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GUIDE TO  
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WITH GOD

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**Beneath the Storm**

**Redemptive Scars**  
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## Guest Editorial



When fall arrives, my mind turns to a busy season of training women's ministry leaders. One of those training events I look forward to each year is our Women's Leadership Forum here at LifeWay in Nashville, Tenn.

If you lead women in your church, then you know that can be a blessing and a challenge at the same time. I'd like to invite you to join leaders from across the country that totally understand! This year's forum will take place November 14-16, and our focus is "Filling Up and Pouring Out...Together!"

This year's guests include Angela Thomas, Margaret Feinberg, Esther Burroughs, and Vicki Courtney. Travis Cottrell will lead our worship and provide a wonderful concert on Friday night.

Romans 15:13 tells us: "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." If we don't fill up, we can't pour out effectively, and if we are full, then we **MUST** pour back into the lives of others.

At this year's forum you'll find out about:

- Reaching for discipleship
- Building community
- Ministering out of the overflow
- Connecting the generations of women

I'd like to challenge older leaders with this question: What younger leader are you going to commit to bring with you? (And that actually includes YOU, no matter what age you are!) Come and share your stories of connecting the generations as you fill up and pour out.

*Chris Adams*

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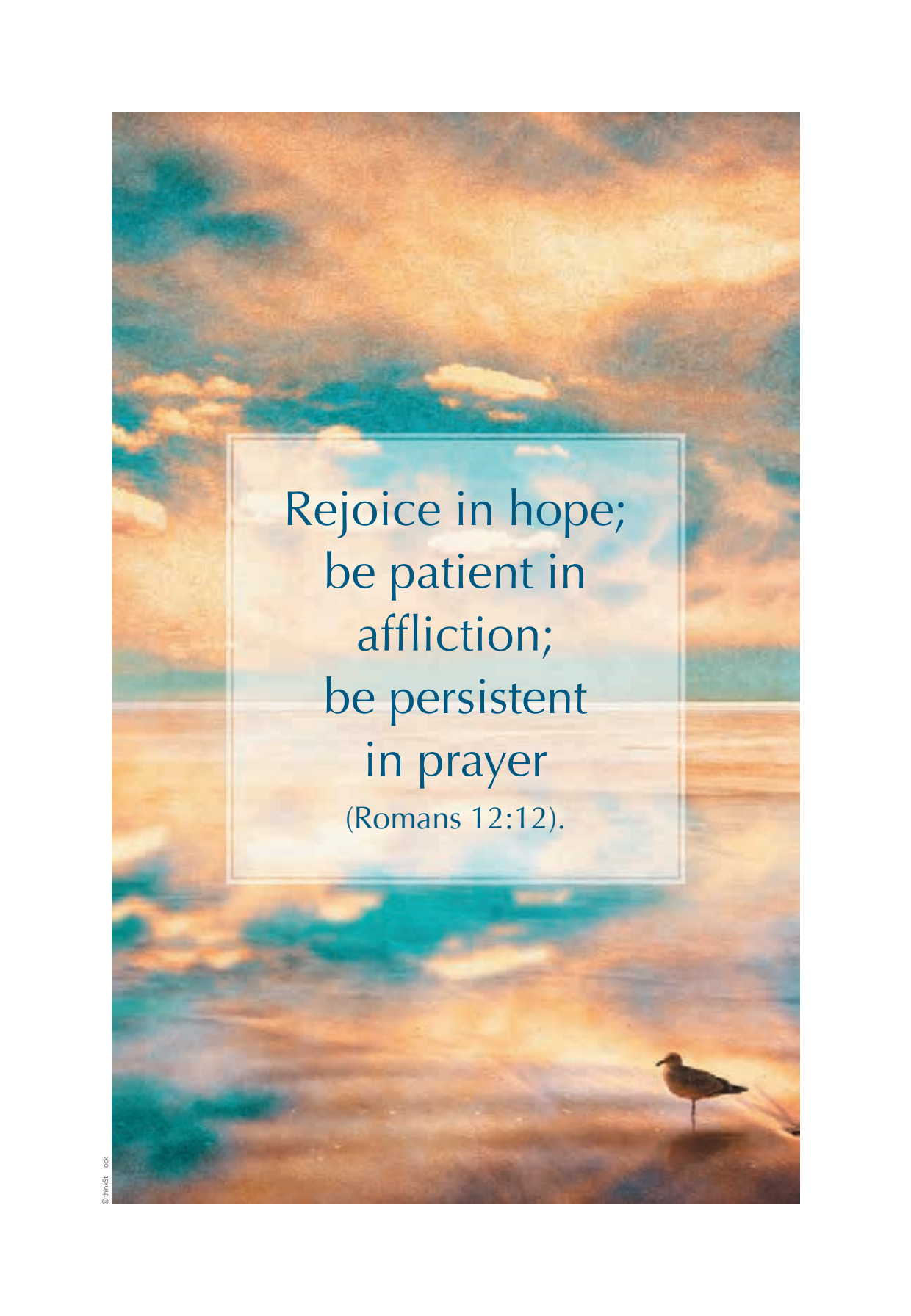
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Rejoice in hope;  
be patient in  
affliction;  
be persistent  
in prayer  
(Romans 12:12).



e t c .

## Secrets of Flu-Resistant People

- \* Eat plenty of raw fruits and vegetables.
- \* Wipe down the germiest hot spots—refrigerator and microwave door handles, light switches, and doorknobs with a clean, slightly damp cloth. You'll cut the germ count by 50 percent or more. Once weekly, mix 1 oz. of bleach into 1 qt. of water and use it to wipe down grimy surfaces.
- \* Spoil yourself for 30 minutes each day. Take a catnap, read, or take a long shower.
- \* Eat at least one cup of cooked tomatoes daily (tomato soup will fit the bill).
- \* Sanitize your salt and pepper shakers. They typically harbor lots of germs.

Source: *Woman's World* magazine, December 31, 2012



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## Help a Hero

Next time you stay in a hotel and don't use the complimentary shampoo, conditioner, soap, mouthwash, and other items, take them when you leave, then send them to Operation: Care and Comfort, 2392 Walden Square, San Jose, CA 95124. They'll be shipped to soldiers on the front lines who can use them when they're not near a military base. For more information, visit [www.OCC-USA.org](http://www.OCC-USA.org)



## September Web Sites

<http://www.flu.gov/prevention-vaccination/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

<http://syatp.com>

<http://www.ovarian.org>

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/BeReady>



September 1

Going Beyond

# Christ—The Bread of Life

by Priscilla Shirer

Deeper Walk

Saturday: John 6:22-33

Sunday: John 6:34-58

Manna, apparently a bread-like substance, was the foundation of the Israelites' menu for 40 years! Daily the people would pick it up and prepare it. The sameness of the situation is most assuredly what led the children of Israel, long fed on pagan bounty, to turn up their noses at this seemingly dull display of heavenly provision.

I can understand how it may have been difficult for Hebrew taste buds not to long for the varying foods to which they had become accustomed. Far too many Christians turn away from the narrow road of abundant living to temporarily enjoy the Enemy's worldly variety.

Yesterday, I turned on a top-rated show to find the day's discussion being led by a self-proclaimed spiritual guru. He offered the captive studio audience a variety of options they could use to tap into "God." "Come to God any way you want and through any means" was his bold declaration. "Jesus Christ is only a way to connect to God, certainly not the way." The crowd nodded, smiled, applauded, and received the "food" of Egypt on a silver platter. Christianity's foundational principle that only our Savior, Jesus Christ, connects us with God seems a bit limited in a world flooded with colorful, aromatic options like "you can be your own God" and "God is a relative concept."

Like the Egyptians, we fall prey to the idea that Egypt's table overflows with delectable treats. The truth, however, is that we can enjoy true spiritual freedom only when we commit to accepting the pure, daily bread God provides.

The simplicity and singleness of the manna in the wilderness symbolized the Christ who was to come. When presenting Himself as the true Messiah to the Jews, Jesus clearly said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). While the manna of the wilderness could not provide eternal life, Christ did and will to anyone who will receive it.

Heaven's manna was God's miraculous portion given to the children of Israel, not to bore them, but to show them a new dimension of Him. This portion is given to us just as freely as He gave it to the Israelites.



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Priscilla Shirer is a Bible teacher, speaker, and author of many books and Bible studies. Her ministry, Going Beyond, was founded by Priscilla and her husband, Jerry. She has three sons and lives in Dallas, Texas. Priscilla is the daughter of pastor, speaker, and well-known author Dr. Tony Evans. For information about Priscilla's Bible studies, as well as LifeWay Women's Going Beyond and Deeper Still events, visit [www.lifeway.com/women](http://www.lifeway.com/women)

## Crisis

As the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct  
(1 Peter 1:15).

I found out about “the birds and the bees” quite accidentally. My older sister and two of her friends were discussing a teenage girl in the neighborhood who was pregnant. I knew this girl wasn’t married, and I didn’t understand how she could be having a baby. So later, after Pat’s friends left, I nagged her until she caved in and told me.

It was 1959 and Nancy, the pregnant girl, just disappeared for a while and reappeared a few months later—not pregnant. That’s the way it was done in the 50s. Everything was very secretive.

Today, it’s not so scandalous or even unusual when an unmarried girl or woman becomes pregnant. In 2007, 40 percent of all live births were to single women. Unwed mothers in Hollywood proudly flaunt their baby bumps, and many have no intentions of marrying the father of their child.

A couple of years ago, my neighbor Helen sat in my kitchen in tears. Her 17-year-old daughter was pregnant and Helen was crushed. The family attended church every week. Emma was an honor student, active in the church youth group, and had scholarship offers from several universities.

But Emma and her boyfriend gave in to temptation, and now she was pregnant. And while no one in Hollywood blinks an eye at single motherhood, Emma’s family was in crisis mode.

Emma turned down the scholarships because she decided to keep her baby. She finished high school and works at a grocery store while taking college classes one or two at a time. Emma has learned the importance of waiting. Her life is very different than she dreamed it would be, but the love and support of her family and the church is providing a nurturing place for her faith—and her baby—to grow.

God’s rules are rooted in His knowledge of what’s best for us. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to follow in Jesus’ footsteps each day.

## Steps of Faith

Lord, when You tell us not to have sex outside of marriage, it’s for our own good. Please help me to be obedient to Your laws.

Deeper Walk  
1 Thessalonians  
4:1-8

# Workplace Gossip

Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt,  
so that you may know how you should answer each person  
(Colossians 4:6).

"Did Natalie give you your review before you transferred departments?" my coworker Dawn asked.

"She did. She also wrote me up for answering the telephone without using our standard greeting once when our district manager called." I shook my head in disbelief. "I mean, I know she needed to address the fact that I made a mistake, but to put it into writing and have it in my permanent file? She doesn't know a thing about being a customer service manager and she's unwilling to work side by side with her team like our other managers have done."

Dawn nodded in agreement. "Did Natalie tell you that corporate did some research and learned that shift workers tend to be less productive after five hours? That's why corporate cut our hours."

I nodded. "She gave me that speech too. You know what I wanted to ask her?"

Dawn looked up from her pricing gun to listen more closely. "What?" she said grinning.

"I wanted to say, 'Is that study why you managers spend half of your days sitting around when it would make more sense to get up and work with your team?'"

I smirked.

Suddenly Dawn and I heard several of the other women laughing. We didn't realize anyone else was within earshot. I was pretty embarrassed at that moment. I hadn't intended to gossip, but I was angry and the conversation just headed that way. I was upset with Natalie, but I didn't want to be known as a gossip. I silently prayed and asked God to forgive me for using my words carelessly.

It can be easy to get caught up in conversations that can hurt us, our reputation, or someone else. If you're tempted to gossip, ask God to help you keep your thoughts and negative opinions to yourself.

## Steps of Faith

Father, please forgive me for the times when I have gossiped. Prompt me before I say something I shouldn't and instead, help me to use my words to affirm others.

Deeper Walk  
Proverbs  
18:7-8

## Free Time

Teach us to number our days carefully so that we  
may develop wisdom in our hearts  
(Psalm 90:12).

Roxanne fought back tears as she gave Emily one last hug and exited the kindergarten room. Her friend Anne met her outside.

"You OK, Mama?"

"Yeah, I just can't believe my baby is in kindergarten." Tears welled up.

"Some of the moms are going out for coffee. Would you like to join us?"

"That would be wonderful." Roxanne wiped her eyes. "I don't know what I'm going to do with these free mornings." She had plenty to do at home, but the idea of doing it all in a quiet house felt depressing.

"Before you know it, you'll be looking forward to those moments when you can just have some alone time. But I know the adjustment is hard. There's a new ladies' Bible study that starts next week. You should sign up."

Roxanne gave her eyes one last dab before opening her van door. She had wanted to join one of those Bible studies for a long time. As she followed Anne to the coffee shop, the idea of having some free time started to sound appealing. What else could she do besides Bible study? Start playing piano again

perhaps? And then there was a plea in the most recent church bulletin for help with the food pantry.

*God, help me to make the most of this time now that all my kids are in school. Let this be an opportunity to grow, especially in my relationship with You.*

For some mothers, the new school year means an empty house for the first time in ages. We are on the threshold of a different season of life with new opportunities and possibilities to prayerfully explore. A milestone for our little ones can also be a milestone for us as we use the gift of a few quiet hours for prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and exercising our God-given talents.

As difficult as it is to send our children into the world, God can use every season for our growth and good, and for His glory.

## Steps of Faith

Lord, help me to see changes as new opportunities to grow. May I make the most of every moment as I seek Your will.



# Standing Firm

*"You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous!  
I have conquered the world"  
(John 16:33).*

Maryanne closed her Bible study booklet and turned to Holly. "I'm off to see what horrors await me at home."

Holly shook her head. "What do you mean?"

"In the past year my family has had two trips to the ER, a job loss, a new job that might fall through, a death, a flood in the garage that we're still cleaning up, and now Erica's grades might keep her from playing basketball. Basketball was her ticket to college." Maryanne took a breath. "Sorry, I know you know all this. I'm just tired of life being so stressful."

"This is going to sound insensitive; and believe me I don't deny that you've been hit with a lot, but, as long as we live in the world, life will be stressful."

Maryanne traced the design on her Bible. Holly was the only friend who could get away with saying such a thing to her. If anyone understood suffering, it was Holly. "OK then, what's your secret?"

"To be honest, I handle difficulties best when I remember that Jesus promised we would suffer but He also said, 'Be courageous.'"

Maryanne thought about Holly's words on the drive home. *God, I don't want to be a person who*

*whines when life is hard. Help me to be strong no matter what happens next, knowing You are at my side.*

Before going to the cross, Jesus made His disciples a promise: "You will have suffering in this world." He also equipped them with a good reason to stand strong when He proclaimed, "I have conquered the world."

Today, we may not suffer anything close to what the disciples withstood, but experience continues to drive home the truth of Jesus' assurance that life includes suffering. Our ability to endure so often depends on our attitude. Will we complain our way through it, or call on God for the strength to follow our Savior's instruction?

## Steps of Faith

Lord, You know what I have endured and what I will face in the future. Help me to stand firm through all of it, knowing You have already overcome this imperfect world.

Deeper Walk  
John  
16:25-33

## Forgive Who?!

And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ (Ephesians 4:32).

Kristin turned the page of the photo album. In an instant, there he was. Her father. Her pulse quickened and she instinctively pushed the album away from her. Fear, anger, and disgust jostled for expression inside of her.

Kristin had not seen even a picture of her father for years. Though she knew he was still alive, Kristin had buried her father in her heart and mind. She had stuffed every slap and degrading insult in a mental closet and locked them away. At the time, it was the only way she knew how to cope with the damage he had done.

Now, years later, she was shocked at the onslaught of unresolved feelings that were surfacing. She wasn't sure what to do with them.

Within the storm of emotions, she heard God whisper, *Forgive him*.

"I can't!" Kristin felt so strongly, she had spoken out loud. How could she ever forget what he had done? How could she give him a pass for his abusive actions? Again, God spoke to her heart, *Not forget. Forgive. Vengeance is Mine, not yours. I can help you*. Remembering how much healing God had

already done in her life, she softened. Maybe if she could just start with the words *I forgive him*, God would eventually give her freedom from her bitterness and resentment toward her father. She was willing to try.

Some hurts can go so deep that we may think we can never possibly forgive the person who hurt us. Often forgiveness is a choice first, sometimes one we have to make over and over, which is later followed by peace of mind and heart. If you are struggling to forgive, release your offender into God's just hands today by declaring your forgiveness. If the old anger rises up, keep re-releasing him or her until your heart aligns with your words.

### Steps of Faith

Father, \_\_\_\_\_ has hurt me deeply. I choose today to trust You and forgive this person. I know You will help true forgiveness take root in my heart.

September 7 & 8

Totally Captivated

# Faith or Fig Leaves?

by Tammie Head

In Romans 7 we find the apostle Paul having a real internal battle. If you ever thought he was spiritually perfect, then you'll be quite surprised. He was human just like the rest of us. Deep down, he honestly wanted to make godly choices, but he felt powerless. Paul's sudden jolt of realization that it wasn't him but sin's existence in him is powerful and profound. His feelings did not define him as a person. He recognized he could be rescued from how he was feeling.

Paul saw a war within his members—a war with his sinful nature. He realized his job was not to save himself but to call on the Lord.

If self-condemnation has been your bag, you have a promise from Romans 7:15-21. You're not worthless. You don't have to be stuck feeling good for nothing. The Jesus our brother Paul called on to rescue him is the same Jesus who will rescue you. Let's walk together toward the goal of throwing off every hint of shame and worthlessness.

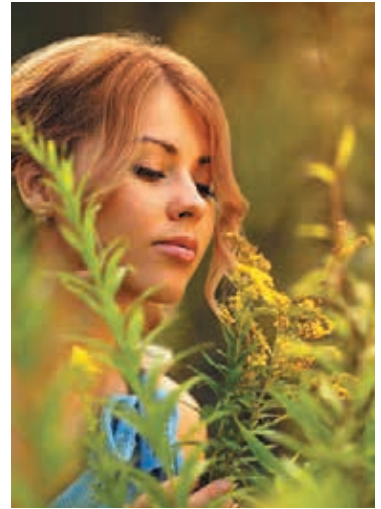
Unless we're crying out for some God-kind of help, we're probably sewing fig leaves. In modern days we sew fig leaves such as performance, perfection, control, anger, or passive aggression. Anything that keeps us seeking approval, identity, and self-worth apart from God is a fig leaf.

We don't need to cover ourselves. Each one of us is already God's favorite—handpicked and loved. Let's be brave and start coming to Him, like the old hymn says, "Just As I Am." Jesus has us completely covered. Next month, we will look into this more, but for now, I want you to lie back and rest in God's lavish love for you. Still yourself before Him and blessedly receive. You are one step closer from duty to delight. Ah, yes.

## Deeper Walk

Saturday: Romans 7

Sunday: Romans 8:1-11



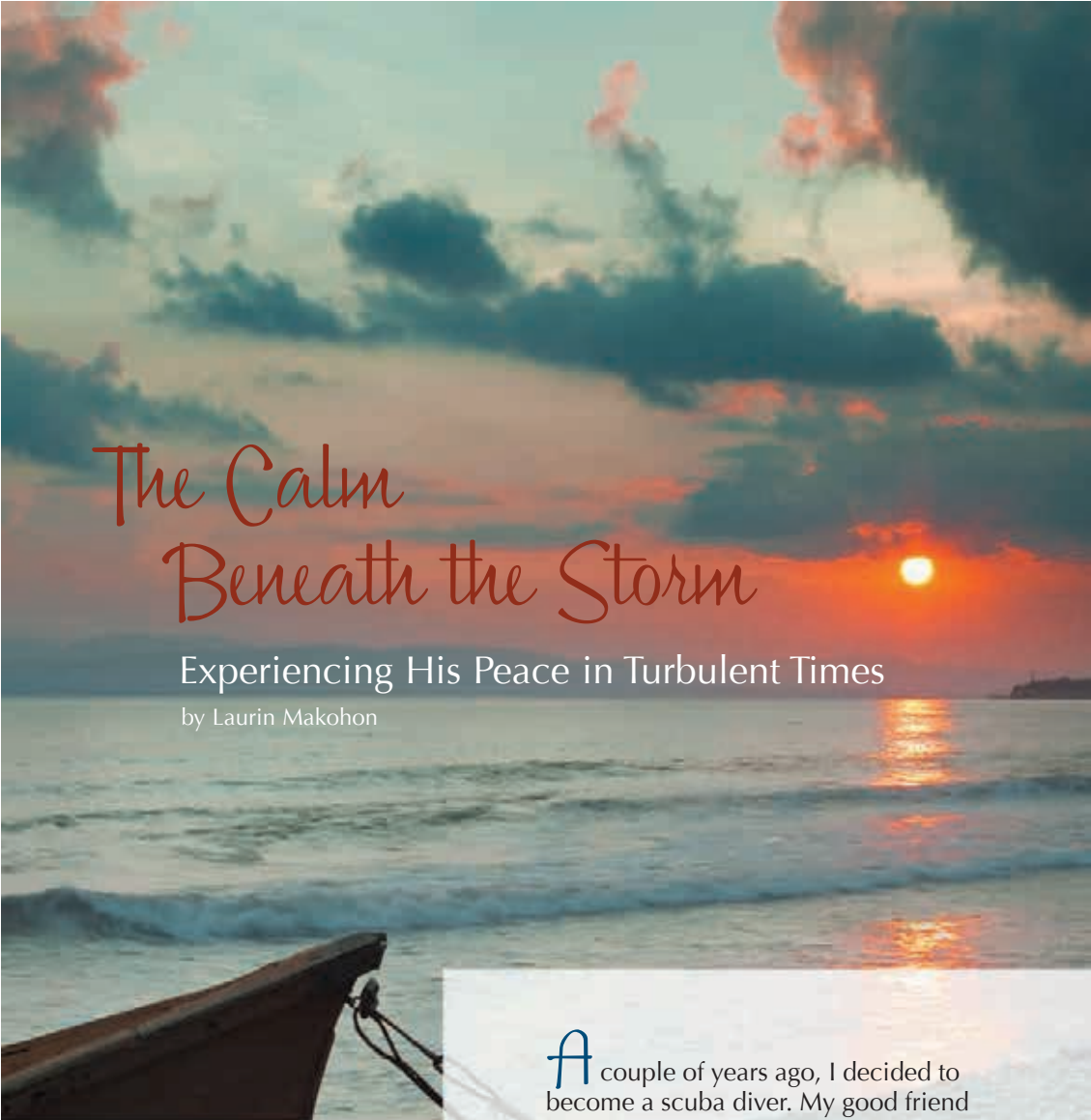
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You are chosen.



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Tammie Head is the founder of Totally Captivated Ministries, an organization committed to exalting the name of Jesus and His powerful Word in our generation. Tammie pours her energy into teaching the Scriptures through speaking and writing so women will encounter the One who has captivated her own soul. She and her husband, Erin, live in Houston, Texas, and have two teen daughters, Peyton and Savannah. You can find more information on Tammie and her ministry at [tammiehead.com](http://tammiehead.com)



# The Calm Beneath the Storm

Experiencing His Peace in Turbulent Times

by Laurin Makohon



The first opportunity  
I had to go scuba  
diving was in the  
breathtakingly blue  
waters of Hawaii.

A couple of years ago, I decided to become a scuba diver. My good friend from high school is a scuba trainer and kept telling me about all of these *Finding Nemo*-esque adventures he was having underwater. So I decided to get certified.

To become a scuba diver, you have to take hours of classes and written tests. And you have to go on several dives with your trainer where you make sure that you can do different tasks—like clearing your mask when you're 50 feet underwater, and conserving your air if you happen to run low. I took my classes and did all of my practice dives—I was ready to see the underwater world.



Or so I thought. Silly, silly me.

The first opportunity I had to go scuba diving was in the breathtakingly blue waters of Hawaii. But as we drove the small motorboat out to our first dive, I wasn't enjoying the scenery. I was freaking out. I was suddenly very aware that I was in way over my head. I had done my practice dives in a calm, small pool and a wee bit bigger rock quarry. Puddles, basically. Now, I was in the *ocean*. I was in the middle of the super-expansive, water-as-far-as-the-eye-can-see, can't-stop-and-ask-a-fish-for-directions-if-I-get-lost ocean.

What was more terrifying is that in the ocean there are massive, massive waves. As we drove out, our little boat was getting tossed and heaved around like a bull rider in his first eight seconds. The waves were at least three feet tall. That may not seem like much, but when you get in the water with your wetsuit and your fins and your respirator and your gargantuan air tanks and all of this saltwater is flying in your mouth and your mask is foggy and you're trying to remember all you learned in the puddle that you got trained in . . . well, it's terrifying. Absolutely terrifying.

For about three minutes I bobbed and weaved and choked and sputtered and regulated my breathing and prayed and tried to keep my breakfast down.

And then, we submerged.

As soon as we got three feet underwater, all . . . was . . . calm. My heart rate calmed down. My breathing slowed down. My breakfast stayed down.

*Peace.* And in a few minutes I was seeing the most beautiful sights I've ever laid eyes on. I danced with a massive sea turtle. I think I might've found Nemo in the coral. And all of this amazingness was going on despite the craziness 100 feet above me on the surface.

Life has been super hard for me lately. I've found myself in the biggest life storm I've ever been in, and I'm in way over my head. Waves of fear are pounding me, hurtful accusations are causing me to lose my breath, Satan's doing everything he can to make me feel alone, and I am powerless to fix the situation and calm the seas. In those moments of intense remind-myself-to-breathe panic, I am trying my hardest to do what we did that day in the Pacific.

*I've found myself in the biggest life storm I've ever been in, and I'm in way over my head.*

I take a deep breath and I submerge into Him. I remember that He is bigger, that all of my life is in His complete control, that He promises that He has got me, that He will fight for me, and that He will never let me go. I sink into His bigness, His goodness, His power. And I've found that even though the storm still rages on above, I can find complete peace in Him.

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# More than Just a Job

Think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths  
(Proverbs 3:6).

When my college-aged son needed a job, I expected his search to be difficult. While he had three summers of work experience, the economy had tanked and we lived in a state with one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. Sure enough, he requested applications only to hear, “We aren’t hiring right now.” Seeing his willingness to accept anything as long as it provided a paycheck, I found myself praying that he would find not just a job, but something that would be a good match for him.

One Sunday night, I attended the weekly prayer meeting at church and mentioned Christian’s need for employment. “Have him call my son,” one of the women said. “He’s head of security at the art museum, and I know he’s looking for someone.”

With no experience in either security or museum work, or even art for that matter, Christian gave it a shot. Not only was he hired, but he also ended up with a boss who was a believer, coworkers who became his friends, and a position that he enjoyed but never would have thought to pursue.

Seeing his employment experience unfold reminded me that God

is not limited by the economy, statistics, or even our job history. This memory continues to inspire me to trust Him more completely with my employment needs.

When we need a job and unemployment rates are high, expecting a position that we feel suited for and would enjoy seems like too much to ask. Shouldn’t we be willing to settle for anything? Isn’t it challenging enough to trust God to open a door when so many are pleading with Him for the exact same thing? At the same time, we know God has a specific plan for us, and He wants us to talk to Him about it. The most exciting doors seem to open when we risk praying, *Send the job that is right for me*, do our part in looking, and relax in His ability to “do above and beyond all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

## Steps of Faith

Heavenly Father, You know my needs. Help me to trust You to point me toward a source of income that I know is from You.

Deeper Walk  
Mark  
11:21-24

# Running Over

Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD,  
and He will give a reward to the lender  
(Proverbs 19:17).

For most of Sarah's life, she'd lived paycheck to paycheck. In college, a friend introduced her to Jesus. As she grew in her faith, she began tithing and giving offerings from her wages and tips as a waitress. Sometimes it was hard to give when bills were piling up, but she stretched her dollars and worked extra shifts.

As Sarah's debt-free goal approached, only six months away, she grew excited about having a bit more wiggle room in her budget. But Sarah soon experienced a financial roadblock—the transmission in her 13-year-old car went kaput. If she used all of her savings, she'd only be about \$200 short of paying for the car repair in full. And \$200 was what she planned to give to the homeless shelter in her community.

Sarah thought about how close she was to paying off her debt and how she could postpone giving the money, but the idea bothered her. So, she resolved to find another way; she explained to the mechanic shop owner why she was \$200 short. Moved by her faith and generosity to those less fortunate, he allowed her to pay him back over her next two paychecks.

A month later, Sarah was still recovering from her financial pitfall and times were tight. When checking her email, she received a reply from a writing job inquiry she had made to a well-known blog months ago. They accepted her submissions and were sending her a check for \$500.

Sarah knew it wasn't coincidence. She knew it was God's faithfulness and provision.

Since the beginning, God has given generously, and He promises to continue this generosity throughout eternity. Make giving to others a regular part of your family's activities. Choose wisely to take the generosity shown by Christ, now living within you, to change not only your community, but also to change the world.

## Steps of Faith

Lord, thank You for blessing me.  
Help me to reflect Your generous  
heart by sharing my time and re-  
sources with those in need.

Deeper Walk  
Deuteronomy  
15:7-11

# Serving Attitude

Do everything without grumbling and arguing,  
so that you may be blameless and pure  
(Philippians 2:14-15).

Dana and her Bible study group were always encouraging one another, sharing each other's burdens, and finding new and fun ways to serve in their community.

One of their favorite serving opportunities was playing with children at a local recreation center. After a few months, someone suggested broadening their service opportunities to other demographics—namely, the homeless shelter in the crime-riddled inner city.

The shelter needed help with cleaning up after meals, serving meals, and sorting clothing for distribution. One of those opportunities seemed to bother Dana—serving meals. But she would go and participate, and hopefully be placed in the sorting room.

When the group showed up for duty on their assigned day, the volunteer coordinator called out names, giving everyone a responsibility. Internally, Dana groaned when she was assigned to the food line in the dining hall. As the night wore on, Dana's inward groan turned into an outward scowl.

At the end of the night, Shelley confronted Dana. "What was with your attitude, Dana?" Shelley asked.

"Nothing." Dana shrugged. "I was just serving by doing my duty."

"Well, if that's the way you serve, then maybe you shouldn't," Shelley said. "Serving is more than just showing up and trudging through. Sure, you're still serving physically, but you sure aren't serving grace and joy by having a bad attitude."

Dana felt a flash of anger, but she knew Shelley was right.

Have you checked your attitude lately? Are you doing good things, but grumbling the whole time? Make sure you're serving in areas that tap into your God-given giftedness and carve out time from your schedule to regularly read the Bible and pray. As you seek to fill up your heart tank with God's Word, He will work to refresh your heart enabling you to serve Him with gladness.

## Steps of Faith

Father, replace my grumbling with praise. Renew my mind with Your joy as I rely upon Your strength.



# Building the Bond

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!  
(Psalm 133:1).

Steve and I met several years after our first spouses had died. We felt blessed because, while his two daughters and my son and daughter still loved their deceased parents and remembered them fondly, they were open to us beginning a relationship. All busy teenagers, they willingly joined us on “family dates” so we could get to know one another and test the family dynamics. Before we married we had decided a blended family was going to be a cake walk!

But shortly after our wedding, the relationship between the three girls got testy. Steve’s daughters, one older than my Kate and the other younger, closed ranks and refused to allow Kate into their tight-knit bond to any degree. She felt left out, outnumbered, and disappointed that she wasn’t getting the sisters she had hoped for. Not completely innocent in the feud, Kate also began tattling on Steve’s daughters, sometimes making up offenses to report.

Two years later with Steve’s eldest about to graduate from high school, things are much better. How did we bridge the sibling gap? We went back to doing the things we had so intentionally done before the marriage but had neglected since. Steve

and I initiated “family dates” again, insisting the kids put family time on their busy schedules. We prayed together as a family weekly, encouraging the kids to pray for each other. And I began taking all three girls out for girls only days one Saturday each month. Bottom line? We got creative about sustaining the relationships we had intentionally built to begin with.

Relationships require time and effort. Psalm 133:1 reminds us that unity among brothers, spiritual or blood-related, is a blessing worth working for. Whether your children are young or out of the house, how are you presently helping them to build relationships with one another and promoting unity? Check out *The Smart Step-Family* by Ron L. Deal (Bethany House Publishers).

## Steps of Faith

Father, show me where I may be a catalyst for peace, unity, and love among my family members. Show me ways to help build relationships that will last in my family.

Deeper Walk  
Psalm 133

# Living Beyond Myself

“Open your eyes and look at the fields, for they are ready for harvest”  
(John 4:35).

I’ve decided that reading too many headlines and listening to the news nonstop is not good for me.

Why? Because I’ve become inward-focused and fearful. Economic disasters and natural disasters. Terrorism and corruption. Fiscal cliff and sequester. Wars and rumors of war. And fewer people than ever who want to have anything to do with Jesus (or so it seems). All of this has combined to make me feel unsettled and afraid.

The truth is that we live in an unsettled world. So I can’t rely on false securities, like having enough money, enough food stored, enough professional contacts, enough anything but Jesus. Everything else is sinking sand.

Our world is crying out for answers, and I have the Answer. People are preoccupied with the storm, but I know the Storm Calmer. They are worried about the future, but I know the One who holds the future. They think that government is their protector, but I know *the* Protector.

Since He is for me, how can I be afraid? Since He holds my life in His hands, why do I worry? Since He is the Creator and Sustainer of all, why do I feel it’s all up to me?

I believe He is calling me to live beyond myself. To cast all my care upon Him so that I can care for others freely. To shed my fear, focus on Him, and get to work for His kingdom. To understand that every day that passes is one day closer to His coming, yet so many still don’t know Him. To know that although I may not have many earthly treasures, that I only need Him, so I can share Him with abandon with needy people.

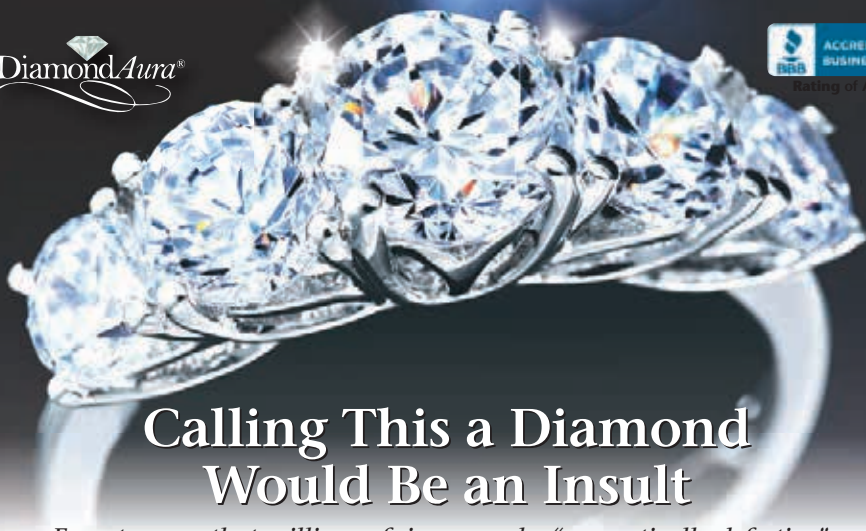
I think that living beyond myself is going to be freeing.

Our world is facing many challenges today. As Jesus followers, we must not be fearful, but instead, we must be preoccupied with Him. Yes, these battles we face can be damaging. And yes, we are frail and vulnerable. But He is on our side. What do we have to fear? Let’s live beyond ourselves.

## Steps of Faith

Father, You are our Protector in these stormy times. Help us to keep our eyes on You and live beyond ourselves.

Deeper Walk  
Psalm  
46:1-7



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# Following God's Direction— Relocation Required

by Kaye Geiger





I guess I always knew I would be a gypsy of sorts, but I certainly did not know that it would be as a pastor's wife. As a child, I was a skirt-clinger; however, I can remember from a young age my mama saying that I would be the one to move away. This was a big deal for a country girl from a small town in north Louisiana. All four of my older siblings grew up, married, and built homes on my parents' property, which I affectionately call "The Kennedy Compound." My daddy and I had even chosen a piece of land where I would one day build a house and live with my husband and children. Then I met Eric.

I hadn't planned to fall in love with and marry a pastor. Early on in our relationship, Eric and I had a conversation about how ministry might move us far from home. Oddly enough, I was totally at peace with that thought—until it actually happened.

Our first move out of college was to a small town about 40 minutes from where I grew up. This move was challenging because it was Eric's first "real, full-time" ministry job and my first year of teaching fifth grade. We were growing up and learning hard and sometimes painful lessons. This was the town where we bought our first home and had our first real jobs and where I successfully grew a backbone as a teacher.

Two years later, we felt the Lord leading us to move to Ohio. For the first time, I would be moving away from my family. This move would take us 12 hours from home. I cried, cried, and cried some more. (I'm even crying now as I write!) Eric had accepted a position at a great church that would provide an awesome opportunity for

him to grow a student ministry, and I was hired as a fifth-grade teacher at a phenomenal school.

This move had some challenges, but oh so many rewards! The greatest challenge was the fact that Eric moved two months before me. I wanted to finish the school year, and he was ready to get rolling. A few sweet church members unpacked all of our boxes in the home where we would live. We were young and childless, so we poured our lives into our ministry and jobs. We saw many people come to know Jesus in Cincinnati, through both our student ministry and my school. This was a fun and rewarding time, but I cried like a baby every time we had to leave after a visit with either of our families.

Three years later, Eric came home one night from seminary, and we had a conversation that went something like this:

Eric: "Babe, I think God may be leading me to serve at that church in Miami that I told you about."

Me: "You mean Miami, Florida? CSI Miami? No, He's not."

Eric: "Miami has great beaches and lobster."

Me: "OK, let's go!"

It wasn't quite that easy of a decision, but we both knew without a doubt the Lord was leading us there. I was convinced that I would look out the airplane window as we were flying into the city and see violent crime taking place on the streets. I was surprised to discover that the real Miami CSI vehicle was a beat-up white van and not a Hummer.

Eric and I were so excited, yet I was concerned that our family would be devastated because now we would be 21 hours away from them and 12



hours from Eric's parents who had just moved closer to us. After I tearfully told her the news, I still remember my awesome mama saying to me, "Kaye Marie, this is great. Everyone will want to come visit!" Everyone certainly did! Eric's parents visited so often that we named our guest bedroom "Mimi and Pop's room."

Our eight years in Miami became one of the best experiences of my life. God gave us friends who were like family. Eric and I both loved our jobs. We were blessed with our two precious little girls during these years, and we were able to impact many lives for the Kingdom during our time there.

A year and a half ago, our family moved to Nashville, Tennessee. This move has been different than the others for a variety of reasons. After serving *in* the local church for 15 years, Eric took a job *serving the church*. When you move into a church staff position, you have built-in church

friends. After this move, no one was beating down my door to get to know me. Eric's new job meant we would need to search for a church home. This was also our first move with children. Let me stop and say, GAME CHANGER! Eric and I had always been able to adjust as we made a new start, but our little girls left the only home they had ever known and people who loved them dearly. I was also moving into a new role as a stay-at-home mama rather than a teacher. I would no longer have a built-in circle of friends at work. Last and certainly not least, we had huge culture and weather shock. My girls had only seen coats and scarves in pictures! Life changed, but it was good.

It was probably because of my girls initially, but I sought the Lord more during our move from Miami to Nashville than I have in any other move. I was excited to move to Nashville, but at the same time, I didn't want to leave Miami. I knew our Miami family would

## New Life in Christ

The Bible tells us that we all fall short of God's righteous standard (Romans 3:23). Because of this, we are separated from Him and are spiritually dead; but because He loves us, God sent His Son, Jesus, to die in our place as payment for our sin (John 3:16).

God says in the Bible, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You can begin a personal relationship with God right now. Agree with Him about your sin and your need for

forgiveness. If you are ready to make this choice, as an affirmation of your belief, you might wish to pray a prayer like this one: *Dear God, I understand I am a sinner, but I believe Jesus died for my sins, and I now accept His gift of eternal life. Thank You for forgiving my sins. Thank You for my new life. From this day on, I choose to follow You and Your will for my life.*

If you begin a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus, please share this with the person or church that gave you this magazine.

never be replaced, but I began praying and asked close friends and family to pray that the Lord would lead us to people in Nashville who would love and welcome us. Our oldest daughter was almost 4 when we moved, and she isn't crazy about change. After we moved, we asked the Lord not only to bring us new friends but also to help us find a house and a church where we could serve. As He faithfully answered our prayers, I learned that the Lord truly does go before me just as He went before Jacob many years ago. (See Genesis 31-33.)

The Lord faithfully worked out the details of Jacob's move back to the land He had promised him, and He can do the same for us. That doesn't mean it will be easy or fun every step of the journey, but it does mean it can be fruitful in the end. In the years that followed Jacob's move, he experienced heartbreak and challenges, but God used all of these circumstances to accomplish His good purposes for His

people and the world. Through Jacob's family line would one day come our precious Savior, Jesus.

Perhaps you are moving from a comfortable place that you adore to an unfamiliar place. Maybe you can't wait to move because you feel miserable in your current circumstances. You may be like me and have a divided heart that wants to stay and yet wants to go. But like Jacob, his father Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham, we must find confidence in knowing and believing God's promise to see us through because we know that what He promised He is able to perform (Romans 4:20-22).

*For helpful tips on making a smooth transition to a new location, be sure to read Kaye's article "Making the Most of Moving" in next month's issue!*

Kaye Geiger lives in Tennessee with her husband, Eric, and their two children.

# On the Front Lines



© Jennifer Gask

An Interview with Girls' Minister Jennifer Grether

by Jennifer McCaman

As the full-time girl's minister at First Baptist Church of Orlando, Jennifer Grether pours her life into leading girls every day. From the front lines, she shares some insights into the world of today's girls.

## What are some alarming trends you see our girls facing?

More and more girls in this generation are either experimenting with homosexuality and/or viewing it as something that is normal and OK.

I've also observed that many girls do not understand how to be a friend or how to handle conflict within friendships. Social media is a large contributor to this problem because it is easier for a girl to handle something in the wrong way when she is hiding behind a computer screen.

## What would you say to someone who wants to mentor a group of girls?

First, get to know the girls before you try to teach them. Girls thrive on relationship, and they need to know that they can trust you before entrusting themselves to you. Second, don't be afraid to be vulnerable and honest with girls about your life and your walk with Jesus. God is glorified when we are real about our ongoing struggles because it magnifies the goodness of the gospel and the goodness of Jesus. Girls need to see that you need Jesus on a daily basis just like they do.

## What are some of the rewards of your job?

- 1) Watching girls have "lightbulb" moments with God where they finally understand an aspect of His truth.
- 2) Watching girls lead other girls through what they have personally learned about God.
- 3) Counseling girls who are walking through a struggle, especially when it's one that I have personally walked through in my life.

In next month's issue, Jennifer Grether talks about how we can encourage our girls to seek God's guidance in their daily lives.





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# A Student of the Word

by Chris Adams



@thm51 ok

In Joshua 1:7-8, we see God speaking to Joshua. What do you notice about the way He instructed Joshua in this passage? From the beginning, the promise of God's support was based on Joshua's faithful obedience to the Word of God. He meditated on it.

If we are to follow God courageously and do all that He asks us to do, we too must be passionate students of His Word. It's easy to fall into the trap of reading Scripture as though it's an assignment or an obligation and then going about our daily business, never really focusing on what God is telling us specifically for that day. We need to meditate on His Word, which means we prayerfully concentrate on it until we know what God is saying to us. We must intently and consistently seek God's guidance about what His Word is saying to us so we don't miss out on His blessings and opportunities.

Here are some creative ideas for "hearing" new messages from God's age-old Word:

- Read Scripture in different translations. Last year I read the Bible chronologically using the Holman Christian Standard Bible. This year I am reading again but using another translation.
- Listen to the Bible on CD. Numerous times God has spoken to me or made a point that I missed when I read the same passage earlier. Sometimes I have to listen more than once to "get it"!
- Set aside time daily to read God's Word.
- Read a daily devotion when you get up in the morning or as you go to bed at night to set or refocus your heart on the Lord.
- Have a reading plan. It helps me to read regularly, and it makes me even hungrier for the Word.
- Participate in deep Bible studies, such as those written by Beth Moore, Kelly Minter, Lisa Harper, Angela Thomas, Jennifer Rothschild, Tammie Head, and others.



Joshua knew the history of the Israelites and learned from Moses many of the laws and principles God taught. To succeed as Joshua did, we also must carefully observe everything written in God's Word.

September 14 & 15  
Great Prayers of the Bible



## Jehoshaphat's Prayer in a Crisis

by Anne Alexander

When you are facing a crisis and the fear of the unknown grips your heart, what is your “default” mode of operation? Do you call your spouse or your mother or a friend? Or do you immediately shift into “panic” mode? Maybe you reach for your favorite comfort food. Today we’re going to look at the example of Judah’s King Jehoshaphat. He gave us the best action plan for facing our fears.

After being told that multiple armies were planning to invade his country we read, “Jehoshaphat was afraid, and he resolved to seek the LORD. Then he proclaimed a fast for all Judah, who gathered to seek the LORD. They even came from all the cities of Judah to seek Him” (2 Chronicles 20:3-4).

Yes, Jehoshaphat’s fear was justified. There was no way humanly possible for God’s people to overcome the invasion of these combined armies. Notice the repeated phrase, “seek the Lord.” In the midst of fear, Jehoshaphat’s default response was to pray. Clearly, prayer was an established habit in his life.

“For we are powerless before this vast number that comes to fight against us. We do not know what to do, but we look to You” (2 Chronicles 20:12). The Lord answers, “Do not be afraid . . . for the battle is not yours, but God’s. . . . Tomorrow, go down against them . . . for Yahweh is with you” (2 Chronicles 20:15-17). In the most unorthodox military move ever, the choir preceded the army onto the battlefield singing, “Give thanks to the LORD, for His faithful love endures forever. The moment they began their shouts and praises, the LORD set an ambush . . .” (2 Chronicles 20:21-22). And here’s the end of the story—the enemy armies destroyed each other!

“There is simply nothing more important than worship in preparing to battle problems. The man who kneels before God can stand before any problem.”—Adrian Rogers

### Deeper Walk

Saturday: 2 Chronicles 20:1-23

Sunday: Psalm 62

Anne Alexander is the mother of two adult children and lives in Atlanta, Ga. She teaches, writes, and speaks to women’s groups and is a freelance editor.

# Uncomfortable Evangelism

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes  
(Romans 1:16).

My husband was once on a mission trip with a good friend of his. On the long flight back, he and his friend were unable to get seats next to each other. Being resourceful, young, and gregarious, his friend told the man seated next to him, "Hey, you can either listen to me tell you about Jesus on the flight home, or you can switch seats with my friend back there in row 20." The man wasted no time gathering his stuff, and my husband and his friend were able to sit together during the flight.

We've often laughed about his unorthodox tactic on that flight, but Steve is the kind of man who truly would have joyfully shared the gospel with his seat buddy. He is one of those people whose default is to talk to everyone, from waitresses to homeless guys on the street, about Jesus. For him, it's never a question of whether a person wants to hear about Jesus. He operates fully from the belief that everyone needs to hear about Jesus. And his engaging personality makes him a winsome witness.

But I blush to think of "bothering" a fellow airline passenger by trying to tell him about Jesus. I'd worry I

was making the person uncomfortable. But how can I be more concerned about a little discomfort than whether someone has the joy of knowing Jesus? I have often excused my silence with the rationale that I'm just not gifted with evangelism, but gifted or not, Jesus gave the great commission to all His disciples, including you and me.

Let's face it. The gospel can be uncomfortable. It's radical and out of the box. Jesus challenges people's thinking and the lifestyles they may not want to give up. We can't let a little discomfort keep us from obeying His call to tell others, though. If you shy away from sharing about Jesus, pray for boldness, and ask God to go ahead of you, preparing hearts to hear the Good News.

## Steps of Faith

Lord, forgive me for being ashamed of the gospel. Show me who needs You. I am willing to be the bearer of Good News—the gospel of Jesus Christ.



# I'm So Tired

He gives strength to the weary and strengthens the powerless  
(Isaiah 40:29).

I could barely concentrate during choir practice, usually a highlight of my week. Instead of bringing me joy, singing felt like a chore. Summer had introduced me to the ugly world of divorce and officially put me in the single mom category. In addition to juggling that heartbreaking process and the responsibilities of being both Mom and Dad, I was dealing with two confused sons, lost relationships, and life-altering decisions. I had known this new phase of life would be hard, but I completely underestimated how exhausting it would be. As the choir music played and the friends around me sang, I fought to keep my mind from spinning and my head from drooping. *God how will I get through this year if I'm already worn out?*

After practice, my friend Jill gave me a hug. "Hey you, how are you doing?"

All I could get out was, "I'm so tired."

Two other friends gathered around me to pray, strengthening me with their love and willingness to listen. Over the next week, each of them followed up in some way, checking in on me, finding little ways to encourage me and my sons, and referring me to helpful

resources. More overwhelming weeks would come, but memories of that evening at choir practice reminded me that I had friends to call on for help.

The nonstop demands of solo parenting can quickly lead to exhaustion, especially when a mom is also dealing with the divorce process, ongoing custody or child support battles, or other extra challenges. The emotional upheaval of grieving the loss of a marriage, explaining changes to children, and accepting that life will never be quite the same adds pain to an already energy-sapping situation. While these overloaded women must learn to ask for assistance, find balance, and call on God for added strength, friends can help by asking Him to keep them sensitive to needs and to provide opportunities to lighten the load.

## Steps of Faith

Father, give me the strength to face the challenges You have allowed, and the heart to recognize when another mom is depleted and needs help.

Deeper Walk  
Isaiah  
40:28-31

# Dealing with Disappointment

Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men. . . . You serve the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:23-24).

I was an ideal employee at the university's communications office. I came in early, stayed late, and produced some successful pieces that drew lots of attention to the university within my first few months on the job. But when a management position opened up and I applied, I was overlooked.

The day I found out about not getting the promotion, I was hurt and angry. My emotions fluctuated between disappointment and resentment. One minute I felt I should just quit my job and go to another workplace entirely, and the next I was vowing to work harder and better so that someone would notice.

Lying in bed that night, I prayed about my situation for what seemed like the millionth time that day. And suddenly a thought popped into my head. Someone *had* noticed my hard work—Someone who mattered much more than my boss or my coworkers. God noticed every time I used the gifts He had given me for His glory, and every time I had done my best work for His name's sake.

I was still disappointed that I hadn't received the promotion, but I clung to the promise that God has a plan for me and it's better than I can

ask or imagine. When I am hurting, He promises to heal me and to be with me, and He also promises to use all things for good in my life. I can't be disappointed for long if I consider all the goodness that He shows me every day.

Disappointment is a part of life because heartbreak was introduced at the fall of man, but we serve a Savior who has overcome the world (John 16:33). Will we allow disappointment to drive us away from God and His promises, or will we consider how God might be working through our disappointments to make us more like His Son and to accomplish His big-picture plan in our lives? How awesome that we serve a God who uses all things—even things we see as negative—for our good and His glory.

## Steps of Faith

Lord Jesus, thank You for never disappointing us, and thank You for the honor and love that You bestow on me by calling me Your own.

## Cisterns and Springs

“They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water”  
(Jeremiah 2:13).

Jerusalem was steeped in idolatry. Its religious leaders already had the books of Moses, so lack of information wasn't an issue. In fact, many of those religious leaders, as well as the voices of the prophets, had preached plenty of sermons about the jealous God who had delivered His beloved people and asked them to love and worship Him exclusively. The problem wasn't a lack of awareness or knowledge. The problem was apathy and even rebellion. Something else needed to be said, something that might help the political and religious minds of Jerusalem understand what they were doing to themselves.

God gave Jeremiah a picture to illustrate the devastating implications of idolatry. Forsaking God isn't simply a matter of making a mental mistake and choosing an alternative worship style, or even of being brought up in a non-theistic culture. It's a matter of abandoning a life-giving, ever-flowing spring for dirty, broken pots that can't even hold water.

The graphic nature of God's words meant to startle ignorant people and give them the understanding they need to embrace truth. It's also meant to rebuke rebellious people and shock them into a

sudden awareness of the ridiculous nature of their rebellion. In any case, investing worship and honor in anything other than God is wildly irrational, a choice no one in his right mind would make. So God paints a picture to help put people in their right mind.

Are there any areas of your life in which you've grown apathetic or even rebellious? If so, God longs for you to be awakened to His loving embrace. He wants all of your honor, all of your worship, all of your praise; and He grieves when someone or something else gets them. He wants His children to be refreshed by the living Spring, not trying to dip water from leaky pots. He wants His beloved to love Him back. “We easily fall into idolatry, for we are inclined to it by nature.”—Martin Luther

### Steps of Faith

Father, show me any areas where I may have apathy or rebellion in my life. Help me to honor, love, praise, and worship You with all my heart.

Deeper Walk  
Exodus  
20:1-6

# Garbage and Glory

“My people have exchanged their Glory for useless idols”  
(Jeremiah 2:11).

Imagine having the world’s most valuable masterpiece, a work of art that would bring 30 or 40 million dollars if you auctioned it. Then imagine, instead of taking that masterpiece to the auction, you took it to a pawn shop, pawned it for 20 bucks, and blew the whole wad on crayons and paper so you could decorate your own walls.

Or imagine being offered a lifetime pass to the city’s best buffet spread, only to reject it in favor of one meal at a truck stop. Silly? Ludicrous? Absolutely insane? All of that and more. People with even an ounce of sense don’t squander glory on garbage. But that’s what idolatry is. That’s what the people of Judah were doing in Jeremiah’s day, and that’s what we do with alarming ease today.

Think about how much God is worth: He can create anything, so whatever we have, He has something better. He governs and sustains everything, so every circumstance we encounter must bow to Him. And He has promised lavish blessings for eternity, so all our cravings will be extravagantly exceeded by His good gifts. Logically, there’s nothing we would take in exchange for a relationship with this God. Practically, however, that’s exactly what we often do.

What drives us to such insanity? Ignorance of what will really fulfill us, perhaps. Or maybe it’s blindness to the beauty of our Creator. Whatever the case, human sin is always a bad trade, an offering to something worthless at the expense of Someone infinitely exquisite and priceless.

What drives God to seek us out regardless of our offenses? Love for a pitifully ignorant people; compassion for children with massive, self-inflicted, potentially fatal wounds. God doesn’t enjoy our foolishness any more than we do. He longs to share His glory with those whom He loves.

Let Him do that. Never exchange the invitation of God for a self-drawn plan. The cost never will—never can, in fact—match the worth of our Glory.

## Steps of Faith

Father, thank You for Your love and compassion. Help me to love You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Deeper Walk  
Jeremiah  
2:11-19



September 21 & 22  
The Frazzled Female

# Suffering Savior

by Cindi Wood



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I'm on the road a lot. I love teaching about God's love and how He longs to share a deep and meaningful relationship with each of His children. After a weekend with the girls, it's the sweetest thing to get in my packed-up car and head home. I get a rush every single time I plug in my GPS and hit the icon, "GO HOME." No matter how awesome the time away, I always get excited about getting back to the comforts of home. My husband, who knows and loves me, is on the lookout and always makes getting back home special. My favorite pillow, my man, and my stuff make home warm and inviting.

I've been invited back to my spiritual home, the cross. The Spirit delivered this subtle yet distinct invitation straight to my heart during a late afternoon walk on a balmy spring day. Gently, the message emerged: *You will discover intimacy with Me to the degree you understand My suffering on the cross.*

I remember being hit with a burst of joy the moment I realized I'd heard from God. The next moment brought sheer panic at what these words might mean. A dichotomy began brewing in my spirit. Did I want deeper intimacy or not? Was I willing to experience it by understanding more about suffering, His suffering?

It's such a delightful experience inviting God to speak to you and recognizing His voice when He does speak. In continuing pleas from my heart, I had often asked Him to show me how to love Him more and to draw me deeper into His presence. Ultimately, love and trust won out over fear in this latest message to my heart. Trusting Him completely, I knew there was absolutely nothing to be afraid of. I also knew that His love was the key that would unlock my heart, freeing me to love Him even more.

## Deeper Walk

Saturday: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Sunday: Psalm 33



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Cindi Wood is author of LifeWay's *Frazzled Female* books and *Desperate: Seeking Simplicity . . . Finding the Cross*. She is a sought-after speaker and Bible teacher, guiding women to deal with daily stress by experiencing a practical and deep relationship with Jesus Christ. Cindi is also wife, mother, and grandmother. She lives in Kings Mountain, N.C., with her husband, Larry. Check out [www.frazzledfemale.com](http://www.frazzledfemale.com) and Cindi Wood on Facebook.

# Rights and Responsibilities

“Have you not brought this on yourself by abandoning the LORD your God while He was leading you along the way?”  
(Jeremiah 2:17).

We're a society of victims. That's what happens when a culture emphasizes human rights over human responsibilities. Both are important, but one without the other has tragic consequences. Focusing on responsibility to the exclusion of rights ultimately results in slavery. Focusing on rights to the exclusion of responsibility results in . . . well, the society we have. Everything is always someone else's fault.

God won't let us get away with that attitude. He loves us too much to allow us to think our brokenness comes to us in spite of our innocence. No, we live in a fallen world, and all of us have deepened the fall. We don't just bear the effects of sin; we've inflicted them from time to time. We live in a climate of rebellion because we've been rebels ourselves. In one way or another, everyone has forsaken the Lord who would have led us in the way we should go.

We like to point fingers at those who are worse sinners than we are, and we can find plenty of evidence that some people exhibit more depravity than others. But the Bible never really invites us to do that. It's always reminding us of our part in

the fall, rarely, if ever, lamenting that all those other people have messed up the world for us. That doesn't mean that all suffering is at our own hands. It does, however, mean that all suffering comes from the condition of a fallen world—a condition we've helped create. Finger-pointing is never allowed in God's kingdom unless we also place ourselves in the path of the pointer.

Most of us who believe in the gospel have a heart that longs for Him. Even so, never get to the point of thinking that your heart is beyond rebellion or temptation. And never cease to follow the One who leads the way for you and who is jealous for your love. Live as a citizen of the kingdom of righteousness, not as a citizen of the society of victims.

## Steps of Faith

Lord, sometimes I'm quick to point a finger. But You call me to personal responsibility and to confess my sins. Forgive me and give me a heart that longs to follow You.

# Variety and Depth

“Why go to Assyria to drink water from the River?”  
(Jeremiah 2:18 NIV).

Human nature is always craving something new and different. That’s why clothing styles change every season. It’s also why many believers leave the faith to try out Buddhism, Islam, or some cult that has gotten their attention. When we’ve tried something and passed through our initial fascination phase, we’re ready to move on. We seek variety over depth.

Not God. He knows that a taste for truth should lead to a voracious appetite for deeper truth, not experimentation with error. Variety may be the spice of life in cuisine and fashion, but it has tragic consequences in matters of faith. Belief is not a buffet spread to pick and choose from; it’s a deep well of real sustenance that should draw us back again and again.

Even within the Christian community, we often jump around from church to church and teacher to teacher. We skim the surface of the land because we’re intrigued with the varieties of wood, hay, and stubble we see there, never realizing that if we dig with a little persistence, we’ll find gold and silver underneath. Sometimes the cravings we have can be fulfilled right where we are.

There are legitimate seasons in life, and He will guide us through

them at appropriate times. But far too often we get restless and impatient, and we jump around because we can’t get enough of the feeling we have when we’re discovering something new and fresh. That’s fine within limits. But when “new and fresh” take us outside the bounds of simple devotion to Jesus, we’re missing the depth we desperately need.

Don’t go to Assyria to drink from the river. Or, along the same lines, don’t go to human-devised philosophy, alternative spirituality, or material acquisition to satisfy your thirst. The Spring of life in your heart is what you really need. “Many of us are not thirsty for God because we have quenched our thirst at other fountains.”—Erwin Lutzer

## Steps of Faith

Lord, “Your faithful love is as high as the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches the clouds. God, be exalted above the heavens; let Your glory be over the whole earth” (Psalm 57:10-11).

Deeper Walk  
Psalm 57

## Evil and Awe

“Think it over and see how evil and bitter it is for you to abandon the LORD your God and to have no fear of Me”  
(Jeremiah 2:19).

God is awe-inspiring. Well, He should be, if we see Him correctly. The problem is blindness. He can’t inspire awe when He isn’t seen. But we live in a blind world, don’t we? People casually take His name in vain, defy His moral standards, ridicule those who take Him too seriously, and have a “don’t-call-me-I’ll-call-you” attitude toward Him. When people are desperate, they’ll talk to Him—often with indignation that He let them get in this mess in the first place—but otherwise He’s treated as a senile grandfather who smiles with affection at everyone.

Yet God calls a lack of awe “evil and bitter.” It isn’t intentional evil and bitterness, necessarily. It’s simply the result of choosing not to see Him in His greatness and majesty, of remaining unaware of how overwhelming He really is and how His holiness should make us tremble. If people opened their eyes to His presence, they’d fall down in worship. But instead, they have no awe. And this, according to the words of God through Jeremiah, is a horrible sin.

How can we cultivate awe? Contemplate the vastness of His creation, and realize that all that vastness fits in His palm. Consider

the invisible intricacies of every substance on the planet—especially the kind found in a human cell—and try to comprehend the wisdom that it took to synchronize the vast array of mechanics required to make complex organisms live and grow and function. Imagine light whiter and brighter than you’ve ever seen choosing to inhabit an utterly dependent human body from day one in a cold, manure-fragranced manger to the last day in a cold, decay-fragranced tomb, and bow before the humility and sacrificial love of the Almighty.

What does your awe do for the world around you? For starters, it’s contagious. It’s also teachable. No one will be in awe of a God they can’t see. Let them see Him in you.

## Steps of Faith

Holy, holy, holy are You LORD of Hosts; Your glory fills the whole earth (Isaiah 6:3). You are the Alpha and the Omega, the One who is, who was, and who is coming, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).

Deeper Walk  
Isaiah  
6:1-5

## "Are We There Yet?"

With the Lord one day is like a thousand years,  
and a thousand years like one day  
(2 Peter 3:8).

When our three children were younger, we loved traveling, but Rob and I couldn't afford airline tickets for five people. So we drove—everywhere. From the Midwest, we took car trips to California, New England, Florida, Colorado, Texas, and many points in between.

Our car trips were before the days of hand-held video games, DVD players, and MP3 players. So I made sure the kids had plenty of books, coloring books, crayons, and card games. All five of us participated in word games as we drove down the highway. We made frequent stops to stretch our legs. But the children's frequent cries were always the same: "Are we there yet?"

Their question reminded me of the times I've waited on answers to prayer. Sometimes I feel like a kid sitting in the backseat of the car, waiting to get to my destination. When I'm in the midst of suffering, I impatiently ask God, "Are we there yet? Is it time for the pain to be over?" Or when I'm waiting on an answer to prayer, I want to know if He's heard me and when He's going to respond. However, God's timetable is vastly different than ours, and He may not answer in the way we had expected or hoped. But He will answer.

As we get older, our perspective of time changes. While it seems to drag by in our youth, when we become adults, it flies by and we may wonder where it went so quickly. The span of our lifetime is only a speck on God's timeline of eternity. While our suffering or waiting may seem to take an incredibly long time, God knows how much we can bear, and He is full of mercy. Paul reminds us, "We also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope." (Romans 5:3-4). So the next time you have to wait on an answer to prayer, take heart. God will answer, but it will be according to His timetable.

## Steps of Faith

Father, please forgive me for the times I've been impatient as I've waited on Your answers to prayer. Help me to trust in You and wait for Your perfect timing.

Deeper Walk  
John  
11:1-44



# Crisis Too Soon

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways”  
(Isaiah 55:8).

**N***o one is ever prepared for the phone call that tragically changes his or her life,* Leslie thought. Three months ago, Leslie didn’t recognize the phone number, and she almost didn’t answer.

On the other end of the line was her husband’s coworker. He told her that Mike was at the hospital, he’d had a weird accident—he blacked out and dropped lifelessly to the floor, hitting his head on the concrete. Due to head trauma, his heart and breathing stopped. But paramedics arrived and revived Mike, and doctors attended to him in the critical care unit.

When the accident happened, Leslie and Mike had been married less than a year. They’d made many plans for the first few years of their marriage that included moving to another city and having children. Now, sitting in a rehabilitation center while her husband worked on his motor skills and speech, these dreams were now in question. Leslie pleaded with God to heal Mike completely. He had been active and healthy, and he enjoyed working with the youth in their church.

Leslie knew there would be hard times during their marriage. But she never imagined they would be

facing something as life altering as this so soon—if ever.

**H**ave you experienced a crisis of faith? A circumstance so personally disturbing that you’ve questioned God’s sovereignty and love for you? It’s human nature to struggle and ask questions. What we do with our questions determines whether faith will grow or stagnate. If we allow our minds to continually loop through questions and refuse to stand on the faith we profess, we miss out on God’s supernatural comfort and the chance to experience “the peace that passes all understanding.” Questioning, while continuing to pray, read Scripture, and pursue God wholeheartedly will produce a richer, more trusting relationship with our Heavenly Father.

## Steps of Faith

Father, I don’t understand Your ways sometimes, or why You allow some things to happen. But I trust in Your sovereignty and faithfulness. Help me walk with You through trials.



# Hope and Happiness

by Anita Lustrea

I recently listened to a friend of mine speak at a Bible conference. One of the thoughts that she put forth was about humanity's unending pursuit of happiness. It doesn't take long to think of how we try to buy happiness. The entire entertainment industry is built on the assumption that people will always be looking for happiness and therefore need to be entertained, to engage in activities that "make them happy." The sports industry is a billion-plus-dollar business. We buy tickets and concessions all to watch someone else play a game. We even try to develop relationships that, we think, will be the key to our happiness. It seems we will go to almost any length to obtain happiness. It's even written into our Constitution. What does God's Word say about this? Psalm 146:5 (KJV) reads, "Happy is he . . . whose hope is in the LORD." That seems like such a simplistic statement, at least it does compared to the ways we try to make our happiness.

What does having hope in the Lord really mean? To hope means to expect, trust, anticipate, wish, look forward to. We have a future and that future is wrapped up with salvation and freedom and new life. It is filled with mercy and grace and love beyond measure. When compared to watching a movie or a basketball game, or skydiving, it's easy to see what's real. We try to manufacture happiness, but as we seek Jesus' face and His ways, that is reality and the only place "real" happiness can be found.

Do a self-assessment. What are those things in your life that you find yourself running to for happiness, or to make you "feel" better? Then go online, or to a concordance and do a word search on *hope*. Find some key verses that speak directly to you and then revel in the hope, the lasting hope we have in the Lord.

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September 28 & 29

# Redemptive Scars:

## Evidence of God's Life-Changing Love

by Jocelyn Green

He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself!" (Luke 24:38-39 NIV).



*Have you considered that these scars of sorrow make you able to minister to hurting people in a way that a trouble-free life would never enable you to?*

It was September 11, 2002, the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Immanuel Bible Church in Springfield, Virginia was packed with thousands for a special service, yet when our speaker took the stage, you could have heard a BlackBerry drop.

His dress uniform was sharp and crisp, his medals signifying years of service for our country. But it was the headband around his scarred forehead, the compression garments on his arms and hands that told the greater story. Lt. Col. Brian Birdwell was a 9-11 survivor. He should have died that day at the Pentagon. Miraculously, he lived, but 60 percent of his body had been burned, 40 percent of which was third-degree. The scars he bore—and will bear for the rest of his life—made us believe him when he

*Without [Jesus'] scars,  
humankind would not be  
saved, [and] we would not  
have the assurance that He  
can relate to any degree of  
human suffering.*

spoke of the goodness of God, for he had been through the flames of hell and back again.

When Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, He showed them His feet and hands to convince them He was who He said He was (Luke 24:38-39). The scars were His proof. Without those scars, humankind would not be saved, but also, we would not have the assurance that He can relate to any degree of human suffering.

## Deeper Walk

Saturday: Luke 24:36-49

Sunday: Isaiah 53

Not all scars are visible, of course. Sorrow etches deep scars on the heart as well. Perhaps you have scars of your own, invisible, yet indelible. Something has happened in your life that has marked you. Have you considered that these scars of sorrow make you able to minister to hurting people in a way that a trouble-free life would never enable you to?

Lt. Col. Birdwell, now retired, has founded a ministry to other burn victims called Facing the Fire. His scars give him instant credibility in his ministry.

J. W. Follette wrote:

The one who has had but little trouble in life is not a particularly helpful person. But one who has gone through a hundred and one trials, experiences, deaths, blasted hopes, shocks, and a tragedy or two has learned his lesson. He is able to enter into the need of suffering humanity and pray it through. He can enter into perfect fellowship with a person who is in unspoken agony of spirit and pressure of trial. He is able . . . to trust God with a sublime faith for victory and power (*Broken Bread*, published by Gospel Publishing House, 1957).

What do your scars say about you? About God? Who can you minister to because of your scars?

*Lord, thank You for healing me, though I still have scars. Show me how to use my painful past as a key to unlock hope in someone else's life. In Jesus' name, amen.*

From *Faith Deployed . . . Again*, © 2011 by Jocelyn Green. Published by Moody Publishers. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

# Stop Sin Before It Starts

God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, . . . He will also provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

**A**s I threw the clothes into the dryer, I realized things were too quiet in the rest of the house. I ran into the hallway to see what my 4 year old was doing. "Cole, you know better than that!" I screeched. "Stop writing on the wall!" My 18 month old had also used Cole's markers, but a different canvas: her shirt.

I want to get rags and soap to clean up when I saw that our border collie puppy had left another kind of mess for me to clean up.

I felt my internal temperature rising. I was tired of spending all my time cleaning up after everyone else. I felt like yelling at the kids, the dog, or whoever crossed my path next.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit had been working on me in this area, and I recognized that I was about to lose my temper. I counted to 10 and prayed, *Lord, help me to glorify You in all things—even in the way I handle a tough day.* I recited the verse I had memorized to help me deal with anger: "Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for a man's anger does not accomplish God's righteousness" (James 1:19-20).

I was still upset, but I was no longer raging with out-of-control anger.

Instead, I was yielding control to the Holy Spirit.

**W**hen temptation to sin knocks at the door, what is your first reaction? If you recognize the temptation and ask God to deliver you, He promises to do so (1 Corinthians 10:13). Prayerfully pinpoint your struggles and use your Bible's concordance or an online version to find verses that address those issues or particular sins. Memorize several verses you can call to mind when tempted. The psalmist wrote, "I have treasured Your word in my heart so that I may not sin against You" (119:11). Jesus used Scripture to resist Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). This shows us that our best defense against sin is to know God's Word, depend on it, and obey it.

## Steps of Faith

Dear Lord, thank You for delivering me and forgiving me of my sins. Please show me areas that I struggle with and empower me to resist temptation.



# Marriage Getaways



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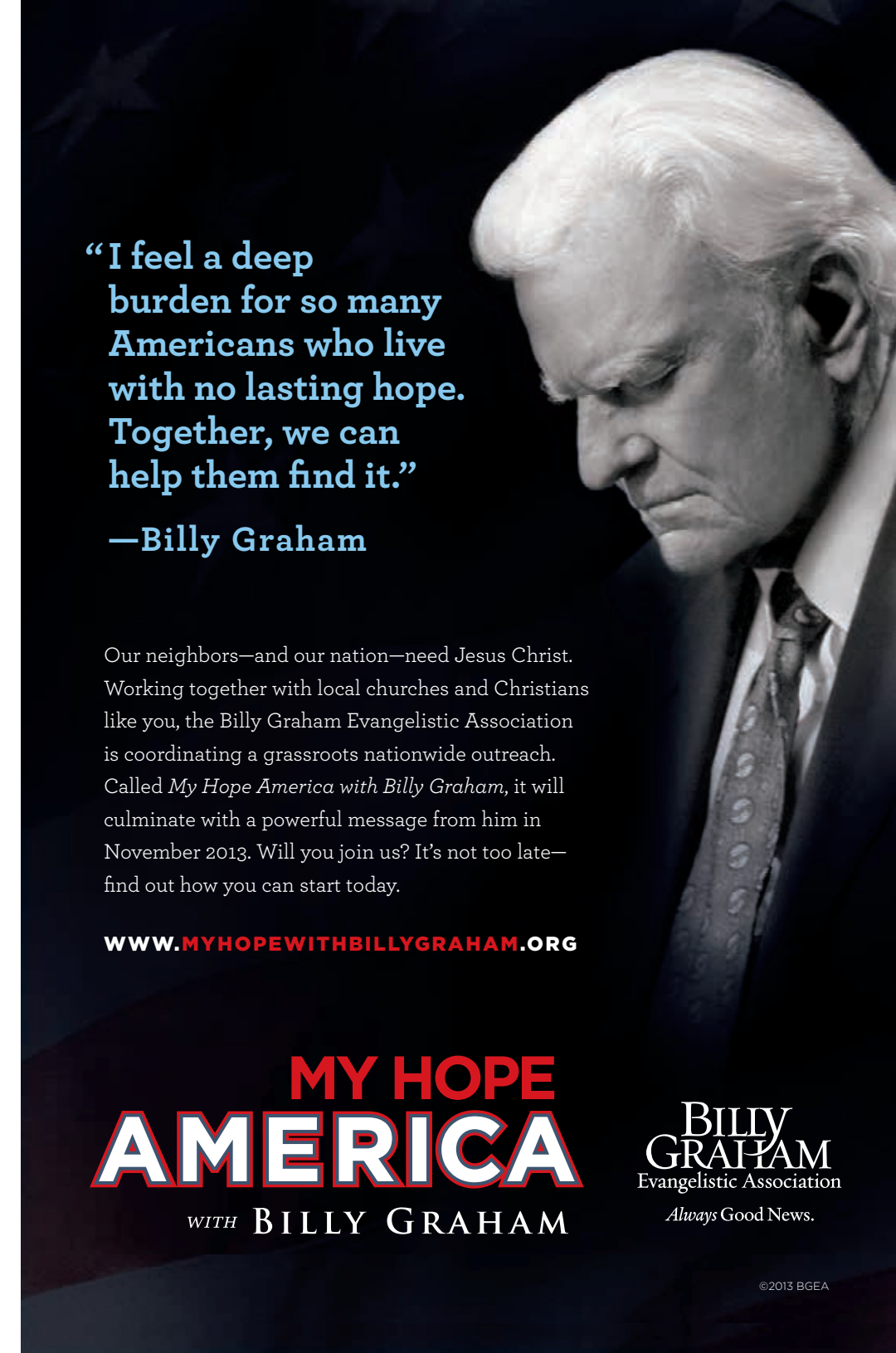
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with no lasting hope.  
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help them find it.”**

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