

CONFERENCE ISSUE 2018

# LEADING HEARTS

EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP

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- ♥ **OVERFLOW**  
WOMEN IN WORSHIP SERIES
- ♥ **HOW BOLD WOMEN SURVIVE**  
CHARACTER ASSASSINATION
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THROUGH DEPRESSION
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**CONTINUING**  
THE GREEN LEGACY

*for heaven's sake!*

LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS FROM THE PRAYER LADY

*Linda Evans Shepherd*



“Arise, Shine...

the glory of the LORD rises upon you.”

-Isaiah 60:1 (niv)



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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

*Linda Evans Shepherd*

hey!  
don't i know you?

I'VE SEEN YOU AT CHURCH, RIGHT? You're the one who leads, the one who's on staff, the one who volunteers. You're the one who tries to make a difference by reaching out to the women of your church and community.

It's not like you don't have other things to fill your time: family, obligations, job and more. But still you squeeze it in. You organize, plan and even create and lead Bible studies and other events. You do all this even when it feels like you are trying to herd cats. Not only do you need a better budget to help you accomplish all you do: it can be hard to get commitments from your group, hard to know who's coming so you can plan.

Let me encourage you. God is using you and you *are* making a difference.

And you're right in pursuing this God call of yours. Not only do the women at your church need one another, they need you, a leader who reaches out to them, a woman who cares. They are in a struggle too. Knowing you are there, knowing they have a place to connect with you and other women, knowing they have a place where their souls can be cared for—well that's worth more than you know.

You have a God-given gift of leadership, and you've done a beautiful thing by using it to serve God. So push through the struggles and push through the setbacks. The bottom line is you win because you are bringing hope and help to these women who, in turn, bring hope and help to their families and community. See, you are making a difference.

Psalm 68:11 says, "The LORD announces the word, and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng."

I am glad you are among that throng. And let us, at Leading Hearts magazine, encourage you and supply you with resources.

### Ideas for You

1. Why not send your women a link to each of our free magazines at [LeadingHearts.com](http://LeadingHearts.com) as soon it drops? It's free, and you can use it as a discussion tool, needed information, a Bible study, inspiration or other helps.
2. Get the women in your group connected to our daily devotional at [AriseDaily.com](http://AriseDaily.com). Why not lead a daily group text discussion on it with your peeps?
3. Need a speaker? Check out our speakers at [AriseSpeakers.com](http://AriseSpeakers.com).

Let me close with a blessing for you:

*Dear Lord,*

*Please bless this dear one who worships You and is a part of the throng of women who proclaim the good news. Strengthen her. Lead her! Assure her You are with her. Give her joy in this journey as she serves You, with and through Your power. Push back the darkness over her ministry and shine the light of Your love on all she does.*

*In Jesus' name,*

Amen *LSH*

Love,

LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD  
PUBLISHER, LEADING HEARTS MAGAZINE



CONFERENCE ISSUE 2018

# LEADING HEARTS

EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP

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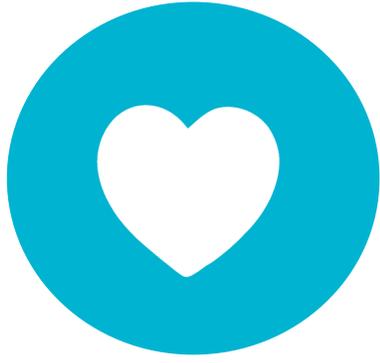
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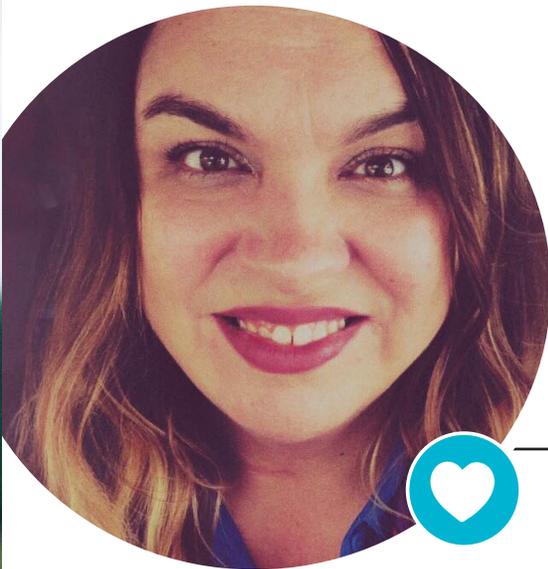
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FROM THE EDITOR  
*amber weigand-buckley*

hi, my name is amber  
and i am ... human

I REMEMBER STANDING IN OUR  
WEEKLY CHAPEL SERVICES AT  
THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS  
FOR THE CHURCH I ATTENDED.

I would sometimes visualize, on the occasions that “come to Jesus” altar calls were given, that human resource staff would be issuing those brave individuals their pink slips at the door.

Many times, I asked myself why I didn’t go forward when the invitation was given.

I knew the answer. I was afraid that acknowledging my personal discouragement and struggles in front of my peers would disqualify me from being in a place of leadership.

So when I struggled, I turned those article ideas into story. And when I preached on paper, I preached to myself the words I knew God was speaking to me.

In the process of continually going face to face with God, in all my dirt and bones of struggle, I learned that nothing I do in my own power qualifies me for any title of leadership.

But God calls me and qualifies me. All I can bring to the table is my willingness to serve Him — in all things and through all things.

Some of the best-written ministry material I have produced is nothing but the honest, barefaced conversations I have had with the God who loves me.

Paul led a lot like this. If anybody had a lot to boast about, it was Paul. On one hand, a native of Tarsus, he was born a Roman citizen. On the other hand, he was raised in Jerusalem and, as he states in Acts 22:3, “I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors.” He was a student of one of the greatest Jewish scholars of his day.

Yet for all his privilege and training, Paul understood who he really was. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15). Paul led from an understanding that he was only a sinner saved by grace, yet called by God as an apostle.

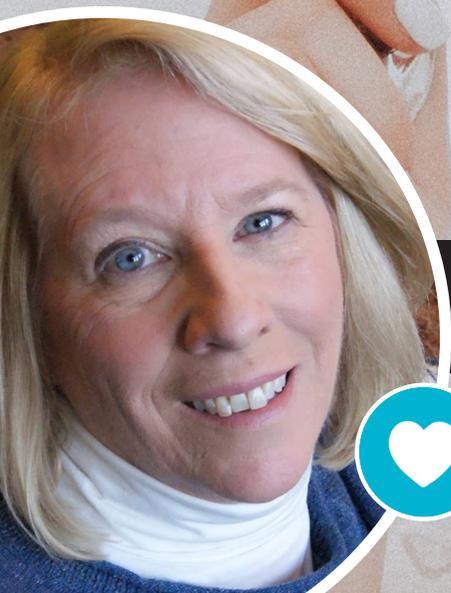
As a Christian in leadership, not being a slave to sin is not in freeing you to do everything right. No, it’s the freedom to acknowledge the struggle, no matter what leadership position you hold, and put the weight of it at the foot of the cross.

Sometimes that means holding your breath, putting the fear of judgment aside and stepping to your calling.

As leaders, that is the best kind of example we can set. I hope this issue of Leading Hearts inspires you to lead with the confidence of the call of the God who qualifies you. *LH*

Love,

AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY  
EDITOR, LEADING HEARTS MAGAZINE



by Robin Gilbert Luftig — [WWW.ROBINLUFTIG.COM](http://WWW.ROBINLUFTIG.COM)

# serving Christ while dealing with depression

**I REMEMBER GOD NUDGING ME INTO SERVICE.** Initially, I thought he had made a mistake. After all, it seemed unlikely that he would use someone with such a sinful past as mine. I know His grace and forgiveness are perfect — I had a place secured in heaven — but service seemed unlikely. Besides, I thought my emotional scars were too great. Additionally, I struggled with physical side effects from a brain surgery. It was easy to question the nudge.

But I prayerfully accepted the call, hoping my heart would experience “the peace that surpasses all understanding.” I prepared my initial talk, wrapped my audience in prayer, and readied myself to make my Heavenly Father proud. The time finally came for me to put on my best smile and walk in front of ladies who wanted to hear what I had to say.

The presentation went splendidly. Afterward, I received hugs and encouraging comments. When I returned home, however, I climbed under the covers, wishing to disappear.

Depression had found my heart.

My anxiety-based depression was based on feelings of inadequacy and the remnants of brain trauma — rich fodder for the enemy to rob me of the peace offered in serving Christ.

Depression is nothing new for God’s servants. Many of Scripture’s heavy hitters have dealt with it. Jonah felt so bad after being in Nineveh that he asked God to “take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live” (Jonah 4:3).

And don’t forget Elijah. After he won an incredible battle against the prophets of Baal, he prayed, “I have had enough, LORD.

Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” (1 Kings 19:4).

Depression can be paralyzing, but don’t be helpless when hits:

**Remember Who You Are.** Guard against being captivated by your own willingness to serve. Instead, focus on the Who you are serving. James 4:8 tells us, “Come near to God and he will come near to you.” Ponder Matthew 10:29:

Emotions come and go, but truth is rock-solid. Find some bet-your-life-on-it truths that stand the test of time.

**-continued on p. 10-**

A silhouette of a woman with long hair, looking down, holding a small object in her hand against a sunset background. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow. The woman's hair is long and dark, and she is wearing a dark top. The background is a mix of dark and light orange tones, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

"God wants to  
take you out of the  
place in your head  
that prevents you  
from walking freely  
in faith toward His  
plan."

*@barefacedgirl*

## -continued from p. 9-

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care.” It’s vital to stay focused.

**Allow Yourself to Feel Your Emotions.** God created you as an emotional being. To deny that is to deny God. When depression rushes in — as difficult as it is may be — thank Him for it. Apostle Paul addressed this very point. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7).

### **Trust Truth More Than Feelings.**

Acknowledge your feelings — your depression — but recognize it for what it is: only a feeling. Emotions come and go, but truth is rock-solid. Find some bet-your-life-on-it truths that stand the test of time. Consider truths like Hebrews 13:5 “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” or 1 Peter 1:6-7 “Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

### **Seek Godly Friends Who Also Serve God.**

Jesus and Apostle Paul served with others. They understood the need of sharing. We can model their examples. Ask God to bring women who also have a heart for service into your life. Find your own rendition of an Aaron and Hur team. Exodus 17:12 shows dedication in serving together: “Aaron and Hur held his [Moses] hands up — one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset.”

**Prepare for Depression Before It Strikes.** It’s difficult to recognize depression while you’re in its grip. If you are prone to suffer from bouts of depression, be proactive and prepare for it.

- Jot favorite verses on 3-by-5 cards and have them ready when depression begins to steal your peace. In John 14:1, Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me.” Use Scripture like the sword it is.

- Journal on the personal promises God’s kept with you and speak them back to Him. These reminders can be lifelines when doubt begins to creep in.

We are all instructed to “guard your heart” (Proverbs 4:23), but those who serve Christ need to be especially diligent in doing so.

While depression is a powerful emotion, it need not own us when it comes. I recognize it’s only with God’s divine protection that I made it through my sinful past. That gives me reason to rejoice. And I also accept my physical limitations related to my brain surgery as another point of praise.

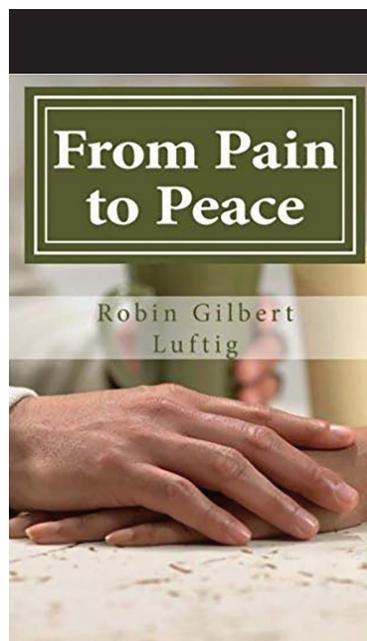
When depression hits, I acknowledge it, tell a friend, get more rest and immerse myself in Scripture. If you’re interested, my 3-by-5 card says:

“My God says he will never leave me nor forsake me.”

“My God says he has a plan for my life.”

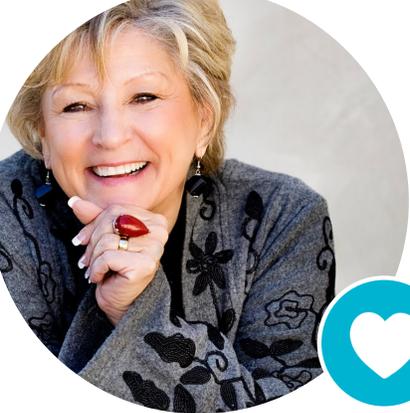
“My God cries when a sparrow falls, yet He loves me even more.”

*NOTE: If you deal with medically diagnosed depression, talk to your doctor regarding any changes in your condition. LH*



After years of working with broken people through different recovery venues, Robin founded Renew Ministries in 2009 with the purpose of sharing God’s plan for healing with spiritually and emotionally broken men and women. She wrote *From Pain to Peace: A Journey to Peace*

**After Divorce** and often speaks on what she discovered from her research.



by karen porter  
WWW.KARENPORTER.COM



# change your women's ministry forever



## AS I TRAVEL AROUND THE COUNTRY SPEAKING AT EVENTS

and consulting with aspiring speakers, writers and leaders, I see a lot of women's ministry programs and leaders up close and personal. Some are thriving with excitement, reaching new women each week and leading women to Christ. Other programs: not so much.

I've watched to see what makes a women's ministry successful. Much depends on the leader. If the ministry leader is growing and flourishing, so is the

ministry. As Mary Kay Ash said, "The speed of the leaders is the speed of the gang."

Every leader needs growth and health in the four areas that Jesus mentioned in Mark 12:30, "And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength" (NLT).

Are you growing in your heart, soul, mind, and strength?

**Heart Growth.** Check your attitude. Are you enthusiastic? If you aren't, neither will your team or the ladies you serve. How high is your gratitude

# INTHELEAD

level? Start a “thankful” list. Name the large and small blessings of your life. The list will increase your appreciation for life and ministry. Examine your perspective. How often do you laugh? When do you have fun for the sake of having fun. When Jesus left, He said, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). Are you peaceful?

**Soul Growth.** How’s your walk with Jesus? When Jesus was here on earth, He increased in wisdom and stature; what about you? Reading your Bible each day and praying in a systematic and powerful way will grow you personally. Your organization will never grow spiritually until you do.

**Mind Growth.** Read. Study. Be curious. Learn a new skill or a new language or experiment with learning a musical instrument. Exercise those mental muscles.

**Strength Growth.** Eat well. Protein and green veggies will make you feel better. Get moving. Walk, swim, bike; you don’t have to go to gym every day, but you do need to make time for movement. Rest. Sleep is the sweet elixir of health. Get a new mattress. Turn off the noise. Darken the room. Go to bed in time to get a good night’s sleep.

When you grow, your ministry will grow.

## *Five sure-fire ways to change your women’s ministry forever*

**1. Plan regular events** full of excitement and fun. Wouldn’t you love an event that the women put on their calendars so they won’t miss it. A fall kick-off. A spring fling. A Christmas event. The events that are successful are regular and expected and exciting. One church of more than 10,000 members had only 300 or so attend women’s events. The team decided to try a regularly scheduled event to test this idea. They planned a once-per-quarter night for women. They gave it a clever name. The team went over the top with fun, decorations, food and great music and speakers. Now the attendance at the event is fantastic because the women have high expectations even though the event is no longer held each quarter. The event is established, and the women don’t want to miss it.

**2. Invite exciting speakers.** There are thousands of quality speakers available, no matter the size of your church or event. Speakers want to work with you to engage and encourage your women and help them grow spiritually and in friendships. If you need help finding a speaker, contact Right to the Heart Ministries (the publisher of this magazine) or email me at [kaeporter@gmail.com](mailto:kaeporter@gmail.com). I know hundreds of speakers, and I’ll help you the perfect person for your event.

**3. Deal with conflict soon.** I once met a man who had been pastor at his church more than 30 years. I asked some of the members of the church why they thought the man had been so successful.

They said that anytime a conflict or controversy happened, he immediately went to the people involved and began solving the problem. His quick action and heart for reconciliation paid off. You can use this principle in women’s ministry. When you have a team of women, there will be clashes. It is inevitable because of the different personalities involved. Make it your plan to move quickly and never let a conflict grow. One of the hallmarks of great leadership is recognizing a problem before it becomes an emergency.

**4. Delegate and empower.** Women join your leadership team because they want to serve. Give them a job. Let them do their job their way. Don’t over manage. Lavish each person with encouragement.

**5. Arrange training sessions.** Your team and potential team members love to improve and grow as leaders. You can help them with training opportunities. Bring in an expert to teach them about personalities. Ask a coach to help them learn to speak before the groups they lead. Bring in a professional stylist to talk about the right clothes for body types or hair styles. The topics for training are endless: hospitality, preparing and teaching a Bible lesson, leading someone to Christ, neighborhood evangelism, and so much more. Your team will love learning and will bond.

Your leadership will make a difference in the lives of your team and your ministry. *LH*



# how bold women handle character assassination



by heather riggleman — [WWW.HEATHERRIGGLEMAN.COM](http://WWW.HEATHERRIGGLEMAN.COM)



“You have the power to rise above it and let your reputation do the talking or let this poison you.”

I LOVE PEOPLE. LOVE THEM. DEPENDING ON MY SOCIAL AWKWARDNESS, I'M THE PERSON STRIKING UP A CONVERSATION WITH COMPLETE STRANGERS. Grocery store lines, galas, waiting rooms, the pharmacy — basically, anywhere there are people I'm all ears.

I even went into a career in public service where my job required me to meet strangers all day long, interacting with each and every one of them to write stories.

How I loved humanity!

And then came the day someone assassinated my character.

Driving home from Omaha with my husband my phone chirped once, and I ignored it. But then it chirped again and again.

Curious, I checked to see what was blowing up my phone. Three different friends, three separate messages saying, “I was told by such and such —” or “Today in a meeting I heard —”

Unsure of how to respond, I sat in disbelief as I continued to receive a flood of text messages, emails and phone calls. I was the source of gossip that had spread like wildfire. It felt as if this source had set my soul ablaze and scorched my heart. Oh, how I wanted justice. I wanted to tell my side of the story. I wanted to set people straight.

I was a mess of tears when my husband looked over at me and said, “You have the power to rise above it and let your reputation do the talking or let this poison you.”

That moment happened several months ago. The parts of me that loved people are still tender, raw and fresh as if the attempted assassination had just happened, but so are my husband's words. Apparently, pivotal moments will do that to you.

Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.

—Abraham Lincoln

We've all been there — that moment when someone makes us feel small and murders our character. Chances are you've suffered from gossip too; whether you made a poor choice or were in the wrong place at the wrong time. But you have the power to change how you handle it from here. That night when I was riding home with my husband, my thoughts focused on the word “power.”

The key word is **power**. You are a strong woman with God as your defender.

You have the **power** to do hard things.

You have the **power** of resting your reputation in God's hands.

You have the **power** to speak wisdom.

You have the **power** to move forward.

You have the **power** to choose compassion over judgment.

**-continued on p. 16-**

# 7 Ways Bold Women Slay Character Assassination

If you are a woman, at some point you will be on the firing lines of someone attempting to murder your character. At best, what has been said about you will shed unflattering light — at worst, it can damage your reputation. It's worthwhile to keep these seven tips in your tool kit, not to just survive, but to prevail.

**1. Bold Women Build Others Up.** Behind every successful woman is a tribe of women. Find your tribe and love them hard. Be open to what your tribe of women teach you about yourself. They know your faults, flaws, strengths and heart. Allow them to build you up. This gives you the opportunity to build others up in ministry, at home and in the workplace.

**2. Bold Women Pray Hard.** The tongue is the deadliest weapon in ministry. It has the power to build up, tear down and divide the strongest women and relationships. Pray against gossip, not just for yourself but for your team and your church.

**3. Bold Women Set the Spiritual Temperature of Their Ministry.** You are a thermostat, not a thermometer. This goes for your character, tone and speech.

**4. Bold Women Use Their Power to Change the Conversation.** Whether in the line of fire or not, bold women use their power to change

the conversation for the better, especially if the discussion or comments are about another co-worker or ministry professional. Use your voice to shut it down.

**5. Bold Women Have the Power to Choose Compassion Over Judgment.** Regardless of what has been said or who said it, compassion far outweighs judgment.

**6. Bold Women Have the Power to Speak in Truth, Love and Wisdom.** As Christian women, we have a responsibility to keep the gospel central to what we do. It empowers us to love, to fight and build each other up. Remember the gospel. Always. Period.

**7. Your Life Is Still Being Written.** Live each day as if it your first and last. What testimony will it bring? This mindset will help you if someone has attempted to assassinate your character. Is your character the same as it was yesterday, or better? What would Jesus say to you? *LH*



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“ON THESE PAGES WE PLAN TO REVEAL THE UNDER-APPRECIATED TRUTH THAT CHRISTIAN WOMEN CAN AND DO LEAD; and furthermore, that history is filled with examples of bold, courageous, innovative women who loved God and rose to face the challenge of their times, forging a lasting impact on the course of human events in the process,” write Jackie Green (co-founder of the Museum of the Bible and wife of Hobby Lobby president Steve Green) and her daughter Lauren Green McAfee (Hobby Lobby corporate ambassador). “In every respect, these women were just like you and us.”

**-continued on p. 18-**



### -continued from p. 17-

In their new book, *Only One Life: How a Woman's Every Day Shapes an Eternal Legacy*, the mother-daughter team encourage women to intentionally invest in the lives of others by sharing their God-given times and talents. As they examine their 12 characteristics of legacy, they also share the profiles of 36 influential women of the Bible, history and today.

"I think it's important for us to realize, with their stories, they didn't feel equipped, empowered, sufficient or able to carry out things that would be impactful or important," Jackie says. "They are really lives that we can look at today that have really impacted us, even currently."

As an example, she referenced the life and faith of Elizabeth Anne Everest. As the nanny to Winston Churchill, Everest instilled values, nurtured and helped shape him to an influential man. Her intentional investment helped him make decisions that affect the world today. "We think so often that you have to be a worldwide leader to make a difference. No, she made a difference in a leader's life as she was leading him," Jackie says. "I think

We think so often that you have to be a worldwide leader to make a difference. No, she (Elizabeth Everest, nanny to Winston Churchill) made a difference in a leader's life as she was leading him.

it's important for women to realize that what we feel are mundane tasks do matter. They matter for somebody."

For Jackie and Lauren, legacy is the important part of our lives that lives on; they also share stories of the Green legacy.

"We all have a limited time on this earth, so I think it's important for women to be intentional with their life. We don't get a do-over, this is the only one we get. We need to make it count and maximize our time here on this earth and leave a legacy that will outlive our life," Jackie says. "We have goals for fitness. We have goals and plans for finance

and better areas of our life, but how often do we sit down and think, 'What are my goals for my legacy that I want to leave behind?'"

Jackie Green is a fourth-generation believer who is grateful for the godly life and influence of her mother and grandmothers and the opportunity to pass that heritage on to her children and grandchildren.

"I feel like having that example before me is such a gift and blessing; I'm so grateful for it that I make sure to do my part to pass it on, which is scriptural

# REALCHURCHLADIES

for us to pass it down to future generations,” Jackie says. “I also have examples with my mother-in-law, which we talk about in the Prayer chapter.”

Barbara Green and Marie Green’s stories are shared in the Prayer and Faith chapters. Marie, especially, was influential in Lauren’s life. “We recognize Marie Green as being a woman of prayer and a woman of faith. She really exhibited just walking the walk and not just talking the talk. We have so many in our family that have done this. They have shown us different ways this can be exhibited, and we’ve realized the benefits; and we are the benefactors of that,” Jackie says. “So, we’re very grateful to have women in our lives who have shown us with the day-to-day decisions and with the ups and downs how to walk a life of faith and how to be intentional with our life. Now we have made the choice to pass that down to future generations.”

Jackie believes the great examples of the women profiled in *Only One Life* make the book one to be shared with women of all ages and generations.

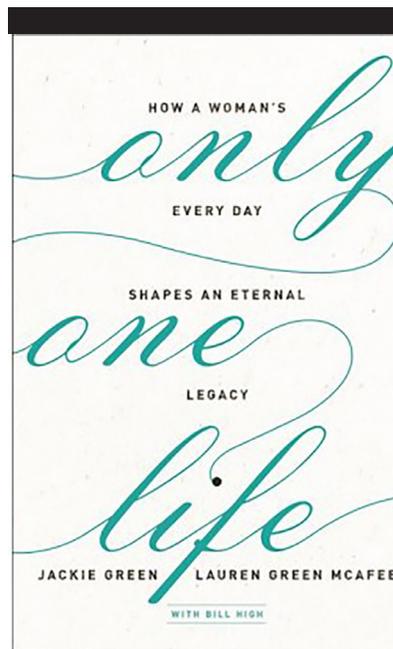
We think of legacy as leaving a financial legacy or something that’s more monetary, but it’s the story of your life that lives on after your time on this earth.

“Each woman had challenges. They had times when they had questioned their ability. They questioned the direction they were going,” she says. “They had real-life challenges that they overcame, and they walked in faith. I think it shows us how to do that. What better way to learn than to learn by someone else’s example? I think it’s encouraging no matter where you are in life.”

We all need these values replicated in our lives: being faithful to God and the direction that He’s leading us, being intentional with this one life that we have, and realizing that through God and following His direction, we can make a difference in someone’s life and be impactful for eternal and legacy purposes. So often we think of legacy as

leaving a financial legacy or something that’s more monetary, but it’s the story of your life that lives on after your time on this earth. We write this story every day with the values that we live out and embrace. Our legacy can be positive, but the outcome is always up to us.”

Jackie loves the subtitle, “How a Woman’s Every Day Shapes an Eternal Legacy,” because it helps women to realize leaving a legacy is a day-to-day thing and an attainable goal. “Just take one step at a time and choose every day to make that day matter,” she says. “A woman just needs to exercise that little bit of faith every day with whatever goals she’s set for the day. Just to be busy working with the opportunities before you every day.” *JH*



**Jackie Green**, co-founder of Museum of the Bible, is a full-time homemaker who relishes her roles of wife, mother to six children, mother-in-law, and “Gigi” to four grandchildren. Married to her high-school sweetheart, Steve, Jackie actively supports him in his high-profile role as president of Hobby Lobby and chairman of the board of Museum of the Bible.

**Lauren Green McAfee** is a speaker, writer, connector and coffee enthusiast with a heart to engage others in the Bible. Today, Lauren works

for Hobby Lobby as Corporate Ambassador, and is pursuing a PhD in Ethics and Public Policy at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

by *jenn taylor*  
PROFILE CONTRIBUTOR





by *pam farrel* — [WWW.LOVE-WISE.COM](http://WWW.LOVE-WISE.COM)

# refresh your quiet time

LIKE A COOL GLASS OF LEMONADE ON A HOT SUMMER DAY, GOD'S WORD and creative times with Him can refresh your soul. There is something about vacation, holidays and "kids out of school" summer days that invite us to change things up a bit. Sitting by the pool with a long-awaited book or Bible study, taking that favorite Christian magazine to the beach, or sitting in the shade of the patio or front porch with a prayer or Bible art journal, all sound so welcoming! In *Devotions for Women on the Go*, I share a few creative ideas and I have added several more unique quiet time devotions that will surely REFRESH you:

## **R**elocate:

Move outdoors. Create a quiet time oasis using a patio chair, a garden bench, a trellis or gazebo. Even investing in a comfortable folding beach chair that you can take to some new lovely spots in nature will be a small investment that will reap big benefits. You may want to make a quiet time basket or bag and fill it with a new devotional, a colorful empty journal, colored pens and highlighters and a Bible in a new translation and you have an "on the go" quiet time package.

## **E**scape:

Dig into a Bible character's life who you share something in common with. Learn courage from Jael; love from mother Mary; loyalty from Mary

Magdalene; relationships skills from Ruth and Naomi; leadership from Miriam, Ezra or Nehemiah; wisdom from Deborah or Solomon; perseverance from Daniel; or determination from Paul.

Recently, I learned how to manage stress as I studied the Book of Psalms and followed David's life journey and writings. I thought I was writing my "Hope Alive" devotions in *Discovering Hope in the Psalms* to help others, but God knew I needed to be firmly planted in the Psalms for my own survival through the whirlwind of selling our home, downsizing and moving to a new city to help care for my aging in-laws.

## **F**all in:

Submerge yourself in a digging deep study. My Logos Bible Software enables me to dig deep by connecting me to hundreds of word meanings, study helps and the original language to glean more linguistic meaning as well as history and culture. Dive in the deep end of Scripture by learning a new method to study the Bible. Many of us appreciate the expository style of Kay Arthur's studies. It was her suggestion to circle key words, draw symbols and use color as I studied that helped me see patterns or themes in some passages.

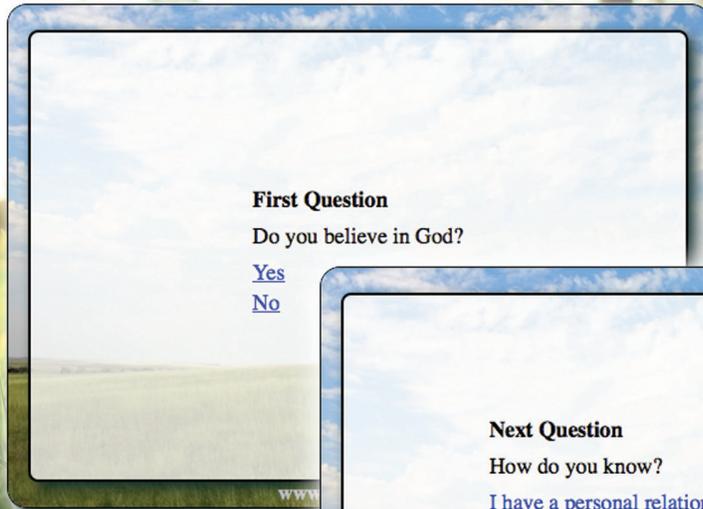
If you feel like you need to hone your study skills, download an online course from your favorite Bible teacher or sign up for a Bible study skills class at your church or a trusted Bible college.

**-continued on p. 23-**

# How Well Do You KNOW God?

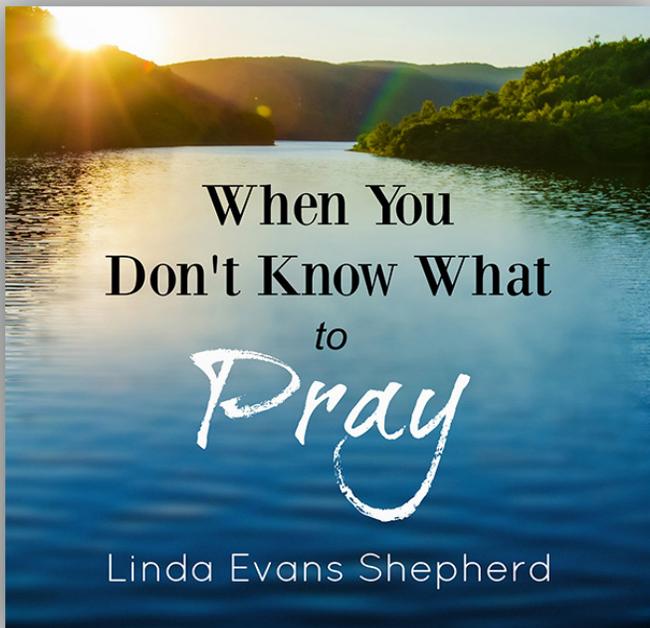
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when to pray. You will be encouraged."

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



-follow linda on-



GOTTOPRAY.COM



“Equip the next generation by sharing family devotions. Make the Bible-sharing experience with your children fun.”

## **-continued from p. 21-**

### **Refocus:**

Look at some area of stress, weakness or discouragement and set aside time to reboot or rebuild your life. In *10 Best Decisions a Woman Can Make*, I explain how to trade in your weakness for God's strength. Make a list of your fears, frustrations and foibles and then ask yourself, *What is a trait of God that is opposite of this?* For example, if you are anxious, spend time studying God's peace. Look up verses on your life-strengthening topic online. String together favorite verses, then personalize them by placing your name right in the verses, then decorate the page using your computer art program, print it, frame it and hang it in a place you can see your “personal transformation credo” daily.

To further walk out life change -- apply it. If God has been speaking to you about taking better care of yourself, sign up for a First Place 4 Health Bible study. Want to be more organized? See what authors like Marcia Ramsland or Kathi Lipp might be offering. Need to improve your marriage or parenting? Stop by my ministry at Love-Wise.com

If all those ideas feel too intense, then try a more uncomplicated life adjustment tool. I enjoy the condensed, simple and clean topical studies of Rachel Wojo that include topics most women want growth in: love, trust, power, peace, joy, etc.

### **Express:**

Create art: a drawing, a watercolor or oil/acrylic painting, sew a quilt or pillow, embroider a book mark or pillowcase, write a poem or song, cook up a food mentioned in the passage you are studying or dance to a praise song that connects

with the Scriptures you are studying. If you would like to awaken the inner artist, pick up Wendy Speake's book: *Life Creative: Inspiration for Today's Renaissance Mom*. Or search for an online #Bibleart or #biblejournaling or #illustratedFaith Facebook group or follow Pinterest boards, Instagram and YouTube channels sponsored by authors, artists and ministries you trust.

### **Share:**

Invite your spouse into your quiet time. Read *A Couple's Journey With God* or another devotional for couples. Try a hand-in-hand prayer or praise walk with your mate. Use your sermon notes for discussion as you share a meal. Pop some popcorn, curl up on the sofa and tune into *A Better Us* TV show where you can see relationship experts share biblical truths; then take time to dialogue and pray together after the show.

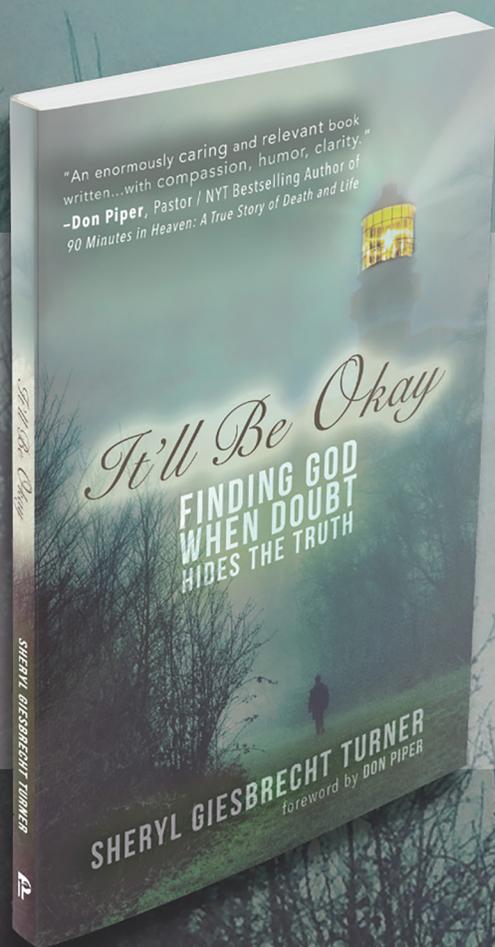
Equip the next generation by sharing family devotions. Make the Bible-sharing experience with your children fun. One of our sons' favorite memories is the day we all made the armor of God — complete with sword, shield and helmet — out of milk jugs, cardboard boxes and rolled up newspaper!

### **Hike:**

Take your Bible, a journal and pen and get out where the cell phone cannot reach you. Hike a mountain, trek a forest trail, kayak to the other side of the bay or lake. Put your cell phone on mute and get away — just you and God. Give yourself white space and SILENCE to simply listen for God's voice.

“Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him” (Psalm 62:5). *LH*

# Move *Forward* from **Doubt** to **Deeper** *Faith*



*"An enormously caring and relevant book written...with compassion, humor, clarity."*

— Don Piper, Pastor / NYT Bestselling Author of 90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death and Life

In *It'll Be Okay: Finding God When Doubt Hides the Truth*, Sheryl Giesbrecht Turner weaves solid Bible teaching, personal experience, and historical examples to help renew our trust in God. We can doubt our doubts, not letting them go unaddressed, but examining them instead, to prove our faith is dependable.



*"Faith grows when challenged. We must learn to feed our faith, doubt our doubts, and handle them through the grid of God's Word."*

—Sheryl Giesbrecht Turner

Can't wait to invite Sheryl to teach your tribe? [sherylgiesbrecht@gmail.com](mailto:sherylgiesbrecht@gmail.com)





embracing  
**OVERFLOW**  
-women in worship series-

FOR MOST OF US, THERE ARE MOMENTS, SOMETIMES SEASONS, WHERE IT FEELS LIKE WE ARE RUNNING IN A COMPLETE DEFICIT.

As women in leadership we've all been there. The well has run dry. Focus for the tasks at hand seems out of reach. We simply need a refill — and not just the proverbial topping of our tank! We need the kind of recharge that refreshes and overflows from the ultimate Source, splashing into all areas of our life.

*Leading Hearts* recently had the opportunity to speak with women who impact the church, both global and local, as they lead us to passionately live life in the overflow.

### **Leading Globally**

Worship Leader Sam Evans, with husband, Russell, co-pastor Planetshakers Church in Melbourne Australia. What started as a youth conference in 1997 has since contributed 35-plus albums declaring worship to God. *Heaven on Earth* is the most recent project from the Planetshakers Band. Sam

Pastor Sam Evans of Planetshakers.

-continued on p. 26-



“I believe the way we worship today is a real awakening, an era change, based on a greater revelation of the power of corporate worship, and the greater level of intimacy that people can have with God our Father.”

—Pastor Sam Evans to *Leading Hearts*

**-continued from p. 25-**



Sam Evans of Planetshakers

says, “*Heaven on Earth* was the culmination of everything we were singing in our church from the previous year.”

When speaking of the importance of worship for the present, she adds, “I believe the way we worship today is a real awakening, an era change, based on a greater revelation of the power of corporate worship, and the greater level of intimacy that people can have with God our Father.”

She continues to state that, “What I would like to preserve is the amount of the Word of God that our songs contain in this modern era. The old hymns had so much of the doctrines of our beliefs based on the Word of God. While I am happy to use modern language to express these truths, I truly believe there is power in the Word of God and our songs. When those songs contain God’s truth, then they help to create a powerful spiritual atmosphere because we are coming into agreement with God’s Word. I love our modern, passionate worship, but I also love and honor past expressions of worship.

Previous generations have made a way for us, and their words are truly inspirational. We can worship like we do because of them. I love the way God’s kingdom is built throughout the generations.”

### **Leading Locally**

While there are many well-known contributors to the present voice of worship music, God is utilizing musicians within their local churches to do the same thing. Michaelah Weaver has been leading worship since she was in high school. She and her husband, Kaleb, are currently worship arts pastors and songwriters at Bridgewood Church in Clarkston, Michigan. Michaelah says, “I think writing for the local body is so important. As a congregation you are walking through a season of life with each other. To have a song that you can sing with one another, to proclaim what God has done during that season, can be so memorable and powerful!”

The songwriter goes on to remind us that this isn’t anything new. “We see it all the time in the



Michaelah Weaver



Michaelah and Kaleb Weaver

Old Testament. When the Israelites were in the wilderness and God would provide or rescue them, they would sing a song of His deliverance. Those songs went on to be sung for decades to come! And for us, when God gives us those special moments, we write songs to remember.”

As children of God we are urged to “teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16). While leading a culture into the presence of God is a calling, it may not always be easy. How do those we look to for leadership through our difficult moments handle their own challenges? What do you do when you, as the leader, need to be led?

Worship Leader Sam Evans shares, “My greatest source of inspiration is Jesus. I love to read the Gospels over and over to see the life that Jesus led. He came up against so many obstacles, but always had an answer, a prayer, a key to see the natural world submit to the supernatural world of God’s kingdom. He always had the right response to a religious leader and the wisdom for life’s problems, and He knew His Father. I want to know my Heavenly Father like Jesus demonstrated. One of my favorite songs is; ‘I Love Your Presence.’ One of our pastors wrote it. Every time I sing it or listen to it, it brings such a sense of God’s presence. It also has an ability to soften my heart and make it very responsive and sensitive to God. That’s what I want to be, sensitive to God. I want to hear Him, know Him, encounter Him so that He can change me,

grow me and enable me to do so much more than I would ever dream.”

Truly, at the core of worship is the hope that we are drawn into the presence of the living God, to shower Him with the adoration due Him. The end product of intimate time with God is ultimately to become more like Him as we spur on our current generation and those that follow.

Join us for continued conversation with women of worship. *LH*

**Find out more about  
Heaven on Earth (Parts One and Two) at  
[www.planetshakers.com](http://www.planetshakers.com)**



*by Lisa Burus*  
PROFILE CONTRIBUTOR





LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD

# the power of a praying leader

AUTHOR LINDA SHEPHERD'S LIFE, TESTIMONY, AND WORKS ARE A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF SAYING "YES" TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER.

Linda's passion for prayer started when she began to want more from God as a young girl. "I remember thinking, 'I can talk to God, but God can't talk back to me,'" she says. "I began to push into prayer and learn how to listen." Young Linda had no idea that this focus on prayer would become vital years later.

It was the day after Christmas in 1987. Linda and her mother were returning from a shopping trip with Linda's 18-month-old daughter, Laura, in the car seat in the back. Suddenly, a car hit its breaks ahead of them. Despite Linda's best efforts, their car skidded into the other car at 60 miles per hour.

After the impact, dazed and confused, Linda looked to her mother to find her alright. Linda was also fine. Then she realized that it was silent. Looking into her back seat, Linda saw that Laura was nowhere to be found. The back seat had ripped off the car and been thrown out of it. Linda crawled out of the car and found Laura in her car seat, dazed.

Laura had suffered a fractured skull and had multiple seizures due to the trauma. Despite multiple surgeries, Laura remained in a coma on life support. While waiting for Laura to wake up, Linda felt a silence from God. Overwhelmed by grief, Linda contemplated taking her own life.

Her thoughts slowly cleared, however, and Linda realized that she needed to wait on God. She started saying "yes" to Him and saw that He was with her even in the silence. Her daughter did eventually wake up, but there were still many challenges ahead. "I began to say 'yes' to my new reality and to my daughter's reality," says Linda, "I began to accept what had happened to my daughter, understanding that He was with me."

Linda began writing and speaking about the prayer. Despite her success, she still emphasizes that God is her partner. "I bring everything to the Lord



because I don't like to run ahead of Him and say, 'Here is a good idea, Lord, let's do that.' I like to say, 'Lord, if you're in this idea, let's do it together,'" says Linda.

She also speaks of the importance of letting go of our own goals and need for control in our lives. We have to lay our goals at God's feet. Linda says,

**-continued on p. 30-**



“Lord, it gives me peace to know that  
when I call on you,  
you will answer and help me solve mysteries  
I need to understand.”

—Linda Evans Shepherd from “Praying God’s Promises”

**-continued from p. 29-**



“God loves for us to make goals as long as we invite Him in to be our partner. When we have God as a partner He can supply everything that we need.”

This is not to say that there will not be challenges. As a leader in ministry, Linda is no stranger to trying doors that will not open. Many ministry leaders often feel like they are hitting a wall, that no amount of prayer is helping anything work out. Linda advises taking the time to do an assessment of what the Lord is trying to tell them. Sometimes it’s about listening to God in the moment. Sometimes it’s about learning from the moment. Sometimes it’s just about waiting.

We have to trust in God’s timing in these situations. The door we are trying to open may not be the one we need. “There are lessons God wants us to learn,” says Linda. “Until we learn the lesson of the moment, the door won’t open.” These lessons are equipping us to be ready for the next trials ahead.

We have to be willing to give up control over the situation and hand it over to God. We must stay focused and dedicated to praying and listening to what God is trying to tell us.

This kind of engagement with God takes staying focused in prayer while going about a normal daily life — not an easy thing to do. “You have to take down the dividing wall between your spiritual life and daily life,” advises Linda. “I invite God’s presence into every moment.”

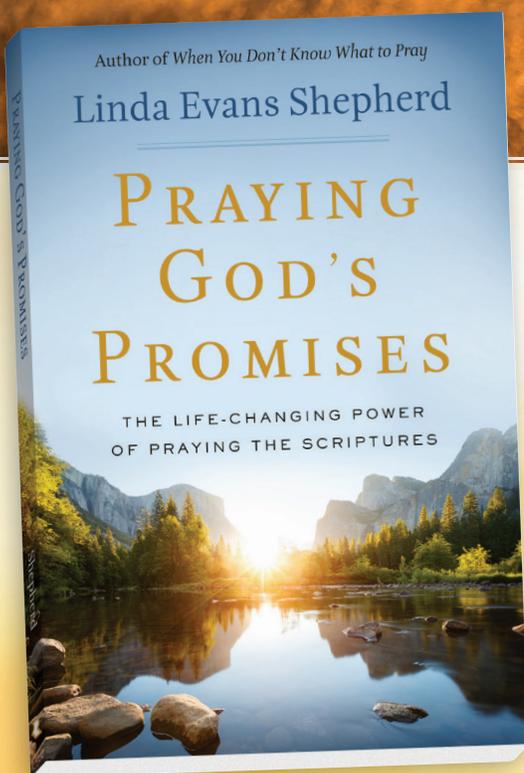
We can confidently do all of this because God’s will is clear through the promises He has made to us through Scripture. Linda talks about this in her new book, *Praying God’s Promises: The Life-Changing Power of Praying the Scriptures*. While Linda explores the countless promises God has given to us, one stands out. Exodus 9:16 gives a promise to all who want to lead and share God’s power with others.

“I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth” (Exodus 9:16). *LH*

by emily walton  
INTERN



# God's Word Is Powerful. Pray It.



In this inspiring book, Linda Evans Shepherd reveals that God's will is not a mystery—it's clearly laid out in his Word through his many promises. Through stories, practical application, examples of prayers, and guided reflection, she leads you toward a more powerful prayer life!

---

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## the big question

Q: Many people believe the Bible doesn't value women and places women in a subservient position. What is the biblical basis for women who serve?



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

### I BELIEVE A CAREFUL STUDY OF THE WORD SHOWS US GOD

**VALUES WOMEN** and encourages them to minister to others. First, in Galatians 3:28, God makes it clear He doesn't elevate one person over another when He says that "there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NASB). Furthermore, Hebrews proclaims that anyone who trusts Christ is part of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB). This verse clearly states that believing women stand as priests before God as well as being part of God's chosen, holy nation. Priests offer sacrifices and serve.

Second, God gives every believer, women included, a spiritual gift when he or she enters the family of God. Look at Romans 12:3: "I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" (NIV). As women,

thinking too highly of ourselves means we assume we are the whole body of Christ. No. Instead, "sober judgment" means we view ourselves as vital part of the body. Verse six of that chapter says, "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly" (NASB). In other words, think of a machine where every bolt and screw must be working or the whole machine stops. I believe every Christian woman has a special gifting for the time she lives, a unique message, something she alone can do. If she does not use her gift, the church loses something only she can give.

Third, looking back in history, marriages improved during Reformation as men and women studied the Bible and understood God wanted men to see women as equals who shared in decision making. Also, during the Great Awakening, women who came to Christ learned how much God loves the world. They began to reach out to the mentally ill, the disabled and prisoners to ensure society treated them with dignity. Women's suffrage came from the actions of these women.

Lastly, we have ample evidence that women served in the Bible. Genesis called Miriam, sister of Moses, a prophetess. Deborah, a judge in the Old Testament, went with Barak when he feared facing General Sisera alone. She watched as God gave Barak victory in battle and freed the Jewish people from King Jabin. Anna prophesied to the people of her day and waited in the temple to see Jesus. From her study of the Bible, she knew Messiah would come soon. Timothy's mother and grandmother shared their faith with him.

In summary, we need to interpret Scripture carefully to understand how God uses women. *CL*

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

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

*-Linda*



"Thank you for speaking at our conference,  
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—Conferee, Warner Robins, GA

"Linda's book was the absolute best  
book I have read about prayer!"  
—Reader, Gayle Radavich,

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-follow linda on-





THE LORD ON OUR SIDE  
*by penelope carlevato*  
WWW.PENELOPECARLEVATO.COM



THIS PAST WEEK I ATTENDED A CHRISTIAN WRITER'S CONFERENCE. I went to hone my skills, seek God's will for my writing and speaking and have some one-on-one appointments with faculty, agents and editors.

During a quiet time with the Lord, I read Psalm 124: 1: "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side...." I began to think of all the things I would not be doing had it not been for the Lord.

- I would not be at the writer's conference.
- I would not have eternal life with Christ.
- I would not still be married.
- I would not be healed.
- I would not know my precious roommate at this conference.

The list went on and on. I looked back on all the times that God had rescued me in times of trouble. I recalled His protection and deliverance in my family's and friends' lives. It was a time of praise in my hotel room that morning!

When I looked back on my very long list, I began to think of situations that were still in the future and knew that many adventures would not be possible "if it had not been the LORD who was on our side...."

During the conference, I kept that Scripture very close to my heart and just praised God for all the wonderful women and men that I met and all the special friends I reconnected with from previous conferences. It made the conference a time of joy and blessing.



# KEEPING TRADITION ALIVE!

*Take a journey* into the lives and customs of those who lived during the turn of the century. Much of what guided them has helped shape the values and beliefs we hold dear today.

Each of Penelope's books will help you establish traditions for your own family. You'll discover recipes and ideas for family times around the table.



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Take a few minutes and list things you enjoy because of God's wonderful provision. What a difference God makes in our life. If the Lord had not been on our side, there would be no hope, no joy, no salvation, no healing, no deliverance. The amazing realization is so evident that it could have only been God. What a wonderful Savior we serve.

We cannot keep this to ourselves. Sharing the good news is our responsibility and our privilege. Open your front door and share this message with a neighbor, friend or family member who needs Jesus.

A great little meal to share on your patio on a warm summer evening without heating up your kitchen is a yummy taco salad. Serve with a pitcher of iced tea and remember: If it had not been for the Lord on our side, we would not have this great message to share with others.

## Taco Salad

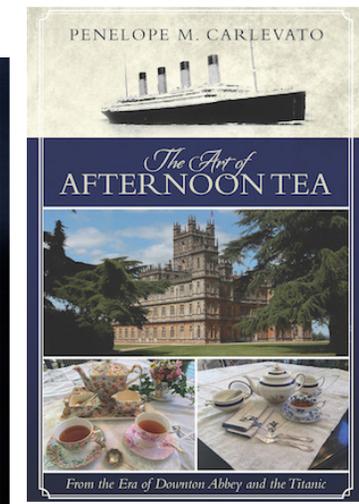
- 1 lb. lean ground beef or ground turkey
- 1 tsp. of oil
- 2 to 3 Tab. taco seasoning
- 1 small can of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 large head of lettuce, Romaine or Iceberg, chopped
- 1 small container of grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup of shredded cheese, Cheddar or Jack
- 1 cubed avacado
- ½ cup chopped green onions

- ½ cup salsa
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- ½ cup sliced black olives
- 1 package of corn chips

Heat oil in a skillet over high heat. Add the ground beef or turkey and stir until browned. Add the taco seasoning with ⅓ cup of water and the beans. Cook until most of the water has evaporated.

Place the other ingredients into a large bowl, then add the ground beef or turkey. Toss everything together except the cilantro and olives. Serve the cilantro, olives and corn chips on the side (as not everyone likes them!)

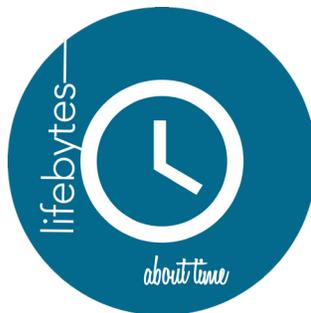
Serve on the patio with a large pitcher of iced tea. Super easy and super fun. *LH*



Find great recipes like this in

Penelope's book:  
The Art of Afternoon Tea: From the Era of Downton Abbey and the Titanic.

Available autographed from  
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## CARING FOR VOLUNTEERS

by *karen whiting*  
WWW.KARENWHITING.COM



FOR VOLUNTEERS TO STAY STRONG AND ACTIVE, they need care from their leaders. They need to feel appreciated and know their ideas are valued. Make sure you and other leaders show you care.

**Understand.** Take time to get to know each member. Take time to know their personality and gifting to best use their talents and skills. They will feel accepted because you get them. This will also help you know what motivates them.

**Appreciate.** Show you appreciate each individual and their work. Remember birthdays and let them know you value their ideas. Set up a suggestion box or invite volunteers to email ideas. Implement some of those ideas to foster personal initiative. Praise workers for their accomplishments. Kind words of encouragement go a long way to retaining volunteers and developing a sense of belonging.

**Listen.** Pay attention and listen with your heart and eyes when a volunteer speaks to you. Ask what they need and what they like about the ministry.

Notice body language to pick up on signals that a volunteer might be feeling low. Be available if they face struggles in their personal life. Knowing someone cares gives hope and helps each person feel valued.

**Provide.** Provide what they need in training, supplies and comfort. If there's a meeting place or office, make it comfortable and keep the atmosphere positive and friendly. Stay on schedule so volunteers know you value their time.

When there's a big task, be sure to have all the supplies and tools needed to complete the work. Being prepared makes the ministry run smoothly and creates faith that the ministry is organized and well run.

**Involve.** Include volunteers in making decisions, and ask for their input. Ask for feedback or an evaluation of the ministry and staff. This builds accountability. When members are engaged, they develop a vested interest in the ministry.

**Inspire.** Volunteers want to believe the cause is worthy of their time and impacting lives. Let all members know how every member makes a difference. Present new ideas and opportunities that foster enthusiasm for the ministry and increase team spirit.

**Recognize.** Acknowledge each person's contribution, no matter how small. That helps volunteers feel respected. Consider holding an annual dinner to celebrate the ministry and all the helpers. Let it be an event where they can invite friends and family who will see they are important to the ministry. Fill the room with photos of volunteers in action and words of thanks for the hard work. *SH*



## REACHING OUT AND THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

by edie melson  
WWW.EDIEMELSON.COM



WHEN GOD CALLED ME INTO MINISTRY, I thought my life would look a lot different than how it's played out. I envisioned speaking at women's ministry events like retreats, luncheons and even conferences. Instead, God uses me primarily through the written word. Yes, I write books and articles, but the place where I've found the most ministry fruit is through social media and the women I reach online.

Social media gets a bad rap these days. It seems well earned, but the issue isn't really with social media; it's with the people who use it. Online interactions can seem shallow at times and outright vicious at others. There are the dangers of being harassed, having identities stolen and even worse.

But isn't this exactly the type of place that Jesus has called us to go? God's Word is clear that we are called to be a light in the darkness. There's no place darker than the world of social media.

Jesus was clear. He came to save the sick, not the well. There's not much sicker than the half-truths and twisted concepts of God and the world than

what we see on social media. He told us to go out into the world. For us, that includes the World Wide Web.

We are in a war. Our weapons are our words, our pens and laptops and the books, articles, and social media posts we write. Our Leader has called us to a purpose — bring His light to a dark world. When we head out on that mission, we draw enemy fire.

But we are called for such a time as this. It's no mistake that we were born in this time and place. God didn't make a goof. He's not sitting in heaven shaking His head because He forgot we'd have to deal with online issues.

God is perfect with His plan, preparation and place:

- in His plan for us.
- in His preparation of us.
- in the time where He's placed us.

He ordained us for this time. And He's calling His people to ministry in this difficult medium. We cannot abandon those online to lies of the enemy. Instead, we need to stay the course and understand the importance of our interactions on social media matter. We can make a difference in the lives we touch there.

We must not shrink from the difficulties that come with interacting through social media. For the first time ever, we can reach the world without leaving home. No wonder Satan wants to convince us it's too hard, too meaningless, too much work. He's trying to handicap us with fear because He's scared of what God can do with a few committed believers willing to make a difference through the tools He's given us. LH

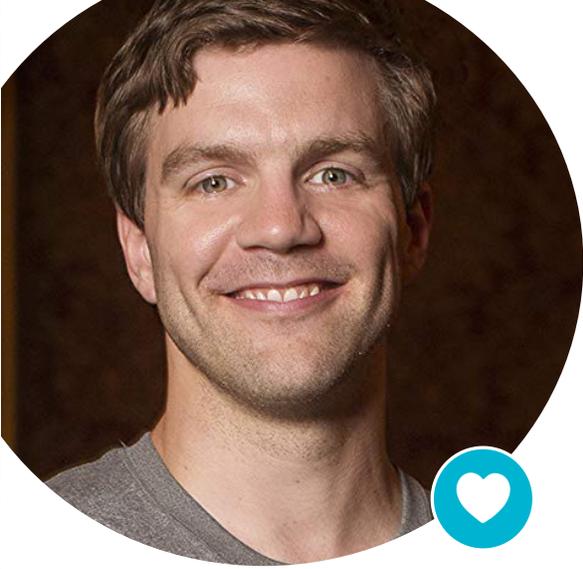
DAVID  
STRATHAIRN

BRENTON  
THWAITES

AN  
**INTERVIEW  
WITH GOD**

What  
would you  
ask?





INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCER

*harrison powell*

*Harrison Powell, vice president of development for Giving Films and a co-producer of An Interview With God, discusses this thought-provoking film.*

### Synopsis

Covering the war in Afghanistan provided journalist Paul Asher with some of the best stories of his young career. But upon returning home, Paul struggles to deal with the after-effects of his experiences, a failing marriage, and his dying faith. Not knowing where to turn, Paul dives deeply into the story of a lifetime—an interview with a mysterious man claiming to be God.

#### **Q: What is the mission of Giving Films?**

**A:** We have two goals. One of them is to fund and produce great stories that entertain and spark great conversations. The second goal is to raise as much money as we can and give it all away back to organizations serving underserved children.

#### **Q: What made you want to do this film?**

**A:** When we read the script for *An Interview With God*, we were intrigued. We felt that it explores elements of faith, life, relationships and God in ways that other films have not. It was a fascinating story we think the audiences will enjoy. And we believe they will be encouraged to put their questions on the table or sit at the table while other people put their questions out there.

#### **Q: So that makes this an extremely timely film.**

**A:** I think so. People are not necessarily having conversations where they seek to understand,

listen and share their opinion. There a lot of people sharing their opinions, but not much listening and seeking to understand.

#### **Q: This film has an interesting interpretation of God. Where did that come from?**

**A:** The person interviewing this mysterious man in the course of three interviews has the same questions we have. We wanted the person playing the role of this man to come across on the screen as approachable and have a wittiness to him and have a mystery to him. David Strathairn did that in a great way. He's an Academy Award® nominee, a terrific person off the screen and a wonderful actor on the screen.

#### **Q: Paul is another interesting character. How did you come up with that character?**

**A:** Our writer wanted a character who had some substance and who had some things going on in his life for whom this interview was timely and much needed. So he created a character that not only had an issue with his marriage, but had just come back from Afghanistan, reporting out there, and so he's dealing with seeing things he didn't expect to see and things that were too overwhelming for him to deal with. This interview came at an opportune time when he's dealing with these big issues in his life. We wanted our characters feel real, to have real problems and concerns and questions and consequences. We felt that character of Paul the journalist needed to be written well, and we feel that was accomplished well.

#### **Q: What are you hoping your audiences will get from *An Interview With God*? What do you hope they will do?**

**A:** I hope they feel more comfortable asking questions and allowing those around them to ask questions. Even if you are already a believer, you still have questions. We all have questions, and sometimes there's a pressure that you shouldn't ask questions because you should already know the answers to those questions or the questions are off limits. I believe that if God loves us the way we read in the Scriptures, He will welcome our questions.

The litmus for the success of this film what kind of conversations were fostered as a result. *LH*

**For the official trailer, cast interviews, and other resources, go to [www.aninterviewwithgod.com](http://www.aninterviewwithgod.com).**



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

A woman with long brown hair is shown in profile, looking out a window. She is wearing a red top. The background shows a window with a view of a brick building and some greenery.

# leading from *a place of rest*

**HURRY IS NOT GOD'S BEST FOR LEADERS.** Many are leading under the influence of their stressed-out and overwhelmed lives. We struggle and strive in ministry to see God's call on our lives fulfilled and to reach more people with His message of hope. All the while, we are daily withering under the pressure of family demands, careers and ministry obligations. There will always be pressure in leadership, but it should never be the place you lead from.

Our society has cultivated a mindset of resting after completing the work. The problem is the work never gets done. There will always be more to do on your to-do list. There will always be more work needing your attention. If you only rest when the work is done, you will never feel you have permission to rest.

# HEALTHTRACKS

This is not God's plan for rest. It is the opposite of your divine design. In Genesis, God created man on the sixth day and on the seventh day God rested. Man's first full day began as a day of rest. Rest was the foundation, not the reward. Rest was the place from which all work would start. God's rhythm of living for our lives is one of leading from a place of rest. It begins in communion with Him, and from that time we leave empowered to do the work we are called to do.

Setting boundaries can be difficult due to the nature of ministry work. Every emergency is important. Every prayer is important. The list of needs is endless, and there is always someone in need of the hope found in Jesus. Despite the unending to-do list, rest is a mandatory part of effective and sustainable ministry life.

You must learn how to rest well. It's not just taking a nap or breaking away for a vacation; it's but a deep, abiding rest where you can lay it all down when you feel God drawing you near. It's the ability to step away from ministry duties for a time while you focus, not on the calling, but on the One who called you.

***What does it look like to lead from a place of rest?***

**1. Embrace Sabbath as the beginning of your work week.** Sabbath is not how you end your week; it is how you prepare for your week. Seek first to enter into the rest of God. If your position requires you to work on Sunday, choose Friday or Saturday as your day to rest. Purposely slow down and intentionally let God begin restoring those areas of your life stress has broken down.

**2. Learn the value of sleep and develop a relaxing bedtime regimen.** Rest is the bridge that allows you to transition from your busy day to a peaceful night's sleep. Turn off the electronics, release your anxious thoughts through journaling or renew your mind in Scripture. Determine a relaxing sequence of events to help you experience sweet sleep.

**3. See joy as the compass pointing you in the direction of God's best.** Ministry is not supposed

to drain you to the point of extinguishing. God wants you to prosper and be in good health even as your soul prospers. Work without the benefit of rest becomes void of pleasure. Rest allows an opportunity for joy to show the way back to God's best for your life.

**4. Treasure and seek out time with uplifting, life-giving individuals.** The people you are around during the day have a direct effect on how you feel. Seek out those individuals who have a positive, restorative effect on you, and spend time gleaning from those social interactions.

**5. Make room for the things you enjoy.** The purpose of some things is to bring a smile to your face and birth a song in your heart. Every activity does not need to fit into a specific business or ministry checkbox. There should be enough margin in your life to allow time for those activities and hobbies you love for no other reason than you enjoy them. Lift praises and thanksgiving during these fun moments. A well-rested life is a wide-open space God can breathe upon with many opportunities to bless you with the gift of His goodness towards you.

**6. Appreciate the small beginning and trust God for the increase.** Striving to see results does not lead to God's best. Abraham learned this the hard way. His desire to help God do things faster resulted in Ishmael, which only created more work and more problems. When we choose striving over trusting, we are saying we are not content with God's timing. Do not strive for results. Instead, aim to please God. Honor His ways and trust His timing. In due season, you will see the fruit of your labor and your rest.

**7. Stay attentive to how God is leading you.** Communication is one of the gifts of learning to lead from a place of rest. You will be able to more clearly discern what activities are still yours to do from the ones that were only yours for a season. Separate out your emotional ties from what God is calling you to do at this time in your life. Find the freedom to be still and silent in His presence, knowing you will leave these moments of rest better prepared to be a leader. Allow God to lead you as you lead others from a place of rest. *PH*



# JUST18SUMMERS

by michelle s. cox  
WWW.JUST18SUMMERS.COM



## MY HUSBAND AND I LOVED THE MINISTRY-RELATED THINGS WE WERE DOING FOR GOD.

We spent many weekends on activities with the teens at church. I taught Sunday school and spent Fridays getting the bulletins ready for Sunday. More opportunities arose, and we were soon doing something church-related every day of the week, dragging our young son with us. We loved it, but it was sometimes wearying.

And then God whispered something to me one day: "You're so busy doing things *for* Me that you're too busy to spend time *with* Me."

His words were so true. We'd meant well, but we'd gotten things out of balance. God wasn't getting the attention He deserved, and our family wasn't getting the attention it deserved either.

I've often heard an old saying, "Your mission field begins at home." There's so much truth to that. We certainly didn't want to reach everyone else while neglecting the precious gift God had given us with our marriage and our son.

We'd meant well, but we'd gotten things out of balance. God wasn't getting the attention He deserved, and our family wasn't getting the attention it deserved either.

So we got on our knees and said, "God, if You'll get us out of some of these things, we'll be careful in the future to check with you before we say yes to every opportunity that comes along."

Perhaps your family has gotten things out of whack as well. Here are some things we found helpful:

1. We asked God to be the keeper of our schedules.
2. We talked together before we took on new opportunities.
3. We asked, "Is this a God thing or just a good thing?"

I'm so glad we learned that lesson early on. You see, the time on our mission field at home with our sons has

borne great fruit. Two of our sons are preaching the gospel to thousands of people each year. Our other son is active in music ministry in his church and is impacting young lives as he teaches at a college.

Ministry truly does begin at home—and when we keep God, family and then others in that order, we'll bring an important balance to our lives. *SH*



# praying God's promise of love

GOD IS NOT ONLY A PROMISE MAKER; He's a promise keeper. But to fully understand this truth, you have to say "yes" to one of God's promises before you can make it your own.

There are over 5,000 promises in the Word, and one of the best promises to say "yes" to is this one from 1 John 3:1. "See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are" (NLT).

In his book *Peace with God*, Billy Graham said, "Never question God's great love, for it is as unchangeable a part of God as is His holiness. No matter how terrible your sins, God loves you."

This is what Annie discovered. It seems that she felt unlovable because of deep trauma she'd experienced as a child. To make matters worse, she'd contracted a devastating disease, making her feel that God had rejected her too.

One morning, as we gathered in prayer, Terri and her husband, Dave, and I began to pray God's love and healing over Annie. As we prayed, I began to feel the Holy Spirit's presence.

That was the moment when Terri and Dave began to pray against the shame Annie felt as a child. When we finished praying, I opened my eyes and got a shock. My friend's face actually glowed.

"Annie, you look so different!" I exclaimed.

"I feel different!" she said.

"Your eyes! There's such a peace."

Terri said, "It's like a light is shining."

Annie explained, "I feel God's love shining on me."

What a remarkable healing to see. Annie finally felt the love God had for her all along. My friend will never be the same after such a loving encounter with the Lord.

It's true that God loves Annie, and He loves you just as much. And my question to you is: How much would your life change if you could grasp God's love for you? When you can begin to understand God actually adores you, then you can learn how to love your neighbor as yourself. This means you will be able to love your neighbor as the love of God pours through you. Trying to love your neighbor without the power of God's love activated in you is hollow. You must learn how to receive God's love for yourself before you can love others through God's love.

If you would like to experience God's love, pray the promise with a "yes" and a declaration that you are claiming the promise of God's love for yourself.

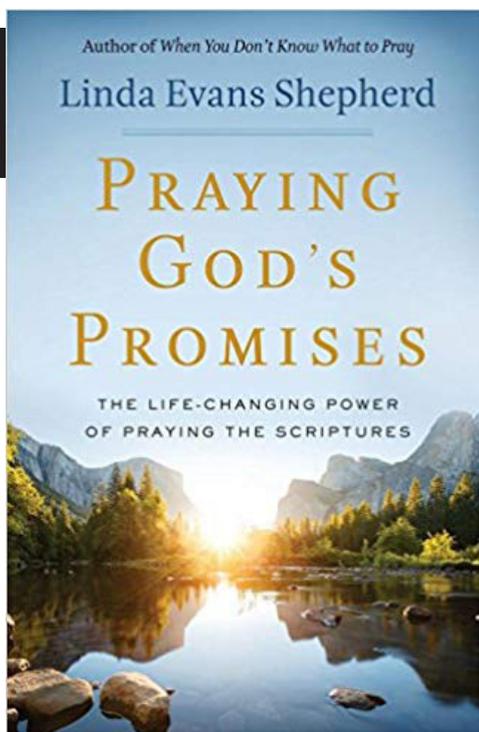
**Your Word says:** "See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1, NLT).

**I agree with your Word and say YES:** How much you love me! You call me your child and I am!

Adapted from *Praying God's Promises: The Life-Changing Power of Praying the Scripture* by Linda Evans Shepherd. 



# BOOKSTOREAD

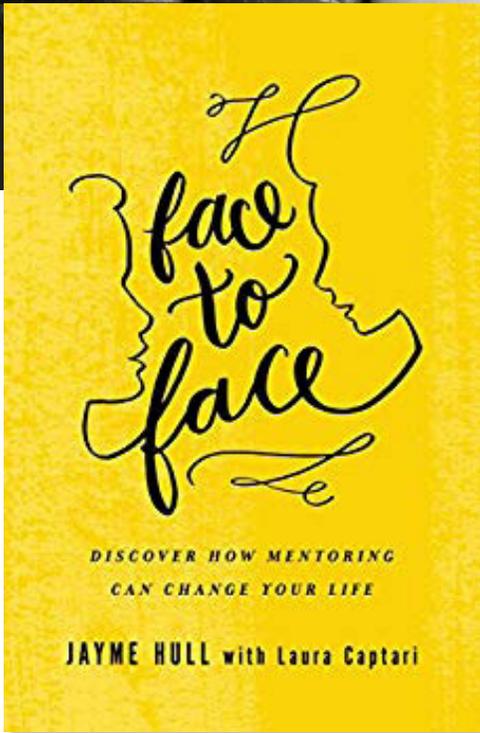


## PRAYING GOD'S PROMISES by Linda Evans Shepherd

This book (*Praying God's Promises: The Life-Changing Power of Praying the Scriptures*) is power packed with inspiration, instruction, and encouragement for both the heart and mind.

Linda Evans Shepherd has woven into 27 chapters a combination of stories, prayers, and Scriptures. The different chapters on topics like faith, direction, protection, provision, and many others make it easy to look up a needed encouragement and find the wording for praying in a particular way, along with reflecting on a promise from God's Word.

This book is like a treasure box of faith-building tools for every Christian. —Kathryn E. Miller

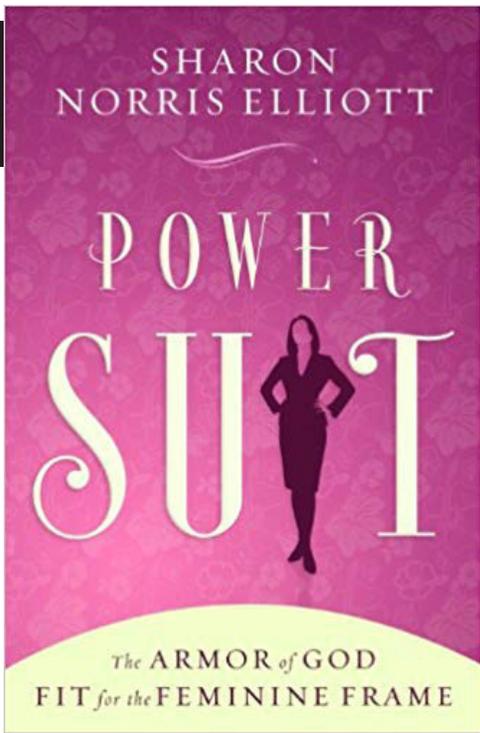


## FACE TO FACE by Jayme Hull with Laura Captari

This book was not only about mentoring and being mentored, but it also shared so much practical wisdom about living life connected first and foremost to Jesus Christ. I am now motivated to find a mentor and pray how God can use me to mentor someone else. As a woman in my 40's I still have so much to learn but also so much to share. I highly recommend Face to Face. —Becky Philo on *NetGalley*

Life is complicated and often difficult. Too many people are filling their lives with regrets and “if onlys.” But it doesn’t have to be that way! In her book **Face to Face**, Jayme Hull demonstrates how people can prosper from the wisdom, encouragement, and counsel of others along their journey. Brimming with wisdom, this book will inform, encourage, and inspire you!

—Richard Blackaby, coauthor, *Experiencing God*



## POWER SUIT by Sharon Norris Elliot

This book allowed me to really understand the individual “armor pieces” that should be worn daily and how they are used to battle sin and conquer the devil. I enjoyed the scripture references and will be sharing this book with other sisters in Christ. —Veronica Pierce

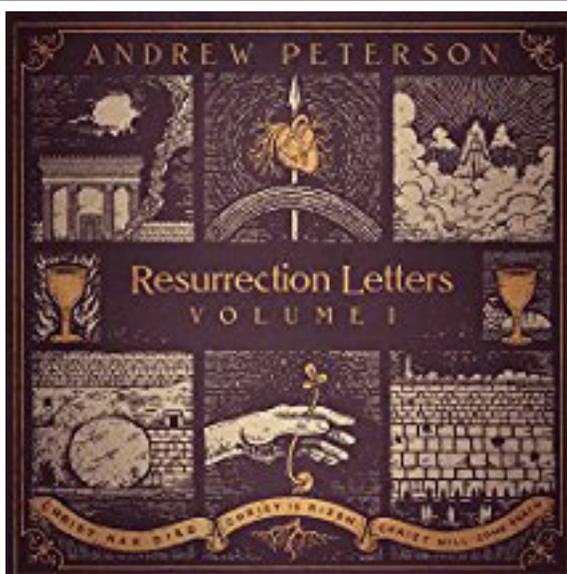
I couldn’t put **The Armor of God Fit for the Feminine Frame** down! The unique way Sharon Elliot weaves the fashion topic with God’s armor immediately caught my attention. She hit the nail on the head. I get sucked in by Satan in his sneaky ways. Because of reading this book I can’t help but think about it as I get dressed, physically and spiritually, which helps me become more alert to Satan’s daily challenges. Everyone should read this book. You’ll change the way you “dress.” —Annetta Dellinger



by heather van allen  
LH STAFF REVIEWER



# MUSICREVIEWS



## ANDREW PETERSON Resurrection Letters, Vol. 1

Andrew Peterson has released, through Centricity Music, **Resurrection Letters, Vol. 1**. Preceding the album is the EP **Resurrection Letters: Prologue**, “five songs that take us from the last words of Jesus on the cross to his interment in the tomb. And then comes the long wait for Sunday morning,” Andrew says.

**Resurrection Letters, Vol. 1**, follows with the bright new hope found in the risen Jesus. The nine tracks carry to listeners the best news we’ve ever heard: Christ is risen! In His love for us, He has defeated sin and death.

“My dream for **Resurrection Letters, Vol. 1**, is that it would be the kind of record people turned up to eleven on Easter Sunday, when Christians all over the world celebrate something that happened — it really happened — two millennia ago,” says Andrew.

**Resurrection Letters, Vol. 1**, celebrates Jesus’ victory and calls us to respond in worship and to spread this good news.



## JASMINE MURRAY

### Fearless

Season eight “American Idol” finalist and Fair Trade Services artist Jasmine Murray has released her first full-length album, ***Fearless*** (June 15). With her power-packed, soaring vocals, Jasmine delivers 10 tracks declaring victory over false internal voices of fear and insecurity that can cause us to call our abilities into question.

“We all have chinks in our armor,” Jasmine says. “Some are clearly seen from the outside. Mine were on the inside; I secretly battled fear and anxiety. I know it looks like I had it all together, but I didn’t. I feel like I’m on a

journey now, and it’s a privilege to be able to share that with people. I know this is my purpose. I’m where I’m supposed to be. I want to reach people with the message God’s given me.”

Refusing to give in to her anxieties, Jasmine musically gives glory to the source of her strength, Jesus, with ***Fearless***.



## MICHAEL W. SMITH

### Surrounded

Three-time Grammy Award winning, veteran Christian artist Michael W. Smith’s ***Surrounded*** is a live worship experience recorded with a gathering of diverse voices at The Factory / Jamison Hall in Franklin, Tennessee. Stirring Michael’s desire to do the project was Amos 5:23-24, in which God rejects the songs of the people and calls for justice.

“I started to reexamine everything that I did. I realized at that moment that worship and justice go side by side, and

if justice is not a part of what you’re doing worship-wise, then it’s not going to work,” Michael says.

***Surrounded***, which combines several familiar favorites into the set, is a genuine, joyful, soaring expression to God. It rings as a response to what Michael sees as God’s calling for His Church “to be one voice and one heart. One bride. Every nation, every tribe and every tongue. Every social class, every denomination.”

***Surrounded*** is unity — in song.



by rhonda rhea — [WWW.RHONDARHEA.COM](http://WWW.RHONDARHEA.COM)

# scratching where it itches

I CONFESS I DON'T HAVE THE GREENEST THUMB ON THE BLOCK. As a matter of fact, I was thinking it might be easier to just give up on all other greenery and grow a poison ivy garden instead. Except that at this point I'd have to start from scratch.

Scratch? Get it? Anyway, I decided it would probably be better not do anything that "rash."

That's because we really do have to be careful what we plant. We will reap what we sow. It's right there in Galatians 6:7. And according to the verse that follows, not only should we be careful what we plant, but we're told if we choose to live only to please our own sinful selves, we'll reap a harvest of death and decay. I think I've grown that kind of plant before. But when we're talking about what we're growing spiritually, we're talking about an especially ugly garden. Eternally worse than poison ivy. Don't even bother with the weed-whacker. Weed killer won't cut it either.

Take a look at the passage: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:7-10, NIV).

I love how Paul rounds out his point in verse nine with an understood "so" when he charges us to "not

become weary in doing good." He lets us know that the harvest kind of thinking and learning to live to please the Spirit instead of the flesh leads to staying energized in doing good things for the Kingdom — leads us to not "give up." And that leads to a harvest of everlasting blessing.

Our gardening time here is short. We need to stay on task. 2 Timothy 4:2-5 charges us to, "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (NIV).

Instead of catering to the poison-ivy-itchy-ears of those who simply want the easy way, and instead of letting them distract us, we're called to keep our heads and to steadfastly keep on working in whatever ministry God has called us to. The passages in Galatians 6 and 2 Timothy 4 are the kinds of sound-the-charge verses we can put to memory. They can remind us all along the way to stay tenaciously resolute in our service. It's then that we can become more and more the kind of Christ followers who don't just tickle itchy ears, but truly scratch those eternal itches.

So, ready to write down those passages? Okay, but first you'll need some scratch paper. *LH*



by *sharon elliott*  
WWW.LIFETHATMATTERS.NET



## count the cost

THE BOOK OF SECOND JOHN WAS WRITTEN "TO THE ELECT LADY AND HER CHILDREN." As I

read this short book of only 13 verses, it dawned on me that the

apostles may not have had much of a love life. They seemed to have been constantly on the move, driven as the first vital messengers after the Resurrection,

dedicated to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. John writes to this lady, whoever she was, and gives her one basic warning: watch out for people "who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (verse 7, NKJV). His closing personal thought to her is:

"Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full" (verse 12, NKJV).

We may never know if there was more to this relationship than elder to parishioner, but it's striking to think about all that the apostles gave up in order to reach the world with the gospel. Oswald Chambers said, "The men and women Our Lord sends out on His enterprises are the ordinary human stuff, plus dominating devotion to Himself wrought by the Holy Ghost" (*My Utmost for His Highest*).

We're all "ordinary human stuff." The question to ask ourselves is whether or not we have "dominating devotion" to Jesus that will, if called upon to do so, move us to give up some things others couldn't dream of living without. Involvement in ministry requires a deep, dedicated walk with the Lord,

and we women in ministry can sometimes feel amazing pressure to be super women. For the sake of the gospel, would we forego marriage

The men and women Our Lord sends out on His enterprises are the ordinary human stuff, plus dominating devotion to Himself wrought by the Holy Ghost.

—Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost for His Highest*—

in order to spend time away from home traveling to preaching engagements? Will we give up some sleep to write our books bit by bit from 10 p.m. till midnight three nights a week while our children are small and require our attention during the day? Could we say "no" to some conference invitations in order to prioritize time with our husband? Can we do without a luxury car and a house on the hill if living moderately would be a better witness to those we are serving? Will I substitute a soda for a glass of wine if those with me may be offended when they see me drinking alcohol?

God does not necessarily call us to do without the things we like, but in ministry it is incumbent upon us to be ever mindful of living so we glorify God with every aspect of our being. Will we go the distance no matter what it may cost? Can we say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15, KJV)? *JH*



MEET OUR

# Contributors

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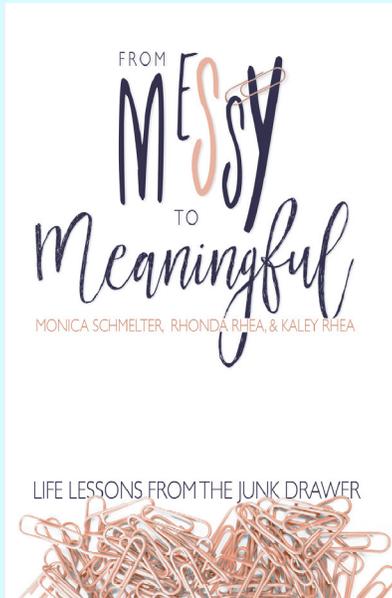
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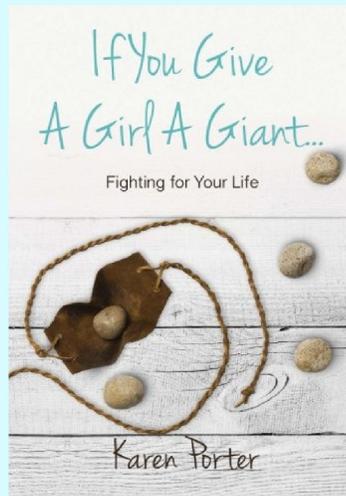
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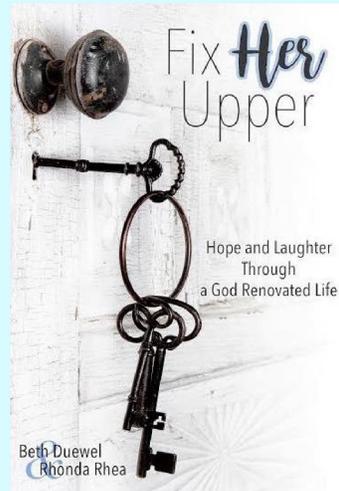
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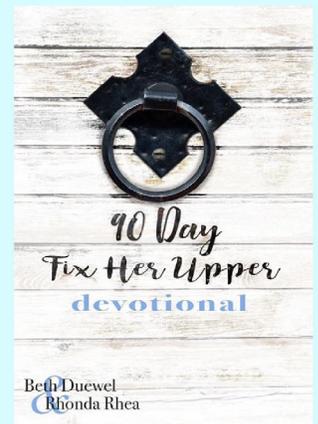
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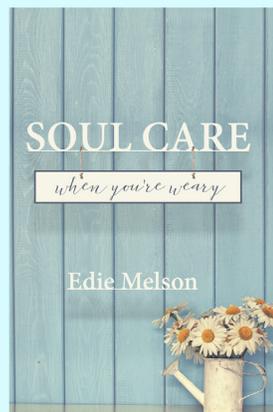
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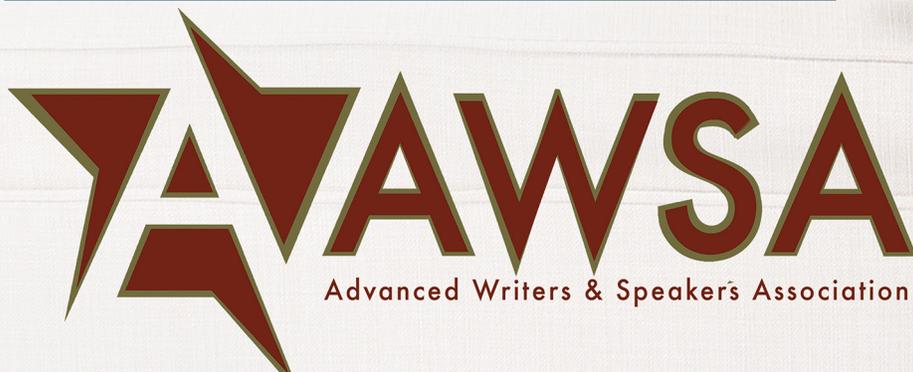
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