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2022 Spring Edition / Vol. 8, Issue 5

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*Meet the
Challenge!*





taming a mountain lion of fear

If you're feeling overwhelmed as you stare into the face of this new year, you're not alone.

"Not a problem," he said as we all strapped into our giant backpacks. "We knew we'd have to hike into basecamp at some point."

The trail was a lot longer than Paul and our friend Gordon expected. After a couple of hours, I couldn't keep up with the guys, so Paul volunteered, "We'll run ahead to the basecamp, set up our tents, and come back to get you."

I continued to walk as the hours drifted toward dusk. Suddenly, just a few yards behind me, a mountain lion screamed!

I got an adrenaline rush, enough to make a run for it.

Then I remembered. If you run from a mountain lion, it will see you as prey and attack.

So instead of running, I lifted my hands above my head, trying to look as big as possible. I yelled like a wild, crazy girl, hoping to frighten the predator away.

The cat went quiet, and I kept plodding up the now dark trail, not knowing if the cat was stalking me or not.

Finally, I saw the light of a campfire ahead and I knew I'd found basecamp.

This memory of the feeling of being stalked reminds me of what we've all experienced together in this dreadful season. It brings to mind 1 Peter 5:8,

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the

devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (NIV).

Fear has been devouring our lives. And this fear, combined with a deadly disease, shut down the entire world. My theory is that the true cause of this emergency was the person of our enemy, Satan, who used the pandemic to bring devastation and fear into the lives of 8 billion people. There are many of us who are still feeling the effects of that fear. But what would happen if we gave God our fear and asked Him to not only heal our trauma, but turn this whole terrible ordeal into a miracle?

I think God's doing exactly that.

Consider this: in the past three years, the Google searches for "prayer" shot up over 30 percent. But did you know that the most searched for Scripture was 2 Chronicles 7:14?

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (NIV).

Friends, I think we could have the makings for a worldwide revival. It takes prayer to invite revival in, so I believe that worldwide prayer could usher in a worldwide revival.

So don't be afraid. It's time to fill your lamp with God's peaceful presence and continue to pray for people to come to Jesus. ☺

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are you building an ark or a golden calf?

Have you been building idols in your life to other people's opinions?

It may seem like a crazy question to ask. Yes, we all look for those who can give us sound advice and insight into faith or life direction. However, are there areas where you've let those voices of influence overwrite the call God placed on you?

Maybe it's that mission trip you didn't go on because someone convinced you it's not possible to raise the finances. Perhaps it's that speaking opportunity that you turned down because you were told you weren't qualified. Maybe it's a book you keep putting off writing because you were told you shouldn't take on another project.

I can't help thinking back to Noah and the moment God called him to construct a colossal ark smack in the middle of bone dry land.

And to top it off, Noah foolishly took on the job God had called him to do with no previous ark-building experience.

Then when Noah did all he could do, despite the opinion of others, God did all the rest as the animals came in from near and far.

Noah felt the confirmation of everything he'd been working on when the first drop of rain hit the land.

On the other side, look at what happened in Exodus 32 when Moses followed God's call to meet Him for 40 days on the mountain. While almost everyone else joined, let's build a golden calf party.

I read a social pin lately that said

"Not everyone will understand your call. It wasn't a conference call."

I had to chuckle because sometimes we wait for someone else's opinion to determine God's call in our life. And sometimes, sadly that opinion overwrites our obedience to God.

I guarantee you being obedient to God's call will not be comfortable, convenient, easy and acceptable —and it's not meant to be.

We have to get to the place of realizing that God calls us as His children to do something doomed to failure without Him, and embrace that instead of the idols of popular opinion.

I pray this issue of Leading Hearts will help you learn to evaluate everything that you have in your heart, in your hands, and on your shelves that is overwriting God's call on your life. God is calling you to embrace a new level of heart-wide-open, feet-ready-to-move, Holy Spirit-led mindfulness as you obediently build the ark to move to the next place He is taking you.

Love,

—Amber



I felt my only viable
solution was to step
away from ministry. I
thought I had
failed God and the
expectations of others.

THE POWER OF LETTING GO

A Prayer of Release

from divorce to following God's call

tracy hester | tracyhester.com



A few years ago, I went through a bitter divorce. As a woman in ministry, I didn't know how to effectively deal with the emotional outflow—rejection, abandonment, betrayal, disappointment, shame and embarrassment, and much more.

I now had a “D” on my life's report card, and I felt my only viable solution was to step away from ministry. I thought I had failed God and the expectations of others. At the time, I perceived that the divorce had taken me two giant steps backward in walking fully in my God-created purpose.

As Christian women, we are not exempt from pain. God didn't promise us that we wouldn't have to deal with pain.

Instead, He promised that He would be with us as we walked through our painful circumstances. Maybe you're questioning God's call on your life after picking up the pieces of your broken marriage. Possibly, you are trying to sort through the damage that the divorce tornado has ripped through your life. Also, you might wonder where you start to rebuild your life.

I discovered an effective way to move beyond my pain by inviting God into my painful circumstances. One of the first essential steps in me breaking free from the emotional pain of the divorce was to learn how to release it to God. So I wrote a letter of release to God, and my heart responded beautifully—it started to heal.

This letter of release taught me how to let things go, something I wasn't taught how to do.

Dear God,

I'm writing this letter to you as a desperate prayer to release the pain that I'm processing as I walk through this divorce. I'm at a place where I don't expect or need an apology to forgive or move on. I only need to know that you are with me.

I can see the good that you are birthing in me through this painful place. I'm getting to a place of being thankful for it. If I hadn't taken the time to walk through my pain and not stuff it as I did in the past, I would have missed out on seeing what you have created me to be.

Today, you spoke to me about who I am, and you gave me a key to ease my pain and walk in new freedom. You told me that I should hear your voice louder than the voice of the enemy. WOW.

Your message was eye-opening because the harmful lies the enemy spoke over me for years have crippled me. I have allowed the enemy's voice to consume me and throw darts of insecurities, fears, disappointments, and comparisons at my heart. These darts have penetrated my heart deeply. They have convinced me that I will never heal. These darts have also disqualified me and labeled me as not having a creditable voice to minister and fulfill your plans and purpose for my life.

So today, I wage war on the voice of the enemy by counteracting his lies with the truth You have spoken over me in Scripture. I let go of the past. I release all emotional pain at the feet of Jesus, and I press into the resurrection and restorative power of the cross.

I know that the Holy Spirit is interceding for me at this moment. This intercession is powerful and filled with blessings and favor over my life. I need your help to change my confession to agree with the intercession, and plans You have for my future:

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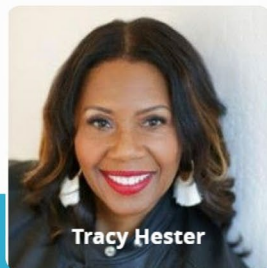
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continued from p. 9

I let go of:

- The emotional prison of the years of neglect, rejection, abandonment, and lack of approval. I am set free from being negatively defined over the years. I no longer play the negative tapes in my mind—help me destroy all negative recordings.
- Hiding emotional pain because I thought that was my role as a Christian woman.
- The lie that I'm not good enough. When the enemy tells me, "You can do everything 100% right, and it still wouldn't be good enough," I will remind him that I am the apple of Your eye.
- The lie of perfectionism. No more thinking that I need to perform perfectly to be loved or make others feel secure, respected, and needed.
- The trust issues from the betrayal.
- Taking responsibility to help heal others' brokenness.
- Not feeling valued or loved.
- Disappointment of not being chosen first.
- Being seen as a human doing instead of a human being.

God, teach me the real meaning of this love and how it doesn't act a certain way. Based upon 1 Corinthians 13 (MSG), I understand how, according to Your original plan, love is not supposed to act:

Love never gives up
 Love cares more for others than for self
 Love doesn't want what it doesn't have
 Love doesn't strut
 Doesn't have a swelled head,
 Doesn't force itself on others,

*Isn't always "me first,"
 Doesn't fly off the handle,
 Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
 Doesn't revel when others grovel,
 Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
 Puts up with anything,
 Trusts God always
 Always looks for the best
 Never looks back
 But keeps going to the end*

Thank you, God, for helping me press past this storm. If it hadn't been for you who was on my side, where would I be? Certainly not where I am today. You taught me the gift of pain.

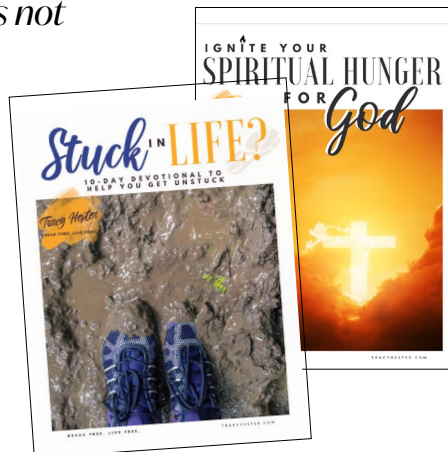
How if I press into the pain according to Your model, You will mold me into Your image—a woman free to show her scars so others can heal, a woman who only wants to lean on You to fill every void in her life.

I love our friendship, and You are showing me how to search for love in all the right places instead of the wrong places. I see my value now, God. There is no way I will sell out to any low bidders who try to devalue my worth, including the enemy. Because of Your love, I'm free today to walk as You have created me.

AMEN

One of the best gifts we can give ourselves is to honor our past by releasing others and ourselves from figuring out our healing prescription.

God has a customized solution to heal us. So let's release what we can't control or understand to God and allow Him to use our pain to create our beautiful redemptive story. ☺



TRACY HESTER will be one of our special workshop speakers for the May 2022 Arise Esther Evening. Her book *Get Up, Girl, Let's Go*, releases in April from Elk Lake Publishers. To get her free *Stuck in Life?* or *Spiritual Hunger* downloadable booklets and more go to tracyhester.com.

A photograph of four diverse women of various ages and ethnicities smiling and posing together. The woman in the center foreground is wearing a bright pink leather jacket over a pink top with orange and white polka dots. To her left is a woman with dark hair wearing a patterned scarf. To her right is a woman with grey hair wearing a floral shirt. On the far right is a woman with blonde hair wearing a green cardigan over a pink top. The background is plain white.

6 qualities of a **LEGACY LEADER**

karen porter | karenporter.com



You've seen them. You know who I mean—the leader who had been the trailblazer for years or even decades.

And even when they turned their organization's day-to-day leadership over to a younger generation, these men and women are still the most revered person in the room. Their history of leadership lasts.

How can you and I become a leader whose influence and legacy lasts a lifetime?

1. Lifetime leadership requires competence and ability,

One of our primary goals should be to keep learning and growing in our leadership skills. Consider hiring a coach to take you to the next level. Read books and articles about how to develop your expertise and professionalism. Michael Hyatt said, "If I'd known what I know now, I'd have hired a coach sooner."

2. Build your leadership on character and integrity.

Character is a combination of qualities which distinguish you from other leaders. Character is in the deepest part of your heart and mind and is reflected in what you do when no one is watching. Integrity is the standard you choose for your life—the moral and spiritual fiber of your being. Both character and integrity are based on high-principled ideas which start in your mind, "Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8 NLT).

If you have made mistakes and failed in the areas of character and integrity, Jesus makes a way for you to rebuild these traits into your life and your leadership. Here's how he sees your blunders:

•**He doesn't condemn.** "There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1 NLT).

•**He forgives.** "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness" (1 John 1:9 NLT).

•**He offers a second chance.** "Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, 'Where are your accusers?'"

Didn't even one of them condemn you?' 'No, Lord,' she said. And Jesus said, 'Neither do I. Go and sin no more'" (John 8:10-11 NLT).

3. A long-term leader consistently cares for people.

One pastor led his church for more than four decades and there was never any trouble. Because when he heard about a problem or that someone was unhappy, he drove to their house in person to solve the issue. One women's ministry leader took members of her team to lunch individually so she could know their hearts and about their lives.

"One test of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency."—Arnold Glasow

4. A lifetime leader understands the power of servant leadership.

When did you last join the workers in the daily work of your organization? Would people say you are a hard worker? Would your team say you serve them?

5. Communication is key in lifetime leadership.

Listen—really listen—to everyone. Become more curious and more interested in how they do their job and why they perform it well. Tell your team what you are planning or about ideas in your mind. When you trust them, they will trust you.

6. Be generous with accolades and promotions or more responsibility or awards or recognition.

Sometimes simply saying "thank you" when a job is well done is what an employee or volunteer needs most. You will inspire and challenge your staff when you do what you said you'd do and when you notice their contribution to the success of your organization.

"To add value to others, one must first value others."—John Maxwell

When we understand the true meaning of leadership, we will be in it for a lifetime because the true meaning has little to do with your rank or the title on your business card. Instead, a leader affects how others see themselves and how they grow in their life skills. The lifetime leader is the ultimate influencer. ☺



If we only base
our calling and
our ["voice"] on
self-discovery,
it can lead us
into a loop of
uncertainty.

—Linda Goldfarb—

DISCOVERING THE VOICE

God gave me

“When will you let God use your pain?”

That question brought speaker, author, and life coach Linda Goldfarb to a turning point. Whether on stage or working at her day job, Linda has always used her voice to entertain people. Little did she know that God would take her voice on a journey to truly impact lives for eternity.

“Before then, I used my humor as a way to mask my own unresolved hurt. The reality of how my pain was affecting me did not surface until later in life,” Linda said.

Behind the Laughter

The award-winning author and podcast host grew up in a military home. From a young age, Linda was constantly moving. By the time she found new friends, her father would be relocated to another state or country.

“Dad’s short-term relocations didn’t allow me the opportunity to become truly established. I was critical of myself and full of self-doubt. But I could do voices. And I could make people laugh.”

Linda lived to entertain others—dabbling in theater and comedy was a natural outflow of what she did best. But deep inside, she struggled. “I didn’t realize how much I actually disdained myself. I wanted people to laugh with me before they had a chance to laugh at me. I had turned my ability to make people laugh into a defense mechanism.”

The Cover-Up of Control

At the age of 18, Linda married her first husband. And at twenty, she had her first child and her second at 24. She recalled those ten years as “a difficult season.” The upside—it gave her the opportunity to look at life in a different way.

“Others saw me as funny, but inside, I had something of substance to share. My humor had a bad habit of covering up

my spirituality,” said Linda.

“We all can be guilty of constantly downplaying our gift. For me, it was saying, ‘No, God really didn’t mean to use my voice for His purpose.’”

Shortly after her divorce, this single mother of two children found herself drawn back to church. This is where she got the idea to use humor to serve God and stepped into comedy. Comedy was the start of her journey to find her voice.

“I was funny so I could control people laughing with me, not at me.”

The Big Question

When author Georgia Schaffer presented Linda with the challenge of allowing God to use her pain instead of covering it up, she was slightly offended.

“Honestly, I didn’t think anyone wanted to hear my story. People like to laugh and be entertained. Besides, my life wasn’t interesting enough to share.”

Later that year, before taking the stage at a Christian women’s event, God challenged her with the same call, “Let Me use your pain.” Linda moved forward with the challenge, figuring she’d never see the audience again. She described that moment of vulnerability, “I felt the rock exterior I had grown accustomed to crack open, revealing God’s geode inside.”

God took the humor Linda used for protection and reframed it around her vocal talent to build her influence outside church walls. With no college degree or the education people might think necessary, God unexpectedly brought all the pieces she needed together.

continued on p. 17

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An Unexpected Turn

Working on a production for her church, Linda approached the general manager of a local radio station to narrate the story alongside her. While talking, Linda joked with him about having a radio show of her own.

A couple of weeks later, her second husband, Sam, arranged a lunch meeting with the local radio station manager. "During this meeting, I was sitting at the table with three people, being talked about in the third person. It was kind of hilarious, like I wasn't even in the room." They all had ideas, but Linda knew the show, a talk show about real life, must be funded by God. "If Sam and I put funds into the project, it would be our program, not God's. And we had no time to work on anything that wasn't God's best."

Linda recalls how God provided all the sponsors needed to fund the show. She was given the song, *It's Not Just Talkin' the Talk* by Christian Country singer, Clifton Jansky as the theme song for her show, "Not Just Talkin' the Talk," which grew globally and remained on the air for ten years.

By helping others share their stories, Linda realized she shouldn't separate her real-life stories from God's everyday work in her. Continuing to set aside time every morning with God, He took her deeper and showed her what He was accomplishing through her.

As Linda relied on God, He guided her to authentically share her voice from the core of who He designed her to be. Through this, she experienced His provision as she watched her platform grow.

Growing Your God-Given Voice

Linda's voice has been heard across the world. She has toured China and continues to travel the US sharing a variety of voices along the way through Storybook Theatre of Texas. She uses her voice to bring life to authors' stories via audiobooks. While hosting the award-winning podcast "Your Best Writing Life," she has welcomed God's open door to use her as a vocal conduit, coming alongside writing industry experts who share their teachings with writers of all levels.

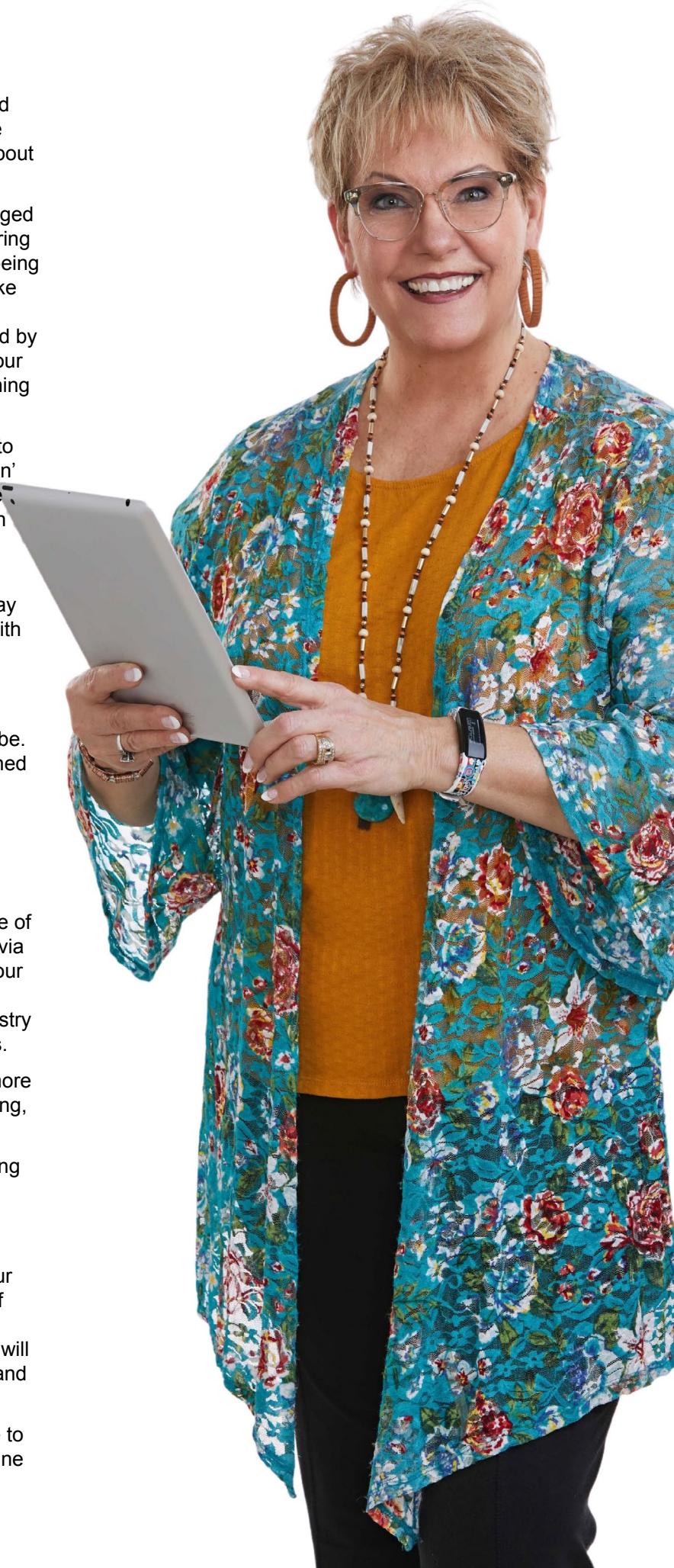
Linda shares that your voice can be expressed through more than just speaking, it can be heard through writing, teaching, and art, among other things.

"The most important consideration is following and obeying God first and foremost. Doing what God tells us to do can help us grow the voice He's giving us beyond our expectations."

Linda is quick to remind us that "Basing our calling and our ['voice'] purely on self-discovery can lead us into a loop of uncertainty. When you base your voice on who God said you are, you will grow more confident in your calling. You will learn to love your voice because God entrusted it to you and only you."

God is the restorer of the parts of us we want no one else to see, and He takes great joy in using that to speak and shine through us. ☺

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hope

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Lighthouses are special to our family. Our youngest son proposed to his wife at a lighthouse.

We have our home on a live-aboard boat, so lighthouses are a beacon of hope to us in the fog or squalling sea.

God's Word is that same kind of lighthouse, a beacon of hope to guide us into safe harbor in the storms of life.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5 ESV)

A storm can hit your life like a flash of lightning: a diagnosis from a doctor, a confession from a spouse or a child revealing one of your worst fears, a pink slip from an employer, a pandemic that shuts down your world, or a war pivoting hearts and minds around the globe.

In my new book, *Discovering Hope in the Psalms*, I share one of our stormiest seasons and how God's lighthouse of

hope helped us navigate our perfect storm.

The winds first hit our little lifeboat during one of our media tours. Bill wasn't feeling well, so we went to the ER where a doctor informed him that he had high blood pressure.

That news caught Bill's attention. His dad had a stroke in his 40s that left him paralyzed, and Bill's grandfather died of a stroke in his early 40s. Soon it became apparent that God was asking Bill to resign from the lead pastor role he had served over 15 years. This decision was difficult emotionally and financially.

In this same season, our youngest son, Caleb, was hit in a football game and rushed to the hospital where he needed a blood transfusion to save his life. Eight days later, when we brought Caleb home, all I wanted to do was to wrap him in my arms, but I had a speaking engagement, which our family needed me to fulfill to keep food on the table and a roof overhead.

During my time away, I received calls about my other two sons who had both also experienced athletic injuries. Then I got a call that my younger brother was hospitalized after having a heart attack—and could I come help care for his young children?

My stress was welling up like a tidal wave.

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When friends would ask, “How are you?” I didn’t know how to answer. So, I went to the Word and read Psalm 30:5.

“Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning” (ESV).

JOY! That’s what I needed.

I immediately went on a joy hunt. I read Nehemiah 8:10—“... do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (ESV).

The grief in the hearts of the people was their realization of how far they had drifted from God. Their leader, Nehemiah, wisely pointed them back to a focus on the power of God. In this verse, strength of God means God himself is a place of safety, protection, and defense, a fortress, refuge, and stronghold—this is a sure source of lasting joy!

In this storm, I followed the well-lit path of joy verses. I printed them, studied them, and hung them around my home. Joy became my lighthouse of hope, an anchor in a storm that lasted three years.

Now, years later, we decided to downsize to live on a boat—a fun second-half-of-life adventure.

However, due to the coronavirus, our marina was closed and my then 91-year-old in-laws needed us to be their on-site caregivers. This meant we had to abandon our vessel of romance and move on to the property of Bill’s folks—to live in a 300-square-foot RV! I knew the only way I could hold on to hope was to “choose joy” every day.

I decided the best way to bolster my hope and joy was to teach the Bible studies I had penned on these topics online through social media and face-to-face virtually through Zoom throughout the nearly 3 years of the California lockdown.

Since the day I found hope in the Psalms, I answer the question: “How are you?” with “Choosin’ joy!”

This saying has caught on with the women who hear me share my story of hope and joy. That’s the power of the Word. Its joy is not only your lighthouse, but also a beam of light to others, because God multiplies the light as you share your hope and rejoice in Him. ●

PODCASTSPOTLIGHT



HEART IN A DRAWER *with sarah geringer*

No matter what age you were when your parents divorced, Heart in a Drawer host, Sarah Geringer, knows that the pain continues on and on. Whether you were very young, a teen, or even an adult at the time of their divorce, the underlying hurts are similar and long-lasting. They are probably affecting you in ways you don't even realize.

Sarah is a child of divorce twice over, at ages 4 and 22. She is also a Christian author, speaker, blogger and artist who writes about finding peace in God's Word. She also is called to minister to adult children of divorce—an often overlooked demographic who also need healing on a deep level.

Sarah discusses issues like alcoholism, forgiveness, grief, peace and much more.

You can find the "Heart in a Drawer: Exploring Hurt, Healing and Hope as an Adult Child of Divorce" on iTunes and many other platforms, including YouTube.

 Listen Now




FAITHFUL *with the FAITHFUL project*

The Word of God is filled with voices of mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives, and each of their stories shows us different sides of God's love and faithfulness that are still true for us today.

The *FAITHFUL* project (read about on p. 23) launched the "FAITHFUL" podcast in February to further discuss God's faithfulness. On this podcast you will hear poets, songwriters, authors, and storytellers dive into these ancient stories to learn more and share about their own stories in the process. FAITHFUL women lead the way to show other women that you have permission to create, live, and think creatively for yourself.

Episode two features Rachael Lampa, Sandra McCracken and Raechel Myers sharing the story of Esther and how her surrender foretold Jesus' sacrifice.

You can find the "FAITHFUL" podcast on iTunes and many other platforms, including YouTube. 

 Listen Now



jennifer taylor
profile contributor

RACHAEL LAMPA & THE WOMEN OF

the Faithful project

GO & SPEAK

continued on p. 24



continued from p. 23



The stories of these girls we're reading in the Bible are stories of real courage and bravery, and I love that because every time a woman comes up in the Bible, it's when something big happens.

More than a year ago, pre-pandemic, a group of female authors and artists came together to tell the stories of God's faithfulness through the stories of women in the Bible.

This collaboration, which was aptly named the *FAITHFUL* project, released an album, and book last May. "The Today Show" featured performances, and the collaborators celebrated the release with a livestream concert.

Artist and Producer Rachael Lampa, known by her songs "Blessed" and "If You Believe" in the early 2000s, debated whether to return to recording music. Then a friend invited her to be part of the *FAITHFUL* project. "I'm going to throw you in a room with all of the best and most inspirational and great-hearted women to be safe and creative together," she said.

Rachael sang on "Rahab's Lullaby" and "We Are One", as well as co-writing and singing "Call Upon Him."

"We each wrote songs with each other, and then we sort of invited other singers to sing on some of the songs also. I was honored to be asked to sing as well.

I'm so grateful because the story of Rahab is one of my favorites in the whole Bible," Rachael said. "The whole idea behind that song is that it's a lullaby from Rahab to her son. It's a beautiful song. I just love that song."



Rachael wrote and sang “Call Upon Him” with Sandra McCracken and Trillia Newbell. It’s about the slave girl who approached Paul and Silas. Rachael said that the girl had the power of fortune-telling, and her owners kept her in their grip and used her to make money. This spirit was not of God, so Paul called it out of her, and he was thrown into jail.

“I thought it was just like this moment of when you call on God, call His name, He sets things right and sets people free,” she said.” That’s where ‘Call Upon Him’ came from.”

Her third song, “We Are One,” was inspired by the story of Ruth. Rachael said Ruth’s story is one of those messages that never gets old. “It’s just like remembering that you’re all connected, that we’re all part of God’s story,” Rachael said.

“His promises, His truths, it begins, and it finishes. It’s just so cool to see those things come around and His faithfulness when we can’t see the beginning of the end.”

Rachael added that through the pandemic, many felt stuck in the narrative of not having a good news day. There was just constant bad news. These stories are important because we are part of a bigger story, and God knows its end. “I think it’s so good to be reminded that He hasn’t left us,” she said. “It’s so good to hear the stories of these women who have come full circle and just remember ours will come full circle also, and things will be right again.”

Prior to the project, Rachael worked in the Nashville jails two or three days a week with a program called The Wild Ones. She said the pandemic ripped her heart open when she couldn’t see her friends and continue the connections with the people she had grown to love so dearly. When she was invited to be part of the *FAITHFUL* project, she knew God would bring her into a new realm of women.

“The stories of these girls we’re reading in the Bible are stories of real courage and bravery, and I love that because every time a woman comes up in the Bible, it’s when something big happens,” she said.

“I felt like God was taking care of me in that moment, being faithful to me because He knew the way that my heart was breaking in that time. And He felt it. That was a really cool moment for me realizing He knew He knew what I needed, and He was there.”

Since the project, Rachael started writing and creating new music again. She started releasing her new music last summer with the hope of a new album coming soon. She knows God used the project to reactivate that part of her heart that loves writing and creating music.

In February, the *FAITHFUL* project also launched The “FAITHFUL” podcast to further discuss God’s faithfulness. Episode two features Rachael, Sandra McCracken, and Rachel Myers sharing the story of Esther and how her surrender foretold Jesus’ sacrifice. 🙏





Surrender becomes natural when you have
a loving support system of people who have
been in a similar situation...

STRUGGLE

5 WAYS TO SURRENDER

(even if you don't want to)

michelle s. lazurek | michellelazurek.com





I learned about surrender at the bottom of an empty bottle of anti-anxiety medication.

Last winter, my world turned upside down. Health issues I battled reared their ugly head. These issues caused financial burdens and negatively impacted my marriage, relationships, and life overall. There was no area of my life my illness hadn't touched.

I felt like my world was crashing down around me, and all I could do was cower in the corner and cry out to God.

What is happening?

Why is this happening to me?

How will I ever return to normal?

The sobering answer I received: there was no returning to normal. This was my new regular.

In Exodus 14:13–14, Moses and the Israelites had their work cut out for them (had an arduous task). It says, “Moses answered the people,

‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm, and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still’” (NIV).

The armies were approaching, and as they were quickly surrounded, they figured their time was up. Yet, this command from Moses allowed them to complete a counterintuitive task that, when they did so, allowed them to let go of their pride and self-sufficiency and allow God to do the impossible. When they laid down their weapons, God opened the doors for them to get out of harm's way and allow God to work miracles.

But as Christians, it is hard to lay down the areas of our lives and surrender control. Our marriages, children, and incomes are just too tempting to give over to God. But when we give God complete control over every area of our lives, we understand the fullness of God's good and gracious nature.

How can we let go and surrender control to God (even when we don't want to)?

1. Pray. I know that sounds simplistic, but having an intimate relationship with God helps me trust Him more. When He is speaking into my life, and I'm learning more about Him in His word, it is easier for me to let go of the stubborn areas of life I am unwilling to surrender. Pray regularly, and surrender will become easier.

2. Seek counsel. Don't do life alone. Throughout Scripture, no one did life alone. Adam had Eve, the disciples had each other, and David had Jonathan. Even God exists in three persons! Surrender becomes natural when you have a loving support system of people who have been in a similar situation, or at the very least, can pray and love you through the difficulty surrender can be.

3. Rebuke the lies. When we embrace surrender, the enemy swoops in, speaking lies and making us believe it is easier—and even better—for us than giving it to God. The best place to replace lies with the truth is God's Word, and it can transform our hearts and minds in ways I could never imagine.

4. Prioritize. More often than not, God asks us to give something up that seems like a massive deal to us but, in the end, is not as important as the things in our lives that matter most. Consider the things in life that are the most important to you. Where do the areas God wants you to surrender align with the items you consider most important? More specifically, where does it compare to achieving a more intimate relationship with the Savior?

5. Adopt an attitude of gratitude. It is easier to surrender when you are focused on what you have rather than what you don't. Jesus, in the last moments before His crucifixion, chose to spend time eating with His disciples, whom He called brothers: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body” (Matthew 26:26). The last words before His impending death were to give thanks to His father. If Jesus can do it, so should we.

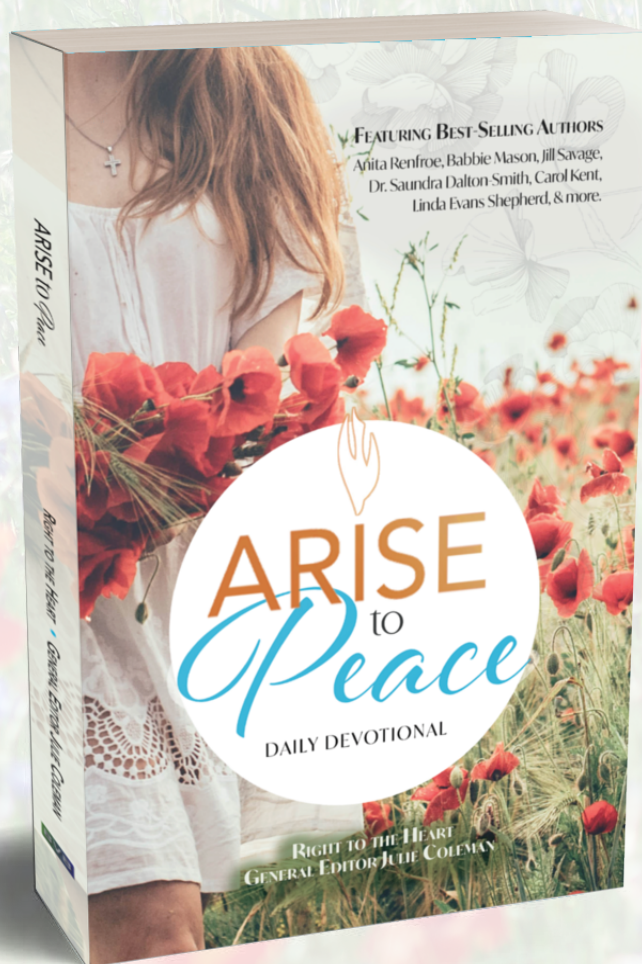
We may feel like we are losing in one area of our lives, but he has blessed us in other places. Before we go to God with our complaints, we need to shower Him with our praise.

Surrender is never easy. But as Christians, surrender is a natural part of our spiritual growth. By learning to let go, we step out of our way and give God permission to move in our lives.☺



Listen to Michelle talk about her new book, I Surrender All (Sort Of): Laying Down Our Plans, on the Arise Esther Podcast by clicking here or scanning the QR code on the left.

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THEBIGQ

with cynthia L. simmons | csimmons.com

Q: How can I live righteously? I want to do right, but I continue to sin.

It is simply impossible to be righteous on our own.

I remember seeing my children run through the house when they were young. I'd feel the dishes rattle and books fall over, and I worried they would get hurt. However, slowing them down was tough. They would walk faster and faster till they returned to blitzing past me.

The Apostle Paul recognized that struggle when he wrote, "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing" (Romans 7:19 ESV).

We find a clue when we notice Paul's words, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8 ESV). That phrase, "in the flesh," helps us realize our natural state is the problem. We are born in sin and Ephesians 2:1 states, "...you were dead in the trespasses and sins" (ESV). A dead person can't obey God.

However, we have hope. Isaiah proclaimed, "But he [Jesus] was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace... (Isaiah 53:5 ESV).

When Jesus, the sinless son of God, died on the cross, He paid for every sin we commit. When we believe in Him as our Savior, God declares us "justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24 ESV).

The word "justified" means "declared righteous." Imagine standing in a courtroom

and having the judge pound his gavel and say, "not guilty." In this case, God says the words, and from then on, He sees you as righteous. At that point, "God made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5 ESV).

A redeemed person can obey because the Father gives him life and the Holy Spirit. The Father begins the process of sanctification, helping us become more like Him. The Apostle Paul described this process as he shared the gospel with people, "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me (Colossians 1:29 ESV). Notice Paul toiled, but he used God's energy.

For example, I could push my vacuum cleaner around all day, but unless I plug it in, the floor won't get clean. God's Spirit is like the electricity that enables us to obey God. Should we still stumble and sin, "...we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"(1 John 2:1 ESV).

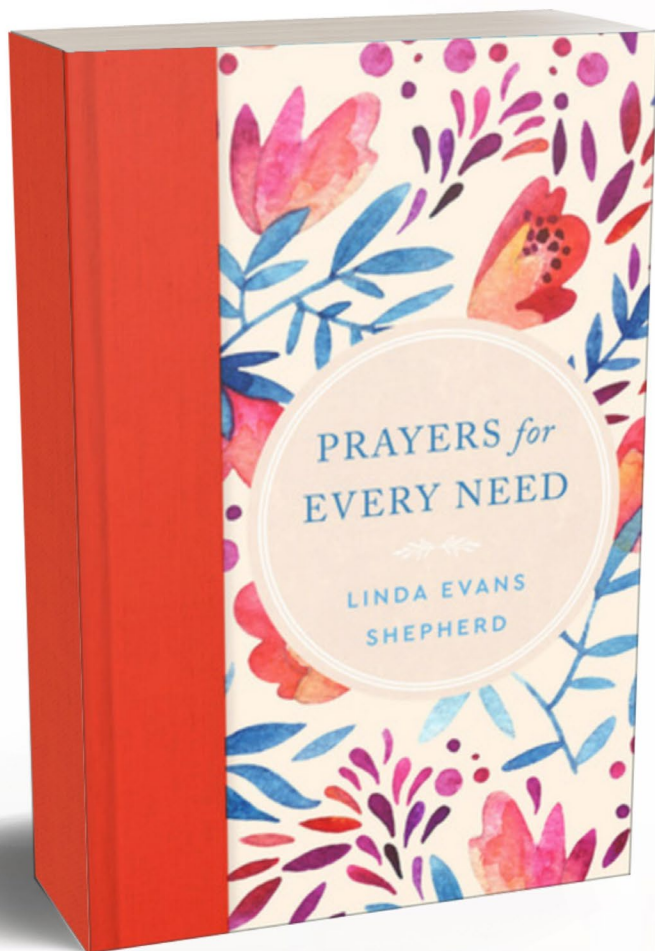
Jesus Christ intercedes for us before God. I love that image! Jesus is on our side, reminding God that sin is under the blood. We can seek forgiveness and know the Lord will do it.

We are so blessed! Should we battle temptation, we can remember Jesus did too. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16 ESV).

Let's obey out of our love for Him. ☺

—New From Award-Winning Prayer Author **LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD**—

Power-packed prayers for every moment of life



Whether life sends us trouble or blessings, we should pray. We know this, yet we often don't know what to say—so we say nothing.

No more! This compilation of powerful prayers is arranged by topic so you can find the words you need when you need them in order to ask God for help, consolation, wisdom, patience, and more for yourself or others.

The prayers in this book will be the ones you turn to again and again as you walk through life with the ones you love.



LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD is a bestselling author of 37 books, an international speaker, and a media personality. She is the founder of Right to the Heart Ministries and publisher of **LEADING HEARTS** magazine and **ARISE DAILY** devotionals. For more, visit LINDASHEPHERD.COM.



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THE PRAYER THAT TURNS PAIN TO JOY and difficulties to peace

linda evans shepherd | lindashepherd.com



I was furious. “They want to do what? Take another MRI of Laura’s brain?! No! I won’t allow it.”

Nurse Sharon was patient with me. “You don’t have a choice; the insurance company requires it.”

My head began to pound. I had a secret. I had seen the original MRI of two-year-old Laura’s brain after our devastating car crash. I knew that over one half of Laura’s brain had been destroyed. I’d seen the images, and when the therapists who’d worked with my daughter found out about her brain damage, they walked away with a simple, “What’s the point?”

“Oh, Lord,” I’d prayed. “It’s going to happen again. People are going to walk away from my daughter—again.”

So, when I wheeled six-year-old Laura into the doctor’s office to hear her interpretation of how Laura’s brain was swirled with massive empty spaces, the doctor smiled and pointed to the wall where a film was posted on a light box.

I had just settled into my chair when I stood up. “I hate to tell you,” I said, “But this is not my daughter’s film.” The doctor stared at me. “Why would you say that?” she asked.

I hung my head. “Because over half of my daughter’s brain was destroyed in the car crash, and this child in this MRI, has an intact brain.”

The doctor tilted her head. “Well, look, the film says, ‘Laura Kay Shepherd.’ This is your daughter’s film. What we didn’t know was that your daughter’s brain could regenerate itself.”

I sat down, I stood up, I sat down again. Then I realized what had happened. For the last three years, when I’d prayed nighty-night prayers with Laura. I’d put my hand on her head, and asked God to restore her brain. As I stared at the film, I saw the results of my prayers.

In one moment, the meeting I had dreaded, turned into one of the most miraculous moments of my life and I was filled with joy.

It would have been nice if I had allowed God’s joy to carry me into the meeting I’d dreaded, but the meeting changed my outlook.

The truth is, the difficult thing we dread, the thing that we kick and scream over, may be the very seed of a miracle that God is planting in our lives.

Since that day, I’ve decided to calm down, and hand over my torments to God. “I give them to You,” I pray. “Please turn them into miracles.”

I’ve learned that this is the prayer God always answers. And I’ve learned something else, I no longer need to kick and scream when things go wrong. I can calmly invite God into the difficulty and trust in Him to work everything out for His good.

Dear Lord, we give our pain and difficulties to You, and ask that You transform them into miracles, as we learn to trust You with both peace and joy. In Jesus’ name, Amen. ☉



at the table

hands of encouragement

penelope carlevato | penelopecarlevato.com



It was a tough week. I was at my parents' home to prepare the house for my mother's return home from the rehab center after a stroke.

However, after a week of rearranging furniture and sorting through things, I realized this wouldn't happen. The stroke was more debilitating than we thought. Mother wouldn't be coming home. Now, we needed different arrangements. I was discouraged and depressed. As I sat at my parents' kitchen table wondering what to do, the screen door opened, and my friend Sue walked in and placed a cup of tea in front of me. She pulled up a chair and just sat there and held my hands in hers. I cried. She just let me cry and listened to me.

Occasionally she nodded or said a few words, but I knew she cared by just being there, and I treasure her love and friendship. The week became more challenging when we had to face the financial facts. Sue was there for me, if not in person, just a phone call away. My daughter took time off from work, and it was such a blessing that week. It's so true that two are better than one in all situations.

"Two are better than one ... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up"
(Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NIV).

I know most of you, like me, have been discouraged. I realized offering encouragement doesn't mean having

the answers to others' problems, but just being a "Sue" in someone's life is all in God's plan.

The dictionary describes encouragement as: the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope. It doesn't say solving one another's problems.

That is encouraging and gives me the incentive to send a card, make a phone call, text, make a meal, plan a visit, or just listen. Or maybe showing up and rearranging the flowers in a wilting flower vase.

Paul wrote these words to the church in Thessalonica: "Therefore, encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NASB1995). Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica on his last journey because of the hostile environment. He wrote to Christians with words of encouragement.

That culture was similar to ours today—seduction, materialism, hostility, and pleasures of every immoral type. Paul wanted to remind the church that they were THE CHURCH—they were followers of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. He advised them to stay strong and help others battle depression and discouragement.

His advice is as timely today as it was then. He gave them encouragement from the Word: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" (Romans 15:4 NIV).

I look back now on that morning with Sue as a perfect

example of 2 Corinthians 1:4—"That we may be able to comfort [or encourage] those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (ESV). Sue had been down this path already. She knew just what I needed.

Some days, we feel so low that we could dangle our feet if we sat on a curb. Instead, we need to put one foot in front of the other. Do the next right thing.

It was sad seeing my mother in this condition. My mother and I were both born in England and enjoyed our morning cup of tea. It didn't seem fair that I would never sit at her table again and share our tea. Life would change drastically for my mother. She always had time for a cup of tea and a book in the afternoon. It was strange that I now had to make plans for her afternoons and mornings and evenings. I didn't know what to do ... find a place for my mother or find caregivers to come into the home.

It was encouraging to have others walk beside me. I found that I just had to take the next step and walk through the next open door. Another part of the planning involved my brother, who had lived with my mother for many years. If we had to sell the house, what would he do? A friend from my life group called at just the right time. Her advice was to wait a year, not do anything too quickly. I found her encouragement to be wise, and I had peace.

I think we complicate life when we are looking for THE answer. I had such great peace when meeting with the care team at the rehab center where my mother was a patient. They were great resources and gave me numbers to call and people to see. I began to take the next step. It was amazing how someone would show up with ideas or a meal. I experienced hospitality in friends' and neighbors' homes. I loved having the opportunity to reunite with a few of my mother's friends.

I realized the gift of hospitality is encouragement. Jesus' ministry was home-centered. Do we use our homes to reach out and invite someone in for a cup of tea or coffee? It's a loving way to encourage,

Last week my friend and I had the incredible pleasure of going to a couple's home and making dinner. The couple is doing poorly and can't do much in the kitchen. It was a no-brainer for us, but the joy we had far surpassed the little bit of cooking and cleaning up we did for our friends. They both had tears in their eyes as we left and told us how we had been such encouragers.

Hospitality and encouragement go hand-in-hand. It's an opportunity to show love and care. I experienced genuine encouragement when others just opened the front door.

The phrase "easier said than done" is a hurdle we need



to practice. We know what we should do, but we don't get around to following through. Good intentions don't help or bless anyone. Just do what God puts in your heart to be an encourager. It's the little things that make a difference.

The first time I had a British Flapjack was in the lovely Georgian home of my cousins in the Lake District of England. On a cold and rainy day, my cousin Margaret suggested a cup of tea and a flapjack. I thought she was referring to pancakes. Now we enjoy them often, sometimes with a cup of coffee or a glass of milk.

Flapjacks

- 1 stick (1/2 cup) butter
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup Lyle's Golden Syrup (or honey)
- 2 1/3 cups quick-cooking oats
- Pinch salt

Preheat oven to 350°F

Butter 8" X 8" X 2" metal baking pan

Mix butter, brown sugar, and syrup into a saucepan. Stir over medium heat until the butter is melted, and the brown sugar is dissolved and mixture is smooth.

Stir in the salt and oats until well mixed.

Spread evenly into the pan.

Bake until the top is golden brown, about 25 minutes.

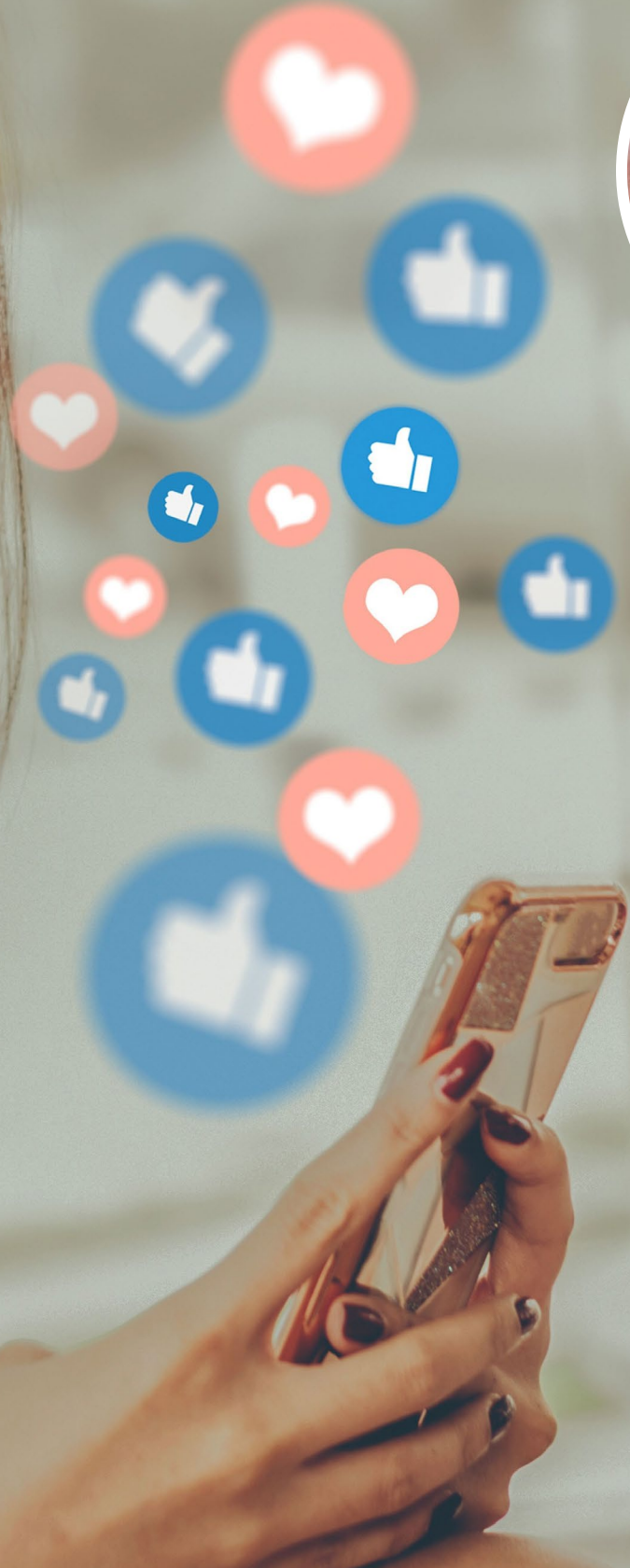
Cool in pan for 10 minutes or more, then cut into squares and then diagonals. Use a sharp knife.

Lyle's Golden Syrup is available at specialty stores, such as World Market, or some supermarkets. If not available, substitute with honey.

It's easy to make variations to this recipe by adding dried fruits, nuts, coconuts, or seeds. ☺



Social media networks
want to please their
users and deliver the
experiences they enjoy.



WHY SOCIAL MEDIA IS STILL VALUABLE for ministry leaders



There has been a lot of discussion—ironically taking place ON social media—about whether social media is still a valuable endeavor for ministry leaders.

Each person's journey is unique. Because of that, we're each going to gather different tools, and find the ones that work best for us.

But I do believe social media can be a valuable tool for reaching and serving those who need encouragement.

Here are my three bottom-line reasons for doing social media:

1. Personally, I believe social media is an extension of the ministry God has given. My primary reason for being on social media is to serve others and to build connections.
2. It gives another dimension to my prayer life. Just opening a social media network immediately leads to an opportunity for prayer.
3. I believe God has called me to be a light in the dark. So the darker social media gets, the stronger my call to stay there.

Social Media Benefits for Me

- I can minister to those God puts in my path by praying for them—sometimes anonymously and sometimes directly.
- I get a chance to serve and encourage those I serve. I can post updates that provide valuable information and encouragement without asking for something in return. This builds trust and lays the groundwork that encourages them to connect more strongly with God.
- It gives me a place to connect with others who have similar interests. These connections often lead to sharing Jesus.
- I have opportunities to interact with other ministry leaders. These interactions include:

- o encouragement from others and toward others;
- o valuable leads on opportunities;

o opportunities to share and receive information about some aspect of leadership and ministry.

- It's a place to connect with those I wouldn't have contact with otherwise, due to physical location or beliefs.
- It gives me opportunities to share the message(s) of my heart. I can do this through invitations to post on blogs, become a guest on podcasts, and in many other ways.

What Social Media Does Not Do for Me

Social media doesn't sell my ministry. There isn't (nor has there ever been, as far as I can tell) a direct connection between advertising a service on social media and selling it.

Why doesn't social media work for sales?

- Most people are on social media to be social. Sometimes they are looking for information, but in general, they're just hanging out.
- An invitation to buy something is seen as an interruption. I don't know about you, but I get irritated by the paid advertising slipped into my browsing pleasure.
- The algorithms for most networks make it difficult to get visibility when someone is selling something. Social media networks want to please their users and deliver the experiences they enjoy. Since most people are irritated by advertising, these networks try to limit anything that could be seen as a negative experience.

Bottom Line

If a ministry leader is on social media solely to promote themselves, then it's going to be difficult to find value in being there.

However, if we're looking to make connections and increase our ability to serve our audience—as well as the other benefits mentioned above—I believe we will find value in staying active there.

Final Tips

I think it's important to find a way to interact on social media without spending a lot of valuable time on it. My recommendation is thirty minutes a day on social media.

It's also vital that we're focused on building our email lists. Email lists DO help us promote our ministry. Making valuable connections can facilitate growing these lists. ☺



Grief is certainly a universal experience, but it does not have a one-size-fits-all approach to healing.



GIVING YOURSELF GRACE TO NAVIGATE GRIEF

dr. saundra dalton-smith | ichoosemybestlife.com



Everything that lives eventually dies, but just because death is natural doesn't make it any easier to navigate.

After a period of loss or grief, something inside of us changes. We are never completely the same because the experience stretches us and builds inner strength.

Whether your experience is the result of a loved one's battle with a long illness or came sudden and unexpected, the resulting grief can be overwhelming and debilitating.

Normal day-to-day activities can begin to feel like they are too much to handle.

Loss is a unique stressor. It causes you to feel like something is missing. The closer the connection, the deeper the wound left after the loss. It's important to have grace for yourself while you process the pain.

Grief is as much a part of life as joy, just as you can't have light without darkness.

We wouldn't know the blessings of joy without also knowing the pain of loss. Grief is certainly a universal experience, but it does not have a one-size-fits-all approach to healing. It is a very individual one that will challenge your mental and physical wellbeing.

Everyone will face loss during their lifetime, so it's beneficial to learn healthy ways to process it.

1. Grieve at your own pace. Resist the temptation to compare your grief timeline with others. It is no one's place to judge the appropriate time another person needs to grieve, and telling someone to move on with their lives is insensitive.

Everyone is unique in how they deal with grief. Some people move on quite quickly, while others languish in distress. Avoid

the belief that there is a designated process that you have to follow or time frame you must strive to stay within.

2. Accept the support of others. Initially, you may want to be left alone with your thoughts, or you may be afraid to love anyone else again. Those feelings are common, normal, and even expected, but isolating yourself can be unhelpful to your recovery. When people offer to bring you a meal or spend an evening with you, accept it. Everyone needs support through difficult times. Remove any expectations you place on yourself to be a good host during their visit.

Your role during this time is to be open to receive. Allow those who care about you the opportunity to uplift you.

3. Honor your feelings. Be honest with yourself about how you feel. There's no right or wrong way to feel when you're mourning. Part of the healing process is expressing your emotions. Rather than distract yourself from your feelings, experience them. Just sit your feelings and explore them. Allow yourself to feel whatever you're feeling without judging your emotions. They won't go away until you've allowed them to express themselves. Talk about your loss with friends, family, counselor, pastor, or therapist. If you're not ready to discuss your feelings face-to-face, start a journal or join an online grief support community.

4. Surrender to rest. Grief is physically, mentally, and spiritually draining. It's common to want to distract yourself from the pain by staying busy, but this will only lead to further exhaustion. Go above and beyond your normal nurturing routine and treat yourself to more time for rest. Make a list of activities that restore you like getting a massage, cooking a healthy meal, watching your favorite movie, going for a walk, reading a book, taking a hot shower or bath, and listening to music. Give your body and soul what it needs to heal.

5. Grieving takes a lot of energy. Pace yourself and expect challenges when special holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays roll around. It can be a long recovery process and isn't easy to handle. If you're dealing with a recent loss, expect that it will take some time to run its course. Navigate grief in your own way and on your own schedule. Be patient, and have grace for yourself.☺

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DEFINING MEASUREMENTS

OF SUCCESS



It's tempting for us to look at other Christians who appear to have large ministries, bestselling books, popular podcasts ... Somehow, we come up short.





God has a purpose and a plan for the gifts and dreams He's given to us. But—have you ever wondered how to measure the success of your ministry?

It's tempting for us to look at other Christians who appear to have large ministries, bestselling books, popular podcasts, large social media numbers and multiple speaking engagements.

Somehow, we come up short. But instead of comparing our ministries, let's look closely at what success and profitability look like from a Christian perspective.

Success is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. In our circles, profitability is the ability of a ministry to use its resources to generate revenues in excess of its expenses, which allows us to make a living as we follow our call.

Here are the six most important lessons I've learned on this subject.

1. Embrace failure—it isn't the end of your ministry.

Pastor Erwin Lutzer wrote, "Those who have failed miserably are often the first to see God's formula for success." The important question is: What did I learn from the failure?

2. Read biographies and articles about Christian leaders you admire. Collect quotes. Study methods. Cut and paste key illustrations. Record what made that person successful. Were they effective as a teacher/speaker/preacher, as an author, as an innovator, as a prayer warrior, as a ministry leader, as a parent/spouse, as a visionary, as an income-producer, or as a generous donor?

3. Accept financial compensation. It's biblical to

receive payment for ministry endeavors, whether that involves leading, writing, or speaking. Luke 10:7 says, "...the worker deserves his wages" (NIV).

4. Select and implement your method for recording ministry income and expenses.

5. Seek wise counsel regarding your business/ministry structure (Should you have a non-profit or for-profit organization?)

6. Determine the definition of success for your ministry.

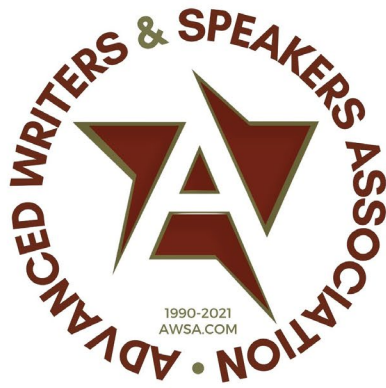
Priscilla Shirer wrote: "True success in any endeavor can only come when the Father has initiated the activity and invited our participation."

Zig Ziglar was a well-known Christian motivational speaker. He spoke at both business and ministry events, and he was never shy about sharing his faith. As an author and speaker he was highly successful, but he reminds us of one of the most important parts of true success: "I believe that being successful means having a balance of success stories across the many areas of your life. You can't truly be considered successful [in your ministry] if your home life is in shambles."

To be a successful leader, surround yourself with people who are passionate about Jesus and who are good at the things you're not good at.

Free them to creatively use their gifts. Let go of any fear that they might surpass you. Be generous with praise. Reward them appropriately. Watch God multiply the impact and profitability of your ministry—by His standards!

"Before you do anything, put your trust totally in God and not in yourself. Then every plan you make will succeed" Proverbs 16:3 (TPT). ☉



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Reading Between the Lines— & living between the times

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Someone once told me that all crazy women have super-thin eyebrows. I don't see how I could even begin to argue with that logic. So I pencil.

I feel I have a lot to prove.

That's one reason doing makeup in the car is such a risky business. One hard stop and a gal could end up with a seriously high eyebrow. No one could ever be as astonished as that kind of brow implies. And please excuse me if the humor here is a bit ... ah ... highbrow.

The other day, even full-well knowing the risk, I was doing my makeup in the car. My daughter was driving and hit a bad bump at a very crucial eyebrow moment.

I immediately shot her a half-angry look. Not because I was really angry. Hey, bumps happen. I gave her the look because suddenly I had one fiercely anger-shaped brow. That's hard to get rid of.

To find some sort of symmetry I had to line and over-line both eyebrows. We're talking, eyebrows full on. Like, high-beam on. I just combed my bangs extra low and hoped people would read between the lines, as it were. Goofy road-bump.

If anyone knew about bumps in the road, it was Paul. Talk about some hardships. It was enough to furrow any brow. But in Romans 8:18 he tells us that those difficulties were not such a big deal.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us" (HCSB).

Difficulties? Temporary. But the glory? It's forever! Our future is so much brighter than anything dark we could ever encounter here. What hope! A few verses later we read,

"Now in this hope we were saved, yet hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience," (verses 24–25 HCSB).

It reminds us that we live between the times. We can't see the big picture full-beam. We're living in that space between the bumps in the road and the glory that awaits. But this we know.

We can walk in faith and live in confidence even now because our Father has a great plan for our future. He is a trustworthy God who keeps His promises. That means we can wait with assurance—eager, yet patient.

We have a better perspective on life and its challenges when we think about our future and about the temporariness of our here and now. We're able to focus less on the things that won't matter in eternity and more on the things of God.

Jonathan Edwards, great revival preacher of the 1700s, prayed, "O Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs."

Stamping eternity on our eyeballs is not about pencils or brows. It's about keeping our eyes Godward and staying ever-mindful of our future with Him, with His holy agenda at the heart of all we do. It keeps us mindful of those around us who need Jesus. It helps us sort out our thinking regarding bumps in the road and everything seen and unseen.

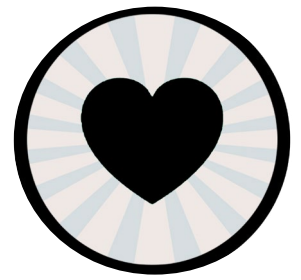
We're in this world, yes, but it's good to know where to draw the line.

Knowing where to draw the line—yeah, that's also good for eyebrows. ☺



HAPPY
Easter

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