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EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMAN TO ARISE

LeadingHearts



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Evict Your
Emotional
Squatters

SACRED SCARS—

9 Things Pain
Teaches That
Nothing Else Can

Dr. Gladys Childs-
**Injustice Made Her
the Truth Doctor**



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LeadingHearts

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Are you a Christian Woman Called to Write & Speak?



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“Authenticity is not about perfection. It's about honesty.”



LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD
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PUBLISHER'S LETTER | LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD

Scars & Authenticity

When Jesus appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, He didn't hide His scars. |

Instead, He showed them. Those marks told the story of love, sacrifice, and healing. They were proof of what He had endured—and of the victory He had won.

We all carry scars. Some are visible, some are hidden deep inside. Each one tells a story—of hurt, yes, but also of survival, of healing, of God's presence even in the hardest places. Our scars are not the end of the story. They are part of the testimony of God's goodness.

This issue is an invitation to go deeper. Beyond surface appearances, beyond polite answers. We're stepping into authenticity—into stories that don't hide the scars, but reveal them as places where God's light shines through.

Inside these pages, you'll discover women who share honestly from their journeys. They open their lives to show where they were broken, where they wrestled, and how God brought restoration. Their courage to be authentic gives us all permission to stop pretending and start living truthfully.

Authenticity is not about perfection. It's about honesty. It's about connection. When we share our real stories—the ones marked by scars—we find that others lean in closer, not further away. We discover that the very places we thought disqualified us become the places where God's power shines the brightest.

So as you turn each page, don't rush. Immerse yourself in these stories. Let them speak to your heart. Allow them to remind you that you are not alone, that your scars have meaning, and that God is still writing your story.

May this issue encourage you to live authentically, to share your journey honestly, and to see your scars not as signs of weakness, but as testimonies of healing.

Love,

— Linda

lll
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This is YOUR Moment!

When Pink Chose Me

“Undress from the waist up, wipe off all

deodorant.” I like pink, but on this particular September day, the shade of pink wasn't one I'd choose—a tie-in-the-front top that came with very specific instructions that made vulnerability a mandate—not the option.

October means pink ribbons everywhere, but this year came crashing in as a reality check when pink chose me. Walking from the clinic to the diagnostic changing room, crossing that corridor where mortality meets you face-to-face—young and old beauties, all vulnerable from the waist up, missing the usual support that helps carry the weight closest to our hearts.

In this place we were a different kind of Pink Ladies tribe—not satin jackets and attitude, but hospital gowns and courage we didn't know we had. Sitting in that waiting room, my mind wandered to those pink naked ladies sprouting in my flower bed. Resilient things—some pulled from the root, yet still blooming in the driveway cracks. Stalks straight, heads held high.

That's when I looked down at my latest book—*Flowers Find a Way: Resilient Blooms of Relentless Faith*—and felt Father whisper: *Maybe you're here to plant something.*

The woman who walked in on me pulling up my yoga pants because I failed to lock the loo door? Comic relief. I blurted out, “Don't worry, we've all lost our dignity here—the number of times I've been felt up in this place.” Laughter broke across that room like medicine.

And then came the call with the results. Not cancer. But not nothing either. Something that could have turned bad if left—caught just in time because I showed up, put on the pink gown, and let them look. It's more like being handed back your own life with fresh eyes, realizing even when you're planted in the cracks, you can still choose to bloom.

If you're in your own pink gown season—whatever that looks like—waiting, wondering what in the world comes-next—you're not alone. You're planted. You're held.

This issue of *Leading Hearts* is full of these moments—the broken-to-healing stories that dig deep into the reality of God with us in every space. In the hospital gowns. In the waiting rooms. In the places we'd rather not be planted. These are the stories where light finds a way through our humanness, where hope grows in the cracks, and where we discover we were never standing alone. Turn the page. Let's bloom together.

—Amber



“ Even when you're planted in the cracks, you can still choose to bloom.



AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY
AMBERAUTHOR.COM

Maximize Your Team's Potential



*with Linda Goldfarb
in Memory of our Beloved Sister Linda Gilden*

I came across an article in Harvard Business Review called “Great Teams Are About Personalities, Not Just Skills,” by Dave Winsborough and Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic.

The authors mentioned a 2016 Google study where the company claimed to have found “the secret ingredients for the perfect team.”

It turns out Google doesn't just hire based on talent—they look for something they call “Googliness.” In other words, personality really matters.

And they're not alone. Many big organizations now use personality assessments to help them figure out who fits best where—whether it's hiring, promoting, or building the right mix of people for a project.

The Solo Work Myth

As speakers and writers, we sometimes feel we're working solo and don't need to think about team building or personalities. The truth is, we can't succeed alone. We must interact with editors,

designers, publishers, and others. Once our work is in print, we connect with marketers, readers, and the public. Speakers also need clear communication with event planners, those who help at book tables, accommodation hosts, and the audience afterward.

You may not have considered how much personality shapes your work or ministry. Learning a few relationship skills—and understanding both your personality and others'—can make every partnership more effective.

Beyond Labels: Understanding Your Work Style

There are many assessments that use different words to describe each personality, but you'll find most are grouped in similar ways and it's simple to determine which one fits you. Some use animal names, some letters, and others draw from ancient history. Here, we'll use words that are clear and easy to understand.

If you're a writer, you have a team waiting to help you. You're either a Mobilizer, Socializer, Stabilizer, or Organizer. Maybe the words *extrovert* and *introvert*

sound more familiar. The extroverts are the Mobilizers and Socializers, while the introverts are the Stabilizers and Organizers. When you narrow it down, you might recognize yourself.

Mobilizer: the get-it-done person.

Socializer: the life-of-the-party person.

Stabilizer: the keep-it-peaceful person.

Organizer: the everything-in-order person.

When Different Personalities Collide on Stage

Once you identify your personality, you can discover how helpful it is to know the personality of your event planner, publisher, and others you work with.

For example, if you're a Mobilizer speaker, you know exactly how things should be done—and want them done immediately.

However, if your event planner is a Socializer, she won't be as eager as you are to go over all the plans and details. Your to-do list may feel overwhelming to her. Offering lunch after the meeting (if you're in the same town) might help her stay focused since there's a promise of fun afterward.

If your planner is a Stabilizer, you may find him or her agreeing with everything just to keep peace and move things along. You and an Organizer will likely enjoy working out the details together, but take care not to create a debate over whose way is best. You both have strong ideas.

If you're the speaker, remember—the event planner brought you to the venue, and you're under his or her authority. Most of all, learn as much as you can about your audience and meet their specific needs.

In every case, remember to be respectful.

The Publishing Ladder Requires Relationship Intelligence

If you are a writer, you need to be aware that you are a very important part of a team. You cannot be successful in your calling unless you can work well with those up and down the publishing ladder. Likewise, publishers, editors, designers, and typesetters depend

on writers to provide the material they need to produce their publications.

As with speakers and event planners, writers will work far more effectively with others in the industry if they understand the personalities of those they collaborate with.

The Send Button Dilemma

Suppose you are an Organizer-type writer who is a perfectionist. First of all, it was probably hard for you to hit the send button—you wanted to make sure your manuscript was perfect. But on the other end of that send button is a Mobilizer editor who loves to dive right in, making notes and a list of changes for the author. If you know yourself well, you'll recognize that you must guard against taking those comments personally.

If you understand your editor's personality, you can view their feedback as constructive criticism meant to make your work shine. The Mobilizer's notes may come with fewer soft edges, while the Socializer may add a little fluff to make the process fun. You'll likely find fewer comments from Stabilizer editors, who prefer to move the project along with a minimum of conflict.

“**Before you label your event planner, editor, publisher or friend as someone who is hard to get along with, find out what their personality is.**”

Writing for Four Audiences at Once

As a writer, you also know you'll have readers—another part of your team—who represent all four personalities. Therefore, as you write, include something for your get-it-done person, life-of-the-party person, keep-it-peaceful person, and everything-in-order person. If you can do that, you'll broaden your readership and extend the reach of your message.

Before You Label Someone Difficult

A little personality insight goes a long way in helping you understand those around you, both personally and professionally. Before you label your event planner, editor, publisher, or friend as difficult, pause and consider their personality. You'll find it easier to work with them—and to respect their role—once you understand what motivates their responses. ❤️

Article adapted from LINKED by Linda Gilden and Linda Goldfarb. Take your free assessment at linkedpersonalities.com.



Faith Laid Bare
**God's Relentless
Love in Our Mess**



with Dr. Gladys Childs

The screams tore through our Texas evening like a siren. Family members, scattered around the house, ran into the living room—my brother, fresh from the shower, wrapped in a towel, water still dripping down his face. “What was that?” I asked, heart pounding. From the vacant house next door came sharp, unsettling sounds.

Soon, the street in front of us was a cacophony. Police cars filled the street. Neighbors spilled out of their homes. The ambulance arrived, then Life Flight. I watched as someone was loaded into the helicopter. At 13, in eighth grade, I had no idea those sounds would unravel our lives.

The following day, my brother was arrested, accused of the crime that had happened next door. How could that be? He was home with us, still damp from the shower. The nightmare began as circumstantial evidence quickly piled up. The following summer, as my dad reached his long-planned retirement, we packed up and moved to Arkansas, carrying the weight of ongoing court battles with us.

“**When Christians around me said, “Stop feeling sorry for yourself,” offering platitudes like “just pray” or “have faith,” I felt unseen. They saw my polished exterior, blind to the chaos within.**”

A Glimpse of Hope

Shortly after moving, a stranger knocked on our door, inviting me to a church youth group. I had no friends in this new town, and nothing better to do, so I went. Later, I received an invitation to attend church camp, and it was there that I met Christ.

Jesus' love didn't silence the ache; He stepped into it, raw and unfiltered. When I heard 1 Corinthians 13, it wasn't just words about love; it was a love that could transform a life lost in noise and chaos. For the next four years, that little country church became my refuge, surrounding me with love and laying the first foundations of my faith.

During that time, the years of litigation continued to drain us. By the time I was a sophomore in college, the verdict landed like a sledgehammer: decades in a maximum security prison for an innocent man. Our family, already fractured by my mother's alcoholism and abuse, splintered further. “It would have been easier if he had committed the crime,” I whispered to myself, the weight of his innocence crushing me.

Depression settled heavily around me. I concealed my pain, keeping family secrets hidden as I had been taught. When Christians around me said, “Stop feeling sorry for yourself,” offering platitudes like “just pray” or “have faith,” I felt unseen. They saw my polished exterior, blind to the chaos within.

The Weight of Injustice

My brother's case was complex. He was innocent, yet lies and assumptions had trapped him. Witnesses contradicted themselves,

timelines twisted, and every day of his incarceration reminded us of our helplessness. Visits carried a mix of hope and despair, love and longing. The injustice wasn't just in the courtroom; it echoed in our home, in fractured relationships, and in the silent corners of my heart.

Miraculously, after four long years, he was released. The circumstances were improbable, almost impossible to explain outside of divine intervention. Those years left

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Bare Faith

*where raw faith & deep pain
meet a relentless God*

Bare Faith isn't your typical faith show. No clichés. No easy answers. Just honest conversations that face real struggles and uncover hope in God's truth. Each episode includes study and leader guides, making it perfect for individuals, small groups, or churches. Watch Bare Faith Wednesdays at 9:00 p.m. CDT on the OBBM Network or stream anytime at www.obbmnetwork.tv



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scars, but they also planted seeds of purpose, shaping the path I would walk for the rest of my life.

From Pain to Purpose

The pain of those years lingered. I became determined to confront wounds with biblical truth, without judgment or shame. Tired of fluffy Christianese that dodged hard questions, I wanted to address life's messes honestly.

In the years after my brother's release, life moved forward, though not without its challenges. I attended seminary where my faith deepened and my calling became clearer. I married a fellow student and stepped into life as a pastor's wife, learning how to walk with people through their pain while raising my son. I also taught as a religion professor, guiding students wrestling with faith and doubt. I also served as a chaplain walking alongside college students through their joys and struggles. Those seasons didn't erase the ache of my past, but they layered wisdom and compassion onto my life, quietly preparing me for trials I couldn't yet see.

Life, however, tested me again. As interim dean at the university, a small group of faculty orchestrated a coup, built on lies, to derail my promotion. Years later, one of them made a false accusation against me. I spent nine hours with two lawyers listening as countless people spoke lies against me. Still, I stood firm as their stories shifted under my insistence on truth, and my reputation for honesty exposed the deception. That day, though it wrung me out, did not destroy me; it confirmed what I had learned early: God's love is relentless, and He will always redirect us to where we belong. Those lessons, tested in pain and forged through struggle, became the foundation for the work I do today.

Our Mess, His Purpose

Today, known as the "Truth Doctor," I help uncover the lies standing between people and God's truth. My TV show, Bare Faith, born out of the pain and faith struggles of my life, carries the tagline: Where raw faith and deep pain meet a relentless God.

God met me in every mess, turning injustice into a calling. He can do the same for you. Where is God calling you to trust Him in the midst of your pain? ❤️

Dr. Gladys Childs hosts the TV show Bare Faith, where raw faith and deep pain meet a relentless God. Known as the "Truth Doctor," she names the lies that stand between people and God's truth. Pastor's wife, author, speaker, former religion professor, and boy mom, Gladys speaks with authority, heart, and real-life grit. Learn more at gladyschilds.com. Follow on Instagram or Facebook.



“ I realized the simpler, more grounded lifestyle I'd been living is something people crave and desire in their fast-paced lives.

T.E.A.M. Up to Stay in Love





BY PAM FARREL
LOVE-WISE.COM

When we stood at the altar and promised to love in “sickness and health; for better or for worse,” I think we all secretly hoped and prayed there would be very little sickness and not much we’d call “worse.”

So, what can a couple do when life gets tough to help them “TEAM Up” to stay in Love?

Talk Honestly and Tenderly

When pressure mounts—from finances, health issues, career change, a move, a high-need child, caring for aging parents, or some other outside stressors—marriages often suffer in silence. But silence creates distance. Instead, choose to communicate openly, yet gently. Share your fears, frustrations, and feelings without accusing or blaming. Tender truth-telling builds trust. Plan regular heart-to-heart talks to keep love alive.

For the past decade, Bill and I have been caring for his aging parents, and on top of caring for them, I had a near-death coma caused by escalating out-of-control glucose. I recovered (with Bill’s tender loving care) and a year later I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer!

We created a lovely bistro garden table with comfy wicker chairs complete with a lovely shade umbrella for daily chats and twinkling lights for a little late-night

romance. Where in your apartment, RV, home or yard can you create a cozy conversation getaway?

*“Instead, speaking the truth in love ...”
(Ephesians 4:15 NIV).*

Encourage Each Other Daily

During difficult times, it’s easy to focus on what’s wrong and overlook what’s right. But couples who survive and thrive through trials are those who choose to

“speak life. A kind word, a simple compliment, or a whispered prayer can uplift a weary soul. Make it your mission to be your spouse’s #1 encourager—especially when the world feels heavy.”

We suggest you two create a rhythm of encouragement. Greet each other with a hug and a kiss and “Good Morning.” Ninety percent of couples that do this simple starter say their whole day improves! We also have a fun habit of each time we pray and bless the food; we kiss each other! We have been doing this since we got engaged over 47 years ago! It is nearly impossible to be angry or frustrated when you kiss this often! Lastly, we retire to bed together, cradle each other and pray over one another each night. By weaving God into our life all day, we find the words we choose tend to be kind, affirming, and uplifting.

*“Encourage one another daily ...”
(Hebrews 3:13 NIV).*

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“God’s promises remind you that you’re not alone—and that He is faithful to strengthen your love through every storm.



CONTINUED FROM P. 15

Anchor in God’s Promises

Feelings will fluctuate. Circumstances will shift. But God’s Word stands firm. When life shakes your marriage, let Scripture steady your hearts. Post verses on the fridge, pray them aloud, or declare them together during devotions. God’s promises remind you that you’re not alone—and that He is faithful to strengthen your love through every storm.

In one particularly strenuous season, we were selling our home to move to be caregivers. It was taking many more months than we hoped, and we were watching our stress rise and bank account dwindle. At the same time, I was writing my portion of *Discovering Hope in the Psalms: A Creative Bible Study Experience*. So we daily read and prayed through a Psalm together. One day, we both teared up as we read God’s promise to us:

*“You who have made me see many troubles and calamities **will** revive me again; from the depths of the earth you **will** bring me up again. You **will** increase my greatness and [**will**] comfort me again” (Psalm 71:20–21 ESV, emphasis added).*

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul ...” (Hebrews 6:19 NIV).

Move Forward Together

Tough times can either drive couples apart or draw them closer. The difference lies in the decision to walk through hardship hand in hand. Don’t retreat from each other—press in. Take the next steps together: go on a daily prayer walk, keep attending church or small group, join a group giving help in your area of stress, or find a Christian counselor and go together to the sessions. For us, teaching on marriage—in coaching sessions, for marriage enrichment events, conferences and weekend getaways—became an oasis as we “practiced what we preached!”

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

Pam and Bill Farrel are co-directors of Love-wise. Authors of 61 books including bestselling, Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti.

A template for A Conflict Covenant is available at www.Love-Wise.com



AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY
LH EDITOR



Why I'm Putting My Heart on "Do Not Disturb" (AND YOU SHOULD TOO)

**Can we just be honest for a second?
We're all living like emotional sponges
right now, soaking up everyone's
opinion, everyone's drama, everyone's
hot take on literally everything.**

And as someone who needs medication just to slow my brain down enough to think instead of react, let me tell you: this is not sustainable.

Are you feeling it, too? We're in the middle of a full-blown emotional real estate crisis and it's frankly exhausting to say the least.

The Airbnb Problem

Somehow many people have decided that being offended is a full-time job. Both sides of every argument are crumbling like overcooked cookies, and everything pops off like water on hot grease. Meanwhile, we're handing out keys to our emotional apartments like we're running an Airbnb special. "Come on in! Set up camp in my headspace! Make yourself at home. I'm preaching to myself right here, girls!

At the end of the day, I've found myself wondering why I'm exhausted, anxious, and emotionally bankrupt.

Here's a truth bomb: If I expect everyone to think like

me, act like me, and choose like me, then I'm not showing love—I'm being controlling while wearing a Christian T-shirt.

Do You Feel Yourself Sinking?

Remember Peter walking on water? He's out there doing the impossible, literally defying physics, because his eyes are locked on Jesus. But then what happens? He looks left, looks right, sees the humongous waves crashing in—and sinks.

We think it's the storms of life sinking us, but we rarely recognize that the firestorm of other people's opinions is what's really taking us down.

When I start focusing on the disturbing sound waves around me—the rhetoric, the controversies, the offensive everything—I sink. Over and over. And I realized something crucial: I do not have the emotional currency to spend on being offended.

Do you?

5 Signs You Have Emotional Squatters in Your Headspace

Here's how you know people are living rent-free in your emotional space:

1. You're rehearsing arguments with people who aren't even in the room. You know the ones—shower

arguments, 2 AM spirals, formulating your comeback before you even talk to the person.

2. Someone else's bad mood becomes your bad day. Their energy walks in and hijacks your peace like it owns the place.

3. You check social media and immediately feel your blood pressure rise. If scrolling feels like volunteering for an anxiety attack, that's a sign.

4. You can't focus on your own life because you're mentally managing everyone else's. Their choices, their drama, their problems become your obsession.

5. You feel responsible for fixing, correcting, or educating every wrong opinion you encounter. We are not required to do the heavy lifting—the only way people's opinions can change is if the Holy Spirit moves. And to be honest, there are things—there are mindsets—He wants to change in us as much as other people. We are on a mission to connect people with the Savior, not to build a kingdom in this world we are comfortable with.

The Monkey Wisdom We Forgot

Remember the three wise monkeys? Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil? There's some serious wisdom there. We have to guard three entry points:

- **Our ears**—what we allow in
- **Our eyes**—what we consume
- **Our mouths**—what we release

Most of us are drinking in controversy like it's our morning coffee, then wondering why we can't find peace. We're doom-scrolling through everyone's worst takes and worst days, then asking God why we feel so disturbed.

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you." (Isaiah 26:3 NIV).

Notice it says steadfast minds, not minds ping-ponging between every opinion, controversy, and offense.

Your Preemptive Strike: 6 Practical Ways to Protect Your Peace

1. Put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your heart. Not everyone gets access. Not every opinion deserves your response. Not every controversy requires your emotional investment. Full stop.

2. Recognize your triggers and stop them at the door. Is it social media? Certain news channels? Specific people? Name them. Write them down. Then create boundaries. Sometimes it's better to silence a friend than keep reading their feed and getting offended every time.

3. Have a script ready for emotional hijackers. Something like: "I'm not willing to receive this into my heart and mind right now." You don't have to be mean, but you have to be firm.

4. Remember: They don't care if you're offended. Seriously. The people offending you aren't losing sleep, so why are you giving them your peace?

5. Ask yourself: Is this stealing my peace or building my purpose? If it's not moving you toward what God called you to, it's a distraction. Release it.

6. Practice compassion without absorption. How did Jesus show up with compassion without being controlled by the crowd's emotions? He stayed centered on the will of God. Jesus is our deflection of emotional bullets, stopping them at the door of our heart.

“We live in a fallen world with fallen people having big emotions and trigger happy reactions.”

The Bottom Line

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the

peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7 NIV).

God offers to be the supernatural bouncer for your heart and mind. I want to take Him up on that offer.

The world is broken. All sides are equally fractured. We live in a fallen world with fallen people having big emotions and trigger-happy reactions. God's orchestrating the final outcome—He's got this. So why let people who don't even know you steal the peace that God freely gave you?

Put up your emotional "do not disturb" sign today. Keep your eyes on Jesus in the middle of the storm of rhetoric. And let everyone else's offense be their problem, not your prison.

Your peace is too valuable to give away for free. 

Amber Weigand-Buckley, editor of Leading Hearts, is an award-winning author and podcaster. For more insights like this, subscribe to #randomdevothoughts Insights on the Jesus Heart from an ADHD Mind, available on all podcast platforms and Coffee Chat with Amber & Lisa.



Silent Stones or a Living Temple

“ Our lives can be so filled with busyness and distractions that we neglect our time in prayer and worship.



BY PENELOPE CARLEVATO
PENELOPECARLEVATO.COM

Just before my husband and I left on our river cruise to Europe, I received news that my younger brother had died suddenly.

He never married and lived a quiet life with a few friends. Though in poor health, he still managed to walk every day. I am his only surviving relative, so the weight of settling his affairs fell on me. There were no other siblings left, no one else to help carry the load.

I carried that grief and sadness with me as we traveled with friends to Germany, France and Switzerland. The cruise itself was relaxing as we gently floated down the Rhine River. I found I had time to process the truth that my brother's life had ended. I grieved his loss but took comfort in knowing he had accepted Christ years earlier. He was no longer suffering, he was fully healed and in the presence of the Lord.

Toward the end of our cruise, we visited the French city of Strasbourg. Each morning of the cruise began with a city tour. On this particular day, as we walked down the cobblestone streets of the well-preserved part of the old city, we stepped into the city square and saw the breathtaking Strasbourg Cathedral, officially called the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg. Built between 1015 and 1439, it is acclaimed as one of the world's most beautiful examples of Gothic architecture. Its spire soars 466 feet into the air and the first sight of this magnificent building is breathtaking. This majestic structure is a testimony of artistry and devotion that took generations to build. Tourists filled the square, necks craned upward, snapping pictures of the astonishing cathedral.



I don't resent the tourists who are perhaps seeing this magnificent structure for the first time. What saddened me was the thought that the purpose for which it was built isn't what captivates the attention of the people today. The spires, stained glass windows, and vaulted ceilings with unparalleled artwork were meant to draw our eyes and hearts heavenward in worship of God. Yet now, in many of the churches, the gaze is now downward onto smartphones, with long lines of tourists missing the true reason these houses of God were created.

This contrast reminded me of how easily we can become spiritual tourists, no better than these travelers shuffling mindlessly in the shadow of once-living cathedrals. Our lives can be so filled with busyness and distractions that we neglect our time in prayer and worship. Do we move through life like a tourist, snapping mental pictures of Scripture, enjoying the beauty of worship without really engaging our hearts? Do we look good on the outside, but remain empty on the inside? God does not want spectators; He desires true worshipers. Our main purpose in life is to glorify him.

"Your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God. You are not your own, you were bought with a price."

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 NIV

The amazing cathedrals and churches gave me a renewed vision. We carry within us something much greater than stained glass windows and priceless art. When life brings loss or seems overwhelming, we are not just empty vessels or hollow cathedrals. We are living temples created by the Master Artist, filled with the Holy Spirit.

As I face the task ahead—settling my brother's affairs, sorting through his belongings, and making decisions about his property—I am not alone. I have the Holy Spirit as my comforter, my strength and guide.

Many cathedrals and churches across Europe may stand silent and empty, but as living temples, we don't have to follow that path. We have Christ, the Light of the World.

Visiting foreign countries allows us to experience new foods, and one of our favorites was the famous Black Forest Cake. Our chef on the cruise ship gave us his recipe for the original version, which was quite complicated. So here is an easier version that tastes almost as delicious!

Black Forest Cake

1 box Devil's Food or Chocolate Cake Mix

1 can pitted black cherries, drained well

1 8-oz pkg cream cheese, softened

1 pint heavy whipping cream

1/3 cup sugar

1 tsp vanilla

Maraschino cherries

Chocolate Shavings

Bake cake as directed in two 9" pans, Cool, then place one cake on a plate and trim the dome of the cake to form a flat top.

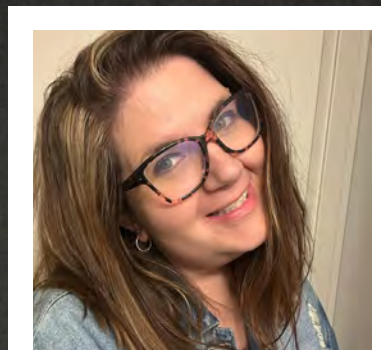
Blend the cream cheese, sugar and vanilla until smooth. Slowly add half the whipping cream and whip for a minute or so, until it starts to thicken. Add the rest of the whipping cream and whip until stiff peaks form.

Spread ¼ of the whipped cream on top of the first cake layer. Put the drained cherries on top of the whipped cream and spread evenly. Top the cherries with another ¼ of the whipped cream. Place the second cake layer on top of the mixture. Spread the remaining whipped cream on top of the cake and decorate with the maraschino cherries and sprinkle the shaved chocolate on top of the cherries.

Chill the cake in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.

Refrigerate leftover cake, covered. 

Find more of Penelope's recipes at leadinghearts.com.



BY JENNIFER TAYOR
LH MUSIC CONTRIBUTOR

Writing Worship for a Hurting Generation

—JASMINE CHRISTMAS BRADY—

When tragedy struck, Nashville worship leader Jasmine Christmas Brady didn't have to search far for the songs that could carry her through. They'd been there all along—in her blood, her heritage, and in the melodies she'd written as a grieving teenager.

She's the great-niece of Vestal and Howard Goodman of the Happy Goodman Family, granddaughter of Joel and LaBreeska Hemphill, and daughter of Candy Hemphill Christmas. For Nashville worship leader Jasmine Christmas Brady, music isn't just a career—it's a multigenerational calling woven into the fabric of her identity.

Surrounded by her encouraging musical family, Jasmine knew she wanted to pursue music at the age of three. As she grew up, her mother became one of the main acts with the Gaither Homecoming tour, selling out 20,000-seat arenas across the country.

Dinner with Legends, Dreams with Purpose

"At every family gathering, we would have the Happy Goodmans gathered around singing, and Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass, would come and sing," Jasmine recalls. "It would just be like family dinners."

What seemed ordinary to young Jasmine was extraordinary to everyone else. "Our nanny would take me to see my mom sing, because my dad was an evangelist and my mom would be traveling with the Gaithers," she explains. "My dad would be evangelizing around the country, and so on the weekends, our nanny would take us to see my mom at these huge arenas. I thought every kid did that—I thought every kid went and saw their moms singing and dancing in front of thousands of people."

Jasmine started songwriting and performing in her preteen years while her mother toured with the Gaithers. "I can remember them talking it through with me—how to craft songs, how to craft lyrics—and then they would let me sing it on the road with them," she said. "It was quite a heritage to be born into, and I'm grateful to carry on that legacy through my music, and hopefully through the music my children will make also."

When Grief Becomes a Gateway

In the last year, Jasmine released her fourth album, *Lover of My Soul*. But the project's origins trace back to two pivotal moments—one recent, one from her youth.

"My brother passed away unexpectedly in February 2022," Jasmine shares. "When we go through seasons of unexpected grief, we gravitate to words that we know—words like Psalm 23. I think for me, it's difficult to come up with something to create in those kinds of seasons."

So she went back to a song she'd written at 16, after a friend passed away. "I wrote most of the songs to carry me at that time," she explains. "And I went back as a 35-year-old to those words in a new season of grief and finished the song."

The album's title track was also inspired by watching the 2023 Asbury Revival unfold on news outlets and TikTok. As a worship leader, one detail struck her: "At three o'clock in the morning, there were no words on the screen. So it really inspired me to write songs that are singable—that we could close our eyes and lift our hands, just sing, and not necessarily have to worry about the lyrics."

A Message of Victory in Uncertain Times

Her hope for the music is clear: that people will know God is victorious and worthy of trust, praise, and worship.

"We can trust Him to see us through tumultuous and uncertain times. He won the victory on the cross at Calvary," Jasmine says. "Even though things look uncertain, we have a sure word—as the Scripture says—that Jesus Christ has conquered it all. Everything that the enemy tries to throw at us—fear or whatever else it could be—Jesus Christ has already won."

"The second thing I would hope people would get from this album is just to be inspired to worship and to declare God's victory. They can lift their hands, close their eyes and sing the words, 'Nobody loves me like Jesus.' Remember that God is on our side."

From Worship Leader to Bible Teacher

Besides leading worship, singing, and songwriting, the wife and mother of three has become a successful

“

**I went back as a
35-year-old to words
I wrote at 16 in a new
season of grief and
finished the song.**

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CONTINUED FROM P. 23

podcaster. Her Wholly Holy podcast has been reading through the Bible with listeners since 2023.

"At the end of 2023, I thought I would just do a video talking about different Bible translations and maybe different Bible plans because I have people message me every year asking all those kinds of questions," Jasmine explains. "Well, the video got so much more response than I had anticipated—like several thousands. In one week, we got 83,000 views in six hours, which is just incredible, because people are hungry for the Word."

The response revealed something deeper. "I think people want to read their Bible, but it's ancient literature. It's tough to just jump into it if you don't know what's going on," she says. "Just taking like 10 minutes on Monday to talk about the Word of God—it's been such a great blessing to me personally, but also I'm seeing people grow in their spiritual walk."

Listeners have even stopped her in Costco to share how much they love the podcast. People are engaging with Scripture in fresh, new ways. The Bible reading has inspired Jasmine so greatly that she's gone back to school to study more of the Word. In the last five years, she's earned her associate and bachelor's degrees, and she's now pursuing her Master of Divinity.

The Power of Small Yeses

"I believe that when we say yes to the Lord in the small things—even if it's just reading your Bible after your baby goes to bed in a one-room apartment—we never know what God will use it for," Jasmine reflects. "You just know He'll use it for great things. That's the thing about saying yes to God and reading His Word: when we say yes, He'll do it exceedingly abundantly above what we could ask for (Ephesians 3:20)."

Her advice to others is both practical and profound: "When we give God our yes, we don't have to know what the outcome will be. We don't, but God does. He will be a lamp at our feet, a light at our path. He won't be a stadium light—you can't see the whole way. So when God prompts us to do whatever it is, and we say yes, we don't have to know the outcome. We trust Him with that outcome."

She adds one final word of encouragement: "Persevere and do not give up, because anything worth having is worth fighting for. There will be times where we say yes because we know that God called us to it. He prompted us to do it."❤️

You may listen to Jasmine's Wholly Holy podcast and music on YouTube and all platforms. Follow Jasmine Christmas Brady on all social media platforms.



- Everyday Esthers - How One Person Can Silence the Chaos



BY CYNTHIA L. SIMMONS
CYNTHIALSIMMONS.COM

We live in such crazy times—what can one person possibly do? More than you might imagine. Our world feels topsy-turvy and our culture often makes little sense, but history shows us that individual actions can create powerful ripple effects, even in the darkest moments.

When Crisis Struck a Revolutionary

Consider Esther de Berdt Reed who lived through the chaos of the Revolutionary War. In 1776, as Britain invaded Philadelphia—the very heart of the American uprising—patriots like Esther had to flee for their lives.

But Esther faced extraordinary challenges. With her husband working alongside Washington, she had to evacuate their family alone while in the final months of her fourth pregnancy. Rising prices, economic collapse, and severe shortages made survival difficult. She grieved over mounting losses and hardships as she settled in Burlington, New Jersey, close enough to Valley Forge to hear the devastating reports from Washington's struggling army.

From Despair to Action

In her distress, Esther turned to prayer and reached out to help others however she could. When the British finally evacuated Philadelphia, she returned to find her home destroyed. Yet instead of focusing solely on her own losses, she noticed something that moved her to action: Continental soldiers arriving in the city wearing rags and begging for food.

She negotiated directly with Washington how to effectively use the money. Her efforts created America's first organized women's charitable group, which produced 2,000 shirts and provided direct financial support to Washington's troops.

Your Divinely Designed Difference

Following Esther's example, we can pray for God to lead us to people and places where He can use us. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand" (ESV). Based on that truth, the Lord has already prepared a unique place for you to bless those around you.

Just like Esther Reed, your actions could create ripple effects far beyond what you can imagine. As believers, we possess "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Peter 1:4 ESV). With such heavenly wealth at our disposal, we can afford to share generously with the hopeless people who surround us.

Your Action Plan

Here are practical steps you can take:

- **Identify your gifts**—Perhaps you excel at cooking, writing, organizing, or crafting
- **Seek God's direction**—Ask Him specifically how He might use your unique abilities

- **Create a focused plan**—Set a concrete goal, like providing meals for struggling families or tutoring at-risk students

- **Find your community**—Look for organizations or churches already working toward similar goals

- **Invite others to join**—Ask friends with complementary gifts to partner with you

The world's chaos doesn't have to paralyze us. Like Esther, we can transform our circumstances into opportunities to serve others and honor God. Your faithful actions today may be exactly what someone desperately needs—and exactly what God intends to use for His glory. ❤️



BY LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD
GOTTOPRAY.COM

The Prayer That Healed Broken Bones

The gondola car slammed into my back before I even had time to react.

It was a beautiful summer day at Breckenridge, and my family and I had taken the gondola up the mountain for lunch. At the top, each passenger had to exit one at a time as the car made its tight U-turn before sailing back down the wire toward the valley.

When it was my turn, I stepped onto the pavement and tried to swing my other foot free. As I stepped out, the gondola rocked wildly and the heavy car struck me square in the back of my rib cage and knocked me to the ground.

Pain exploded through my back as muscle spasms seized me, leaving me unable to rise from the pavement. My family helped me up, but by the time I reached the ER, scans confirmed the worst: three broken ribs.

The Prayer Before the Miracle

By the next morning, I couldn't get out of bed. I whispered: "Lord, I can't believe this happened. But I have decided to trust You. You said, 'By Your stripes I was healed.' So I ask You to heal me—and I choose to trust You no matter what. Thank You, Lord!"

That was my prayer of faith—the prayer of trust. Nothing complicated. Just a decision to rest my pain in God's hands, ask for healing, and trust Him in the no-matter-whats.

A few hours later, the follow-up X-ray told a different story. Instead of three badly broken ribs, I had only one slightly cracked rib. And the crushing pain? It was gone.

What If He Hadn't

But here's what mattered most: even before the

miracle, I had made up my mind to trust Him. Someone asked me, "Linda, what would you have done if God hadn't healed you?"

Without hesitation I answered, "I would still trust Him." Because trusting God is pure faith. It's believing He is faithful no matter the outcome.

Job understood this when he cried, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15 KJV). Job didn't know even if his suffering would end, but he anchored himself in God's character. And

Paul reminds us, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28 NIV).

The Blessing From the Ashes

Trust doesn't mean we don't pray for miracles. It means we believe God is good whether the answer comes quickly, slowly, or in a form we didn't expect.

The prayer of faith is the prayer of trust

When you pray, "Lord, I trust You," you can be confident that He will either deliver a miracle—or bring a blessing from the ashes.

So whatever you're facing today, whisper the prayer of trust. Hold on to Jesus. He is faithful.

Lord, I choose to trust You no matter what. Whether You bring healing today or strength for tomorrow, I believe You are good to me. Teach me to rest in Your love and walk in Your peace. In Jesus' Name, Amen. ❤️

Linda Evans Shepherd is the publisher of Leading Hearts and the author of *Praying through Hard Times* from Baker Revel. www.GotToPray.com



What Healing Looks Like

During my twenty years in clinical practice, I have witnessed the body's incredible capacity for restoration. I have seen broken bones mend and illnesses retreat under the influence of medicine and time.

I have also found that some of our most profound aches are not physical. They are the fractures in our spirit, the exhaustion in our minds, and the weariness in our souls that no pill can touch.

When most of us hear the word *healing*, our minds reflect on our most recent diagnosis. But true healing encompasses so much more. It is not merely the absence of pain or disease, but the presence of peace and a sense of wholeness. It is the realignment and restoration of every part of who we are with the truth of God's love for us.

Mountain Ranges and Valley Floors: The Non-Linear Path

Healing is not a straight line. It often looks more like a mountain range with many peaks and valleys. It requires persistence to stay the course even when it can feel like you've had a regression. Think of the woman with the issue of blood. She didn't give up hope after all the setbacks and disappointments. Despite spending all she had on conventional medical treatments; she pressed



BY DR. SAUNDRA DALTON-SMITH
ICHOOSEMYBESTLIFE.COM

her way through the crowd in Mark 5 to touch Jesus. After many days in the valley, she finally entered a time of healing.

Her story is a testament to the fact that healing requires persistence, courage, and a faith that is willing to push through obstacles. Many sermons focus on her miracle moment of touching the hem of His garment, but let's not forget the years of waiting, the daily prayers, and her trust in God's desire for her to be healed. This is what healing looks like.

The Sacred Work of Waiting Seasons

If you are currently in the middle of a health crisis, this part of the journey can feel intensely frustrating. We want a breakthrough now, minus the ebbs and flow. But the process itself is part of healing. God uses these waiting seasons to strip away the lies we have believed and reframe our identities in His truth.

The healing journey teaches us a holy reliance on His presence and His timing. Healing looks like trusting Him even before the symptoms lift or the circumstances change. It's a humbling process as we learn to lean more deeply into His grace and compassion during our times of need.

The Liberation of Letting Go

Sometimes healing is not about gaining something you feel is missing in your life but rather letting go of something that is no longer serving you. We can carry bitterness, shame, guilt, or unforgiveness for so long that they begin to feel like a part of us. They become unseen toxic attachments to our soul, blocking our joy and hindering our spiritual health. Hebrews 12:15 reminds us that bitterness can grow deep roots that entangle our hearts and choke out the life God desires for us.

Soul deep healing often begins when we release what we cannot control and place it all in God's hands. Consider the infertility of Hannah who wept bitterly before the Lord in 1 Samuel 1. Her healing journey didn't begin when she conceived, but in that sacred moment when she released the full weight of her anguish to God in prayer. Healing looks like tears on the altar. It's the place where our unmet wants are surrendered to God. We stop carrying the weight of our hurt alone and allow the Lord to carry it.

The Transformative Power of Shared Stories

Another truth we often forget is healing can require community. James 5:16 states, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may

be healed" (NIV). Healing can look like finding those safe people who will listen without judgment, pray with fervor, and walk alongside us through the valley.

For women especially, this community healing can be incredibly powerful. Sharing our stories brings light into the darkness and breaks the silence that shame thrives on. When one woman testifies about how God brought her through a difficult season, another woman receives the courage to believe that her own healing is also possible. Healing looks like holding each other up, speaking life over a sister in Christ, and consistently reminding one another of God's unwavering faithfulness.

Integration: Bringing Every Fragment Under His Authority

In the Gospel of John, Jesus encountered a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years and asked him a question that has always puzzled me, "Do you want to be made well?" The word well is not just about physical health but about complete wholeness.

Healing looks like integration and restoration of the body, soul, and spirit. It is the process of bringing every fragmented part of ourselves under the authority of Christ. It means our bodies are honored and cared for as temples of the Holy Spirit. It means our minds are renewed daily with truth and protected from the onslaught of

negativity and fear found online. It means our emotions are acknowledged and surrendered, rather than stuffed down or ignored in the name of self-sufficient strength. Healing looks like living at peace with how God has uniquely knitted you together.

Hope That Refuses to Die

Even when full restoration has not yet arrived on our timetable, healing can look like hope. Romans 15:13 calls our Creator the "God of hope," who fills us with all joy and peace as we trust in Him.

Your healing may not be the complete absence of pain or reversal of disease, but the grace to see God's faithful fingerprints throughout your life. Even when complete restoration does not seem possible on this side of eternity, healing can look like joy that passes understanding and the courage to live fully now. It can look like hope that refuses to die, because it is anchored in the truth that Christ has conquered death and the grave.

Healing is a settled assurance that your life is already beautifully restored in the finished work of Jesus. ❤️

**Healing looks like tears
on the altar. It's the place
where our unmet wants are
surrendered to God.**



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Don't Be Afraid

How to Use
AI to Help
with Online
Connections



BY EDIE MELSON
EDIEMELSON.COM

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here to stay. Love it, hate it, or view it with mixed emotions, it's time to figure out how to use it effectively.

I grew up in the golden age of science fiction and the idea of artificial intelligence has always fascinated me. But watching AI burst into my world with alarming speed made even this sci-fi fan girl feel uncertain.

But now, I'm finding many ways AI makes life easier—especially when I'm connecting with people online, as so many of us in ministry do. Before I dive into some ways to use this new tool well, let's look at a couple of warnings.



AI—What NOT to Do

Don't let artificial intelligence become god. Remain connected with the Lord as He directs your specific paths. Spend time praying for those you are reaching, and let the Holy Spirit be the one who guides your online steps.

Don't let artificial intelligence replace your creativity and emotional connection. We still need to reach out personally. Transparency and sincerity matter most.

AI—Ways to Use This Tool Effectively

It's time to begin using our artificial intelligence tools, but which one? I use ChatGPT, but there are many excellent choices. I like to stick with one because, just like a personal assistant, your AI bot of choice will learn your preferences and quirks. This makes both it—and you—more effective.

Use AI to brainstorm engaging post ideas or draft ministry updates, prayer prompts, or event reminders. Then add your own voice, photos, and personal touches. AI helps with consistency, but sincerity is what builds trust.

2. X (formerly Twitter)

AI is excellent for condensing long thoughts into shorter posts. Ask this tool to generate variations, then choose the one that best reflects your heart. Add Scripture or a personal insight to keep the message meaningful.

3. Instagram

Captions can be tough. Let AI suggest captions, hashtags, or devotional thoughts to pair with your images. Use it for carousel ideas or story outlines—but remember, your authentic photos and testimony are what connect most deeply.

4. TikTok

If video ideas feel overwhelming, AI can suggest short scripts or creative ways to present biblical truth. Use it to plan video hooks, talking points, or titles. Keep the delivery personal, warm, and Spirit-led.

5. LinkedIn

AI can help polish professional posts, summarize articles, or draft ministry updates that resonate with a faith-and-work audience. It's especially helpful for structure, but keep your tone encouraging and people-focused.

6. YouTube

Before filming, use AI to outline your video, suggest keywords, and draft descriptions that help people find your content. Afterward, let AI create summaries or pull quotes for cross-promotion. Keep prayer and Scripture central.

7. Pinterest

AI can generate pin title ideas, descriptions, and keyword-rich text to boost visibility. Use it to brainstorm content calendars or design ideas. Then pair AI's help with your own graphics, photos, and personal touches to keep the pins authentic and engaging.

8. Blogging

AI can provide topic ideas, outlines, or titles to improve search results. But don't let it replace your voice. Use AI to strengthen posts, then weave in your personal stories, biblical insights, and ministry experiences.

Bottom Line

I try to remember that AI didn't catch God off guard. Instead, He ordained that we would be ministering in this specific time and place. He is the one who provides the tools, and it's up to us to learn to use them for His glory and His work. ❤️

Turning Scars into Strength -

Discovering God's Purpose
in Your Painful Past



BY MICHELLE BENGTON
DRMICHELLEBENGTON.COM

We all experience pain—physical, emotional, relational, financial, or spiritual. Words and actions from our past, whether our own or others', often leave wounds that fuel guilt, shame, or regret.

Jesus warned us that trials would come, but we choose whether pain makes us bitter or better.

Pain is like a storm: it arrives unexpectedly, traps us beneath its weight, and leaves us wondering how long it will last. Yet because we serve a God of redemption, even our painful past can bear unexpected gifts.

Joseph explained to his brothers that what the enemy had intended for evil, God intended for good" (Genesis 50:20). God never wastes our pain. Instead of hiding our scars in shame, what if we considered them gifts?

1. Pain Teaches Us Something Is Wrong

Pain is unpleasant, but it alerts us to danger—whether an injury, broken relationship, financial strain, or spiritual misalignment. Without it, we would walk unaware into harm. Pain calls us to pause, notice, and address what's off course.

2. Pain Reveals Our Dependence on God

Like the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5), we often try everything in our own strength before finally turning to God. She found healing only when she reached out to Jesus in faith. Our painful trials remind us that dependence on God is not weakness, but the very pathway to His strength.

3. Pain Deepens Our Walk with God

In suffering, we ask hard questions: Is God good? Can He be trusted? God welcomes our honest cries. Often, His aim is less about giving us answers and more about drawing us into deeper intimacy with Him. Even if pain only teaches us to know Him more fully, we are blessed.

4. Pain Teaches Perseverance

Easy seasons don't require perseverance, but trials do. James reminds us that those who persevere are blessed (James 5:11). Paul declared that suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope (Romans 5:3–4). Our perseverance also encourages others watching from the sidelines to cling to hope in Christ.

5. Pain Confirms God's Goodness and Faithfulness

Faith trusts God's character even when circumstances tempt us to doubt. Our scars bear witness that He

brought us through before and will again. God's faithfulness isn't shown by sparing us hardship but by walking with us through it. Looking back, we see His hand in the details, redeeming even the darkest valleys.

6. Pain Gives Us Strength Beyond Ourselves

Scars are proof that, in Christ, we are stronger than what tried to destroy us. On our own we feel weak, but that places us in perfect position to experience God's strength, courage, and refuge. Pain teaches us surrender, and surrender proves God in us is greater than anything against us.

7. Pain Proves We Are Overcomers in Christ

Overcoming doesn't always look like victory laps—it's often simply putting one foot in front of the other. Jesus, in His own agony, surrendered to His Father's will. His death and resurrection secured the victory we could never win ourselves. As long as we cling to Him, we are overcomers too.

8. Pain Equips Us to Comfort Others

Paul reminds us that God comforts us so we can comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:4). As a neuropsychologist, I once treated depression with head knowledge,

but after walking through depression myself, I could enter my patients' pain with empathy. Your scars uniquely qualify you to walk with others in theirs.

My own journey—through deformity, miscarriage, depression, anxiety, cancer, caregiving, empty nesting, and chronic pain—has prepared me to minister from compassion rather than theory. Your past does the same. God uses your pain not only for your growth but also as a lifeline for others.

9. Pain Reveals God's Redemptive Plan

On the far side of suffering, perspective shows us that God was weaving redemption into every detail. Every wound, every scar, every injustice—He works it all for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28). We can trust His sovereignty, even when we wrestle, doubt, or question our worth.

Friend, if you're walking through pain today, take heart: God sees you. He is with you. He will use your suffering for good and for His glory in His perfect way and time. Our painful past is never wasted—it is sacred, just as Jesus's scars were. Our painful past becomes the very soil from which God grows redemption, hope, and a sacred purpose. 

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**Pain teaches us surrender, and
surrender proves God in us is greater
than anything against us.**

Tired is How Tired Does



BY RHONDA RHEA
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Have you ever counted the number of times in a week you talked about how tired you are? Like a weekly “I’m so tired” tally?

It’s almost like it’s a competition. A no-way-you-could-be-as-tired-as-I-am contest. Always an ough of a pyrrhic victory, that.

Last week I was just sure I’d used up all the tired. My tired. Your tired. All the tireds. My tired was even tired of being tired. It was the kind of tired that feels really close to melting.

Does that ever happen to you? When you feel there’s no skip in your skippety and no zip in your zippety? Not even a smidge of zippety left for your whole doo dah day? You wonder if all the tired you’re currently tireding will require at least a week of recovery, by which time you’ll have a whole new slate of tired to deal with on top of the leftover tired you’re still tireding. A tired deficit.

Everyone talks about renewable energy. Maybe we could use a little more of that. Some renewable energy we could apply to all those tireds. Yes, an order of renewable life energy, please. To go.

I hope you know I’m mostly exaggerating a lot of my tired—just for joking’s sake. Mostly. In all seriousness, whether I’m heading to Meltsville, or I’m hyperactively maintaining every skip and zip of my day’s skippety-zippety, I want to use every ounce of energy wisely and well.

Isn’t it amazing how often our energy begins to re-spark as we seek the God who renews? Connection to Him is life energy. It’s soul energy.

“

**Connection to Him
is life energy.
It’s soul energy.”**

We might as well confess it; He is not always our first go-to. I want to guard against any tendency to seek first to refill energy reserves in some experience, or the latest book, or a plan or program, or even another person. All those can be great—even needed. But not first.

Lord, may I seek You first. Remind me. Renew me. Re-energize me.

I’m leaving a “note to soul” for myself, to hang onto this prayer. It’s a Psalm 62 kind of reminder.

“Rest in God alone, my soul, for my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I will not be shaken” (Psalm 62:5–6 CSB).

Are you soul tired? True rest is God-generated. Only.

Guess what. That’s where joy sparks too. It doesn’t even matter if my body is tired. As long as my soul is God-seeking and Jesus-focused, there is a

wonderful, steadfast joy energy that compares to nothing else.

Any other go-to plans (or even to-go orders) to re-energize a soul are weak, sad, fleshy—goofy. The God who adores you longs to regularly renew and energize your spirit. He invites you to come close. And then He lovingly holds you there.

The very next psalm of David says, “I follow close to you; your right hand holds on to me” (Psalm 63:8 CSB). His right hand. His hand of power. There’s enough there to handle any and everything He wants you to accomplish.

Meanwhile, if you’re still struggling with a tired deficit on the physical side, hopefully it’s temporary. If not, take heart. You probably won’t melt. And at least you win the tired contest. 



Speaking Joyfully



Joy Dunlap
WRITER | SPEAKER

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

WHAT'S BEING SAID...

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

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

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

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



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