

# We Will Pray

*...And they overcame him by the Lamb and the Word of our Testimony'- Revelation 12:11*

Ignite The Fire Movement  
Summit Ministries Newnan Magazine

Volume 2 Issue 3 Winter 2023

Look Up! The Key  
to Overcoming the  
Obstacles of Life

God is Bigger than  
the Fires of Life

The Power of  
God's Care to  
Overcome the  
Unimaginable



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Editor's Note:

## FOR EVERY TRAGEDY, GOD IS GREATER



*"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10 NKJV)*

In this life, we will experience many tragedies, hardships, calamities, and tribulations. However, God promises through His Word to be with us and sustain us throughout our lifetime. The Word further states, *"So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord!" (Psalm 31:24 NLT)* Either way, as people of God we are taught to rely on God for help in every area of our lives! We need to understand that God's Word is God in the physical. It is not just a book! It is a living, breathing book with supernatural power!

Every time we open the Bible, we are literally spending time with God. He is in our face! When we read and hold on to the Word of God as our source of strength and encouragement during trying times, we will never be disappointed. It is during our times "in God's Face" that we are being breathed into by the inspired Word of God. God (Ruach Elohim) is blowing His breath into us for stamina and endurance for hard times ahead of us. This is why we should never take God's Word for granted.

We are taught that God's Word is His inspiration (Ruach—breath) to us and in us! Why? When we learn how close we are to His presence and how to rely completely on His Word, our lives are better and tragedies will not take us under!

Jesus said, *"...the words that I speak are spirit and life..." (John 6:63)* With this understanding, we must allow our regenerated spirit to connect with the spirit of the Word to make the difference! When spirit connects to spirit, assuredly we can be winners! There is no failure in the Word of God; however, if it is inaccurately received or applied, we will never get winning results. Our results of being encouraged, empowered, and moving forward during tragic times will never be seen.

We never seek pain, disappointment, or trials but we can be prepared for them! The Bible can be our instruction manual for living a tried-and-true life in Christ. Every trial and even the tragedies aren't designed to kill us, but to strengthen us for the long haul. Our goal is to bring glory and honor to His name as we press through with the life of the Holy Spirit in us. Our tragedies are no match for the Holy Spirit and the Word of God! To Ruach Elohim, we owe glory, honor and praise!

*Apostle D. Harris*

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# CANCER DIAGNOSIS REVEALS THE SOLDIER OF GOD WITHIN

By: Tanita Teagle



Imagine: It's 2020 and the pandemic is in full force. Everyone is masked up, people are not able to gather, medical appointments are completed over video when possible and if you went into a facility, you were alone.

Alone. Alone is exactly where I found myself when I was told that I had breast cancer. Instantly, fear suffocated me. It was shoved down my throat and I was forced to swallow it whole. I could feel it travel down the back of my throat into my stomach and if I opened my mouth in that moment to let it out, that would be the end of me. I swallowed it down real hard and tight.

Just as quickly, denial came. "This can't be" and "Who will take care of my children if I am not here?" However, just as instantly as the fear struck and the denial settled, I quickly switched it off and became who I had always been—strong. My mantra, "I don't know how, I don't know when, but I know that everything is going to be alright" rang out in my soul. There is no way that I could die. God and I have a history. He couldn't be done with me yet.

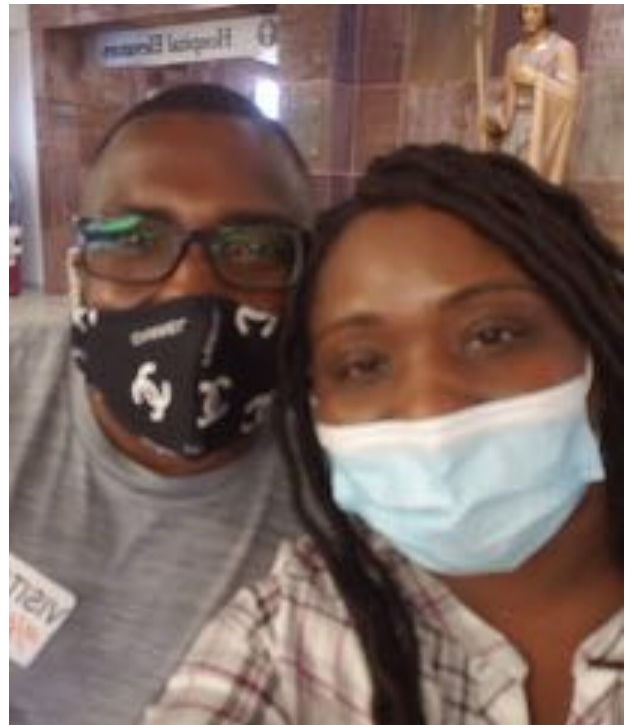
Due to a family history of cancer, I was vigilant about getting mammograms. However, the year prior to my diagnosis, I failed to complete this necessary task. Life was hectic. I didn't even realize that I had missed the appointment. One year made a huge difference. Now I was fighting for my life.



As I shared the news, I could see the fear in my family and friends' eyes. Their fears mirrored and reflected to me all of the pain and uncertainty that I was trying not to show. I remember their sadness, their worry and their concern, even their own denial. Their mouths still spoke encouragement. Initially, I would not allow myself to cry. I am a therapist. I have a therapist. I know that crying is OK, but I couldn't cry. Gradually, I allowed a few tears to roll down my face, but the feeling that I was going to fall apart stopped the outpour.

It takes a certain determination and mindset to hear a possible terminal diagnosis, learn how this enemy is impacting your body, endure treatment and its side effects and still deal with those around you who are in just as much fear as you are about your mortality. For me, making up my mind very quickly that I was going to survive helped me to face being alone at appointments, being in the hospital alone, going to treatment alone and in explaining my journey to others.

I needed a scripture. I know God watches over His Word to perform it, so I had to find something that I could declare. I was in a war. This was soldier business for me. In Psalm 118:17, it says, *"I will not die but live and will proclaim what the LORD has done."* It was a strong statement; a purposeful statement and it declared my end!



I made up my mind that I was not going to die. I wasn't trying to be anybody's hero; I just knew for myself that I was going to make it.

There was no chemo or radiation warranted for my situation. I had cancer in one breast and had precancerous cells in the other. I opted for a double mastectomy. Little did I know that post surgery, it was discovered that I had two different cancers in one breast and both chemotherapy and immunotherapy were necessary. I was devastated. I allowed myself the disappointment. I sat in my own sadness for myself and for what was to come. Treatment and the journey impacts everyone differently. It took 16 months of treatment and I am currently taking medication. But GOD!!

I have always heard people say, "I can feel the prayers." I didn't understand it until this journey. I felt it; I know it now. God showed up in so many ways through people and acts of kindness, words of wisdom and through my own relationship with Him. When I experienced each act of kindness, I would shout "Manna." God always provided just enough for me to get through. I am learning:

- Cancer is a physical journey, and everybody's journey is different. Join with others anyway.

- Cancer is just as much a mind journey as a health journey. Use your support and don't be afraid to go to therapy. God is OK with it.
- God will show up in so many ways, so when you least expect it, expect it.
- Declare what you want for your life and even in the darkest hour, keep proclaiming it.



Finally, people think when the treatment is over and you get back to the norm, that you are fine. Please check on us periodically. It's OK to ask us how we are doing. For me, it has been a little over two years since my diagnosis. I am just beginning to deal emotionally with all that has happened. In fact, in writing this piece, I struggled emotionally. This is my first time publicly acknowledging my journey. I didn't know it, but I needed the release. Selah!! **WWP**



Tanita Teagle is a licensed clinical social worker who earned her bachelor of sociology from Spelman College in 1997 and her master's degree in clinical social work from Smith College School for Social Work in 1999. She resides in Carrollton with her husband Samuel and two sons, Samuel and Jonathan and worships at Word of Faith Cathedral in Austell, Georgia.

# OVERCOMING A LUKEWARM LIFE

By: Connie J. Singleton



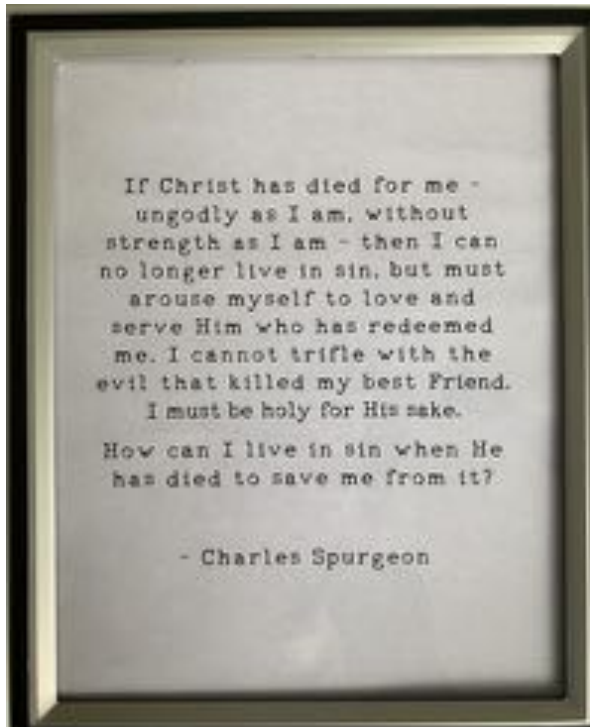
About once a week or so I post a coffee meme on my Facebook page, professing my love for coffee and warning folks that talking to me before I've had a cup or two is not advised. Usually I get laughs and quite a few affirming responses. What perhaps differentiates me from other coffee lovers is that despite my caffeine affection, I prefer small cups or mugs so my coffee stays hot and the flavor delicious while I drink it. I'll say it: Lukewarm coffee is for pouring down the drain!

Likewise, until six years ago, I lived a lukewarm life. In my heart, I knew some of my actions weren't pleasing to God, but I'd ask for forgiveness and at some point later would repeat the process.

It wasn't comfortable—but fence-straddling never is. Living life with one foot in the culture while also attempting to live a godly life leaves you uncomfortable in both places. Scripture reminds believers, "... be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (*James 1:2, ESV*)

I became a Jesus lover and follower as a child, but if I'm being completely truthful, for most of my life, I wasn't living with an "all-in" mentality. Lukewarm Christianity is unacceptable to God and His Son. Scripture warns, "I know your works: You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot or cold, I will spit you out of my mouth". (*Revelation 3:15-16*) In this passage, the admonition is directed at a particular church, but the principle holds the same for all believers.

**“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”  
(Ephesians 4:1 ESV)**



We are called to be ambassadors for Jesus, and our actions should demonstrate our total commitment to living a life that glorifies God—a life that looks nothing like the do-as-you-please culture we live in.

For many people, drinking alcohol isn't an issue at all, and the Bible, God's roadmap for the Christian life, doesn't forbid it. It does, however, repeatedly warn against drunkenness. Thankfully, the issue for me was not one of addiction, but rather I wasn't always able to control the quantity I drank when I did drink, and the shameful, biblically incompatible things I later would remember that I'd said or done while intoxicated haunted me.

I recently discarded an impressive stack of workbooks from my 20+ years of Bible study. If you opened each one, you'd see my absolute love for Jesus but also, somewhere among the pages, you'd find my repeated prayer requests for God to help me manage my social drinking. I'd have a slip-up and feel enormous guilt, vow not to do it again, but never once in those pages did I commit to surrendering what I once heard a Christian speaker call my "cherished sin"—something we don't want to surrender. Even though I had the freedom to drink alcohol, I knew it was not beneficial for me (see 1 Corinthians 10:23).

Both of my parents and their parents were alcoholics, and literally generations of my family have suffered because of alcohol abuse. My father died of cirrhosis when I was 16 and he was only 40 years old. Given my family history, I was playing with fire to even entertain the notion of drinking.



And I certainly did not have peace in my lukewarm Christian living. I could go weeks or months without overindulging, but then it'd happen again and I'd be back in bondage to my shame, and unwilling to be bold in my Christian witness for fear of appearing a hypocrite. How could I share the joy of living a surrendered life with others when I hadn't fully embraced it? Was I afraid God would withhold something good from me, and that I'd no longer have "fun" in situations where I couldn't drink alcohol?

In "The Good News We Almost Forgot," Kevin DeYoung says, "Too often, we think that regretting a past mistake or saying we're sorry for some offense is all that repentance requires. But true repentance involves a change, putting our old ways behind us and walking in a different direction ... We have not really repented if we are only stirred, but not changed."

Holiness is a word that seems so archaic and irrelevant to modern living, but when understood and lived out, it radically transforms every aspect of a Christian's life.

It's the pursuit of godly living, a laying down of personal preferences and a willingness to follow Jesus' commands, making us joyfully alive both now and for eternity. A week before I surrendered my freedom to drink alcohol, God pierced my heart with a Charles Spurgeon quote about holiness that I read in passing, one that I framed and hung in my home office: "I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best Friend (Jesus). I must be holy for His sake. How can I live in sin when He died to save me from it?" No, God didn't want to withhold anything good from me! He gave me His best—the great exchange of His Son for my sin and shame.

The day after Thanksgiving, 2016, I resolved to quit drinking with God's help. In His strength, I have maintained that vow. It wasn't easy at the beginning, but I don't now feel awkward or that I'm missing out in social situations. Best of all, I can confidently share that God is faithful to deliver us from any sin and will replace our lukewarm living with a fresh fire of joy and peace for which we all long.

## RESOURCES

- "The Pursuit of Holiness" by Jerry Bridges
- "The Good News We Almost Forgot" by Kevin DeYoung
- "Returning to Holiness" by Dr. Gregory R. Frizzell
- "The Unexpected Joy of Being Sober" by Catherine Gray

WWP



Connie J. Singleton has worked in healthcare, publishing and education and has co-authored and published a book with an Atlanta-based women's ministry executive.

She has written for Newnan-Coweta Magazine, The Newnan Times-Herald, In Her Heart Magazine, and We Will Pray!, and she especially enjoys sharing the stories of those who find joy in living or life purpose from their hardships.

# A DAUGHTER'S STORY OF HER FATHER'S MIRACLE

By: Jordan Hamilton



When I think of my dad, Greg Hamilton, and his miraculous story, I am speechless. He is the most incredible, God-fearing, heroic man I know. Not only did he and my mom, Debbie Hamilton, shape me into the person I am today, but so did his cancer story.

When I asked my dad, "What was the first thing you thought of when you heard the diagnosis?", he responded, "It didn't seem real. I don't even remember the moment I was told because it did not seem like it was my diagnosis." He spent some time being upset, but that wasn't going to change anything. The road ahead was going to be long, but he had to start somewhere to get to the finish line, and that started with his faith.

On May 9, 2016, my dad went in for his first round of chemo. The doctors were also running a lot of tests to learn more about his cancer and the extent. It seemed that after every doctor's appointment the news just kept getting worse. The doctors were finding cancer everywhere in his body.

I remember thinking that my dad wasn't going to be able to walk me down the aisle or see me become a mom. My world was shattered. But through it all, we had the best support system. My family and our community came together to be a constant support of my dad. It was magical to see the love that was shared through this challenging time.





**"God was present  
and would continue  
to be there. God  
proved my beliefs to  
be true."**

Days before chemotherapy started, my dad woke up one morning from a life-changing dream. He told me, "I saw Jesus. He was a bright white light and I spoke with Him. He didn't promise me that I was not going to die but He did assure me that I was going to touch many lives. He showed me three different people: The first man was dressed in a tan coat with a gold pendant, the next was a lady with dark hair in a ponytail and the last was just a white doctor's coat but had no facial features."

Although I was unsure what that dream meant or what the outcome would be, I knew God was present and would continue to be there. God proved my beliefs to be true. At the first visit to the doctor's office, my dad met several people who would help him along his journey. It started with meeting the preacher. My dad said, "I walked into the room and there stood a man in a tan coat and a gold pendant." The next stop was his nutritionist. He walked in to see a young lady with black hair put up in a ponytail. He began to share his story with the doctors, telling them that he knew they would be coming into his life because Jesus showed him. I remember my dad thinking about the third person Jesus showed him; it was just a white coat. Then a doctor told him, "You will see many doctors throughout this journey, so there will not just be one face you get to see, there will be many, but God is the ultimate healer."

Miracles were happening. Then we got the news that cancer had spread to his liver. I was devastated and began to question again. "Why is God doing so many incredible things but it's getting worse? What was the point?"

God showed up again and my dad had another dream. "I was told the cancer in my liver is gone. I know it is," he said. Of course, he called his doctor and told him about his dream. My dad went in to get a scan and sure enough, the cancer was gone! My dad's nurse made a comment that, "It could have been just a shadow but I don't miss Stage 4 liver cancer. We just witnessed a miracle."

It was God! He showed up in our weakest moments. Faith is believing in something that you can't see but I had witnessed a miracle. From that day forward, I was shaped by the power of God.

My dad finally finished his third round of chemo. The cancer was shrinking and the scans were showing progress. To me, God had done enough. He had already changed so many lives throughout my dad's journey, but He showed up once again.

On July 6, 2016, my family and I were standing outside when a rainbow filled the sky. As soon as I saw it, I knew this was God and this was a message. I was overwhelmed with joy and the first thing that came to mind was, he beat it. I knew that was our sign that my dad had beat cancer and it was gone..

On July 7, my dad, mom and I were all sitting at the table with the doctor on speaker phone. My job was to write down the things the doctor said because there was always much information to process.



**"Through any situation, find God."**

I only had to write one word: *remission*. My dad was in remission! God is so good!

I am one of the people whose life was changed by my dad's story. I have never felt so close to God and so at peace than I did during this journey. God is the ultimate healer. Through any situation, find God, because He is there. You just have to be open to seeing Him.

#WithGodWeFight **WWP**



My name is Jordan Hamilton and I am 25 years old. I am one of four siblings and I currently work as a Special Education Teacher at Northgate High School. I have been a teacher for three years now and will graduate with my Master is Special Education from Georgia State College in May!

# CHURCHES UNITE TO SHARE THE LOVE OF JESUS

By: Apostle Debra Harris

When God gives us vision and directives, it is for His glory and honor first, and then for the Body of Christ. God is always giving out Kingdom assignments. He is always speaking and giving directives, but are we listening? When He spoke to me, I was uncertain of His directions. But He gave me the vision over and over again. It was then that I moved out and initiated the assignment.

As I was listening and heard the still small voice of God giving me this assignment, I knew it was like all others—a Kingdom assignment. It was a call for unity in the Body of Christ. Jesus prayed, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."* (John 17:20-21)

He is not calling for one corporate Church, but individual Churches, united in Christ. He is calling for Churches to have the same mind, same word (His Word), with the same understanding (which comes by the Holy Spirit). The Scriptures teach us, *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* (1 Timothy 2:5) The Psalmist wrote, *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."* (Psalm 133:1)





And we, the Churches, are coming together to fulfill the call of the Lord, to pray with one accord. We are gathering together, one day each month, and offering our silent prayers to the Lord. We are encouraging others to join this great move of evangelism and prayer. This is not a knock on the door, or stopping someone in the marketplace, but an assertive effort of believers coming together to express the love of God through a written message and a silent prayer for the seven cultural mountains of influence.

God has called every believer to be witnesses, disciples, and preachers of the gospel. All of this can be done within one hour through this Kingdom assignment. If one person can make a decision for Christ through our efforts, we have accomplished the "leave the ninety-nine and go after the one!"

*"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it."  
(Luke 15:4)*

For more information on how you can join us for our next prayer gathering, email [Dharris387@gmail.com](mailto:Dharris387@gmail.com)

# LOOK UP! THE KEY TO OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES OF LIFE

By: Marty M. Hohmann



*"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world, you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33 NAS)*

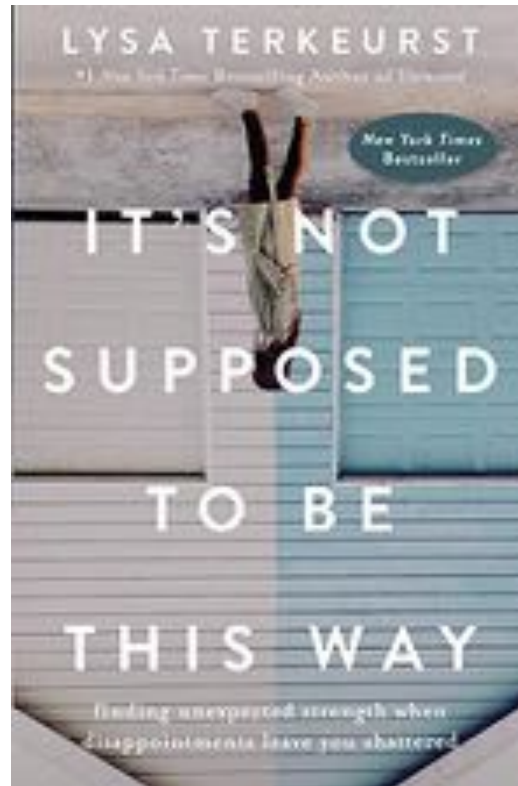
It was 2015 when I got the dreaded phone call from my doctor. Yes, those little specks on my mammogram film were cancer. Immediately my life was flipped upside down. That day in my kitchen, I cried and I went to Jesus.

When I was a child, I thought as a child. Problem was, I didn't stop thinking with that childish idealism well into my adulthood. I simply expected that I would have a good life, free from sickness, pain, and heartache. I mean, isn't that what we all want? To live a long and painless life, and to die in our sleep with a smile on our face? But along the way, a funny thing happened—life! Is there anyone who has or is walking this earth who has a carefree existence?

Of course not! Our Lord and Savior Himself went to the cross on our behalf. His followers throughout history have been beaten, persecuted, and killed for their testimony.

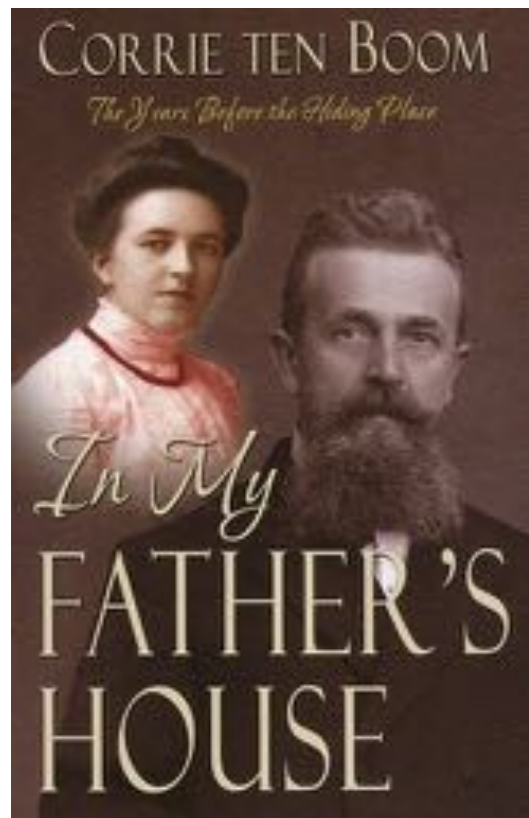
So that phone call was my wakeup call, my grow up call, I like to think. Don't misunderstand me. I had overcome a number of blows emotionally and spiritually during the first four decades of my life. But this was different. This was going to be a taller mountain to climb because we were talking about my mortality. From 2015 through 2019, I had four lumpectomies and the grand finale, a bilateral mastectomy. Glory to God, I'm still here!

Awhile back I read Lysa TerKeurst's book, "It's Not Supposed to Be This Way." For anyone going through the throes of "Why me, God?" I highly recommend it. TerKeurst told a story that resonated about how skilled potters know that to craft the best pottery, they must add the dust from previously broken pottery to the new clay. The dust is called grog, and apparently, to get grog, the pottery pieces must be shattered into dust in just the right manner. If the dust is shattered too finely, it won't add strength to the clay. If it's not fine enough, the shards will make the potter's hands bleed. But when it's just right, the grog enables the potter to use the clay to make a larger and stronger vessel that can go through much hotter fires. Wow! Just call me grog.



Author Recommended Resource

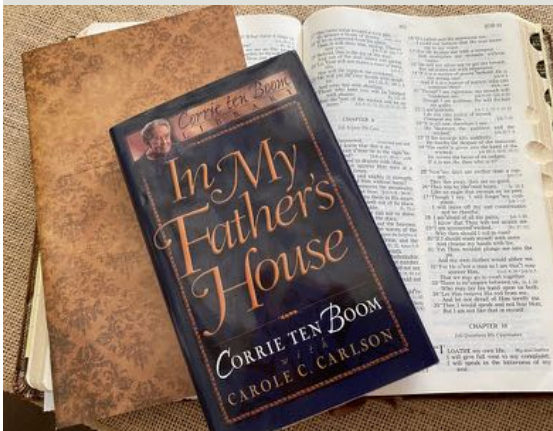
The late Corrie Ten Boom, whose words and faith have inspired me my entire life, also speaks to our questioning about why bad things happen in life. For helping and hiding Jews in Holland during WWII, her father, brother's son, and sister all died in concentration camps. Her brother survived but died shortly afterward. Only Corrie and an older sister made it out of prison alive.



Author Recommended Resource

From "In My Father's House" by Ten Boom, she said, "So many times we wonder why God has certain things happen to us. We try to understand the circumstances of our lives and we are left wondering. But God's foolishness is so much wiser than our wisdom. From generation to generation, from small beginnings and little lessons, He has a purpose for those who know and trust Him. God has no problems—just plans!"

**“So many times we wonder why God has certain things happen to us. We try to understand the circumstances of our lives and we are left wondering. But God’s foolishness is so much wiser than our wisdom. From generation to generation, from small beginnings and little lessons, He has a purpose for those who know and trust Him. God has no problems—just plans!”  
-Corrie Ten Boom**



Oh, how gloriously right she was! God always has a plan for each and every one of us. *“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart.”* (Jeremiah 1:1)

We are designed by the hands of the Potter to be overcomers. We are being broken, sifted, refined, and purified to be a suitable bride of Christ. And the loveliest part of all is that the holy hands of the Father are shaping us and molding us, never turning us loose to walk through this life alone.

Life can be hard. It can be cruel. It can be heartbreaking. This year I lost my mother following a 10-year battle with Alzheimer’s disease and her last months delivered some of the most excruciating emotional pain I have ever endured.

I have watched friends exit my life and family members choose not to walk with the Lord. Others of you have experienced job loss, lost loved ones, and other heartache.

Scripture tells us that in this world we will have troubles. But how we respond to those troubles is the key! It’s very simple: Look up! Eyes on Jesus. Psalm 121 says it beautifully. *“I will lift my eyes to the mountains; From whence shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”* (NAS)



Look up! The Creator of the universe has you in His Potter's hands. And you may live a life of peace and joy, no matter what life hurls your way.

*"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*  
(Romans 8: 37-39) **WWP**



Marty Hohmann is a lifelong journalist and former newspaper owner who loves to write feature stories about those who are walking in God's calling on their lives. It is her hope that the articles she produces will have an impact on the reader long after the type has faded from the paper.

# OVERCOMING PAST HURTS & WOUNDS

By: Pastor Bill Smith



Often in life we are challenged by things seen and unseen. It is at this point in our walk with the Lord that our faith and endurance are tested most. Such was the case for my wife and I one Sunday night in February 2002 after attending a powerful service. We returned home and were preparing for the next day. As we slept at 3:38 a.m., my wife suddenly felt our bed violently shake up and down. We were in total darkness and found ourselves engaged in an unexpected battle for our lives.

I was being violently and repeatedly stabbed! My wife put her body over mine to protect me and our attacker began to stab her as well. We then saw to our total amazement that the person doing this was our own son! It was unprovoked and totally out of his character, and when we called his name, a flash of bright light came across the room. In that moment, he snapped out of it and the attack stopped. Shocked, stunned and severely wounded, it was then we felt the presence of the Lord covering us as a blanket, enabling me to somehow make it downstairs to dial 911 and get help after the phone was pulled out of the wall by our son.

After seven minutes we heard the ring of the doorbell. I gathered enough strength to say “come in.” The police officers entered the house, one of them with their weapon drawn. The paramedics came in behind them. They followed the blood trail to me. I informed them that my wife was upstairs in need of medical attention. I also informed them that my son had left the house. I let them know that my 12-year-old daughter was upstairs in her bedroom (I had no idea whether she was harmed or not). Fortunately, during the attack, she was completely overlooked. Thank God.

I was losing consciousness quickly and my body began to feel numb and cold. As the medics worked on me, I heard on the police radio an all-points bulletin for my son’s arrest. As they put me on the gurney, I looked down and could see the insides of my chest. At that moment, I said to myself with determination, “I shall live and not die.”

In the distance as I was being wheeled toward the ambulance, I heard my wife ask if I was OK. She began to pray in the Spirit and to declare, “I shall not leave this earth by the hand of someone I love.” Then she spoke, “no weapon formed against me shall prosper.” As the paramedics moved her from the house, she declared “the peace of God is over my daughter now.” And she began to feel the same cold sensation on the right side of her body that I had.





In the middle of being transported to the hospital at high speed, we turned onto Interstate 20 and the back door of the ambulance flew open! The gurney my wife was on nearly rolled out of the ambulance, but the medic was able to grab her gurney and close the door. While in the ambulance, she also began to declare, "I shall live and not die."

The miracle part of this testimony is that I was informed by a doctor upon arrival at the hospital that I had only 1.8 pints of blood left in my body, yet I was still somewhat conscious. Before I went under (sleep) for surgery, I heard the Lord say to me, "You have work yet to accomplish in the Kingdom of God." It was then I knew I would survive.

Often in our darkest hours, we must be able to hear the voice of God in our spirit (heart) saying "Behold it is I, be not afraid" and not allow our emotions to run wild and panic to set in. As we looked at the horrible scene in front of us, it became very clear our son had no idea what had happened and would later recount that he thought it was a dream and actually ran and got a towel stating, "Oh my God, what happened?" In his dreamlike state, he believed an intruder had broken in and attacked us as we lay sleeping.

That was the night we understood that spiritual warfare is real! The weapon will be formed, but our God is stronger!

Today, some 20 years later, I am one of only three people treated at Grady Hospital who has ever survived a severed aorta and still lived. We are still healed, and as believers, still in love with the Lord and our son.

God has wonderfully blessed and ministered to us to learn the following. First, to move on you must decide to understand what occurred, forgive accordingly, holding no grudges or resentment (Matthew 5:38-3). Second, refuse to become a victim of internal vengeance, seek no revenge according to Romans 12:19. Third, don't allow hurts to linger in your spirit; forgive and forget. Decide to move on that your soul not be wounded, and inner healing can begin (Philippians 3:13-14).

In Matthew 9:15, Jesus referenced Himself as the Bridegroom and we as believers (The Church) are the bride of Christ. God's plan is that we would be holy as He is holy. The marriage relationship refines and prepares us for Christ's return. **WWP**



Pastor Bill Smith lives in Villa Rica with his wife of 33 years, Virginia.

They have three children, two daughters and a son. Pastor Smith is originally from Queens, New York, and is a retired Delta Airlines employee. His ministry is The Abiding Hour Ministry,  
Theabidinghourministry@gmail.com.

# HANGING ON BY A THREAD

By: Ron LaSocha



I need to start off by saying, don't ever think it can't happen to you! Life can dramatically change in a flash. Your involvement at church, ministry, reading your Bible daily, as a small group leader, or pastor cannot stop life's hardships. In the blink of an eye, your life can be forever changed. That is when we need to realize that if it can happen to Jesus, even worse than anything we can imagine, then why not you?

I, like everyone else on the planet, have made mistakes in my life. I got married the first time at a very young age and we were not equally yoked. After 11 years of marriage, we got divorced. I was blessed to get custody of my three kids. But it was at that time I realized Ron's way was not working very well. So, I chose to try God's way! I had my kids in church. I focused on them and raising them right. I then, without looking, found what I believed to be God sent, my soulmate. Life could not be better or happier.



Here's that part of my story. I had the life! I was married to my best friend, had a great blended family with six kids and several grandkids, was the Georgia leader of a motorcycle ministry, a leader at my home church, and had a great job. I was blessed more than I deserve! Then 2019 came along. I went from the close-enough-to-perfect life to it all being gone in weeks.

In April, I received a terminal lung disease diagnosis. Two weeks later my spouse, the love of my life, walked out. Shortly after that my "Christian" friends/family, all but a very small handful, turned their backs on me. Talk about saying, "Really God?!"

I read scripture back to God reminding Him of His promises. "So why was this happening to me?" I railed. "Where is this promise? It was bam, bam, bam. Why are the ones hurting me just cruising through life like they always do without a care? You allowed my entire life to be destroyed as I knew it, my wife, my friends, wiped out!"

During it all, I never lost my faith, but I will admit that I did get sideways with God, several times. I asked why, why, why. No answers! I was at the end of my rope. I could not go through all of this alone. Sure, I had my small group of friends and my kids kept saying they were here for me, but it wasn't the same. The pain left by my spouse walking away was more painful than the terminal disease.

I was all alone, empty, no dreams, goals; I did not care if tomorrow came or not! I even thought of how and where I was going to depart this ugly world, just not the time. I was hanging on by a thread, for sure.

I am so blessed to be hanging by that thread, a thread that was attached to Jesus' robe! I finally understood that we are here on earth for one reason *only* and that is to glorify God! I had to stop asking "why," which had no answers, and start asking "how" questions. How can this disease glorify God? How can my spouse walking out glorify God? How can "Christian" friends/family abandoning me glorify God?

It was then I understood what the Great Commission meant. It is as we go, daily! He showed me that I did not need a group of people to do His work, just me. I had to become intentional in asking the people I came in touch with throughout my day about their salvation. This does not come naturally; you need to work at it. I made my own little ministry of it, me and a pocketful of hand-cut wooden crosses to pass out along with church invite cards.

This was NOT of my doing. God inspired others through me by my positive attitude, my sharing Jesus, my willingness to talk to anyone at any time going through anything that has them at the end of their ropes. God did not leave me; He redirected me to serving Him better.







When people come up to me now and say that I am inspirational to them, I just look at them and point up and say, "If you only knew how broken and what a mess I am. All praise and glory to God!"

The hurt and trauma was not my fault, but pursuing God for the healing is my responsibility! Read that again!

I will never be the person I was. I am broken and still hurt like this was yesterday, but God took this broken person and did not put him back together again like I was. He made a new version of a new me. He can use you, too, just as you are! **WWP**

**"Just As I Am"**  
**Just as I am, though tossed  
 about  
 With many a conflict, many a  
 doubt  
 Fighting and tears within  
 without  
 Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I  
 come.  
 Just as I am, Thou wilt receive  
 Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse,  
 relieve  
 Because Thy promise I believe  
 Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I  
 come.**



Ron LaSocha lives in Newnan and works for Delta Airlines as an aircraft mechanic. He has three children, Krista, 33, Kortney, 29, and Brandon, 28; and four grandchildren, Bailee, 11, Jayce, 9, Kash, 6, and Asher, 3.

# GOD IS BIGGER THAN THE FIRES OF LIFE

By: Laura Gibson



When we started Heirloom Market Co. & Bakeshop, we did so with the intent of honoring God. We had no idea what that would look like or how it would turn out.

After a lot of trust and prayer, we put our blood, sweat, and lots of tears into the redesign and renovation of a portion of the old Collector's Corner building on Highway 54 in Sharpsburg, a beautiful old landmark. We opened the doors to the public in October of 2019 and we experienced pretty quick and exciting success. We knew, as God continued to bless us, that our job would be to bless others in our local community the best we could. *God, we know You are in this business!*

Cue March 2020. Four months into our brand-new business, the world was hit with the pandemic. The unknown. Our sales plummeted overnight, and we could feel God whispering to seek Him. So, we did. We prayed and we pivoted. We put our food truck to work and started to serve our customers where they were...at home. Our God is bigger than any pandemic. He is bigger than any trouble that we could face. *God, you are bigger.*

Cue August 2020. After a very short battle with a glioblastoma brain tumor, my five-year-old niece passed away. That is a whole different story. *God, we know You are present with us. But goodness, this hurts.*

We know that when we dedicate our lives to God, that doesn't mean our lives will be easy. That doesn't mean our lives will be perfect and seamless. It means in the times where there are hard things, we look to Him. And we were looking to Him.

Business continued as usual for us as we began to grow and expand. We planned to open our beautiful Newnan location in April 2021. Cue the tornado. The day we had set to open, Newnan/Coweta County was rocked by a devastating tornado. *God, what can we do?* Pivot again.

Cue September 2022. I haven't talked a lot about our family, but we have four kids, age seven and under. I was at home the afternoon of September 21, preparing dinner and getting everybody squared away for the evening when I started receiving texts asking if I was OK. I had no idea what anyone was talking about until I got the frantic call from my husband. "Laura, it's on fire, everything is on fire!" He was a former firefighter and not one to overreact. I could hear the fear and panic in his voice and knew it was bad. After calling in a babysitter within minutes, I quickly got over to the beautiful building we had put so much time and love and effort into, and realized then that it was bad.

In the hours after, we watched our building go up in smoke. We cried and questioned and cried some more. But still, I could feel God reminding me that our treasure was safe at home. Our people were out of the building and no one was hurt. *God, where do we go from here?*





In those moments, our lives were forever altered and would never be the same. *God, we know You are here standing in the fire with us.*

*"The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place." (Isaiah 9:10 ESV)*

Our "bricks" had fallen. Our hearts had been broken. Our lives have been rocked. Our team was in mourning. But...

But our God. Our God is bigger than our circumstances. All of them. Our God does not make mistakes. Our God knows no bounds and our God makes promises He keeps. We cried those first few days, because even when we know we have God on our side, that doesn't mean things don't hurt. We felt raw. For four years, our blood, sweat, and tears had adorned those walls. We had prayed circles around that building as we dreamed even bigger dreams for our business. God-sized dreams.

The building was destroyed, but not our hope. The work feels endless, but we won't give up. The future feels uncertain, but God is our solid foundation. Our God. The One who promises—when we are not sure, that is enough. The One whose hope we count on, when hope feels hard. We serve a God who knows what is best for us. We serve a God who restores. We serve a God who shows up in the dark places. We serve a God who reminds us *whose* we are.

While it feels natural to throw our hands up in the air and ask, “Why, God?”, we feel God reminding us that if we serve Him and trust His plan and path for us in the hard, we don’t need to ask “why,” but “how.” God’s plan is so much bigger than us. We need to actively seek the wisdom from those He strategically placed in our lives for such a time as this. We need to listen and draw near to Him.

*God, we know you rebuild. We know you restore. We feel Your presence. No matter the “why,” no matter the “how,” no matter how hard... we’re here for it. Beauty from literal ashes. **WWP***



My name is Laura Gibson. My husband, Justin, and I own Heirloom Market Co. & Bakeshop. We have four children, under the age of seven, and live in Sharpsburg with our three dogs.

# BEATEN DOWN BUT NOT DESTROYED

By: Tammy Pitts



When we went to bed the night of March 25, 2021, we had no idea what we would wake to. Having heard there may be some rough weather, we took it in stride. Springtime in Georgia often brings stormy weather. Just before midnight, a piercing alarm woke my husband and I. After a few seconds of orienting ourselves, we found that it was my very old and oft-made-fun-of trusty flip phone. Never before had it done this. It was a tornado warning.

In shock I threw open the bedroom curtain to a red-lit sky, brimming with multiple lightning strikes. We had never seen anything like it. My husband grabbed the laptop and I opened the bedroom window in order to hear the city alarms should they go off. I have a friend on social media who is a weather nerd and her post was the first to come up: "Newnan Friends, take cover now!! Tornado headed toward Belt/Belk Rd!!"

At that moment the city sirens went off. We ran and woke our adult children and got the dogs huddled together in a very small hallway. I was on the laptop messaging a friend who was concerned. Suddenly, everything went dark and became very quiet. The silence was replaced when the house started to vibrate and we could hear a loud rumble approaching. All I could do was pray and cry out to God as we heard glass shattering and massive earth quaking thuds. We had no idea what was happening all around us.

It seemed like an eternity, but as soon as the storm passed, we sprang into action. We immediately called our other two adult children and their families. Our son's family was missed by the tornado, but our daughter's family took a direct hit. They had several trees on the house and three through the roof of the tiny closet where she, her husband, and their three-month-old baby were sheltering.

We all thought in those moments of terror that we would be swept up by that EF4 nightmare and taken home to Jesus. This beast put that fear in many that night. But praise the Father, we were all alive! As I stepped outside in the moments after, I could not process the surreal scene in front of me. I ran to my neighbors to make sure they were safe as others ran out of their homes.

The days, weeks, and months that followed were amazing. God's people were immediately moved to travel to and hike into our area with needed provisions and blessed help, some having no idea how to get to us with all the trees blocking roads and live wires down. But God poured out His mercy and love through His Kingdom here on earth. Every need was met. Strangers walked up to us with food, water, chainsaws and ability, fuel, and love. It was amazing and it was beautiful. True Kingdom living!





But even in all that display of love, service, and help, there were feelings of discouragement and heavy-laden hearts. Our 2.5 acres was completely covered in debris, limbs, and sticks from more than 200-year-old trees. The much-beloved land that was so very beautiful was now changed forever. Our home was damaged and leaking, and glass covered our 400 sq. ft. sunroom.

We were overwhelmed. How would we ever have our peace again? How could we bring order from what looked like Armageddon chaos? I spent hours every day for months picking up sticks.

One day, as I loaded more sticks into the wheelbarrow through tears of discouragement and hopelessness, I called out to God, "How, Lord, are we going to get this done?" And then gently He encouraged me: This stick matters, and that stick matters, and every stick that is picked up makes a difference! That was a turning point for us in our walk through this trial. Psalm 61:21 says, *"From the ends of the Earth I call to You, when my heart is overwhelmed lead me to The Rock that is higher than I."* (NKJV)

It was through my faith in Jesus and His indwelling Holy Spirit abiding in me that discouragement and defeat were overcome with hope! God's presence was there with us.



None of this took Him by surprise. His grace is sufficient, especially in our weakness. In 2 Corinthians 12, God promises He is able to make ALL grace abound toward us, that we always, having ALL sufficiency, in ALL things, we may have an abundance for every good work. God also promises His presence is with us, *“Be strong and of good courage; Do not fear nor be afraid of them, for the LORD your God, He is the one who goes with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you.”* (Deuteronomy 31:6, NKJV)

Jesus spared us that night. But really, beloved, we never know when our last heartbeat will come. We are all eternal beings, but the question is, will we spend eternity with God or will we spend it in darkness and absent from God’s presence in hell? Jesus has overcome sin and death and He has provided a way for us to overcome. That overcoming way is through belief in Jesus as the sacrificial lamb given to make you in righteous standing before God. Through Him, we are able to abundantly overcome the storms of life. **WWP**



By grace alone through faith alone, daughter of King Jesus. Wife to one, mother of four, Gram to more and more all the time. I love studying God's word and feeding people.

# THE STORMS OF LIFE COULD NOT STOP GOD'S PLAN

By: LaVann Landrum



On the evening of March 25, 2021, I had taken our bernedoodle puppy, Henry, to his group puppy training class after my workday as Chief Advancement Officer for Christian City. My husband, Chuck, and I went to bed fairly early that night, as did our son, Sam. Our son, Jack, routinely stayed up to take the dog out around midnight. There had been warnings that there might be storms that could become strong and damaging but I managed to fall off to sleep. As the storms rolled in, Chuck was watching them from our bedroom windows. I was roused by Jack and Chuck talking about the storm.

Our puppy resisted going into his crate after going out for his final bathroom break of the evening, which was unusual behavior. I was still mostly asleep when I heard a crack and immediately knew a tree was falling. I remember telling myself, "Sit up and get up, LaVann." The next thing I knew, my head was being pelted with bricks and plaster. I remember thinking that I should put my arms over my head and a strange sense of peace came over me.

Quickly, it all stopped. Chuck was shining a flashlight and calling my name to see if I was OK. Plaster dust was in the air and I was surprised that I was sitting on the floor at the base of the bed rather than on the bed. He then ran to find Henry, who had run toward the big hole in the front of our bedroom.

The tree had come into the room in the spot where I lay my head. Half of the ceiling had broken apart and swung forward in a whole sheet of plaster. The chimney of the bedroom fireplace was strewn across the room. The impact and movements of the house felt like an earthquake. Fortunately, Sam was not in his bed, as two large windows imploded, covering the bed and the room with glass.

We made our way downstairs, not knowing if the storm had passed or there would be further damage. We gathered in the mudroom to pray and thank God that we were safe and to pray His protection on our family and others impacted by the storm. Our phones were exploding with texts to see if we were OK. Neighbors were telling me there was a gas leak in the front yard and we had to get out fast. Our daughter's house had been hit as well, but she was OK, praise God.

I was lighting candles when I heard someone shouting my name. I pushed the porch door open and looked beyond the massive root ball of the 100-year-old oak that previously sat between our house and the driveway and was now resting on the roof of our neighbor's house. Our friend, Barry DeBrow, was in our driveway calling to see if we were OK. He had his car nearby and said we should come with him. Our cars were inaccessible, though unharmed, due to the trees across our driveway. Puppy in arms and guided by flashlights, we climbed through the debris to reach Barry and safety.

When the sun came up on Friday, we headed back to our house. The devastation was sobering. But the sight of the many people who had come to help was overwhelming.





Friends from our church, Newnan First Baptist, and the community were cutting wood and clearing debris, expressing their care and concern, and bringing refreshment. Several of the homes on our block were impacted, but ours received the most significant damage. Seeing where the tree lay on our house—directly at the head of our bed—was chilling.

The following weeks were filled with many blessings. A friend leaving for vacation the day after the storm offered us her lovely home for the week. Another friend called to offer his vacant home for our use until our repairs were complete. Meals were provided by close friends as well as by people we hardly knew. Despite the massive devastation to property, the tornado didn't take a single life and only caused physical harm to a few people.



Through it all, I was amazed that we had survived the storm. Had I not sat up in bed, half asleep as I was, the bricks and nails would have come down on my face and chest. Had Chuck not been out of bed watching the storm, he would have suffered harm from the impact.

God could easily have taken any of us that night. But He didn't. What is it He wants us to do before our time is up? I continue to ask that question. One thing I know is that we are to tell others that it is God who provides. The God who is far greater than our ability to understand, who created and designed all, who loves us so much that He sacrificed His son Jesus Christ so we can be united with God for eternity, who blesses us by showing us that we are not really in control of anything and we need Him for everything, who allows storms in our lives so we can be blessed by the realization that love is what matters.

As the old hymn says, "On Christ the solid rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand. In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil."

**WWP**



LaVann Landrum has lived in Newnan since 2000. She is married to Chuck, a lieutenant with the College Park Police Department and they have four adult children: Drew and Ansley Landrum and Jack and Sam Weaver. LaVann has worked in various nonprofit organizations in Atlanta, currently serving as Chief Advancement Officer for Christian City. She volunteers at her church and in various community organizations. As empty nesters, Chuck and LaVann have become "those" dog parents, enjoying their friendly and goofy bernedoodle, Henry. They hope to move back into their 118-year-old home early in 2023.

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COME AND WORSHIP  
WITH US!

PSALMS 127:1

"EXCEPT THE LORD  
BUILD THE HOUSE,  
THEY LABOUR IN VAIN  
THAT BUILD IT."

WEEKLY SERVICES:  
MONDAY NIGHT  
PRAYER  
5:30-6:30  
THURSDAY NIGHT  
YOUTH & ADULT  
BIBLE STUDY  
7:00-8:00 PM

# **THE POWER OF GOD'S CARE TO OVERCOME THE UNIMAGINABLE**

By: Pastors Kevin & Nicole Royston



**"When we choose  
to cast our cares on  
Jesus, it unlocks  
the supernatural  
power of God to  
help us, no matter  
where we find  
ourselves."**



God cares for us and He desires that we cast our cares on Him. He tells us this repeatedly in His Word. But many of us don't intimately understand His loving care until we are broken.

On January 20, 2019, we had to learn how to cast our cares on God because we needed the kind of care that only He was able to provide. It was on a Sunday immediately following our regular worship service that we experienced what we thought was unimaginable. Two of our sons, Joshua, age 16, and Kahlil, age 17, had been in a fatal car accident.

Anyone who has lost a child can tell you of the heartbreaking devastation. We were overcome with the most intense despair that either of us had ever experienced. In an instant, we had lost not one, but two of our sons.

Shock was followed by desperation for God to work a miracle. We were not prepared for the hard reality of losing our sons. Who could be? So, we prayed hard, hoping and believing for a miracle. Surely God cared for us enough to not let this be true—to somehow or another work a miracle, to turn things around like we believed He could.

*In His sovereignty, He did not turn things around. He did not reverse things.*

I tried to process my feelings and wrestled with trying to understand why God chose not to turn it around. I desperately tried to make sense of what I couldn't make any sense out of. When I came to the end of myself, mentally and emotionally drained, a sense of hopelessness set in.

Ultimately, we chose to follow the Word and cast our cares on God. The burden was much too heavy for us to carry. The key was that we needed to get to a place of choosing—choosing God's way instead of continuing to struggle.



And God met us there! When we laid our burden down, He picked it up. We began to possess a supernatural strength that we knew wasn't our own. It was the power of God being unlocked to give us strength that we could not explain. It was truly an exchange which continues to this present day as we continue to look to Him.

When we choose to cast our cares on Jesus, it unlocks the supernatural power of God to help us, no matter where we find ourselves. His care releases power to make us whole and complete in every way. Our ability to cast our cares on God determines our ability to receive and operate in this power.

**1 Peter 5:6-10 KJV**

*"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Casting all your cares upon Him; for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."*



God's power produces wholeness, it stabilizes our minds, it provides us with supernatural strength and brings us to resolve and purpose. His power is activated when we ***humble ourselves as we cast our cares on Him.*** We must humble ourselves by pulling down thoughts and opinions that do not align with what God has said in His Word. God's promise is that He will **exalt** us *(to be set above whatever you are experiencing, and possess power over it and overcome it)* in due time.

In the moments of hopelessness, I heard a still small voice bring to my remembrance, *"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but God delivers them out of them all."* (Psalm 34:19) *"Sorrow not as the world who have no hope."* (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

My initial reaction was, why am I thinking this? Does this really apply? I didn't want to hear it. Oftentimes, as the Word of God enters our thoughts, our flesh immediately rejects it, especially when we desire a different outcome. I knew that I was in a battle to submit to the Word and not my own thoughts. I began to meditate on the words in my head. I spoke the words aloud.

I told myself that God will deliver me even in this and that I did not have to sorrow as the world sorrowed; I have hope. This didn't mean that I was not sad or that I did not feel pain, but it did mean that I was choosing not to remain hopeless. I had hope, according to the Word of God.



And God had me reflect on Jesus, as He is our example.

### **Matthew 26:36-42 KJV**

*"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."*

Casting our cares happens in prayer, our conversations with God. This means we must verbally speak to Him about the things that are weighing on us. We must be ready to humble ourselves according to His Word of truth.

I considered the example of Jesus, which at its core was that no matter what, we must finish the assignment God has given each of us. I, too, came to a resolve that it may not look like I want it to look, but God is still in control. I will march on for His glory. I will finish my assignment.

Day by day, we continue this journey by remaining sober and vigilant against our own thoughts and opinions and against the thoughts and opinions of others.

### **Matthew 16:21-23KJV**

*"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."*

### **Matthew 26:51-54**

*"And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"*

Jesus remained sober and vigilant so that He could finish His assignment. What seemed to be unfair for Him to have to walk through did not stop Him from continuing in His assignment. He did not let his friends who meant well deter Him because they felt it was unfair and cruel. He chose to endure what seemed unfair and cruel in the moment to walk in purpose and complete His assignment.

I have found that above all, I must remain sober (having a sound mind, not wavering between my thoughts and the Word of God) and vigilant (aware of words and emotions that will try to exalt themselves above God's Word).

In the frailty of the human mind, it is hard for us to understand or endure suffering. Suffering is no stranger to any of us. It comes at different levels and in different degrees. It hits us when we least expect it. Its aim is to rob us of our purpose by stealing the hope that we have in God and His goodness toward us.

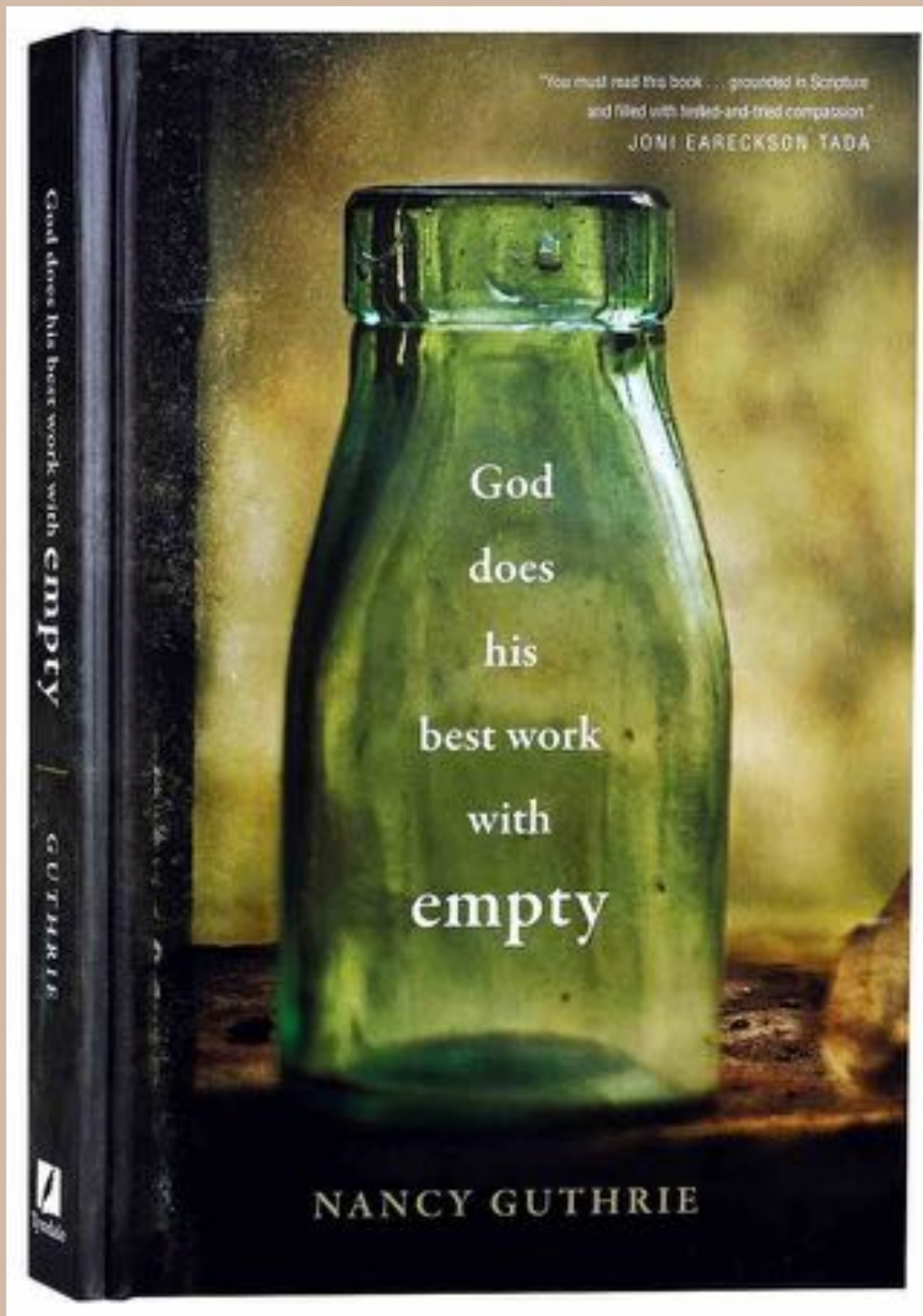
Remember in verses 9 and 10 of 1 Peter 5:  
*"Whom steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."*

Lean in and cast your burdens on the Lord and believe that He will continue to provide you with supernatural strength to run this race and complete your assignment. **WWP**



Pastor Kevin Royston founded OutReach Church in 2005. He is a man who lives by the principles he teaches. His assignment to the body at inception was teaching believers how to win in life by faith in God's Word. This remains his assignment as he teaches biblical principles and how to apply them in everyday life.

**Book Review:**  
**“God Does His Best Work with Empty”**  
**By: Connie J. Singleton**



# **“God Does His Best Work with Empty”**

## **Book Author: Nancy Guthrie**

Nancy Guthrie understands pain better than most: She lost two of her three children to a rare genetic disorder. Her compassion for others who are hurting compelled her to pursue theological training and to share her insights on how to apply God’s Word to their hurting hearts. She is author of several books, co-host with her husband of the GriefShare videos used in more than 20,000 churches around the world, and co-creator of Respite Retreats for couples who have faced the death of a child.

In her 2020 book, “God Does His Best Work with Empty,” Guthrie speaks to each of us about the empty places in our lives and leads us to agree with her that only God can fill them. She shows how all of us encounter emptiness, perhaps through the loss of a child, a job, a dream, or even a sense of purpose. Guthrie says, “You may have come to see your emptiness as your greatest problem, but I hope to convince you that when God sees the emptiness in your life, He sees it as His greatest opportunity. In fact, throughout the chapters of this book, we’re going to see that emptiness has never been, and never will be, a problem to God. Rather, we’re going to see again and again throughout the story the Bible tells us that God does His best work with empty, as by His Spirit, He fills it with Himself.”

Early chapters of the book explore parallel experiences of the Old Testament Israelites’ wanderings in the wilderness after escaping slavery in Egypt and of our own wilderness times in life. Drawing on Scripture, Guthrie highlights how God uses these hard times to teach and train us to trust Him for all our needs. What the Israelites needed most of all, and which also holds true today for us, as well, is a committed relationship with our Creator God. It is only through a daily walk with Him (in prayer, meditation, Scripture study, joining with other believers) that we are able to overcome adversity and live in trust that our God will withhold no good thing from us. Guthrie explains, “And as the Word of God begins to change how we think, we discover that it is also changing how we feel. In fact, we discover that it is actually changing what we want.”

As we journey through the book’s eight chapters (202 pages), we learn just how God can fill us with His provision, presence, grace, kindness, life, meaning, faith and joy. We come to realize from Guthrie’s teaching that “God’s perspective ... is that it is actually a great evil when we prefer something other than God Himself as the source of what fills our lives with joy. It is wrong, and not merely a bad habit, to approach each day seeking to savor the taste of something we find in this world—be it a substance, an experience, or a person—while starving ourselves of the companionship of God.” The ultimate answer we seek to our emptiness is God Himself.



## Start Your New Life With Christ

You can have a real, lasting peace today through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Start your four-step journey now!

### **Step 1: God loves you and has a plan for you!**

The Bible says, "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, [Jesus Christ], that whoever believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life". (John 3:16)

Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"—a complete life full of purpose. (John 10:10)

But here's the problem:

### **Step 2: Man is sinful and separated from God.**

We have all done, thought or said bad things, which the Bible calls "sin." The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". (Romans 3:23)

The result of sin is death, spiritual separation from God. (Romans 6:23)

The good news?





### **Step 3: God sent His Son to die for your sins!**

Jesus died in our place so we could have a relationship with God and be with Him forever.

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”.  
(Romans 5:8)

But it didn't end with His death on the cross. He rose again and still lives!

“Christ died for our sins. ... He was buried. ... He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures”. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me”. (John 14:6)

### **Step 4: Would you like to receive God's forgiveness?**

We can't earn salvation; we are saved by God's grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for your sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins—that's called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your heart, your honesty. We suggest praying the following prayer to accept Christ as your Savior:

Dear God,

“I know I'm a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life. I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will.  
I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

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