

2022 Holiday Edition | Vol. 9, Issue 3

LEADINGHEARTS

EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN TO ARISE



*TURN THE TABLES
on Holiday Conflict*
with Linda Evans Shepherd

*H.R.H. QUEEN ELIZABETH II—
The Servant Queen
& the King She Served*

Janell Rardon's
5 SECRETS TO LIVING
UNHURRIED

25 YEARS OF YANCY
Leading Little Ones
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Are you a Christian Woman Called to Write & Speak?



LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD
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"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."



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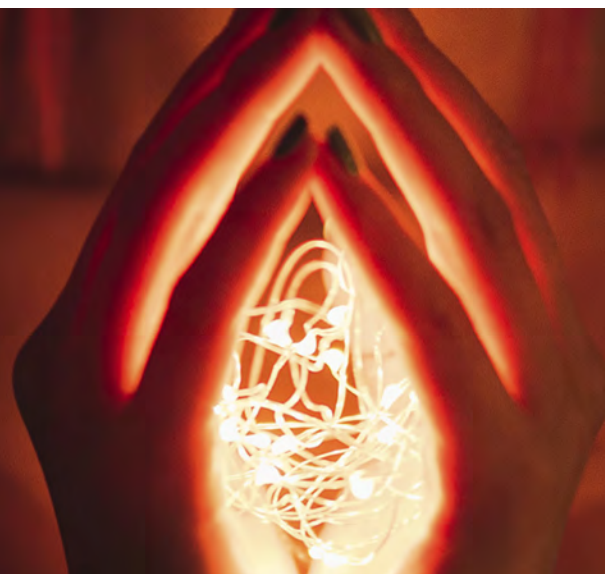
-Member's-Only-

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FROM THE PUBLISHER linda evans shepherd



What the Holy Night Means for Us

Have you lost your holiday cheer? Maybe you're fretting about whether you should buy Christmas gifts or save up for a tank of gas? Or perhaps the recession, not to mention the war, makes it hard for you to find the joy of Christmas.

Take heart and take a moment to flip through the pages of *Leading Hearts* magazine, designed to help you celebrate the holidays ahead. You'll find this issue of *Leading Hearts* will help to give you relief from worry so you can find peace for your heart.

Let's push into joy by stopping to consider the great Christmas song, "O Holy Night."

In 1847, composer Adolphe Adam set a poem to music. This simple poem was written by a French wine merchant, Placide Cappeau, to celebrate the renovation of the church organ in his hometown. Then in 1855, Minister John Sullivan Dwight translated the French lyrics into the Christmas song we sing today.

Some tried to ban this song, but the profound words continue to be sung these past 175 years, even in times of war, times of recession, and times of pandemic—just like today.

And through the years, in every trial, this song remains a song of hope for all people.

Read the translated lyrics that have given millions of people hope at the profound appearance of the babe in the manger, the Son of God, sent to us. Sent to change everything.

*It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth;
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
'Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;*

Chorus

*Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born.
O night, O holy night, O night divine.*

*Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is Love and His gospel is Peace;
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother,
And in his name all oppression shall cease,
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful Chorus raise we;*

Let all within us praise his Holy name!

Dear friends, despite our temporary trials, we have the hope of Christ. And that hope changes everything, for you, for me. For Christ is the Lord! Let all within us praise His Holy name.

Listen to my YouTube list of renditions of "Oh Holy Night" as you read this issue: [CLICK HERE](#). 🎵

Merry Christmas!

PUBLISHER, *LEADING HEARTS* MAGAZINE | AWSA, FOUNDER

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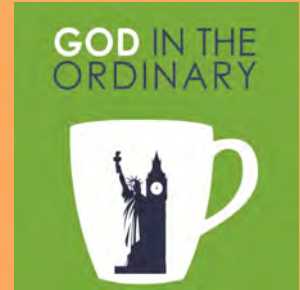
with host

Dawn Scott Damon





FROM THE EDITOR amber weigand-buckley



I'm a Bipolar Woman and I'm a Leader

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV).

"Hi, my name is Amber. I'm a bipolar woman, and I am a leader." Sometimes when I say those words, I feel like I just arrived at my first AA meeting.

I'm not a healed bipolar or a recovered bipolar. I take medication daily and navigate life differently. My family knows that bipolar disorder is a part of my DNA. But I still have faith, and I still believe in miracles. I love God, and I love that I'm one of many, just like you, called to lead in a unique way.

I was already serving in a place of leadership as the editor of a youth magazine and a licensed minister with the denomination that published my magazine, so it was so hard to admit to needing professional help. It was only when I let go of my title and walked into authentic healing that I discovered the leader that God created me to be. I ceased hiding behind the smoke and mirrors and stopped bowing to the pressure to take on a nebulous persona of godliness.

It took me a while to feel qualified to lead again, but that wasn't because God magically changed my brain chemistry.

Isaiah 61:7 (NIV) profoundly speaks to what I call my Barefaced Journey: the day-to-day walking through the challenges mental health brings to the table:

"Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours" (NIV).

Where I am now, I have no regrets. God built himself up in me when I felt everything was crumbling around me.

God's appointment and anointing will always be beyond our capacity. It is not some predetermined package; it flies in the face of the world's idea of a strong leader.

As a woman with mental illness, my call to lead is in the confident assurance that God uses all of my divinely created beauty and steps into my weaknesses so that I might lead others to a fuller knowledge of Him.

Maybe today you are struggling with the shame or stigma of something that makes you feel you are disqualified to lead—your brain chemistry, what you've been through, what you struggle with, or the hurdles that you continue to have to jump every day just to do life.

I want to tell you that God wants to step into that place that feeling of unworthiness and build up greatness in you that you can never imagine—because He delights in our weakness so His glory can glow brighter than any star in the universe! So go on and glow girl! Lead the world through this dark night into the presence of the Savior. It is the call you were created for.

Love,

—Amber

EDITOR | ART DIRECTOR *LEADING HEARTS* MAGAZINE
AWSA, MARKETING DIRECTOR

P.S. Click the picture above to listen to the God In the Ordinary interview where Amber shares her journey navigating mental illness.

LIFE... *Unhurried*





“We are all riding on a very fast train that is traveling down a predetermined track, gathering speed as it goes, and we have been on it for a long time. Many of us want to slow down; some want to get off the train. Others are so used to the speed that they don’t notice it. The few who love speed are the only ones who get their way. Most of us stare blankly out of the window, barely seeing the world flying by and feeling helpless.” —David Kuntz, *Stopping*



Hurry is a great foe.

It tiptoes into our life in astonishingly subtle ways and taps us on the shoulder every second of every day through dings and dongs and dainty little alarm sounds like whistles or bells or swooshes.

It invades our lives via the world of screens, compels us to fit one more thing into our already packed schedules,

and slowly drains our hearts, minds, and bodies of their God-breathed vitality.

Just today, an extra hour opened in my morning schedule. Instead of using that time as a beautiful margin of peace and quiet, I rashly decided to race to the store, which was a good distance from home, to find the perfect sweater for an upcoming holiday event.

I can do it. I can make it to the store and still make my next appointment.

As a result, I ended up in a state of overwhelm. Time flew by a bit faster than anticipated, making me five minutes late for my appointment, which ironically was a one-hour relaxation massage. As Hurry would have it, I was flustered and frazzled and frankly, quite mad at myself.

Did I need a new sweater? Absolutely not.

Did I need to fill in the white space of the margin that morning offered me? Absolutely not.

Did I like feeling flustered and frazzled? Maybe? It is a state that pumps my adrenaline, and I’ve sadly become very accustomed to it.

Hurry Sickness

No wonder I have a twenty-first-century condition experts are now calling hurry sickness. Yes, hurry sickness is a real behavior pattern. The term was coined by cardiologists Meyer

Friedman and Ray Rosenman in their book, *Type A Behavior and Your Heart*. Hurry sickness is “a continuous struggle and unremitting attempt to accomplish or achieve more and more things or participate in more and more events in less and less time.” It is highly related to the “fear of missing out” (FOMO).

In her article, “Ten Intelligent Ways to Combat Hurry Sickness,” Paloma Cantero-Gomez, former contributing editor to *Forbes*, writes, “Achieving, growing and performing better in every single sphere requires hard work and time investment. Getting things done feels good and rewards our brain with a hit of dopamine.

Being busy and making full use of our talents and resources to achieve excellence is desirable. But when busyness tips over into a hurry sickness, our body starts releasing the stress hormone cortisol which can long-term cause depression. In a constant state of over-stimulation, our minds make us also feel tired, anxious, prone to irritability, and unable to relax.

Time is a finite resource. And unfortunately, nonrenewable. Consequently, we end up going through life unconsciously in our busy way of running around.”

As a Heartlifter, a woman committed to leading and loving well, those last four words, “going through life unconsciously,” begged me to ask myself one critical question,

“Is your current state of personal and professional hurriedness adding value to your life?”

I came to a crystal-clear conclusion: No.

In truth, it is highly devaluing, and I feel a sense of urgency to break the pattern.

5 Intentions for Unhurried Living

With the holiday season approaching, I’m determined to embrace fierce intentionality toward unhurriedness.

continued on p. 11



Every time your name
comes up in my prayers,
I say, "Oh, thank you, God!"

—Philemon 1: 4. MSG

continued from p. 9

I can't keep up my current pace. It is stealing my joy and harming my sense of well-being.

To find success in this arduous challenge, I've created five intentions to help keep me on track:

I wake up every morning with increased awareness of the inner sense of urgency that wants to take over. Instead of allowing it to rule me, I speak my intention and practice self-control.

1. I create space in my day for intentional mental and emotional breaks.

I follow the 90–15 Rule. More than 50 years ago, the pioneering sleep researcher Nathaniel Kleitman discovered that the same 90-minute “basic rest-activity cycle” that occurs during our five stages of sleep also occurs during the day. Our bodies move from higher to lower alertness every 90 minutes and signal when we need a break. Instead of paying attention to these signals by taking breaks, we power our way through with caffeine, sugar, or other stimulants.

2. I practice healthy assertiveness by saying “no” to the Land of Overdoing and say “yes” to the Land of Being.

Focus on what brings peace and joy and stability. You might be misunderstood, but that is OK. Share with loved ones or coworkers or even your church family that you are committed to an unhurried holiday.

3. I learn to identify my “stability zones.”

Forbes magazine notes that “stability zones are places or things that make you feel safe, relaxed, and secure. They can be things, people, objects, or even ideas that protect or defend you against the outside world. Home, your partner's hug, this cozy coffee place around the corner, or that movie that always makes you laugh are perfect places to be or regularly visit to consciously switch off and recover.”

4. I take 15- to 30-minute “digital distraction” breaks during my day.

As hard as this might be, silence your phone, turn your computer off, and intentionally detox from all screens. Inform your family, friends, and coworkers of this new practice and invite them to join you.

5. And most importantly, embrace Unhurried as your new friend.

Get to know her well. She is waiting and eager to walk this journey with you. ☺

Listen to Janell's Hearlift podcast episode
“Contemplative Prayer in Our Everyday Lives”
by clicking the picture below.





Grateful
&
Blessed

The Thankful leader

Doug Conant wrote more than 30,000 handwritten thank-you notes when he was CEO of the Campbell Soup Corporation.

Imagine 30,000 letters. Seems overwhelming. But he created an ambience in his company—a culture of appreciation. And the atmosphere of thankfulness was one of the key factors in turning around the struggling company.

Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, set a goal to write one thank-you letter a day. Does that idea seem more feasible for you? It does for me.

Gratitude is a key factor for your team, whether they are volunteers or paid employees. In the general public, 20% of satisfaction in life comes from feeling appreciated. The percentage is higher for team members, employees, and volunteers. Some research indicates 80% of workplace contentment is found when people feel valued. And they will work harder and be more efficient if they feel someone notices their effort and enthusiasm.

Here are 5 simple ways to be a thankful leader and foster an environment of gratitude:

1. Start every meeting with your appreciation for the team.

Then ask team members to express their gratitude for each other and events.

2. Set your own goal for writing handwritten thank-you notes.

Will you try Zukerberg's one per day or set your goal per week or month? A handwritten thank-you note tells the recipient you care, you took the time to write it, and you made it personal—and the note will boost the person's eagerness to be a stronger team player.

3. In your journal, make a list of your employees, volunteers, and team members.

Write at least one attribute for which you are thankful for each person. Use that list to encourage each one privately.

4. Notice when any team member is struggling.

Talk to them over a cup of coffee or tea and show your gratefulness for them as a person. If their work is suffering because of personal problems or issues, adjust the work schedule or find a way to help them be successful.

5. Purchase a supply of blank thank-you cards.

Put them in baskets throughout your office area and break room so staff members can write notes to each other.

Encourage everyone to use them freely and often to express their gratitude for each other. If you make the blank notes available, your employees or volunteers will use them.

When Paul wrote to Philemon, he said, "Every time your name comes up in my prayers, I say, 'Oh, thank you, God!'" (1: 4 MSG).

He prayed grateful words for his friend and coworker. Paul also said, "I keep hearing of the love and faith you have for the Master Jesus, which brims over to other believers. And I keep praying that this faith we hold in common keeps showing up in the good things we do, and that people recognize Christ in all of it" (verses 5–6).

His genuine gratitude is an example to us. When we see good in people and fervor in their work ethic, we also see the passion for the cause in their hearts. When you tell a coworker you appreciate them, be specific and don't use flattery. Open your eyes and see their value and their potential. Then speak gratitude in words and handwritten notes.

Id love to know if you see a difference in your team because you added gratitude to the work day. Write me at kaeporter@gmail.com. ☺



—Tracy Taris—

PUTTING PEACE

into Practice

One of my favorite Christmas carols didn't start out as a Christian song. "Do You Hear What I Hear" was written by a husband-and-wife duo who wrote the song during the Cuban Missile Crisis as a plea for peace.

When we hear the song today, we associate it with imagery the writers never intended—that of the Savior's birth. Leave it to God to take something and repurpose it for an even greater message.

The writers were Noël Regney, a Catholic who had left the church, and his wife, Gloria Shayne, who was Jewish. The inspiration for the lyrics came to Regney in 1962 during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was in a blue mood as he walked through the streets of New York City, thinking about impending war.

As he was absorbed in thoughts about the atrocities of war, he witnessed two babies in their strollers facing each other. They smiled at each other, and for some reason a sense of warmth overtook him. It was at this very moment that the words to this legendary song came to mind. He later asked his wife to compose the music to go with his lyrics.

"Do You Hear What I Hear" begins with the night wind speaking to a little lamb, (the lamb was a symbol of peace), asking him if he sees a star "way up in the sky ... dancing in the night, with a tail as big as a kite." The star was supposed to be representative of a bomb, not the Christmas star.

Later in the lyrics, the child "shivering in the cold" did not represent the baby Jesus, but the children Regney saw on his New York stroll and how war would affect them. The gold represented money that would be needed to recover from the loss war would surely bring. The central message of the song is to "pray for peace."

I find it fascinating that a song about war became a song about the Prince of Peace. We are called to peace due to the nature of God himself. God commands us not to fear, no

matter what He calls us to. Great pressure comes with the role of leadership. God knows this, but He calls us anyway.

The Book of Joshua begins with God calling Joshua to ministry, to take the place of Moses who had just died (Joshua 1:1-9). In His call, God gave Joshua three directives:

1. Go and take the land He'd given them (verse 2).

He promised He'd be with them and that He would not leave or forsake them. God said this because this wasn't the first time Joshua and the people had been told to go into Canaan. Forty years prior (Numbers 13), when Moses was alive, Moses had sent in 12 spies to investigate the land. All but two, Joshua and Caleb, responded in fear to what they saw and came back with a report that resulted in disobedience to God. What was the consequence of shrinking back in the midst of stress? Never entering the land.

2. Be strong, courageous, and not afraid (verse 6).

The King James Version uses the word "dismayed," which in Hebrew means cracking or breaking under pressure or stress. Because the parents of the children of Israel allowed fear and anxiety to stop them from taking what God had for them, God warned Joshua and Caleb to not allow fear of the unfamiliar steal their peace.

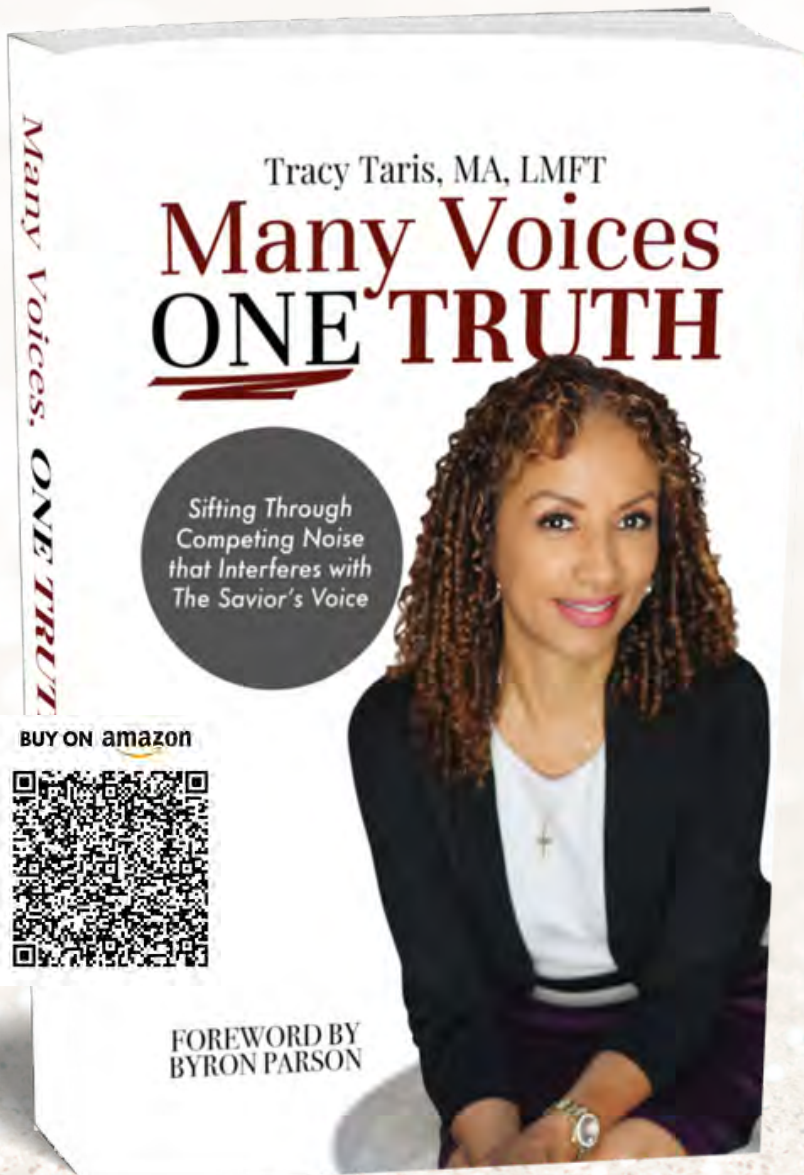
3. Meditate on the Word of God (verse 7).

God told Joshua to always think about and obey the instructions He'd given them through Moses. He was letting them know that they didn't have to repeat history by letting fear lead to disobedience. They had His Word as a guide and they had a choice to listen to it.

God doesn't tell us to not fear because there is nothing to fear. Often there is legitimate reason to fear as we experience

continued on p. 17

Give *the gift of* transformative **TRUTH** *this Christmas!*



Tracy Taris' **Many Voices, One Truth** teaches the reader to discern the voices that vie for our attention: Self, Satan, Society, & the Savior.

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TRACY TARIS, MA, LMFT provides her clients with the insights written in this book daily. As the owner and operator of a private practice, she and her team of therapists offer counseling that heals psychological, mental and relational suffering. Through her work, Tracy teaches souls they are valued, loved, part of a holy nation, and able to take hold of the truth.

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continued from p. 15

life through our human minds. Yet, He wants us to know that whatever He asks of us, He will be right there to see us through.

We serve a God who is both omniscient and compassionate.

He knew Joshua would have his work cut out for him in leading the people of Israel. He knew the possibility of the Israelites giving into fear and forfeiting what was promised—again.

The Bible sees not believing God as equivalent to having contempt for Him (see Numbers 14:11). When we are called to serve others, we ultimately serve God. The task may seem daunting but we can choose peace in our response.

Keep the following in mind:

- 1. When God calls, He equips.**
- 2. Believe Him when He says He will never leave you nor forsake you.**
- 3. Experiencing stress is normal.** Stress often manifests due to the mind's realization that the tasks before you outweigh the resources you have. God knows this, so refer back to Numbers 1 and 2.

When we accept an assignment from God, He wants us to choose to have peace about it.

Galatians 5:22 shows that peace isn't something we go after. It is something we already have. Since the Lord is Peace (Judges 6:24) and as His people we have peace (Psalm 29:11), we are already equipped. We just have to believe that His Spirit provides and then move in the direction of that belief through obedience.

Peace doesn't mean there won't be any challenges. Peace, which is translated from *shalom* in Hebrew, means wholeness, completeness, and being unbroken in our minds and emotions.

Obedying God not only brings blessing, it also brings healing and wholeness. When God tells us "No" or "Go," it is always for our good. It is not from a place of withholding nor a place of putting a strain on us.

So, think about it. Do you hear what I hear? Hear, believe, and know this: "The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). ☉

Are You in Ministry and Struggling?



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GOD *math*





Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35 NIV)

Do you have a favorite bread? In the Holy Land, I discovered the sweet challah with honey and the savory laffa, hot from the pan with olive oil. The bread common in the life of Jesus was probably unleavened, baked in an oven, flat like a large thick pancake and to eat it you’d break or tear it.

Jesus claimed the title “*ártos*.” He is the bread of “divine provision; all the sustenance God supplies to yielded believers scene-by-scene to live in His preferred-will.”¹ The day before He shared this name, He fed 5,000-plus with nothing more than a little boy’s lunch! “In Jesus’ hands not enough became more than enough.”²

When choosing Him, we will not go hungry, crave ardently, eagerly desire, or feel famished physically, emotionally, or spiritually. We each choose what will fill our lives—that which nourishes and keeps us healthy or “fast food” that looks or tastes good but has nearly no life-giving value. Life with Jesus is satisfying.

Christ also says if we believe with absolute trust, a fully persuaded confident faith in Him, we will never thirst. Thirsting by biblical definition is a painful feeling of want or a longing for something to quench the pain. Only Jesus, the Living Water, truly refreshes, supports, and strengthens the soul (John 4:10). Jennifer Kennedy Dean, in *Prized*, elaborates, “He [Christ] never creates us with a need that He himself is not the supply.”³

Scene-by-Scene Provision

In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus taught us to ask, “Give us this day, our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11 ESV). And in the last Bible study, *Discovering Joy in Philippians*, we spent time processing the comfort of Philippians 4:19: “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (NIV).

Recently, I was a guest on a podcast where the host asked me to share miracles of God’s provision, and I referred to many as “Manna” or bread from heaven. Jesus was also connecting himself to God, who led the Israelites out of bondage and provided for them the Bread of Life in the wilderness (Exodus 16:8).

In that interview, I shared so many miracles that time ran out before I could recount them all! In *A Couple’s Journey with*

God, we share a list of times we trusted God early in our marriage. Our Bread of Life laid a proven track record to help us gain a strong foundation for the faith of our fledgling family.

Manna Moments

- We married at age 20 with only part-time jobs and no college diplomas—yet God provided our needs.
- Bill quit his job and we lived on just Pam’s salary so Bill could finish 2 years of college in just one very packed academic year
- We only had \$10 for a week’s worth of groceries, and God had us win four bags in a grocery store sweepstakes we had not even entered! (We found out later, our Sunday School class all wrote OUR names on THEIR entries.)
- We went without a car for almost an entire year (while working several part-time jobs, volunteering as youth leaders, and carrying full-time college class loads). We rode our bikes and trusted God would somehow provide a car.
- Our youth group was praying and bought us a bumper sticker that read, “I believe in miracles.” Nine months later, over 150 kids helped place that sticker on a car provided through one of their families for \$67!
- We set off for Talbot Seminary and Biola University to get training for ministry. We knew our part-time job incomes would fall short, so God sent financial support from the parents of the kids we had mentored.
- We started a family, then bought and remodeled our first home—on a youth pastor’s salary.
- We took a cut in pay for Bill to take a senior pastor position at age 28, so two friends pitched in to cover the car payments until it was paid off or we grew the church budget.
- Pam was a re-entry college student, our church was under 100 people, and we had two little kids. Then her car died, so a Christian businessman gave us his “old” NICE car.
- Wanting our roots to be deep in the community, a church member loaned us money for a down payment on some property. Together with church members, we hammered up a home in San Diego—and repaid the loan.
- We started our writing and speaking ministry, and God blessed it so we could in turn bless others as we had been blessed.⁴

We call God’s provision “God-math.” We married young, followed God with a whole heart, worked extremely hard (and still do), and have the delight of experiencing Him! Pray bold, God-sized, send-manna-from-heaven prayers—not only for you, but for all who need the Bread of Life in this world. And when God asks you to be a part of the answer, give the blessing in His name. ☉

¹ <https://biblehub.com/greek/740.htm>

² Jennifer Kennedy Dean, *Prized: Experience the Tender Love of the Savior* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2019), 57.

³ Dean, 56.

⁴ Bill and Pam Farrel, *A Couples’ Journey with God* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2012), 120-121.

MUSICSPOTLIGHT♥



CHRISTMAS IS LOVE
jonathan cain

Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame inductee and Journey band member Jonathan Cain releases *Christmas Is Love*. Produced and written by Jonathan, *Christmas Is Love* is a five-song holiday offering bearing this legendary musician's signature. Familiar yet unconventional, the EP paints a musical palette highlighting the remarkable story of the birth of Jesus in the opening track, "Hope Was Born," and marvels at the miracle in "Who Is This Child" while underscoring the core message in the title track.

Christmas Is Love is rounded out by Jonathan's Top 5 Christmas radio hit "Wonder of Wonders," which was first released in 2019 and featured GRAMMY®-nominated, Platinum®-selling Newsboys lead singer Michael Tait.

"Christmas is love. It is that simple," shares Jonathan. The EP highlights the artist's brilliant keyboard work and dynamic vocals forged through six solo albums since 2016 and as a worship leader at City Of Destiny Church in Apopka, Florida, where his wife, Paula White-Cain, is pastor.



LET LOVE BE THE GIFT
trinity

One of Europe's best-known Christian bands, Trinity, a band based in the Netherlands, released its Christmas EP, *Let Love Be The Gift*, on October 28. The six-song EP includes the title track, co-written and produced with GRAMMY®-nominated, multiple Dove Award-winning producer Ian Eskelin.

Based on the prophecy in Isaiah 9:2, the song is an epic-sounding EP-opener that combines Nashville's Christian music influence with the famous Celtic Riverdance and hints from the box office hit musical drama *The Greatest Showman*.

Along with the title track, Trinity also records for the first time its crowd favorite and Christmas classic, "Little Drummerboy."

"Baby Jesus, this mysterious child, becomes a shepherd-king," reflects Trinity lead singer Elbert Smelt on the inspiration behind "Let Love Be The Gift." "Through the centuries, He leads His people through glory and hardship from the Kingdom that He started back then and is still shaping today. It is a joy to be a part of this worldwide love, peace, and forgiveness movement.



jennifer taylor
profile contributor

25 YEARS OF YANCY

*the sweet sound
of success*

“God, brilliant Lord, yours is a household name. Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble.”—Psalm 8:1-2 MSG

These are the Scriptures that inspire children’s worship leader, songwriter, and author Yancy Wideman Richmond to usher in the Holy Spirit year-round from Nashville to Dallas, and all around, as well as the celebrations and sounds of the season.

Celebrating 25 years of music ministry, she’s involved in all the things that involve discipling children and creating resources for the church and family.

Based in Nashville and serving and worshipping at The Belonging Co., Yancy also leads the iCampus for kids at First Baptist Church in Dallas. Always working on projects to bring kids and families closer to Jesus year-round, Yancy recently released her spin on “Holy Spirit Come.”

“I felt a nudge from the Lord that I should make a version of it to enable kids and children’s ministries in churches to sing it,” she said. “There

continued on p. 22



continued from p. 21

have been several times over the years where I just feel that push from the Spirit for me to make a version of it. So that's why I moved forward with making that version. It's a little bit of a different song, a little bit of a different subject matter, and maybe just a little different posture.

It's been special to hear the feedback from the churches that are doing it. It's confirmation that I was obedient to what the Lord was asking me to do because it is connecting and it's bearing fruit in the lives of those kids in His ministry. It's a cool song, and I'm very proud to attach my name to it and make a version to just get it out there farther."

Even after 25 years, Yancy is still celebrating her first Dove nomination and win for her *Ready, Set, Go* project. "Being nominated was a huge surprise," she said. "I knew for me it was an uphill battle. So, I needed to be happy and satisfied with the nomination because I thought that was going to be as far as the journey goes. I was looking forward to it just like that, it is such an honor to be nominated once you're on that side of it, but it was also super special winning, especially for *Ready, Set, Go*."

"About three weeks before beginning the project, I went to Ark Encounter, the replica of Noah's ark, and walked around that day. It was this whole new level of appreciation and understanding of how big the ark was and also just how crazy Noah's obedience was.

Ultimately, Noah obeyed, and the rest of his life unfolded because of his obedience."

Yancy explained that she had been procrastinating on beginning another *Little Praise Party* album, not because she didn't want to, but because she didn't have all the funds available to make all the recordings and video production at once. She knew God was asking for her obedience, so she just started taking the small steps she could.

"It was just a journey that lasted for about a year, taking small steps, and honestly, until the very end of the process, there was never one gigantic miracle," Yancy said. "It was like small \$25 donations, like just being ordinary little things, yet God provided and ordered my steps along the way. For *Ready, Set, Go* to be the project that got nominated, and then for me to win was incredibly special because of that project.

In her book, *Sweet Sound: The Power of Discipling Kids in Worship*, Yancy wrote that the *Ready, Set, Go* project changed her forever. She knows she's not the same person, the same Christian, nor the same minister that she was before.

“My life has been impacted in the best of ways. I know it’s all because I was submitting to God’s voice, and I took the steps even when it was scary,” Yancy said. “It felt like God throwing confetti down with my honor to just say, ‘I see you, I honor you, and I celebrate you.’”

Winning the award was a buried teenage dream for Yancy. Her goals were to write songs and perform music. “Somewhere along the way, I got involved in helping resource the church and writing songs for little ones,” she said.

Yancy adds that there are so many more opportunities to become more intentional about raising disciples that know how to worship.

“It’s so much less about that particular Sunday, and it’s so much more about those seeds that are planted,” she said. “The experiences and the smiles. The hugs and the people knowing the names and all of those things that are impacting each person and helping them take steps towards God to grow further in their relationship.

It’s about helping those kids grow up to be adults that know and love and serve Jesus with their life.”

Yancy frequently leads worship at kids’ camps, Vacation Bible Schools, and conferences, but it was one summer camp that made a particularly lasting impact.

“A young boy was worshipping at a summer camp with me, and a few months later, I got a call from his mom. He and his dad had been killed in a car accident. She was asking me to sing at the boy’s funeral,” Yancy said.

It was such a wake-up call to me to realize that three months before, I was leading that kid in worship at summer camp. I think for all practical purposes, as adults, we think they are there that week, that these kids have their whole life ahead of them. It was a wake-up call for me to just realize that it’s also not just about the long-range forever, like decades-to-come impact, but it’s also realizing that this week is so crucial to their spiritual growth.

That same child may not still be here in only three months. How can we impact them? How can they have a real relationship with Jesus?”

Yancy added that the little boy loved Jesus, her worship music, and wanted to share it with all his friends. She knew this celebration of his life was an opportunity for their family to impact their community, and for her, it was not just another song. It’s not just another worship because the future is also not guaranteed.

“This moment here now matters just as much as another,” she said. “I think it’s a reminder of why children’s ministry is so important. We are to reach these kids and help them to be the men and women of God that they were created to be, even in their elementary and preschool years.”


Remembering that sweet boy’s love for Jesus reminds her of her favorite verses in Psalm 8:1-2. It leads her further into a Jesus story because these are the verses He’s quoting as He’s riding a donkey on Palm Sunday.

“Palm branches are waved and the children are shouting, crying Hosanna. A few verses down in that same chapter in Matthew, Jesus is in a temple and a group of adults are questioning Him,” she said.

“I find it so special and significant that on the way to the cross Jesus thought it was important to share these Psalms with the children.

Jesus took time. This was a key moment in history. Jesus was heading to the cross in a matter of days, yet He took the time. This speaks to us, as believers, even here in 2022.”

Depending on which translation of that Scripture you read, those are some of the words that get us to the praise of children. I just want to highlight how powerful worship is. We also need to become intentional about what we play in our cars and listen to in our living rooms. We need to take the minutes and time that we have in our church classrooms to help kids taste and see that God is good so they will hunger and thirst for more. That’s the heartbeat of my book, why I wrote it, and ultimately, the mission behind what I do in creating music and worship resources for kids.”

Find out more about Yancy, her music, book and ministry at yancyministries.com. 

You Can't Find *Peace* under the Christmas Tree

(but you can get close.)

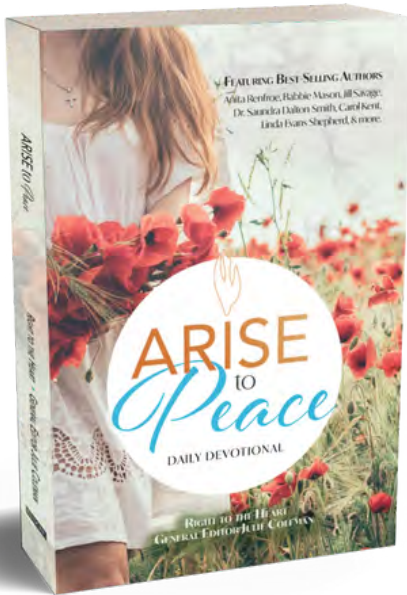
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THEBIGQ

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Q: Over the holidays, how can I get along with relatives I love, but don't like?

Nothing ruins special occasions faster than a family squabble. We all prefer what James called "wisdom from above," so your family time can be "... peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits..." (James 3:17 NASB1995). Let's consider relationship tips from God's Word.

First, the Apostle Paul offered a powerful suggestion when he commented we should think like Jesus. Based on Christ's unselfishness, Paul said to "let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (Philippians 2:3 NASB1977). In other words, consider the needs of that difficult person.

Like you, he or she bears the image of God, so find ways to show respect and kindness.

For instance, plan on cooking a dish the person likes or suggest a game he or she prefers.

Second, set boundaries and enforce them to ensure peace. The Psalmist said, "Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards himself will be far from them. (Prov. 22:5 NASB1995) Make plans to diffuse tension with your husband or another person you trust. You might use a signal that communicates a need for a transition.

For example, my grandmother lived with my mother for years. Before we visited, I warned my husband she would favor the boys. She would offer my sons gifts while informing my daughters she had nothing for them. My husband stepped in and refused all her gifts while guiding the children out of her room.

Third, Jesus said, "...love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you."

You might think this verse applies to an extreme situation, but I have discovered praying for someone softens my heart.

The Lord gives me insight into that individual's personality and makes me see their emotional vulnerability. Instead of responding in frustration, I can temper my words with kindness and compassion.

Fourth, "...let everyone be quick to hear and slow to speak" (James 1:19 RSV). I always considered myself shy until I learned to interview for my podcast. Now I pelt the other person with questions and listen so I can devise even more queries.

People enjoy talking about themselves and may not notice your silence. You might discover hurts you weren't aware of, or you could find a topic you both enjoy. On the other hand, avoid irritating topics.

Fifth, don't let your emotions zap your judgment. Paul the apostle said, "Be angry, and yet do not sin..." (Ephesians 4:26 NASB).

Past hurts can flare up and make us want to say hurtful words. I have felt that way, and it's hard not to explode. Ask the Lord to help you leave all those wrongs in his lap. That's such a relief. Also, fatigue makes you more vulnerable, so excuse yourself when you get tired.

In summary, with prayer (see Linda Evans Shepherds "Turning the Tables on Holiday Strife" prayer on page 31), careful planning, and listening, you can still enjoy holidays despite challenging relatives. Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas. ●

— 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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TURN THE TABLES on Holiday Strife



Holiday get-togethers with extended family remind you of greeting cards which picture smiling faces, with everyone getting along.

Really?

Is that how your Thanksgiving dinner pans out?

I don't know about you, but in my decades of holiday dinners, I've noticed some holiday get-togethers not only are sprinkled with mild bickering but can also serve up a few hot heads. Today, more than ever, we must learn the secret art of walking on eggshells. And don't even talk about all the political opinions in the room. Really. Don't. Or it may not just be the turkey that gets burned.

Yes, today most families find that division comes in so many styles and varieties.

You know how it starts! Someone innocently, or not, says the wrong thing. Suddenly someone gets a bad case of hysterics, sobs, or slams the door—which is a real dinner spoiler.

So, what if I could offer you an idea on how to tame the holiday tension? Would you be interested?

OK, what if we made a pact, a secret plan, that only you and the others reading this article know about? What if we prayed, like down on our knees?

Well, sure, you've heard prayer can change things. And though I'm not promising you a holiday miracle, I am

promising you that if you follow my prayer directions below, you may get even more than a piece of pumpkin pie in peace. What would that be worth to you? Let's pray!

Dear Lord,

I invite You to my holiday get-together. Please come and bring Your peace that passes understanding. Serve me with Your peace first, so that I can serve it to others. I ask that Your peace reign, even if only through me.

I also close the door to the enemy who would love to stir trouble into my family this year.

Enemy, you are not invited. Even if someone opens a door for you to salt our dinner with strife, I say no in the name of Jesus. I take authority over this and any other stews you plan to serve. I pray this in the name and the power of the blood of Jesus.

Furthermore, I'm not entertaining your strife, division, anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, hurt, pride, bruised feelings, or arguing. And I say, you may not give these evil presents to the others at my table. Forget about it.

Lord, instead, I'm asking You for a holiday miracle, one of peace and love, one where You become our special guest. And Lord, may Your miracle start with me. Pour Your love in and through me, and cover all those I love with Your love, even if I don't appreciate their points of view.

Lord, I invite Your Holy Spirit to rest on me. Help me to see my loved ones through Your eyes. Even if they come to the table angry, may they leave refreshed.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Linda Evans Shepherd is the author of Revell's Prayers for Every Need, a little book which could serve as holiday favors or even peace offerings. ☉



The Servant Queen

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In the summer of 1952, our family spent three glorious months in England. My grandfather passed away in April, but we would not arrive in time for the funeral. It was also the same year the King of England died, and Queen Elizabeth II was the new queen. There was

much excitement all over England,

and we had high hopes of getting a glimpse of the queen.

Her coronation was not until the following June, but many businesses and homes displayed flags and announcements of the upcoming coronation.

Last month ended the 70-year reign of Queen Elizabeth II. Millions viewed the funeral, and most never knew another monarch. Her loss is great; even though we all knew she would pass away one day, our hearts and minds were not ready.

I have admired the queen all my life, and since my mother and I are British citizens, we greatly respect the royal family. My mum collected books, photos, newspaper articles, commemorative teacups, and mugs for many years. I have continued with those collections and purchased many other books and magazines about Her Majesty and the royal family.

I saw the queen numerous times during trips to England. Unfortunately, I did not have the pleasure of meeting her in person. It is always a heart desire of most Brits to see the queen.

During our summer vacation in 1952, we did

have the privilege of meeting the queen's grandmother, Queen Mary.

Our family was visiting one of the royal residences, Sandringham, which was very close to my grandparent's summer home at the beach at Heachem. While we were visiting Sandringham, Queen Mary came to inspect one of the royal businesses on the grounds—a carpentry shop. The manager told us that the queen was coming later that day and that we might get to see her if we were in the shop a little before noon.



Meeting the queen was a dream come true for my mother. We quickly changed into our finest clothing—the ones we wore for the Captain's Dinner on the ocean liner that brought us to England. My mother instructed my brother and me to curtsy and bow correctly and only speak to the queen if she spoke to us first. After changing,

we dashed back to the carpentry shop and were allowed to stay while the shop was closed to the public. We “hid out” in the back of the shop.

About a half hour later, the queen arrived in her 1935 Daimler and parked in front of the shop's main entrance. She was dressed in white from the top of her head to her shoes, spectacular and regal. Although only 5'7”, she appeared taller as her heels and hat added to her height. After a few words, the manager ushered the queen into the shop and guided her to our family. My mother's heart probably did a few flip-flops!

The queen was friendly and chatted away like she and my mum were old friends. She was curious about America and wanted to know if South Dakota was near New York City! It was a very casual conversation about her son, King Edward VIII, who had abdicated the throne in 1936, and his wife, Wallis Simpson. They lived in New York City, and although she had not visited them, she thought it lovely that we were not far from them. She asked my mother about living in America, what part of England she was from, and what she missed most about Britain. The queen visited with us for about 15 minutes, and then at my mother's request, she walked outside so my mum could take her picture.

After that amazing experience, whenever I saw Queen Elizabeth, I wanted to shout out to her, "I met your Granny and talked to her, and my mum took her picture!" However, as wonderful as that time was, it will pale in comparison when we come face-to-face with Jesus, the King of Kings.

Six years ago, while I was visiting England, the book *The Servant Queen and the King She Serves* was published by Bible Society, HOPE, and the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity for the Queen's 90th birthday. The Queen wrote the foreword for the book with the agreement that the book must be given for free to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, never for resale.

I have enjoyed reading it many times since and savor the focus of the queen's own words to draw on her trust in Jesus Christ. In her Christmas broadcasts, the Queen always shared the message of Christ as her source of inspiration in good times and tough times.

As I watched her funeral procession, I was reminded of the truth that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. Only those with faith in Christ. Kings and queens of the Earth, princes, generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else—both slave and free—must have a personal faith in Jesus Christ to enter heaven (Revelation 6:15–17)."

Chocolate Biscuit Cake

Queen Elizabeth's favorite dessert was this delicious chocolate biscuit cake. Her personal chef of ten years, Darren McGrady, reported this cake was probably the only one requested in the royal dining room many times. It was so popular that Prince William also chose it as his groom's cake at his wedding to Kate Middleton. The chocolate biscuit cake was served many times when he had tea with his grandmother, the Queen.

It's not really a cake, as there is no baking involved. It's super easy with only four ingredients: tea biscuits, butter, sugar, and dark chocolate. It also goes by another name—tiffin, a Scottish dessert.

To remember the Queen, I made this cake and shared it with friends with a cup of tea as we celebrated the Queen's life and joined millions of others while watching her last royal procession

Cake: 8 ounces of tea biscuits (such as McVities Digestive Biscuits found in specialty stores or World Market. In a pinch, you can use graham crackers.)



½ cup butter, softened

½ cup sugar

4 ounces of dark chocolate, melted (Trader Joe's Chocolate Bars are great in this recipe.)

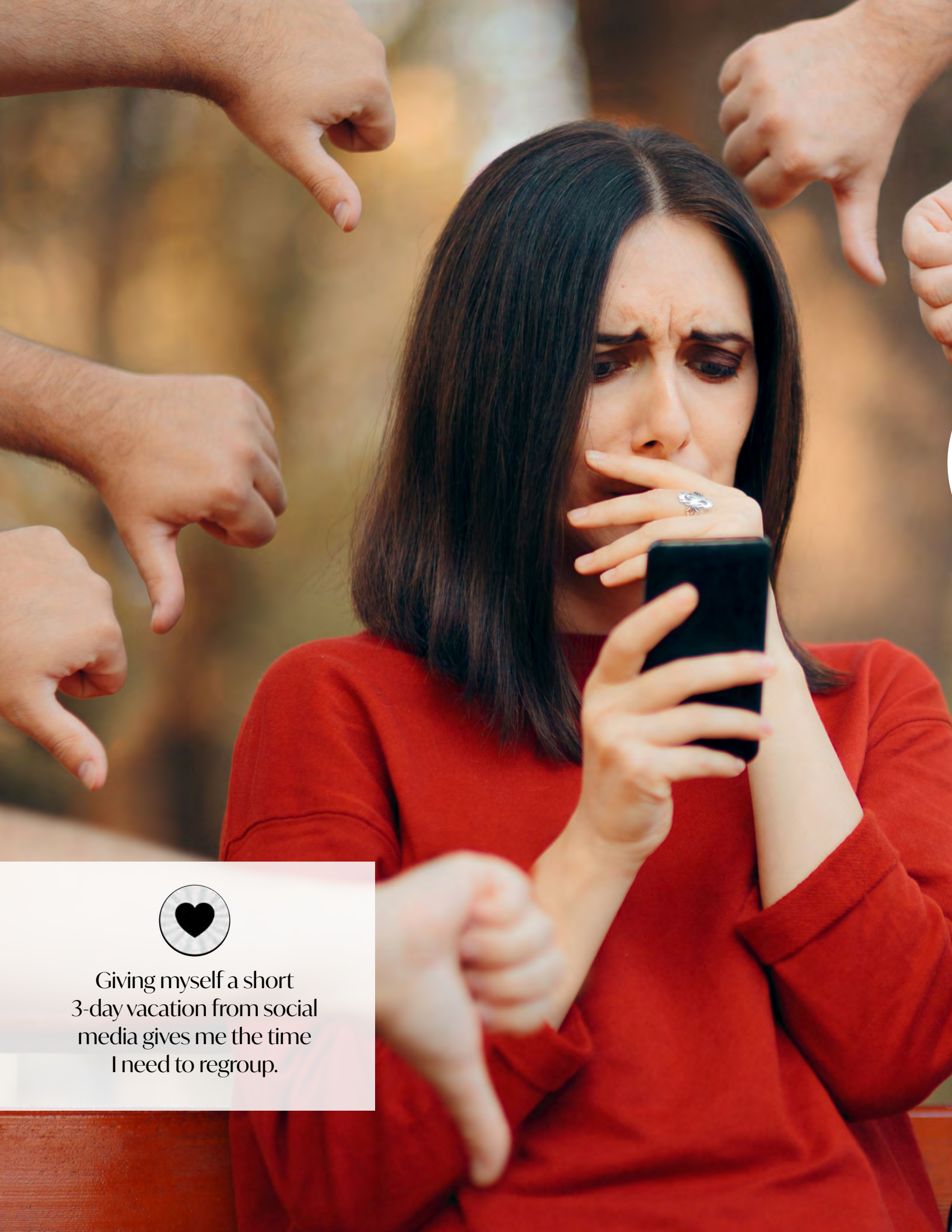
Icing:

8 ounces of dark chocolate (for coating the top and sides)

Grease a round cake pan with butter.

- Break each of the biscuits into pieces about the size of almonds.
- Using an electric mixer, in a large bowl beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
- Melt the chocolate in a microwave until just a few pieces are still solid, then add to the butter mixture and stir until smooth. (The original British recipe calls for beating in a raw egg at this point, but our eggs are not OK to eat raw.)
- Fold in the biscuit pieces until each piece is coated with the chocolate mixture.
- Place the chocolate mixture into the cake pan, pat down and smooth until all the air gaps are gone and the cake is evenly spread into the pan.
- Chill the cake in the refrigerator for at least 3–4 hours.
- Remove the pan from the refrigerator, and let it sit for about 15 minutes.
- Run a sharp knife around the inside of the tin to gently loosen the cake.
- Turn the cake upside down onto a cooling rack placed over a parchment- or wax-paper cookie sheet.
- Melt the chocolate for the icing in the microwave. Pour the melted chocolate slowly over the top of the cake and let it drip down over the side, then smooth it with a knife to cover evenly.

Decorate the top of the cake with shaved pieces of chocolate or drizzle melted chocolate over the top. ☺



Giving myself a short
3-day vacation from social
media gives me the time
I need to regroup.

SICK & TIRED OF *doing social media?*



There are times when every professional gets weary of social media—especially ministry leaders. Usually, it happens when certain situations arise:

- I haven't had any meaningful conversations in a while.

- My updates seem to fall into a black hole because no one notices them.

- Life, in general, has gotten chaotic, and it's squeezing the life out of me.

- My numbers aren't moving up; they're sitting there like an old tire in a mud hole.

- It seems like everything I read on social media is rude, wrong, or just plain shallow.

But I've also come through it to the other side. There are some things to do when social media gets too much to deal with. Here is what I do when it becomes just too much work.

Social Media Strategies for the Weary

1. Remember your why.

We all should know WHY we're doing social media. And if that why is meaningful, it will help sustain us when the going gets tough. For me, I have a double why. I do it to bring light to the dark. I want to bring God's joy to people only. I also use my online interactions to equip others to discover the strength and ability God has given them to fulfill their purpose.

With these whys always before me, I can stay the course when the algorithms change, the world gets ugly, and others decide to leave.

2. Take a 3-day break.

Don't stay off too long, but I've discovered giving myself a short 3-day vacation gives me the time I need to regroup. The

permission to not open FB or Twitter is almost exhilarating. One thing about this, though—don't advertise it. Don't get on FB and tell everyone you're getting off for 3 days. That falls into the category of noise, not meaningful conversation on social media. Just quietly take a few days off.

3. Set a timer.

When you return, watch your . . . er . . . watch. Don't try to make up for lost time. Instead, be very deliberate about the time you're on. Don't let it go over 30 minutes a day. The one caveat to this is if you reserve a social media network for only play. I know some who love Pinterest or Instagram and only use it for personal enjoyment. If that's the case, separate that time from your work time.

4. Reply to those who've mentioned you.

Note those who have shared your blog, retweeted, commented on a FB post, or whatever. Take about 5 minutes and pick out a few to thank and engage with.

5. Share something meaningful to you.

Don't try to anticipate what will get the most traffic humming. Just be transparent. Post a pic from childhood, share a quote, ask a question.

6. Evaluate your social media content

Look again at what you're sharing. Spend some time looking for new places to visit online—blogs, websites, etc. Shake things up a bit. You will enjoy it and so will your audience.

7. Change when you schedule your social media.

If you normally schedule it in the morning, move that to late afternoon. Streamline what you can, but remain disciplined in your consistency. A change in routine can help shake things up in a good way.

Social media is a tool. It's a valuable tool when we use it correctly. But like any good worker, we can't just use one implement to get the job done. Sometimes we must put it down and pick up another one. ●



Stress simply means that the body experiences psychological pressures related to an event. This can result in becoming physically, mentally, spiritually, socially, and emotionally drained.

* Christmas
to do list :



3 WAYS TO DE-STRESS

your
Holi-Do list

dr. saundra dalton-smith | ichoosemybestlife.com





Every November, the holiday dash begins and does not slow until we ring in the New Year.

The weeks leading up to 2023 are exciting and can feel overwhelming as you find yourself busy searching for the perfect gift, planning gatherings, and deciding what new changes you resolve to make in the new year.

Some of these activities inevitably generate a certain amount of stress. Keep in mind stress does not always mean that one dreads an activity, although that can be the case depending on who will be at some of your family gatherings. Stress simply means that the body experiences psychological pressures related to an event. This can result in becoming physically, mentally, spiritually, socially, and emotionally drained.

Studies suggest there are two types of stress: distress and eustress. We are more familiar with the distressing aspect of stress, but a large part of our lives is spent in eustress.

This is especially the case when dealing with important family or social events. This is the stress of anticipation and excitement which can occur when a fiancé is meeting the family, when that difficult in-law opens the gift you got for them, or when you are cooking your first family holiday dinner. It's all good stress but stress is just the same.

Holiday stress, thankfully is short-term, but it can take a toll on your mind, body, and spirit. It's important to remember to take time for rest and relaxation. Spend some time enjoying the process and breathe in the wonder of the season. Remind yourself of the season's purpose. It is too easy to get caught up in the busyness of the season and lose sight of the awe and wonder of it all. And this is when eustress can change and become distressed.

Instead of getting overwhelmed by your holiday to-do list, follow these three steps:

1. Determine what is time sensitive.

Allocate a specific time on your calendar for those activities.

2. Decide what is most important to

maintaining well-being (yours or your family's).

These are the next items that should find a dedicated space in your schedule.

3. Distinguish between actual and

perceived obligations. Many of the things that clutter our holiday to-do list are perceived obligations. For example, you do not have to buy a different gift for every person on your list. You could instead simplify your shopping by deciding on a gift you could give every person on your list and spend that extra time enjoying the holiday with those you love.

When searching for ideas to destress for the holidays, several options were available: laugh around the fire pit, listen to music, practice self-compassion, ask and allow others to help, delegate some of the work, set healthy boundaries, enjoy holiday foods in moderation, take a leisure walk to look at the neighbor's decorations, and breathe in the smells of fall.

Additional ways to take some time for yourself can include watching a fun Christmas movie, having a game night, and sitting in a quiet room with a cup of hot tea, coffee, or hot chocolate.

Enjoy a few moments of calm and allow the mind to unwind. Of course, this list can go on for pages. The important thing is to find personally enjoyable and relaxing activities to de-stress. Whatever it looks like, prioritize time for yourself during the holidays independent of your seasonal obligations.

When you do, you reap the benefits of what this season is about, which is the good news of the gospel, the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus, who came to earth for our health, freedom, and vision (Luke 4: 18). We can be assured of His company through the best of this season, as well as the difficult and unwelcomed stressors that can pull you down.

Breathe in His grace and peace ... a peace the world does not understand but needs right now (Luke 2; John 14:17). You can rest assured in His healing power over our emotional, mental, and physical health today as well as in the coming year. In whatever ways you choose to de-stress your life, be encouraged—God is with you (Matthew 1:23). ☉



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9 Life Hacks for the Organizationally CHALLENGED



As a teenager, I was told by a prominent businessman to “do one thing that scares you every day.” I thought, *why would I want to do that?* But as I began to think about my future, I began to plan all I wanted to accomplish. That’s how I began to appreciate that this businessman’s challenge to be fearless could generate huge possibilities in my life.

His challenge encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone at least once a day. For example, while I was still in high school, I used his advice as a reason to apply to a work program. Having my first job interview was scary, but negotiating my first salary and being thrown into a corporate environment helped me to discover a wonderful new possibility for my life, a possibility which helped shape my future. That’s how I found that leaving my comfort zone of working at the “family business,” gave me the opportunity to excel in the technology industry. My accomplishments in this new world gave me the courage to continue to follow my fledgling fearlessness into more opportunities.

Doing scary things helped me become more confident, learn more, and expand my comfort zone, especially when I decided to leave my lucrative corporate job to enter the ministry.

My quest to challenge myself further led me to start a nonprofit. Walking into new challenges wasn’t always easy. There were mistakes, and I battled with uncertainty, fear, and self-doubt. But the positives gained from my fearlessness outweighed my concerns and gave me the lessons I needed to grow as a leader.

With the growth I’ve experienced by becoming fearless, I’ve realized the importance of being organized. Plotting my time helped to fulfill my daily and long-term goals. It seems that many people shy away from the word “organize,” especially those who don’t like structure. But we all need to have some organization in our lives. So if the word “organization” scares you,

check out my list of “insights gained” so you can develop the organizational structure which will help you lead a fearless life.

1. It starts with a good night's rest.

After dinner, begin to slow down with your activity. About an hour before bedtime, shut down all electronics and try reading a book or taking time to reflect for a few minutes on your day, thanking God for the blessings you received. Practicing gratitude makes us more aware of the good things in our life. I like to write down two or three items I'm grateful for each day. It's nice to have a record of these highlights to go back and read at a later date, especially on difficult days. Getting a good night's rest allows you to start your tomorrow refreshed so you can conquer all tomorrow will bring.

2. Make a list.

My family will tell you I love list making. When I mark off the items on my list, it fills my heart with joy. You may not relate to my enthusiasm at list-checking, but starting your day by identifying what you would like to accomplish will give you a better guide or timeline for completing actions. Thinking ahead and planning accordingly can keep you on top of your tasks so you avoid missing deadlines and opportunities.

3. Build your confidence.

I've been described as “confident,” and people in my life have asked me how they can become more confident. I've found you can build confidence by choosing to do scary things, the very advice I was given in my teens. I find that the more confidence you gain, the more you can accomplish because you are not focused on negativity or doubt; you are focused on opportunities.

4. Say No.

Like most people, you may have trouble saying no to things. Of course you don't want to disappoint anyone, so you find yourself saying yes to things you have no interest in doing. But if you decide to say no to things that don't align with your goals, you will free your time from unnecessary duties so you can focus on the things you need to complete.

5. Surround yourself with people who have traits/qualities different from yours.

As a leader, it's important to recognize what you are good at. But more importantly, recognize areas where you need support. I often find myself wondering how I will get something done or if I'm smart enough to be in the role I find myself in. I've made it a habit to delegate when I recognize my talent or knowledge is not at the level it needs to be to complete the task. It's not a sign of weakness to ask for help. It's a sign of strength and leadership.

6. Keep Your Home/Office Space Clean.

It's often hard to juggle the various roles we women hold, including having a career, being a wife and/or a mother,

volunteering in organizations, and being a friend to others. There are a lot of responsibilities that come with these roles. I find I feel more at peace when my home/office is clean and in order, but it's hard to maintain a clean space when you and your family are always on the go. Put one cleaning assignment on your calendar to complete every day. That way your space will remain clean throughout the rotation of your cleaning duties. I believe that maintaining an organized space can improve your mindset and productivity by eliminating the stress and wasted time spent looking for the things you need.

7. 30 Minutes for Yourself.

Growing up, I saw my mother take 30 minutes each day for herself. After dinner, once the kitchen was clean, she would retreat to her room to enjoy a hot bath and read a book. As I got older, she told me to remember to focus on something I enjoy daily. I have found this very helpful and her advice has become a priority in my daily routine. If my day is organized and I have a sense of accomplishment, I can relax and enjoy time for myself.

8. Attention to Detail.

This skill relates to how mindful and thorough you are in your work and personal duties. When you pay attention to detail, you recognize that taking the time to do a job well the first time will save you from extra effort later. You will also feel a sense of pride for doing a job well ... the first time.

9. Digital Organization.

Given that many of us primarily do our work on computers, organizing our digital lives is also essential. Think through the files you have and decide where and how they should be saved. Delete all unnecessary files. This is the key to organizing your digital life. I would also suggest that you daily review your email and delete unnecessary messages. Set aside a few minutes each week to back up and label important files. When you're not spending valuable time tracking down important files or emails, you can use your time efficiently and boost your productivity.

10. Communication.

This may not be one of the first words that come to mind when you think of organization. Many problems result from miscommunication. Miscommunication will lead you to spend time correcting your work. I've found that strong communication skills ensure better organization. Take time to think about what you want to say first and be as direct as possible. This will prevent miscommunication.

Being organized is a key skill for us all to continually develop both professionally and personally. As you implement these insights, you will grow a sense of calmness in your daily routine and you will feel the empowerment of your every accomplishment. I am confident that the more you organize your life, the more you will enjoy your accomplishments on your life's journey. ●



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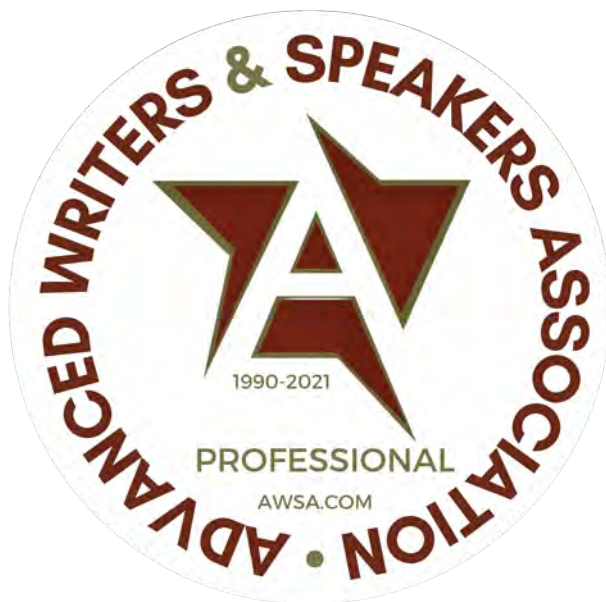
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A-MAZE-ING Grace



I think about 87% of my shopping at a couple of my fave department stores happens in the maze of a checkout line.

Through the labyrinth, the marketing geniuses who came up with this merch-maze lure me left and entice me right. They all but twirl me and whirl me through what must be three miles of displays and shelves, all full

of every magical item I never knew I needed but suddenly realize I can't—no, cannot—make it to the register without. Cannot make it through life without.

Recently, I went into the store for a journal. That's it. Just that one thing. When it came my turn to pay, I took my lovely, flowered journal out of the basket and set it before the cashier. And then set a mug beside it, one with a saying on it that had made me chuckle. Then some chocolate-covered cookies on top of that. Then a pen with a furry poof. Then I unloaded my socks with Bible verses on them. Only a barbarian could say no to Bible socks. And finally, I hauled out a handful of refrigerator magnets. Because they match my décor. And because you can never have too many refrigerator magnets.

Rolling through that maze, I had found “one more thing” and then another “one more thing” to heap onto that one. It's like they were all gifts. And all of them for me.

So guess what. By the time I left that store, I felt like I had a lot more to write about in my new journal.

It may sound weird, but it reminds me of the grace of God. How many of us went to God to ask for grace solely to ease our guilt? We were shopping for just one thing—a quick fix for that nagging guilt.

All we wanted was relief from the bothered conscience that made our days feel hopelessly dark.

But the more we experience His grace, the more we realize His grace is so much more. More than a quick fix for nagging guilt. The grace of God is the foundation upon which we build the closest, most loving relationship with our Heavenly Father. And—more upon more—in this relationship Jesus made possible with our Father, we get to know our God more. And more. It's a relationship that carries us through good times and bad, successes and failures. It carries us through every maze of life—all the way through to eternity. More grace.

Have you noticed that knowing Him more and understanding His love for you always results in worshipping Him more? Oh, the marvel of never-ending grace.

John 1:16 tells us that “from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (CSB).
Grace on grace on grace.

The Amplified Version describes His fullness as “the superabundance of His grace and truth” and describes our grace on grace as “spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing, favor upon favor, and gift heaped upon gift.”

A-maze-ing grace is a labyrinth of more. Grace for forgiveness, grace for living, grace for enduring—more. It always keeps on giving and growing and showing us more of Him.

I cannot live without this grace on grace.
The “one more thing,” deep, beautiful gift of grace.

In closing, though, could I share a little shallow-sided “one more thing”? Because I had to note this in my new journal: “I now officially have too many refrigerator magnets.” ●



Once in our world, a
stable had something
in it that was bigger
than our whole world.

—C.S. Lewis






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