

LEADINGHEARTS

LEADINGHEARTS.COM



*Need emotional breakthrough?
Pray this prayer now!*

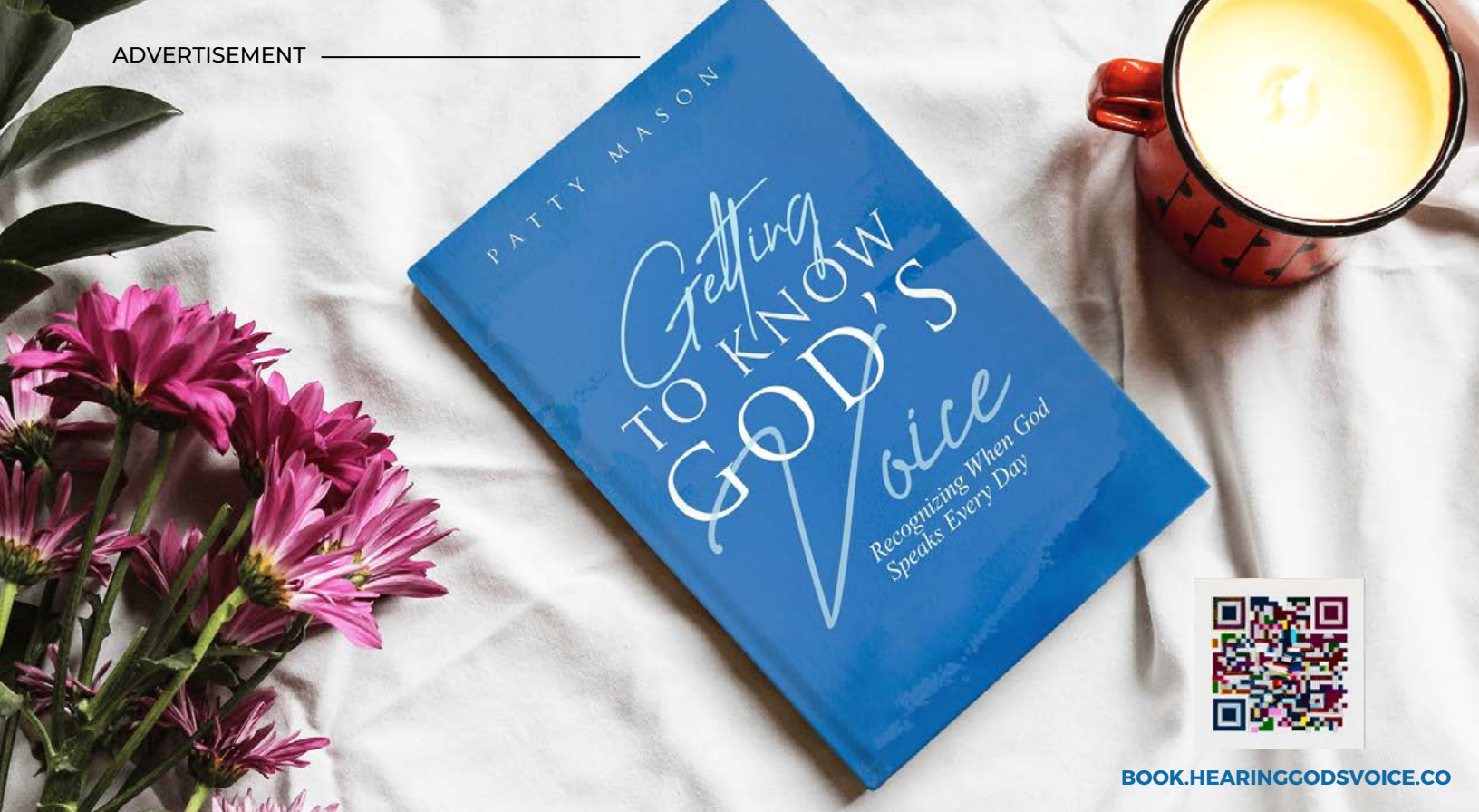
Exclusive interview —



Relationship Expert Dr. Velma Bagby

Are you running after
Mr. Wrong?




BOOK.HEARINGGODSVOICE.CO

FROM AWARD WINNING, BEST-SELLING AUTHOR PATTY MASON AND KP PRESS

Discover the joy of talking with God and hearing Him speak to you



Do you feel you are missing out on hearing God, wondering why He speaks to others, but He doesn't seem to talk to you? Do you have trouble recognizing God's voice above all the noise, then *Getting to Know God's Voice* is the book for you.

Patty Mason longed to hear God speak to her. Hidden beneath her dutiful Christian walk, a hunger to generate honest communication with God developed. Secretly she desired to go beyond the traditional views of discipleship and experience the God of the Bible, but where did she begin? Then, she made a wonderful discovery that caused her to go beyond daily religious duty to having daily conversations with God.

There are modern-day believers who hear from God, and Patty wants you to be one of them. In this simple, straightforward Bible study, you'll discover the joy of talking with God and hearing Him speak to you—not just in your prayer closet, but all the time.

ASK FOR IT WHERE BOOKS ARE SOLD.



LEADINGHEARTS

October/November 2023 | VOL. 10, ISSUE 3

EDITORIAL STAFF

PUBLISHER/ADVERTISING.....Linda Evans Shepherd
 EDITOR/ART DIRECTOR.....Amber Weigand-Buckley
 COPY/LAYOUT EDITOR.....Tom Young
 EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS.....Joy Dunlap & Rebecca White
 PROMOTIONS.....Rebecca White
 AWSA ADMINISTRATIVE ASST.....Carla Wicks
 CONTRIBUTORS.....Penelope Carlevato, Pam Farrel,
 Patty Mason, Jacquelyn Maruska, Edie Melson, Karen Porter, Rhonda
 Rhea, Stacy Sanchez, Cynthia L. Simmons, Jenn Taylor & Amy Williams

RIGHT TO THE HEART MEDIA NETWORK

ARISE ESTHER PODCAST.....Dawn Damon, Host
 ARISE DAILY.....Julie Coleman, Editor

RIGHT TO THE HEART BOARD

RIGHT TO THE HEART BOARD

Linda Evans Shepherd (President), Edie Melson, Karen Porter, Linda
 Goldfarb, Sharon Norris Elliott, Karen Whiting and Joy A. Schneider

INFORMATION

Leading Hearts magazine for Christian Women is published
 bimonthly by Right to the Heart Ministries 2023.
 ISSN 2380-5455 \

ADVERTISING | Display rates are available at leadinghearts.com. By
 accepting an advertisement, *Leading Hearts* does not endorse any
 advertiser or product. We reserve the right to reject advertisements
 not consistent with the magazines objectives.

MANUSCRIPTS | Writers guidelines are available at
leadinghearts.com.

Leading Hearts | PO Box 6421, Longmont, CO 80501
 email: lindareply@gmail.com fax inquiries: (303) 678-0260
 MEMBER | 2022 Evangelical Press Association Award of Excellence
 2014-2021 Evangelical Press Association Award of Merit Winner

Copyright ©2023 Right to the Heart Ministries. All rights reserved.
 Copyrighted material reprinted with permission.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from
 the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973,
 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All
 rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New
 International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States
 Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

contents



FEATURES

- 8 KAREN PORTER
The Cookie Extravaganza
- 10 AMY WILLIAMS
Heart Conversations with Dr. Velma Bagby
- 14 PAM FARREL
What if My Mate Strays ... from God
- 18 JACQUELYN MARUSKA
From Pushover to Powerhouse
- 22 CeCe WINANS
Believing Together for Bigger Things
- 28 EDIE MELSON
The P.O.I.N.T. of Being a Ministry Leader
- 30 STACY SANCHEZ
The Heart of Communion
- 34 RHONDA RHEA
Living Unhaunted
- 36 PATTY MASON
How Do You Know You've Heard From God?

PAGES

- 5 FROM THE PUBLISHER
The Joseph Plan
- 7 FROM THE EDITOR
Everything He Wants Is Me
- 17 CYNTHIA L. SIMMONS
The Big Question
- 21 LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD
Need a Next Level Emotional Breakthrough?
- 26 PENELOPE CARLEVATO
A Family That Eats Together Stays Together
- 33 AWSA MEMBERSHIP
- 39 MEET THE TEAM



LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD
FOUNDER & CEO OF AWSA

Are you a Christian Woman Called to Write & Speak?



Join Us!



FIND OUT IF YOU ARE
ELIGIBLE FOR
MEMBERSHIP @
APPLYAWSA.COM



"One of the best investments I made in my speaking and writing ministry was membership in AWSA.

I connected with fellow Christian women authors and speakers. These sisters have contributed to my books and recommended me for speaking engagements. Most of all, I made lifetime friends who continue to inspire me."

Carol Kent
Founder and Executive Director of
SpeakUpConference.com
Speaker and Author of *Speak Up with Confidence*
1990—AWSA Founding Member



AS FEATURED ON
crosswalk.com



**2014-2022
MERIT AWARD
2023
AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**

-Member's-Only-

AWSA membership benefits include publishing and promotion opportunities in our multi-award-winning *Leading Hearts* magazine and *ARISE Daily Devotionals* as featured on Crosswalk, plus eligibility to enter our Annual Golden Scroll Awards.

ARISEDAILY.COM | LEADINGHEARTS.COM



FROM THE PUBLISHER linda evans shepherd



The Joseph Plan

Have you ever bruised your heart by tripping on a relationship? Maybe your best friend stopped speaking to you, your boss spewed his bad attitude all over your work, or the kids tried to wake you to 'woke,' and because you said, 'no,' in love, you must deal with the fallout.

These things shouldn't happen, not when you have God's Holy Spirit inside of you, right?

Yet, these are the kinds of relationship difficulties that everyone must manage. But our secret power is that we can trust God through it all.

Consider young Joseph, from the Book of Genesis. I've sometimes wondered if he was too naïve to understand his brother's jealousy. Why else did he flaunt his God-dreams that they would one day bow down to him, their little, no-account half-brother?

Joseph got his wake-up call when his brothers threatened to kill him, threw him in a pit, and sold him to slavers.

Even through the resulting hardships, Joseph trusted God. Even when he became a household slave and his mistress falsely accused him of a sex crime, and even when he was thrown into jail with no hope of release.

He trusted God and tried to make the best of each difficulty. He worked hard and befriended those who came into his life, including the Pharaoh's chief butler who also spent a few evenings in Joseph's jail. It was the butler who eventually put in a good word to the Pharaoh on Joseph's behalf, resulting in Joseph interpreting the Pharaoh's dream about a coming famine. This resulted in Joseph becoming second in command to the Pharaoh so he could create a stockpile of

food for the coming days of trouble.

When the day came that Joseph's hungry brothers came to Egypt to buy grain, they did not know that this young ruler they bowed before was their own brother. And Joseph didn't rush to lop off their heads or even greet them with open arms. Instead, he put them to a test to see if they had finally become trustworthy.

But when Ruben, the oldest brother, offered to sacrifice himself to jail to save his father's youngest son from such a fate, Joseph finally revealed his identity. Later, when Joseph spoke of the long-ago betrayal of his brothers, he said, "What the enemy meant for evil, God meant for good, for the saving of many lives."

Joseph trusted God through all his difficult relationships and the result was a miracle that even Joseph-the-dreamer couldn't have imagined.

If Joseph trusted God through all that trauma, maybe we can too. And consider that God used all Joseph's relationship pain to put a humble young man into a place of power in the hour of greatest need.

So, when our best friend won't speak to us, the boss gives us grief, and our kids can't understand us, we can still have the peace that passes understanding, trusting God and allowing Him to position us for such a time as this.

Be encouraged and enjoy this fresh, relational issue of *Leading Hearts*!

Love, *Linda*

LEADING HEARTS PUBLISHER | AWSA, FOUNDER



ARISE *Esther*
EVENINGS

MAKE A DIFFERENCE *for such a time as this!*

OCTOBER 23RD, 2023
7 PM ET | 6 CT | 5 MT | 4PT



Dr. Sharon Norris
Elliott

Hosted by
Dr. Sharon Norris Elliott

✓ **Worship**
with **Sharon Tedford**



Sharon Tedford

✓ **Keynote**

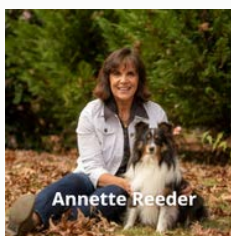
Be Encouraged - God Will Make a Way
with Bestselling Prayer
Author Linda Evans Shepherd



Linda Evans Shepherd

✓ **Two Fabulous Workshop Options**

Annette Reeder: *Stop Struggling and Start Seeing Success; How YouTube Can Help You Clarify and Reach a Larger Audience*



Annette Reeder

Ginny Brant: *12 Little Known Facts About Brain Health*



Ginny Brant

✓ **Small Group Time**

REGISTER NOW AND BRING 2 FRIENDS FOR FREE.

ARISEESTHEREVENING.COM



FROM THE EDITOR amber weigand-buckley



Everything He Wants Is Me

During worship recently, God graciously opened my eyes to glimpse His tender heart

for me. I saw myself as a carefree young child, laughing and playing in Jesus' presence. We splashed in a crystal-clear pond, made mud pies, and picked ripe, sweet fruit off the trees. I took a big bite of a juicy pear, and he smiled as I smushed it back in His mouth. I felt so safe and cherished.

Then animals started gathering around us. A lamb nuzzled up under my arm. Chipmunks scampered over, and a fawn gently took fruit from my palm. Jesus smiled, showing me how much He enjoys lavishing love on all His creation. In these simple moments of connection,

I sensed the whisper of the Father saying, "This is what I want from you—your presence, your companionship. You don't have to strive or perform to earn My love."

In that moment, tears streamed down my face. Even though in everything I was doing, I wanted to show Jesus how much I loved Him, He didn't require it. It was like He wanted me to see the thick wrap of His love that was my constant—the only thing He wanted me to do was to enjoy the gift of His never-changing love for me.

As 1 John 4:19 (NIV) says, "We love because he first loved us." I can't manufacture or earn God's love—it's freely given. My only

response is to receive it and let it soften my heart.

The vision powerfully illustrated Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28 (NIV), "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Like Martha absorbed in her work, I often get preoccupied trying to serve God out of religious obligation (Luke 10:38–42).

But He doesn't want my exhausting striving. Jesus simply wants me. He wants the gift of my presence, affection, and trust.

Intimacy with Jesus must be the center so His compassion can flow through me. I must accept Jesus' invitation to sit together in the Father's lap, fully loved and accepted, to realign my perspective before serving others.

As you read this issue, find your cozy space in the Father's embrace to realign your life, relationships, and purpose with Jesus at the center. Walk daily in the revolutionary gift of His perfect love. ●

Love, —Amber

LEADING HEARTS EDITOR | ART DIRECTOR

Get a free download of project single "Lead Me On" by Michaelah Weaver of The Keepers Co. from Amber and Lisa Burris Burns. Their award-winning book, *Leading Ladies: Discover Your God-Grown Strategy for Success* is available now. Find out more at www.leadingladies.life.

The cookie extravaganza

LH Staff | leadinghearts.com



On a crisp December afternoon, hundreds of friends and family enter a welcoming front door of a home in South Texas.

Each person is given food-safe gloves and a Christmas tray or box along with instructions to choose any cookies they wish from the displays in the next rooms. When they've finished loading up their trays, they will pay for the cookies at a set price per pound. And all the money goes to a school in India.

Inside, the guests are greeted by more than 6,000 cookies of various gourmet varieties beautifully displayed, all handmade by a mother-daughter duo—Karen Porter and Cherry McGregor.

The two bakers have hosted their Cookie Extravaganza for more than 15 years to support various charities, including helping build a fresh-water well in Haiti.

For the past several years, they have sent the proceeds to the Sanctuary Home, a school in India which educates and houses untouchable and unseen children in India. Education catapults these children out of poverty and into a bright future.

Sanctuary Home has been a personal passion for the family for many years and family members regularly travel to the school

providing dental services and other aid.

Many of the children go to college and become doctors, lawyers, and work in various other professions. None of them would have dared to dream of such lofty prospects without the helping hand of the school.

The welcoming hospitality is enhanced by the smell of the home-baked cookies and the beautiful decorations. Each year, the duo chooses a new decorating theme such as gnomes, snow villages, or small Christmas trees. This year, they've invited the local high school a cappella ensemble to sing Christmas carols during the event.

The fundraiser is a labor of love and perhaps a little craziness for Karen and Cherry. Karen says, "I love the fun of doing the baking together and the weeks of planning and preparation. But what I love most is the people who come and fill their trays with the joy that only Christmas cookies can bring. It's so fun to watch them find their favorites and know they are taking home goodies to their family. Many also buy extra trays for their neighbors or friends. It's a joyous day."



The planning and baking start in October when the pair begin mixing dough. They will make two to four recipes each day and freeze the dough—sometimes forming balls or shaping into a log for cutting and sometimes rolling out the dough for Christmas cutouts. Then, they carefully wrap and seal the dough until baking day. Some recipes are old family favorites while others the two have developed through time.

The week before the Extravaganza, they bake, ice, and decorate cookies. Each recipe is stacked on a tray and wrapped for freshness until the party. They label each tray with a clever cookie description.

Giving each recipe a Christmas name is part of the fun. Chocolate-dipped cranberry cookies become Blitzen's Favorite. Lemon snowdrops are named Gnome Buttons. Snicker Bars transform into Lumps of Coal. White Chocolate

Chip cookies become Scrooge's Humbug. And Pumpkin Chocolate Chip is named, "It's a Wonderful Cookie."

Karen and Cherry admit that baking 6,000 cookies is not a task most people could or would take on. "My favorite part is decorating the cookies," says Cherry. "We make sure there are no plain cookies at our event. Even a simple cookie becomes extravagant when half is dipped in chocolate and sprinkled with a delicious topping like nuts, chocolate, or sprinkles."



Karen and Cherry say, "This Christmas, go outside your routine and do something spectacular to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Give your whole-hearted self (even if it seems a little crazy) to a purpose bigger than your small world. And your Christmas will be extravagant."

The cookie-baking duo will release a cookbook with cookie recipes and all the information on how to start your own fundraiser extravaganza on November 15, 2023. In the book, they suggest you get a big team to make the cookies because they know most people wouldn't tackle such a project alone.

For more information on getting your copy of *THE COOKIE EXTRAVAGANZA* or a copy of their Christmas book, *Make Your Heart a Manger*, please go to www.makeyourheartamanger.com. ☺





Heart *Dr Velma Bagby* CONVERSATIONS

with Amy Williams, LH Contributor

Some stories demand to be told, regardless if the storyteller planned to be an author or not. Dr. Velma Bagby didn't see herself as an author in 2012.

After 38 years working as a deputy administrator for the state of California, she was ready to retire, but God had other plans.

"God has blessed me with all this wonderful experience," Dr. Velma said. "I felt Him saying I needed to go bless others, to help other women experience God's best for them."

Her first book, *Your Adam Is Asleep Until God Opens His Eyes*, released in 2018. For her, non-fiction made the most sense. With a lifetime of experience from her career and even more experience from a beautiful 49-year marriage, Velma gladly stepped into the role of a Titus 2 woman.

"It's my responsibility," Velma said. "My heart is for women who are struggling to discover their mate."

Dr. Velma has been able to speak truth into the lives of the young women of the Body of Christ, intervening in their hearts before they give them away to someone who God hasn't called their mate.

"Don't be in a hurry," Dr. Velma said. "When it's the right time, God will make it happen. Until then, be in fellowship with God. Be the person you're supposed to be and work on yourself, until it's time for your mate to come into your life."

Dr. Velma shares with young women the truth about relationships out of Scripture, starting at the very beginning in Genesis. "Adam never declared that he was alone," Dr. Velma said. "God did that. God recognized that Adam needed someone else in his life, and when it was time, God provided exactly the right person Adam needed. Until then, Adam

remained in fellowship with God."

As a Certified Christian dating-relationship coach and a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC), Dr. Velma has coached young women through relationship issues for more than 30 years. She constantly seeks to help women understand their worth, knowing and embracing their value to God so that they can avoid the trauma of a failed relationship because of poor self-worth.

"The modern-day dating practice is only a few hundred years old, and doesn't have commitment in it," she said. "That's why it isn't working."

Modern dating discourages making commitments to each other. Dating apps connect people who are just looking for a fun time, but if you try to find a serious relationship in those environments, you will only waste your time and energy.

"With all the break-ups in an average person's life," Dr. Velma said, "you've gone through so many broken relationships that you won't even recognize the right person when God brings him into your life."

Dr. Velma initiated conversations with her daughters about dating, giving them examples straight out of God's Word to explain relationships, both good and bad. The more she talked to her adult daughters, the more her daughters talked to their friends. And their friends talked to their friends. Those friends told others, until Velma realized a desperate need.

That's how Dr. Velma began the Date4Marriage movement.

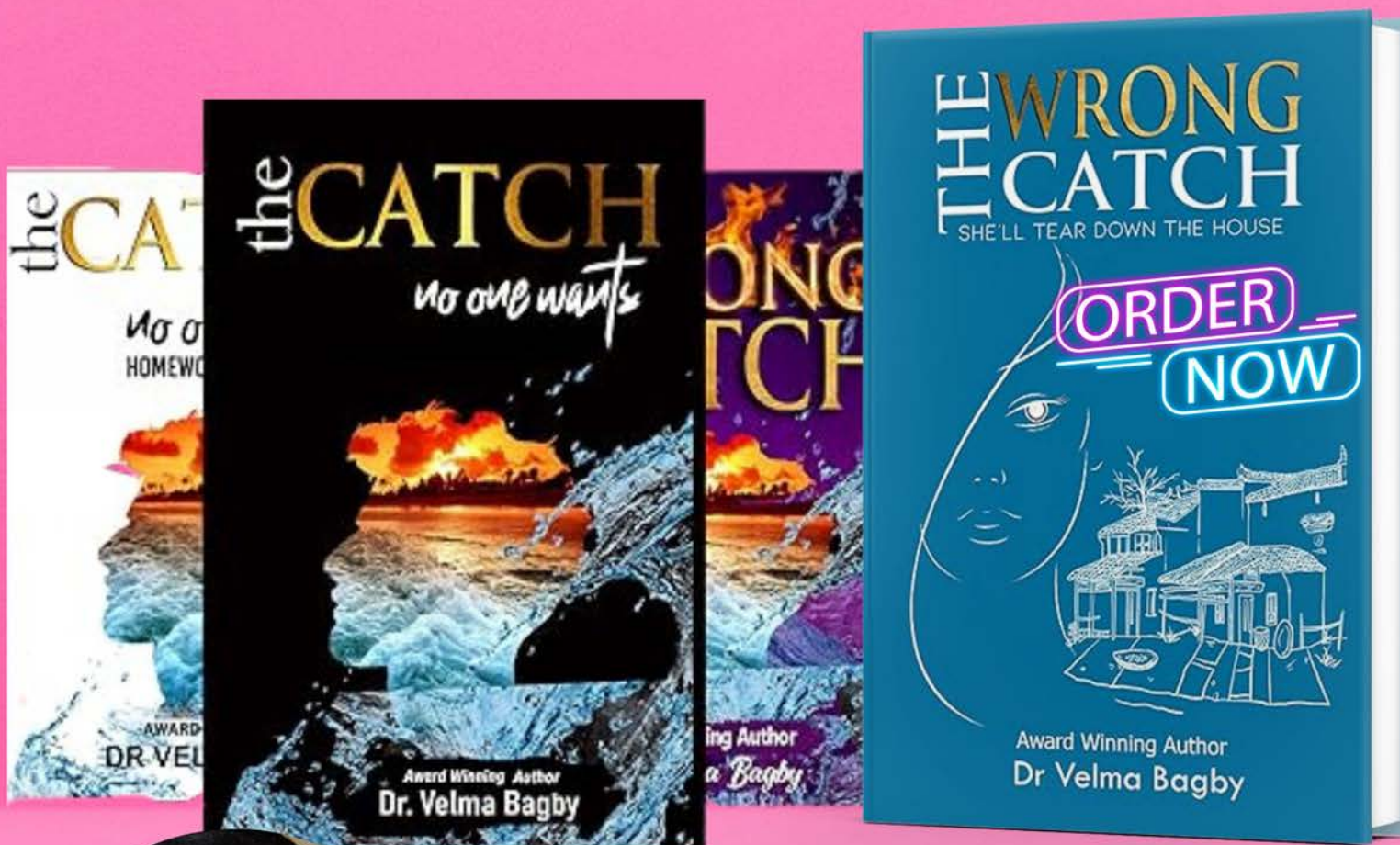
"It changes your approach," she said. "If I'm going into business with someone, I need to ask questions. Are they

continued on p. 13

New Release from Dr. Velma Bagby

BOOK #4 IN THE CATCH SERIES

THE WRONG CATCH



Whether you're single and looking for love, or in a relationship but unsure if it's the right one, this new novel in *The Catch Series* from Relationship Expert Dr. Velma Bagby gives you practical examples from the dating world to help you avoid the pitfalls of *The Wrong Catch*.

DRVELMA.COM



AVAILABLE ON AMAZON



continued from p. 11

who they say they are? Are they lying about their finances? Are they reputable? We are entering into a business contract with each other.”

If those questions matter for business, how much more do they matter for a relationship that is intended to last the rest of our lives?

“We just fell away from doing our due diligence when we meet someone,” she said. “We need to ask the right questions.”

Since 2018, Dr. Velma has released 15 books, and most of them are focused on dating and relationships for single women. Once a person has chosen to be married and that marriage has fallen apart, it is so much more difficult to pick up the broken pieces and try again.

“The place to intervene is before marriage,” Dr. Velma said. “God gives us clues. God has given us the keys to His Kingdom. We have just forgotten how to use them. That’s how I moved into writing this last series about dating and relationships.”

Dr. Velma’s books are all about dating and relationships, but not all of her titles are non-fiction. In 2022, the Lord made it clear to Dr. Velma that it was time to write a fiction story.



Dr. Velma recalled an instance from years previous where she met a woman who was stuck in a toxic, abusive relationship. This woman’s life experience could have been moving in non-fiction, but transforming it into a fiction story could highlight themes and choices about the situation that might resonate with readers who hadn’t gotten into a circumstance like that yet.

“This is a story I needed to tell,” Dr. Velma says. “Not another woman should fall victim to this ever again.”



Deciding to go down the road of writing fiction wasn’t easy. Many experts advise against splitting your author platform, but God made it obvious to Dr. Velma that this was the course He’d called her to walk.

“Jesus told over 50 parables,” Dr. Velma said. “He wanted to tell a story without becoming too preachy, so he used themes they would recognize. Jesus used fish. He provided redemption in the story or a way to change. He told a story, and He’d walk away. It was up to the listener to make up his or her own mind.”

Dr. Velma believes this idea of allowing a reader to make up their own minds is the greatest value of Christian contemporary fiction.

As a genre, it allows an author to reach an audience that is familiar with Scripture, but it also opens the door to reach an audience that isn’t.

And if Jesus used fish in His stories, why couldn’t she?

In 2022, Dr. Velma released *The CATCH No One Wants*, fictional stories about dating and relationships created by a father and shared with his daughter. And, yes, she uses different kinds of fish as metaphors for the different sorts of men to avoid dating.

Dr. Velma recently released the 4th book in her award-winning series *The Catch*, in response to demand and has since expanded to include three books, all stories about how to navigate the complex world of relationships from a biblical perspective.

“Fix your eyes on a fulfilling relationship with Christ before considering marriage,” Dr. Velma said.

“Commit to Christ before you commit to a husband. Become the person God has called you to be before you yoke your life to someone else.” ☺

Learn more about Dr. Velma Bagby, The Catch Series and read more relationship articles at her website www.drvelma.com.

pam farrel | love-wise.com

What if My Mate Strays...

from God?





I have walked alongside
so many wives, over our
four decades of ministry,
where she finds herself
alone, or perhaps alone but
with the kids, while he is drifting,
rebellious, angry at God, or simply has
become disinterested in God. When

these wives reach out for HELP what they
first need is HOPE!

In my bible study, *Discovering Hope in the Psalms*, I define hope as “waiting expectantly for God to show UP and Show OFF for your good and His glory.” An acrostic for HOPE can be:

Hold
On
Pain
Ends

But what do you DO in the waiting? What do you hold on to until the pain ends? Is there anything a wife can do to lessen the pain and make forward progress, at least on her side of the equation, while she waits for God to move in the heart and life of her husband?

These are four key choices a wife can make to preserve her heart and increase the possibilities for God to do some miracle working in your mate's.

Hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with Him there is plentiful redemption. (Psalm 130:7)

Hang on to promises, like this one! While this verse was penned as a command to the nation of Israel, the same God is there for YOU too! If you use the key words from Hebrew, this promise might sound like this: Wait expectantly in Yahweh, the Most holy One. For with Yahweh, there is loving-kindness, goodness, and kindness—from the Divine! With Him is abundance, heaping, lavish, and surpassing redemption.

Sounds hope-filled, right?

So, let's look a little closer at four vital choices you CAN make when you might be feeling there is so little you do have control over in your marriage or family. Walk out these steps of H.O.P.E.:

Hold Fast in Prayer

Prayer is your secret weapon and sacred safe space while living with a spouse untethered from the moorings of faith. We live on a boat, and once the bowlines are loosed, and without the engine running, the boat just drifts, and this can be very

dangerous. The boat can crash against rocks, get stuck on a sandbar, or if caught in a torrential storm, it can sink. Your husband runs the same risks the further he drifts from God. However, prayer is your engine and prayer is a lifeline. My favorite resource for praying for a spouse is *Praying for Your Husband from Head to Toe* by Sharon Jaynes. All marriages will benefit from this resource that gives biblical and practical ways to pray over all areas of a husband's life.

Offer Unconditional Love

You can protect your own heart and the health of your marriage by focusing your time and energies on what IS WORKING in your marriage instead of obsessing on what ISN'T WORKING. If you can stay positive toward your mate and keep extending acts and gifts of love his direction, it helps your heart stay soft and it might also soften your husband's heart too.

When I was a women's ministry director, a woman on my leadership team came to me frustrated by the lack of spiritual growth of her husband. She wanted to leave and was headed toward divorce. I asked her to think of one positive thing about her spouse. All she could think of was, “He's still here”. We brainstormed many creative ways she could affirm him. She would rub his shoulders and say, “It is nice to know some things in life never change” Or she'd catch him in a hug with a “It is so nice to have you around.” She kept this up for months until one day, he walked in, and she was having her morning devotion and he asked what she was reading. She read a verse and explained how it was helping her, and the next Sunday, he met her at the front door to attend church!

Protect Your Faith

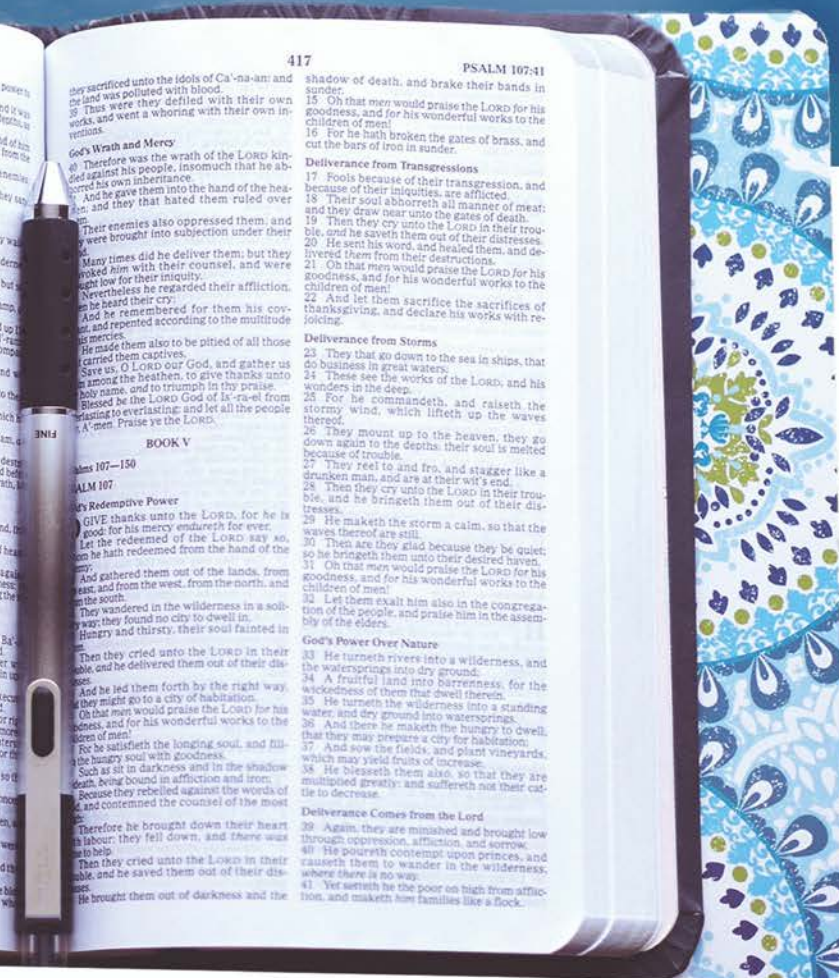
My best advice to wives with a wayward husband (or prodigal child) or any toxic member of her family is, “Don't let his crazy make you crazy” In other words, keep pursuing Christ with a whole heart. It can become very easy to skip church with your mate, avoid a small group bible study because you don't want to go alone, or pause the very good faith building habits like saying family grace, playing Christian music in the car and home, and family devotions. Instead of drifting alongside your man, press into Jesus. Make sure to make time for your own morning and evening devotional time, attend women's retreats, look for small group women's bible studies, perhaps with other women who are also spiritually single.

Embrace Partnerships

Lastly, invest in your “success net.” Look for online groups videos and podcasts that equip you for building a healthy family and a strong marriage. Look for leaders who honestly deal with the unique challenges of the “spiritually single” or wives married to unbelieving mates or spiritually disengaged husbands. And consider booking a regular appointment with a biblically solid Christian counselor so you have a safe space to air your emotions but are given helpful insights and advice to strengthen your own inner core and spiritual life. ☺

SUBSCRIBE
NOW!

"Arise, Shine...
the glory of the LORD
rises upon you."
-Isaiah 60:1 (niv)



Sign Up at ARISEDAILY.COM
to get fresh-brewed inspiration
delivered direct to your inbox.
ARISE DAILY DIRECT e-devos
are designed to bring you the
hope and encouragement of
biblical truth written within
the context of real life.

Arise each morning to words
that will refresh your soul
as you see God reveal pictures
of His love for you.

Find us on

Brought to you by the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association.

AWSA.COM



THE BIG Q

with cynthia L. simmons || clsimmons.com

Q: How can we overcome a judgmental attitude?

Wonderful question. As believers who have tasted God's sweetness, we long for righteousness and abhor sin.

Living in a sinful world hurts our hearts. In the second epistle of Peter, the word says Lot "...was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard." (2 Peter 2:8, ESV) That's strong language. However, our natural reaction can push us further away from the people we need to reach.

I love Francis Schaeffer's imagery—a shocked Pharisee wrapping his robes around himself. That 'holier than thou' attitude creates a negative reaction. So, how can we reign in our hearts to respond with God's grace? Several things have worked for me.

First, I recognize my own sinfulness. If I compare myself with a drug addict or murderer, I look awesome. However, in fairness, I should compare myself to God's holiness. When I do that, I look hideous.

The story of Isaiah's vision resonates with me. When he stood in the presence of the Lord, he cursed himself.

"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5, NAS)

Only the blood of Jesus makes me worthy of approaching God. Without Him, I have the capacity for unimaginable evil.

Second, develop empathy. Our world is imploding

under the result of the curse as well as the effect of sin. Scripture teaches "...the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now." (Romans 8:22, NAS) Plus, sin destroys marriages, families, and friendships.

Combine both of those dynamics, and you get incredible pain. That sinner may have come from a horrible home. Maybe she grew up with constant condemnation and never knew love.

Perhaps she or he fears the future and longs for security or praise from others. Unbelievers cannot rest in the Lord and have no hope for the future. The lost can find temporary peace in drugs or alcohol but those can destroy their health. Pondering these truths makes me compassionate rather than judgmental.

Third, once my heart aches with their need,

I pray. I can't change someone's heart, but the Holy Spirit can point out guilt while giving me opportunities to speak the truth. I love what the apostle Peter said, "...and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." (Ephesians 6:19, ESV)

In summary, we have new natures, and we struggle with the sinfulness we see around us. However, if we will remember our own failures before God, we can remain humble.

Once we realize the heartache unbelievers face, we can lift them up before the throne and request a chance to share hope. Rather than passing judgment, let's give hope. ☺

From Pushover to Powerhouse—

Guarding Your Heart= Healthy Boundaries



I. Finally. Got. Tired. Not any old tired. Not irritated. Not even exhausted. No, I got: “the straw that broke the camel’s back” tired. Tired of making excuses for people treating others poorly.

Tired of people making excuses for people treating me poorly. Tired of me treating myself poorly. Most of my life I’ve made excuses for all this bad behavior—until now.

What changed? I. Got. Angry. Not a sinful anger, but a healthy anger where something inside just said, “no.” It was a rush of clarity.

I wondered ... Am I gullible? Am I too nice? I used that anger and, like David, I got to praying.

I begged God to reveal what I needed to change to make my heart—and resources—safer from those who would take advantage of me.

I asked God to just make me thicker skinned, but instead I heard Him say the word: Discernment.

Discernment. A trait I wasn’t comfortable using because I grew up in the Hispanic culture, where often women are nurturers, givers, and people who sacrifice for anyone. I needed to add wisdom to the gift of my upbringing.

What happened next is more than I could have imagined and everything I needed.

I learned to take a pause. The next time I was asked to



invest my time, give my resources, or donate money, I paused, inhaled, and asked if I could get back to the person. I gave myself space to ask questions and collect information about the request. Was it wise? Was I enabling someone or something? Would this be one in a string of things I'd tie myself to?

I began to listen with godly logic which protected my heart. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to “guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (NIV). This gave me space to clearly evaluate facts. This is easier to do when separated from emotion.

I had to learn to say “no.” This was hard because I'd tied being liked to over committing myself in every way. I went back to God for strength, and ultimately “no” became easier to say. I now measure my decisions with caution and respond honestly with wisdom and grace.

One of the most challenging things I faced was trust. I used to freely trust people and continually ended up wounded. That was not God's best for me. Now, armed with God's discernment, I allow people the opportunity to earn my trust over time. I place a high value on my trust now, and it has made a difference.

As Ephesians 5:6 says, “Let no one deceive you with empty words” (NLT). Incorporating Paul's words helps navigate all relationships while honoring your commitment to yourself.

Having made my small share of partner decisions based on emotion, hope, and love, I look back and wish I would have rooted them all in Christ.

Now I offer my single girlfriends advice: be discerning. The thing you may want the most could be the very thing that lures you away from God.

Six things that will take you from pushover to powerhouse:

1. Filter your feelings with prayer: They are a barometer. Your feelings—anger, fear, confusion—are a guide for your actions, like dashboard warning lights. Instead of acting on them, notice them, let them inform your plan, and then act if needed. Anger can create negative outcomes but can also be a catalyst out of harmful relationships or partnerships. Confusion is a caution flag to slow down in the moment.

Fear can be the red flag warning you to take a big step back and review what's in front of you through the filter of wisdom and prayer.

2. Just say No. No isn't a bad word. I used to beat myself up for saying no when asked for something. I enlist a 24-hour rule: I don't give an answer immediately. I pause and pray. When someone continues to pressure me, then the answer is no. It's a no to pressure and guilt, and a yes to peace and good decisions rooted in discernment and guided by prayer.

3. Shake the shame. Don't blame yourself for anything you've been through or allowed yourself to be part of under the influence of a bully or gaslighter. The past is gone and what's left are lessons. These are gold.

4. Recognize repetitive negative patterns. I recommend starting a journal to document the hurtful behaviors you've endured. Don't tie feelings to them. Let them simply remind you of the things you no longer have time for and help you recognize behaviors that you'll want to stay away from. You'll begin to recognize patterns.

You wouldn't want to leave a friendship because of one or two bad days, but be aware of the difference between a bad day and repeated negative behaviors. Repetition represents a pattern. A negative pattern of behavior without change is something you may want to evaluate and move away from.

5. Get accountability yourself with a small group of prayer warriors. My friend and coach Lori Roeleveld recommended I find a small circle of sisters I trust to cover me in prayer. If you don't have this in your life, please round up a few trusted prayer warriors. You'll thank me as I constantly thank Lori.

6. Journal. I keep a daily journal and began a new, clean notebook to record requests from people, clients, and organizations. Big or small, from money to time, I lay it all before God. At the end of every week I reflect on decisions and am able to see what I can specifically praise God for. This keeps me in a spirit of gratitude and is a great reminder of what to do—and what not to do.

I used to think anger was bad; now I see how God used uncomfortable emotions to wake me up. I had to get a little angry at myself, and that healthy, brief moment of anger pushed me out of a pattern that was taking me down many wrong paths.

As you go forward, keep in mind the road to changing a lifetime of behavior patterns isn't automatic or easy. Old habits die hard and you will go wrong. Give yourself grace and **STICK TO YOUR NEW RULES.**

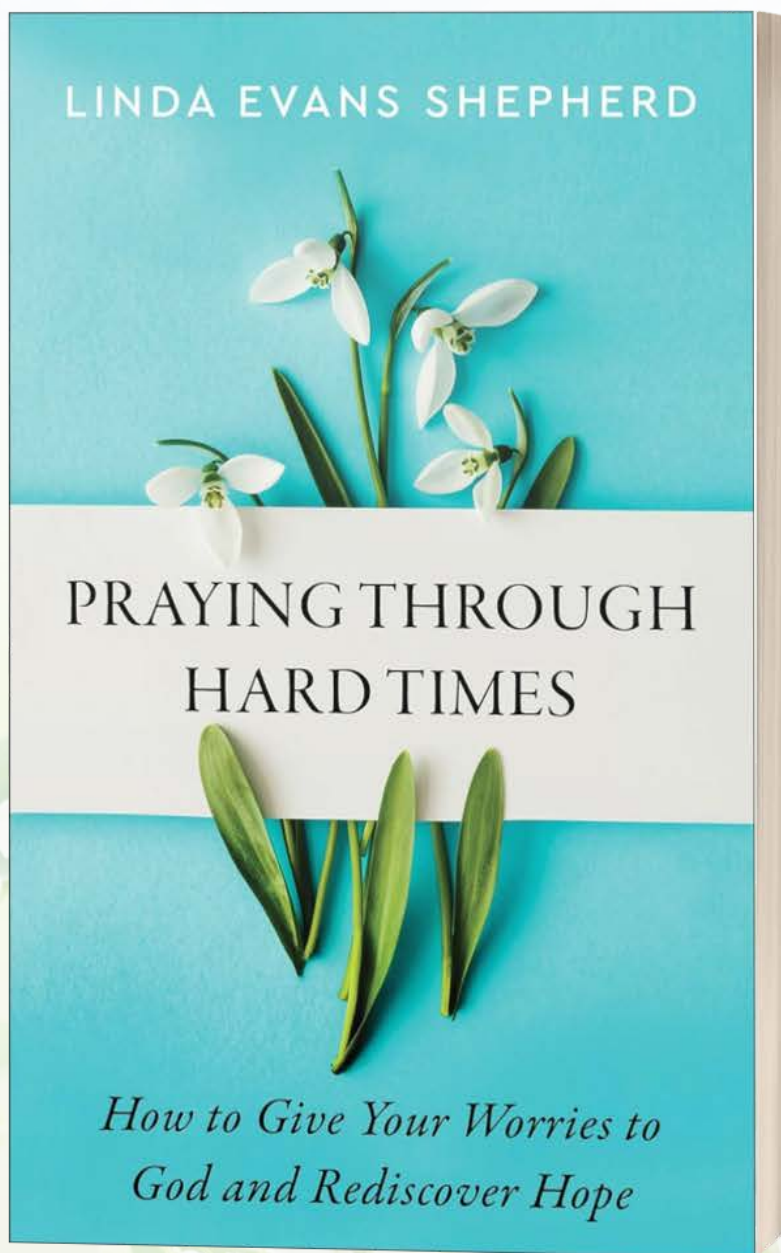
When in doubt, remember: “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33, ESV).

Now, get out there and live your best life! ◉

When crisis strikes, does God truly care?

In the re-release of the award-winning bestseller, *Praying Through Hard Times*, **Linda Evans Shepherd** compassionately shows how to see God amid tragedy, offering practical strategies to survive hurt, release worries through prayer, and rediscover hope. She reveals how tough times can draw you closer to God.

No matter the pain, hope exists. God may not answer prayer as expected, but He answers in transformational ways. Rediscover faith in hardship with *Praying Through Hard Times*.



Available now wherever books are sold.

amazon.com

BAM!
BOOKS-A-MILLION

LifeWay
CHRISTIAN STORES™
Biblical Solutions for Life

TARGET

 **Christianbook.com**
1-800-CHRISTIAN

 **BAKER BOOK HOUSE**



Need a Next Level Emotional Breakthrough?

linda evans shepherd | lindashepherd.com



The broken woman who stood before me said, “But I’ve prayed to forgive, but my feelings of bitterness always return.”

This woman had just heard me tell my audience to lay those who wronged them at the foot of the cross and to ask God to give them the strength to let go of their bitterness.

The woman and I had just observed a glorious moment of freedom within the audience, yet she felt left out. I told her, “This sort of pain happens when we have trauma left over from our ordeals. Let’s ask the Lord to set you free from trauma and to replace it with God’s spirit of peace.”

After her tearful prayer, I encouraged her to continue to pray this prayer as often as she needed because emotional healing is often a process, especially when you are dealing with bitterness, unforgiveness, grief, anger, abandonment, and loss.

I understand. A couple of years ago I faced this same struggle.

Someone went to my board and made a false accusation against me, perhaps hoping the board would remove me from the organization I’d founded. My wonderful board saw through the woman’s false pretense and backed me up.

But during the long process of being investigated and questioned, I felt shame, embarrassed, threatened, and angry. As much as I tried to let go, to forgive, to make sure that I did not harbor bitterness, I was still dealing with the pain of betrayal and the shock of possibly losing my ministry.

Even after I called the woman and forgave her, after the ordeal was behind me, I still felt traumatized.

It wasn’t until I led a small band of authors to a retreat at Asbury Seminary the fall before the Asbury revival broke out that I found my healing.

Before we left for Asbury, I’d studied the Asbury revivals of the past, when young people stood on the Asbury stage and publicly admitted their sins and struggles. So we authors also took to the Asbury stage to “confess.”

I held my breath and listened as these godly women confessed their struggles with the shame over their children’s choices and the difficulty of dealing with heartache. And then it was my turn.

I took a chance and confessed the shame I felt over the woman’s false accusation, and to my amazement my shame and trauma vanished.

As I’ve contemplated why, the Lord showed me that when I confessed my shame to my peers, I was in fact yielding my feelings of shame to the Lord, and He set me free.

Do you have painful feelings you need to yield to the Lord?

Let’s pray: *Dear Lord, through Your strength, I forgive and receive Your peace. Through Your love, I yield my shame and painful feelings to You. In Jesus’s name.*

Pray this prayer as often as needed, for the yielding of yourself will yield healing and the peace that passes understanding. ☉



Watch CeCe's
"Believe For It" video.

jennifer taylor | profile contributor

CeCe Winans

BELIEVING TOGETHER
FOR GOD'S BIGGER PROMISES

With 15 Grammy Awards, 29 Dove Awards, and 15 Stellar Awards, the legendary CeCe Winans is the best-selling and most-awarded female gospel artist of all time, and now you can also add the honors of the Aretha Franklin Icon Award and Rich Mullins Impact Award to her amazing list of accolades.

“Oh my goodness, it’s very humbling. It’s very exciting whenever you’re encouraged by your peers or by an organization for what you’ve done with your music. To me, it’s always surprising, and it’s always humbling,” CeCe said. “I remember when I got my first Grammy that I ever received. I was just like, ‘Oh, my God! For real? You’re doing this?’”

What a lot of people do not realize is there’s a lot of great music that never gets recognized. I mean a lot of good stuff. As a musician I know that. So for me knowing that, it always puts me up in a humble position and posture of ‘God, I thank You.’ And I pray to the Lord that the platform that He gives me I will use for His glory.”

She laughed as she noted it’s kind of a balancing act now with all the awards. “I have different cases for them, and I have so many awards now. I look down at them and I’m like, ‘Lord, I thank You, but where am I going to put them? What am I going to do?’ she said. “So I walk around and I say,

‘Wow, He’s allowed this to happen.’ And I’m grateful. I’m really, really grateful.”

Gratitude is also how CeCe summed up her widely successful Believe For It Tour. “It was awesome to see the responses of the people. Not just coming, but coming to participate and coming to worship,” she said. “I just felt a unity in the body of Christ. Unity across the whole tour. I just saw the power of God be evident in each spot, and for that I’m even more grateful. I realized that if He doesn’t show up, nothing eternal happens. And it wasn’t the performance; it was His presence there.”

After hearing some of the testimonies from the tour, CeCe realized it was more than just something on her calendar; it was something that God ordained. “It just kept going higher and higher. And I believe for it to finish very strongly with the wonderful Dulaney and Jenn Johnson coming with me. I’ve been so blessed by both of their ministries, and we’re better together.”

One of the amazing testimonies she received was from a woman attending the concert in CeCe’s home city of Nashville. CeCe asked attendees to believe God for the miracles they’re praying. “This woman was praying for her niece who had lung cancer. One of her lungs had collapsed. The doctors were at the point of nothing that they could do. And she believed. She dared to believe. She said she was kind of scared to believe but she did. She had lost her husband a few years back, so she just didn’t feel like her belief really counted, but she released her faith,” CeCe said.

“Not long after, her niece was ministering before the people about how her whole life was saved and turned around. So I shared it with the team, and they said, ‘Oh my God, thank You! This is why we do what we do.’ So the stories have been a testament to God’s miraculous powers.”

But don’t think for a second that the 59-year-old icon is even close to retirement. With her Generations podcast and conference she wants all generations to ignite a fire and keep the fire going.

“We’re all fathers and mothers of nations and it’s our privilege, it’s our opportunity. But it’s also our responsibility to make sure we’re pouring the faith of God into somebody.

That we’re sharing the faith of God with people who are coming after us,” she said. “I am only here because of those who cared enough to lay down their lives for me. And it’s my turn. I’ve got to lay down my life for somebody else.”

She said her music, the *Believe For It* book, the Generations Live Conference (May 10–11) and podcast—all of it is really to say to everybody that we gotta wake up, we gotta get up. “First of all, in the Kingdom of God, we never retire. We never retire from the Kingdom of God.

No matter who you are, there’s so much value in who you are,” CeCe said.

“Some people feel like they hit a certain age, and there’s nothing else they can give. But no. Our culture is totally backward when it comes to that. The older we get, according to Scripture, the more valuable we become.”

continued on p. 25

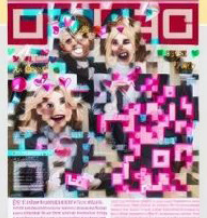
EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN TO ARISE

LEADINGHEARTS.COM
LEADINGHEARTS 


Send this issue
TO A FRIEND



**NOW AVAILABLE
IN PRINT FOR U.S.
OR OVERSEAS
DELIVERY!**



ORDER NOW AT LEADINGHEARTS.COM

powered by
 **peecho**

continued from p. 23

She wants everybody to understand that you need to be pouring into somebody. She wants the young and elderly people both to be honored and realize that we all have something to learn from each other. “It is such a blessing for us and such a blessing for them,” CeCe said.

“My mom is 87 now, and as long as I have her I want to get wisdom from her. And then I need my daughter. Who



understands technology like these young people? Nobody! We need their understanding of technology, their energy, their perspective.

We as an older generation have to learn to listen to the younger generation, and the younger generation has to listen to us. Because when we work together and worship in together there’s nothing more powerful.”

CeCe noted this is why the enemy loves to break up families, churches, and communities. He understands that there’s power in unity in every generation. But our God is the God of every generation.

“He’s the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He worked with the generations together. That’s what we want God to do through the Generations Live conference and the podcast and everything that we do. I feel like it’s spiritual, but very natural as well,” she said.

“At the age of 59, I’m young enough to still connect with the young, but I’m old enough to have some wisdom behind me. It’s urgent, because we all have this window where we live. I don’t know if my day could be tomorrow. I don’t know when I will leave

here. The bottom line is while I’m here, while I have this window, I want to use it to prepare who I’m going to pass the baton to,” she said. “And those prayers never end.

I look at my life and I think of my grandmother who’s gone on, my grandfather, and my father who has gone on, I know God is still answering those prayers. They may see them from Heaven, but God is faithful and He will still answer those prayers.

That’s what *Generations Live* is all about.

And the music hasn’t stopped for CeCe either. Her latest single, her remake of “Holy Forever” released on October 6, is the first single on her new live album. “I heard Chris Tomlin sing this song at the Dove Awards when he first performed it. I could have laid down on the floor and worshiped for the rest of the night. It’s one of the most powerful songs that we’ve heard.

The whole project is coming out in 2024; so we are doing another live record, but man, that song is just amazing,” she said. CeCe added that in some ways, the album is a continuation of *Believe For It*, another powerful live recording. “It’s a worship record where we wrote a few songs and did a lot of remakes. It’s another record that will gather people and bring people into the throne room to really focus on praising God according to His greatness,” she said.

“First of all, *Believe For* was recorded live but it was during the pandemic. So we didn’t have many people. I think we may have had 50 people. This time, hearing the live audience sing—Oh my goodness! With the worship in one accord—it is next level powerful.” ●





A Family that Eats Together Stays Together

penelope carlevato | penelopocarlevato.com



Family mealtimes appear to be something of the

past. Sitting down together as a family doesn't happen in many families. In today's wild world, this is something that needs to be fought for and reignited.

Every child, teenager, or young adult needs connection. We need one another, and especially family members need each other.

How did this once everyday event disappear? What happened to the Sunday dinners at Grandma's house? It is a spiritual problem. What better family function to ruin than destroying family support and love? It started when we all got too busy, including me.

I look back to when our kids were in grade school and middle school and remember how crazy our evenings were. Three kids in sports, running everyone to practice, trying to get homework finished, and dinner from a fast-food restaurant. It wasn't something I had planned, but I needed some help! However, things escalated. I felt like time was being snatched right out of my hand.

I was a young Christian mom, distraught by what was happening. One morning, I sat down and cried to God, "How is this happening in our family, and what can I do?" I want to say God magically answered my prayer, and dinner time as a family reappeared. After much prayer and reading God's word, I knew, with God's help, I could stop the merry-go-round and prioritize planning for family meals.

Did God care that we were becoming a detached family and ate meals on the run? Had I over committed myself and my children?

Who was in charge of the time in our home? If it was me, I had indeed messed it up. I realized that my kids were over-committed; one of our sons was in two sports, our daughter was playing sports and involved in music, and our oldest son was in double sports and extracurricular school activities. I was also too busy with school parent-teacher association, bible study, part-time job, etc. My husband had to choose which game to go to or which practice to attend.

As I was reading my bible one morning during this crazy time in our lives, I read Matthewes 11:28-29,

"Come unto me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Boy, did I need some rest? I committed the rest of my morning to praying and researching busyness, over-committing, and the importance of family mealtimes.

The studies and statistics I found were shocking but very supportive of families eating together. While writing this article, I revisited some places I had researched earlier. Family mealtimes are now even more critical.

Family mealtimes offer many benefits for the whole family. It promotes family cohesion and provides many valuable tools for healthier living, physical and emotional. It doesn't matter in what part of the world you live or if you are in a low-income or high-income family; the barriers are the same.

According to a Harvard Graduate School of Education study, regular family dinners are associated with lower rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, eating disorders, tobacco use, teen pregnancy, and contribute to higher resilience and self-esteem.

We are too busy. Mom is too tired to cook after a busy day at work or other obligations, the family can't agree on food

choices, or priorities conflict for family time.

A few years ago, I wrote a book called *Manners Matter* (which they do,) but how much more does food matter or the experience of dining together?

After reading all the statistics about why eating together matters, I know it's the communion of being together, the pure joy of hearing about one another's day, whether good or bad or knowing someone cares that is essential for healthy families.

We tend to think this meal must be dinner, but it may be breakfast, lunch, or brunch. We have 21 opportunities a week. I encourage you to remember that having a meal as a family is vital in many areas. Here are ten reasons that will enable you to get the family together.

Benefits of family mealtimes:

1. Promotes good eating habits and food choices and less weight-control issues in the future.
2. Builds self-esteem, and it's an opportunity to let your children know they are valued.
3. Prevents Mental Health disorders, especially substance abuse, sexual activity, and suicidal thoughts.
4. Promotes good communication skills such as listening and taking turns talking.
5. Builds better relationships in families.
6. Improves learning, literacy, and academic performance.
7. Establishes traditions – such as birthdays or cultural holidays.
8. Helps save money.
9. Learn manners to last a lifetime.
10. More resilience to bullying and cyberbullying.

Sometimes, we need a nudge to get us back on track. This is a reminder that families are the foundational institution on earth, and the enemy is working overtime to keep us apart. Consider the following tips to change your present routines from eating on the run to a time that is beneficial for all your family members.

Tips for making family meals happen:

1. Start small — it may be just one meal a week, and it doesn't have to be dinner!
2. Plan a specific date and pray for success.
3. Make it a high priority.
4. Establish mealtime rules: manners, etiquette, kindness, no television or electronic devices.
5. Make a meal plan with input from family members (favorites).
6. Make easy-to-fix meals your family enjoys, or dust off



your crock pot.

7. Set a pretty table and say grace before mealtime.
8. Involve all family – delegate a specific chore to help -cooking, setting the table, clearing up.
9. Let everyone know the time frame.

Cowboy Casserole

This quick and easy meal is kid friendly and continues to be enjoyed by both adults and children. This tasty dish will bring out the cowboy or cowgirl in anyone! Prep time is 20 minutes and only takes 30 minutes to bake.

Ingredients

- 1 lb of ground beef
- 1 lg can pork and beans (28 oz)
- ¼ cup barbecue sauces
- 2-Tablespoons brown sugar
- Salt to taste
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 can jumbo biscuits
- 1 cup cheddar cheese – shredded

Directions:

Brown the beef and onions and place in a greased casserole dish.

Add the can of pork and beans, barbecue sauce, and brown sugar and mix together.

Cut the biscuits in half and place the cut side down on top of the meat mixture around the edge of the dish.

Sprinkle the cheese on top of the biscuits

Bake for 30 minutes @ 375°F

Enjoy with a green salad. ☺



THE P.O.I.N.T OF BEING A ministry leader



Many of us came to the world of ministry in a roundabout way. A lot of us don't have academic degrees that qualify us. Because of that, we often struggle with insecurity.

We strive for validation through service, speaking and publication. But no matter how many awards we win, things we accomplish, followers we have, the only validation that lasts is confidence. And confidence is a decision, not a designation.

Who we are, knowing what we were called to do or even where we are on the journey. But it always takes a great dollop of faith to make it stick.

And some days it sticks better than others.

So here is my acronym for getting to the point of ministry confidence, which is foundational to everyone who serves.

P is for persistence, permission, and patience. Being a ministry leader is a journey, not a destination, so it takes persistence to stay the course. Beyond that, it's not a path that ends in perfection. To be confident in ourselves means we have to give ourselves permission to try things and fail. Failure is an option and frequently holds the key to learning the best secrets. Finally, we must have patience. Nothing about being a serious writer comes overnight.

O is for optimism, organic, and obstacles.

The ministry journey isn't easy, and that's especially true if we're only looking for the worst in ourselves and everything around us. We have to develop a glass-half-full-mentality to survive. Organic is the best kind of growth for a Christian leader. We all progress at our own speed. Comparison is the quickest way to discouragement. Finally obstacles—there are always bumps in the ministry road, no matter how far along we are. Obstacles are challenges to be met, hardships to be conquered, and barriers to get around. They are NOT excuses to stop.

I is for insecurity, intuition, and inconceivable. One thing to note however, make sure the hurdle isn't there because God wants to change your path. Some hurdles are there for purposes other than going over them!

N is for noise, never, and nevertheless. Noise is the chaos of life threatening to drown out the words and service clamoring to escape our souls. We must fight against the siren call of busyness and be about the work of ministry. Never is the time when we quit. We never give up the pen. The only way to fail as a leader is to quit, so never is the driving beat deep within our souls. Nevertheless is how we keep moving forward. Certain things happen, but nevertheless we keep serving.

T is for toiling, testing, and THE call. Toiling is what we do. It's more than just work, it's the driving force that keeps us serving through the night and through the chaos of life. Testing is what happens again and again as we prove to ourselves we can persevere. Finally THE call is why I do what I do. I felt God whisper that I was called to a writing ministry. I feel His joy as exercise the gift He's given me. And one day I pray to receive the ultimate affirmation when I stand before Him. "Well done good and faithful servant."

These are the points that make up the lines that create the service we share with the world.☺

Into-Me-See—
RECONNECTING WITH
THE HEART OF .
Communion



stacy sanchez | stacysanchez.com

Would you like to have a more intimate connection with Jesus?

We can have a deeper relationship than we ever thought possible by learning about the Hebraic meaning behind communion.

There's much more to what Jesus did on that last Passover night than we understand. Because we are not first-century Jewish believers, we have missed the Hebraic nuance and symbolism Christ used as He shared what we today call communion with His followers.

From no fault of our own, we do not understand the richness of the communion meal. It's been lost in translation. Communion is more intimate than drinking juice, eating bread, and remembering His crucifixion. It is an intimate act we engage in with our Savior. It is an invitation from the One our heart loves to be in a covenantal union with Him for eternity.

Intimacy starts with prayer

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei peri hagafen. (Blessed are You our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.)

Jesus prayed this prayer over the cup of wine before offering it to His disciples. Unless we speak Hebrew, we miss the intimacy of this prayer.

The word "Atah" means you, but so does the Vav at the end of the verb, making "Atah" (you-you). The doubled you in Hebrew makes "Atah" personal, and a word for coming together and drawing close to someone. When addressing God with the word "Atah" in the prayer, Jesus, and those who recite it, are expressing a deep, intimate relationship with God.*

Jesus understands the importance of intimacy—true intimacy. He has it with His Father and hopes for it with us as well. Prayer is the heart of communion.

Into-me-see

I've heard the word intimacy explained like this: into-me-see. Is there anything more intimate than being fully loved by the One who created us and knows everything—even the things we don't say aloud and don't dare post on social media?

Do this in remembrance

The last act a person does before dying is usually the most important.

Jesus's last act was to institute communion with His followers. "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Why was communion important? One reason is that communion reminds us that we are one in Him.

"Come union with me."

The Heavenly Father desires to be one with you in a bond which cannot be shared with another human.

When speaking on the topic of communion with groups, I like to give them a communion cup of juice and an eye dropper with water. The juice represents Jesus's blood that was poured out for us. The water, our lives. I ask them to release one drop of water into the cup.

What happens?

The water disappears into the juice. It has been completely enveloped until all that is noticeable is juice. The juice and water are now one.

Yes, Lord, let it be for me.

In taking communion, Jesus shows us what our relationship with Him can be. As Bernard of Clairvaux explained, "In a matter of speaking, we should lose ourselves as if we did not exist, utterly unconscious of ourselves and emptied of ourselves."

Just as the drop of water mixed with juice empties itself and seems to lose its identity, we, too, melt away and are transformed to look like the person of Jesus.

Paul explained it this way in Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

And Acts 17:28—"For in him we live and move and have our being..."

In Him we live and move and have our being.

The intimacy of communion will happen when we no longer think about ourselves or our needs. It is when we lose ourselves in the rapture of His love that our soul tends to God fully.

We only see the juice. The water cannot be taken from it.

No matter how hard we try to remove the water from the juice, they will always remain one. Jesus taught His followers, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:28–30).

Communion is a reminder of the intimacy we are meant to have with Jesus.

Sadly, we have lost the art of community. We long to be seen, accepted, and loved. We look for intimacy anywhere possible. Our fractured society makes intimacy with God difficult to imagine. However, it is within God's power to give us such an experience. It is not because of our efforts, but our surrender. Only by losing ourselves can we be transformed into one with the Father.

As Christians, we have something the world cannot offer people: intimate communion with the One who created us all.☉



**Are you a Christian Woman
Called to Write & Speak?**

*Join
Us!*



FIND OUT MORE @ [APPLYAWSA.COM](https://www.applyawsa.com)



awsa memberships

The Advanced Writers & Speakers Association (AWSA) has two levels of membership.s specifically designed for Christian Women Communicators.



AWSA PROTÉGÉ —

For women who feel called to communicate.

Annual Membership includes:

- Opportunity to attend live conferences and network with published authors. (\$1000 value)
- Invitation to join Protégé Power Call — lively group coaching with experts. (\$300 value)
- AWSA Connect, virtual, quarterly mini-conferences with small group network time. (\$500 value)
- Invitation to submit to AWSA's Leading Hearts magazine and daily e-devotionals. ((\$100 value)
- Access to Certified Writing Coaches. (\$100 value)
- News and happenings, plus invitations to ministry/career changing courses. (\$500 value)
- Fast Acting Bonus: "How to Get More Speaking Engagements" course. (\$500 value)
- Fast Acting Bonus: Writing and Speaking Guides by Kathy Collard Miller. (\$200 value)

Annual package worth: \$3200;

*Yours: \$47.00 per year.**

AWSA PROFESSIONAL —

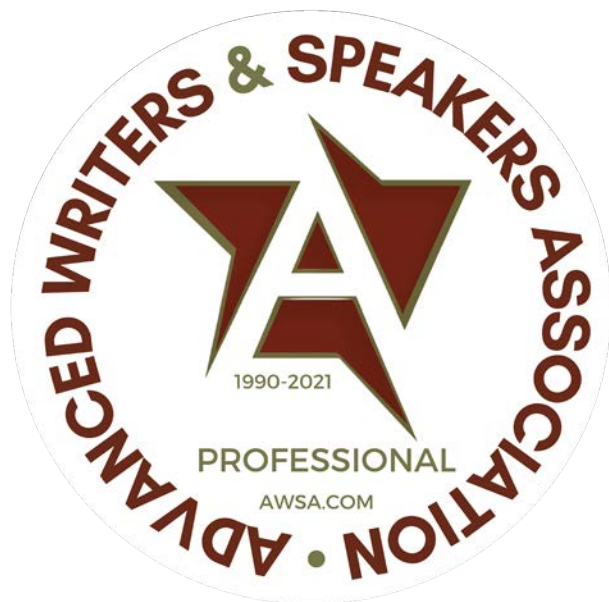
For women who are professional writers, speakers, or communicators.

Annual Membership includes:

- An online networking and resource loop. (\$1000 value)
- Online prayer loop. (Priceless)
- Opportunity to attend live conferences and network with editors and published authors. (\$1000 value)
- Opportunity to become an AWSA Certified Coach. (\$100 value)
- Opportunity to become a P.O.W.E.R. Certified Speaker. (\$100 value)
- News and happenings, plus invitations to ministry/career changing courses. (\$500 value.)
- AWSA Connect, virtual, quarterly mini-conferences with small group network time. (\$500 value)
- Invitation to submit to AWSA's Leading Hearts magazine and Arise Daily e-devotionals. (\$100 value)
- Fast Acting Bonus: "How to Get More Speaking Engagements" course. (\$500 value)
- Fast Acting Bonus: Writing and Speaking Guides by Kathy Collard Miller. (\$200 value)
- Exclusive access to Golden Scroll Awards Contest. (Priceless)

Annual package worth: \$4000;

*Yours: \$47.00 per year.**



Act fast because of pending membership package increases!*

Go to applyawsa.com.



Living Unhaunted



Have you ever opened your microwave to reheat a cup of coffee, only to find you really don't want to put it in there?

It's like the ghosts of dinners past haunt that little space from all sides. And don't even get me started on the spaghetti sauce stalactites hanging from the top. At least I

hope it's spaghetti sauce. Because otherwise, what I found inside my microwave a few days ago was a tiny little murder scene. A murder scene is even worse than a haunting. Also guess who didn't put her coffee in there.

I drink lots of coffee with lots in it. Coffee with too much sweetener and even more creamer is perfect for me. People, I rarely turn down an overdone cuppa. But I don't regret refusing the murder coffee. Not even a little.

Coffee with spaghetti sauce drippings holds no appeal for me either.

When you find this kind of scene in your microwave oven, who ya gonna call? A housecleaning service? CSI? Best Buy? Like, just give up and buy a new microwave?

I hate to admit it, but sometimes I can be more like that microwave than I want anyone to know. Anytime I'm wondering why life doesn't taste as sweet, I really have to look at what I might be hanging onto, stalactite-style. Hanging onto self-centeredness, bitterness, laziness, or any of those kinds of things will always haunt a spirit and kill all the deliciousness of life.

First Peter 2:1-2 gives us a big, ugly list and then tells us making God's Word a central part of our lives can help us get rid of everything ugly that might be hanging around in there.

"So be done with every trace of wickedness (depravity, malignity) and all deceit and insincerity (pretense, hypocrisy) and grudges (envy, jealousy) and slander and evil speaking of every kind. Like newborn babies you should crave (thirst for, earnestly desire) the pure (unadulterated) spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured and grow unto (completed) salvation" (AMPC).

Before I can grab onto what the Lord wants me to do, and before I can experience the satisfaction and joy that comes with fruitfulness, I have to let go of sin and selfishness and hang on tight to the instruction of His Word.

God's Word is life building, fruit building, faith building.

Paul reminds us to stay rooted in our faith in Colossians 1:21-23: "You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things. But his Son became a human and died. So God made peace with you, and now he lets you stand in his presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent. But you must stay deeply rooted and firm in your faith" (CEV).

Nothing inspires getting rid of sin and growing in Christ more than recounting our salvation by reading His Word. It inspires a faith that's deeply rooted. Firm and strong. Altogether undaunted. And evermore unhaunted. ●

patty mason | pattymason.com

How Do You Know You're Hearing from God?





“How do you know you are hearing from God?” The question permeated the room as one hundred pairs of eyes stared at me, waiting for an answer.

You just know, was the thought that came to mind. But I knew that kind of vague response would not do.

How do I know I’m hearing from God? The question begged an answer I wasn’t sure I could describe. After all, how do I explain what I experience when I receive revelation and know in the core of my being it’s God?

Perhaps you feel the same way and question whether you are hearing God. And if you are hearing, how can you know it’s His voice and not your own?

Whether we’re new to our Christian faith or we’ve been walking with God for years, this question seems to pierce the heart of every believer: How do I discern the voice of God?

There is no formula for hearing God’s voice or knowing if it’s God speaking. Hearing and discerning God’s voice comes by practicing His presence and tuning your ear to His heart.

God’s voice may not always be obvious, and He doesn’t always use words. But when He speaks, He reveals His heart, ways, thoughts, character, and plans.

There are many ways we can know we are hearing from God, so we need to be open and stay alert to whatever way God decides to communicate. We can know God is speaking when His Spirit makes His presence known or when an answer to a question pops into our mind with a solution to a problem we couldn’t fix. Or when revelation pierces our heart, or we are moved to take action. But here are what I would say are the three most common ways to know we are hearing from God.

1. Peace Rules in Your Heart

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace” (John 16:33).

When God speaks to our hearts, He gives us a deep sense of internal peace to confirm the message is from Him. Jesus

said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

In this life, we will have trouble, but if peace is ruling in our hearts, conquering all fear, worry, and anxiety about a situation, we can know we are hearing from God.

2. God’s Word Becomes a Neon Highlighter

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

I get excited about God’s Word. I get even more excited when His Word leaps off the page. You know the moment when Scripture suddenly turns to neon, lifts off the page, and strangles you. Then, as you go throughout your day, that same Scripture seems to follow you as it pops up in totally unrelated places.

God is relational. If you ask, expect Him to answer. And if His Word leaps off the page, you know you are hearing from God.

3. When God Repeats Himself

“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have” (2 Peter 1:12).

My first discipleship teacher would say, “When you hear the Lord repeating himself, stand up and take notice because He is trying to tell you something.”

Is there a recurring theme in your life or in your alone time with God? If so, pay attention. He is trying to tell you something.

When God wanted to give an important message to Pharaoh, God sent him the same dream twice (Genesis 41:32). When God wanted to speak to Samuel, He woke him up three times (1 Samuel 3). When Jesus wanted to encourage Peter and tell him about his calling, Jesus asked Peter the same question three times (John 21:15–17). If you hear the Lord repeating himself, don’t take His repetition as a rebuke. Instead, take it as a sign of His great care for you.

How can we know we are hearing from God? It doesn’t have to be a mystery. There are many ways we can know God is speaking. God’s voice surrounds us, communicating to our spirit the longings of His heart, filling us with satisfaction, and revealing His life and love. There is no formula we need to follow. To hear, we only need to tune our hearts inward to His Spirit, be still, and listen. ☺



Speaking Joyfully



Joy Dunlap
WRITER | SPEAKER

- Experienced Communicator - broadcast, print and podium
- Award-winning Blogger - Speaking Joyfully
- Certified P.O.W.E.R. Speaker - Advanced Writers and Speakers Association (AWSA)
- Worked as VP, Radio Operations - National Association of Broadcasters (NAB)

WHAT'S BEING SAID...

Joy Dunlap's "Speaking Joyfully" messages always encourage and uplift, bringing hope and truth in each one. She takes everyday things we often overlook or count as "that's just the way it is" and turns them into opportunities for her readers to experience more fulfilled lives.

Practical, thoughtful, and always applicable, Joy has a remarkable way of bringing biblical truth to light by sharing the observations she makes in daily life.

I marvel at how (Joy) has taken personal experiences and turned them into teaching moments...and, most importantly kept it interesting and funny, albeit at (her) own expense in some cases.

("Speaking Joyfully") is thoughtful and fun, and always a reminder of our Loving God and His presence in both the simple and the miraculous.



speakingjoyfully.com
joydunlap.com

love one another;

meet the team



meet the publisher

LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD @LINDASHEPHERD is publisher of *Leading Hearts* magazine. She is also a best-selling author, an in-demand speaker, and president of Right to the Heart ministries. She is founder of the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association (AWSA). She lives in Colorado with husband, Paul, and son, Jimmy. Subscribe to her "Prayer Investigator" show on YouTube and visit her at www.lindashepherd.com as well as gottoprayer.com.

meet the editor

AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY @BAREFACEDGIRL is managing editor and art director for *Leading Hearts* magazine and brand manager for AWSA. She is a writer, speaker, book cover designer and multi-award-winning editor, having spent 26 years in the magazine industry. Amber is owner of #barefacedcreative, providing branding support for authors, speakers, businesses and missionaries. She and her Brit-native husband, Philip, live in Missouri with two of their daughters: Imogen and Penelope. Their oldest, Saffron, is a student at Missouri State. Amber's new award-winning book, *Leading Ladies: Discover Your God-Grown Strategy for Success* (Bold Vision Books), co-authored with Lisa Burris Burns features the stories of over 30 world-changing women. The duo co-host of Coffee Chat with Amber & Lisa: Real Life. Real Influence. No Makeup Required which is available on all podcast networks. Find out more at www.leadingladies.life.



contributors

PENELOPE CARLEVATO is the author of *The Art of Afternoon Tea: From the Era of Downton Abbey and the Titanic* as well as *Tea on the Titanic, First Class Etiquette, and her latest, The Tea Lover's Journal*. www.penelopecarlevato.com

PAM FARREL is an international speaker, and author of 59 books including her newest, *Discovering Good News In John: A Creative Bible Study*. Pam and her husband, Bill, are co-directors of Love-Wise, a ministry to enrich, educate, and encourage people's most vital relationships. When not traveling for speaking, the Farrels enjoy kayaking, paddle boarding, walking the beach, and hosting guests on their floating home on the ocean. www.love-wise.com

KAREN PORTER is an international speaker, the author of six books, and a successful business woman. She is president of Advanced Writers and Speakers Association, serves on several boards, and coaches aspiring writers and speakers. She and her husband, George, own Bold Vision Books, a Christian publishing company. www.karenporter.com

PATTY MASON is the founder of Liberty in Christ Ministries and has encouraged women worldwide through her books, live events, and media appearances, including American Family Radio, Moody Radio, and the 700 Club. She lives in Nashville with her husband. They have three children and four grandchildren. www.libertyinchristministries.com

EDIE MELSON is an author, blogger and speaker who loves to empower those who are struggling to find the God-given strength they need to triumph through challenging circumstances. www.ediemelson.com

ediemelson.com

JACQUELYN MARUSKA has over 30 years' experience in brand development and public relations, guiding and coaching clients to advance their careers and dreams. Marushka Media is the first Latina-owned PR and Branding agency in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1995 she became the youngest vice president of Public Relations and Communications in the Sony Music Entertainment system, responsible for 40+ recording artists across five record labels. www.maruskamedia.com.

RHONDA RHEA is an author, humor columnist, and TV personality. Her newest release with co-authors Monica Schmelter and Kaley Rhea, *Messy to Meaningful — My Purse Runneth Over* is available on Amazon. www.rhondarhea.com

STACY SANCHEZ and her husband, John have been married for over 35 years. She is a mother of four children and grandmother of nine. Stacy is a pastor, author, speaker, and business owner. Her passions include all things baseball (Go Yankees!), the beach, and teaching about the Hebraic roots of Christianity. Look for her new Young Adult devotional book, "Diamond Dust: Lessons from the Ball Field," coming soon. Learn more about Stacy at www.stacysanchez.com.

CYNTHIA L. SIMMONS is the mother of five grown children, past president of Christian Authors Guild, radio host, media coach. She writes both fiction and non-fiction and loves history. She ministers to women of all ages but has a special place in her heart for young mothers and homeschool mothers. www.clsimmons.com

JENNIFER TAYLOR is a reviewer and profile contributor for *Leading Hearts* magazine.

Instagram



facebook



follow us like
share
comment
subscribe

@leadinghearts_mag

LEADINGHEARTS 
EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP

@leadingheartsmag