and financially, has been arduous and painful.

We were disappointed as individuals who said they would support us but left when things became tough. I later lost my dad to cancer and then a friend died of suicide. And with two children in college, starting over in a new ministry with my husband, a newly ordained pastor, brought many challenges in our marriage, family and finances. But today

my husband and I praise God as we enjoy the fruit of our labor.

Why? We both refused to give up on what God had spoken to us. Life still isn't easy, but we learned to walk in the spirit instead of by our flesh. During this time I also began to sit each morning and invite God into my coffee time. Having "Coffee with God" and meditating on His Word gave me the strength to continue. It is how I uncovered my gifts of writing and art.

Today we rejoice as we see families being restored, atheists come to Christ and eyes being opened to the love and power of God through our ministry. We now have an after-school program and music program for children at our church, where we constantly share the love of Jesus.

And we built the church according to God's design in a rural area where it was needed. And our marriage, which was tremendously tested after 35 years, is stronger than ever. We praise God that



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both our children have completed college and are being blessed. The \$50,000 that I donated to help complete our church facility was merely a seed that I had to plant to grow the garden that God has for us.

I now realize everything that I have belongs to God! Amazingly, I have just completed my book titled *Coffee with God—How to Start Over*, which details my journey of answering my calling and literally starting my life over by God's power! It is now on Amazon.com and is evidence that the prophecies spoken over my life as a child are being fulfilled.

Without any art or writing lessons, I design my book covers, illustrate my work and enjoy attending book festivals, where people of all races and backgrounds buy my works. I believe that everyone can start over after loss, pain and hardship when they choose to fellowship closely with God and answer Him. I pray that my story will encourage others to hold on to the Lord and do whatever He is calling them to do. Please see my website coffeewithgod.org and our church website amorexway.com. 



ANJOY MCCANTS

AnJoy is an evangelist who uses her gifts of writing and art to share the Word of God. She and her husband

Mack, are founders and pastors of A More Excellent Way Church in Blythewood South Carolina. Obeying God, she left her career in health care and education to pursue her divine destiny. She is the proud mother of two adult children, Brittany and John. For books and artwork, AnJoy can be contacted at her website coffee-withgod.org or amorexway.com.

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MIND

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NEW YEAR'S HOPES FOR KIDS OF DIVORCE

What I want mom and dad to know

BY TAMMY DAUGHTRY

With every new year comes a hope for the future, a blank slate yet to be painted, a blank page yet to be written. What do you think children of divorce would hope for in a new year? If we were to "peek inside" their personal journals, what would their wishes be?

This year I hope my parents won't fight at the handoff. I wish they would not argue when I transition between homes.

This year I hope my parents won't put me in the middle of their problems. I always seem to be the messenger and I don't like it. It's not my job. I wish they would learn to talk to each other instead of through me.

This year I hope my mom will stop being so mean to my dad. I love my dad and I miss him when I don't see him. I wish she would not make it so hard on him to spend time with me.

This year I hope my dad will not say negative words about my mom. It makes me hurt inside when he points out her faults.

I know my parents love me, but this year I wish they would be OK with me loving the other parent.

I wish I could have a picture of my dad at my mom's house and a photo of my mom at dad's.

I want my parents to be happy. Their divorce was over four years ago and I want them to start smiling again.

I hope this year I can do better on my grades so they won't have anything else to argue about.

Now that I am a teenager, I like spending time with my friends. I hope my family can be more understanding and not take it so personally when I want to be with friends on the weekend instead of family.

More than anything, I just want my parents to get along. I love them both. They are the two most important role models in my life. I hope they will find a way to be peaceful when they are around each other at my sporting and music events. Maybe this year things will get better ...

It's a new year with new beginnings, new resolutions and new opportunities. For the sake of the children, may we find a healthy way to communicate as divorced parents and keep the kids out of the middle. I have been walking the co-parenting path for 14 years now, and each year it gets a little easier—but it takes intentionality and self-control.

One of the best ideas we came up with 14 years ago is to have a "co-parent meeting" instead of having parent discussions at the handoff. We hoped that it would protect our daughter from ever having to feel like she was caught in the middle of our challenges, and it has served us all very well.

I realized in the last few years that not only does it protect her, but it protects us as parents. By "compartmentalizing"



our communication to the co-parent meetings, when we attend her volleyball games or school choir performances we simply show up to see our daughter; we don't use those public times to discuss co-parent business.

Neither of us shows up with anxiety or worry about getting into a difficult conversation at her high school; we simply enjoy being Angelia's parents. These intentional co-parent decisions continue to benefit our daughter and also benefit us as parents.

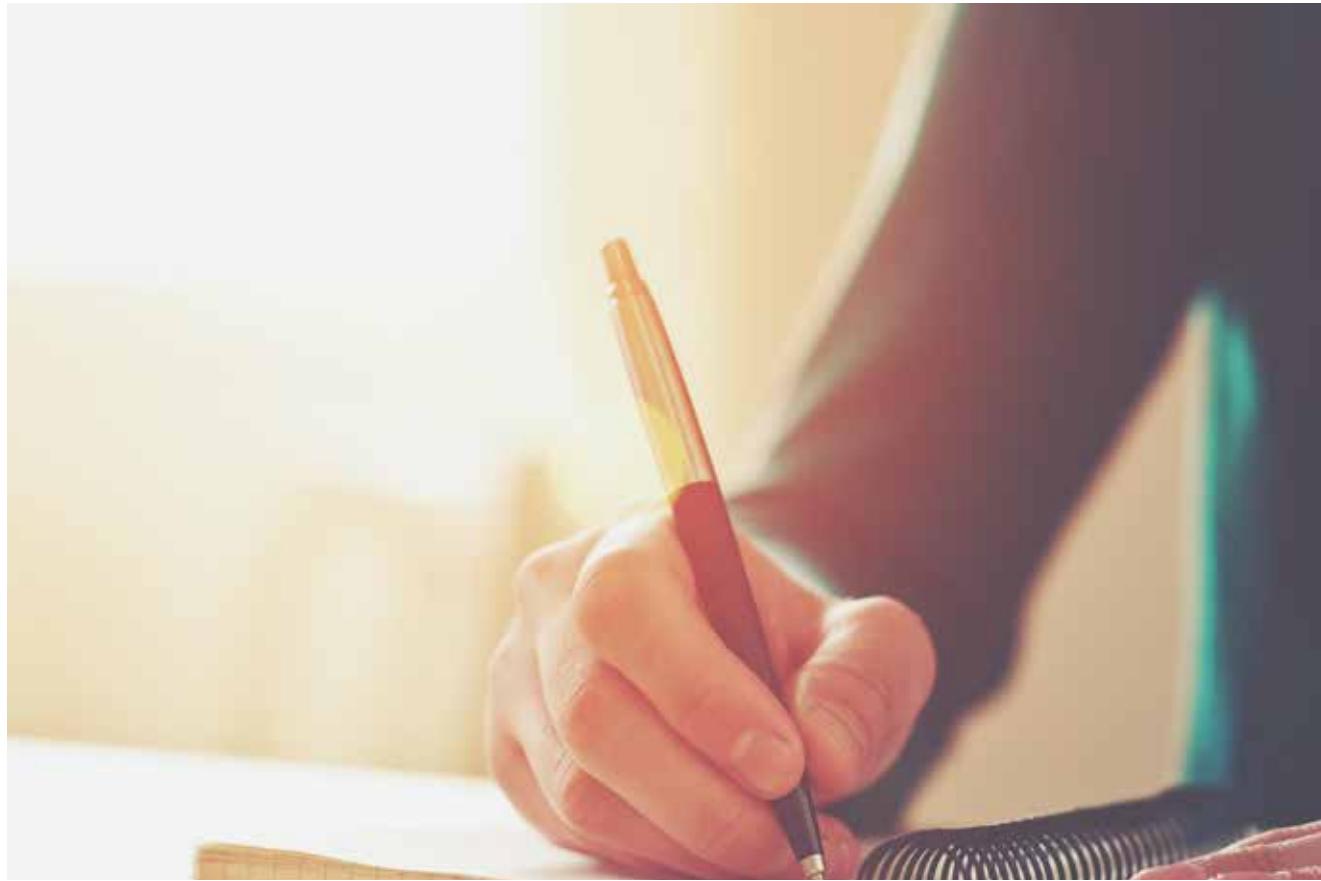
No matter where you are in the journey, try something new this year in co-parent efforts with the other parent. The more peaceful we make life for our children, the less pain they will carry. The more self-control we exercise that puts their needs first the less angst, they have to write about in their life journals.

What is our child's peace of mind and emotional health worth to us? ☺



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.



Ask. Listen. Write.

A few simple questions can bring about big changes in the year ahead

BY CAMILLE GAINES

Do you ever end the day frustrated because you thought you would have gotten so much more done? Most women overestimate what they can do in a day. But here's the opposite golden nugget: They also underestimate what they can do in a year.

Capitalize on this awareness to create your best year yet. There's something about the new year that feels perfect for fine-tuning your life. January abounds with new beginnings, with the thought of an entire year to plan and then actually achieving those truly life-changing accomplishments.

What's the best way to get started making your dreams a reality? Get super clear about what you want. The best way to do that is by asking a few simple but powerful questions in the big areas of your life, including your money.

Many people, especially women, feel that it's wrong to focus on money as a primary life goal, but life and money are

intertwined. It's just not easy to be happy and fulfilled when you can't easily pay your utility bills. But, of course, this is only one element of a fulfilled life. That's why it's important this winter to examine your life in broad categories, such as spiritual, family, career, fun, money, health and personal development.

All of your life categories are probably intertwined. For example, career is part of personal growth and money. Hopefully, it's related to fun and possibly several other goal areas. Spirituality can be a part of your entire life, as well as your health and personal development.

To embark on this refreshing but powerful journey, find a quiet time to ask yourself these questions in each of your life categories:

1. What's working?
2. What's not working?



3. What will change those things that aren't working so that they are working?

Then listen for the answers, and write them in your journal.

Start by asking the big and broad questions about your overall life, and then narrow in on various areas as the answers surface. Be in complete allowance of divine guidance. When you are, it's amazing how the answers flow right out, as easily as water from the tap.

Now, the path to our dreams is often not what we thought it would be, and here's what can make this tricky: The answer may not be what you're expecting, or it may even be the farthest thing from what you want to hear. In fact, sometimes you may catch yourself saying to that ever-so-subtle inner voice: "That's impossible!" or "What? I just couldn't quite hear that through all of the clutter in my full brain; you know, the brain that I keep too busy to hear what I really can do to create the life that I only dream of having."

Do you know that voice? Do you ever hear it? And do you ever do that?

When we stop to ask big questions like this, in allowance of answers, we zoom straight in to the voice of divine guidance, that guidance that knows all. Some call it the Holy

Spirit, and others call it God.

This practice helps you get clear about what's really possible with your dreams and provides clarity about the steps that will create it. It cuts right through to the chase. It's spiritual, but it unites with the necessary steps. Sometimes those necessary steps are just outside of your comfort zone, but that is often what it takes to make things happen. We certainly saw this in the life of Jesus.

In this time of new beginnings, open your spirit to grow. Curl up by the fire with a hot cup of tea, your journal and quiet time. Ask. Listen. Write. Plan the year of your life, and then go live it. ☺



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.

TOTAL LIFE CHANGES

It's a good time to renew your commitment to a full makeover

BY MARILYN SCOTT

My husband and I made a commitment to make Total Life Changes. We're talking about Mind, Body, Soul and Spirit. We started in the latter part of 2015. If you haven't made a commitment to do so, I encourage you to join us. It's a journey you won't regret!

MIND

Making Total Life Changes starts in the mind. In order to make positive changes, we must have positive thoughts entering into our minds. As senior citizens, we often talk about where we are right now in life—mentally, physically and, of course, in our relationship with God.

We evaluated ourselves and decided we both needed to renew our minds and become more intimate with God, making sure we're focusing on our destiny He's purposed for us. Then we looked in the mirror, both having wellness exams coming up, and decided we needed to make changes concerning our bodies and health.

Last year, our doctor had a candid talk with us about getting out of this overweight category we had been in for too many years. We knew we didn't want to go back to the doctor the way we left last year. We are now focusing on

being involved in the right activities.

"And be not conformed to this world: But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2)

BODY

My son, Jason, came to me one day and said, "Mom, y'all are getting older and really need to start doing something about your health."

Our sons have always voiced concerned about our health. We would do well for a little while but then back into those bad eating habits. We love ice cream. My weakness was cookies, and Nate's was Pepsi. It seemed as if we just couldn't resist the temptation of either.

After Jason sat down with us for about an hour, I looked at my husband and said, "Honey, you know he's right. For the last 15 years, our doctor has been on us about our health." That day, we decided to tackle Total Life Changes and make conscientious efforts to eat healthier meals and exercise more.

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)



"And be not conformed to this world: But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2)

SOUL AND SPIRIT

Last, but certainly not least, we made changes concerning our walk with God. What kind of spirit do we have within us? Does the Holy Spirit have total residence in our body? We have been in church and very active down through the years. The question is, have we truly been allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us or have we merely been going through the motions, just talking and not walking?

Each of us should stop and ask ourselves these questions to see how we are living. We want to make absolutely sure our hearts are right with God and doing things according to His Word, not out of tradition. We don't want to hear Him say, "I Never Knew You!"

WHOA!! Reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Nate: "When a man dies, he will open his eyes and see the reality of his living."

By the time you pick up this magazine and read my story, you might say, "I will be a new Marilyn and my husband will be a new Nate in the name of Jesus Christ." We are making Total Life Changes, working on our Mind, Body, Soul and Spirit.

The Scripture says, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind," meaning we are to make conscientious efforts to be

more in line with God's way and live accordingly. It is a good thing to make recommitments to God when we have become complacent.

I believe 2016 will be a year of greater things, because we are being renewed in our minds and trusting God to do above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us. I encourage you to make a commitment to make some Total Life Changes and experience the newness in you and your family's lives also!

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prosper." (3 John 1:2) 



MARILYN SCOTT

facebook.com/dreammessengers

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.

THIS YEAR, LOSE THE FEAR

How you can get past this four-letter barrier to success

BY LYNETTA JORDAN

Dreams ... We all have them, but why does it often seem so hard to achieve them? F.E.A.R.

Fear is a four-letter word. When I was a child, "four-letter words" were profanities, and we were forbidden to let one slip out of our mouths.

Our parents were serious about us being "good girls," so we quickly learned not to do and say what others were doing and saying, even when it was popular. The risks were too great. We knew the words and heard movie stars and adults curse; however, we were confident that we would get in serious trouble if we repeated them. Unlike many fallen politicians and superstars today, my sister and I learned early in life that one slip of the lip could bring miserable consequences.

That childhood lesson stayed with me. I am still amazed that I have managed to communicate extremely well as an adult without speaking profanity. But there is one youthful trait that did not fully blossom as I became older. In fact, it seems like it withered. That is my faith versus fears.

In childhood, my "faith factor" astronomically outweighed my "fear factor." As I graduated from college and entered the traditional world of work, I noticed that my sense of youthful adventure, fearless attitude and daring determination diminished.

Have you ever wished you had childlike faith again and were no longer ruled by adult fear?

As children, we were daring and confident, bold and undaunted. Our parents taught us that God dearly loved us

and that nothing was too hard for Him. We believed that we had unlimited possibilities of what we could accomplish. We did not overthink processes and procrastinate. Instead, we took immediate action. If we failed once, we kept trying.

As an adult, however, I began to wonder more about what I could not accomplish rather than what I could. As I ventured out into what my parents called the American dream—a "safe" job based on a set salary that did not always reward you for extraordinary efforts—I discovered one more four-letter word that had miserable consequences for adults: fear.

Fear became my new profanity. Like profanity in my childhood, fear was popular. It was also full of consequences if I spoke it like others did. It seemed as though everyone had some type of fear: fear of losing their jobs; fear of being disapproved or rejected; fear of their families failing; fear of failing even before even trying; fear of not fitting in. Oh, the consequences when you let fear guide your life. Some people let it run and ruin theirs.

When you understand fear's role, you can catapult your dreams, conquer your fear and change your future.

A popular acronym for Fear is False Evidence Appearing Real. Did you get that? Fear is often an illusion, so know that your dream really is bigger than your fear. So first, you must realize that the only time fear appears is when your potential for success is real.

Next, you must learn how to let fear be your fuel. Have you noticed that obstacles appear after you decide to pursue



a dream? Do not think that it is strange. Fear also does not waste time on people with no potential.

Fear confronts only those who are more capable than they can dream of being but who have not yet tapped into the great potential inside of them. You are significant and uniquely gifted by a God who has great plans for your success, so if you have faced fear, you can wipe your tears and smile now. It just means you are "somebody" who is on to something big. So instead of allowing fear to discourage you and drain you dry of your confidence, reverse it. Let fear be the fuel to get you to your destination.

Finally, you need to know that dreaming big is always worth it, but you must be prepared to fight the enemy to your victory—fear. Fear battles your mind in attempts to tear down your faith in God and yourself, but you can conquer it. In my journey, I have faced three types of fear that will undoubtedly appear when you decide to dream big and venture into the unknown: fear of rejection, fear of personal failure and fear of financial failure.

At first, they paralyzed me for long periods. Now, fear works for me and actually confirms that I have an achievable dream. When it shows up, I get more focused to ensure that my faith is greater than my fear.

You change your future when you make your faith greater than your fear.

Whatever you feed is what will grow. I recall a minister saying, "Feed your faith and doubt will starve to death." So build your faith daily. Read positive, faith-building devotions

and meditations. Listen to the inspiring testimonials of others. Practice positive self-talk. And when all else fails, do not wait for others to endorse you. Believe in and encourage yourself.

Our words shape our world. Don't let one four-letter word get you in trouble and assign a miserable punishment. Life is too short not to maximize it. Speak faith until you believe it, walk in it and see your dreams manifest. So I ask, "What dream will you pursue now that you know you don't have to fail?" ☺



LYNETTA JORDAN
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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](https://www.facebook.com/LynettaJordan)) and Twitter (@LynettaSpeaks TODAY!).

UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

Treatment requires more than just 'snapping out of it'

A huge number of our mothers, sisters and female friends are silently suffering from depression. That's because depression is hard to talk about.

Frequently, women who suffer from depression perceive their plight as something to be endured alone. After all, mood swings and transient "blues" are a typical part of almost every woman's monthly cycle.

Women might conceal their depression from family and friends for fear of being ridiculed or perceived as unstable. Some women may not realize the warning signs of severe depression. Consequently, they may not seek professional advice or support from family and friends, which in turn allows them to sink deeper and deeper into despondency.

Women need to know that they are not alone. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, "Each year about 6.7 percent of U.S. adults experience major depressive disorder. Women are 70 percent more likely than men to experience depression during their lifetime." The NIMH also reports, "Many people with a depressive illness never seek treatment." These statistics are daunting.

Deborah Serani is the author of the award-winning book *Living with Depression: Why Biology and Biography Matter Along the Path to Hope and Healing* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011) and technical adviser for the NBC television show *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. She specializes in depression and trauma. However, there is something unique about Serani. While she treats patients with depression, she has also battled her own illness. Her journey began as a teenager, when she descended into a debilitating, depressive state.

"With talk therapy, I realized that genetics and biology greatly affected me," she says. "We traced two generations of relatives that were depressed in both my mother's and father's lineage. I began writing about being a psychologist who experiences depression and takes medication to help take the stigma out of depression. Experiencing depression personally has given me tremendous insight into my professional work."

Serani stresses that women should seek help, talk about their

feelings and become active participants in their diagnosis and treatment. The first step, however, is to recognize the warning signs.

The many faces of depression

Depression is thought to be caused by a combination of physical, emotional, biochemical, psychological, genetic and social factors. Depression is not something you can "snap out of," so women should understand that pursuing outside help is imperative. There are many different types of depression—some considered severe and some moderate or mild.

Major depression: This is the most serious type of depression in terms of the number and severity of symptoms. People with severe depression have a hard time coping with daily activities and responsibilities.

Dysthymic disorder: This refers to a moderate level of depression that persists for at least two years and sometimes longer (malaise). While the symptoms are not as severe as a major depression, they are more enduring and resistant to treatment.

Unspecified depression: This includes people with a serious depression, but not quite severe enough to have a diagnosis of a major depression. It also includes people with chronic, moderate depression, which has not been present long enough for a diagnosis of a dysthymic disorder.

Adjustment disorder and situational depression: Depression occurs in response to a major life stressor or crisis such as death or divorce. What we consider to be "midlife crisis" depression falls under this category. It is a myth that "mid-life crisis" affects only men.

Bipolar depression: This includes both high and low mood swings.

The female factor

Researchers have explored the issues that are unique to women, both biologic and psychosocial, but there is no simple answer as to why women are twice as likely to experience depression as men.

For women, hormonal changes during and after pregnancy,



perimenopause or menopause can be catalysts. Women often face stressors such as simultaneously caring for children as well as elderly parents. Many also feel the pressure of being both a perfect caregiver and a breadwinner. They also tend to absorb and internalize the problems of their children and other family members as their own.

A 2011 article published by Harvard Health Publications (Harvard Medical School) titled "Women and Depression" discusses how severe hormonal changes may be an underlying factor to a female vulnerability to depression. However, the reader is cautioned not to jump to conclusions. "While multiple studies have examined this question, they have not been able to prove that these hormonal fluctuations significantly affect mood in large groups of women. The consensus now is that hormonal fluctuations may render individual women more vulnerable to depression at certain times of life — perhaps by interacting with other factors, such as stress."

The editors point out that everyday experiences can take a toll. Women are more likely than men to be caregivers—taking care of young children, elderly parents or both. This chronic, low-grade stress may lead to depression. Single mothers with young children have a particularly high rate of depression.

Recognizing the warning signs

Women must learn to recognize the signs of depression and the differences between a depressive disorder and a case of transient blues. Signs of depression vary from person to person. Women should be concerned if their symptoms last for more than a couple of weeks.

The following symptoms that may indicate a per-

son is depressed:

- Excessive crying
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities, including sex
- Sleep problems such as insomnia (can't sleep) or hypersomnia (excessive sleeping)
- Loss of interest in normal activities
- Lack of motivation
- Sense of hopelessness
- Lack of self-worth
- Thoughts of suicide
- Weight gain or loss

Serani also considers the duration of symptoms to be a key indicator of depression. "Though everyone feels sad from time to time, usually these sad feelings subside as time goes on. However, when sadness and despair linger for a period longer than two weeks and begin to affect daily living, coping and quality of life, depression could be occurring."

Serani emphasizes the importance of a complete medical evaluation. She explains that an examination will determine if depressive symptoms are biologically related (i.e. hormonal, genetic or organic, such as hypothyroidism). She says, "That is the first step whenever I work with a patient. If medical tests indicate that hormones, chemistry and other illnesses are not a factor, then looking at one's life stressors is key."

Helping yourself

Studies have shown that both medication and talk therapy are extremely useful in treating patients with depression. However, certain lifestyle choices can help as well. Women should not feel helpless.



Patricia A. Farrell, a New Jersey-based psychologist and author of *How to Be Your Own Therapist: A Step By Step Guide to Taking Your Life Back* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2004), says that diet can affect depression. She stresses the importance of a well-balanced diet. She also warns, "One of the most harmful things you can do is to drink a lot of coffee. Coffee is a diuretic and diuretics cause a loss of potassium." It has been found that potassium deficiency can cause depression, mood changes and fatigue.

Serani agrees that a well-balanced diet and exercise are ways to help fight and ease depression. She also suggests keeping a regular sleeping pattern. She adds, "It is also a good idea to reduce refined sugar, and to limit caffeine and alcohol. Vitamin supplements like B-complex have been shown to be helpful as well."

SEEKING OUTSIDE HELP

Readers can find more information from the following organizations:

National Institute of Mental Health
Website: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Anxiety and Depression Association of America
<http://www.adaa.org/>

Mental Health America
<http://www.nmha.org/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Crisis Hotline): 1-800-273-TALK

However, a healthy diet and regular exercise should not be perceived as cure-alls for depression. Although healthy habits can certainly be beneficial, women should seek advice from professionals if their symptoms continue for two weeks or more.

Farrell stresses the importance of getting help when one's condition is not improving. She advises that women seek medical advice if "they find that they are becoming dysfunctional and can't take care of their responsibilities." She recommends that women become informed consumers and prepare a specific list of questions prior to a consultation with a specialist.

Experts suggest getting a complete medical work-up to rule out other possible medical conditions. Serani says, "It is so important to find a health care provider that is a specialist in depression. The reason to seek out these specialists is to ensure that whomever you work with understands the biopsychosocial aspects of depression."

Serani also wants to help debunk the myths about depression. "I think the most important thing I can offer women who are experiencing depression is to understand that it is a real illness. It is not a result of a faulty character, weaknesses or laziness." ☺



MYRNA BETH HASKELL
myrnahaskell.com
Myrna is an award-winning author, columnist and feature writer. For more about her book *LIONS and TIGERS and TEENS: Expert advice and support for the conscientious parent just like you* (Unlimited Publishing LLC, 2012), columns and features, visit her website.

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mercy
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For big results, think small

Little victories add up to major success

BY JULIE HADDEN



“Every new year seems like the perfect time to start over and set new goals. But remember, new beginnings can start at any time. You are worth the effort it takes to make any change you want to make in your life.”

There's a popular saying, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss you'll still land among the stars." And while that may be good advice in some things, I want to suggest something kind of contradictory to you as we think about the new year: Aim lower!

Now before you go, "Gee, thanks for the vote of confidence, Julie," let me explain what I mean.

I am not suggesting that you underestimate yourself or your potential in any way. As children of God we have the power within us to excel and achieve. But in regard to any monumental task that you have set for yourself—weight loss in particular—I say, "Take it slow."

I base this advice not only on my own experience, but also on what I've heard from hundreds of others. I continue to hear from women who are fans of *The Biggest Loser*. They look at how quickly we did things on the show and compare those results to their own. Sometimes it seems unrealistic and disheartening.

Many times it's easy to get discouraged if you look at the big picture all at once. Discouragement leads to excuses. And excuses lead to giving up.

Yes, I lost nearly 100 pounds on reality TV for all the world to see. But that wasn't the last time I'd have to fight a battle with my weight. After having my 40th birthday surprise baby, I had to work hard to lose the weight I had gained during pregnancy.

Had I dwelled on everything that I needed to do to get back to my goal, it would have been easy to let discouragement set in. So I learned to set small, achievable goals for myself. And that's what I recommend to others. Take it one day at a time, one pound at a time. Every pound lost is a victory.

And then I recommend that when you've hit a milestone or a significant marker along the way (no matter how small)—CELEBRATE!

Years ago, I would celebrate accomplishments with a big piece

of chocolate cake. Not anymore. Be creative in your rewards for yourself. But you do need to acknowledge your hard work and your accomplishment. Go get a pedicure. Make a date with your favorite person to go on a nice, relaxing walk in the cool of the day. Or treat yourself to a new piece of clothing one size down. But whatever you do, celebrate yourself.

And then before you know it, all your little goals will add up to the one big accomplishment you are striving for. And you will realize how strong you are and have a true feeling of achievement. Remember, anything worth having is worth working for, and working hard for.

Every new year seems like the perfect time to start over and set new goals. But remember, new beginnings can start at any time. You are worth the effort it takes to make any change you want to make in your life.

If it seems selfish to celebrate yourself and make yourself a priority, just remember, "You can't pour from an empty cup. Fill yourself up first." You don't know what the coming year will bring, but taking care of yourself will ensure that you'll be ready for it. As wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and friends, we must take care of ourselves in order to be able to be all that we need to be for the people we love most in our lives. ☺



JULIE HADDEN
JulieHadden.com

Julie is a wife, mother, author and motivational speaker. She placed as the "biggest female loser" of Season 4 on *The Biggest Loser*, losing nearly 100 pounds and half her body weight in the process. She is the author of *Fat Chance: Losing the Weight and Gaining My Worth*.

W I N T E R 2 0 1 6

BODY



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"Would I have chosen Lyme disease as my teacher? No, I wouldn't. But I do look at the journey and am profoundly grateful to have learned these lessons."

52 DISCOVER THE STYLE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

"With all of the professional opinions about what was beautiful each day, I had to learn what made me feel good about myself. I had to find my own style and my own look."

64 WITH HOLIDAYS OVER, SATISFY WITH SOUP

"After all the holiday food, soup can be so comforting. ... Prepare a couple of different soups and an easy dessert for a game or movie night."

The cover of the book 'Inspired Design' features a large, ornate title in white script and serif fonts against a dark background. Below the title, it says 'The interior design book filled with hundreds of tabletop ideas from eight generations of design royalty.' The background of the cover shows a bright outdoor scene with two women at a table set with flowers and croissants, surrounded by greenery and purple wisteria flowers.

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

How to Purchase:
Please send a check for \$19.95 made out to Camarillo Community Church

Mail to:
Roxanne Packham
4027 Mission Oaks Blvd.
Camarillo, CA 93012-5156

A small thumbnail image of the book cover 'Inspired Design' showing the title and a photo of the authors.

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



For Inspired Ideas for House & Home go to
Roxanne Packham/Inspired Design

Beautiful Heart, Beautiful Home

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us, it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

—Marianne Williamson

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



P

eautiful, as used throughout this book, does not mean simply external beauty. There are hundreds of excellent interior design books that illustrate and discuss beauty for beauty sake. (Ask my husband. He says I have them all!) When we speak of beauty, we cannot separate external beauty from the internal beauty that radiates from the heart—or in this case, the heart of the home. Words like beautiful, stylish, elegant, classic and timeless conjure up images of people whose presence is hard to forget. You cannot have a classically beautiful home, or be a classy, beautiful person, without true inner beauty: warmth, kindness, and empathy.

True beauty also stimulates the five senses. A beautiful home—indescribably warm and visually stimulating—envelops you in coziness and love! Touching all of the five senses sends the message that you have eagerly awaited your guests’ arrival, and that they are truly welcome in your home. Think of your guests as honorees. Think of the five senses as five ways to envelop them in warmth.



Touch

Touch can be literal and figurative in entertaining. An embrace or pat on the back upon entering conveys a sense of intimacy. Being greeted at the door with a welcoming touch is much more important than finishing up the cooking, lighting candles or setting the table. If you must finish something else, greet the guests first. Then finish up! If you are entertaining a business associate or a new acquaintance, a handshake or pat on the shoulder will do quite well. But you will also touch your guests figuratively throughout the evening. Soft upholstery, comfy pillows or cashmere blankets make sitting on a couch so much more pleasant. Soft is key.

Smell

A fragrant candle, a simmering pot of cider on the stove or a plate of freshly baked cookies make a wonderful entrance to a home. A few votives lit and placed around the front door, with some fresh seasonal greens or flowers, rarely goes unnoticed. Fresh flowers in your window boxes, or pots outside, are also very welcoming. Realtors comment frequently that the smell of freshly baked bread or cookies helps a home to sell! That is a strong statement of the message that is sent when your home smells pleasant. Seasonal scents bring the outdoors in, and a few pine boughs, for example, are simple to cut and bring indoors. You can place them in a vase of water, across the mantle or even inside the fireplace.

Sight

Obviously, a clean and tidy house is, in general, more appealing than a dirty one. But hospitality will compensate for a less than perfect home. This can be as simple as a sign with a welcoming quote or verse that lets your guests know you are excited to see them. But sight also includes the mood of the room.

A room lit completely by candlelight, with a soft fire in the fireplace, conveys a deep sense of warmth. Nothing is more elegant than candlelight, and as a bonus, it helps conserve electricity. Lighting a room with candles is also romantic and soft. I never feel completely ready to entertain until all the candles are lit. The glow candles cast creates a delicate, shadowy, warm and appealing look. It hides a multitude of flaws, including dust, a slightly dirty floor or crayon marks, and everyone looks more attractive in candlelight.

Another way to make your home more visually appealing to your guests' sense of sight is with place cards, menus, and flowers thoughtfully arranged. As guests come to the table they will see these touches and know that time and care were taken in anticipation of their arrival.

Thoughtfulness is key. A hand-cut arrangement of flowers is just as thoughtful, perhaps more so, than a store bought arrangement. My friend Wendy cuts roses from her garden and puts them in a jelly jar. It just warms my heart that she took those fifteen minutes out of her busy day to do something nice for me when I visit.

Sound

Appeal to your guests' sense of sound with subtle classical, jazz, or soft contemporary music playing in the background. Classical music, in particular, can be quite soothing. Medical studies show that it raises natural serotonin levels in the brain and helps children retain what they study. Now, I am not a doctor, but I do know that music is soothing, and certainly can't hurt!

What you say also counts when it comes to filling your home with pleasing sounds; so fill your home with encouraging words and uplifting speech. A cheerful greeting and a compliment upon entering will lift your guests' spirits. I wouldn't suggest making something up, but you can always find something nice to say to a friend or a guest.

Taste

Taste, of course, means food. Since there are thousands of delicious recipes out there I am not including any recipes, but if you aren't a gourmet chef, don't worry! Keep it simple. Sometimes an intricate and complicated meal can require so much time in the kitchen that you won't be able to welcome or mix with your guests. It is just possible if you are never ready when your guests arrive, you need to prepare simpler recipes and lower your expectations. You can always hire someone to serve, if it's important to cook in gourmet style.



Have some candies and nuts in dishes throughout the main area, just in case the meal is a little later than hoped for. But elaborate meals are not necessary to make guests feel welcomed and loved; it is better to be relaxed. Do remember to ask about food allergies and accommodate friends who are vegetarians or vegans. You will be showing your thoughtfulness, and they will feel more welcomed.

Little things can make a big difference. I know they have for me. I have a friend named Susan, for instance, who each year bakes a cake for our birthdays that incorporates favorite things like colors, sports team, pastimes and the like. It is such a thoughtful touch. My friend and neighbor, Sharyl, is the best cook, but what sets her apart is the way that she makes everyone feel comfortable and relaxed in her home. She has candles lit, and there are always flowers or something fun on the table!

My friend, Joy, brought homemade scones and hot tea to my car door when I gave her son a ride to school. A bowl of chicken soup, from Susan, a basketful of snacks, from Suzanne, and a beautiful fresh basket of flowers, from Tamma, were treats when I had sinus surgery.

It's all about thoughtfulness. So while you are preparing to enjoy your home with guests, or alone, mentally check if all the five senses have been covered: touch, sound, feel, taste and sight. Add a little kindness, and you will have the perfect recipe for the perfect time.





Hannah's POINT OF VIEW

Pretty much everything I know about hospitality, I learned from Mom. I learned how to be myself. Mom helped me grow to love design—not by pushing me to love it, but letting me slowly grow to appreciate it all on my own. My family has inspired me to love design because they all are so talented. I grew up wanting to be like them. I would love to carry on the tradition and create inspired designs, just like my family has done.

—Hannah



LEARNING FROM LYME

In struggle with pain, God's promises come into focus

BY ROXANNE HUGHES PACKHAM

"I do not hate Lyme or the journey because I am changed within my soul because of these truths. But I am done with Lyme. I've learned these truths and embraced the joy, love and friendship that surround me. I'm ready to move forward in pure health."

Living with a chronic illness requires both fortitude and faith. Words like faith, hope and healing truly have new meaning to me. The intangible lessons I have learned are like God's promises illustrated in a beautiful new way.

Would I have chosen Lyme disease as my teacher? No, I wouldn't. But I do look at the journey and am profoundly grateful to have learned these lessons. The anguish of not knowing if I'd ever be on the other side of being sick powerfully taught me to lean into my faith in a deep and abiding way.

Lyme disease has affected my life in definable ways regarding my time with others, making it far less private than I would have liked. I would have preferred to keep the journey private.

But it is impossible to keep it to yourself when you have to reschedule, postpone and cancel social and professional engagements. After a period of time, people wonder how many headaches or bouts with flu you could have.

My first lesson was that in letting my guard down, I was able to discover the promise of God's comfort in the beauty of thoughtful friendship. Before Lyme, I was very independent. I really didn't want to ask anyone for help. I'd rather have been just as energetic and dependable as always.

I wouldn't say pride kept me from asking for help, but it could have. I wanted to continue to be the kind of person that my friends could count on. My health would not allow that. But the best part of this promise is that my dear girlfriends just knew and stepped in. I didn't have to ask. (Philippians 1:3, Proverbs 17:17, Proverbs 22:11, Proverbs 27:9)

The depths of these friendships added powerful healing to my journey. A few things will be imprinted forever on my heart. One was my Monday morning

prayer time—soaking in deep prayer with two dear friends down the street. Even when feeling awful, I'd drag myself there.

Those deep and fervent prayers impacted my healing. Also, knowing that they kept me in prayer helped healed me.

Another time in prayer and encouragement was two other prayer friends from church who cheerfully came to my house twice a month to pray together. I truly got so much comfort from them, their smiles and kind words.

And then, my dear friends—a doctor and a nurse—had me come over with all medical records so that their sister, a rheumatologist, could review my records. The hours they spent were such a deep expression of love to me.

Time with dear friends is a precious expression of God's love for me. For a few months the doctor I saw for treatment was a two-hour drive in L.A. traffic. That drive was exhausting to me, especially when I was suffering vertigo. I often was scared to drive by myself.

A dear friend from my college days lived near the doctor's office and I'd often stop and have lunch with her or just visit on the way home. The time together made those days bearable. God used her powerfully to comfort me.

My second lesson was that by learning how to be heard, I experienced the promise of the softness of God's grace. People assume I am a type A, high-energy person, an extrovert and thus very expressive. Nothing could be further from the truth as far as the last few years—and Lyme—are concerned.

I have always been very concerned that I not hurt someone's feelings and that I not disappoint people. Unfortunately, sick but with no diagnosis for years, I



"I wouldn't say pride kept me from asking for help, but it could have been. I wanted to continue to be the kind of person that my friends could count on. My health would not allow that. But the best part of this promise is that my dear girlfriends just knew and stepped in. I didn't have to ask."

often said things harshly with a whiny tone. The worst thing is, I could feel it in my soul. Not a great set of circumstances for trying to be a graceful communicator.

I had to learn to quietly articulate my most difficult truths of being unable to do what was expected or required, or even things that I deeply wanted to do if only I could have summoned the strength.

The worst part was disappointing those I love. During most of my son's senior year in high school, I was lying on the couch, too tired to attend anything except the baccalaureate and graduation. I missed a lot.

The promise came with the grace my dear loved ones showed me in letting me know that I was not disappointing them. They accepted me with softness in grace that makes my eyes well with tears as I write. (2Timothy 2:1, Proverbs 16:23, 24, Proverbs 25:11, Proverbs 31:26, Ecclesiastes 3:7, Ecclesiastes 7:21-22)

While most of the time I could muster enough energy to do a day, or a few days, of something. Though I looked perfectly fine, I had to schedule days of rest and after working or serving. Well-meaning acquaintances would say, "You seem fine and you look great."

Honesty would have me correct them, but I never

knew what to say. Conversely, I could have just burst into tears. I learned the skill of articulating the truth, while hopefully being gracious.

The alternative was not saying anything about Lyme at all, which was my approach at my church. That didn't work well. For a long time, I didn't have the energy to attend, so some people presumed I had left or was having marital trouble. (I didn't care about those assumptions.)

Part of me feels like a fraud or just a complainer because I believe I am making a full recovery. Although Lyme can be fatal to some, I am fully aware there are much more deadly and debilitating diseases and conditions.

Still, Lyme has had a significant impact on my life. I do not wish others could know exactly how I feel because they'd have to experience the same thing.

The most profound promise is no matter what a particular day brings, I will keep my focus on my powerful, loving God. Whether my day is full of doctor's appointments, L.A. traffic and IV's, vertigo and fatigue, my focus is on who God is, who He says I am and that I am healed according to His word. Lyme has been the teacher of powerfully beautiful truths I have discovered



in my life. (Luke 18:27, John 3:16, Philippians 4:13, 1Corinthians 1:30, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Philippians 4: 8-20)

I do not hate Lyme or the journey because I am changed within my soul because of these truths. But I am done with Lyme. I've learned these truths and embraced the joy, love and friendship that surround me. I'm ready to move forward in pure health. (Jeremiah 1:17)

I would like to leave you with this:

If you suffer from chronic or undiagnosed illness, I am so sorry. God sees you (Psalm 91). He loves you deeply (Psalm 32:10).

In the quiet of your time alone, I hope you feel His presence in an almost tangible way (Psalm 31:20). I hope you know that the love of God can and will sustain you (Psalm 23).

It is not easy and no one will understand exactly how you feel, but God can provide that comfort to you, the peace that surpasses all understanding (Psalm 27:14). My prayer for you is that you reach out to the Lord, more and more, and ask Him to comfort you (Isaiah 40: 29-30). ☩



ROXANNE HUGHES
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Roxanne, wife to Scott and mom to Hannah and Justin, loves design and hospitality and believes that God is the ultimate

designer. With Hannah, she co-authored *Inspired Design* and co-founded *Inspired31.org*. Her home designs appear in *life:beautiful*, *Cottages and Bungalows*, *California Homes*, *Dream Homes of Coastal California*, *Cowboys and Indians*, *Gaither's Homecoming Magazine*, *Family Circle* and more. Her artistic heritage includes her grandfather and great-grandfather, the silversmiths Allan Adler and Porter Blanchard. She studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, graduated from USC, Paris Fashion Institute and FIDM, and works part time in her design business, *Sunset & Magnolia*. She is Parents Council president on the Westmont College Board of Trustees. Roxanne shares design inspiration on Pinterest.



Learning your 'Look'

Confidence abounds when you know what's best for you

BY KIM ALEXIS

When I started to model years ago, I walked into a business in which I felt awkward. I had never dreamed of being a model. Growing up, I rarely used makeup or worried about my hair. I was actually proud to be labeled as a "tomboy." I certainly didn't diet because I swam at least five hours a day.

For the first 18 years of my life, I was performance-driven. I felt good about myself when I earned good grades, had fast swim times and finished all of my homework. I loved being "good" for my parents and never liked getting into trouble.

Then I was discovered at 18 and moved to New York City to live by myself. Performance was not what the industry looked for in a model. All of a sudden, people were focusing on my outward appearance, not my performance, and I felt like a fish out of water. (You can find this story in my eBook on Amazon, *How to Be Discovered*.)

In the modeling world, I learned that it was OK to be different or something that I was not. Of course, all I had known up until that point was to be a good, hard-working girl who liked to swim fast and study for good grades. But none of that was important as a model.

In my first few months in New York, I went from being an athletic, smart girl, walking the streets from one casting job in search of another, to a beautiful, elegant woman dressed in the finest clothes.

I was lucky enough to get jobs right away, but it took a while to adjust my mind to the business. I wasn't used to being pampered with hairdressers who made my hair beautiful and makeup artists whose work I could never re-create, not to mention wearing clothes that were not my style. I had such expensive jewelry for the shoot that an armed security guard that came with them. (It was fun to go to the bathroom with the jewels on—the security guard would give me a stern look both going in and coming out of the bathroom.)

I spent a busy summer that first year as a model, trying to fit into a difficult, competitive business. Each day I met new people. No day was like another, and no one person was a constant in my life. I had no office with a familiar desk and no coworkers to hang out with in the lunchroom.

I was alone and put in a different scenario each day—a new location with new photographers and clients and new "looks" with my hair, makeup and clothes. I found how to be strong while being alone and to find what made me happy.

With all of the professional opinions about what was beautiful each day, I had to learn what made me feel good about myself. I had to find my own style and my own look. I had to learn to be my best even though it wasn't what the top hairdressers, makeup artists and stylists said were best for me.

If it didn't feel comfortable on me, then I had to find what did. I went through many changes to my makeup and clothes. Most of the time, my hair stayed in a ponytail when I wasn't working; my clothes and makeup were constantly changing as I experimented with my look.

I think all young girls go through finding what makes them feel beautiful about themselves. It is a process of learning to be your best. Once girls find this "look," I think they turn into beautiful, confident women.

I love watching a confident woman who knows her boundaries, knows what is important to her and knows how she presents herself to the world. It is learning how to be the best she can be—and that is the slogan I use signing autographs to this day. ☺



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.

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU, NEW FASHION

It's a new year! Why not try something new? Winter is the perfect time to break out those fun scarves, chic boots and wild prints. 2016, here we come!

BY ELIZABETH BERGMAN



THE (FUN) SWEATER

We all love cozy sweaters during these cold months, but choosing one with a little personality brightens even the coldest case of winter blues.

NOT-SO-BASIC BLACK

I hear you! We all love black, but wearing black in new ways makes it feel fresh, especially at the office or any fancy affair.



Jessica Simpson
Elizabeth Jumpsuit \$89
Belk and belk.com



Free People
Skinny Mockneck Sweater \$98
Plaid Mini Skirt \$88
Clean Vegan Jacket \$198



Kind of Tina Fuzzy Jacket \$139
Belk and belk.com



BP. "Maribel" Mary Jane Glitter Flat \$49.95
Nordstrom and nordstrom.com



Faux Leather Jacket Forever 21 and forever21.com



I.N.C. International Concepts
Black Bag \$69.50
Macy's and macy's.com



Bar III
Black Pearl Necklace \$49.50
Black Crystal Chandelier Earrings
\$29.50
Macy's and macy's.com

SUPER COZY EXTRAS

We all want to cozy up by the fire this time of year and just sip a hot drink and read a good book. These winter wardrobe essentials make things even warmer and comfier.



Tucker + Tate Thermal All In One \$36
Nordstrom and nordstrom.com



Barefoot Dreams Cozychic Hooded Short Robe \$54.97 Nordstrom Rack and nordstromrack.com



Knitted Hoodie
Forever 21 and forever21.com
(No Price)



UGG Australia Birche Slipper \$79.95
Nordstrom and nordstrom.com



Ideology Camo Leggings \$49.50
Macy's and macy's.com



Charter Club Scarf \$58
Macy's and macy's.com



Diptyque Colored Glass Candle Trio \$100
Nordstrom and nordstrom.com



Wild and Wolf 'Coffee Yeah!' Mug
\$10 Nordstrom and nordstrom.com



Ideology
Bralette \$19.98
Hoodie \$54.50
Sweatpants \$49.50
Macy's and macy's.com



ELIZABETH BERGMAN
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Elizabeth is the youngest certified Christian image consultant in the nation and was formerly a photo co-ordinator 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.

THIS WINTER, KEEP YOUR GLOW WITH THESE BEAUTY AIDS

BY ELIZABETH ORTEGA



SIMPLE

Cleansing Micellar Water

Simple Micellar Cleanser Water is made with skin-loving ingredients, including vitamins B3 and C and Triple Purified Water to help remove contaminants known to irritate skin. The thorough cleansing removes makeup, dirt and impurities and unclogs pores. Instantly boosts skin hydration by 90 percent. No residue. Applied with a cotton round, Simple Micellar Cleanser Water leaves skin feeling fresh and revitalized, no rinsing required.



PRADA

Candy Gift Set

Prada CANDY is instantly seductive—pure pleasure wrapped in impulsive charm. In an explosion of shocking pink and gold, Prada CANDY shows us a new facet of Prada femininity where more is more and excess is everything. Magnified by white musks, noble benzoin comes together with a modern caramel accord to give the fragrance a truly unique signature.



TOO FACED

Melted Liquified Long Wear Lipstick

Get the staying power of a stain, the intense color of a liquid lipstick and the high shine of a gloss in one long-wear formula. Melted Liquified Long Wear Lipstick comfortably coats lips in bursts of intense, high-impact, super rich, saturated color that lasts for hours. Precision tip applicator allows for a clean, effortless application each time, with no liner needed. Vegan-friendly.

TARTE

Rainforest After Dark Colored Clay Eye & Cheek Palette

Inspired by the rain forest's deep orchid hues at dusk, tarte's limited-edition eye and cheek palette creates sultry and sophisticated day-to-night looks. Infused with colored clay, which naturally color-corrects as it supports oil control, this makeup provides longer wear and truer color payoff. This modern ingredient from the mountainous regions of Brazil brightens, evens and soothes skin, while the velvety formula glides on and delivers rich color—without settling into fine lines and wrinkles.



REDKEN

Pillow Proof Blow Dry Express Primer

The microflex stylane creates a "thermal blanket" of flexible silicone resin that protects hair and helps prevent breakage. Trisiloxane and isododecane allow for quick drying, resulting in a smooth and silky finish. Cuts blow-dry time. Anti-breakage. Protects up to 450 F.



PAUL MITCHELL

Super Charged Moisturizer

Rehydrate your hair and skin. This ultra-rich treatment contains Hawaiian awapuhi, jojoba and glycerin, three of nature's finest moisturizers. Your hair becomes instantly fuller and more manageable.

**CLARINS****Exfoliating Body Scrub**

This exfoliating cream supports natural cell renewal for youthful-looking skin. It gently eliminates dead cells and rough skin for a smooth, supple finish. Rich in natural plant extracts, it detoxifies the skin while neutralizing pollution particles and toxins. The gentle, comfortable formula forms a film on the skin's surface to prevent excessive moisture loss. Use before the first application of a self-tanner product to ensure perfectly even color or to prevent ingrown hairs.

LA SOLUTION**10 DE CHANEL****Sensitive skin cream**

A gentle, soothing moisturizer formulated for sensitive skin and for all skin types irritated by aggressors, including pollution, climatic conditions, stress or non-invasive microdermabrasion. The formula features just 10 carefully selected ingredients, each chosen for its optimal skin tolerance and efficacy. Alcohol-free, fragrance-free, oil-free,

**LANCÔME BI-FACIL****Double-Action Eye Makeup Remover**

This formula activates when shaken to gently whisk away even waterproof eye makeup while conditioning and refreshing the skin. Ideal for sensitive skin and contact lenses, it leaves eyes feeling cool and relaxed without an oily residue. This product has been ophthalmologist-tested for safety.

**MAYBELLINE****Volum' Express The Falsies Push Up Drama Mascara**

Push the limits with the first ever cup-shaped bristles that lift your lashes to dramatic heights. Over-the-top lashes for a glammed-up look.

**SOLEIL TAN DE CHANEL****BRONZING MAKEUP BASE**

The velvety finish of this light cream-gel bronzer leaves your skin with a beautiful sun-bathed look. Wear it on its own, or for a hint of outdoors radiance, over or under your favorite CHANEL foundation.

**BOTANICAL KINETICS****Hydrating lotion**

Nurturing your skin comes naturally with this quick-absorbing lotion containing emollients derived from coconut, jojoba and other natural sources. It replenishes moisture with a gentle touch. Camomile and lavender blend helps promote a soft, supple skin texture. Leaves skin feeling resilient and moisture-refreshed. Protects from dehydration. For all skin types.



ELIZABETH ORTEGA
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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.



Soup's on!

Warm your spirits straight from the bowl

BY DEBBIE GREENHILL

Happy New Year! It can come with mixed feelings as we look back and begin to look forward. We enter 2016 with expectations and changes that we want to make—our New Year's resolutions.

But those things we would like to change or do differently can be unrealistic, and then we become frustrated and discouraged because we did not meet our goals. There is nothing wrong with wanting to change; just be sure to not set your expectations too high without seeking God. I love that our God is a God of new beginnings.

There are several Scriptures that talk about the “new,” and I take such comfort in Lamentations 3:23, which says God’s mercies are new every morning. I love that I can start over with God every day. A Scripture that I truly love and God brings to me quite often is Isaiah 43:18-19: “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth. Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Whoa, what a comfort this is to me. I am to let go of the past, expect the new and have faith that God can make rivers in our desert. So as you begin this year, seek God as you look back, let go and pray about the changes that He wants you to make. With God all things are possible, and He can change those things in us and our situations that need to be improved.

I have a soup menu to share with you. After all the holiday food, soup can be so comforting. A fun thing to plan is a Soup Buffet. Prepare a couple of different soups and an easy dessert for a game or movie night. Keep it simple and just enjoy the company of your friends or family.

Some of these recipes to share are favorites of my family. The Turnip Green soup recipe came from Ms. Grace, a precious lady from my hometown. This is her signature soup, and you can expect to have delivered to you if you have been sick or just need a little comfort food. It is delicious served with your favorite cornbread recipe.

I have a chicken noodle soup that has become my signature delivery for friends and family. This soup is full of spices, vegetables and flavor. I like to serve this with Special Crackers. These versatile crackers are easy to make. They are delicious served with soup, dips or salad, or just by themselves. I always end up making two or three batches at a time because they go quickly.

Then I have the Corn and Cheese Chowder. Can you say creamy delicious? I like to serve it with tortilla chips. Now just add a simple dessert like these Easy Snickerdoodles for a light, tasty ending to this Soup Menu.

These recipes have become favorites with my family and friends and I know they will become favorites as you celebrate The Family Table. ☩



CHICKEN NOODLE

8-10 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole chicken
- 1 teaspoon lemon pepper seasoning
- 3½ quarts of water
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 onion diced
- 1 tablespoon chicken bouillon granules
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 4 bay leaves
- salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Add all ingredients to a large pot. Cook about 30 minutes, or until chicken is tender. Remove chicken and set aside to cool enough to removed bones. Remove the bay leaves. You should have about 3 quarts of stock.

ADD THE FOLLOWING INGREDIENTS TO STOCK:

- 2 cups sliced carrots
- 2 cups sliced celery
- 2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
- 3 cups egg noodles (uncooked)
- ¾ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup dry sherry or cooking sherry
- 3 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Bring stock back to boil, add carrots and cook for about 5 minutes. Add celery and mushrooms and cook another 5-10 minutes. Add egg noodles and cook 8 minutes or until done. Add the chicken that has been picked from the bone, cream, sherry, parsley and grated cheese. Cook for another 2 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste if needed.



TURNIP GREEN SOUP

8-10 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (16-ounce) package frozen turnip greens (no roots) bunches of collard greens
- 2 cans great Northern beans
- 2 packages Knorr vegetable soup mix
- 1 pound smoked sausage
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 2 teaspoon sugar
- Hot sauce to taste(optional)

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium high and cook for 1 hour.



CORN AND CHEESE CHOWDER

8-10 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- ½ stick butter
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 slices bacon, diced
- 3 bell peppers finely diced (red, yellow, orange)
- 3 cans of corn with peppers (mexicorn)
- ¼ cup all purpose flour
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 2 cups Mexican blend cheese, shredded
- 1/3 cup sliced green onions
- salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

In a large pot, melt butter over medium high heat. Add the onions and cook for a few minutes. Add the bacon and cook for another few minutes. Add the bell peppers and cook until they begin soften. Add the corn and cook for another few minutes. Sprinkle the flour evenly over the top of the vegetable-bacon mixture; stir to combine. Add the chicken stock and stir well. Allow to thicken for 3-4 minutes and then reduce heat to low. Stir in the half-and-half, cover and allow to simmer for about 15 minutes. Stir in the cheese and green onions. When the cheese is melted and soup is hot, check seasonings. Add salt and pepper if needed. Serve hot with tortilla chips

SPECIAL CRACKERS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick butter
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 sleeve saltine crackers

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 275 degrees. Melt the butter in a microwave-safe bowl for 45 seconds or until melted. Add the seasonings and stir to mix. Dip the crackers in the butter mixture and place on a rack over a baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes. Store in an airtight container. You may want to make a double batch, they go fast!



EASY SNICKERDOODLES

MAKES ABOUT 40 COOKIES

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 package yellow cake mix
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup canola oil

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Blend sugar and cinnamon in a small bowl and set aside. Combine cake mix, eggs, oil and 1 tablespoon cinnamon mixture in a large bowl with a wooden spoon until blended. Shape dough into 1-inch balls and roll balls in cinnamon mixture. Place on a cookie sheet that has been lined with parchment paper. Flatten balls with bottom of a glass. Bake 8-9 minutes or until set. Cool cookies and remove to a serving plate.



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"Life in Christ is a fresh start. The truth is, the greatest new beginning any of us can have is becoming a new creature in Christ."

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"Just because one chapter in your book called Life gets a little crazy, your story is not over. God desires to start a new chapter, a greater chapter to glorify Him."

86 JESUS AWAITS OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

"See, when you step out of the boat, Jesus steps out with you. Don't be afraid to fall. We all do it. Just know that Jesus is there to help you."

108 STUCK IN THE PAST? DON'T BLAME HIM

"If we are stuck in our past, it is not His fault, and neither is it His will for us to stay there. We get a fresh chance every day to let go of our past and move forward."

Lorrie Morgan: Rolling with the changes

BY CHUCK DAUPHIN



business she has seen over the years.

Morgan, who has been a member of the Grand Ole Opry since 1984, tells *WHOAwomen* that change is a constant, whether in her personal life or her career in the spotlight.

"Change seems like it's an 'every other week' thing for me," Morgan admits. "I've often said this business is not for the sissies, and you've got to be ready for change—and ready to accept things. That's just part of this business, as well as life."

At the very least, she says, it keeps life interesting. "It would be pretty boring if there was nothing new or fun to look forward to, or new things to try."

Starting over, she says, is not always a bad thing. "It can bring a lot of creativity. There's some anxiety involved to be sure, but it's an anxious anxiety. I'm just not afraid of starting over. I never have been afraid of new things or to explore. It's all exciting to me."

Morgan noted a quote from Kenny Rogers, who said he was more scared of stagnation than failure. "Kenny is exactly right. He's been a mentor to me," she says. "I've learned a lot from him. Failure is something you can overcome. It's more difficult to break free from a rut."

The singer, best known for hits such as "Something In Red" and

"We Both Walk," admits that her inner circle can tell when something different is in the air around her.

"My longtime assistant, Debbie, who has since passed away, used to look at me and tell me 'I feel a change coming on. You've got a wild look in your eye. You're either going to be doing press or the tabloids—there is never a dull moment with you.'"

As the calendar turns to 2016, Morgan has a brand new album titled *Letting You Go Slow*. She has also started work with Pam Tillis on a follow-up to their 2013 collection *Dos Divas*.

A crucial part of staying afloat creatively, the 56-year-old Morgan says, is feeling her best, which she admits take a lot of work.

"It's very important. It's harder for women to get out on the road, especially at this age, and feel good and look good. Travel plays a lot on us as we get to a certain age. Pam and I talk about it all the time. We love our buses. That's where we get our rest."

"But, you get to the town you're playing in, and you're supposed to look good and feel good and be happy. It's a different ball game when you reach a certain age. Our comfort level on the road is very important to us. We exercise on the road, we walk and try to eat the right things. But there's only so much that you can do when the road is driving you."

Family life also keeps her grounded. Married to Randy White, Morgan has six grandchildren, including her first granddaughter, born in November 2014. "I just went shopping for her today for a little dresser," she says. "It's really exciting. That's for sure. Who would have ever thought it? But, that's the thing about change. You never know." ☺

The words "change" and "adapt" have been constants in Lorrie Morgan's life since her teenage years. It was just a few days after her 16th birthday that her father, Country Music Hall of Fame member George Morgan, passed away from a heart attack.

A divorce ended her first marriage and left her a single mother, and then a seemingly storybook romance and marriage to rising star Keith Whitley came to a tragic end with his death in May 1989.

Those are just some of the twists and turns in her personal life, not to mention the changes in the music

can do is try to fight that, because all you're doing is setting yourself up for unhappiness."

Seely says she tries to keep an open mind and heart to life's challenges. "I just want to try everything that might be possible to do. I'm always up for a new adventure," she says.

She practices what she preaches. The legendary singer took part recently in an online Halloween costume contest with other performers such as Rhonda Vincent. She also appeared on a video that made the Opry's social channels late last year where she dramatically recited the lyrics to Meghan Trainor's "All About That Bass," something she says she really enjoyed.

"That's just one of the fun things for me. I don't mind making a clown of myself, and the marketing department there had a ball with that. I just believe in enjoying your life and career as much as possible. Every day, there will be things that won't be exactly like you want it to be, but there's some fun out there. You've just got to find it or make it up."

Seely began her music career working in the Los Angeles office of Liberty Records. She played a huge role in Johnny Rivers' cut of "Memphis" becoming a hit, calling radio and hiring musicians for sessions for the label, including a pre-stardom Glen Campbell. So she has seen changes galore in the business. Her advice to anyone contemplating a new direction in 2016? Roll with it.

Jeannie Seely has witnessed many historic moments in country music over the years. For almost five decades, the stunning songstress has been an integral part of the Grand Ole Opry, and she became one of the first female vocalists in the genre to win a Grammy for "Don't Touch Me" from 1966.

"It does not seem possible," the Pennsylvania native said, looking back at her career. "They say time flies when you're having fun, and I've had a ball for 48 years. It was a lifelong dream, and they've got a quote on the wall backstage that says 'The Grand Ole Opry is my home. That's where my heart is,' and that's how I feel about it."

In addition to her performing career, Seely is one of the leading female songwriters of her era, with cuts by artists such as Willie Nelson, Ernest Tubb and Faron Young, who topped

Jeannie Seely: 'Always up' for something new

BY CHUCK DAUPHIN



the charts with her "Leavin' And Sayin' Goodbye."

Seely has many memories of artists from the Opry who have since passed on, including Ernest Tubb and duet partner Jack Greene, with whom she recorded the 1970 hit "Wish I Didn't Have To Miss You."

She also recalls the woman who encouraged her to move to Nashville. "My mind always goes back to the times I spent with Dottie West. She and I were really good friends, and had so much fun pulling tricks, and trading outfits over the years," she says.

Next year will mark the golden anniversary of "Don't Touch Me," the song that punched her ticket to stardom. She says it was a life-changer in so many ways. "It's all still kind of a blur. I had only been in Nashville for a couple of months. I didn't have a chance to get prepared or anything like that. There was no artist development. I had to learn so much all at once. It changed my life, and I will always be indebted to (songwriter and former husband) Hank Cochran and Fred Foster at Monument for opening the doors for me." ☺

CHANGE AHEAD

It's time to get unstuck and discover a new freedom

BY LA-TAN ROLAND MURPHY

Life is full of changes. Some changes are welcomed guests; others we'd rather avoid.

Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you felt "stuck" and really needing something fresh, new and exciting?

I have.

Just when I thought I was ready to step onto a fresh path, try something new and embrace change, my gleeful anticipation was dashed with a single looming question: What if ... I fail?

Fear of change does that, you know—fills our hearts with doubt and questioning, squashes our bold, hope-filled ambitions "flat as a flitter," as my 86-year-old mother would say. Fear works hard to leave us stuck in past regret, to intimidate and to emotionally paralyze us altogether.

Today, let's try with all of our might to stare fear and "what if" square in the face. Let's be bold enough to come clean with the truth of what we really feel but are afraid to admit:

What if I can't do it?
What if I'm not good enough?
What if I don't make the cut?
What if they don't like me?

I'm pretty sure these doubt-filled questions stomp around in everyone's brain at one time or another.

But today is a brand new day; today offers brand new possibilities. It's up to us as to how we prepare ourselves emotionally and spiritually for change. The truth is, as long as we are living and breathing we will be faced with a series

of constant changes.

Perhaps you are downright angry: You didn't ask for the changes you currently face. You were perfectly happy with the way things were. You had life all figured out, tied up with a pretty little bow on top. And then ... a "new beginning" forced its way into your perfect world:

Your husband left.

You lost your job.

You just received news of a life-threatening illness.

You looked into the mirror and listened to the voice of your enemy's taunting and destructive lies: "You are really OLD. Washed up! Done for, sister!"

Perhaps you feel that, out of the blue, a blinding, flashing, neon sign reading CHANGE AHEAD forced its way upon you. Change, whether forced or pursued, can be scary. Change represents uncharted territories yet to be explored—unknown landmarks.

God is with you, dear friend. He sees you. He loves you with an everlasting love, the kind of love that gives, gives and gives. He will not leave you to face life's changes alone. In fact, He is all about new beginnings. He wants you to be "unstuck" and free. He wants you to live the abundant life, free from anxiety, free from fear and its paralyzing grip.

From creation to the Cross, God had glorious new beginnings reserved and marked across the pages of time, with you in mind. It was at the Cross that real change happened. God exchanged His life for the penalty of our sin. As He took His final breath here on earth, He lovingly saved us from this broken and fallen world that fights so hard to



Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

keep us back, hold us down, pen us in.

No more personal renditions of *The Walking Dead*—lifeless living, zombie-people. No more comfortable complacency. No more being "stuck" and hopeless, full of fear and anxiety. Once Christ is Lord of your life, your best changes are ahead of you.

Friend, if God has allowed change in your life, He will equip you with all the changing power you will ever need. For today, and all of your tomorrows.

"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." (Romans 10:9)

Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and

destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

So if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:36) ☩



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A nationally recognized speaker, La-Tan ministers worldwide through her talks, her mentoring and her award-winning writing. She finds great joy in reminding others of their worth. She has been married to husband, Joe, for 28 years and has three adult children and a granddaughter.



Staying True To Your Mission

Lessons of excellence by Salvation Army Founders William and Catherine Booth

BY KATHLEEN COOKE

Most people have seen the red kettles and the bell ringers at Christmas time, but the story of the couple who founded the Salvation Army, William and Catherine Booth, isn't nearly so famous.

William and Catherine's legacy is worth noting because 2015 marked the 150-year anniversary of the Salvation Army. I was honored not only to attend the celebrated Salvation Army Boundless Global anniversary event, but was able to be involved with the media production as 20,000 people packed the O2 Arena in London this past July. They came in their uniforms with their timbrels and brass instruments blaring.

The Booths felt that Christians should be more than just believers of Christ; they should be participants in the Kingdom and transformers of culture. The Booths lived by Luke 12:48, "to whom much is given much is required."

They endeavored not only to introduce those around them to the giver of Grace and Light but to be grace and light in every situation.

The Salvation Army was one of first groups to step outside the structured traditional church and connect evangelism with social reform. They enthusiastically worked in the unclean, diseased and poverty-stricken slums of London during the Victorian era, making their home among the forgotten and disdained.

They willingly sacrificed their reputation and embraced the swelling population of alcoholics, drug addicts and prostitutes with God's love. They fought then as they fight today to eliminate human trafficking, hunger and the suffering and tragedy of the homeless.

Today the Salvation Army has the top substance-abuse recovery programs in the world with the highest rate of

What has God called you to do that could impact the world—the world where you are right now? Go. Do it with excellence.

rehabilitation.

I especially admire Catherine as a leader with wit and wisdom and who, at a time when women were told to keep quiet and let men lead, chose to stay out of the spotlight.

She encouraged women to share, teach and bring their unique feminine touch to ministry, particularly reaching out to women and children. She was ridiculed and verbally assaulted not only by unbelievers but by those in the church, yet she never let them keep her from pursuing her unique calling. Today, there are places in the world where only women can go, and because of Catherine's vision, thousands of female Salvation Army officers answer that call.

I admire the Booths for their insight in seeing culture as it existed and using multiple platforms to reach those in need. Whether it was on a street corner, at a pub or in a back alley, they understood that God's love could be shared anywhere.

They were innovative and creative. They used media and other tools to get the message of Jesus seen and heard. They kept the mission of why they existed strong and chose to go where the people were instead of waiting for the people to come to them, essentially moving the "church" into the streets.

Victorian society practiced quiet reserved church services, but the immigrants and the working-class poor were loud and boisterous. So the Booths stood on the corners preaching with brass instruments and timbrels (two-sided tambourines).

They embraced the movie industry in the early days of film and allowed their missionary cause to be written into the 1950 Broadway musical *Guys and Dolls*, which continues to be restaged today. When the traditional church shunned these platforms, Salvation Army leaders stood true to the Booths' calling and mission: to proclaim Jesus wherever the world was living.

The Victorian culture also said that a person's appearance mattered and that spending money on expensive clothes and shoes showed a person's influence and importance.

This view created an immediate judgment on individual worth. The Booths, who believed that God looks at the

heart, simplified their dress. They created a uniform so that a person's outward appearance would be modest, practical and presentable. The military style added a powerful message that they were at war with sin, poverty and desperation.

Today's officers still wear the uniform, and when a major disaster strikes, that visibility makes it easy for people to find them.

William Booth was a gifted preacher, and Catherine a gifted speaker and teacher. They could have had an easy life as a pastor and minister's wife at an English parish or, in time, perhaps a cathedral, but they chose to care, even beyond the boundaries of the time.

They chose to confront pain and not turn their eyes from the desperate and those in need. Their cry of "Blood and Fire" (the blood of Jesus, and the fire of the Spirit) is still used today and ignites thousands to join them in sharing and caring for mankind.

What has God called you to do that could impact the world—the world where you are right now? Go. Do it with excellence. William and Catherine Booth have proven that it's possible, because God is right by your side.

And next time you see those red kettles—toss something in. ☺



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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](#), Instagram: [kathleencooke](#)

WAKE UP YOUR DREAMS

Tap into your slumbering passion to give meaning to your life

BY DEBRA GEORGE

I can still hear the words of Dr. Martin Luther King as he declared, "I have a dream!"

As small children, we all dare to dream to be something and to do something significant with our lives. Then life happens, and for one reason or another, we stop dreaming.

I want to encourage you today that when one dream fails, it's time to dream another dream. God delights in giving us a new beginning.

All I ever wanted to do was to get married, have six children and duplicate the life of my amazing mother. It wasn't part of my dream to go through an unwanted divorce and to miss my opportunity to have children of my own. No! No! No! I did not sign up for this. This seemed so unfair when my friends were getting married and having baby after baby.

I had to reach a decision, friends. I could either sit around crying and feeling sorry for myself or I could get up, wipe away the tears and allow Jesus to pick up the pieces of my broken dreams. Thankfully, I chose the latter.

And today I not only speak in churches helping people but I equip them to go onto the streets and win souls for Jesus Christ. I take all of the love God has given me and I pour it on beautiful children and families in our inner cities who desperately need a touch from Him.

When my first dream failed, I dreamed another dream, and you can, too. I like to say it like this: If you have thrown in the towel, go back in the ring, pick it up, wipe the sweat off your brow and say, "I can go another round."

Just because one chapter in your book called Life gets a little crazy, your story is not over. God desires to start a new chapter, a greater chapter to glorify Him. You can begin again.

"Here comes that dreamer" was the way Joseph was described in the Bible. Not only did Joseph have a dream from God, he saw it come to pass. God specializes in

dropping His dream seed inside of you and then watching it grow to fruition. I like to call your dream "a dream on fire" because there's something about a fire that cannot be ignored.

I grew up on the dirt roads of Clodine, Texas, around some pretty crazy people. One of them, Estelle, had a habit of lighting a fire under a big black pot in her back yard used for cooking. One day, it caught the field across from our house on fire. Since Clodine wasn't big enough to make the Texas state map, we didn't have a fire department.

The next town over had to be alerted to round up its volunteer fire department to attend to the flames. By the time they arrived, a lot of the field had already been burned. The funny thing about all of this? Estelle sat on the back porch of her home watching the fire. It was blowing away from her home, so she didn't have a care in the world. But the rest of the folks in Clodine were scurrying around to see the fire. It could not be ignored.

Friends, that's the way it is with the dream of God on the inside of you. You are so passionate about your dream that it wakes you up in the mornings and puts a bounce in your step. Your dream demands your attention. It can't be ignored or put on the back burner, so to speak.

Recently I found a paper that I had written and kept tucked away in my childhood bedroom. I was 18 years old when I wrote about how I wanted to do something to help people who were hurting, especially people with drug addictions.

I was not born again at that time, yet still inside of me was a dream crying out, to come out, to do something for humanity. When people see you, I want them to say, "Here comes that dreamer." You are a dreamer who is on fire with a dream on fire connected to a God who is the fire! (Hebrews 1:7, Hebrews 12:29)

What is your dream? What is your cause? What are you passionate about? What are your desires? Do you have



them written down? Are you looking at your dream daily? I love Habakkuk 2:2: "Write the vision..." and verse 3, "Though it tarry wait for it."

Today you may feel as if your dream is dead. That's OK because it's time to tell your dream to wake up. Most of the time your dream is not dead but it's been buried beneath the storms of life. It's time to get your shovel and dig your dream back up for the glory of Almighty God.

Like drinking a strong cup of coffee to wake us up in the morning, our dream must have some "wake up" poured on it as well. This starts whenever we make a teeny-tiny step in the direction of our dream. Here are a few journey steps that will get you and me moving in the pathway of the dream God has in store for you:

WAKE UP: MY DREAM JOURNEY

DREAM Journey Step 1: Purify Your Life

Whatever is in my lives that does not please God, ask Him to remove it and to help us to live a life that's pure and pleasing to Him. (I Peter 1:16)

DREAM Journey Step 2: Bury Your Past

You cannot go forward looking backward. (I John 1:9)

DREAM Journey Step 3: Identify Your Purpose

Identify your desires. Detail your dream. (Psalm 37:4)

DREAM Journey Step 4: Choose Right People

Get around dream feeders. Identify who they are in your life and stay connected to them. (Proverbs 13:20)

DREAM Journey Step 5: Trust God With Your Dream
Trust in God and in His perfect timing to bring your dreams to pass. He knows when you are ready. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

DREAM Journey Step 6: Pray!

Soak everything in prayer. Bring your dream to God in prayer and remind Him of what you trust Him for. (John 14:14)

Go ahead. It's time to get dreaming. Take the first step. God is with you helping you every step of the way. Remember, a big dream is just a bunch of little dreams coming together to form the big picture that God has for your life. ☺



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.

STEP OUT OF THE BOAT

With God at your side, you can unlock your potential and experience the new

BY LISA OSTEEN COMES

I don't know of a better time than the new year to make the decision to move forward in your life. It's so easy to feel stuck—I have been there—but you are not stuck. It's true that God has something new for you, but you must believe it and begin to take steps of faith to let go of the old and take hold of the new.

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

There is a longtime member of our church that I have known for years. I first met Jim when he was going through a divorce. He had served God faithfully but drifted away from church and experienced a lot of heartache in his life. He came to me and said, "Lisa, I want to repent because I have been away from God and did things that I am not proud of."

I replied to him, "Jim, we forgive you and we bless you! We're glad you are back at church."

Ever since then, Jim has been faithful and serves in one of our ministries. But deep down inside, all the while he was serving, he still wanted to do more for God. He had a desire within him for God to use him more. Jim didn't know how God was going to use him; he just knew he wanted to be used.

One of his skills is speaking Spanish fluently, and he is as gringo as you can get. One day, God opened a door for him to go to a Spanish-speaking country, and he was able to preach in an all-Spanish church service. Since then, God has opened up more doors for him to preach in Spanish.

He is a businessman, but he takes his vacations to preach the Good News to people in Central and South America. He told me one day, "Lisa, I am amazed how God is using me!"

That's what God will do when you choose to move forward and expect Him to do something new in your life.

Jim easily could have let his heartache and past circumstances keep him from serving God and traveling to preach in other countries. But he knew God had a destiny for him to reach. He knew he had potential inside of him. He knew he had to step out in faith and believe in God's gifts in him, regardless of the "how's" and past mistakes. And as he eagerly moved forward, God's destiny and plan for his life began to unfold.

It's like Peter in the Bible. He stepped out of the boat to walk to Jesus on the water. You may be thinking, "But Peter fell..." Yes, but he also walked on water. And when he fell, Jesus picked him up and they walked on the water together. The Bible doesn't say that Jesus carried him back to the boat. No, they walked on the water together.

See, when you step out of the boat, Jesus steps out with you. Don't be afraid to fall. We all do it. Just know that Jesus is there to help you. He is a very present help in time of trouble, and He will walk on the water with you, directing your steps while equipping you and giving you new opportunities.

Because Peter was willing to stretch himself, he experienced something new. He stepped out into his destiny and was able to discover the potential he had through God. In your own life, there is so much potential locked up in you, but you must believe it's there. You must step out of the boat, get out of your comfort level, press beyond your fears and your past, and believe God has new opportunities, favor and ways to use you. Step out and see the amazing plans God has for you.

And like Jim and Peter, when you step out of your comfort zone and begin to do your part, God meets you

where you are and amazing things happen. There is so much in you that God is waiting to release. You have a wealth of God-given potential on the inside if you will reach for it and step out of the boat. ☩



LISA OSTEEN COMES
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Lisa is associate pastor at Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, the largest church in the United States. Lisa has survived both a birth defect and a mail bomb explosion, and she has overcome many other challenges with hope and optimism. Subscribe to her newsletter at her website, lisacomes.com. Her most recent book is *You Are Made for More*.





DO THE NEXT RIGHT THING

Messed something up? Grace helps you quickly repair the damage

BY SHEA WOOD

Does the new year bring to mind excitement or regret? Do you feel that you messed up so badly this last year that relationships, situations or careers are ruined forever?

Often with the prospect of a new season, we become paralyzed by the thought of repairing things that were broken. We think that maybe things that were done cannot be undone. The things we did with our own hands or mouths can never be mended. We have hope for the new year, but then are reminded of the terrible ways we botched the previous year and automatically become discouraged.

I love the phrase "Do the next right thing." It's a simple and

fairly straightforward statement. I like the idea that the moment I mess up, I can turn it around in the next breath and simply do the right thing. Correct it. Pick up the phone. Apologize. Change my plans. Cancel something that I should have said no to in the first place. It's a great time to start again—much like the new year.

You may feel that once you mess up, regret and anguish come in, but you don't have to get on to yourself, beat yourself up or lay in bed and grieve your shortcomings—again. You can simply ask God for guidance and direction. He so freely gives it when we ask Him. And it's a rather simple ask.

Sometimes I get caught in the trap of the "should haves,"



"could haves" and "would haves," and it paralyzes me not to do the next right thing. It cripples my thoughts and second-guesses my moves. I am in a tizzy about how to make things right. My view then becomes one that says, "I can never make it right, so why try?"

It's a slippery slope that I begin sliding down. The next thing I know, I am telling myself what a horrible human being I am and wonder how anyone can even like me. I know I cannot be alone in this, right?

"Do the next right thing" is much like God's grace. This was grace I did not always understand. I believed that I was due some sort of punishment no matter how sorry I was for the wrong words or actions. I did not understand the true ramifications of His forgiveness for me.

Maybe you, too, believed that you would always have to pay for your mess. The Bible says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9) This is a promise that God gives to each of us. Although we mess up and sin, which is weakness, He promises to give us sufficient grace.

This grace gives me a choice to do the next right thing. It doesn't demand payment. Each time I am having a moment

of weakness, I mess up. I take over and do what I think is best. I haven't thought about anyone but myself. That's when grace is most needed, most applied, most given—in those times of weakness. "For when I am weak by myself, then I am strong in Christ." (See 2 Corinthians 12:9-12)

As this year begins, we can be confident to put away the old and start fresh. The old ways and regrets no longer can have a hold on us. We can simply, "Do the next right thing." No rituals, requirements or pressures. Look square in the face of your mess and trust Grace to give you the next right move. ☺



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Shea, along with WHOAwomen contributor Susan Milligan, is co-founder of Lock & Key Ministries. They are co-authors of *Moving Him In*. The daughter of a musician, Shea finds comfort in a home grown Arkansas, tomato. She lives in North Little Rock, Arkansas with her husband and two daughters and is a licensed minister.

INSPIRED BY HEAVEN

Look and listen closely to discover what God has in store for you

BY LISA BEVERE

As one year turns into another, we tend look at our habits and achievements and aspire for something new. This is no passing instinct of the earthbound. It is a reflection of something innate in the fabric of our being, for within each one of us, God has placed an abiding hope that the old will be made new.

Notice I did not say we hold hope for the old to become young, but for the old to become new. The world around us vies for the restoration of youth, but to be young again is not enough.

As daughters of God, we watch for something so much more than chronological displacement or the mask of youth over the wisdom of age. No, our destiny is pregnant with something no mortal eyes have seen—something, therefore, we can scarcely hope to believe exists. We can be confident of this, for we are told:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9 NIV)

The awesome magnitude of God's promise defies the boundaries of our imaginations. He has prepared something for us that we could never hope to attain on our own. I pause in wonder at the beauty and simplicity of what qualifies us for such unimaginable ecstasy: He readies wonders unseen for those who love Him. Are we not among that number?

As we lift our eyes over a new year, let us watch for what we have not seen. Let's listen for sounds unfamiliar to us, and let's stretch beyond ourselves to embrace dreams and ideas our minds cannot receive even in seed form.

Though we've not seen nor heard, there is a revelation for those who hunger for more.

But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:10 NIV)

Our minds may not be able to comprehend what God is readying for us, but there is a place with the capacity to grasp this revelation: the heart. It is where God's Spirit whispers and woos, speaking glorious mysteries to us as the veil of heaven and earth thins with the passage of time.

As you position yourself for the weeks and months that will form your 2016, have you quieted yourself to hear what heaven would speak to your heart? This is about more than goals achieved, fitness maintained or ventures established. This is about what the Creator of heaven and earth longs for in your life in the coming year.

One of my favorite verses says:

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. (Proverbs 4:18 NIV)

This verse lends poetic perspective to our journey, and what it reveals is crucial. A moment of change should not be our highlight but merely the beginning. It should be the point in time when our light is the dimmest, yielding the very faintest outline of the road before us. We should find our way



The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. (Proverbs 4:18 NIV)

increasingly illuminated as we near our destination.

This is the year for newness to set a new precedent in your life. I encourage you: let God speak to you about what He would bring in and through your life this year. Write what He reveals down, then believe and declare it. May you move forward in strength and faith so that what is new may act as the mere starting point for miraculous achievements and transformation you've never known before.

To dive deeper into this subject, check out Lisa's book *Fight Like a Girl: The Power of Being a Woman* (Warner Faith, 2006). Some of the content in this article also appears in that message. ☩



LISA BEVERE
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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.



MADE FOR MORE

What you can learn from The Miracle Worker

BY LESLIE VERNICK

I've always loved the true story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan as depicted in the movie *The Miracle Worker*. Helen Keller was born in

1880 but a severe illness when she was 19 months old left her blind and deaf. As Helen grew up, her parents were compassionate but clueless about how to help their daughter.

Helen couldn't see or hear. She didn't comprehend language or function as a normal child. It seemed that her greatest pleasures were getting rocked by

her mother and having the unrestricted freedom to grab fistfuls of food off her family member's plates and mash it into her mouth.

But Helen knew nothing of feeding on the things that would nourish her mind or her soul. She was dead to those things. Helen's parents eventually hired

Annie Sullivan as a live-in teacher, hoping that Annie could somehow reach their daughter and teach her sign language.

Annie's first task was to teach Helen

some basic manners. Helen fiercely resisted and, out of pity, her family interfered with her lessons. Annie's methods appeared harsh and heartless, but she needed to capture Helen's undivided attention so that she could be talk.

If Helen could learn words, an entire world would open up to her, a world that was beautiful and stimulating. Annie knew that sign language would provide Helen the opportunity to grow, to develop and become all she was

"Joy means the perfect fulfillment of that for which I was created and regenerated."

capable of being.

Helen continuously fought Annie's instructions and rebelled against her teacher's love. Even so, Annie persisted teaching Helen, often repeating the same lesson again and again. In one particularly frustrating moment, Annie furiously pumps water into Helen's hand, forming the word WATER in her other hand. The teacher repeatedly presses this precious word into Helen's palm.

Then, a spark ignites. A glimmer of understanding crosses Helen's face. She tentatively presses the letters W A T E R back into Annie's palm. Annie excitedly nods and cups Helen's hands to her face. "Yes," she cries.

We see Helen's appetite for words

born and we see her hungrily seeking more and more words while Annie carefully presses each letter that makes the word into her open hand, nodding and laughing and crying, "Yes, yes, yes!"

Language was something Helen never could have imagined as a blind, deaf and mute child. But because of

Annie Sullivan's faithfulness and love, Helen Keller not only learned to read and write but also to speak. She went on and graduated cum laude from Radcliffe College in 1904. Helen Keller became

an author, lectured worldwide and received many honors and distinctions.

"I thank God for my handicaps," she said, "for through them, I have found myself, my work, and my God."

Helen Keller found incredible purpose, joy and happiness in life once she was able to learn what her teacher wanted to teach her. Prior to Annie's involvement in her life, Helen Keller was physically alive but disconnected from her true self. She hovered around her family's dinner table filling herself with whatever pleased her taste buds.

Spiritually, we're a lot like a lot Helen Keller. You and I are blind, deaf and mute to spiritual reality. We don't understand or know how to speak God's language, and we are oblivious to what we are missing.

Sometimes we live as if real joy and the good life are found by rummaging around the world's banquet table, stuffing ourselves with temporal delights.

But God reminds us that He has created us for more than we can think or even imagine.

You and I are designed to reflect God's glory, not our own. He shows us that His ways are better, but we will never see or know or experience them unless—and until—we begin to get a

glimpse and taste of more of real life than what we now experience. Then like Helen, we must yield ourselves fully to Jesus and the Holy Spirit so that they can teach us what we need to learn and help us live it.

God knows the end for which you were made. He knows how to get you there if only you will yield yourself to Him and what He wants to teach you. The evangelist and teacher Oswald Chambers tells us, "Joy means the perfect fulfillment of that for which I was created and regenerated."

Are you willing to yield yourself to God so that you, like Helen, can become all He's created you to be? You were made for more. Don't settle for less.



LESLIE VERNICK

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Leslie is a popular speaker, licensed counselor, coach and author of six books, including *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship: Seeing It! Stopping It! Surviving It!*

THREE R'S FOR A HEALTHY MARRIAGE

Make this the year to retreat, renew and reboot your relationship

BY JONEAL KIRBY

The calm, rich blue ocean in the foreground, with the dropping sun still round and huge, made for a perfect dinner setting. The gentle waves almost touched our table.

Overhead, a canopy of swaying palm trees covered us. Our private linen-covered table had been placed in just the perfect spot to fully enjoy the evening's view of the sunset. The softness of steel drums was heard behind the trees edge.

We were alone on the beachfront as our personal waiter served our dinner of perfectly prepared steak and lobster. I know that this much perfection is rare, if not impossible, to experience this side of Heaven. But for us as a couple, it was very close to the perfect moment.

There on our island paradise, celebrating 40 years of marriage, we had little doubt that all other moments before and those still to come would now be compared to this. That oasis has particular, special meaning to us because we had spent some of our honeymoon there. It was our own romantic paradise then, and it still is now.

Marriage can be tough, and many marriages are just staying alive. A lot of couples seem OK if their relationship just functions. In our divorce-friendly culture, this attitude satisfies no one and it will not work. As a marriage therapist who has counseled hundreds of couples, I've learned most young people do not know the burden of work required of them when they say, "I do."

When they promise "... til death do we part," naive young lovers have no clue about maintaining a strong relationship. They have exciting, distracting times of pre-wedding events, the celebratory day and then, if blessed, perhaps a year or so post-wedding. But those experiences do not prepare the newly married couples for the work required to have a healthy, loving, and lifelong marriage.

Marriage can be beautiful. And fun. And the richest, deepest, most exciting blessing of a person's experience. But as someone with 40 years of marriage behind me, I know some

secrets.

My husband and I have created some habits not only to create a healthy, happy relationship but also to have a marriage that will honor God and our covenant with Him. I'd like to share these with you.

As a marriage therapist, I have shared these with couples I have counseled. I don't promise they will work for you, but unless to integrate something similar into your lives, you will miss out on the loving, deeply satisfying relationship that you surely can have.

I once counseled a couple for a few years. At the time they came to see me, Adam and Victoria (not their real names) had been married almost 30 years with three grown sons and grandchildren. They were a friendly, pleasant couple who were also believers in Christ, and they came to see me because their marriage was in deep trouble.

They did not want their marriage to end, but both Adam and Victoria had had affairs. They were committed to repairing the severe damage their relationship was suffering.

As they worked through these difficult challenges, Victoria told how their marriage had hit some rough spots while they were busy raising their children. The attention they gave to their three sons left little time to focus on their marriage. The fatigue and distractions were heavy and constant as their boys' school and athletic events took center stage. Both she and Adam also were invested in ambitious careers.

Those choices left them with no energy, time or desire for time as a couple. Victoria confessed, "I think we both thought we could just put our marriage on the back burner and then when our kids were grown, we would then have 'our time.'"

The obvious problem with this plan: By the time their sons were grown, the couple's marriage had become an empty shell. The outer casing of commitment was intact, but little else. After the devastation of the adultery settled in, they realized that they shared almost nothing as a couple anymore, other than the love they felt for their children.

Perhaps you've never thought your marriage could become



a wasteland. Or perhaps you are close or at that place now. But it's a new year and time to get your relationship work hat on. Pour into your marriage before you do get to that place of dread and despair.

Here's what you need for a marriage that not only survives the turbulence that life is destined to send, but grows even stronger as a result of the turmoil: Retreat, renew and reboot.

1. Retreat: Get away from the house, the kids, the jobs, the chores, the in-laws, the friends, the responsibilities. Withdraw from the constructed life you share and the one that drains your energy, fills up your schedules and distracts you from each other.

If you can go away for a week, do it. But if you can't, plan at least a couple of one-day, one-night getaways each year. The purpose of those times is to reconnect with one another as a couple. Invite God to bless your marriage on these retreats. Make it a joint project to plan for these. If one spouse is better at organizing activities, travel, etc., that's OK. Don't make this a point of tension between you. Just decide between you who will be the main organizer of planning and making reservations.

Always recognize anniversaries, birthdays and Valentine's

with special dates, dinners or getaways. Make these "retreats" the time where you intentionally commit to knowing each other better, laughing together and growing your marriage.

2. Renew: While on retreat or on a dinner date, commit to thinking about, talking through and working on some area of your relationship that needs refreshing. It may be your communication; I've never met a couple whose doesn't. You may need to spend extra time bringing more romance and reigniting your sexual attraction for one another. All couples struggle with this during the child-rearing years.

Your dreams for your marriage don't need to get stale, either. Spend time talking about your plans and hopes for your relationship. After the children are grown, you will spend the majority of your life just as a couple. What is that going to look like?

3. Reboot: When nothing is working right, we all know what our IT guy says: Reboot. This is good advice for couple as well as laptops. Just start over. Forgive those past transgressions.

That's what Adam and Victoria did. They both recognized how damaging the lack of forgiveness was. It was very, very hard. But God's business is the impossible, so with His help, they did it.

Spiritually and emotionally, the moment when they both agreed to forgive and move on was the turning point in their counseling. And then their marriage began to rapidly heal.

Whether it's a huge issue like adultery or small, daily annoyances, you can do the ultimate good for you, your spouse and your children when you forgive.

Jesus teaches us to forgive 70 times 70. His example is the rock we all have lean on to get through troubles, but His strength and help are only a prayer away. Pray together to receive the wisdom and grace to forgive and start over.

You may need help with the reboot, so do your homework. Work only with a well-respected and highly recommended Christian therapist. And that retreat? A well-planned vacay can be just the time for these tender conversations.

Tough issues will require more than a one-minute sound bite on your way out the door. Get away together with the intention of retreating, renewing and rebooting your relationship. This will be the gift that keeps on giving—to you, your children and those grandchildren to come. ☺



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.



RESURRECTED DREAMS

Even in loss, Jesus is nearby with eternal life

BY LAURA STORY

Like Mary and Martha, I wanted things to happen my way and in my time. But when I stayed focused on my shortsighted view of the situation and absorbed by my own grief and loss, I missed seeing Jesus, who was standing with me the whole time.

*Taken from When God Doesn't Fix It by Laura Story
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When Martin and I walked through his medical trials, we saw a lot of things die. Our vision for our future. Our dreams for each other. Our idea of a perfect family.

Sometimes they died all at once; other times, our dreams slowly withered away. When they did, I thought they were gone forever. But occasionally God allows a dream to die so that we can see His power greatly displayed.

In chapter 11 of the Gospel of John, Jesus was traveling with his disciples when he received a message from his friends, Martha and Mary of Bethany, that their brother, Lazarus, was very sick. Though they don't say so directly, the implication from the women was that they wanted Jesus to come to Bethany and heal him. But Jesus stays where He is. It takes Him four days to return to Bethany.

When He arrives he hears the bad news.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:31–32)

They were upset that Jesus hadn't fixed Lazarus. Jesus understood their disappointment. But these sisters were His friends and not even they fully understood who He was. He was about to show them that death has no power over Him.

He prayed, thanking God for hearing Him, and then commanded Lazarus to come out of the grave. To the surprise of the sisters, Lazarus shuffles out still tightly wrapped in his burial clothes. Jesus did His greatest miracle yet, on his own timetable.

Though Mary and Martha had urged Him to come sooner and may have felt unloved when He didn't come quickly, those weren't His concerns. Their urgency didn't stir Him. And His love for them never changed. He alone could

see the future and know the perfect time and the perfect way to answer their prayers.

So what was the sisters' role in this story?

What is our role?

Like Mary and Martha, we can call on Jesus to heal those who are sick. But, if and when Jesus doesn't show up like we think He should, we can't conclude that He doesn't hear us, that He doesn't care or that He doesn't love us. Nothing Lazarus's sisters said or did could have changed Jesus' timing. And the only thing Jesus asked of Mary and Martha is the only thing He asks of us. Their role and our role is the same.

Believe, and be witnesses to the glory of God.

Like Mary and Martha, I wanted things to happen my way and in my time. But when I stayed focused on my shortsighted view of the situation and absorbed by my own grief and loss, I missed seeing Jesus, who was standing with me the whole time.

So I let go of my dreams, because I knew I wasn't the one who could fulfill them, and I didn't want to spend another minute chasing dead dreams when Jesus offered me eternal life. ☩



LAURA STORY

Laura is a Bible teacher, worship leader, Grammy-winning singer and songwriter, and best-selling author. Blessings was certified gold in 2011 and inspired her first book, *What If Your Blessings Come Through Raindrops?* Laura's music and writing show God's love and grace intersecting with real life and serve as a reminder that despite questions or circumstances, He is the ultimate author of our story. Laura and her husband welcomed twin boys, Ben and Griffin, in September, joining 2 ½-year-old big sister Josie. Laura lives with her family in Atlanta, where she serves at Perimeter Church as a worship leader.

HAPPY HEALING

Somewhere, sometime God has a miracle waiting for you

BY KERRI POMAROLLI



"There is nothing God can't heal, and we agreed this was a divine appointment. I invited her to my church and hugged her. God and I bought a shopping cart full of items to celebrate what He did today."

I know we all make promises in the new year, and I'm no exception. I joined a women's small group, even though I feel totally over-scheduled and exhausted. I thought it would be a good idea.

Last night we talked about worship and its importance in our daily lives. I promptly informed them that since I'm a Type Triple AAA working mom who's always on the run, worship is a challenge for me. It's not spontaneous and seems to take a back seat to motherhood, Hollywood and fighting battles big and small.

So I decided to visit the holy of holy places today, Home Goods. Can't we always make time for shopping even when we're stressed? I was eyeing a pair of hot black boots when I struck up a conversation with a lady who, like me, was from Michigan.

She casually told me that she had been suffering from great pain because of lupus and other diseases, and that she had to quit her job. I took a chance and asked her if she believed in God. "Yes," she said. "I pray all the time."

I said, "Do you believe that God could have sent me here to the shoe aisle because He says He wants to heal you completely and get rid of all that pain you live with daily?"

She got excited and so did I. We prayed—I tried to behave and keep quiet—and I heard God tell me that she was going to jump on a trampoline, that she was going to ride a bike in faith for her healing and that she was completely healed today.

God also informed me He was healing her from fibromyalgia, and I didn't even know she had it. I just did my best to hear Him and speak from my heart. Am I always right on? Not by a long shot, but I keep trying and He knows my heart is in the right place.

She got choked up and told me she had bought a bike and was looking at it every day wondering, "When am I going to get to ride this?"

Her neighbor has a trampoline and, despite much discomfort, she'd been trying this summer to jump on it. She was a believer in God's healing. She just needed a reminder.

We prayed for less than 3 minutes, and 100 percent of

her pain was gone. She said she felt a warmth sweep over her, and she knew it was done. There is nothing God can't heal, and we agreed this was a divine appointment. I invited her to my church and hugged her. God and I bought a shopping cart full of items to celebrate what He did today.

I hit the dressing room overwhelmed and shaking with what had just happened. I couldn't do anything but stop and thank God for changing this woman's life. I hit the floor right there in that fabulous fluorescent lighting. I kept thanking God over and over for what He did. I guess I was worshipping. I learned that true worship can come in unexpected moments and that God is always there to talk to us and work through us. All we have to do is to be open and willing to be used.

I don't know who you are or where you are. But if you read this far, you needed to hear this: God has a miracle for you. Stop, ask Him and see Him work in your situation. All I had to do was show up, and God did the rest.

It was so amazing, and I really don't want anything to come between Him and me and having the most fun ever like we did today. The woman actually called me the next day to tell me that she was 100 percent free of pain and that her doctors said her blood work had suddenly changed for the better.

Now, if only God could show me how to pray for supernatural weight loss.

(I also celebrated with a chocolate candy bar! ☺)



KERRI POMAROLLI
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Kerri, known as Hollywood's God Girl, is a stand-up comedian, author, actress, mom and out-of-the-closet Christian. She has been seen on the *Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Showbiz Tonight* and *General Hospital*. Her latest book, *Guys Like Girls Named Jennie*, is being considered as a motion picture.



How to grow stronger

A letter-by-letter guide to building your faith

BY TAMMY TURNAGE

had barely opened my eyes in the early morning hours of my 52nd birthday when one word started bouncing around in my mind. That word? "Stronger."

On my birthday I like to think back over the past year and look forward to the year ahead. What goals do I have for this coming year? What areas of my life do I want to work on? Well, could "stronger" be a goal this year?

If I want to be stronger, where do I start? Maybe I'll look up Scriptures on this word and memorize a few key verses, or read biographies about people who have lived amazing lives with strong faith in God.

True strength comes only from God, so this year I am focusing on growing in my faith. I have come up with a few goals to get started. I hope they just might help you to have a

"STRONGER" year, too.

Stay close to God

The only way to grow stronger in our walk with God is to spend time with Him. A lot of people who are strong in their faith begin each day by seeking God first. Start your day reading your Bible or a devotional book and praising God. Learn more about Him through Bible study and continue to pray to Him throughout the day.

Trust God

We need to be reminded daily that God can handle any problem or concern. Often we face unexpected events in our

lives, like job changes, sudden financial burdens, illnesses or seeing your children grow up and leave home. Whatever you are facing, always trust God. You are His child. He loves you and cares for

Remember to rest

Many women, including me, find it hard to rest. We are so busy caring for everyone else that we fail to get the rest we need. Just sitting down for a few minutes each day to read your Bible or a devotion book, listening to an inspiring song or getting a 15-minute nap will do wonders in helping you feel refreshed. We also need enough sleep every night so we can serve God and others with all our strength. That often means making an effort to go to bed on time every night.

Organize your time and home

When our work and home lives are organized, our minds are clearer, and we have more time and energy to

do things for others. You can search through hundreds of articles, books and online resources with suggestions on how to manage your home. Many have great decorating ideas, too.

Make a list and start with just one area of your home. When you're finished, go to the next room. Before long, the entire house will be done. I once walked room by room and made a long to-do list of what needed to be cleaned, uncluttered and decorated in each room, including the storage rooms and attic.

I worked diligently every day. It was hard work and took weeks to finish, and I often prayed for physical strength to complete the task. But I did it, and you can too. It made such a difference in how my family feels when we are home.

I also finally had time to chip away at another to-do list that I had pushed aside. Yes, it was hard work, but it was well worth the effort. By managing our time and home better, we enrich our lives as well as the lives of those around us. It also clears our schedule for so many wonderful things we now have time to do.

Nurture your relationships with family and friends

One word often describes what our families and loved ones need from us most: time. I don't know about you, but I thought that as each year passed, life would slow down and get easier. But you know what? The opposite happened. My life is busier than ever. You, too?

It's also exactly why we need to remind ourselves that we need to hit

the "pause" button and take a moment to cherish the relationships with those we love.

I remember sharing with my husband one Sunday morning that I felt like we needed to visit my sweet aunt after church.

She lived a little more than an hour's drive away, so a visit would take most of our afternoon. But he agreed, and we left as soon as we could after the service. She had not been feeling well, yet we had just the most precious visit.

She passed away the next day.

Please let this be a reminder. Don't wait to spend time with those you love today, because tomorrow might be too late.

Give of your time and talents to help others

Give and give and give. It blesses your heart and theirs. How many times have you taken a small gift to someone in need—to cheer them up and encourage them—and then pulled back into the driveway feeling that you were the one who was encouraged that day?

It's the wonderful beauty of giving. The blessing comes back around. Visiting members of your church or community who can no longer go outside of their homes brings so much joy.

The ladies in our church have a wonderful Prayer Blanket ministry, giving blankets to those who are homebound or facing an illness. What a loving gift these ladies give to those in need. Can you imagine how the recipients feel when they wrap themselves in a blanket made just for

them and know they were prayed for?

Use whatever talents God has given you—sewing, cooking, gardening, singing, playing an instrument, art—to bring joy and encouragement this year to others. Make it a point to do something every week for someone you know and love.

Encourage others daily

A great goal this year is to reach out to at least three people every day. Whether it's by text message, phone call or handwritten note, your encouragement could mean the world to someone today.

Read, read, read

Start with God's Word. Enrich your heart and mind through reading your Bible, an inspirational book and inspiring magazine articles. Keep a couple of index cards nearby with an encouraging Scripture on them to help you throughout the day. Share a favorite book with others. Give them a Bible or devotional book to help them grow in their walk with God.

Do you know what one of the most beautiful books of poetry is to me? A hymnal. Dust off that old hymnal and start to read some of the most inspiring words ever written. Reading the text to a beloved hymn each day will lift you up and strengthen your faith.

This is just a start. Why don't you come along with me and let's get "stronger" together this year? Who knows what we will learn along the way. I can't wait to get started, can you? ☺



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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.



FAILURE WITH A PURPOSE

Patrick Henry struck out at everything he tried until ...

BY JENNY L. COTE

John Henry looked around the Hanover Courtroom from the chair in which he sat as presiding justice. His face fell as he gazed over at the group of plaintiff parsons leaning in close to whisper to one another.

He could only imagine what they were saying. The colony had passed the Two-Penny Act to pay parsons the original rate of 2 cents per pound of tobacco after a horrific drought dried up the livelihood of farmers who simply couldn't pay the parsons with the inflated rate of 6 cents per pound.

The enraged parsons went over the heads of their own people, over the heads of the Virginia Burgesses and all the way to the king of England himself. They wanted the full 6-penny rate, plus damages, and King George II sided with them—they were due damages and back pay from the people of Virginia.

Sitting in the courtroom this day, some parsons shook their heads with mocking smiles. Some chuckled. This court case was a formality and they already knew they were going to come out on top. But John Henry knew this would not be the case for the opposing young lawyer representing the people. It just so happened that the lawyer was his son.

He cringed as he watched young Patrick grope for the right words before halting mid-sentence, fumbling nervously with documents askew on the desk below. John Henry sank lower in his seat, thinking, "My son has been a failure at everything he's tried ... now this, too?"

Patrick Henry needed a new beginning. He had tried hard to find his purpose in life and a way to support his family. When Patrick was a young man, his father set him up as a shopkeeper with his brother. But their customers couldn't pay their debts from the credit extended to them, so Patrick gave up the store. Soon he married Sarah, the love of his life, and tried his hand as a tobacco farmer. After three years of exhausting work, his crops failed and his house burned down, so he gave up the farm.

He thought he'd try storekeeping one more time, but having only 26 customers in six months wasn't enough to make it, so he gave up the business. Disheartened and at a loss for what to do, he moved Sarah and their two small children into Hanover Tavern, owned by Sarah's father. There, Patrick waited on the lawyers who walked in from across the street after their day in Hanover Courthouse. While he served them and even fiddled for

their entertainment, Patrick listened intently to the conversations of the lawyers.

"Maybe I could be a lawyer," he thought to himself.

With a glimmer of hope, he borrowed three law books and began to read. A few short weeks later, he rode a horse to Williamsburg to apply for a license to practice law. Even though he didn't go to law school like other aspiring lawyers and clearly needed to study more, Patrick Henry was granted his law license. He started riding to nearby counties to represent small cases, and little by little he began to get some traction. When the lawyer for the people gave up the case against the parsons, Patrick Henry was chosen to step in to represent the people in the Parsons Cause case of 1763.

Patrick Henry found himself in a Hanover Courthouse overflowing with spectators, some of whom sat in the open windows despite this cold December day. And here he found himself in front his father. He desperately wanted to make him proud. Patrick knew that the outcome of this day could determine if he was going to make it with this promising new beginning as a lawyer, or if he would fail once again.

But as John Henry sank lower in his chair, as the parsons smugly looked on and as jurors gazed down uncomfortably at the floor, something amazing happened. Patrick's voice slowly began to rise and pick up momentum. All eyes turned with awe as an orator was suddenly born in front of them in that courtroom.

Patrick's arguments came together. For an hour he petitioned the court that the king had no right to intervene in Virginia's ability to pass laws for the good of the people. He then tore into the shameful parsons, suggesting that they didn't deserve more than a single penny for their failure to be faithful shepherds to their hurting flocks. John Henry rose in his chair while the parsons sank in theirs as the clerk read the jury's verdict: one penny in damages and back pay to be paid. The courtroom erupted in applause and cheers of "Huzzah!" and Patrick Henry was carried out of the Hanover Courthouse on the shoulders of the grateful people of Virginia.

Patrick Henry had finally found the right new beginning that led to what he was put on this earth to do. He was destined to become not just a lawyer but also a delegate to the Virginia House of Burgesses.

There he would become the Voice of the Revolution. He would set the colonies ablaze for liberty with his Stamp Act Resolves in 1765, and in 1775, he would rally a nation to independence with the cry of "Liberty or Death!" But it all began with the Parson's Cause.

I'm now writing my seventh novel on Patrick Henry and the Revolutionary War, *The Voice, the Revolution, and the Marquis* (2016). Like Patrick, it took me several attempts at a vocation until I found the right one that led to my life's purpose. I was put on this earth to write books, but seven novels ago, I had no idea if I would make it as an author or not.

Not that I had failed in my previous jobs—I hadn't. But

I was plagued with what I like to call "divine discontent," for I knew that I wasn't doing what I was meant to do. All along, God was preparing me to inspire children and adults alike with my pen. All along, God was preparing Patrick Henry to rally a nation with his voice. Neither Patrick nor I saw it coming, but God did. And all along, God has been preparing you for the role he has tailor-made for you to play on this earth. If God calls you to it, he will equip you for it.

Whether you've failed at everything you've tried or you need a new beginning, be encouraged by this verse: "... He marked out their appointed times in history..." (Acts 17:26). You were put on this earth for a purpose that only you can fulfill at this point in history. God knows what He's doing with you.

If He has allowed failure in your life—and if you allow Him to—God will use that very failure to get you to the place He has intended for you all along. Sometimes the false starts and failures are necessary to get us to the right place at the right time. God wastes nothing, and Romans 8:28 is proven time and again, that He causes "all things to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose."

I doubt Patrick Henry could have argued as passionately for the people whose tobacco crops had failed if his own tobacco crops had not failed. I doubt he could have persuaded a jury with words of empathy for those suffering financial loss and ruin if he had not experienced such loss and ruin himself.

What if his house had never burned, and he hadn't been forced to move to Hanover Tavern to listen to those lawyers? Can you see how God turned those failures for Patrick's good? When the time was finally right, Patrick was given a new beginning with a voice and a purpose that would become pivotal to the direction of an entire nation.

Patrick Henry's voice is still heard 2½ centuries after that day when John Henry wept tears of joy to witness a new, solid beginning for his son. Be it a voice like Patrick's, a pen like mine or another gift God has specifically given to you, I hope 2016 will be your year of using it for new beginnings. Who knows? Maybe you'll even be carried on the shoulders of people cheering you on as you begin. Huzzah! ☺



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Jenny, an award-winning author, developed an early passion for God, history and young people. She beautifully blends these passions together in her two fantasy fiction series, *The Amazing Tales of Max and Liz*, and *Epic Order of the Seven*. Likened to C.S. Lewis by readers and book reviewers alike, she speaks on creative writing to schools and universities around the world. Jenny lives with her family in Roswell, Georgia.

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BUILD ON THE BASICS

BE THE BEST YOU FOR YOUR BEST YEAR EVER

BY DR. CATHERINE HART WEBER



“Always we begin again,” says St. Benedict’s rule of life.

Every day is a chance for a new beginning. Every new year brings the hope to be better, live better. And we are always thankful for these second chances, aren’t we?

So, here we are again, with our goals, dreams and desires, wondering what will make the difference as we begin again. As you reflect on how God is calling you to grow and change, to flourish in all areas of your life, consider these tried and true, Biblical and scientifically proven basics.

1. Choose life, choose God

The good things of God and life don’t always just come naturally. That’s why God encourages us to “be careful how you live.” Choose life.

All the good daily choices we make eventually become our habits. And our habits determine our character, our future reality. This means being intentional. Having the heart and will to “want to” choose what matters most. Not just doing what comes along or letting the pace and ways of world deplete and distract us. Make the right choices.

In the Bible story of Mary and Martha, we are told that Mary “chose” the better part. That means, she had to “choose” to make it a priority to spent time with Jesus. In contrast, Martha was just doing what had to be done. She represents all the distractions and busyness that can keep us caught up when “life happens.”

Mary is a reminder for us. Choose God. Choose abundant life. This is the key to everything else we long for.

In what ways can you choose a healthier life?

How can you make it a priority to spend time in God’s Presence, to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

2. Be a blesser

We all know this. You can’t control everything that happens in life. But attitude is everything, especially gratitude and appreciation. When you choose to focus on and be thankful for the good in life, you also choose joy.

The Biblical, Judeo tradition emphasizes the importance of personally “blessing the Lord” (affectionately praising and thanking) for every detail of our daily life. Throughout the Psalms King David says, “Bless the Lord O my soul.”

In fact, Jewish tradition encourages saying 100 blessings a day. Pay attention. Notice with awe-filled respect and wonder all the good and beautiful gifts of life that the

Lord provides. And then offer a blessing of gratitude and appreciation because God knows it is good for you.

According to heartmath.com, science has even proven that cultivating and practicing heartfelt appreciation actually reduces stress, providing positive mental and physical states.

In what ways can you become a better “blesser” this year, increasing your joy?

3. Cultivate connections

As we journey into the new year, we need safe, sacred soul companions alongside us. We are better together. We won’t make it alone. We need to be in relationship with the Lord and others. Keep the Lord in mind always. Be aware of His presence in everything. Continually talk to Him in your mind.

Jesus was in continual connection with God. He also chose a close group of 12 to be with Him, to do life with, to be together. And He chooses each of us to spend time “with Him,” in prayer, in the Word, journeying alongside His other close companions. This how we become our best, true self and being a blessing to others.

In what ways can you cultivate being with your “close companions” for the journey?

As we look ahead into this year, let’s not settle for wilting or being too busy with the mundane things of this world. May we pursue what matters most. Choose abundant life. Choose God.

Bless the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

Spend time with Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit so you can have the power source to be transformed and keep growing. Stay connected.

And may you be blessed with a good new year. ☺



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

THE DANGERS OF TAKING OFFENSE

Hurt by someone else? Seek God's wisdom to remove the sting

BY COLLEEN ROUSE

Ah, yes, it's time for the annual New Year's resolution list. We formulate it in our mind each year, burgeoning with hope that this year things will be different.

It's interesting to note that most items that make it onto the list have to do with behaviors such as losing weight, healthier eating choices and career development. I would bet that if any area of our lives needs renewal, besides the gym membership, it is the way we interact with others.

I will even take this a step further and guess that one of the areas of challenge for most of us would be dealing with difficult people and or situations.

I'd like to propose that in 2016 we take on a major relational issue that seems to plague every single one of us, that being offense.

You may feel like you've tried everything to improve interactions with a coworker or family member, but to no avail. For those who face these struggles, I have good news—the Scriptures are rich with relational insight. We have far more to stand on than just a hopeful resolution.

If you are tired of being in the relational rut—those patterns of interactions with the same individuals that lead to regret and frustration—then you are my girl. I would love for you to learn from my mistakes and glean from my "Aha" moments with the Lord regarding the trap of offense. Think of this as an opportunity to grow in Relational Intelligence.

These truths have worked in my own life. I have a family member who is difficult to be around; he had a reputation for hostility. Many interactions with him ended in hurt. During one family gathering years ago, he verbally attacked me.

Stinging with humiliation, I thought, "I knew that someone was going to get it from him, but why did it have to be me?" To maintain my cool, and not let him see me cry, I walked away. On the inside, however, it was as if I had con-

sumed a cocktail of pain, resentment and anger. I felt the effects immediately. My neck stiffened and my heart hardened. For the rest of the visit, he appeared unbothered, but offense was eating away at me and the incident was unresolved.

Over the next few days, I replayed the incident, imagining myself coming back with some clever zinger to put him in his place, but this brought no peace. Finally, when I asked the Lord for His wisdom—not as a victim, but as a daughter wanting His counsel on my own actions—He opened my eyes to great truth.

Over the years, as I have applied it, all of my relationships have become healthier, including this particular one. These lessons can help you as well.

Your emotions can lead you to all the wrong places, if you let them.

In moments of pain, we are accustomed to our emotions determining a course of action. When we feel victimized, we can circle the wagons and put up a strong guard against the "enemy." In doing so, we harbor offense. We were not created to guard our hearts against people, but against wrong attitudes toward people. In doing so, we learn that it's possible to allow hurt to foster hostility in us.

When we choose to be led by His truth and the power of His infinite love, the influence of our wounded emotions diminishes along with the vulnerability to offense. It's in those moments we begin to realize the strength of His Word in directing our response.

Sometimes your "rights" can do you wrong.

Many would agree, as I felt, that I had the "right" to be offended. When we feel we have a "right" to something, we take a strong stand. However, this allows the pain of the



moment to live longer than it should. Hebrews 12:15 says, "Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."

Bitterness grows best in the soil of a hardened heart. Be careful what you take a stand on because it will soon take a hold of you. In the same way, if we take a stand on His Word, it takes a hold of us and becomes part of our lives.

Offense has more to do with others failing to live up to our expectations than it does with others hurting us.

I know. This one is hard to swallow, right? Let me explain. There is a difference between desire and expectation. It's not wrong to desire to be treated in a loving manner. The open door for offense, as the Lord revealed to me, was that my desire had become my expectation or demand on another person. My expectation positioned me as a judge regarding the way I was being treated.

We can't hold another person to our standards, or even to God's standard. It is not our place to judge. We can soon find ourselves judging not only their behavior but their heart's motive. From that position, we're aligned with the accuser of the brethren—Satan. The Lord taught me to place my expectations on Him and not on any individual.

It is possible to live free of offense.

The next time I encountered my family member and the opportunity for offense came, I allowed truth to guide my emotions. I began to say to myself repeatedly, "Lord, I give him grace!" I had to say it several times until it really took hold and became my desire. I encourage you to try this.

You'll notice, as I did, the pain lifts and your heart soft-

ens. The entry point to the enemy closes when we are open to obeying His Word. To this day, my relationship with this family member is better. In fact, as I continue to guard my heart's attitude toward him, he has softened his heart toward me and frustration has turned into favor.

Truth brings wisdom and as we embrace it we grow in relational intelligence. It's better to be poised to reconcile than ready to rumble. So go ahead, girlfriend, seize the new year and allow your relationships to flourish in 2016.

"Love sincerely. Hate evil. Hold on to what is good. Be devoted to each other like a loving family. Excel in showing respect for each other." (Romans 12:9-10 GW) ☩



COLLEEN ROUSE
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Colleen, along with her husband, Dennis, is co-founder and lead pastor of Victory World Church in Atlanta. Victory is a multicultural church of more than 115 nations and 13,000 attendees on a weekly basis. Colleen is heavily involved in leadership development with a specific focus on supporting women in the workplace. Her dedication to supporting career women led her to form THRIVE, an organization focused on empowering women in the workplace to thrive as disciples in every area of life.

Redemption: WE ARE HIS

God doesn't redeem you because you deserve it, but because His mercy dictates it. You aren't redeemed because you are worthy, but because you are worth it

BY JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD



Hosea didn't redeem Gomer because she was worthy, but because she was worth it. And so he went to the slave block to buy her back: "So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley" (Hosea 3:2).

Gomer had a price tag on her—about 30 pieces of silver—and Hosea had to scrape his money and belongings together to come up with the equivalent. (That's probably why he added some barley to the mix.)

I can imagine Hosea, having just emptied his savings account and arriving at the market where the slave auction was being held. His heart must have been crushed to see the woman he cherished standing barely clothed before the crowd. And unlike the crowd, Hosea didn't consider what she could do but rather who she was. And he didn't see just where she was, he saw whose she was—his.

When the auctioneer opened the bidding, Hosea offered the first bid. Another bid was made, and Hosea upped his price. The bidding went on until Hosea offered his equivalent of 30 pieces of silver. The auctioneer's hammer fell as he pronounced, "Sold!" When Gomer glanced up to see who would be her new master, Gomer's eyes must have filled with tears—tears of shame and relief, tears of regret and uncertainty.

Can you imagine what Gomer must have been thinking and feeling? Will he ever forgive me? Can he ever really accept and love me again?

The clatter of the hammer and the word sold reverberated in her soul. He rescued me? Hosea bought me back? Her eyes stared at the dirty ground beneath her feet. Gomer knew, as everyone did back then, that 30 pieces of silver was the price of a slave. She had traded in her wedding band for the shackles of slavery. Gomer could not lift her chin as she heard his footsteps drawing nearer and nearer to where she stood. Trembling as the cold wind brushed her bare arms, she shook with hunger and fear.

Hosea made his way to the front of the room, gave the auctioneer a pouch of silver coins and pointed to a heaping bag of barley sitting on the auction house floor. The auctioneer nodded, shoved the coins in his pocket and pulled out a key. Then with one swift pull on the chain attached to Gomer's wrist, he unlocked the chain and it clattered to the floor. Hosea reached for Gomer, yet she could not look into his eyes.

Lifting her dirty hand, Hosea brought it to his lips and tenderly kissed it. He then walked his wife off the slave block, covering her with his cloak and whispering in her ear, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way

toward you." (Hosea 3:3)

Those are Hosea's statements that are recorded in Scripture, but I wonder if he said a lot more between those few sentences—the kind of words shared only between a husband and wife.

Even though Gomer may have been expecting to hear that she was now Hosea's slave instead of his wife, I wonder if he may have said something like this: "Gomer, I chose you once, and I choose you again. Don't let shame keep you from turning to me. I don't see what you've done; I see who you are—my beloved bride.

"My beloved, my affection toward you is so much stronger than the chains you wore. I willingly bore your shame when I redeemed you, and you now bear my name. You were the bride I chose, and you will always be the bride I love.

"You are worth the cost of this redemption. I will always see you as beautiful, for you are mine. I will always think of you as lovable because I love you. So please cease striving to find your place, my precious Gomer. You have already been found in me."

Can you just let these words from Hosea to Gomer settle over you? And can you hear them as God's words to you?

No matter where we are, God sees who we are. We are His, and He loves us with an everlasting love.

God paid the ultimate price to purchase your freedom. He gave Jesus, "who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood." (Revelation 1:5 NASB)

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." (NASB) ☩



JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD, Jennifer, who despite going blind at age 15, has learned to live beyond limits through her faith (even gone bungee-jumping). Jennifer has been featured on *Good Morning America*, *Dr. Phil*, *Billy Graham*, *The Learning Channel* and other national programs. She is the founder of Fresh Grounded Faith events.

A NEW MORNING, EVERY MORNING

*Is the past holding you back? Let God guide
you to change for the better*

BY CHERYL LANE

Lamentations 3:23 says, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

I love this Scripture because it reminds us that no matter what our past is like, no matter what we are going through today, no matter the mistakes we have made, God is still faithful. His mercies are new every morning. In other words, every day is a brand new day.

Why? Because He is still the same, He still has compassion for me and He is still faithful. He hasn't given up on me.

The message bible says it like this, "God's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great your faithfulness! I'm sticking with God (I say it over and over). He's all I've got left."

Wow, what great news! God is not holding out on us. If we are stuck in our past, it is not His fault, and neither is it His will for us to stay there. We get a fresh chance every day to let go of our past and move forward. It is easy for us

to hang on to our mistakes, hurts and disappointments of days gone by. When we do, those things keep us trapped in life and hinder us from the tremendous blessings God has for us.

I have never forgotten a story I read years ago about a little boy who was playing with a valuable vase that had been in his family for years. He had been told that one day the vase would be passed down to him.

He knew he wasn't supposed to touch it, but just couldn't resist taking a better look. He heard something rattle and discovered a dime in the bottom of the vase. Checking to be sure no one was watching, he stuck his hand in to get the dime.

Sure enough, he was barely able to grasp the dime with his fingers, but then discovered he could not get his hand out of the vase. There was nothing else he could do but call for his father's help.

He called for his father, and the dad tried to get his son's hand out without breaking the valuable vase. The father finally figured out that the boy had his hand closed inside the vase. He told him, "Son, open up your hand so

we can get it out." The little boy replied, "But dad, I can't do that because I would have to drop my dime."

This is what some people are doing today. They are stuck in life, holding on to things that add no value and actually hinder them from moving on. They don't understand that if they would let go, God has so much better for them. In fact, God is probably telling them, "Let go! I can help you if you will simply let go of the past."

All of us have areas in our lives that we want to see changed, but many times we don't want to do anything different or difficult to bring about that change. We just want God to "fix" our problems. But change doesn't come to us as much as it comes through us. We don't have to stay the same. God has done His part. He still cares. He still loves us and He is still faithful.

Think about what changes you would like in your life. Pray about what your part is and ask God for wisdom and direction. Ask Him to help you make those changes. Expect great things to happen for you. My husband and I confess often, "The rest of our days are the best of our days!"

Remember, you are not alone. You have opportunities

to start fresh every day. Let go of what is holding you back and get ready to move into your best year ever. ☩



CHERYL LANE
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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.



THE COURAGE TO WAIT

In times of stress, discover your true needs and find yourself in God

BY SUSAN MILLIGAN



I don't know about you, but I am ready for a new year. Why? Because a new year brings excitement, focus and hope. In 2015, I also discovered that I needed something in addition to excitement, focus and hope, and that was courage.

I needed the type of courage that only comes from God, the type that will sustain me through the entire year and help me fulfill all the things that bring excitement. I also needed courage to embrace what God has done in me, what He would like to accomplish with me and also what He would like to change.

Each year I ask God to give me a word to meditate on throughout the upcoming months. It helps me focus on a specific attribute of His vast personality and teaches what I have in Him. This past year it was courage. I was excited to unpack this word, because I thought I knew

what courage meant to me. This was going to be an easy lesson. Ha! Was I ever wrong, and as always, I learned a great deal about our awesome God.

Last year brought much hope and excitement because my two boys started a new school. The new school brought new opportunities for my sons, and I knew they would grow in the process. It also brought something new to our home: cost.

We had enrolled in a private school, and the cost was more than our budget could handle. The logical thought was for me to find a full-time job and put my ministry work on hold. I just knew this was what God meant when He said I needed courage. To go back to the corporate world and put my ministry on hold would require much courage.

I am a go-getter. I can put a great resume together,

"Be strong. Take courage. Don't be intimidated. Don't give them a second thought because God, your God, is striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. He won't let you down; he won't leave you." Deuteronomy 31:6 The Message

apply for jobs and go to interviews. Some people would need courage to do these things, but to me they come naturally because of my personality. I don't really need God's courage to fulfill these tasks; I am good at them all by myself.

But God, well, He had another plan in mind. He knows me, He knows you, every part of us. He knew I needed to trust Him with our family's finances and not strive to do it in my own power. The courage I needed was to wait on the Lord, meaning I didn't get a job right away.

For some of you, this might be something you have already tackled, but remember, I am a go-getter; waiting on something is complete torture.

In the waiting, which is still ongoing, I have learned three valuable lessons. God also gave me three Scriptures on courage to cling to as the lessons learned grow deeply in my soul.

Be you

While waiting I have learned that people are very different. "Well, duh!" you might say, but when you are in the midst of a trial that affects those you love the most, this lesson of being you is highlighted. I don't think this can ever be said enough: God has created us each with a unique personality and purpose. We all must discover who we are in Him. During this season of waiting, I discovered so much more of myself in Him and it brought me more confidence and strength. "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord." (Psalm 31:24 NIV)

Stop comparing.

When you are waiting on the Lord, the temptation to compare is huge. You want to hold your situation up to everyone around you and ask why? God kept taking me back to His Word and asking me to believe that He was faithful and He was going to take care of us and provide for our every need. "Be strong. Take courage.

Don't be intimidated. Don't give them a second thought because God, your God, is striding ahead of you. He's right there with you. He won't let you down; he won't leave you." (Deuteronomy 31:6 The Message)

Live fearlessly while trusting in God

While you are waiting, fear can overtake your soul and begin to make you question the goodness of God. Your brain was not wired to feel fear, but rather love. God showed me that fear is a learned trait that can be unlearned only through exercising your faith in God. Even in the midst of the greatest storms, we can lean into love and trust the goodness of God. It is a choice and it has to be exercised. The storms in life condition us to choose love and trust over fear. "And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong." (Ephesians 6:10 The Message)

After dozens of applications and interviews, I finally realized that God didn't want me to enter the corporate world and put my ministry on hold. No, He wanted me to have the courage to believe He was my provider and He wanted to be allowed to come through for me. Wow!

The journey continues, but I now know more about this vast God and that is He is my provider and the author of courage. ☺



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Susan, along with WHOAwomen 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.

Getting past your past

Leave mistakes behind; a fresh beginning awaits

BY JOYCE MEYER

We've all experienced times in our life when we've been tempted to give up. Maybe you tried something once and it didn't work out the way you expected it to. It's easy to get discouraged, but God doesn't want us to get stuck in a moment in our lives when things didn't work out the way we planned. He wants us to keep going so we can fulfill His purpose and truly enjoy our lives.

John 10:10 says, "The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)." God has a great life planned for us, but too often we allow the enemy to steal our joy by focusing on our past. I believe in order to live the wonderful lives that God planned for us, we need to leave our past behind and press forward. We need to get unstuck.

The devil would love for us to believe that "I've made too many mistakes," "There's no way to overcome the mess I have in my life," "I'm too old," or "It's just too late." But the truth is—whatever you are, wherever you are, whatever you've been through—it is never too late to begin again.

I had a lousy start in my own life. My father sexually and verbally abused me for many years, and it caused me a lot of pain and sadness. But God not only restored what was stolen from me, He made my new life in Him better than I ever could have imagined. It has been a long journey, but I can honestly say that now I love my life and

I'm determined to have a great finish.

God's Word is filled with examples of people who were given a fresh start. A woman known only as "Rahab the harlot" was rescued and given a noble name in the bloodline of Christ. Ashamed because he gave in to fear and denied that he knew Jesus, Peter was forgiven and inspired to preach at Pentecost. Paul was caught in a trap of dead religion, persecuting the early Christians. However, God transformed him and called him to write much of the New Testament.

God loves new beginnings! And He has a fresh start for you, too, if you'll spend time in God's Word and let the Holy Spirit guide you.

Life in Christ is a fresh start. The truth is, the greatest new beginning any of us can have is becoming a new creature in Christ. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!" (AMP).

It's important to understand that growing in Christ is a process that takes time. We learn how to walk by faith little by little, one step at a time. It's like this: When babies are learning to walk, they fall down many times. But they always get back up and try again. And that's really what God is asking us to do. No matter how many times we fall down in life, if we continue to get back up, eventually we're going to get to the place where we need to be. God



will lead and guide us into the best life we can possibly have, but first we need to let go of our past mistakes.

The Bible says in Hebrews 8:12, "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (NIV). God chooses to not only forgive all of our sins, but also to forget them! We need to stop remembering what God has forgotten. You're no surprise to Him. There's not a thing about me or you or anybody else that He doesn't know. Yet when we turn to Him, He still opens His arms and invites us into a relationship with Him.

Our history is not our destiny, but it is very important because it can teach us what worked and didn't work in our lives. And as we walk through life, we learn how to hear God's voice speaking to our hearts and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. We need to learn how to yield to the Holy Spirit because He's smarter than us and always has our very best interest at heart (see Jeremiah 29:11).

You never have to get stuck in a moment or season of your life where things didn't work out as you thought. Romans 5:5 says, "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (NET). If you will refuse to give up and hang on to your hope in Christ, you can enjoy the life God has planned for you. God loves you and He will never give up on you!

For more on this topic, order Joyce's four-CD series You Can Begin Again. You can also contact us to receive our free magazine, Enjoying Everyday Life, by calling (800) 727-9673 or visiting www.joycemeyer.org.



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Joyce is a New York Times best-selling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *The Mind Connection* (Hachette). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. 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.

STAND UP, BOUNCE BACK

Three tips for overcoming adversity and reaching your goals

BY ANGELA WELLS

did it! I finally did it! This year I accomplished all of my goals. I lost weight, eaten healthier, saved more money and stayed on a budget. I even volunteered in my community, developed more meaningful fun relationships with my friends and family and just finally feel accomplished.

OK, so while some of that is true, not all of it is. But wouldn't it be great if, at the end of 2016, you could say it and honestly mean it?

At one time or another, we have all started out the year with the best of intentions. But as soon as we promise to improve our lives and the lives of those around us, every force tries to distract and discourage us along the way.

It is as if at the very moment you decide to exercise and eat right, someone decides to build a bakery across the street from your house. Just the smell alone of the glazed donuts, chocolate éclairs and vanilla puffs has added a couple of pounds. LOL!

But sometimes we can get in our own way. Once discouragement or distraction sets in, our dream or goal becomes only a distant hope hindered by the longing fear that we can never quite reach our full potential.

In the Bible in Luke 22: 54-62, I'm reminded of how Peter denied Jesus. Peter had the best intentions of following and supporting Him through any persecution. He told Jesus during the Last Supper of how dedicated he was and even made it a point to say that he would never deny Jesus.

But when Jesus was arrested, beaten and tried, Peter was overcome by his fear and went against what he truly intended in his heart. Peter succumbed to the pressure

of his environment and circumstances, something we all have faced at some point in our lives.

The good news is that there is hope, and just as Jesus rose from the dead, a resurrection can take place in our lives. On the day of Pentecost, in front of the entire city, Peter gave what is considered the inaugural message of the modern church.

But remember—only days before, Peter was at his lowest; he had failed. But today he stood in victory and proclaimed the Good News. Today is finally your day—your day to stand in victory and give Him praise.

While we can only imagine the struggle Peter went through, we can all agree that now is the time that we finally accomplish what we have set our mind and hearts to do. You can rise up and accomplish the goals God has placed in your heart.

When Peter addressed the crowd on that historic day, Acts 2:14 says, "Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd." Peter became bold, and he accomplished the very thing that defeated him only a short time earlier.

When you set your mind on moving forward and accomplishing your goals for the new year, things will always get in the way. Here are three steps to make 2016 the year you finally accomplish your goals.

1. Always remember that God is working together with you

When you succeed and even when you fail, God is there. Jesus said in John 10:10 that He came to give us



an abundant life that we should all live. That doesn't mean that you will just skate by on the abundance bandwagon. It does mean that He wants your life to be full and rewarding and have abundance so that you can be a blessing to someone else.

But when life doesn't go this way, know that He is still there to help work things together for your good. This includes being successful in our goals and everything we put our hands to do. When you face difficulty and discouragement as you pursue your goals, just know He is there to help you pick yourself back up and try again.

2. Learn how to bounce back from disappointment

Peter made a huge mistake when he denied Jesus not once, not twice but three times. Making the same mistake will discourage anyone, but I could never imagine the feeling of denying Jesus at that most critical moment.

However, on the day of Pentecost, Peter tapped into a power that is greater than he was. In your own power, you can fail, but just know that when you put your trust in Jesus working on the inside of you, you can find the strength to try again. If you are like me, you have plenty of reasons to throw in the towel, but deciding to stick with it has better payoffs.

We tend to get down on ourselves due to our faults, flaws and failures, but never let those things define you. You are more than a setback, you are more than a failure, you ARE more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus.

So if you find yourself behind in any goals, get back up and try again.

3. Have compassion for yourself.

As women, we tend to give everyone else a second, third, fourth and maybe even a fifth chance, but not ourselves. We pick others up when they fall, we support them and believe in them, but often we have a hard time extending that same compassion on ourselves.

So take a dose of your own medicine and have compassion for yourself. Allow yourself to fail, but more importantly, allow yourself to succeed. Believe in yourself and believe that you deserve to be successful in your goals and dreams. Enjoy the journey, enjoy the process and let God help you succeed in life. ☺



ANGELA WELLS

Angela is an anointed vocalist who sings with power and a confident conviction. She has a genuine heart to serve and has dedicated her life to leading the body of Christ into His presence. Angela has opened for CeCe Winans during her "Throne Room" tour in Nashville, Tennessee.

She has sung alongside artists such as Darlene Czech and Nicole C. Mullen.

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A new year and a whole new life with it

BY LAINE LAWSON CRAFT

Psalm 40: 1-3 (Amplified version)
I waited patiently and expectantly for the Lord;
And He inclined to me and heard my cry;
He brought me up out of a horrible pit [of tumult
and of destruction], out of the miry clay,
And He set my feet upon a rock, steadying my foot-
steps and establishing my path.
He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise
to our God;
Mary will see and fear [with great reverence]
And will trust confidently in the Lord.

Happy New Year from my heart to yours! As I was searching for topics to share on, I was certain this favorite Psalm was exactly what you needed to start your new year.

I am not sure what you encountered in 2015, but many readers were challenged in various ways. Some of you may still be in a hurting place as we enter 2016. But I share good news with you. This year can be your best ever with these new revelations that can be activated in your life today.

In 2004 I was living in the pit of hell. Every area in my life was suffering. My finances, my marriage, my children, my spirituality and so much more were literally in bankruptcy. But God! I came across this Psalm and it changed my life. When I took these Scriptures above and applied them to my everyday walk with God, my life began to turn around.

My first step was to change my perspective from “hurry up and panic” to being patient and expectant. I learned that somewhere in the storm, you can find hope to hold on to. Instead of begging for the storms of life not to occur—or at least pass quicker—I began to ask, “What is the

purpose of this storm and how can I get out of this storm as a better person and not be beaten up?”

The answer: If I could have hope, I would get out of the storms. It might not happen in a hurry, but I would eventually come out not broken but better.

So my first challenge to you for making 2016 a better year is to slow down; know that God will teach you in the storm and that He will never leave you there; and expect victory on the other side.

The second step I took was to cry out to God. I finally realized God is not into religion but desires a personal relationship with me. God knew you and me before the earth was even formed. God hand-knitted each one of us in our mother’s womb. He has a specific plan and purpose for all of His children.

Do not live another day thinking God is mad at you, that He is tallying all of your sins, that He is a mean God. He is your heavenly Father. He loves you extravagantly. His greatest passion is to hear from you, talk with you, give you gifts and see that you have a life of abundance. He will do just as this Psalm says: He will hear your cry, reach out to you, and pull you out of hell’s destruction!

My final step was to live in His victory. God loved us so much that He gave us His only Son so that we could have a life full of love, power and success. Now I have a new song in my mouth that I sing with every breath. I sing praises and adoration to my heavenly Father who loves me so. He waits for His children to come just as they are to Him, and He lavishes them with His love and gifts. The confidence He gives is so overwhelming.

In every storm now, I know God is with me. I ask Him to show me what I need to learn through the pain. Then He delivers me every time, and my confidence and happiness grow with every challenge.

If you want 2016 to be your best year, I offer you this life lesson from my heart. This Psalm changed my life. I learned that God loves me deeply just the way I am, and even though I may fall into the pit of hell, He will always rescue me. Now I learn each time I fall or when the enemy comes to tempt me. I don’t panic or run from God anymore.

I have learned to cry out to God with all of my hurts, fears and pain, and He listens. He sets me back on my feet every time, overcoming storms in victory. Now I can share this with all the people I can so that many will find the everlasting and unconditional love of our creator. You too will find a new song and a new level of success. I declare that this year 2016 will be your best year ever! ☺



LAINE LAWSON CRAFT

Laine wears many hats: author; founder of WHOAWOMEN; publisher of WHOAWOMEN Magazine; and host of an upcoming television talk program, *The WHOA Show*. Her passion is to let all women know that God loves them right where they are and He desperately desires an intimate relationship with them. Laine and husband Steve have been married for more than 27 years and have two sons and a daughter.

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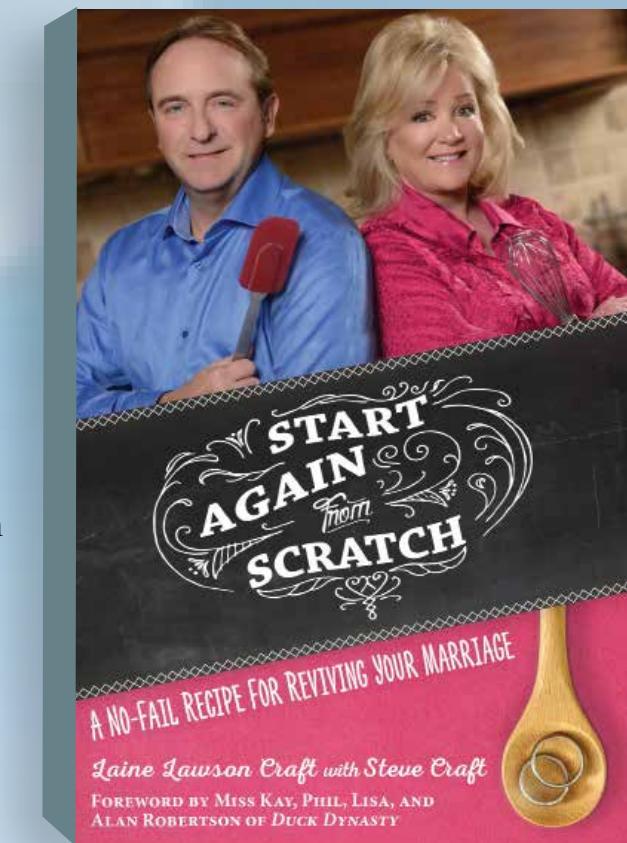
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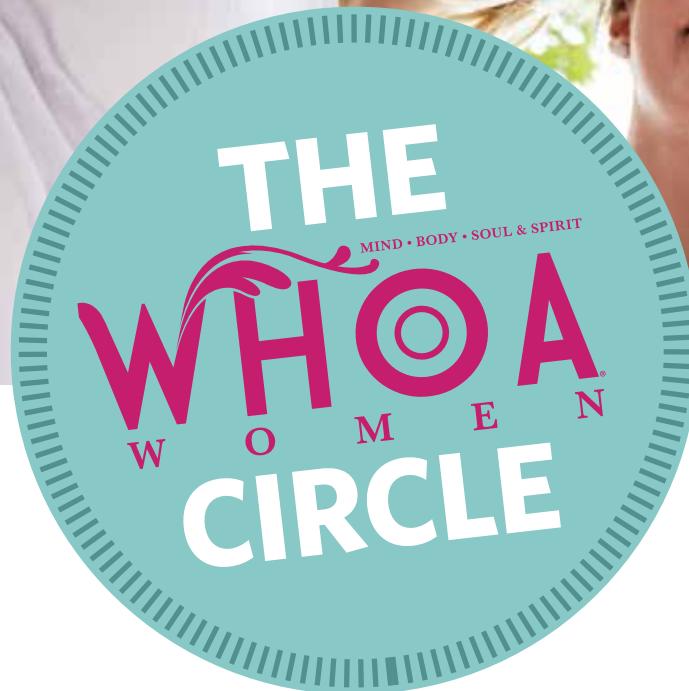


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