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2015-2018 Evangelical Press Association Award of Merit

# LEADING HEARTS

EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP

ONE WOMAN'S HEALING JOURNEY

♥ MILEPOST 95

♥ WHEN GOD CALLS THE HEART TO LOVE

♥ "THE VOICE" OF INFLUENCE  
KYMBERLI JOYE

♥ KNOCK OUT DISCOURAGEMENT



Meredith Kendall

Through it ALL

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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

*Linda Evans Shepherd*



win a billion dollars?

ONE MORNING, I'D SPENT TIME PRAYING FOR SEVERAL HURTING PEOPLE AT CHURCH. As I prayed for my new friends, the Lord revealed their deeper wounds and secrets. I shared the insights God had given me as I prayed for them. I told them they could really trust God and his great love for them. Their tears turned to peace and their peace turned to joy. How wonderful it was to witness the Lord move so mightily in their lives.

So on this day, knowing I'd heard from the Lord, I headed home. As I clutched the steering wheel, I prayed a silly prayer, "Lord, if you can speak to me, would you tell me the winning numbers for the upcoming lottery?"

It was not that I was interested in playing the lottery, through it was hard not to notice that it had reached a billion dollars jackpot. But I was curious if God would speak to me in such a way. So I smiled as I drove down the freeway, wondering if God would answer me.

Immediately a series of numbers came to mind. I grinned. I didn't really believe they were the actual numbers that would win. So, I didn't stop to play the game.

But the next day, these were the very numbers that popped up on the ping poll ball drawing. If I had played them, I would have won a billion dollars.

I was stunned. For one thing, I had really heard from God. And for another thing, I felt guilty. Imagine! If

I had played those numbers how much ministry I could have accomplished.

I took my thoughts to the Lord. "Did I mess up?" I asked.

It was as if I could feel the Lord smile on me.

And in my inner ear of my soul, I heard the Lord whisper, "I knew you wouldn't play the numbers. That's why I gave them to you when you asked. I wanted to show you that you really can hear my voice."

That brought me peace, though I still like to laugh about missing out on a billion-dollar jackpot. But how glad I am that the lottery is not my provider. God is my provider. He's all I need to do all that He's asked me to accomplish.

You may be wondering just how I hear God's voice.

For starters, I daily ask His Spirit to flow through me. It's His Spirit who makes the Word come alive as I read it. It's His Spirit who gives me peace, love and joy and all the other fruits of the Spirit. It's His Spirit who quietly, gently and lovingly whispers wisdom and truth to my heart.

Enjoy this issue and remember this. Even if you never win a billion-dollar lottery, God will provide you with everything you need, including the wonderful fruit of His Spirit.

In Jesus' name.

Love,

Linda Evans Shepherd  
Publisher, Leading Hearts Magazine

*LH*

# LEADING HEARTS

EMPOWERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP

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## Information

**Leading Hearts** magazine for Christian Women is published bimonthly by Right to the Heart Ministries 2019.

ISSN 2380-5455

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**MANUSCRIPTS** | Writers guidelines are available at leadinghearts.com.

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**MEMBER | 2015-2016-2017-2018 Evangelical Press Association Award of Merit Winner — Christian Ministry Digital Publication**

Photos courtesy of: barefacedgirl.com, Rebecca Frielandier, (Unsplash: Katy Belcher, Noah Buscher, Logan Isbell, Neomi Jimenez, Sharon McCutcheon, Mariano Nocetti, Pawel Szymanski).

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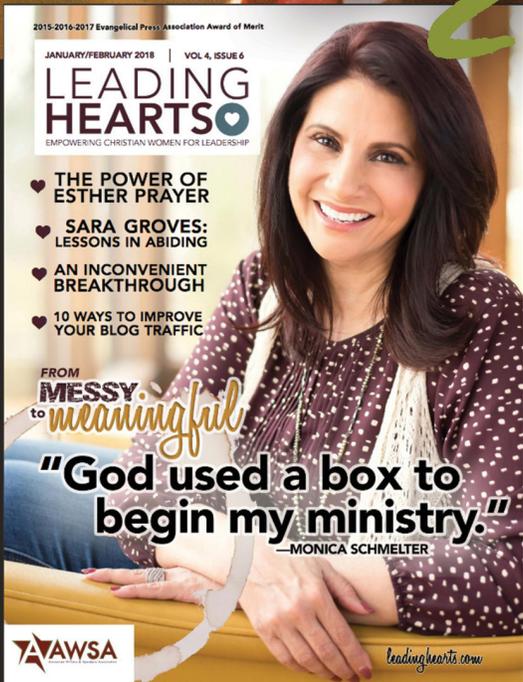
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FROM THE **EDITOR**  
*amber weigand-buckley*

take heart

AS A JOURNALIST, I'VE ALWAYS DESIRED TO BE THE ANTITHESIS TO THE MODERN-DAY MEDIA — bringing JOY to the airwaves.

So, last month when I, along with fellow LH staff member, Tom Young, were given opportunity to take the publication interviews to a Facebook Live talk show format with the help of Acts Media Group, that dream started to take shape.

The show, #something2celebrate with Amber and Tom, does something that we've been doing with Leading Hearts all along — sharing good things that are happening and great things our fellow sisters in Christ are doing all over this world.

And specifically, for my fellow sisters in leadership, we want to encourage you be released into and fully live out God's call for your life. OUR GOD shows up all over the place just to pour out great LOVE for HIS children — that's US!

In fact, in this letter from the editor I want to celebrate two great words Christ shared in John 16:33 during His time on this earth: TAKE HEART!

The Oxford Dictionary translates this phrase as "BE ENCOURAGED."

If I were to make an Amber-ized version, it would probably say: "Kids, as you live on this planet, you'll have to deal with a lot of stuff that stinks — stuff that is painful, stuff that is unfair, stuff that makes you angry, stuff that even makes you so sad that you feel like you can't carry on. But BE ENCOURAGED,

I have already made a way through it, and I HAVE YOUR BACK!"

You don't find that place by living in the make-believe land of "Everything Is Awesome All the Time Because I Have Jesus in My Heart." That place simply does not exist.

You can find joy in knowing that God is Awesome and He is Over Everything. And He dishes GOOD THINGS out in the midst of our perseverance through very hard times.

Have I been known to utter "a discouraging word"? Of course — I've had some pretty barefaced crappy days. I'm human. But, I've always known that God is there, even in the STINK and HEAVY of every situation, He IS There.

Just like Paul, I have the JOY of acknowledging that HE is present in my PIT of discouragement. Thank you, Father, that for each one of us, YOU'RE THERE! May it produce great LONGSUFFERING fruit so I can seed others with your encouragement — that You remain faithful in all things and through all things.

I hope, as you read through the pages of this edition, you will think about the orchard of GOOD fruit that God has grown in you through all the good and not so good seasons of life. I also hope you will help others TAKE HEART, knowing God's rich supply is never limited by seasons. And that is #something2celebrate.

Love,

AMBER WEIGAND-BUCKLEY  
EDITOR, LEADING HEARTS MAGAZINE

LH

REALCHURCH**LADIES**

meredith kendall  
*through it all, He is faithful*

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“We went to church, but it was really just something that you did on a Sunday.”

Still, Meredith became active in the church because she felt like she needed to earn God’s forgiveness for everything that she had done.

MEREDITH KENDALL HAS GONE THROUGH COUNTLESS STRUGGLES IN HER LIFE, from an alcoholic and abusive stepfather to having an affair. Today, Meredith uses her testimony to bring hope and healing to others.

### Growing Up Godless

Meredith never really knew God. Growing up in an abusive home, her family rarely went to church. In 1985 she became a teenage mother, married the baby’s father and moved to the Bible belt. A few years into their marriage she had an affair. They were advised to talk about it and then never bring it up again.

Her husband came from an extremely religious family, but neither of them had a relationship with God. “We went to church, but it was really just something that you did on a Sunday,”

says Meredith. Still, Meredith became active in the church because she felt like she needed to earn God’s forgiveness for everything that she had done. She became a camp counselor and helped with children’s choir and youth group, among many other things. “I could go to someone and have all the right answers for all the questions because I had learned them,” she says.

She realized that she was going to be one of those people saying, “but Lord, I taught Sunday school” or “but Lord, I sang in the choir.” She then fully accepted God into her life.

All of that changed during a sermon at a youth camp when the pastor asked, “If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure, for sure, that you would go to heaven?” He then brought up Matthew 7 which says, “And on that day many will say to me: but Lord.” This shook Meredith to her core. She realized that she was going to be one of those people saying, “but Lord, I taught Sunday school” or “but Lord, I sang in the choir.” She then fully accepted God into her life. Later, her husband truly did as well.

### Me and God, Figuring It Out

Just because she had accepted Christ did not mean her struggles were over, though. Her husband had an affair with her best friend. They

also dealt with bankruptcy and rebellious children. Meredith notes that statistically they should not still be married. “We should be divorced, but then there was God’s faithfulness,” says Meredith. “I

didn’t go it alone this time though; it was just me and God figuring it out.” Through prayer, Meredith and her husband were able to work through these things and will be celebrating 34 years of marriage this year.

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MEREDITH KENDALL MINISTRIES

# Let Go & Let God

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God created you uniquely different from anyone else. with specific giftings. After this weekend retreat with speaker and author Meredith Kendall, her prayer is that you will walk with a new or a renewed sense of purpose and allow God to become your voice you listen to—the voice you seek to hear. Don't let another second of your life to be taken up by the thoughts of this world to dictate who you are to become. Email Meredith to schedule your event today:

[MEREDITHSAGEKENDALL@GMAIL.COM](mailto:MEREDITHSAGEKENDALL@GMAIL.COM)

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## Stepping Out

In 2003 they started a nonprofit called Advancing the Gospel which helps women who were caught in abuse and negative cycles in their lives find their God-given potential. They also co-authored a recovery program called the 180 Program. Now, Meredith can see how God's faithfulness has helped her. "Looking back, I see God's hand in a lot of stuff. I can say, 'If this hadn't happened, then I wouldn't have been able to minister this way.' I can look back and see how God has guided and directed me."



Meredith now spends her time doing speaking engagements and weekend retreats. "The funny thing is that I actually quit speech in high school because there was a kid in the class who also went to a Sunday school that I rarely attended." Again, Meredith felt ashamed and unworthy and quit the class because she was embarrassed to talk to him, but God has helped Meredith overcome that as well.

That is not to say that the work has always been easy. "Satan used the very people I am trying to help to try to take me out," Meredith says. In 2011 Meredith was working with teenagers who were in something like a drug court. Meredith brought in others who had been in the drug world to show them the truth of what they were getting into. One day, she noticed a man standing by the center. She did

not think anything of it, but she saw him again the next day. After her class she was getting into her car when he approached her and started to beat her. "I really believe that God sent something or somebody because as fast as it started was as fast as it ended" Meredith remembers. The man took off like there was someone chasing him even though it was a quiet street.

Her orbital bone was broken, and she still has no feeling in one side of her face. Police officers and others believed that she was targeted as a warning to stop the work that she was doing. The man has still not been caught. "I had to choose forgiveness," Meredith says, "I just want to know why."

## Moving On

Meredith has not let this experience stop her; if anything, she is stronger than ever. "I think the biggest reason I want to be a speaker is to show God's faithfulness." Meredith wants to give others the steps to get through hardships. "After you accept God, there is really no follow-up; there's no what's next," she says. "How do you take what you've just done and apply it to the rest of your life?"

Meredith is currently working on a book called *My Gigi's House* about a woman named Ralynn who runs away from an abusive relationship after promising God that she would seek help if He allowed her to see the light of day. She runs to, and then away from, the church because of shame and guilt after making an accidental scene. She later meets Ms. Shelly, which sets her on a path of healing, a relationship with Jesus and purpose in her life.

After surviving so many hardships and struggles Meredith's advice to others going through tough times is, "I can't tell you it's easy and I can't tell you that you're going to get the response that you want. But don't blame yourself, but take responsibility for what you need to." She wants people to block out the opinions of the world and rely on God. "Put on the armor of God, allow him to be the voice that you follow." LH

by emily walton  
EDITORIAL INTERN





by karen porter  
WWW.KARENPORTER.COM

# ultimate self-control



I KNEW A MAN WHO SEEMED THE EPITOME OF SELF-

CONTROL. Rising early each morning, he went to the gym, ate a healthy breakfast, and dressed with military precision. He consistently kept a record of every detail of his conversations and negotiations. He was always on time and

never procrastinated. He was the picture of a self-controlled person until he began unrestrained yelling, often firing people or making rash decisions. Or he talked way too much in meetings, telling the same stories over and over — but he was so potentially explosive that no one dared to stop him.

Often stated as self-discipline or willpower, self-control touches us in every private and public spot.

# INTHELEAD

We all want to be in control of our urges, our tongue, our pocketbook — our life. Even Cookie Monster from the Muppets is working on his self-control, changing “Me want it!” to “Me wait for it.”

We try to apply self-control to our health by eating right, exercising and avoiding addictive substances like alcohol, drugs, chocolate and sugar. From getting and staying organized to focusing on work and maintaining finances, we set ourselves up for failure in the area of self-control. In fact, scientists are discovering some key facts about self-control.

Research shows that after making big decisions or a string of important decisions, our self-control is weakened.

If we deprive ourselves in other ways — such as eating a minimal breakfast and no lunch — and then face a tough day of repeated decisions, our self-control about eating declines, and we can't resist dessert that evening. Or if we stand strong against harsh stressors, we lose restraint and begin sleeping too much, spending too much or talking too much.

What steps do psychologists suggest so we can avoid the trap?

1. Keep your blood sugar levels balanced throughout the day by eating smaller meals more often.
2. Override habits such as not spending on small items during the day. In other words, pass on that latte or Danish.
3. Deliberately turn off the TV during your favorite show so that you are not a slave to it.
4. Try eating with your right hand instead of your left or vice-versa.
5. Remove the temptations, such as unhealthy foods that entice you, or put your cell phone in a drawer at a certain time each evening.
6. Throw away your to-do list. Instead, schedule every job for a day and time.

Some experts blame distractions for ruining our ability to stay focused and control our day. New apps have been built to help us avoid these distractions. Activate the app and you will not receive any notifications from email or social media for a set period of time. These gurus think that stopping the diversions will solve the problem.

As believers, we know that self-control is ultimately God-control. The result (fruit) of God's Holy Spirit living in us helps us delay our impulses for a greater purpose.

- Eating healthy and exercising makes us strong to serve God.
- Giving money to a charitable cause breaks greedy thoughts.
- Refusing to tell the tidbit of information you know about a person overcomes gossip
- Not talking until you think conquers self-centeredness.

Self-control is keeping in step with the Spirit. The Spirit empowers us:

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7, NLT).

“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13, NLT).

“By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life” (2 Peter 1:3, NLT).

Pastor David Mathis said that self-control isn't flashy or attractive. He's right because it requires hard work to control our appetites and perhaps the even harder work to control our tongues and thoughts. (See James 1:19-20.)

God isn't a diversion as the experts suggest. He is our Source. Self-control is not my choice but the Spirit's choice for me. Ultimately, self-control is God-control. *AH*



PAGE GESKE

# milepost 95 from wreckage to redemption

SHE NEVER SAW IT COMING  
— THE MOMENT HER  
HONDA PILOT WOULD SKIN A  
GUARDRAIL BEFORE FLIPPING  
SEVERAL TIMES AND LANDING  
IN A DITCH. At that time Page Scott Geske didn't realize that over the next year of her life, she would encounter the goodness and faithfulness of God ... as He literally moved her from wreckage to redemption.

In July of 2007, with less than three hours to go, on Highway 15, near Blackfoot, Idaho, Page and her daughter, Andrea, were driving home from Montana where Page's husband had taken a job. The family chose to keep their roots planted in Idaho for the sake of the kids with frequent visits to see Matt.

"Andrea had turned 16 and I thought it would be a good chance for her to gain some experience driving. So we pulled over and switched seats. I should've known better; she didn't get a chance to adjust everything in the car for her to drive comfortably."

The moment Andrea reached down to adjust the settings of her seat, she lost control of the car,

crashing at 65 miles per hour near milepost 95 of Highway 15. Despite the vehicle rolling like a pair of dice, she walked away from the accident unscathed.

"I prayed two prayers," Page commented. "I prayed my daughter wouldn't be alone and that a physician would arrive on the scene." Miraculously, a doctor arrived on the scene, stabilizing Page's life-threatening injuries to keep her from dying. When they arrived at the trauma center, a nurse took Andrea under her wing. Both of Page's prayers answered.

Page didn't know that the next year of her life, she would encounter the greatness and faithfulness God.

In the weeks that followed the accident, Page realized she had a choice in how she moved forward. During her stay at the hospital she received

support from many, but there was one presence she was desperately missing — her husband. Page recalls, "I never expected my husband to abandon me; I was shocked when he chose not to come to the hospital."

"Laying there in pity wasn't really an option. I knew right then if God could bring me through that kind of wreckage, He would bring me through this transition too."

Page Geske says, "I thought the miracle of my life would be surviving eight surgeries and three months in a hospital bed!" But there was so much

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*Milepost95.com*

“This remarkable message will bless and encourage everyone who has experienced hardships and heartbreak.”

—Lysa TerKeurst, *New York Times* bestselling author and president of *Proverbs 31 Ministries*

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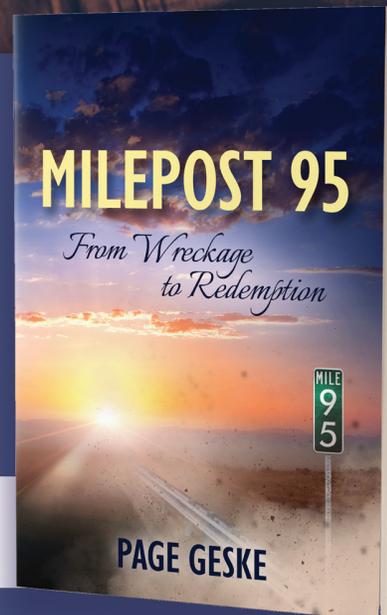
*Author & Speaker Page Geske*

# Help for the Transition. Hope for the Journey.

Author & Speaker Page Geske thought the miracle of her life would be surviving eight surgeries and three months in a hospital bed after a horrific accident, but this tragedy was just the beginning. With unflinching transparency, Page uses the insight of her *MILEPOST 95* journey to encourage and equip her audiences to successfully navigate any transition life throws their way.

Page is available to speak at church events, motivational speaker venues, women's conferences, women's events and more.

**To contact Page to speak at your event or order your autographed copy of the book, please visit [milepost95.com](http://milepost95.com).**



follow @geskepage on





“Lying there in pity and darkness wasn’t really an option. I knew right then if God could bring me through that kind of wreckage, He would bring me through this transition too.”

**-continued from p. 15**

more to God’s greatness and His plan for her. With time Page began to tell the story of God’s goodness and provision for her. Little did she realize, her story would later fill the pages of her book: *Milepost 95: From Wreckage to Redemption*. The book was birthed out of the desire to inspire courage and hope, with a message of trusting God one moment at a time.

Learning to trust and find motivation to thrive are just a few

lessons God taught Page during her recovery. Her story reveals how Jesus called her to be a light during a time of difficulty.

“For anyone reading my book, I pray they will find the courage and strength of His presence to help in their own situations. For people struggling with unexpected transition in their life, *Milepost 95* will give them the strength and power to see how God can use you in your most broken moments, to give inspiration to those around you.” *HR*

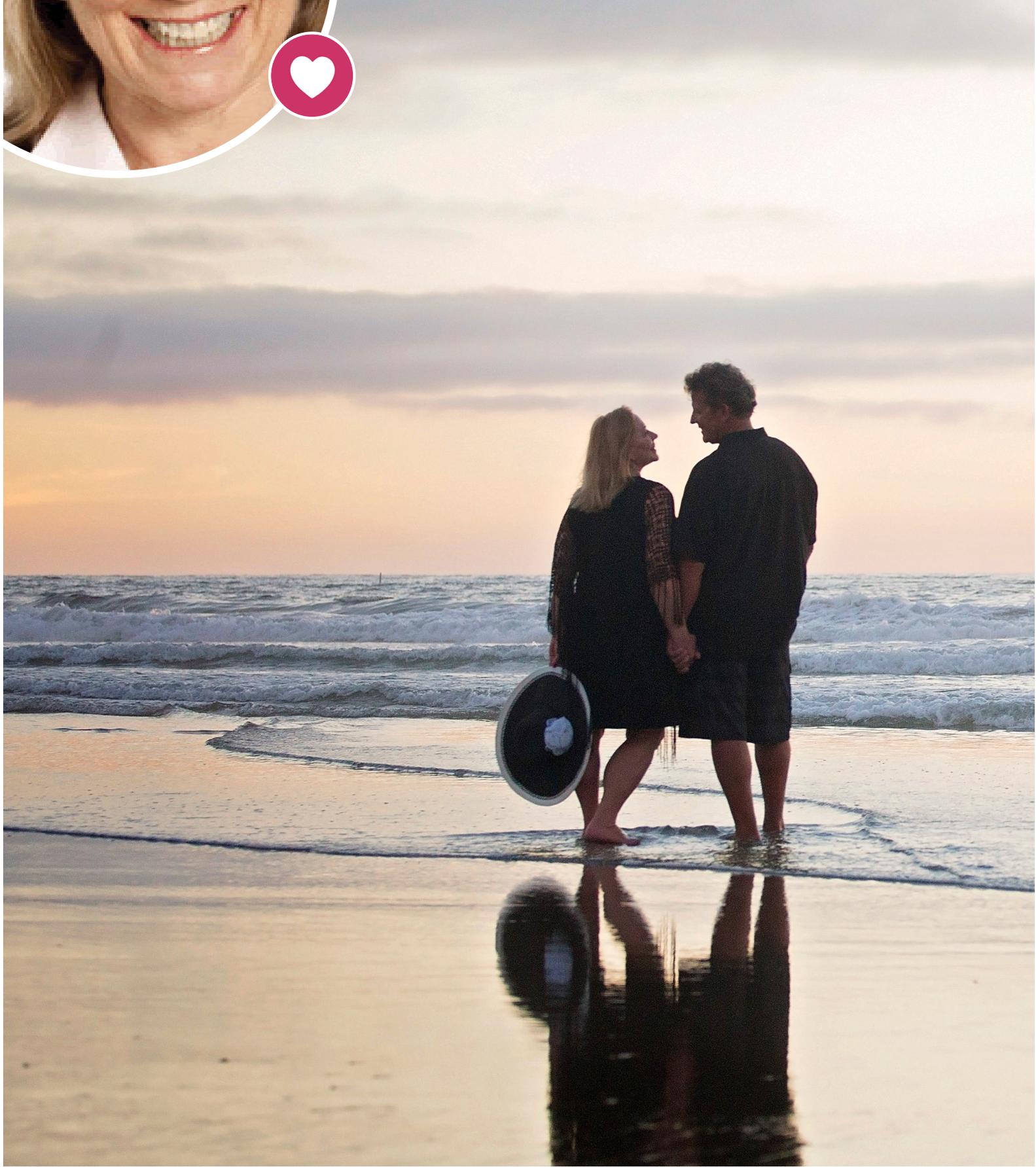


by heather riggleman  
HEATHERRIGGLEMAN.COM





*by pam farrel* — [WWW.LOVE-WISE.COM](http://WWW.LOVE-WISE.COM)



# how do you spell love?

WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF LOVE, ROMANCE AND VALENTINE'S DAY PASSION LASTED ALL YEAR LONG? It can! The Bible tells us that "God is Love." And God's Word is like a love letter to us, so it stands to reason that the Bible might have a few suggestions about how to create lasting love. My husband, Bill, and I have been married almost 40 years, and we have been teaching others about loving relationships nearly 40 years too! We like to help married couples keep the spark and sizzle in their romantic life by giving four simple concepts that fan the flame on L.O.V.E.

In our book, [\*The First Five Years\*](#), we explain how to create a memorable romantic encounter for your spouse no matter how many years you are married. Keep this acrostic for LOVE in mind as you make plans to wow the one you love:

- L**isten
- O**bserve
- V**ary
- E**xtract

## Listen

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"  
(James 1:19).

Your spouse will drop hints about the things he or she loves, and you can use these hints to create

more romance and sizzle in your relationship. For example, if you listen to Bill and me in a casual lunch conversation, you would discern that Bill loves things like: football, fishing, cooking, joke telling and the Bible. If you listen to Pam, you'd discover she loves travel, biking, swimming, tennis, laughing and helping women — and the spa!

It doesn't take much imagination then to know that if I (Pam) give Bill a day of ocean fishing or if he gave me a day at the spa, we would be more interested in each other at the end of that day. But it doesn't have to cost a lot. Kayaking is on both our lists, so we have a goal to have a kayak date in every state we travel to for business. Walking and biking are also on both of our lists, so an evening stroll, or a leisurely cycle along the marina where we live will also put us in the mood. Bill and I keep a running list of "loves" we discover about one another while listening and we use these to plan dates and surprise one another with romantic gifts and activities.

## Observe

"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way"  
(1 Peter 3:7, NASB).

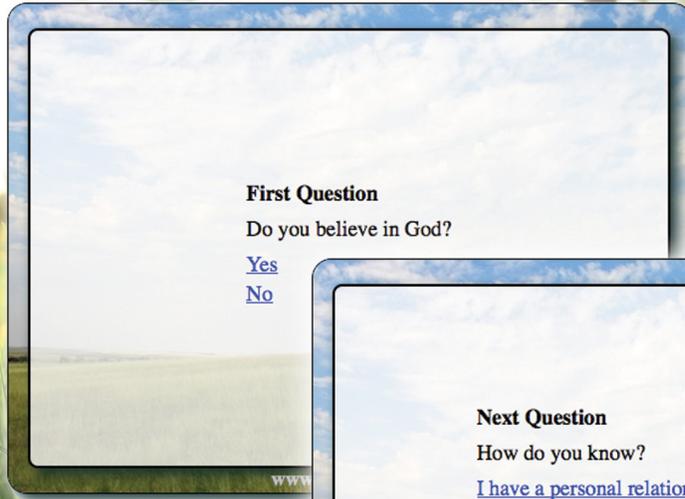
On the TV show "Sherlock" (and in the classic books), Sherlock Holmes wows the audience by his keen detective skills of observation. You can become a detective and easily observe what will bless and ignite your spouse:

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# How Well Do You KNOW God?

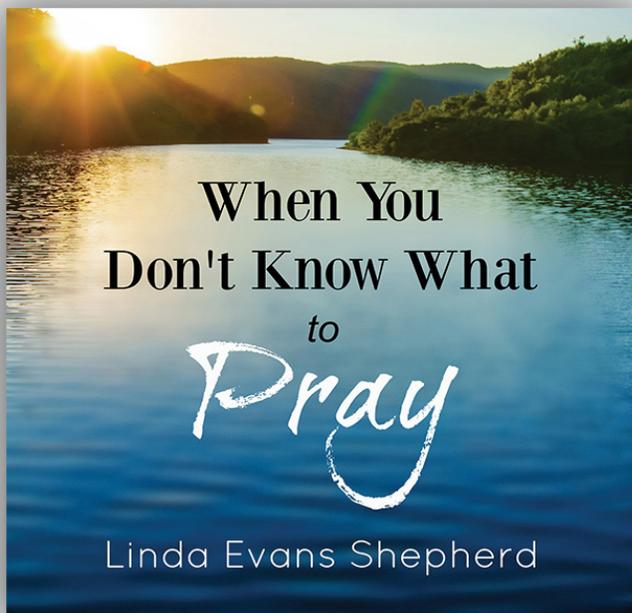
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A Woman of God Ministries



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- What raises stress in your partner? — Then plan to lower it.
- What lifts the spirit? — Then plan to repeat it.
- What calms the atmosphere? — Then recreate it.
- What things are collectible? — Then add to it.
- When does he or she give a relaxing sigh? — Then repeat it.
- What draws him/her to you? — Then protect it.

## Vary

“My beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away”  
(Song of Songs 2:10, ESV).

For married couples, when it comes to intimacy, don't get stuck in a rut. Vary the romance. In our book, [Red Hot Monogamy](#), inspired by the King and Bride in Song of Songs, we give over 200 red hot romance ideas. In Song of Songs, we see a couple who make time together a priority. They do simple romantic gestures, like taking a walk, but they also go out of their way to add some fun to their relationship.

Listen! My beloved!  
Behold, he is coming,  
Climbing on the mountains,  
Leaping on the hills!  
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.  
Behold, he is standing behind our wall,  
He is looking through the windows,  
He is peering through the lattice.

In this passage (Song of Songs 2:8-9), she has been waiting for the King to return home. As she spots him in the distance, she pictures him as a young stag, running toward her. Then the King adds to the welcome-home romance. Instead of walking in the front door, he is raising the anticipation by “standing behind the wall,” then zipping over to “look through the window.” Then he hops again to “peer through the lattice” in a kind of cat and mouse “Honey, I'm home” game.

One of the easiest ways to vary the experience is to keep the five senses in mind. Vary the places you date, mix the style from dressy to down to earth. Or try adding new sounds or music, scents, textures or tastes. If you go to dinner each Thursday, next week eat it on the rooftop or on a blanket at the park. If you usually work out as a couple, then make the next date a payoff — get some new athletic wear and try out a new sporting activity.

## Extract

“You are a garden spring,  
A well of fresh water,  
And streams flowing from Lebanon.”  
“Awake, O north wind,  
And come, wind of the south;  
Make my garden breathe out fragrance,  
Let its spices be wafted abroad.  
May my beloved come into his garden and eat its choice fruits!”  
(Song of Songs 4:15-16).

Songs of Songs is written in figurative language to protect young readers. There are many places that make use of a double entendre like this passage where gardening terms are really an invitation to lovemaking.

To extract love, take an old idea and give it a new spin. Personalize it, shake it up, add to it. For example, because we are relationship communicators, we are usually busy around Valentine's Day. One year, we had to be at the NRB (National Religious Broadcasters) conference. No offense to those in Christian radio, but the NRB isn't the most romantic place to be around on Valentine's Day. To bring in the romance, my husband, Bill, scanned the covers of all the books we had written to that date and made a series of greeting cards with personal love messages that used the titles as a part of a romantic pun, like “It has been ‘Pure Pleasure’ being marriage to you” or “It's been a ‘Marriage in the Whirlwind,’ but what a fun adventure life is with you!” Every hour all day, he gave me a card with a new message and tiny gift.

L.O.V.E: Listen, Observe, Vary and Extract to create a love to look forward to living. It is possible to keep love as red hot as those candy hearts you munch on each Valentine's Day — it just takes a little creativity and some L.O.V.E. *LH*



by karen porter  
WWW.KARENPORTER.COM



# fighting the giant of discouragement

DISCOURAGEMENT IS A GIANT. GOD'S WEAPON AGAINST DISCOURAGEMENT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS. He is faithful, and when we remember and rely on His faithfulness, we can slay the giant of discouragement. But it isn't easy, because God is not the God of the tweak; He is the God of transformation.

Will you allow God to transform you, or will you settle for a tweak?

The history of Esau and Jacob wasn't pretty (Genesis 32-33). Jacob cheated Esau out of his inheritance, and the brothers parted as bitter enemies. Years later, they would meet again.

Feeling guilty, Jacob brought gifts to appease Esau. Gifts might have tweaked their relationship but wouldn't bring total peace.

Jacob heard that Esau was on his way with 400 men. It didn't sound like a dinner-on-the-grounds family reunion. In the night, a man came to Jacob (Genesis 32:24-26). Jacob fought back, defending himself, stubbornly refusing to give control until he realized the man was God.

Jacob seemed ready to settle for a tweak. Save me from Esau! But God fought for total transformation.

Some of us have allowed our health to deteriorate, and now we are out of breath and out of energy; we feel weak and ill. We take a handful of pills each morning — some that treat the symptoms but don't cure the problem. We could exercise, building



Too many of us aren't following closely enough with God for transformation to happen .... We think a seminar or conference will fix our spiritual deficiencies, but we discover the fix is simply a tweak.

muscle and strength, but we swallow the tweak and don't try for the transformation.

Many of us are overweight. In fact, 40 percent of adults and 20 percent of children are obese in America. (Some reports indicate that the percentages may be even higher.) So, we try the next diet fad or drink diet shakes. We lose a little weight only to gain it back as soon as we go off the extreme diet. Dieting is a tweak. Lifestyle change — eating from all food groups in moderate amounts — transforms us into healthy, fit individuals.

Some of us have stubbornly refused to reconcile with another person because of a perceived injustice. Saying you forgive them is a step forward, but it may only be a tweak. Transformation means we get over our pride and instead reconcile with the person if we can. Transformation also means walking away in wisdom because we must withdraw from people who cannot be trusted — such as repeat abusers.

Too many of us aren't following closely enough with God for transformation to happen. We go to church, but we are spectators. We haven't developed a personal intimacy with God. We think a seminar or conference will fix our spiritual deficiencies, but we discover the fix is simply a tweak.

Like Jacob, I have wrestled God until I was exhausted. His love and determination for my transformation has staggered and constrained me until I decided to trust Him. Knowing Him intimately is terrifying and thrilling, breathtaking and astonishing. And He is always faithful.

After my job loss, we sold our dream home at a loss, creating a debt that would take years to

overcome. Silence from friends overwhelmed me. My feelings of rejection were intense. I played the blame game and the pity-me game. I considered a lawsuit — throwing rocks at the people who hurt me. But I soon discovered two options: (1) I could live as some do, wallowing in the brokenness as if it is normal, or (2) I could find a way to start over.

I took the first baby steps from despair to hope — sometimes walking, sometimes wandering, and sometimes slogging. I rambled through the worry thickets: “How would we pay the bills?” I hid in the panic bushes mumbling, “No hope. No hope.” I wondered about the power of God.

My steps took me to the brink with this question, “Is the loss of my job, position, power and prestige the end?”

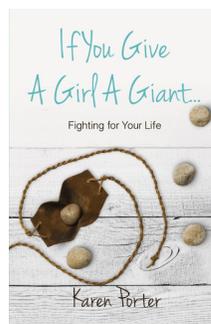
What is your question?

- Is losing my loved one the end of me?
- Can I pick up the pieces after divorce?
- Will I recover from the huge mistake I made?
- Can I leave my addiction behind?

For me, the answer appeared bit by bit. As light exchanges shadow with the early morning sunrise, anticipation replaced despair. Optimism superseded

pessimism. Faith traded places with loss. Desire dissolved apathy. Hope birthed in me. Transformation began because God is faithful. *PH*

**Excerpted and adapted from  
If You Give a Girl a Giant by  
Karen Porter, with permission  
from Bold Vision Books.**



# kymberli joye

## "the voice" of influence



### GOSPEL ARTIST AND WORSHIP LEADER KYMBERLI JOYE

**WOWED AMERICA** when she belted "Break Every Chain" and other hits on the national stage during season 15 of NBC's "The Voice."

With her amazing powerhouse vocals and joyful spirit, her testimony of overcoming depression and anxiety surprised and inspired audiences. "The Voice" semi-finalist grew up in the church, a pastor's kid in Windsor, Connecticut. She remembered that her mama says that she started singing when she started talking, but she didn't share that blessing with the congregation until she was 12.

"I started leading worship when I was about 18 years old. I just started at Berklee College of Music. I thought about the music career around that age," Kymberli said. "Before then, my cousin Jason (who is my manager), we were just fooling around writing gospel songs. Around 18, that's when I decided that's what I really wanted to do."

Since graduating with her music degree, Kymberli has led worship and sung backup for well-known musicians like JJ Hairston. "The Voice" was the first reality show she auditioned for. "It was one of the very few auditions I've ever done. The only other audition I did before that was to get into music school," she said. "'The Voice' was my first audition. I used to say that I would never do it because it was a competition. But when the door opened for me to audition for 'The Voice,' it felt like the right time."

During her audition, Kymberli noted that she was praying about the tough choice should coaches Kelly Clarkson and Jennifer Hudson both turn their chairs for her. When Clarkson used her only block against Hudson to get Kymberli, she believed God heard her requests and she chose to be on Clarkson's team.

"It was really amazing to meet all the artists from different types of backgrounds, see their perspectives of the world and even music. It was amazing to work with the coaches and the people I looked up to for so long," she said. "But the most I got out of 'The Voice' is it gave me the confidence to step forward. I have been a background vocalist for about seven years now. Being on 'The Voice' gave me the confident push that I needed to step out of the background and into the forefront. Not necessarily to make it about me, but feeling the confidence in spreading the message and sharing my voice."

From the beginning of the competition, she knew that she wanted to be a gospel artist. Showing her artistry, she sang a variety of songs; however, it was her performance of "Break Every Chain" that landed her at the top of Billboard Gospel Digital Sales for two weeks. Naturally, that performance was also her favorite performance because "it was me standing in who I am and who God called me to be 100 percent. I believe that was my defining moment on 'The Voice.'" She realized that people were really connecting with her music and message.

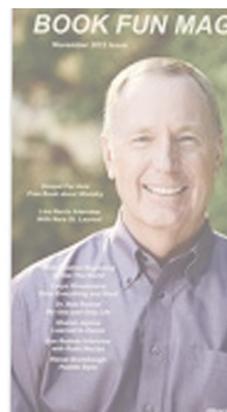
**-continued on p. 27-**



# BOOK FUN MAGAZINE

Where Book Fun Begins

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**-continued on p. 24-**

Kymerli shared that she dealt with depression and anxiety for years, especially in college. “A lot of it I felt inadequate, unloved and alone. So, for a long time I dealt with depression, and depression almost took me out. But God used gospel music and worship music to heal me, to help me see that I was not alone. He had everything figured out for me. He had a plan and purpose for my life.”

She said songs like “Oceans” really helped her because a lot of people don’t realize that dealing with depression can be good for a little bit and then you can fall right back into it if you’re not careful. “So, there were waves of depression. I would come out of it and then go back into it. Songs like ‘Oceans’ helped keep me out. I can say today that I’m delivered. God has completely delivered me from it because I no longer believe those lies,” Kymerli said. “The biggest thing about anxiety is the fear. The fear takes on like a physical form and it starts affecting your body. Sometimes you feel like you’re about to die. It’s really helped me to remember who God is and who God says that I am.”

When Kymerli was given the opportunity to be on “The Voice,” she decided that she wanted to be transparent because she knew that she did not get the platform for no reason. “I wanted to go onto ‘The Voice’ and bring light to it because a lot of people suffer in silence. I suffered in silence for a long time. It wasn’t until I was open and vocal about it that some people opened up and admitted, ‘Oh, my goodness. I’ve dealt with this too, and I felt like I was alone.’ That’s the key to why a lot of people suffer in silence. They feel like they would be judged. They feel like they’re the only one going through what they’re going through,” she said. “So, I wanted to use my musical platform to tell people that no, you are not alone. God loves you. He brought me out of it, so He can bring you out of it too.”

Kymerli is now compiling all the songs that she has written, as well as new ones, and beginning to work on her independent album. “I’m hearing from God and seeing what He wants to say through me. I’m working on an album, and we’re getting into the studio really soon. I’m so excited to bring this sound

to the world. I’ve been wanting to do this for a long time and this feels like the right time.”

Besides releasing a new album, she plans to travel the world leading worship. “I want to do some unorthodox things. Host events where people can come in that might not feeling that comfortable, yet walking into the church. There they can be inspired and uplifted and hear the gospel of Jesus in an atmosphere that is comfortable to them.”

Kymerli thanks all who voted for her and encouraged her. She also wants to encourage anyone who is afraid to step into their destiny to not be afraid. “In the social media age, we feel like if it’s not perfect, then it’s not worth it. We only put up or portray the best version of ourselves, but we all know that we have flaws and shortcomings. Don’t allow what you perceive as a shortcoming or a flaw to keep you from walking out what God has called you to do. Be confident in what God has called you to do.

“Don’t worry about the naysayers or even the voice in the back of your head that tells you that you aren’t ready or not good enough. Or that the world isn’t looking for you. The Bible says that creation is waiting for the manifestation of who the children of God really are. Somebody out there is waiting for you to be who God created you to be, and at the end of the day, if He gets the glory then it’s all worth it.”

She’s also encouraged by those who have testified to her about how her music and story has brought them peace in their pain, encouraged them to try church again, and started a relationship with God. “I’m so grateful that I was able to do ministry while I was there. I’m grateful for all the messages that people have sent; it lets me know that I’m doing God’s work.” *JH*

Social media handles: @kymerlijoye ; YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2MsZn8vpT4>

*by jenn taylor*  
PROFILE CONTRIBUTOR



INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER &  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF OVER 30 BOOKS  
-Linda Evans Shepherd-

*I'd love the opportunity  
to share the life-changing  
power of prayer with you!"*

*-Linda*



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## the big question

Q: How do spiritual gifts work together in the church?



with *cynthia l. simmons*  
WWW.CLSIMMONS.COM

GREAT QUESTION. WE AS INDIVIDUALS EACH HAVE AT LEAST ONE OR MORE SPIRITUAL

GIFT, such as serving, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy, discernment, helps, faith and miracles.

The beauty is these gifts are not only for us as individuals; they are also for the body of Christ.

So as we learn how to flow in our own giftings, we must allow others to flow through their own giftings so we can better serve one another.

Let's get creative and imagine what would happen if some of these gifts came together for an early breakfast one Sunday morning.

The first person to enter the Gifting Café is a certain Miss Teacher. She's spent hours researching the Bible lesson she will soon share in her Sunday School class later in the morning.

As she sips her coffee, in walks Miss Mercy. Miss Teacher invites her to join her, then shares the biblical wisdom she will soon present to her class. As Miss Mercy listens, her heart begins to ache.

Miss Mercy argues that these truths Miss Teacher wants to share will surely wound the class's new believers, who have only recently escaped a terrible past. Miss Mercy encourages Miss Teacher to alter her lesson to spare the new believer's feelings.

Miss Teacher is appalled that Miss Mercy would not want the Word to speak to her class. She explains that after all, the Scriptures formed the basis for our doctrine, and we cannot allow individual reactions to prevent us from giving the whole counsel of God.

As their conflict builds, Miss Exhortation hurries to join them. She notes their distraught faces and listens as they each share their arguments. While Exhortation loves the truths Miss Teacher shared, she understands Miss Mercy's concerns that the new believers will hear these truths in judgment, instead of in in love. That's when Miss Discernment slips into the discussion.

Miss Discernment hears all the arguments then explains that each of her gifted friends have part of the answer. Of course, Miss Teacher must teach the whole counsel of God. Miss Mercy must be there to point out that Christ forgives our sins and covers us with his grace. Miss Exhortation is also needed because she can encourage the new believers to continue their journey to maturity in Christ, in the love of Christ.

So, the lesson is that each of these gifts are not in conflict, and can in fact work together to serve the body of Christ. "...we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another" (Romans 12:5, NASB). *LH*



## LOOKING FOR WHITE SPACES *by penelope carlevato* WWW.PENELOPECARLEVATO.COM



I've been in this situation before. I've limped through the week or month with discouragement. I can identify with King David when he was facing the giant. My giant of an overloaded calendar can stop me in my tracks and reeks of discouragement and failure. I read books that promise I can be in control of my life, my home and even my calendar. I say yes when I wanted to say no. I fear hurting someone's feelings, so I join groups or go to lunch to please others. I am disappointed in myself, and I begin to feel tired and burnt out. My calendar reflects my out of control life.

This year I decided it was time for me to regroup and get alone with God. He offers me the chance to change by allowing me to make better choices. Choices to choose the best yes, not just any yes. Lisa Terkehurst in her book "The Best Yes," says "I get all twisted up in making the decision to check either the Yes or No box, not realizing there is a third box that reads Best Yes." I do have a choice.

I've made many great choices in my life and still forget His plan is the best plan. He gives me the courage to do things differently. His plans for me can make that change in my life a reality. When planning out my days and filling in (or not filling in) the white spaces, I decide to ask myself this question: "Does this choice in some way have an eternal impact? Will I regret making this choice?" If I keep that concern in mind when filling in those white spaces on my calendar, I will be closer to the goal of avoiding overload and being obedient to His calling and still enjoy my family and friends.

I can feel totally defeated if I fixate on my flaws. But, if like David, I put my hope and trust in God,

WHEN I HANG A NEW CALENDAR ON MY WALL EACH YEAR, I FEEL RENEWED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO START FRESH. A month of unlimited possibilities and adventures await me. However, it doesn't take long for the white spaces to disappear. I add already scheduled appointments and events, and slowly the white spaces vanish, and my calendar begins to resemble a map of the London Tube. How can I avoid this dilemma, not overbook, but still have the time and energy to do what I believe is God's call on my life and maintain an active and enjoyable relationship with family and friends?

I make wiser choices. These choices allow me to be confident in my walk with Him. I continue to be transformed by allowing myself to trust God with my life. It's a process that doesn't happen overnight. Daily, as I continue to make the right choices, His plan begins to be my plan. There will be some slip-ups and I will miss His leading in some areas of my life, but I need to remind myself that change is an ongoing process that will last a lifetime.

That's why I am focusing on more white spaces on my calendar this year. It seems simple, and I am excited as this gives me boundaries to have control of my time and not have time in control of me. It gives me time to spend more time with Him. So getting to know Him better is the best way to use up those white spaces.

"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Philippians 3:12, NIV).

### Crock Pot Potato and Corn Soup

I love getting dinner ready in the morning and not having to think, what am I going to make for dinner? This soup is delicious and quick and easy to make. A couple shortcuts to the chopping. I cut the potatoes (I use Russets) into fourths then slice thinly, which works just as well as chopping. I also keep bacon crumbles on hand to add to the soup, which makes it quicker than cooking bacon. Since I am making changes in my routines this year to give me more writing time, I am stocking up on frozen chopped onions and peppers from Trader Joe's. I know you can purchase frozen potatoes, too, but I like to use fresh. The broth is from my Thanksgiving turkey. I cook the carcass and freeze the broth in take-out containers.

5 or 6 large Russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 4 then sliced thinly  
4 cups stock  
1 large onion, chopped  
¼ pound cooked bacon or bacon crumbles (about ½ cup)  
4-oz can chopped green chili  
2 cups frozen corn  
½ cup chopped green peppers  
1/3 cup sliced green onions



2 teaspoon Himalayan Pink Salt  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
2 cups sharp cheddar cheese  
1 cup reduced-fat Greek yogurt or sour cream

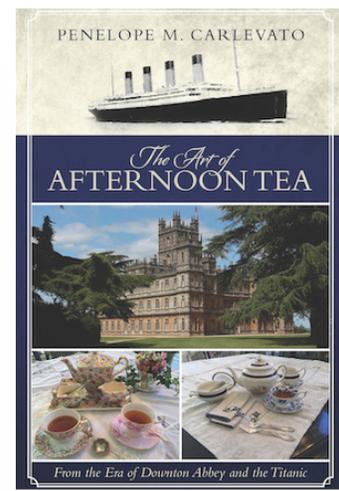
Place the potatoes, stock, bacon, chili, corn, peppers and green onion into Crock Pot.

Start on high for 30 minutes; then reduce temperature to low for 6 to 8 hours.

Thirty minutes before serving or when the soup is done (potatoes will be tender), mash half of the potatoes with a potato masher. Add the cheese and yogurt or sour cream and stir until combined and heated through.

Serve with a tossed green salad and crunchy sourdough rolls. Refrigerate any leftovers and use within a few days.

Serves 6 – 8. *PH*



Find great recipes like this in

Penelope's book:  
The Art of Afternoon Tea: From the Era of Downton Abbey and the Titanic.

Available autographed from [PenelopeCarlevato.com](http://PenelopeCarlevato.com)



FAITH FOR ONLINE INTERACTIONS  
*by edie melson*  
WWW.EDIEMELSON.COM



## WE LIVE IN AN INTERESTING TIME, TO SAY THE VERY LEAST.

Changes are happening faster than the most diligent among us can record, much less keep up with.

Our digital world seems to be the catalyst for the majority of those changes. Because I am a part of the older generation (ouch, that hurts) I hear a lot of derogatory comments about technology and the fact that our generation is not a digital native. We are classified as digital immigrants.

A lot of us didn't grow up using digital devices — and even those who did — still find connecting through cyberspace takes some getting used to.

It's a fact that many of us didn't grow up around the technology we have today — and some of us didn't grow up around any technology. That truth makes some things tough. But that difficulty is no excuse to quit. I didn't grow up having to do a lot of things, but as an adult I had to learn.

Growing up, we had telephones connected by a cord in the wall, television sets that had to be changed with a knob on the front, and there was only one kind of mail and it involved paper, an envelope and a stamp. I've managed pretty well to learn how to use a remote control and cell phone and manage email.

### **The truth is, we learn what we want to learn.**

I hear a lot of people lamenting the “good ol' days” and wishing we could go back.

If we think back, the good old days weren't all that great. Making phone calls meant encountering busy signals, disconnections and angry parents who were tired of teenage girls tying up the phone line talking to boyfriends. The television was grainy, it went off the air at midnight and there were only about a dozen channels. Then there was mail. It certainly was no more reliable than the email I deal with today.

Yes, times were simpler. But I remember my parents and grandparents complaining about how complicated life had gotten.

### **Every time has its irritations and difficulties.**

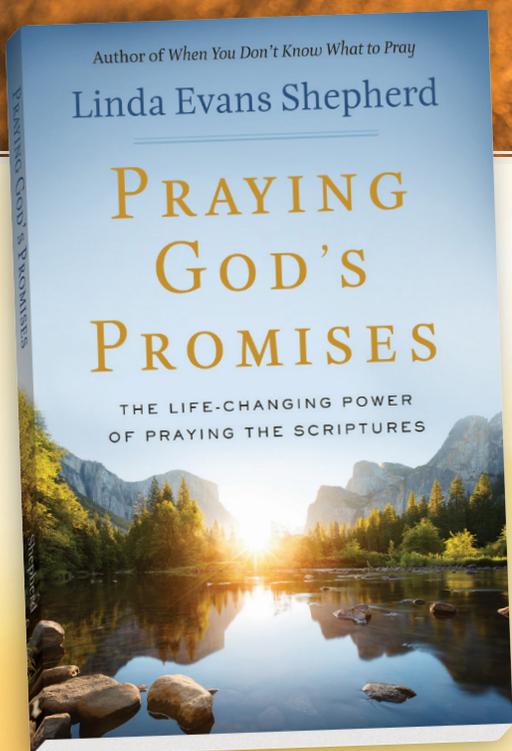
And it always takes faith to thrive in the midst of challenging times.

Here's where faith comes in with social media:

- 1. We must have faith in the medium.** While I do understand — in a sort of thirty-thousand-foot-view idea — how social media works, I don't always understand the details. When I share things online, I have to learn to trust that things are going to work like they're supposed to. And for the most part, I've found that they do.
- 2. We must have faith in the process.** Growing our reach online takes time. Some days we see progress; some days we don't. It takes time to establish a credible presence and see the growth that we're aiming for.
- 3. We must have faith in the people.** There are times when I post an update and I can see the responses — maybe emojis or comments. Other updates seem to land in some kind of black hole where the only response is digital crickets chirping into the night. I've discovered that those dead-seeming posts are actually seen by people. Beyond that, even when I'm not aware of it, they are having an impact.
- 4. We must have faith in ourselves.** Social media is constantly changing. For most of us, that means we're spending at least part of the time interacting on platforms we're still learning. We need to have faith in our ability to learn and grow with the resources we're using, as well as our own ability to connect.
- 5. We must have faith in the One who called us to connect.** I propose to you that our birth into this place and this time was no accident. God is not surprised by the stresses or obstacles we encounter online. And He equips us for such a time as this. I propose that God has a purpose for us in this point in history.

I truly believe God put us here for such a time as this. I for one, have decided that I need to embrace this time and have faith as I join Him in His work, no matter how uncomfortable that makes me. *PH*

# God's Word Is Powerful. Pray It.



In this inspiring book, Linda Evans Shepherd reveals that God's will is not a mystery—it's clearly laid out in his Word through his many promises. Through stories, practical application, examples of prayers, and guided reflection, she leads you toward a more powerful prayer life!

[GotToPray.com](http://GotToPray.com)



## SHARING LOVE WITHOUT SPREADING OUT TIME TOO THIN

by *karen whiting*  
WWW.KARENWHITING.COM



### BLESSING OTHERS THROUGH OUR WORK AND MINISTRY IS GODLY AND SHOULD BE INTENTIONAL.

If we overcommit, though, it can leave us feeling guilty as we crowd out loved ones and time for self. How should we choose where to invest our time and when?

Start with God and prayer. Remember He wants to be center in our life, so make sure you set aside time to pray, read Scripture and listen to God.

Share your calling with your family. They understand the need for the breadwinner to work. Let them know that God wants you to invest time and reach out to help others. Encourage them to listen to God so they will know how to serve Him too.

Engage your children in your ministry. Be sure you pray with them about your ministry. Ask them to pray about any problems you have in your ministry. Let them help you. They can help with mailings, filling

your printer's paper tray, helping to keep your office tidy, or other small tasks. Ask your spouse to pray and partner with you. Find times he can go with you when you speak to understand your ministry better.

Set boundaries. When it's family time, including meals, turn off technology and don't answer or even glance at your phone. Invest that time in listening to family members, laughing and talking together, and being wholly with them.

Evaluate your time investment and check your motives. Are you following God's leading or just being busy? Set aside a monthly time to review and adjust your activities, time choices and progress.

Be accountable. Have a godly person in your life as an accountability partner. Let that person listen to you and give you feedback on how you manage your time commitments and even your social media.

Schedule time to relax and unwind. Invest in a hobby or activities that help you slow down and loosen up. It will make you happier and less stressed. You will smile more and interact with people with more joy.

Schedule time for family activities. This may mean setting a boundary of how many weekends you will travel. It may also mean making sure you don't fill too many evenings with meetings and phone calls. Be available for your family and ready to listen and respond to their needs.

Limit social media. Set short time periods to check posts and interact. Don't let yourself get addicted to beeps and posts.

Always circle back to spending time with God. End your days with prayer and asking for God to guide the next day. *KH*

A person wearing a white, long-sleeved dress with a lace-like pattern on the bodice is holding a large, heart-shaped object made of red glitter. The person's hands are visible, supporting the heart from both sides. The background is dark, making the white dress and the red heart stand out.

when God calls the heart  
*to love*

# WHEN GOD CALLS THE HEART

## HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A MAJOR NETWORK SCRIPTED TELEVISION SHOW WITH ITS OWN DEVOTIONAL BOOK

SERIES? Well, you have now — and I'm totally blown away that God has given me the opportunity to write the *When God Calls the Heart* books with Brian Bird, executive producer of Hallmark's #1 show, "When Calls the Heart."

Those of you who've watched "When Calls the Heart" will be familiar with the fictional town of Hope Valley, the heart of their community. Located near Vancouver, the set is charming, a postcard-perfect glimpse of life there in the early 1900s.

I always enjoy hanging out on the set, but what touches my heart — especially in this era where there's so much hate and discord in our world — is that there are so many life lessons about love that we can learn from the folks in Hope Valley.

It's a town that abounds with love. Where husbands and wives search for ways they can be a blessing to each other. Where a community joins hands whenever there's a need. A place where kindness, love, and compassion are the rule rather than the exception. It's a beautiful thing to see, and a great example for all of us.

But sometimes loving others can be difficult. I imagine all of us have discovered that. It's hard to love someone who's hurt us, who's let us down, or even someone we just don't like.

Mountie Jack Thornton and schoolteacher Elizabeth Thatcher, two of the main characters on the show, discovered that when they first met. To say their relationship was frosty was an understatement. They just simply didn't like each other.

God sometimes throws us into situations like that, and then He whispers, "I want you to love that person." Ouch.

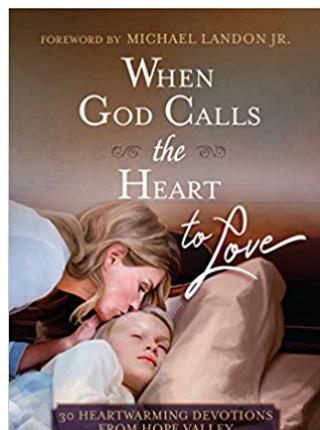
I'll be honest, I've whined and complained about it. "God, I don't even like that man. How am I supposed to love him?" But God worked on my hard heart and I learned some valuable lessons that might also be helpful for you:

1. Love sometimes takes us into uncomfortable or unwanted territory that's way out of our comfort zones. But that's often the place where God's love is most needed — and where we'll discover His love in a fresh new way that we've never seen before.
2. Love can be hard work, and we need to look below the surface, because harsh exteriors often come from wounded interiors. This is the perfect time to say, "Lord, help me to see them as You see them."
3. Prayer makes a difference—and we need to be specific. "Lord, help me to love them like You do. Give me a love for this person."
4. We need to show love even though we sometimes don't feel like it. A card in the mail that says, "I'm praying for you," delivering a warm meal to someone who's not your favorite person or shoveling snow off the driveway of the grouch next door somehow ends up not just being about the other person. God uses those moments to work in our hearts. And sometimes along the way, we just might discover that not only has God made us like that person, He's made us love them.

Loving others as Jesus has loved us is always worth it. You see, love isn't just patient and kind — it's contagious. And what could be better than taking God's amazing love to a world that's in desperate need of it?

Who do you need to love today? *SH*

*In When Calls the Heart to Love, Brian Bird and Michelle Cox explore the love-filled moments from the fictional early 1900s town of Hope Valley.*



by michelle s. cox  
WHEN GOD CALLS THE HEART.COM





by *saundera dalton-smith*  
WWW.ICHOOSEMYBESTLIFE.COM



**GROWING UP I VIEWED DISCIPLINE AS A DIRTY WORD.** It conjured up images of punishment, hardship and stifling rigidity. I saw discipline as something to rebel against if I wanted to enjoy my life. Imagine my surprise when I learned self-discipline is one of the fruits of the spirit.

Self-discipline is the ability to self-regulate or control your natural impulses. If you've ever tried to quit a bad habit, stay on a diet plan or commit to a fitness program for longer than a week, then you know how hard it is to practice self-discipline. However, unlike these examples that require you to provide all the strength required to resist, the fruit of self-discipline is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

One of the best ways to practice the fruit of self-discipline is with a spiritual fast. Spiritual fasting is not about losing physical weight, although that is a nice bonus. It's about losing the mental and spiritual baggage which prevent us from a deeper and more intimate walk with God.

One of the best benefits of fasting is the resulting confidence and sense of identity in Christ. Too often our overbooked schedules leave little room for times of reflection. In the beginning, for me, it was more about obedience to a spiritual discipline than anything else. But as I sacrificed time I would normally spend doing my own thing in exchange

for the purposeful pursuit of His presence; I started learning about the hidden benefits of fasting.

Denying the body food it craves causes a deep hunger inside to be awakened — not just the physical, but also the spiritual hunger many of us possess. We begin to feel empty and yearn to be filled. Time spent reading the Bible is the gateway through which He pours in a life-changing understanding of the fullness of our identity in Christ. He reveals who we are through the Word.

The more we allow God to reveal about our desires, cravings, longings and passion; the more we learn about our individual gifts and talents. Going deeper with God leads to reaping blessing in other areas of our lives.

What you fast is a matter of personal choice. It should be a sacrifice to some degree and require you to resist some type of food. Medical and health issues can limit the fasting options of some, but everyone can fast something.

Breast-feeding moms have told me they were fasting packaged foods and eating an all-natural diet for a period of time. College students have told me they have fasted take-out and opted to only eat prepared meals for a specific period.

Entire congregations have joined together to corporately avoid bread, meats, and sweets for three weeks (the Daniel Fast). All these are

# HEALTHTRACKS

examples of partial fasts which allow you to eat certain groups of food and restrict others.

Another type of fast is a liquid fast comprised of drinking only water, fruit/vegetable juices, and/or broth. The strictest type of fast is an absolute fast of no food or water which is generally not recommended.

Fasting for many has become synonymous with the ultra-spiritual, but in Matthew 6:16 Jesus teaches His disciples that fasting is an essential part of every believer's life. He begins the passage with, "When you fast," not "If you fast." His words imply that fasting should not be seen as an option but as an expected part of your journey.

When you look at Jesus' own 40 days spent in the wilderness fasting, it reveals how fasting can help us be victorious over the enemy's attacks. Fasting may have weakened His body, but it strengthened His confidence and resolve. His example shows us how fasting empowers and equips us to be overcomers.

## Fasting to Overcome Mental Attacks

The mind is a battlefield, and our adversary Satan loves to confront us in this area. Fasting is part of God's plan to help us defeat the enemy's attack. Every word of negative self-talk you have ever spoken to yourself was birthed out of this war zone.

Second Corinthians 10:4 tells us the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We cannot fight with weapons we do not understand how to use. Fasting shows us how His strength is made perfect in weakness. It calls us to draw near to God so we can learn how perfect love can cast out fear. It welcomes us to leave anxiety behind as we bring our prayers and petitions to God.

## Fasting to Overcome Food Addictions

Self-denial is uncomfortable. Our bodies, emotions, and taste buds tend to crave instant satisfaction. Committing to a fast goes 100 percent against the grain. You may even come to a point where you

can almost hear every part of you demanding you give in to whatever you have decided to avoid for your fast. It's in those moments you realize how completely dependent you are upon the Lord's strength to overcome addictive eating patterns. The comfort foods we consume were never meant to replace the comfort of time in God's presence. Fasting refocuses our craving back to the place of our primary longing.

## Fasting to Overcome Spiritual Apathy

Life can be lived focused on God or oblivious to His presence. Believers are not immune to the spiritual apathy that can creep in over time. Regular times of fasting will help keep you aware of God as you experience His creation. It allows you to experience a greater sense of God's presence in your day-to-day life. By replacing the time you would normally spend on personal activity with meditating on the truth of God's Word, you will be armed with all you need to apply His promises to your life.

## Fasting to Overcome Illness

The body is designed with its own internal repair system. Unfortunately, the processed and refined foods which make up the typical American diet slows down the body's ability to heal properly. Fasting causes the internal systems of the body to slow down which allows for more thorough absorption of nutrients from the healthier foods consumed and detoxification from the chemical and preservatives in those processed foods. When your liver, digestive system and kidneys are all properly eliminating harmful products from your body, the result is a more youthful appearing, peaceful and well rested you.

Don't waste another New Year making resolutions you will feel powerless to keep. This year set aside a specific amount of time to seek God, deny physical cravings and allow Him to fill you to overflowing.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled"  
(Matthew 5:6).

PH

inspired to live.  
equipped to lead.

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# kindness conquers all

I WAS NERVOUS. SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED that would make this, my first day of high school, different from all the other first days of high school at South Park High. For this would be the first day that my school would be officially integrated.

The year was 1971 and it seemed the school board had closed Hebert High, the local African-American high school, and were bussing the Hebert students to South Park, a predominately white school.

The Hebert High Panthers were livid, and my friends were both angry and terrified. That first morning, the halls of South Park were filled with fear and hate speech. I could feel the tension; I could see the hate.

That night, I brought it all to the Lord. *What do I do, Lord? How can I help this situation?* I asked Him.

His still quiet voice filled my young heart: *Be kind. Be kind to everyone.* So, armed with kindness, I faced the hate, and I felt the peace of God.

That first year was rough, with student fistfights, along with hate-filled shouting matches. But none of this turmoil affected me. I was not only protected by my kindness: my kindness drew kindness from those around me. I made new friends of both races, and I learned that skin color could not stop the love of God or stop those in our student body from caring about one another. It seemed that kindness was catching on.

By the end of my four years at South Park, the racial tensions had melted away. Our football team went to state, and most everyone seemed to get along.

It turns out that one of the fruits of the Spirit is kindness. Whenever you can, flow in this fruit. Kindness is a gift the enemy cannot challenge, for as the Word of God says, against the fruit of the Spirit there is no law. It is never illegal to be kind! Or loving! Or peaceful! Or patient! Or flow with joy!

If you've never flowed in the fruit of the Spirit, now's the time you tried it. Simply pray along with me.

*Dear Lord,*

*Galatians 5:22-23 says, "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things" (NLT)!*

*So Lord, I open my heart to you, through Jesus, who died to save me from my sins. Jesus, who was resurrected from the dead and who sends His Holy Spirit to me. Lord, I ask for more Holy Spirit in my life. I ask for every fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

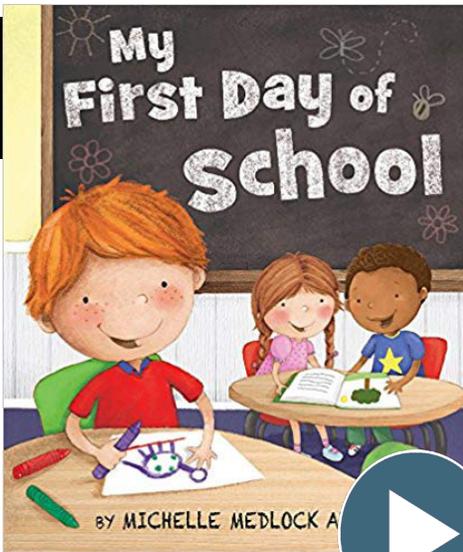
*Show me how to flow in your Holy Spirit every day. Show me how to not only flow in each of these fruits, but to use them to defeat the enemy.*

*Thank You, Lord!*

*In Jesus' name, Amen*



# BOOKSTOREAD

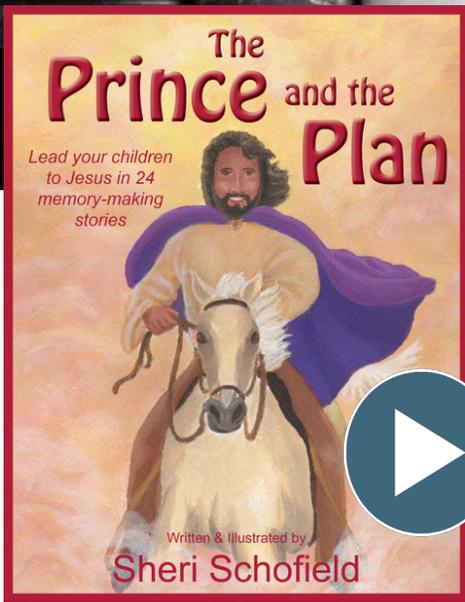


## MY FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL by Michelle Medlock Adams

First Place: Children's Book

I love this book! Cheerful rhyme and adorable illustrations. What a sweet book to read to young children as they learn about school, as they prepare to go off to school, and as they sit in their new class! I would recommend this book to everyone. This book feels modern (referencing the mom taking lots of pictures, the children's names, etc), yet classic. The ending is perfect. — Dennis & Amy Leskowski, Amazon reviewer

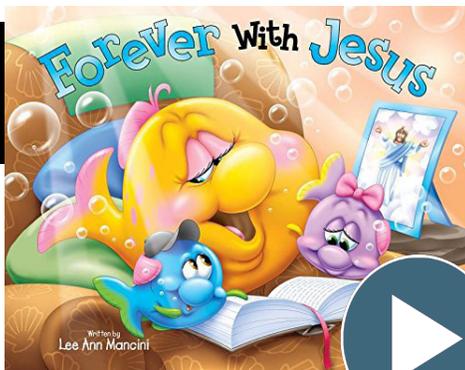
We have a lot of back to school books because I'm a teacher can't help myself when I see one at the bookstore. This is one of my favorites. What a sweet story and amazing illustrations. My youngest starts preschool this fall and I can't wait to read it to him the night before the first day. —Shannon Cook, Amazon reviewer



## THE PRINCE AND THE PLAN by Sheri Schofield

Second Place: Children's Book

This book will, without a doubt, lead your child to Jesus Christ. There is nothing more important, more empowering, than the hope that comes with knowing the truth about God's plan, especially in a world so riddled with uncertainty and upheaval. My 7-year-old granddaughter loves it and carries it with her everywhere! This book is great for all ages, though; I love it, too!  
—rallensamazon, Amazon reviewer



## FOREVER WITH JESUS by LeAnn Mancini

Third Place: Children's Book

The message in this story is that Jesus dies for our sins and if we believe in Him, we will live forever in heaven. While visiting their grandparents for their grandmother's 80th birthday, the neighbor passes away. By reading the Bible to the little ones, the grandmother helps them to understand they do not need to fear dying and that in heaven there is no pain and suffering.

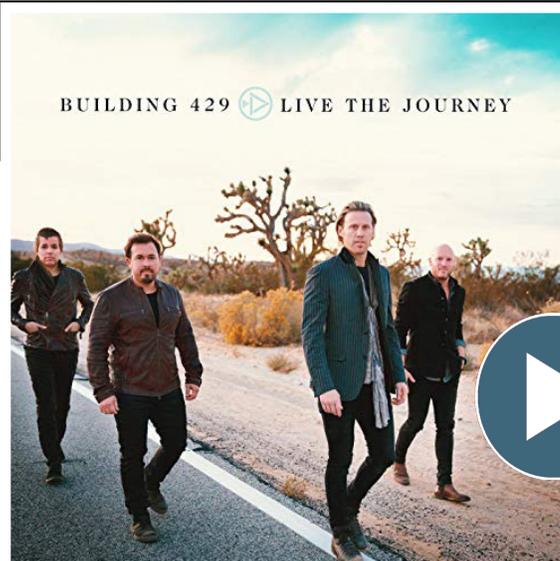
The story is written for children ages 5 to 10 but is enjoyed by younger children as well. The pages are so colorful and the stories are short enough they keep the young child's attention. I like how the illustrator hides a cross in the pages so the children can spend time looking in the pictures to find it. I would recommend this story, and series, to those who have young children. It is a fun book to read with fun characters, yet it gives a meaningful lesson.  
—Helen, Amazon reviewer



by heather van allen  
LH STAFF REVIEWER



# MUSICREVIEWS



## BUILDING 429 Live the Journey

Building 429, the band known for hits “Where I Belong” and “We Won’t Be Shaken” has released *Live the Journey* (September 7, 2018), a new album through Provident Label Group.

A project that took the band three years to put together, *Live the Journey* is the result of allowing God to show them the messages He wanted each song to communicate. Each of the 10 tracks, among them the title song, the familiar radio single “You Can” and the bold “I Still Believe,” has an accompanying devotional.

“We’re learning every day how to slow down and live in the moment, how to be still,” says lead singer Jason Roy. “We hope this record inspires others to rethink what it means to live the journey.”

The band, known for its strong, slightly gritty lead vocals and a varying range of guitar rock style, delivers some deeply worshipful songs mixed into the track list, including “Assurance,” “Always Only You” and “Closer.” Regardless of style from one track to the next, each lyric is fully committed to the faith-filled message of trust in God.



## CATCH THE FIRE Presence (Live from Toronto)

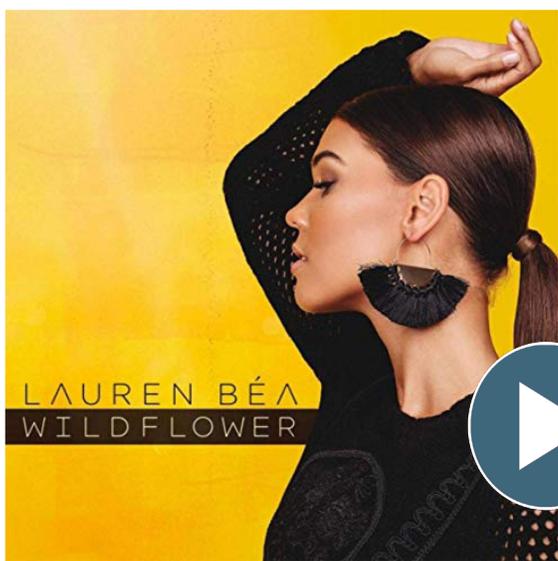
Catch the Fire Music has released *Presence (Live From Toronto)*, its debut worship collection, recorded live at Catch the Fire Toronto and featuring worship leaders from all over the globe.

The best elements of *Presence* are the tracks labeled “Spontaneous.” Any worship album, especially a live recording, can effectively bring the church experience to the individual, putting the listener into an attitude of worship anywhere, anytime. The spontaneous outpourings on this Catch the Fire project add a certain authenticity, truly sup-

porting the concept the album title suggests — that unfettered worship invokes God’s presence.

“Encountering God is at the heart of what we do,” says one of the worship leaders, Chris Shealy. “Every time we gather to worship, we want to see hearts set on fire with love for Jesus, sons and daughters discovering true freedom and God moving among us just as He wants to.”

We can “Catch the Fire” anywhere, and live recordings like *Presence* can be just the spark we need.



## LAUREN BÉA Wildflower

Singer/songwriter Lauren Béa has released her debut album, *Wildflower* (October 26, 2018), an 11-track record that, amongst other faith-filled themes, celebrates the individual beauty that God has placed in each person.

As a bi-racial woman who was bullied growing up, Lauren’s hope is for *Wildflower* to encourage women, reminding them of their worth in God’s eyes.

“The most beautiful thing we can do is embrace the fact that we are chosen and loved unconditionally by the creator of the universe,” Lauren says. “*Wildflower* is an anthem of truth, and I hope it will bring support and comfort to women everywhere.”

Lauren’s soaring voice is joyful and mature, fitting well with her pop musical style. Backing her vocals are some daring, original and sometimes unexpected instrumental sounds that will likely keep you listening intently as she delivers her heart in song. Lauren ends the album on a familiar note, with her rendition of worship song, “What a Beautiful Name.”



*by rhonda rhea* — [WWW.RHONDARHEA.COM](http://WWW.RHONDARHEA.COM)



# patiently hanging on every word

IF HANGING ONTO REALITY IS ANYTHING LIKE HANGING PICTURES, MINE PROBABLY NEEDS TO GO A LITTLE HIGHER AND TO THE RIGHT.

I know, I know. There are all kinds of tools and methods to make picture-hanging easier. But I think I only feel I've put in the right amount of energy when I'm left with four or five holes for every one nail.

Tap in a nail. Hang the picture. Eyeball it. Take down the picture. Pull out the nail. Put the nail closer to the right spot. Tap it in. Hang the picture. Eyeball it. Repeat as needed. That's my system.

In the end, if at least one of the holes in the wall is closer to the size of the hammer head than the nail, that's when I feel I might've put enough heart in it. Annnnd, welcome to my reality.

I do know that if I tried levels and measuring tools and added a little math and science into it, I could probably save my walls from the severe Swiss-cheesing I've inflicted on them. But then, what would I do with my hit and miss (more miss) system? Besides, I always buy extra wall décor and put it away in my "for covering accidental holes" stash. The wall where I had that solo wall piece in mind? It now holds my favorite grouping. Hello, collage!

Did I mention how grateful I am for a husband who

is very patient? Also one who knows drywall repair?

A more "real" reality when it comes to patience is that it's not just a tool we pick up in a moment we think we might happen to need it. Patience is one of the things we're told to "wear." We don't just hang it on the wall. We hang it upon our person — inside our character.

When Paul issues the charge in Colossians 3:12 to "clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (NIV), he's giving us quite a wonderful collage of character qualities.

This is without a doubt a high and lovely grouping!

Hanging on to the first four can tack the patience right alongside. Just try to be impatient when you're wearing compassion. Nope,

not happening. Let the impatience fly at the same time you're walking in the kindness of the Lord. Can't happen. Put on impatience and humility at the same time? Can't manage that one either.

We deal with people every day who test our patience — people who are difficult, troubled, undisciplined, mean, lazy or just plain annoying. If I try for a second to offer them patience from my own personal supply, it's not even going to be hit and miss. It's more likely to be miss and miss some more. Godly patience only happens as we walk in the Spirit. That's why patience is included in the fruit of the Spirit list in Galatians 5:22-23. It's only through Him. He'll bring us a little higher and to the right, as it were, as we surrender to His leading.

And then? We can totally nail this! *SH*



by *sharon elliott*  
[WWW.LIFETHATMATTERS.NET](http://WWW.LIFETHATMATTERS.NET)



## be fruity for heaven's sake

IF YOU'RE ANYTHING LIKE ME, ONE OF MY REASONS FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN IS GOING TO HEAVEN. Some years ago, the singer Evie sang a song with the lyric that said, "If heaven never was promised to me, neither God's promise to live eternally, it's been worth just having the Lord in my life." That's true when I'm counting my blessings, but I have to be honest, heaven's still a big part of the deal for me.

With that in mind, I take very seriously biblical warnings like that of Galatians 5:19-20 which lists the things that will hinder me from inheriting the kingdom of God. Check out this foreboding list. "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (NKJV).

If we find ourselves anywhere on this list, we're on very dangerous ground. We'd better be about the business of changing and quick! But how? God is so good that He gives us the answer to that question in the very next verses. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness,

faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23, NKJV).

You see, if we are exhibiting love, we will not murder, hate, or break up someone else's home as adulterers. If we exhibit peace, we won't stir up contentions, dissensions, or have outbursts of wrath. If we are long-suffering, we won't rush forward in selfish ambition. If we're kind, we won't be envious or participate in starting or spreading heresies. If we live self-controlled lives, we won't participate in drunkenness and revelries. You get the idea. Each part of the fruit of the Spirit eradicates some part of the works of the flesh. Just as darkness and light cannot exist in the same place at the same time,

we cannot exhibit both the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh. They are mutually exclusive. Living as spiritual fruit trees automatically eliminates

participating in that which threatens to keep us from our inheritance of heaven.

Allow these passages to be your personal touchstone, for God goes on to say, "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another" (Galatians 5:24-26, NKJV). Are you truly living as though heaven is actually coming? If so, take seriously that God means what He says here. With His help, you can make the necessary changes. I'm keeping myself in check because heaven is my inheritance! *LH*

## meet the publisher

LINDA EVANS SHEPHERD @LINDASHEPHERD is publisher of *Leading Hearts* magazine. She is also a best-selling author, an in-demand speaker, and president of Right to the Heart ministries. She is founder of the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association (AWSA). She lives in Colorado with husband, Paul, and son, Jimmy. [www.Shepro.com](http://www.Shepro.com)

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## columns



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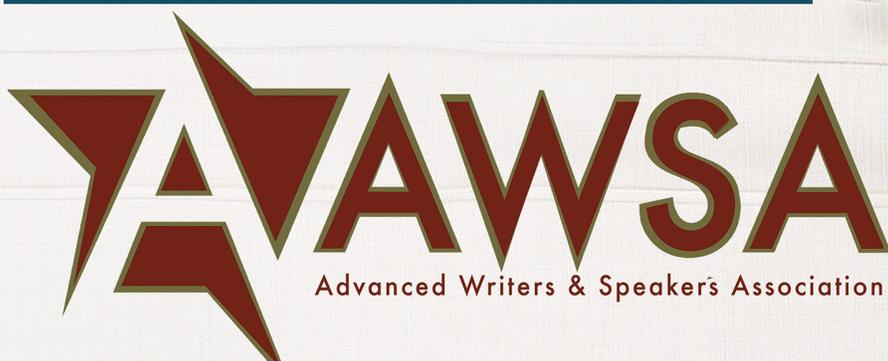
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