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FALL CONFERENCE EDITION

August | September 2026
Volume 13 • Issue 4

THE OFFICIAL AWARD-WINNING VOICE OF THE
ADVANCED WRITERS & SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION

LEARNING INTO THE CURVE

As Linda Goldfarb hits 70,
she's telling her girlfriends
to buckle up—the ride is
just beginning.

*“In racing you
lose control if
you brake instead
of accelerate.”*

— Linda Goldfarb

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FROM THE PUBLISHER | LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD

Dear Friends,

I was seven years old, and I can still feel my small hand tucked into my father's strong one. We had walked down to the bottom of the hill on the old farm where he grew up, to watch a spring bubble right out of the grass. Its song was quiet—endless ripples trickling into the stream between two hills.

I looked up at my dad. "Where does the water come from?"

He smiled. "God is its source."

I've never forgotten that answer. Because it turns out God is the source of so many things—creativity, wonder, love, courage, words. He is the hidden spring beneath everything we do. And the busier life gets, the more we need to remember from whom our refreshing comes.

That's what *Leading Hearts* is about. Every writer, speaker, and ministry leader in these pages is a brook fed from that same hidden source—His presence alive in us, flowing out into the world through stories, books, talks, and lives surrendered to Him.

This August issue is full of those stories. You'll find authors sharing hard-won wisdom, fresh books worthy of your shelves and your heart, and testimonies that remind us God is still at work. My own piece in this issue traces a thirty-year-old seed I'd forgotten I had planted—and the handshake that proved God hadn't.

Whether you're a bookseller, a writer, a speaker, or simply someone hungry to grow in Christ — welcome. There's something here for you. ♥

With Joy,

Linda



lindaevansshepherd.com

FROM THE EDITOR | AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY

Sisters,

I need to confess something: I've given up trying to walk in purpose—and it's the most freedom I've ever been given. Everyone talks about finding your mission statement, your five-year plan, your call, like it's a destination you arrive at once you've done enough soul-searching. I chased that purpose for years. It wasn't until I threw the whole chase away—stopped waiting for someone else to define who I was, and started asking one question instead—that things shifted.

I sat down with the Father, notepad in one hand, cofsfee in the other, and asked Him: who am I? How did you put me together? Why did you wire my neurodivergent brain to run in every direction at once? That's when my voice started to emerge. Struggle became just as holy as the polished, put-together words we call sacred. Not one or the other. Both—the mess and the flourishing standing on the same holy ground.

We quote Ephesians 2:10 constantly. We are God's workmanship, created for good works prepared in advance—I can feel those words pop up like a teleprompter when I think of doing hard things. But workmanship isn't a job title, it's a wiring diagram. He designed the works around the DNA He'd already built into me.

I didn't find who I was by asking God what my purpose was. I found it by taking purpose off my GPS and digging into what He says about me—not the list of things I don't measure up to, but who I am as His fully-equipped girl. I pray this issue of *Leading Hearts* encourages you to sink into the God-designed wiring of everything you already are, and trust Him with everything you think you lack. ♥

Love,

Amber

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LH EDITOR AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY ON THE LINE WITH LINDA GOLDFARB

LEARNING INTO THE *Curve*

*As Linda Goldfarb Hits 70, She's Telling
All Her Girlfriends to Buckle Up—
Because the Ride Is Just Beginning.*



The signal kept cutting out. Linda Goldfarb was somewhere on a highway, her husband, Sam, at the wheel, rolling toward her next speaking event. She was on the phone with me—or trying to be.

The connection flickered. Her voice broke up mid-sentence. And yet somehow, every single word that mattered came through clean.

That's the thing about Linda. The static never touches what she's actually saying.

THE CURVE OF HER ELBOW = THE ARMCHAIR OF HER HEART

You know those conversations where you just sink in? Where the voice on the other end feels like a worn armchair and a fresh cup of something hot—and before you know it, you've stopped performing the interview and started actually living inside it?

That's what happened.

I could almost smell the espresso. The good kind. Brewed slowly. The kind that makes you close your eyes before the first sip.

I don't always take notes when I interview someone.

This time I couldn't stop. But they weren't interview notes—questions answered, boxes checked. They were notes to myself. Where her answers were taking me. What her words were unlocking in my own chest.

"We can shut off our own momentum by declaring an end. And God says, 'That's not an end. It's just a curve.'"

SEVEN DECADES IN. AND SHE'S NOT LEAVING HER TOWEL IN THE RING

Yes, she's an author, a dynamic speaker, a podcaster, a narrator—a voice that has filled conference rooms and retreat centers across the country. Google the résumé.



But that's not what made me lean in.

What made me lean in was her presence. A heart full of Jesus and an infectious spirit that doesn't perform—it just is. Talking to Linda felt like leaning into the curve of someone's arm. The kind that says, I get you. And He's got you. And these arms are just an extension of His.

"People keep telling me to relax," she says. And you can hear she's heard it a hundred times—and has absolutely no intention of doing it.

THE PRAYER SHE DIDN'T WANT TO PRAY

A couple of years ago, Linda boarded a plane for her first speaking gig of 2024, grabbed an audiobook—*Beyond Jabez* by Bruce Wilkinson—and somewhere between takeoff and landing, God asked her a question she didn't want to answer.

"You pray for everyone. You fervently pray for others. What are you praying for yourself?"

"I was like, 'Lord, you already know the desires of my heart,'" she tells me. "Whatever you want to do, I'm okay with it."

But He wouldn't let her off the hook. So she did what any good, slightly stubborn woman of faith does—she decided she didn't want to talk to Him for the rest of the flight.

On the return flight, she gave in. She told God what she actually wanted. Keynotes. Retreats—real time with women, not just an hour and goodbye. She said the desires out loud instead of handing God a blank page and calling it surrender.

Three days later, a conference director slid into her DMs: Linda, would you come and keynote for us?

"That exploded," she says. "Keynotes for 2025, 2026. Retreats. Audiobook contracts. He just opened the door. All because I released the bondage that I shouldn't share the desires of my heart with Him."

THAT THING WE JESUS GIRLS DO

Linda put her finger on something we don't talk about enough.

"Sometimes as Christian women, we're convinced it's ego to bring our desires to God. That it's selfish. We come with a servant heart and assume He'll just take care of us."

He does take care of us. But there's a difference between being cared for and being invited in. God wasn't just asking Linda to receive; He was asking her to participate. To stop leaving her own story blank while she filled in everyone else's.

"We're good at listening to somebody else's story," she says, "but we don't walk into that possibility for ourselves. We think it's a page written in somebody else's history."

I wrote that one down and underlined it TWICE.

DON'T BRAKE. ACCELERATE

Here's the moment I put down my pen.

"When you're in a race car going into a curve, you don't coast," Linda says. "You accelerate. Because that holds you firm on the road. If you don't accelerate, you slide—you go where the curve wants to take you."

Our instinct when life bends hard is to take our foot off the gas. To assume age or a difficult season means it's time to coast.

But coasting into a curve is a dangerous move.

Moses was 80 when he stood before Pharaoh. Sarah was 90 when she held Isaac. Scripture is full of people who had no idea they were just getting started.

"We can shut off our own momentum by declaring an end," Linda says. "And God says, 'That's not an end. It's just a curve. I've got another plan around the corner.'"

I WROTE THIS IN ALL CAPS (MAYBE YOU SHOULD TOO)

"When I got to the end of myself, He said, 'Let me show you—I've only just begun.'"

You might get there through a hailstorm. A broken arm. A season that knocked you sideways. The entry point is different for everyone. The invitation is the same.

Her closing words stayed with me long after the call dropped: "When we walk in the Spirit, it's like breathing without effort. No striving. Just following. And every curve—enter it with anticipation of more."

Not less. Not winding down. Not coasting toward a finish line you've already drawn in your head.

More.

The curve isn't the end. It never was. Lean in, friend. He's only just begun. ♡



Scan the QR code to take Linda's "How God Designed Me" quiz. To connect with Linda—her books, podcasts, or request her to speak at your event—go to lindagoldfarb.com. Follow her on socials @lindagoldfarb.

Amber Weigand-Buckley is the founding editor of Leading Hearts magazine. shortyellowpencilRX.com





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THE GOOD LIFE

*Finding God's best path through
life's unexpected twists and turns*

Life is full of ups and downs, but through it all God has created a GOOD road for each of us to walk. In 3 John 2, we find this blessing:

"Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers." (LSB)

The Greek word translated "prosper" is *euodō*:

- *eu* = good, well
- *hodos* = road, way, path

How can we discover and follow God's GOOD Road? Looking back over our journey, I see four principles:

G—A GENUINE LIFE

Living a straightforward life is soil where success grows. God often reveals His path one step at a time, but integrity prepares us for the journey.

"The integrity of the upright guides them." (Proverbs 11:3 NIV)

Bill and I both came from difficult homes. I grew up longing for a peaceful home instead of the chaos caused by my father's alcoholism. Bill's father was a brilliant engineer, while his mother struggled with mental illness. Christ drew Bill and me to Him—me at age eight and Bill as a teenager after watching *The Exorcist*, which he says "scared him to life!"

Our desire for something better led us to the Creator who offers the truly good life. In Genesis, God repeatedly calls His creation "good" (In Hebrew: *tov*). This goodness can be described as beautiful, best, bountiful, and blessed.

O—OBEDIENT HEARTS

Obedience keeps us aligned with God's will.

"Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him." (Psalm 128:1 NIV)

Early in ministry, we taught relationships to teens and young adults. Later, while Bill pastored a growing church, a basketball coach asked if he provided marriage counseling. Soon a couple sat in his office. The husband spoke little while his wife talked for nearly an hour.

As Bill prayed for wisdom, an illustration came to mind: "Your wife's mind works like a plate of spaghetti—everything connects to everything else. Your mind works like a waffle—separate compartments."

*God loves me so much that He
orchestrated every detail to bring me
here...at exactly the right time.*

-PAM FARREL

That simple insight became *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti*, launching a bestselling series translated into 15 languages and enriching thousands of relationships.

O—OVERCOMING SPIRIT

God develops strength through challenges.

"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them." (1 John 4:4 NIV)

After decades of speaking on marriage and family, God led us to sell our home, give away most of our possessions, and move onto a liveaboard boat near Bill's parents in California. God entrusted us with caring for Bill's aging parents for ten years. Looking back, we can see God's faithfulness throughout that season.

D—DIVINE INTERVENTION

During the past five years, I survived a DKA diabetic coma and a profound near-death experience, which I recount in *Glimpse of God's Glory: One Woman's Near-Death Experience*. After a year of recovery, after excruciating pain, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer

When my oncologist entered the hospital room, we discovered he was a Christian. He and his wife had read *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti*. After sharing my diagnosis, I told him, "I've already been to heaven, and it is marvelous. God loves me so much that He orchestrated every detail to bring me here, to Kentucky, to you, at exactly the right time."

The cancer was detected at Stage 1C, and today I am more than two years "No Evidence of Disease." We have written 61 books, but the greatest treasure is seeing God's faithfulness.

"The Lord will work out his plans for my life." (Psalm 138:8 NLT)

And those plans—for us and for you—will always lead down God's GOOD Road. ♥



Pam Farrel and husband Bill received the 2025 AWSA (Advanced Writers & Speakers Association) Lifetime Achievement Award. Find out more about their books and ministry at love-wise.com.





From Novel to Movie

HOW A MODERN CAIN AND ABEL STORY
TACKLES MENTAL ILLNESS, ADDICTION
AND THE POWER OF REDEMPTION.

I was hiking in the Grand Canyon with my husband in 2016 when I heard the ranger say, “We have about thirty deaths each year here from people doing dumb things on these cliffs ...”

I was just lamenting to my husband, I wish I had brought my kids here when they were young. My husband said jokingly, “Are you kidding? Will would have pushed Mike over the ledge ... or vice versa!” (Will and Mike are my sons.) And just like that, the idea of my novel, *The Jealous Son*, was born.



More and more parents are struggling to cope with their “prodigal” kids, trying to be examples of God’s unconditional love, yet also attempting to resist enabling tendencies that make matters worse.

—Michele Chynoweth



HEALING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

My husband and I have a blended family, three sons and two daughters, who were our wedding party sixteen years ago. They’re all adults now, and over time, have unfortunately suffered from various addictions and mental illnesses.

I’ve suffered from these myself, but have found a way out. This spring, I celebrated twenty-two years in recovery by way of a 12-Step program. I’ve found beneficial healing through working my program, counseling, and my Christian faith.

Part of my healing was also from heeding God’s call to write my first novel, *The Faithful One*, based on the Book of Job. Like *The Jealous Son*, each of my “modern-day Bible stories” explores various issues people face today—including divorce, domestic violence, abuse and more.

FAITH IN FICTION

Being asked to teach and speak to a variety of Christian and secular audiences as a book coach and author has helped me further get God’s messages across.

I know firsthand that alcoholics usually have depression and anxiety and that addiction and mental illness are often intertwined. As a mom of kids with these illnesses, I also know the devastating effects they can have on families.

I explore these themes in my novel, a modern murder mystery based on the Bible story of Cain and Abel, told through the points of view of both the Eve character, Eliza, and the Cain character, Cameron.

HELP WITHIN REACH

Increasing numbers of young people suffer



from addiction and mental illnesses, especially after COVID. And more and more parents are struggling to cope with their “prodigal” kids, trying to be examples of God’s unconditional love, yet also attempting to resist enabling tendencies that make matters worse.

It’s a tough road, and sometimes parents feel alone in these struggles. But I’ve found the worst thing we can do is isolate or compare ourselves to others.

Some practical steps I would recommend are:

Join a church

Attend a support group

Join a recovery program like Al-Anon

Taking social steps like these allows us to share our burdens with those who understand so we don’t feel so alone, like Eliza and Cameron did. And of course, reading literature that helps us grow in our faith and minimize our fears ... and prayer ... also helps.

COMING SOON TO A THEATER NEAR YOU

I’m excited to share that my novel has been turned into a screenplay and is now being made into a major motion picture called *Envious Son* by Profound Studios.

The movie, like the book, will seek to “preach beyond the choir”

by grabbing audiences who love a thriller ... which I hope will evangelize the world even further!

DESPAIR CAN BE DEADLY

The logline of the movie is: What happens when envy, fueled by addiction and mental illness, goes too far? The tagline: Despair can be deadly. The Synopsis: As a girl, Eliza, gets banished by her father from her Navajo reservation for committing a major sin. She and her husband have two sons, Cameron and Austin. The boys grow up to be in a rock band, and eventually Austin’s star outshines Cameron’s; he also captures his brother’s girl and wins the adoration of his parents. Cameron begins to suffer from addiction and mental illness, becomes jealous ... and seeks to find justice once and for all.

Meanwhile, Eliza’s insecurities and feelings of guilt as a wife and mother increase, leading her to become addicted to pain pills. Will her despair also be deadly? ♥



Michele Chynoweth is the bestselling author of five contemporary suspense novels that reimagine Old Testament stories and now an Indie movie producer with Word Alive Films. Find out more about Michele, her books, and the movie by visiting MicheleChynoweth.com.

PROFOUND
STUDIOS

“A bold, tragic, and emotionally exploratory drama.” – KIRKUS Reviews

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The Jealous Son is one of Michele Chynoweth’s bestselling contemporary biblical suspense novels.

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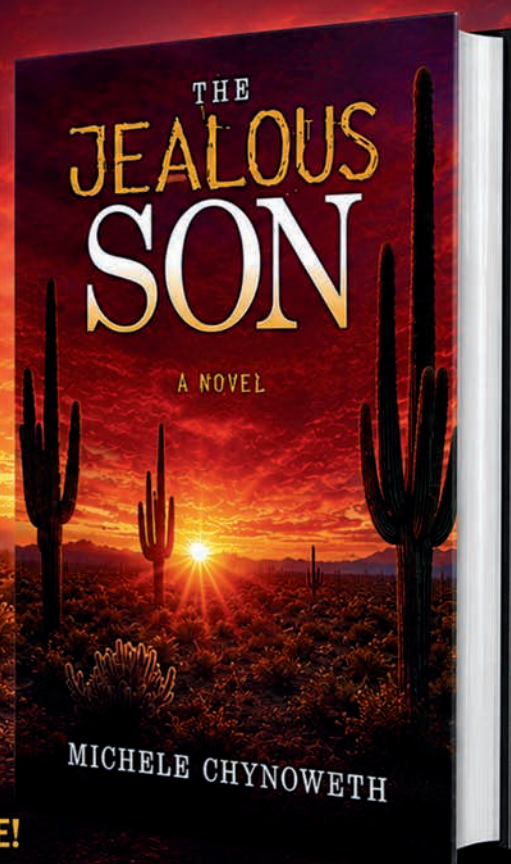


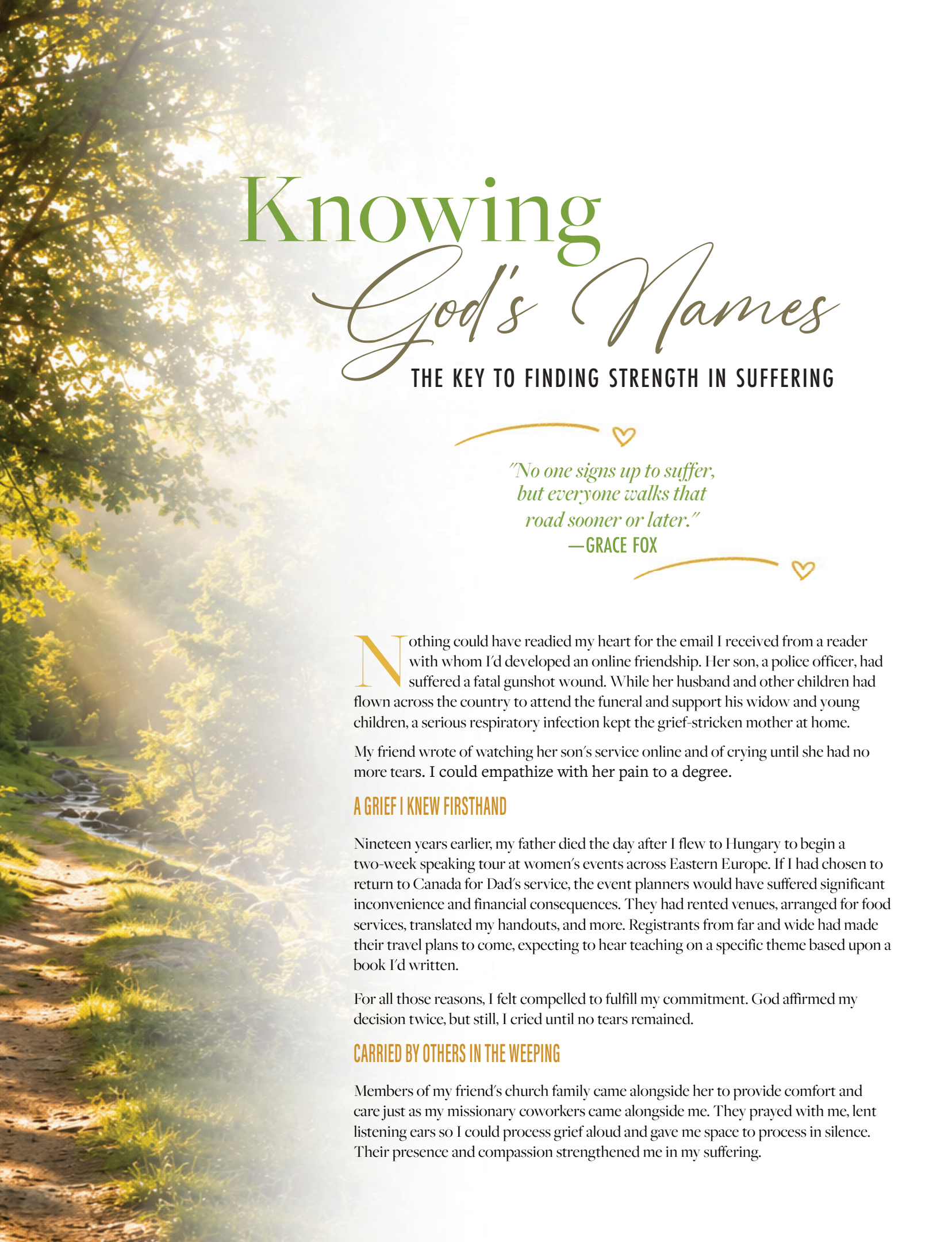
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Knowing *God's Names*

THE KEY TO FINDING STRENGTH IN SUFFERING

*"No one signs up to suffer,
but everyone walks that
road sooner or later."*

—GRACE FOX

Nothing could have readied my heart for the email I received from a reader with whom I'd developed an online friendship. Her son, a police officer, had suffered a fatal gunshot wound. While her husband and other children had flown across the country to attend the funeral and support his widow and young children, a serious respiratory infection kept the grief-stricken mother at home.

My friend wrote of watching her son's service online and of crying until she had no more tears. I could empathize with her pain to a degree.

A GRIEF I KNEW FIRSTHAND

Nineteen years earlier, my father died the day after I flew to Hungary to begin a two-week speaking tour at women's events across Eastern Europe. If I had chosen to return to Canada for Dad's service, the event planners would have suffered significant inconvenience and financial consequences. They had rented venues, arranged for food services, translated my handouts, and more. Registrants from far and wide had made their travel plans to come, expecting to hear teaching on a specific theme based upon a book I'd written.

For all those reasons, I felt compelled to fulfill my commitment. God affirmed my decision twice, but still, I cried until no tears remained.

CARRIED BY OTHERS IN THE WEEPING

Members of my friend's church family came alongside her to provide comfort and care just as my missionary coworkers came alongside me. They prayed with me, lent listening ears so I could process grief aloud and gave me space to process in silence. Their presence and compassion strengthened me in my suffering.

WHEN WEEPING MEETS BETRAYAL

Maybe you've experienced a situation over which you cried countless tears. David felt that way when he and his men found Ziklag destroyed and their wives and children kidnapped by the Amalekites: "So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep" (1 Samuel 30:4 NIV). In David's case, however, his friends did not offer support. Instead, they blamed him for their pain and threatened to stone him. Despite grief and betrayal, David "found strength in the LORD his God" (1 Samuel 30:6 NIV).

Those words—"found strength in the LORD his God"—shower us with hope and courage. If David found strength in the Lord amid desperate circumstances, then we can do the same. How so? By discovering who God is as manifest through His names and then choosing to live from that truth. Here are three names of God that describe His character and strengthen us to persevere:

THREE NAMES THAT HOLD US STEADY

1. *Yahweh Ropheka*—"the LORD your healer"

When hard situations break our hearts, let's find strength in the psalmist's words, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Psalm 34:18 NIV). His presence is real, and He will repurpose our pain when we entrust it to Him.

2. *El Emunah*—"Faithful God"

When life hurts, we might doubt God's presence and intent toward us. Let's battle those doubts with the truth—God is faithful. Let's trust His heart even when we don't understand His ways. "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22–23 NIV).

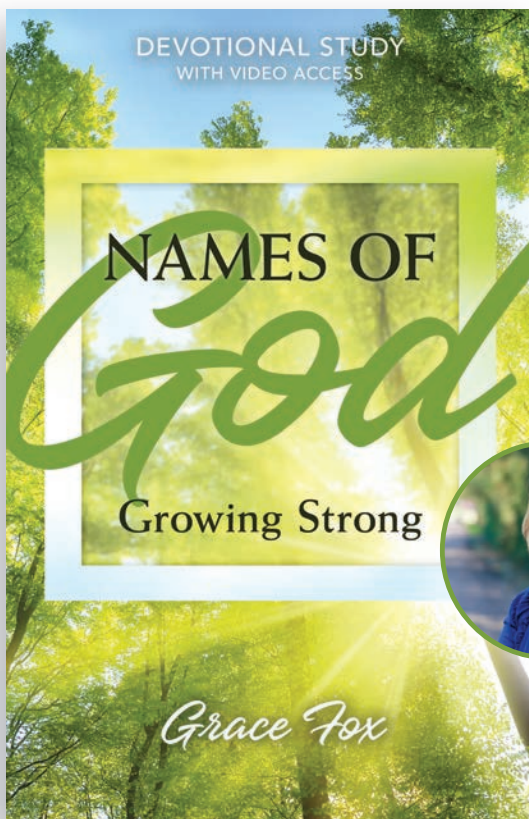
3. *Ruach Elohim*—"Spirit of God"

This name tells us that God gives comfort, brings order from our chaos, and covers us in prayer. Imagine! At times, the only prayer we can utter is "Help!" but we can rest assured that, in our weakness, the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:26–27).

No one signs up to suffer, but everyone walks that road sooner or later. Living from the truth of who God is holds us steady and strengthens our soul during those desperate times.♥



Grace Fox has authored 16 books including *NAMES OF GOD: GROWING STRONG*. She is a missionary, popular Bible teacher, and a member of the "First 5" writing team (P31 Ministries). GRACEFOX.COM.



Have the demands of life left you weakened and weary?

Do you struggle to get back up after life has knocked you down?

Every day requires a fresh dose of inner strength if we are to keep putting one foot in front of the other.



Names of God: Growing Strong by Grace Fox invites you to explore seven Hebrew names of God that will encourage you and fortify your faith.

Perfect for individual or small group study, *Names of God: Growing Strong* will help empower you to "do all things" through Christ as you grow in his strength (Philippians 4:13 KJV).

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SHATTERED FOR GLORY

A HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

From strip joints and gentlemen's clubs to the ballrooms of Mar-a-Lago, Jeanne learns that pain is not without purpose.

Shattered for Glory: A Human Trafficking Survivor's Journey to Freedom recounts the extraordinary true story of Jeanne Roberson's journey to freedom from the bondage of the adult entertainment industry. Her gripping memoir stands as a testament to resilience, faith, and transformation.

A month after turning seventeen, Jeanne is manipulated, groomed, and trafficked into the adult entertainment industry as a stripper by a woman. She is catapulted to stardom in the dark world of sex, drugs, and alcohol.

In a miraculous twist of fate, after a near-death experience, God delivers her out of the devil's playground and places her on a journey to freedom and unshakeable faith. But not without a battle for her soul.

Shattered for Glory is a powerful read for anyone who feels broken, lost, and is searching for hope.

SHATTERED FOR GLORY

A HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

JEANNE ROBERSION


THE WELL
PUBLISHERS

ISBN: 978-1-954658-22-6



GROOMED

Protecting Our Children from the Messages We Don't See

At a well-known preschool, a teacher discovered a group of four-year-olds gathered in a corner of the playground. The girls were lifting their dresses, showing each other their panties, decorated with rainbows, unicorns, and butterflies. The little boy proudly lowered his trousers to show off his new Superman underwear.

Without images on undergarments, the children wouldn't have had a reason to show them. Are images really necessary on children's underwear? Imagine my astonishment when I learned one of those little girls was my granddaughter.

ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS

Could this be a subtle form of grooming, aimed not only at children but also at parents and grandparents?

Is the deliberate use of media, marketing, and cultural messaging to influence children a form of grooming? Some call it cultural influence. Personally, I don't see much difference—it subtly grooms parents and grandparents as well as our children, and we don't realize it.

THE MESSAGES HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

We buy the products, turn on the TV or internet, and rarely consider the long-term effects of what our kids are watching. How are the characters dressed? Is the show truly age-appropriate? Are seven-year-olds watching programs meant for tweens, ages eight to twelve?

Repeated exposure to specific ideas shapes children's behavior and who they want to become. Over time, these ideas are normalized, leaving them more vulnerable to manipulation and predatory influences.

BEING THEIR PROTECTORS

The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6 NKJV).

Once children begin using computers, tablets, and phones, they become vulnerable to online predators lurking in chat rooms and gaming platforms.

HOW CAN WE KEEP OUR KIDS SAFE?

Here are some ideas:

Is the deliberate use of media, marketing, and cultural messaging to influence children a form of grooming?

JEANNE ROBERSON

- Teach children early to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate touching.
- Don't force a child to hug or kiss anyone, including family members. Let it be their choice.
- Explain the importance of privacy. Remind them to close the door when toileting, changing, or bathing.
- Make sure your child knows the difference between a secret and a surprise, and the importance of telling you if anyone, even a family member, asks them not to tell.
- Most importantly, build trust. Tell them they can talk to you about anything, that you won't get angry, and that no matter how bad the problem is, you'll work it out together.
- Monitor and limit screen time on phones, tablets, and television. Encourage reading, art, and creative play instead.
- Implement parental controls on all devices, since unexpected ads can spark curiosity.
- Talk to them about inappropriate content, and stress the need to come to you immediately if someone has shown them something inappropriate, even a friend.
- Be a good example by avoiding sites and shows you don't want your child to view.
- Know your children's passwords, and set boundaries and time limits for device use.
- Create a signed phone agreement defining the rules and dangers. Tell your child not to delete inappropriate images until authorities are notified—it may involve trafficking victims, and the trafficker may be pursuing your child.

TOOLS THAT CAN HELP

Gabb, Bark, and other companies offer parental-controlled phones that let children talk with family and friends but block internet, social media, app stores, and unsafe sites. Education is the key to keeping our children safe. ♥



Jeanne Roberson is an Anti-Trafficking Advocate, Author and Speaker who works in the Christian film industry. To find out more about her ministry and story check out inspiringsouls.com.





"By the time we gathered around the fire, I spoke up, 'I think we need to forgive one another.'"

—LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD

the 30 year Handshake

A chance encounter thirty years later became a powerful reminder that God never forgets acts of obedience, even when we do.

The rehearsal dinner was winding down at a popular Mexican restaurant in Fabens, Texas, when I got up to stretch my legs. The room was full of family—laughter and the warm noise of celebration. I wandered over to make small talk with the manager, a friendly man in his thirties.

"You know," I said, "I was in Fabens thirty years ago to this day."

His bright brown eyes searched my face, and he reached for my hand.

"Were you one of the missionaries who came to tell the children about Jesus?"

I nodded, not yet understanding what was happening.

His eyes filled. "I was one of the children who gave my heart to Jesus that week. Thank you for coming."

I stood there holding the hand of a man whose eternity had been

shaped by a summer I had nearly forgotten—and I understood something I hadn't grasped at eighteen. God keeps the records of faithful moments even when we don't.

THE SUMMER I ALMOST STAYED HOME

Thirty years earlier, my friend Lilly and I had stepped off a Greyhound bus in Dallas—two eighteen-year-olds on a mission adventure, not at all sure what we were doing. We'd been sent by the Texas Baptist Mission Board to travel city to city, helping small churches run their Vacation Bible Schools. That week, we joined a church youth group heading to the border town of Fabens to run a VBS for the local kids.

Mornings were full of songs, crafts, and the simple telling of the gospel. Evenings were an outdoor revival beside the local church. It felt wonderful.

THEN SOMETHING WENT WRONG.

One evening during the service I felt it—an eerie absence I couldn't name. The preacher preached with passion, the words were right, but something was deeply off. It felt as though God's presence had vanished into the warm night air. I looked around and saw the same hollowness on other faces. On the bus ride to the campfire afterward, Lilly and I both noticed it—the youth group's joy had grated into friction. Sharp words turned into sullen silence.

I prayed quietly: What does this mean, Lord?

By the time we gathered around the fire, I spoke up, "I think we need to forgive one another."

What happened next surprised me. With tears, the teenagers began forgiving one another. Faces softened. Hugs were shared by the firelight. The tension in their faces gave way to love, and for the first time all night, our joy returned.

The next morning at VBS, thirty-eight children gave their hearts to Jesus.

WHAT FORGIVENESS UNLOCKED

We learned later that a group, with deliberate intent to disrupt, had infiltrated the evening services. Working quietly among the young people before each service began. After our time of prayer that night, the men didn't return. But more than their absence, I noticed the presence—God's presence was felt again in everything that followed.

Looking back, I don't believe the harvest came in spite of the conflict inside our group. It came after we addressed it. Our disrupters had tried to stop the move of God by sowing seeds

of discord, but our forgiveness toward one another cleared the spiritual atmosphere. And thirty-eight children walked into the light of God's love.

Before the harvest came the forgiveness. Jesus said the world would know we belong to Him by our love for one another (John 13:35). It makes me wonder if unity among believers opens more spiritual doors than we understand this side of heaven.

I've thought about this truth many times in ministry. How often do we go out to share the gospel while carrying unresolved friction with the people beside us? How often does unforgiveness between believers quietly close doors that God wanted open? That summer taught me that evangelism isn't only about what we say to the people we're trying to reach. It's also about what we've settled with the people standing next to us.

GOD KEEPS THE RECORDS

Standing in that restaurant thirty years later, holding a stranger's hand, I realized I had planted a seed I never saw grow. I had no idea which child went home changed that week. When the church bus returned to Dallas, I boarded a Greyhound and went back to my life and forgot most of the details.

God forgot none of them. Not the bus rides. Not the prayers whispered under Texas stars. Not the awkward teenage obedience. Not one child sitting in a folding chair listening to the gospel. Heaven records what earth too easily dismisses.

He arranged a family wedding in Fabens, Texas. He put me in the right restaurant. He brought a thirty-something manager out of the kitchen at exactly the right moment. Thirty years to the day.

If you have been faithful in a small place—a VBS classroom, a conversation that felt insignificant—take heart. God is keeping the records you've already forgotten. And sometimes, thirty years later, He lets you shake the hand of someone whose life was changed because you showed up.

Be faithful. Forgive quickly. Trust God with the fruit.

You may not see it for thirty years. But you will see it. ♥



Linda Evans Shepherd is the publisher of *Leading Hearts* and the founder of the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association. Watch for her new book, *Praying the Word for Women: 90 Scripture-Powered Prayers to Calm an Anxious Heart*, from Christian Art Gifts, which hit number 25 on the ECPA's new release list.com.



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**"A Holy Ache is something you're
not meant to carry alone."**

-Linette Rainville, founder



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A HOLY ACHE

The Biggest Clue to Your Calling

I didn't recognize it as a "Holy Ache" at first. At the time, it just felt like heartbreak.

I had an infant in a stroller, my three-year-old in tow, and a bag of skinny jeans balanced awkwardly on top of the stroller shade. Those jeans didn't fit my new mom body anymore, and honestly, neither did the season of life I was trying so desperately to hold together.

I walked into a thrift store hoping to trade those clothes for items my family actually needed. But the clerk replied, "I'm sorry, that's just not our policy. You can take your donation bag out back."

There I stood—deer-in-the-headlights style—whispering under my breath, "But God, ... you gave me this idea."

WHEN A "YES" SPROUTS

Somewhere between that store door and my car door, God planted a tiny seed in my heart that grew into what I now call my Holy Ache.

Right there in the parking lot, with hot tears streaming down my face, I prayed, "Lord, somehow, some way... let me be the one to help women in situations like mine."

At the time, I had no idea that one small "yes" would eventually grow into a community outreach that now helps meet over 40,000 food, clothing, and infant needs each year.

But that's the thing about a Holy Ache. It never comes as a full blueprint. It's more like a breadcrumb trail God drops along your path.

A persistent stirring.

A burden you can't shake.

Something that makes you think, "Somebody should do something about that..." Until suddenly you realize ... that somebody might just be ME.

TENDING TO THE CALL

The Holy Ache calls you to notice something that feels broken, missing, or unjust—the single mom, the widow, the abused, the overlooked. It's the thing you can't stop thinking about, praying about, or dreaming about. It's like a pebble in your shoe; the why that makes you cry and the thing that makes you sing. Then the Holy Spirit whispers, "Pay attention here." So many women minimize their Holy Ache because it starts small, but God plants dreams in seed form.

*Holy Ache is not
something we're meant to
carry alone. We need a tribe.*

—LINETTE RAINVILLE

HOW TO GROW YOUR HOLY ACHE

1. Name It

What breaks your heart? What keeps bubbling up in your spirit? What do you go to bed thinking about and wake up still carrying?

2. Notice the Pattern

What burden keeps returning? Start to journal it. God often repeats what He wants us to pay attention to.

3. Next Step

Ask God. Not for the entire five-year plan, but for the next step.

4. Now Do It

Start small, but dream big. One conversation. One gathering. One act of obedience.

Because here's what I've learned after years in ministry: A Holy Ache is not something we're meant to carry alone. We need a tribe.

MODERN-DAY ESTHERS

That's one of the reasons I love gathering women inside our Daughters United sisterhood. Our callings grow best when we are in community. Women need spaces where they can heal, pray, build, and be reminded they are not crazy for dreaming big.

Your story matters, too. That's why I also love to spotlight modern-day Esthers on the *What's Your Story?* podcast. Their stories remind us that God still uses ordinary gals with willing hearts.

I hope that today my story is confirmation for you, letting you know that what's tugging on your heart isn't random. It's holy. And I pray that you, like Queen Esther, can hear the Lord echo this in your spirit: "For such a time as this" (Esther 4:14).

So don't ignore your ache. Because the very thing that breaks your heart may be God's clue to your calling. And, precious friend, you don't have to start big. You just have to start. ♥



Linette Rainville, founder of Daughters United, is an award-winning author, speaker, podcast host, and ministry mentor who loves helping women grow God-sized dreams, ministries, and missions from the ground up. Her greatest joy is cheering women on to START LITTLE and DREAM BIG FOR JESUS. www.StartLittleDreamBig.com.





Sometimes God plants a dream long before we're ready to live it—and faithfully brings it to life in His perfect timing.

"Today, from my office, I watch actual ships sail by—but not with my first-grade author's dream that is now a reality."

Lisa M. Pritchard

God's plan for a first-grade author

With squinted eyes, a furrowed brow, and one missing front tooth, I watched from my school desk in the back corner of the room. Mrs. Toms called her students one-by-one into a side room. *Thud!* The door closed. Minutes passed; the student emerged and called the next student. Were they receiving a gold star or candy? Were we assigned a Scripture to memorize, and I forgot? My stomach churned.

Finally, it was my turn. Mrs. Toms sat in a tiny, plastic student chair. Grimacing, she turned a book toward me and flipped the pages. I recognized it at once and beamed with pride.

She asked, "Do you recognize this book?"

"Yes."

"Did you take the book home?"

"Yes."

"Did you write this story in the book?"

"Yes." *Why is she asking me these questions?*

"Why did you write the story in the book?"

She's gone mad. Does she not remember the assignment she gave us?

"Check out a book from the library and write a story about it."

I explained that I took great pains to find a wordless book so I could write a story.

"Am I in trouble?"

Sensing my fear, she smiled. "No, this is a delightful story, but next time draft your story on your own paper."

Whoops. My parents are going to kill me. Obviously, they didn't, or I wouldn't be telling this story. Years later, that book was given

to me, and this treasure continues to be in my care.

A DREAM THAT WAITED

For decades, events—both tragic and happy, necessary and not so much—formed a barrier between me and the dream of becoming an author. So long that I thought that ship had sailed.

Two years ago, my husband and I moved to the coast, and I committed to authoring a book for the Lord. Within weeks, He worked my steps into place like a puzzle, connecting me with the leader of Word Weavers, Coastal Carolinas chapter. I hadn't recognized that a writing group and critiques were essential but felt nudged to join.

That is where I met a woman, now a dear friend, who, in her professional life, edited pieces for publication and now manages her blog, *Living Seasons Ministry*. She published my first guest writer piece.

GOD OPENED EVERY DOOR

After that, God led me to a conference I was bent on not attending. The president of Coastal Carolinas, also a dear friend, convinced me to flip the switch from "I'm not going" to "I can't wait to go."

At the conference, my work was selected for publication in a compilation, and I met a godly woman who founded a speakers

conference, who later enhanced my presentation techniques. One night at dinner, I met the publisher who contracted my first children's picture book. At that time, I had no plans of writing children's books. Now, I'm writing two separate series for different age groups.

TRUSTING GOD'S TIMING

Today, from my office, I watch actual ships sail by—but not with my first-grade author's dream that is now a reality. I don't need to know what is essential. My Father provides it and leads me to it. These written details warm my heart, and I'm reminded God can make anything happen.

"With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
Matthew 19:26 NASB1995

God worked in my life, and He can work for all of us. When He gives us a job to accomplish, He furnishes the resources. Unknown and invisible doors open wide. We only need a willing heart to walk through them and confidence in His timing and ability to conquer the challenges that may come. ♥



Lisa M. Pritchard, children's author and speaker, creates uplifting stories that inspire young readers to love reading, build confidence, and grow kindness through engaging characters and heartfelt, educational adventures.

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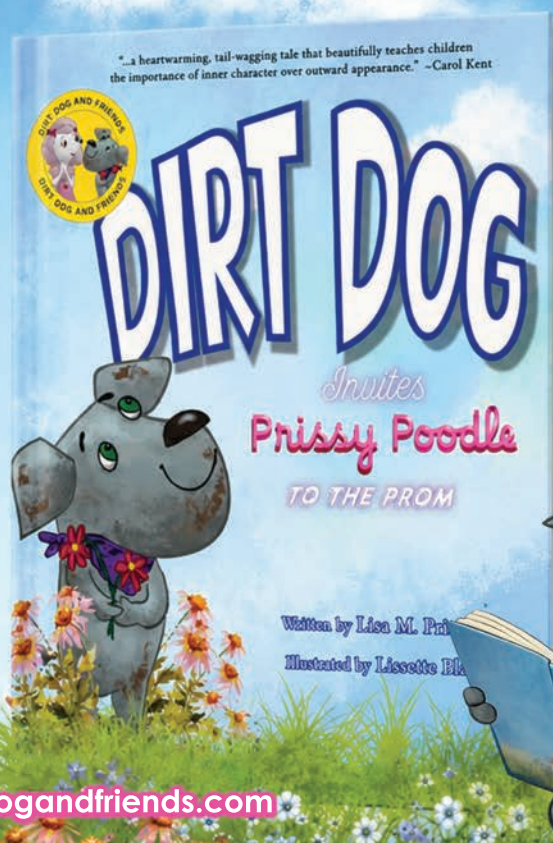
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Revival has always begun with ordinary people who humbled themselves before God and responded to His call.

— JOLIE VOGLIARDO

America: Awakening the Sleeping Giant

God's call to revival begins in His Church.

No other nation throughout history—certainly in the last two centuries—has had a greater Christian influence in the world than America. The U.S. has sent out more missionaries, released more godly Christian music and media, and raised up more preachers and influencers than any other country.

This nation began in holy covenant with God, and so we had God's blessing. America was filled with numerous God-fearing, Bible-believing, holy men and women.

However, with all the good America has done, we would be naïve to think that the devil sat idly by and passively watched America thrive—spiritually, materially, and financially. It is against Satan's nature to simply be a spectator as godly saints began to multiply and spread across the nation and travel to distant lands to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is against his nature to watch a person, a city, a nation prosper and enjoy God's blessings.

Living up to his name as the one who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy, Satan began to strategically, gradually suffocate America, stealing her anointing and leading her further off track. The devil targeted us. He capitalized on our weaknesses. He introduced multiple forms of deception and doctrines of demons to weaken the body of Christ. He stoked the flames of unbelievers and used them to negatively influence the populace through education, media, business, politics, news, literature, entertainment, religion, etc. It can be argued that, as a nation, we now negatively affect the world far more than we positively affect it.

WHEN WE LOSE OUR FOCUS

Truthfully, I believe America has lost her way, and the nation's current form of Christianity is largely diluted and impotent. For all the good America has done, we have conversely done much evil.

The devil worked hard to shut us up and stop our positive

influence in the world. It started with one person at a time, like a contagious virus. As the infection spread, our nation became very sick—as it is today. And this nation is not just sick, but it is contaminated with some highly virulent strains of bacteria (spiritually speaking).

OUR HOPE FOR REVIVAL

We must begin to deal with the spiritual infection in this nation and the American church one organ at a time. May God's holy Word be a potent medicine, strong enough to purge the sickness spreading through our land. Truly, the only prescription strong enough to kill the infection is massive repentance and a return to deep humility before God, a holy fear of God, and a renewed and passionate devotion to Jesus—the lover of our souls.

Indeed, a sweeping awakening is the only hope for America's church and citizens. We can tell that it has begun in pockets of the U.S., praise God! And it is growing. But we must not settle into complacency. We must continue to pray for it to build momentum and to grow into wildfires that sweep across our land, from north to south and east to west! And may these wildfires not just cause bursts of explosions that die down quickly. May awakening move through regions, causing tremendous, permanent transformation as people confess their sins to God, repent, and realign their lives with the Bible. ♥

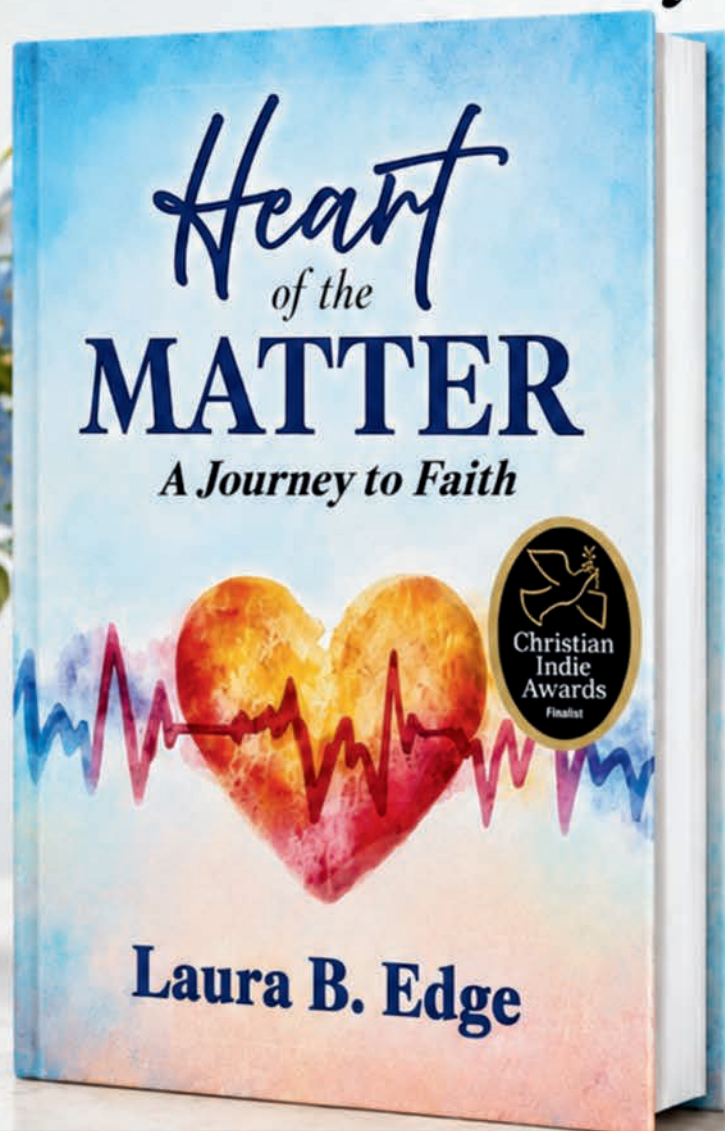


Jolie Vogliardo is the author of **AMERICA: THE SLEEPING GIANT AND HER SLUMBERING CHURCH**. Through her ministry and writing at PursueHoliness.com, she encourages believers to pursue a deeper relationship with Christ and pray for personal and regional revival.



Heart of the MATTER

A Journey to Faith



Heart of the Matter: A Journey to Faith chronicles Laura's battle to stay alive long enough to raise her two young children. The mother of five- and six-year-old boys trades Little League games for hospitalizations and her favorite Italian foods for handfuls of pills. She learns to trust God for each heartbeat and finds faith in His goodness. A survival story with a message of hope, *Heart of the Matter* invites readers into the fragile space between fear and faith. For anyone facing life's greatest challenges or asking its most impossible questions, it reminds us that even in our darkest seasons, faith becomes the light that leads us through.

Available wherever books are sold.



*Scan to learn
more about
Laura's story.*



When we serve our families as unto the Lord, our work becomes worship.

— GINA ROMERO

The Quiet Filling

Timeless Homemaking for Modern Women

The sink was full again.

Warm water ran over my hands as I stood in the soft light of the evening—dishes stacked, laundry half-folded, one of my children calling from the next room. It was one of those ordinary days that felt anything but extraordinary. No applause. No milestones. Just the typical routine of home.

WAS I HAPPY?

As I considered this, I felt a whisper in my heart: This matters.

For many Christian women, homemaking can feel like a paradox. We are called to serve—to nurture, to give, to build lives of doing everything, all the time, while keeping our head on straight. In a culture that often measures worth by visibility and achievement, the ordinary unseen work of the home can often feel overlooked, unappreciated, and even draining.

GOD'S ECONOMY

I used to believe that if I gave too much of myself away, I would end up empty. That pouring out meant losing something I couldn't get back.

But God has a different economy.

Scripture reminds us, "Whoever refreshes others will be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:25). There is a spiritual exchange that happens when we serve our families with hearts surrendered to Him. When we choose patience over frustration, kindness over convenience, presence over distraction—we are not simply expending energy. We are stepping into obedience.

And obedience is never empty.

One evening, as I wiped down the counter for what felt like the hundredth time, I paused. Instead of rushing through the task, I whispered a simple prayer: Lord, this is for you.

Nothing about the task changed—but everything about my heart did.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WORSHIP

That small shift transformed my perspective. The wiping, the cooking, the listening, the tending—it all became an offering. Not to perfection. Not to expectation. But to the Lord.

And in that offering, I began to notice something beautiful—joy.

Not the loud, celebratory kind. But a silent, steady joy that settled deep within me. A sense of fulfillment that didn't depend on how much I got done, but on why I was doing it.

When we serve our families as unto the Lord, our work becomes worship.

This doesn't mean every moment feels easy or fulfilling. There are still long days, messy rooms, and weary hearts. But God meets us right there—in the middle of the ordinary. And as we pour out in love, He faithfully pours back into us with strength, grace, and peace.

A TAKEAWAY FOR YOUR HEART

You don't have to wait for a "bigger" calling to live a meaningful life. Your home is holy ground. The meals you prepare, the conversations you nurture, the care you give—it all matters deeply to God and to the people in it, even if they don't always say so.

So the next time you find yourself in the silent, unseen moments of homemaking, remember this: You are not just maintaining a home. You are cultivating a space where love grows, faith is lived, and God is honored.

And as you pour out, He will fill you—again and again—with the joy that comes from serving Him. ♥

Gina Romero MA, ASBC is an award-winning, best-selling author, speaker, podcaster and homemaking expert. She is a founding broadcast partner for JesusSaid.TV with her homemaking TV show *Right to the Heart of Home and Family*. You can find her on social media @WelcomeHomeByGina. WelcomeHomeByGina.com





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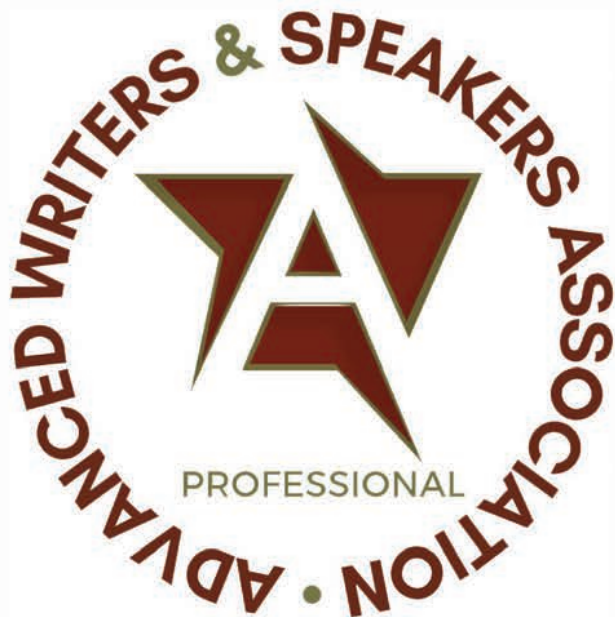
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5 THINGS YOUR ADHD FRIENDS WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT THEM

(and please don't mistake our caring for not caring)



The distracted mind is not a lazy mind. It is an overcrowded one. Too many tabs open. Too many feelings. Too much noticing all at once.

—AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY

Have you ever tried so hard not to mess up that trying itself made you mess up? Have you ever dropped the ball for someone you love—not because you didn't care but because your brain just didn't get the memo that you were needed?

That's what it feels like to live in a spaghetti brain. And if nobody has ever explained that to you—consider this a decoder ring. From us to you. With love.

1. WE ARE NOT MAKING IT ABOUT US.

When we say ME TOO, we are not hijacking your story. We are handing you a lifeline. We interrupt because we connected. We offer solutions because we hate seeing people hurt. It lands wrong sometimes. We know. We replay it for hours afterward. We didn't mean it the way it landed. We promise.

2. OUR BRAINS ARE OVERCROWDED. NOT EMPTY.

The distracted mind is not a lazy mind. It is an overcrowded one. Too many tabs open. Too many feelings. Too much noticing all at once. We notice beauty. We notice injustice. We notice emotional shifts in rooms. We notice hurting people. The problem is never that we don't care enough to pay attention. The problem is that we are paying attention to everything simultaneously.

3. WE ARE EXHAUSTED FROM TRYING TO PROVE WE CARE.

All our lives we've been told our inattentiveness indicates we don't care about anyone else but ourselves. And we do care. We feel genuinely guilty every single time we forget something someone asked us to do. Not a little guilty. The kind that replays on a loop at 2 a.m. alongside seventeen other things we probably also forgot. ADHD feels like that Operation game—trying SO hard not to touch the edge until the pressure itself makes your hand shake.

The minute I get handed something I'm asked not to lose, I immediately have a panic attack knowing the harder I try, I AM definitely going to lose it. More than five decades in and my keys are still attached to me with a carabiner—like a preschooler still wearing mittens on strings. It is not proof that something is wrong with you.

It is just a very full brain doing its very best.

4. WE ARE NOT IGNORING YOU. OUR BRAIN JUST TOOK A JOG.

My husband says my multitasking is a disorder. Honestly, he is not wrong. My brain is continually completing four projects, replying to conversations I haven't had yet, and building a new business even when I am sitting completely still. My body may be in the room—my brain took a hard left turn thirty seconds ago and disappeared down a dark corridor with a random squirrel. We are not ignoring you. We promise.

5. WE NEED OUR SPAGHETTI WITH A SIDE OF STABILIZERS.

We need our spaghetti friends—the ones who get the tangents, the looping thoughts, the ME TOO, the weird connections that make perfect sense to us. And we need our stabilizer friends—the ones who ground us in reality, slow us down a bit, and help us land safely without making us feel defective for needing help landing. Even when we sometimes want to drop-kick their advice.

AND ONE MORE THING.

Psalm 139 says God has searched us and known us. He doesn't just see what we did or didn't do. He sees the heart behind the mess. He knows we were trying. He knows we meant it.

We are not broken. We are heavenly haywired in our divinely-on-purpose DNA. And we are so grateful you stayed long enough to understand us a little better. ♥



Amber Weigand-Buckley is a multi-award-winning bestselling author, founding editor of Leading Hearts magazine, and podcast host. Her book *#SisterhoodoftheShortYellowPencils: Mental Health Mayhem, One Sticky Note at a Time*, was featured in Times Square. Find her at ShortyellowpencilRX.com and on socials @shortyellowpencilRX. Find *#randomdevothoughts* with Amber wherever you listen to podcasts. shortyellowpencilRX.com





When I was a little girl, my mama often called me, “Miss Sassybritches”—for those of you who know me, this probably comes as no surprise. Eventually, the “britches” part of my nickname dropped off, and I became simply, “Miss Sassy.”

It took many years of struggling with my strong-willed nature before I truly surrendered my sass to God, but once I did, God didn’t remove it, He just redirected it. Now I like to think I have a superpower called Spiritual Sass. And guess what? So can you!

Sassy has sometimes been used to describe a person in a negative light, and yet, it’s not a negative word. In fact, one of the main definitions for Sassy is: Lively, bold, and full of spirit. Who wouldn’t want to be all those things—especially where our faith is concerned? So, let me put your mind at ease—I’m giving you permission to be sassy for Jesus. Actually, I’m admonishing you to put on your “sassybritches” and do bold things for God!

FIRST SASS TACTIC: SEE YOURSELF AS SASSY FOR JESUS

A measure of Sassy Faith has always been in

you, but you must see yourself as having Sassy Faith, or as my mama would say, “You have to know it in your knower.” And that only happens by understanding what the Word of God says about you.

If you don’t know what the Word says, you might start believing the enemy when he whispers, “You’re stupid. You’re a failure. You’re unworthy. You’re never going to do anything of significance ...” But if you know the Bible says the devil is the father of all lies and no truth resides in him, then you’ll know whatever he is whispering to you is absolutely, 100 percent false!

You see, if you believe what the enemy says about you, you might forfeit your destiny.

But if you believe what God says about you, there is no limit to what you can accomplish through Him. So don’t let the enemy talk you out of your destiny, your calling, what is already yours! Get it in “your knower” what God says about you, and fan that Sassy Faith flame.

SECOND SASS TACTIC: STEP OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Nothing supernatural or monumental ever happens inside your comfort zone. That’s why you have to step outside that zone and into all that God has for you. Awaken that Spiritual Sass and do it afraid! Remember, you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength (Philippians 4:13). If you don’t know what you’re called to do, ask Him. God isn’t trying to hide your calling from you—He wants you to discover it and walk in it for His kingdom purposes.

Don’t let your insecurities, someone else’s opinions, or the enemy’s lies keep you in a box, limiting your vision and outreach. God has a plan for your life, and you’re going to love it! (See Jeremiah 29:11.)

THIRD SASS TACTIC: TAKE TIME TO DREAM

It’s time to dream again! Some of you have been in that surviving mode and God wants you to be in the thriving mode. You know how I know

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that? Because I have been right where you are ... living in the mundaneness of daily life, wearing all the hats, doing all the do’s and yet, feeling no joy or excitement in my walk with God. But not anymore. I’m joyfully and excitedly dreaming again, and feeling very spiritually sassy. Maybe you’ve forgotten how to dream, too. So let me remind you:

“Never doubt God’s mighty power to work in you and accomplish all this. He will achieve infinitely more than your greatest request, your most unbelievable dream, and exceed your wildest imagination! He will outdo them all, for his miraculous power constantly energizes you” (Ephesians 3:20 TPT).

If God has put dreams in your heart, begin praising Him and celebrate them coming to pass even before they do ... because they’re coming! God wouldn’t have put those dreams in your heart if He wasn’t going to bring them to pass. Remember, don’t seek the dream; seek the Dream Giver. Now go forth and get that Spiritual Sass on! ♥

Michelle Medlock Adams is an award-winning journalist with 90+ industry honors, a best-selling author of 100+ books, and an inspirational speaker with 30+ years of experience. She lives in

Southern Indiana with Jeff, her high school sweetheart, a houseful of beloved pets, and a closet overflowing with leopard print and Indiana University sports gear. Find out more about Michelle, as well as info on her new book Faith & Football: 30 Inspirations from IU’s Storybook Season at michellemedlockadams.com.

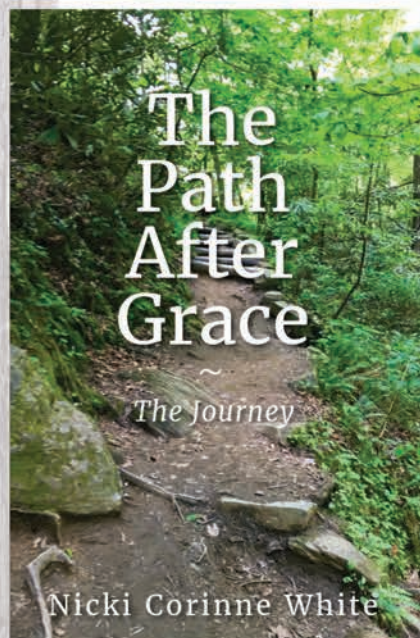


GET YOUR *Sassy* FAITH ON!

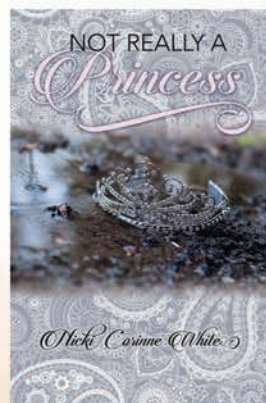
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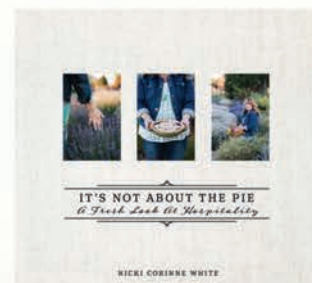
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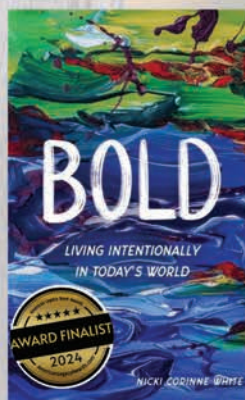
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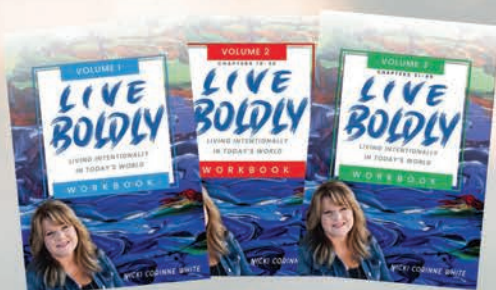
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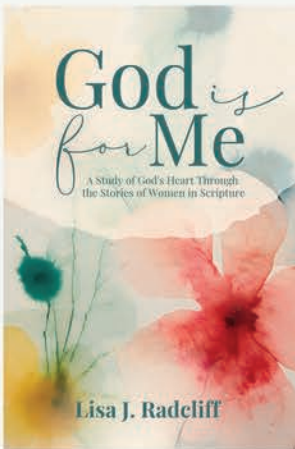
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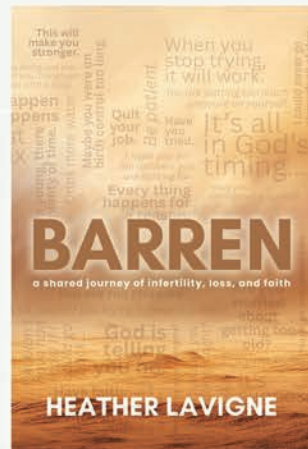


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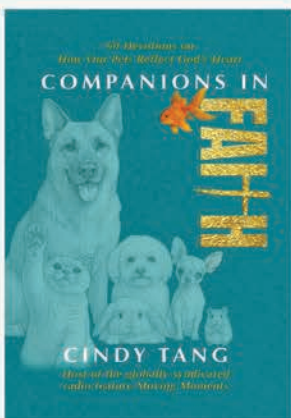


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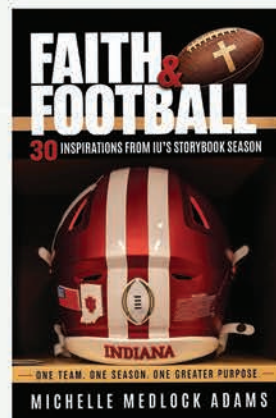


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