

My Walk with Jesus

A journey of faith, hope, and divine guidance

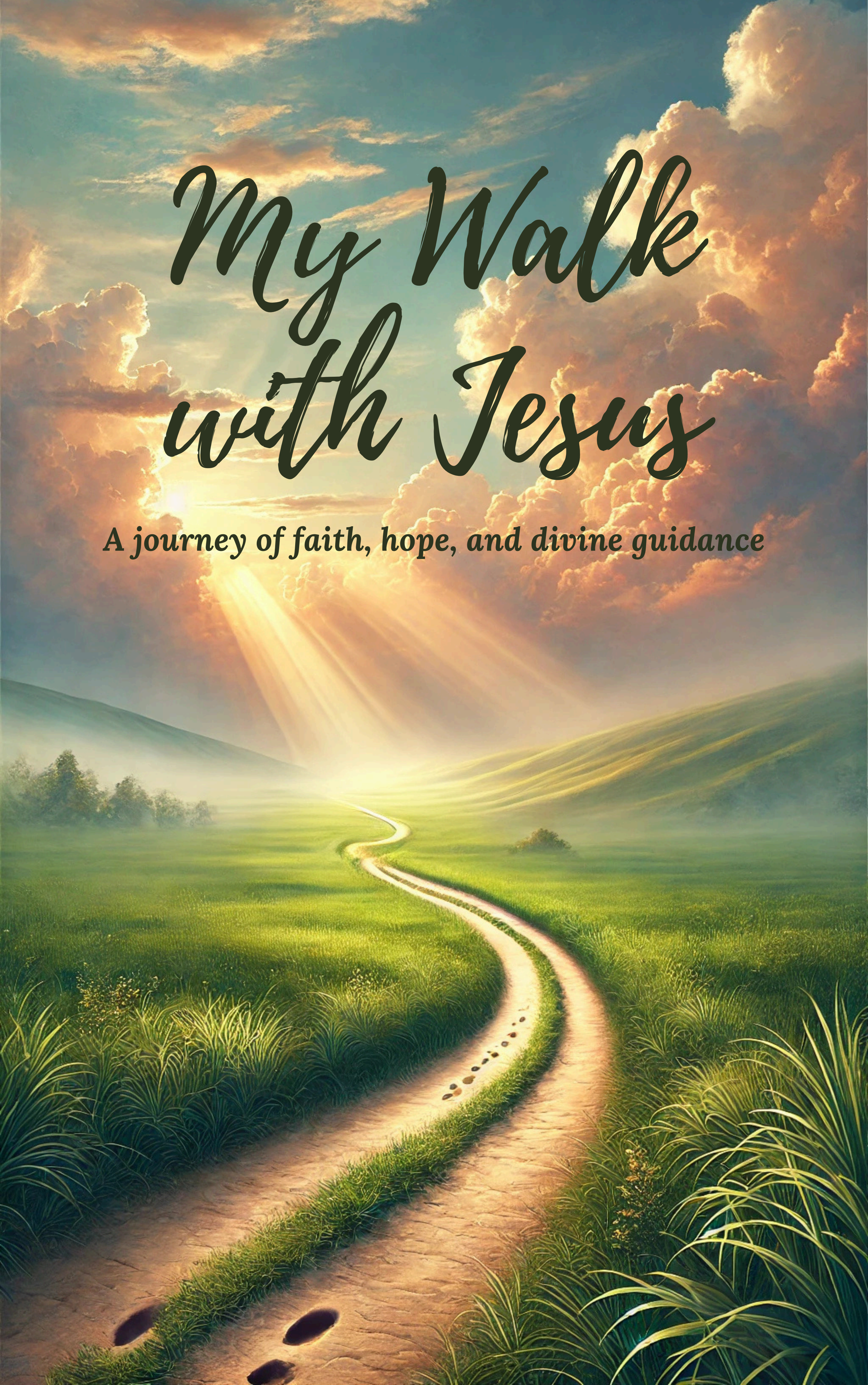


Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Establishing What We Believe

Chapter 3: What We Believe Is What We Will See

Chapter 4: Check the Box or Check the Heart

Chapter 5: Faith Grows and Matures

Chapter 6: The Choices We Make Shape Our Faith

Chapter 7: The Joy That Comes from Trusting the Lord

Chapter 8: The Refiner's Fire

Chapter 9: Hope or Destruction?

Chapter 10: Keep Calm and Continue On

Chapter 11: The Endowment

Chapter 12: Training Ground

Chapter 13: A Broken Commitment

Chapter 14: Starting a New Chapter

Chapter 15: An Eternal Perspective

Chapter 16: Shaky Ground

Chapter 17: The Language of the Lord

Chapter 18: Twelve Stones

Chapter 19: An Upright Soul

Chapter 1: Introduction

When you title a book *I Walk by Faith*, it begs an essential question—what is faith?

Some define it purely through the lens of religion, as a devotion to God or a set of spiritual convictions. But faith is broader than doctrine. It is the unseen force that moves us forward when reason tells us to stop, the quiet certainty that steadies us in uncertainty.

Merriam-Webster defines faith as a “firm belief in something for which there is no proof.” At first glance, that definition seems fragile—why believe in something without evidence? But in truth, we live by faith every day.

An optimist steps into the unknown, convinced that something good awaits, despite having no tangible proof. A pessimist, just as convinced, sees only inevitable failure. Both hold a belief about the future. Both are acting in faith. Faith, then, is not just about religion. It is the foundation of every conviction, every risk, every leap into the unknown. Some believe in God. Some believe in fate. Some believe in nothing beyond what they can see and touch. But make no mistake—belief itself is unavoidable.

The question is not whether we have faith. The question is: *Where do we place it and how do you use it to face challenges in your life?*

Faith and the Lens Through Which We See

If we are to walk by faith, we must first ask ourselves—what do we believe?

For me, the answer has always been clear: I believe in God. But belief is not a rigid structure; it moves, breathes, and takes shape uniquely in every person. Faith is not a competition, and yet, too often, we compare our journeys to others as if faith is something that can be measured or ranked. It isn't. It is deeply personal, molded by experience, refined by trials, and strengthened through choices.

Faith is the lens through which we see the world. Every experience—every joy, every sorrow, every moment of uncertainty—passes through that lens, shaping how we think, feel, and act. And then, when the results of those actions unfold, they do one of two things: they either reinforce what we already believe or they challenge us to reconsider.

I learned this at a young age. Shared in this short book are a small sampling of some of the challenges I have faced in life and the lessons I have learned that helped shape my faith as I walk with Jesus.

A Lesson in Faith and Discernment

I was a teenager when my school held cheerleading tryouts. I had always been taught that God answers prayers, and I believed it with unwavering certainty. Yes, I know this was a trivial request, but I believe our Father in Heaven cares deeply about the details of every aspect of our life.

So, I did what I had always known to do—I prayed. Not just a fleeting prayer but a deeply intentional one. I also fasted, pouring my heart out to God, asking Him to help me make the team.

And then, I made the team.

The moment my name was announced, it was as if the universe had confirmed what I already knew—God hears, and He answers. My faith was strengthened, solidified.

But then came the following year. Another set of tryouts, another opportunity. Only this time, I hesitated. Maybe my previous success had nothing to do with prayer. Maybe I had simply been good enough on my own. I decided to forgo the fasting, the praying. I showed up, tried out, and waited for the results.

I didn't make the team.

It would have been easy to let doubt creep in. But instead, I found clarity.

I had always believed that God answers prayers, and this experience did not shake that belief—it confirmed it. The first time, I had sought Him, and I had received. The second time, I had relied on myself alone, and the outcome was different.

This is where discernment comes in.

Faith isn't just about belief—it's about learning to recognize when God is guiding us, when He is teaching us, and when He is inviting us to trust Him more fully.

It's about paying attention to the patterns in our lives, the moments that whisper truth when we are willing to listen. Had I never tried out that second year without praying, I might have convinced myself that God's presence in my life was optional, unnecessary. But instead, I learned something invaluable: faith is not passive. It requires action, intention, and a willingness to seek Him in all things.

The Evolution of Faith

I have never been able to explain exactly where my faith came from. It has always been inside me, like an ember waiting to catch fire. But I have seen how it has grown, how it has matured with time—just as the body grows and strengthens with age, so too does the spirit when it is nourished.

Faith is different for everyone. It is not a one-size-fits-all journey. Some learn faith through hardship, others through miracles, and some through the quiet, steady presence of God in their everyday lives.

But one thing is certain: faith is not meant to be stagnant. It is meant to grow, to stretch us, to push us toward a deeper understanding of who God is and how He speaks to us.



A Question for Reflection

So, I leave you with this: take time to reflect. What is faith to you? How has it shaped the way you see the world? And when you look back on your life, where do you see the unmistakable fingerprints of God? He is there. He has always been there. The question is—are we paying attention?

Chapter 2:

Establishing What We Believe

If I asked you to tell me about yourself, what would you say? Most of us default to the simple facts—our name, where we live, what we do. “My name is Cheryl. I live in Virginia. I’m a self-employed instructional designer, married with four children.”

But is that really who I am? When my time on this earth is over, will I want to be remembered by a job title or a zip code? Or will it be something deeper—something that speaks not just to what I did, but to *who I became*?

We all want to feel unique, to know that there is something within us that sets us apart. I remember my first-grade class, where there were four other Cheryl’s. To keep us straight, my teacher started calling me “Cheryl Kay”, using my middle name. At that age, a name was the only thing that made me feel distinct. But as I grew older, I learned that identity is not found in what people call us—it is found in the choices we make.

History remembers names, but not for their name itself. The names that echo across time do so because of the beliefs that shaped their choices, for better or worse. It is our belief system—what we hold to be true—that fuels the paths we take.

For some, belief can become a force for destruction.

The idea of a “superior race” has led to cruelty, oppression, and even genocide. Others, like Martin Luther King Jr., held to a belief that all people were created equal. That belief drove them to stand in the face of opposition, to build rather than to destroy.

Every one of us is building something with our lives. The question is: *What foundation are we standing on?*

The Six Steps to Solidifying Belief

Over the years, I have seen a pattern in how we come to form and confirm our belief systems. Whether in faith, in personal values, or in everyday convictions, there seems to be a natural progression—one that determines not only what we believe, but how deeply we believe it.

Step 1: “I Don’t Get It”

There will always be those who simply don’t understand faith—those who hear words like “trust God” or “walk by faith” and feel as if they are listening to a foreign language. Belief is a choice, and not everyone will choose it. I have family members who look at my faith and shake their heads, unable to understand why I turn back to God in both joy and suffering. But faith is personal. It is something each of us must come to on our own.

Step 2: “This Might Be True, But Not for Me”

Some stand on the edges of belief, watching. They see faith in others, and while they do not dismiss it outright, they hesitate to make it their own.

My faith has always been a gift from God. I cannot explain why I trust Him so deeply in moments that seem hopeless, but I do. Some people see that and acknowledge that it works for me. They respect it. But they do not yet claim it for themselves.

Step 3: “It Might Work”

This is the point where curiosity stirs. Someone sees enough evidence—whether through answered prayers, moments of divine intervention, or the unshakable peace of a believer—to wonder, *could this actually be true?*

They are not fully convinced yet, but they are open. They see patterns. They notice things that can't be explained away. Their belief is no longer a flat-out rejection, but a cautious consideration.

Step 4: “I Get It”

This is where a belief system starts to take root. A person no longer just observes faith from the outside—they step into it. They begin to see through the lens of faith, and with that, their mind starts to confirm what their heart already knows.

This is where confirmation bias begins to play a role. In many areas of life, confirmation bias can be dangerous—it can cause people to cling to false ideas simply because they reinforce what they *want* to believe. But when it comes to faith, confirmation bias can be a tool for spiritual growth.

I have experienced this in my own life. My belief that God answers prayers was solidified through a seemingly simple

event—cheerleading tryouts.

The first year, I prayed and fasted, asking God to help me make the team. I made it. That result strengthened my belief that God hears and answers prayers.

The second year, I hesitated. Maybe my success had nothing to do with prayer. Maybe I had been good enough on my own. I didn't fast. I didn't pray. I didn't make the team.

Instead of shaking my belief, that experience confirmed it. I had seen both sides—the seeking and the not seeking, the answered and the unanswered. And in that, I knew my faith was not empty. It was real.

Step 5: “I Can Do It!”

This is where belief turns into action. Faith is no longer something to observe—it is something to *live*.

Once we reach this stage, our belief system becomes our compass. It directs our decisions, our responses, our outlook on life.

Step 6: “I Must Share It”

At this point, faith is no longer just a personal conviction—it is something we cannot help but share. Whether for good or evil, belief has power.

History has shown us the extremes. Adolf Hitler built his empire on a belief that drove an entire movement of destruction. Martin Luther King Jr. built his life on a belief

that inspired generations to seek justice.

Both men had faith—one in something false and destructive, the other in something righteous and true. Both shared that faith with the world. One tore lives apart. The other brought healing.

Every day, we step forward in faith, whether we realize it or not. The question is, what are we walking toward? What is our belief system leading us to build?



A Question for Reflection

Have you ever taken the time to examine your own belief system?

We often assume that our convictions are simply *there*, shaped by the culture we were raised in or the experiences we've had. But belief is a choice. And like anything that shapes our lives, it deserves careful consideration.

Where do you stand? What do you believe? And, more importantly, *why*?

Because in the end, it's not just what we achieve that will define us—it's what we stand for.

And the first step to standing is knowing what you stand *on*.

Chapter 3:

What We Believe Is What We Will See

Faith and belief are powerful forces. What we choose to believe—whether about God, ourselves, or the world around us—shapes the reality we see. Jesus himself affirmed this when he said, **“Your faith has healed you.”** (Mark 5:34) Time and again, people sought him out, believing in his ability to heal. And because they believed, they saw miracles unfold.

But what happens when we struggle to believe?

Part of my own faith journey has been wrestling with this very question. I have always known, deep down, that God answers prayers. But knowing something and trusting it—especially when circumstances challenge that belief—are two very different things.

The Struggle Between Faith and Coincidence

I remember when I was pregnant with my first child. Everything had gone smoothly for most of my pregnancy, but as my due date approached, I began experiencing intense Braxton Hicks contractions. They left me exhausted, miserable, and uncertain about what was ahead.

My mom insisted I get a priesthood blessing. In our faith, these blessings are given by church members to offer healing and comfort.

But I hesitated. I was new to the area, unfamiliar with many people, and reluctant to ask for help. I believed in the power of blessings, but in that moment, I wasn't sure I believed *enough* to reach out.

Eventually, I gave in. A few days later, after passing my due date, my doctor decided to induce labor. The result? A healthy, happy baby boy.

But instead of crediting the blessing, I wrote it off as coincidence.

This is where faith often collides with reason. How do we know when God is working in our lives? Was my smooth labor a result of divine intervention, or was it just the natural course of things?

The answer, I believe, depends on the lens through which we see the world.

The Lesson I Didn't Expect

A year later, I found myself pregnant again. This time, I was sure things would go smoothly, blessing or no blessing. I convinced myself that my previous experience had nothing to do with faith and everything to do with good fortune. So, I didn't seek a blessing.

And I regretted that choice deeply.

My second labor was nothing like my first. It was long, exhausting, and complicated. The pain was unbearable, intensified by induction drugs, and my baby ended up in the ICU. My postpartum depression was severe.

I struggled—not just physically, but emotionally, spiritually. That experience left a mark on me. And in hindsight, I saw what I had refused to see before.

With my first pregnancy, I had a blessing. I had faith, even if it was small. The experience was challenging, but joyful.

With my second, I had no blessing. My faith was uncertain in God's direct involvement. And it was one of the hardest experiences of my life.

This is what faith does—it changes how we perceive the events of our lives. We see *through* what we believe.

And once I saw this pattern, I couldn't unsee it.

With my next two pregnancies, I sought blessings. And while they were still difficult, they weren't the same nightmare that my second birth had been.

The experiences had changed, but more importantly, *I* had changed.

The Power of Confirmation Bias

Science calls this pattern of thought “confirmation bias.” It's our natural tendency to interpret events in a way that reinforces what we already believe.

Author Anne-Laure Le Cunff explains it this way:

"While many of us pride ourselves in our objective thinking, the reality is that we humans are terrible at evaluating situations and predicting outcomes based on facts only."

Confirmation bias is our tendency to seek, interpret, favor, and remember information in a way that confirms our prior hypotheses or personal beliefs. It's a very common type of cognitive bias, which is even stronger for emotionally charged topics and deeply ingrained beliefs. The more we desire a specific outcome or believe in a specific principle, the more likely we are to search for confirming evidence."

Faith operates much the same way.

If we believe that God is present in our lives, we will see evidence of Him everywhere—in the small miracles, in the moments of peace, in the answered prayers.

But if we believe that everything is mere coincidence, we will see the world as random, disconnected, and without deeper meaning.

How Our Experiences Shape Our Beliefs

I have seen this pattern play out in my life in more ways than one.

Math: The Belief That Held Me Back

In fourth grade, I decided I wasn't good at math. More accurately, I *hated* math.

We were learning how to multiply three-digit numbers, and my teacher had a strict policy—no recess until all ten assigned problems were correct.

I had a real problem with this mandate. My personal motto

at the time was **“I’d rather be first than accurate.”** I rushed through my work, making mistakes, and ended up missing recess for what felt like *forever*.

That frustration planted a belief deep in my mind: *I am bad at math.*

It didn’t matter that I might have improved if I had taken a different approach. That single, emotional experience was enough to shape how I saw myself and my relationship to math.

And from that moment on, every struggle in math class confirmed what I already believed. *See? I knew I wasn’t good at this.*

Piano: A Fear That Became Reality

The same thing happened with playing the piano in public. I started lessons with my mom, but I hated being corrected by her. The moment she stood behind me, I would get flustered. My nose would start to itch. My fingers would stumble over the keys. I couldn’t play my best while being watched.

When my parents hired a new teacher, she required *perfection* before I could pass off a song. I was terrified. My confidence crumbled.

One day, after another disastrous lesson, I rode my bike home, tears blurring my vision. I was so distracted that I rammed my front bike tire into a curb, flipped over the handlebars, and broke my tailbone.

By the time my first piano recital came, I was a wreck. I stumbled through my song, “Love Story”, missed notes, and burst into tears in front of everyone.

I never wanted to play publicly again.

Because I had believed I wasn’t good at playing in front of others, my emotions, my reactions, and my reality began to reflect that belief.

Faith: The One Area Where My Belief Transformed Me

There were areas in my life where negative experiences shaped negative beliefs—math, piano, public performance. But my faith was different.

Despite trials, despite hardships, despite doubts, my positive experiences with God far outweighed the negative.

Even in my lowest moments, I saw His hand. Even in my failures, I found reminders of His faithfulness.

This is why faith is not just about what we believe—it is about *how* we believe.

What We See Is a Reflection of What We Believe

Let’s go back to my pregnancies.

With my first child, even though I was two weeks overdue and there were signs of stress, I had faith. I had a blessing. And the experience, while difficult, left me feeling at peace. With my second child, I dismissed faith. I didn’t seek a

blessing. And I struggled.

Faith does not mean avoiding hardship. But it *does* mean seeing beyond it. It means recognizing that, even when things don't go as we planned, God is still present.



A Question for Reflection

Think back through your own life.

Are there moments where your beliefs shaped what you saw? Where an emotional experience became the foundation of a deeper conviction?

And most importantly—what do you *choose* to believe now?

Because the truth is, faith isn't about what we can prove. It's about what we are willing to *see*.

Chapter 4: Check the Box or Check the Heart

Looking back, I can't quite understand why I thought "*first is better than accurate*" was a good motto for my life. It had already cost me plenty—missed recesses in fourth grade, the confidence to play the piano in front of others, and, eventually, professional opportunities I had worked hard to secure.

No one will ever be perfect in all things, but that doesn't mean we can't refine and seek to improve ourselves throughout our life. If I had slowed down, asked for help, and accepted the challenge of improving, I might have made it out to recess. If I had humbled myself enough to listen to my mom's instructions, instead of resisting correction, and focused my piano practicing sessions on playing songs correctly rather than racing through the number of times required to 'check the box' I might have gained the confidence to perform without fear.

I don't look back on these moments with regret. They are not should have, could have, would have moments. They are simply truths—proof of how easily emotions can take control and shape our belief systems.

Workplace Challenges

Shortly after high school, I moved to California, eager to take on the world. It wasn't long before I landed an

incredible job—Executive Secretary to a department head.

It was an opportunity that validated what I had believed about myself for years: I was skilled, I was capable, and I was ready.

I had spent high school taking office skills courses—typing, shorthand, everything I would need for success. I had done well in those classes. My grades confirmed my confidence. This job was my proof.

But there is always a but.

I hadn't yet been broken of my reckless motto: *First is better than accurate.*

My indirect supervisor was the woman who held my job before me. If I separate fact from feeling, I can admit she was good at what she did. She knew the work. She had high expectations.

But at the time, my emotions told a different story.

I despised her.

This was long before computers. Every document had to be typed on a typewriter—no quick edits, no easy fixes. Sure, there was a backspace correction option, but it only removed ink, not the imprint of the mistake on the thick bond paper.

My approach was simple: *Type fast, fix later.*

Her approach was different: *Do it right the first time.*

She would examine my work, hold it up to the light, and—without hesitation—hand it back with a simple command: **Do it again.**

The first time, I shrugged it off.

The second time, I felt a twinge of irritation.

The third time, frustration turned into fear.

I became so consumed by the anxiety of making mistakes that I made even more of them. I was no longer just typing—I was *bracing* for criticism, waiting for the moment my work would be sent back to me, yet again, for another attempt.

I was trapped in a cycle of self-doubt, and I didn't know how to break free.

Checking the Box vs. Checking the Heart

In hindsight, I can see the deeper lesson.

At the time, I had been treating my job like I had treated everything else—**as a box to check**. The goal wasn't to master the skill; it was simply to finish the task.

But faith doesn't work that way.

I see people approach their spiritual lives in the same way I approached that job:

- *I read my scriptures today—check.*
- *I said my prayers—check.*
- *I went to church—check.*

And yet, their faith doesn't grow.

Because reading scripture without focus is like practicing the piano without truly hearing the music. Because praying without intent and sincerity is like rushing through a job just to say it's done.

Faith isn't something you *finish*—it's something you *build*.

Resistance Strengthens Us

It is human nature to avoid difficulty. We gravitate toward ease, toward comfort. But if we want to grow stronger, we have to push against resistance.

This is true in the physical world—if you want to build muscle, you have to push through weight, through strain. And it is just as true in the spiritual realms of our lives.

I have seen people face trials that either strengthened their faith or shattered it. I don't judge how others respond to difficulty—each person has their own journey, their own belief system that shapes how they process hardship.

But *I do* know this: **Nothing can grow stronger without resistance.**

I can curl a one-pound weight without effort. If I move up to twenty pounds, it gets harder. I can either accept the challenge and grow stronger or put the weight down and walk away.

Faith works the same way.

- When trials come, will we press in or pull back?
- When prayers seem unanswered, will we hold on or let go?
- When doubts creep in, will we push through or retreat?

Every difficulty, every unanswered question, every season of uncertainty presents a choice. **And that choice is always ours to make.**

The Illusion of Completion

For years, I lived as if faith was a checklist. A series of steps. A cycle of routines.

But nothing in creation was ever meant to be completed in an instant.

Even **God Himself took seven days** to create the world.

At the end of each day, He didn't say, **"It is perfect."**

He didn't say, **"I am finished."**

He said, **"It is good."**

Why would our faith be any different?

Growth takes time. Development requires patience. Maturity is a process, not a milestone.

If we rush through our faith journey, focusing only on marking off tasks, we will one day realize we have built a faith that has never been tested—one that has never been given the chance to develop real strength.

A Moment for Reflection

Think back through your own life:

- Are there knowledge, skills or attributes you abandoned because they were too difficult to master at the time?
- Have you ever completed a task just to say it was done—without truly valuing the experience?
- Have you ever *checked the box* instead of *checking the heart*?

For me, it happened with piano lessons. I played the song the required three times, but I didn't listen. I didn't care about improvement—I cared about being finished.

Many people live their faith this way. They read the Bible, but don't absorb it. They pray, but don't truly speak to God.

But what if we approached faith with **focused intention**?

What if we saw every prayer as an opportunity instead of an obligation? What if we read scripture *not* to complete a

task, but to hear the voice of God?

What if we went to church *not* because we had to, but because we wanted to encounter and worship Him?

Our lives would change.

Our faith would grow.

And we would stop *checking the box* and start *checking the heart*.

Chapter 5:

Faith Grows and Matures

In today's world, we are conditioned to chase achievements. We set goals, we measure success, and we convince ourselves that fulfillment is found in reaching the next milestone. But true meaning isn't found in what we accomplish—it's found in who we become.

For years, one quote stayed with me: **“Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get.”**

The first part made perfect sense. If I worked hard and pursued my goals, I could be successful. That much was clear. But the second part left me unsettled. Did this mean I had to passively accept whatever life handed me? Even if it was something painful? Was I supposed to want hardship, disappointment, or struggle?

No one *wants* trials. But what if the secret to happiness wasn't in *wanting* them, but in *trusting* that they serve the purpose of *becoming*?

At that point in my life, I wasn't asking those questions. I was driven by ambition, by the certainty that if I wanted something badly enough, I could make it happen.

And for a long time, that approach seemed to work.

Chasing a Dream

Ever since I was a child, I had dreamed of flying. I was born in Wyoming, but when I was seven, we moved to Alaska. Traveling by plane was the most practical way to get there and then return to visit family, and each time I stepped onto an aircraft, I felt a thrill. I wasn't content to just *travel*—I wanted to be part of that world.

By the time I turned eighteen, I was determined to become a flight attendant.

This was before the convenience of online applications. I sat at my typewriter, crafting individual letters of request to each of the major airlines. The airlines would then send me an application in the mail. I filled out application after application— to six different airlines, each one requiring painstaking attention to detail.

Then, I waited.

Weeks passed. Then months. The rejection letters came. Six months later, the process was repeated.

What I didn't know was that most airlines didn't hire anyone under twenty-one. They also rarely considered applicants from rural areas—flight attendants were based in major cities, and they preferred candidates who already lived there.

But I didn't know that.

So I kept trying.

A Door Opens

By the time I turned twenty-one, I had nearly given up hope. Then, my brother—who was living in Guam—mentioned that his girlfriend worked for Continental Airlines.

“They’re hiring”, she told me.

I applied immediately.

And once again, silence.

But this time, something stirred inside me. A quiet nudge. A feeling I couldn’t shake.

Call them.

It didn’t make sense. If they wanted to interview me, wouldn’t they have reached out? But the feeling wouldn’t go away.

So I picked up the phone and called their headquarters. I was told that the recruiters were in Denver. <sigh> Here I go again. But then I picked myself up by my bootstraps. <think> Recruiters usually stay and interview in hotels near the airport. So I pulled out the Denver phone explored the major hotels near the airport. Luck must have been on my side. The first hotel I called confirmed they were there. And even more luck (or divine intervention), they put me through to a recruiter.

“We’ll be here until 4 PM tomorrow. If you can get here, we’ll let you join the group interview.”

I had less than twenty-four hours to make it happen.

I booked a flight from Rock Springs, Wyoming, to Denver, packed my bags, and caught my flight.

When Preparation Meets Opportunity

The group interview went well. But what happened afterward was even more remarkable.

As I was heading back to the airport, I found myself on the same shuttle as the recruiters.

It was an unexpected opportunity. A moment of divine timing.

During that short ride, I spoke with them about my passion for flying, about the persistence it had taken to even get to that interview. They told me they almost never answered calls from random applicants—and they certainly never expected me to show up.

Typically, the hiring process took weeks. If you passed the group interview, you'd receive a letter inviting you to an individual interview. If you passed that, you'd wait again for an invitation to the six-week training program.

That's why, when a **telegram** arrived just two weeks later inviting me to training in Houston, I was stunned.

The door had opened. The dream was becoming reality.

But dreams, I would soon learn, don't always look the way

we imagine.

The Road to Houston

By this time, I was married. Moving across the country wasn't something I could decide alone. But when I spoke with my husband, he encouraged me to go. He was still in school and needed to finish his semester, so we decided I would move to Houston alone for training.

My sister drove with me, and for the most part, the trip was uneventful—until Kansas.

We were running low on gas. It was late at night. The towns were few and far between, so we made a decision: **The next town we come to, no matter what, we stop.**

It was a mistake.

The only motel in town was more than run-down—it felt *wrong*. The clerk looked at us with hesitation and even asked if we were *sure* we wanted to stay. That alone should have been enough to send us packing. But when we realized we didn't need a key to enter our room, we knew we had to leave.

Looking out the window, I saw people dealing drugs. A pregnant woman strolled by, clearly working the streets.

That was it. We were out.

We drove to the next town, where we found a hotel that had once been a Ramada Inn. The new owner clearly

couldn't afford to replace the sign, so instead of "RAMADA", the letters now read "**A.D.A.M.A.R.**"

It was ridiculous. But it was clean. And it was safe.

I called my husband that night and told him, "**If you don't hear from us in the morning, come find us.**"

Faith and Disillusionment

I arrived in Houston expecting to step into my dream. Instead, I felt completely out of place.

The training class was filled with "glamor girls" who looked as if they belonged in a fashion magazine. I was not one of them. But thankfully, there was another woman like me—married, grounded, and far more down-to-earth. We became lifelong friends.

Training had its ups and downs, but the most vivid memory I have is of the emergency evacuation drills.

During one drill, we had to exit a DC-9 in a hurry, sliding down the inflatable escape slide. I was one of the first out, but my **jean jacket got caught on a hook** at the door. I was stuck, my arm wrenched back as trainees behind me pushed to exit. By the time I broke free, my arm was bruised and swollen for days.

But the real test came after training.

I left the hotel where we were housed, to pick up my new uniform from the local dry cleaners. On the way back to the

hotel a torrential rain ensued. It was only a couple of miles from the hotel, but the streets were not only getting wet, but they were also flooding. I got stuck at a traffic light and as I sat there, at a complete stand still, I watched the area at my feet fill up with water.

Our graduation ceremony was canceled. Trainees were thrown onto flights because regular flight attendants couldn't make it in to work. When I got back to the airport hotel, my very first assignment was a flight to Tampa Bay.

The whole flight attendant crew was new. We had never worked a flight. It was chaotic. Halfway through the service, the captain made an announcement: **Prepare for landing.**

We weren't ready. The trays were still out. The cabin was a mess. You cannot land with all of the loose and often times heavy items.

In a panic, we begged the captain to circle while we cleaned up. An off-duty flight attendant who was on our flight, seeing our struggle, jumped up to help.

That was my introduction to my "dream job."

My first few years of flying brought so many incidents. I had to cross picket lines to get to work because of the union strikes. They wanted to fight for better pay and work schedules and they couldn't do that if some people were still willing to work the job and at lower pay.

So many things seemed to stack against me when I became a flight attendant. My husband's family had previously

thought I was a “nice” girl, and everyone liked me but now that he would be moving away and taking their son, their whole attitude changed. They did not believe flight attendants fit the “nice” girl profile, which was somewhat true at that time. However, my friend and I did not conform to the traditional mold.

Things went from bad to worse when my husband told me he wasn't ready to come down to Houston, even though the semester was over. Continental was no longer paying for our hotel, so I got an apartment with another flight attendant. We were on call all day, six days a week. This was back before cell phones. If we had not been called in to work, we needed to stay at the apartment in case we were called. They paid us a flat rate of \$900 per month no matter how little or much we worked. I am not sure which was worse, my roommate's situation or mine. I was called in so much I could hardly get out of the airport before they grabbed me and put me on another flight, but she hardly ever got called. I was oftentimes sick and extremely stressed due to all the work.

After all my years of dreaming to be a flight attendant, it was not exactly what I expected. I did not realize I would be so sick, tired and stressed. I never considered I would feel so...unfulfilled in my life.

What I Thought I Wanted vs. What I Needed

Over the next few months, I came to a painful realization:

I had everything I thought I wanted.

And I had never been more miserable.

Despite the interesting trips and the flight benefits, after six months I was disillusioned with the job and discouraged. I finally had a Sunday off, so I went to church. I was sitting on the back row crying to myself. I had everything I could possibly want. My checklist of accomplishments had been filled and yet I was more unhappy than I had ever been in my life. As I was praying silently for direction in my life, I got the distinct impression that I should get pregnant. It wasn't what I wanted to hear. I wasn't passionate about motherhood. But I was desperate for peace. Kids were ok, but they certainly were not my passion. I babysat as a teenager and did not find any real satisfaction with those experiences. I did not relish the thought of being a mom.

Partly because I was so disillusioned and desperate for some peace in my life, I was willing to trust the Lord and listen to his voice. In addition, due to many female issues I experienced throughout my life the doctors told me that it would be a bare minimum of six months after going off birth control before I would get pregnant. It was likely I would not get pregnant, and it would be two years of trying to get pregnant before they would run tests and identify any issues. Knowing that, I was willing to take the risk and trust the Lord. My expectation was that I would go a couple of years, run some tests, and then possibly get pregnant. Six months later, I was pregnant. Nine months later I was a mom.

And the moment I held my son, I *knew*.

All my life, I had been chasing success. But God had known all along what would bring me true joy because He knows me better than I know myself.

Faith Is Trust, Not Just Hope

For years, I had trusted God only when it aligned with my plans.

That wasn't trust. That was **hope**.

True faith requires surrender. It requires us to stop chasing what we *think* we need and trust that **He already knows**.

Because faith doesn't just grow in success.

It matures in surrender.

Part 2: Faith in the Everyday

Faith is often described in sweeping, dramatic terms—miracles, signs, wonders. We read about seas parting, the blind seeing, and mountains moving, and we think, *That is faith*.

But what about the ordinary? What about the days that blend together—the ones filled with work schedules, grocery lists, unpaid bills, and sleepless nights? What about the moments that feel more like survival than spiritual revelation?

Where does faith fit into *that*?

For me, faith is not just for the miraculous—it's for the mundane. It's not something I reach for only when I need a breakthrough. It's woven into my everyday life, present in the smallest moments.

That doesn't mean I haven't wrestled with doubt. There have been seasons when my prayers felt hollow, when my faith felt distant, when I cried out to God and was met with silence. I have known what it is to feel abandoned.

But I have also learned that **feelings are not facts**.

Because no matter how lost we feel, no matter how deep the silence, **God never leaves us**.

Even when we question, even when we struggle, even when we turn away—**He remains**.

And if we look closely, we'll find Him in the details of our daily lives. Not just in the miraculous, but in the mundane.



Reflection:

How do you find faith in the fires of life?

Chapter 6: The Choices We Make Shape Our Faith

Faith does not exist in a vacuum. It grows—or it withers—based on the choices we make.

I have been asked many times whether marrying my first husband was a mistake. After all, he was blind (yes he was really blind), and he didn't share my faith.

But a mistake, by definition, is a misstep—a lapse in judgment, not an accident, something done with awareness of its consequences.

Marrying him was not a mistake.

It was a choice.

And choices, whether they lead to joy or hardship, shape us in ways we never expect.

The Choice That Changed Everything

A few years before I met him, my first husband made a choice that altered his life forever.

During the height of the oil boom in Rock Springs, Wyoming, he bought an old home in a struggling neighborhood, planning to renovate and sell it for a profit. He had the skills. He had the vision.

But then, one reckless night, he made a different kind of choice.

Some say he was playing Russian Roulette. Others believe he was simply imitating the game. Either way, he held a .22 caliber pistol to his temple in his head and pulled the trigger.

He says he never expected it to fire.

But it did.

The bullet severed his first optic nerve and became lodged near the second. The damage was done. Removing the bullet would have been too dangerous, so it remained where it was.

He lost complete vision in one eye. In the other, he could only see through the very edges of his periphery.

One choice.

One moment.

And his entire future changed.

The Thorny Path I Chose

When I chose to marry him, I knew I was not choosing the easy road.

Even now, looking back, I cannot say I would have done things differently. Because **challenges, no matter how**

painful, have a way of shaping us.

Would my life have been easier if I had married someone who shared my faith? Possibly. Would I have been a different person than I am today? Almost certainly.

But God already knew the outcome of my choices.

And if I had listened to Him more closely, if I hadn't been so caught up in my own desires, maybe I would have seen the warning signs and made a different choice.

Ignoring the Red Flags

I was raised with certain values—ones that, at the time, I didn't fully appreciate.

I was taught the importance of marrying within my faith. But as a young woman, I didn't understand why that mattered. Shouldn't love be enough?

I was taught to be careful with my heart. My brothers warned me over and over that some men would say anything to get what they wanted.

I didn't listen.

He was exciting. He was dangerous. He made life feel unpredictable and fun.

But the warning signs were there from the beginning.

When we met he had a girlfriend—one who had moved in

with him—while we were getting to know each other. At the time I did not know about her.

When I found out about her, I no longer chose to spend time with him.

A few months after I made that decision, I called him to pick up a music album I had loaned him. By then, the other girl was gone, and we started a relationship.

Not long after, we became sexually involved.

He was the first man I had ever been with, and because of that, I convinced myself that I *had* to stay.

That decision shaped everything that followed.

I ignored the times he canceled our plans at the last minute. I ignored the times he forgot to show up altogether. I ignored the little voice inside me whispering, *This isn't right.*

His blindness brought challenges, but it also brought humor. There were times he would return to the wrong table at restaurants or accidentally “goose” another woman, thinking it was me. We laughed about these things.

But beneath the surface, what was happening was not humorous, I was changing.

I stopped going to church.

I didn't see it then, but I was molding myself into someone who could keep him in my life—even if that meant

temporarily sacrificing the person I used to be.

The Breaking Point

After a year of dating, he left for six months to attend a school for the blind. If I had been in a stronger place, this would have been a wake-up call—a chance to reflect on where our relationship was going and take advantage of the situation and walk away.

Instead, I felt like I was drowning.

The pain of his absence consumed me so completely that I swallowed an entire bottle of painkillers. The moment I did it, panic set in. I drove myself to the nearest emergency room, where they pumped my stomach.

But even that wasn't enough to make me walk away.

When he returned, we got more serious. And then, one day, after one of many terrible fights, I was ready to leave for good. Too many times I had been treated as an afterthought rather than an important part of his world. He had been maintaining relationships with other girls. Thus, I was done. I sold my car. I packed my belongings. I was prepared to buy a one-way ticket to Alaska.

Then he said the words that changed everything:

“If you stay, I’ll marry you.”

And just like that, I stayed. We got married a week later.

Not because I deeply believed it was the right decision. But because I was afraid of what leaving might mean.

Owning Our Choices

For years, I wrestled with whether my marriage had been a mistake.

But I have come to understand something important:

It was not a mistake. It was a choice.

And choices shape us in ways that mistakes never could.

Some choices lead to ease. Others lead to struggle. But every single one teaches us something—if we are willing to learn.

I had ignored the signs. I had closed my eyes to the truth in front of me.

But we cannot change what we refuse to see.

Where Are Your Choices Leading You?

We all have moments where we look back and wonder, *What if?*

What if I had walked away sooner? What if I had listened to God instead of my own emotions?

But faith is not about regret. It is about recognizing that, **no matter where we have been, God can still lead us forward.**



So, the real question is not *what if?*

The real question is:

Where are your choices leading you now?

Chapter 7:

The Joy That Comes from Trusting the Lord

At one point in my life, I truly believed becoming a flight attendant was *the* dream. The answer to all my prayers. The thing that would finally bring fulfillment.

And in many ways, it had seemed like God Himself had orchestrated the events leading up to it—opening doors in ways that felt too perfect to be coincidence. The unexpected call inviting me to a last-minute interview. The chance meeting with the recruiters in the airport shuttle. It all felt divinely guided, and for a while, I thought this was where I was *meant* to be.

But the truth is, sometimes God gives us what we *want* just to show us that it's not what we *need*.

No matter how exciting the job was, no matter how many new places I traveled to, a nagging emptiness followed me.

Then, in a single moment, everything changed.

A Life-Changing Arrival

My first child was due on February 20, 1986. My mother had planned to fly to Houston on February 27 with my eight-year-old brother to help me adjust to life with a newborn. Everything was carefully scheduled.

But babies don't care about schedules.

By March 7, there was still no baby. The doctor finally sent me to Hermann Hospital in downtown Houston for a stress test. And sure enough, my baby *was* under stress. They decided to induce labor.

Seventeen hours later, I gave birth to a **7.5 lb. baby boy with bleach-blond hair**—a little angel who stood out unmistakably in a nursery filled with about fifty dark-haired babies. I had no doubt which one was mine.

A New Purpose

The day I came home from the hospital, my mom and brother had to fly home. A friend came to take them to the airport, and as they left, an overwhelming wave of emotion crashed over me.

I sat in my apartment, holding my newborn son, listening to a song called *My Little Child* by Afterglow.

I had heard the song before, but that day, it was as if every word had been written for *me*.

My Little Child
words and music by Afterglow

*In your eyes, I see heaven's sunlight glowing;
You were there just yesterday.
And I know, that deep inside you're knowing,
Why you left that home and came to Earth to stay.*

*There are dreams to last a lifetime;
There are wonders yet to see,
I see mountains yet unconquered;
I see all that you can be.*

*You're an angel from above,
Sent to me by One who loves us.
To learn and grow and come to be
A sacred trust He's give me,*

*To watch and care for you,
And to guide and show the way to,
To form a bond that's meant to be,
Forever through eternity,
My little Child.*

*You were born in a world where pain and sorrow,
Seem at times to much to bear.
But you know, that the skies will clear tomorrow;
You can walk with hope and love enough to share.*

*You'll go on, ever nearer,
Ev'ry step along the way,
Over coming and fulfilling,
Till you reach the perfect day.*

*You're an angel from above,
Sent to me by One who loves us.
To learn and grow and come to be
A sacred trust He's give me,*

*To watch and care for you,
And to guide and show the way to,*

*To form a bond that's meant to be,
Forever through eternity,
My little Child.*

Tears poured down my face as the reality sank in. My life was no longer just about *me*.

God had **entrusted me** with this child. This perfect little human who would look to me for everything. He was a gift, and I was responsible for teaching and raising him.

Everything changed in that moment.

I had spent so much time chasing what I thought would make me happy, and yet **God knew me better than I knew myself**. He knew this—this tiny baby—was what would bring true joy.

In the following weeks, I wrote and wrote and wrote. Pages filled with my emotions, my realizations, my gratitude. I don't know what happened to those pages. But I don't think it matters. Because the words may be lost, but the truth they held is forever imprinted on my heart.

A Turning Point

Despite this deep realization, my naivety had not completely faded.

If one baby could bring me so much joy, then wouldn't ten babies bring me *ten times* the joy?

So, when my son was just three months old, I was overjoyed

to find out I was pregnant again.

At the time, I thought this was another blessing, another confirmation that I was on the right path.

But sometimes faith is tested in ways we don't expect.

My second pregnancy would bring changes I never could have foreseen.

A Lesson in Surrender

If you ever find yourself feeling unfulfilled—if you sense that deep ache in your soul that tells you something is missing—don't ignore it.

Instead of grasping at more of what *used* to bring happiness, turn to God.

He created you. He knows the desires of your heart even better than you do.

But here's the key—**God wants us to turn to Him, not to the blessing He provided.**

Chasing after past joys will never bring true fulfillment. But trusting in God's plan *always* will.

Chapter 8:

The Refiner's Fire

My second pregnancy brought many changes—some expected, some not.

One of the biggest? We decided to leave Houston.

My husband had cousins in Maryland, and after visiting the area, we felt it was the right place for us. We had saved enough for a down payment on a house, with some to spare. We found a small two-bedroom home through a reputable realtor in an older neighborhood and applied for a loan through an also very reputable lender.

Everything was falling into place. It was May of 1986. We were set to close in September.

With a few months to go before the move, we left Houston to stay with my parents in Wyoming. Since I was no longer flying but still working temporary jobs, it gave us a chance to save more money. We shipped our furniture ahead to New Jersey through the airline's cargo department where it would be held in an airport cargo container until our moving company retrieved it.

Everything was going *according to plan*.

But as I would soon learn, **plans rarely go as expected.**

A Rocky Start

In late August we left Wyoming in an old Audi we had purchased for \$500 from my brother-in-law's grandfather. It had been sitting in a garage for years, but we were assured it was reliable.

That turned out to be wildly *inaccurate*.

Our plan was to camp along the way to save money. But on the very first night, while sleeping in our tent, **the infamous Wyoming wind flattened it.**

We barely got any sleep. Not exactly the best way to start a cross-country move.

Then, in the middle of the I-80 corridor in Nebraska, the Audi **stalled right in the middle of the interstate.**

Panic set in.

I prayed hard.

A few anxious minutes later, it started again. We made it to a mechanic, but he found nothing wrong. So, we kept going. If that wasn't enough, **we didn't have a car seat for my son.** Instead, he lay on the floorboard near my husband's feet.

At a gas station in Iowa, my husband accidentally **slammed my son's hand in the car door.**

The scream that followed was enough to break me.

I wanted to collapse. I wanted to turn back. But we didn't have that option.

With ice packed around his tiny hand, we kept driving.

A Hard Landing

We arrived in Maryland two weeks before closing.

Our lender allowed us to move into the house early—one small blessing in the chaos.

But the night before we were set to close, our lender showed up.

He demanded to know **exactly** how much money we had in our bank account.

We told him we had *enough* to cover closing.

He insisted that wasn't good enough. If we didn't disclose everything, we wouldn't be allowed to close—and we'd have to move out.

We were young and naïve. So, we told them.

And just like that, they **required most of our savings** for closing.

Most everything we had set aside for moving expenses, for food, for *survival*—gone.

We were left with almost nothing.

Broken Plans, Stronger Faith

We had little money. No food. No furniture.

Our belongings, still sitting in New Jersey at the airport, were eventually **set outside on the runway in the rain** because our moving company never showed up to claim them. My grandmother's refinished dresser? **Ruined.**

A month later, I scraped together enough to rent a moving truck to salvage what was left. Pregnant, I drove a twenty four foot truck through Newark, NJ loaded most our furniture with my blind husband—**while three men stood watching**—and then we drove home. We were unable to secure all of our damaged belongings because they closed at 5 pm, whether we were done or not. So now I needed to save enough money to rent another truck, drive to NJ again and claim the balance of our stuff.

Life was a struggle.

There were days my son had no formula, only water to fill his tiny belly.

There were nights when a neighbor girl's mother would make extra food just to bring us dinner.

I had never been more financially broken.

But I had never felt **more spiritually whole.**

The Lesson in the Fire

Looking back, I don't remember asking, *Why, God?*

I just remember praying.

And through every scripture, every lesson, every moment, the same word echoed back at me:

Sacrifice.

God never promised that following Him would be easy. But He promised it would be *worth it*.

Sacrifice was not a punishment. It was the fire that would refine me.

And in the ashes of my broken plans, I found **a deeper trust in the One who never leaves us.**



Where is God calling you to trust Him today?

Because even when it doesn't look favorable—you can **trust His plan.**

Chapter 9: Hope or Destruction?

When life falls apart, people often tell you to “look for the light at the end of the tunnel.”

But when you're deep in that tunnel, barely able to catch your breath, it's hard not to assume that the light you see is just another train—barreling toward you, ready to make everything worse.

Maryland had already tested us beyond what I thought we could handle. Financial stress, job uncertainty, moving disasters—I had lost more than I ever imagined I could. And yet, I kept trusting. Kept believing. Kept praying that somehow, God would provide.

Then, I did something completely illogical.

The Piano

We had managed to scrape together **\$1,600** to help cover the cost of delivering baby number two. It wasn't enough—we expected the bills to be at least **\$2,000**—but it was something.

Then one day, out of nowhere, I decided we needed a **piano**.

Why?

So, we went shopping and found a **beautiful white Kawai upright**—used only once at some rich person’s party.

The price?

Exactly \$1,600.

I bought it.

Almost immediately, buyer’s remorse settled over me like a thick, suffocating blanket. How could I have spent the money we needed for my baby’s birth on a *piano*?

For a week, I agonized over it.

Finally, I couldn’t take the guilt anymore. I researched its value, placed an ad in *The Washington Post*, and within a week, it was **sold for \$2,200**—just enough to cover my baby’s medical bills.

The Lord works in mysterious ways.

The Night I Felt Truly Alone

Life continued its relentless cycle—up a hill, failing down a hill, over and over again.

There was no in-between. No stability.

Christmas Eve, 1986.

My baby boy was asleep. My husband was working. Rain poured down in sheets.

I went downstairs to relax, do some needlepoint, and watch TV.

And that's when I saw it. Water seeping in through the basement floor. I immediately jumped up and went upstairs to call my husband to come home from work.

From the top of the stairs, I could see **water—ankle-deep—covering the entire basement floor.**

I just stood there, staring.

Every piece of furniture we had left—the ones that had barely survived the rain in New Jersey—**soaked again.** I wanted to collapse.

Instead, I ran to my neighbors. They told me to call the fire department.

I did.

They were too busy helping other people with flooded basements.

Pregnant, exhausted, alone because they would not let my husband off work—I found myself **lifting furniture onto bricks** in a desperate attempt to save what little we had left.

That was the moment I realized how little value material possessions actually had.

I had already lost so much. And now, what little remained

was being washed away.

I kept waiting for the end of the trial, for relief, for something to get *better*.

But a week after Christmas, another blow came.

A **foreclosure notice** arrived in the mail.

Fighting Back

We had made **every single mortgage payment on time**.

So, how was our house being foreclosed?

After some digging, I found out that the original mortgage company had **sold our loan**—a common practice. But in the process, our payments had been lost. The new lender had **no record of them**.

Worse still, the old mortgage company was under investigation for **fraud** and refused to turn over the money.

We had **30 days** to come up with three months of back payments or move out.

I called an attorney. The cost to fight this? **The same amount we owed in payments**.

I didn't have money to hire a lawyer.

So, I fought it myself and I won. But the stress?

The emotional exhaustion? It left me wondering—how much more could we take?

The Breaking Point

Through all the chaos, my baby boy remained a **bright, happy spirit**. He was busy and curious and always into everything.

I, on the other hand, was **barely functioning**. This pregnancy was nothing like my first. I was **severely anemic**, constantly exhausted, and struggling to take care of an extremely busy toddler.

And then, just as things seemed to settle, **another notice** arrived. Our **property taxes increased** by \$100 a month. That was \$100 a month **I did not have**. This time, there was no fight to be won. No argument to make. The burden just kept growing heavier.

I was praying more, trusting more, serving more—**and yet, life was only getting harder**. I couldn't make sense of it.

When There's No Sugar for the Lemons

People like to say, "*When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.*" But sometimes, there's no **pitcher**. No **sugar**. No **water**. Just **lemons, after lemons, after lemons**.

And in those moments, we have to decide—will we keep walking forward, even when every step is bitter? Or will we let despair consume us?



Reflection:

Have you ever had a time in your life when it just rains (or more accurately) pours trials? How do you respond?

Chapter 10: Keep Calm and Continue On

Baby number two was due **February 15, 1987**. For once, we actually **wanted** a late baby. Why? Because the new DC flight attendant base **opened March 1**, meaning I would officially be transferred from Houston and have insurance to cover the birth—**if she could hold off long enough**. And she did. And then some.

A Nightmare Labor

By **March 5**, at my regularly scheduled doctor visit, I still wasn't in labor. My doctor stripped my membranes, hoping to jump-start things. It worked. I left my son with a friend and drove myself—**in labor** to the hospital. It was in Washington, DC, an hour from our home. Our trip was made even longer when we found ourselves driving around **Washington, DC, completely lost**, trying to find Columbia Hospital for Women.

Just as I was about to flag down a cop for directions, we turned a corner—and there it was.

But after getting checked in, my contractions **stopped**. I was **three weeks overdue**, already dilated to a six, and an hour from home. They **couldn't send me back**. So, they induced me.

The pain went from **zero to unbearable in an instant**. I was given an epidural. It **did not work**. The Pitocin, however, worked **very well**—the contractions were relentless. The monitor on my belly kept going off. I called the nurses, expecting them to check on my baby like they had with my son. They told me I was “moving too much” and causing the alarms to misfire. Eventually, they **removed the monitor altogether**.

I gave up calling for them. Hours passed. The pain never stopped. At some point, my **water broke**. I didn't bother notifying the nurses. By the time they finally came to check on me, **half of my baby's head was already delivered**. I had been in so much pain, I **didn't even realize I was giving birth**.

Panic set in. They started yelling at me to **stop pushing** as they rushed me to the delivery room. Seriously? **Like I had a choice**.

A Rough Start

Eventually she was born, **black and blue** from head to toe. The whites of her eyes were **solid red** where blood pooled from the pressure. Her **Apgar score was a three**. She had to be given **oxygen** and rushed to the **NICU**.

Before taking her, they laid her on my belly, following tradition. But I didn't want to hold her. I was **too exhausted**. I just wanted to be left alone.

Life Rarely Goes as Planned

I had believed everything would go smoothly, just like my first birth. I had **assumed** my son's easy delivery had nothing to do with the blessing my mom convinced me to get. But the **Lord cannot bless those who do not ask for help**. This time, I had not asked. And everything had been harder.

When the Wrench Gets Thrown

Life doesn't follow our script. Even when things are going well, sometimes the unexpected derails everything. I have learned that the best thing to do is **stay calm** and keep moving forward. Because if God has allowed it, **He has a purpose for it**.

And He will work all things **for good**. (*Romans 8:28*)



Reflection:

Have you ever failed to ask for help from God when you felt impressed that you should? Why or why not?

Chapter 11: The Endowment

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints we have temples. “Some gospel ordinances and covenants are so sacred that God permits us to receive them only in special places called temples. A temple is literally a house of the Lord—a holy place set apart from the rest of the world. In the temple, you learn more about the plan of salvation and how to follow Christ’s perfect example. God’s greatest blessings are available in His temples.”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/families-and-temples/what-is-the-purpose-of-the-temple?lang=eng>)

For as long as I could remember, the **temple** had always felt like something in the distance—something you eventually reached, but only under specific circumstances. You went when you were preparing for a **mission** or getting **married in the temple**. That was just the way things had always been.

But then, the church changed the policy. Suddenly, members could receive their **endowment** without either of those reasons. I didn’t hesitate. This was my chance.

I set up an appointment with my **Bishop**, feeling a surge of excitement. This was a step I had longed to take, a step that would deepen my faith, offer me guidance, and strengthen

my relationship with God. I could hardly wait.

Sitting across from him, I shared everything—how much this meant to me, how I had been preparing for this moment. He listened. Then, when I finally asked for my **temple recommend**, he simply said: “**No.**” Just like that. No explanation. No reasoning. Just a firm, immovable *no*.

I stared at him, stunned. Had I done something wrong?

A Test of Faith

I left that meeting feeling **crushed**. I had been doing everything right.

- ✓ I attended church faithfully.
- ✓ I paid my tithing.
- ✓ I had a testimony.
- ✓ I followed the commandments.

And yet, somehow, **it still wasn't enough**. That didn't make sense. Wasn't **obedience supposed to bring blessings?** Wasn't doing what was right supposed to lead to **open doors, not slammed ones?**

For the first time in my life, I felt like **God had let me down**.

Spiritual Temper Tantrums

I wish I could say my first instinct was to trust God's timing, but that would be a lie. Instead, I reacted like a **spiritual toddler**. Fine, God. If You're not going to bless me, why should I keep doing what You ask?

I had done this before—**withheld my faith when things didn't go my way**. If God wasn't going to play by my rules, then why should I keep playing by His?

But looking back, I can see exactly what He was doing. He wasn't punishing me. He was **testing me in a way I had never been tested before**.

A Delayed Yes

Two weeks later, I found out **why my Bishop had denied me**. He was about to be **released from his calling**, and he likely knew that I would need someone who could **walk with me through the process**. Had I gone forward then, I wouldn't have had the support and guidance I needed. **God had been protecting me all along**.

But I couldn't see it in the moment.

That's the frustrating thing about faith—it doesn't always give you **evidence upfront**. You have to **walk forward first**.

Faith That Moves Mountains

For years, I had believed that faith was simply **trusting in things unseen**. But then I read something that stopped me in my tracks.

Even God acts on faith.

That didn't make sense. If God knows all things, **why would**

He need faith? But faith is more than just believing. It is a **power that makes things happen.**

Faith isn't just **passive hope**—it is **active trust, movement, creation, transformation.**

Faith moves mountains.

And if faith was powerful enough to move mountains, then surely, it was powerful enough to move me.

Receiving My Endowment

My **new Bishop** was different. He was from **Worland, Wyoming**—a small, unexpected connection that instantly made me feel at ease. When I told him about my desire to receive my endowment, he didn't hesitate.

“Yes, you can. But you need to prepare.” That preparation wasn't just about me—it involved my **husband** too.

Even though he wasn't a member of the church, he needed to be willing to let me:

- ✓ Pay tithing
- ✓ Wear the temple garment
- ✓ Honor my commitments

He didn't care. As long as **it didn't affect him**, it didn't matter. But the biggest difference with this Bishop? He didn't just want me to **go through the motions**. He wanted me to **fully commit**—to make temple worship a **regular**

part of my life, not just a one-time event.

In **October of 1988**, I entered the **temple with my grandmother and mother** to receive my endowment. And that was only the beginning.

Faith is a Journey

Every step of faith we take shapes our journey. Even when we don't understand it. Even when it doesn't make sense. Even when it feels like **God is saying no**. Because sometimes, **the delays are just disguised blessings**.



Reflection:

What delays have you experienced that later turned out to be blessings?

Chapter 12: Training Ground

Maryland had been financially brutal. We had been **struggling for years** barely scraping by. But no matter how tight things got, I always did **one thing**.

✓ **I paid my tithes.**

And up until this point, God had **always provided**.

Until one month, **He didn't**.

“God, Where Are You?”

I had just written a check for **\$650 in tithing**—the exact amount I needed to **pay our rent one month**. And suddenly, **we had nothing left**. I remember sitting at the kitchen table, fists clenched, heart pounding, whispering:

“I did what You asked. Why aren't You holding up Your end of the deal?”

I had **trusted** Him.

I had **obeyed** Him.

And now, we were completely broke. What was I supposed to do now?

A Change of Plans

The cascade of unpaid bills began, month to month. With no way to pay our bills, **we had to move**. We considered **West Virginia**, but **moving cost money**—money we didn't have. So, we did the only thing we could. We **borrowed money from my parents**, by way of their credit card, and started packing.

But it felt like **failure**. Hadn't God promised to provide? Wasn't I supposed to be **trusting Him**? It felt like He was **pushing us off a cliff**.

But what I didn't realize was that He was actually **redirecting us to something better**.

A Gift at the Door

The night before we were set to leave Maryland, a dear **friend came** by to say goodbye. She had always been a blessing in my life, but now she was about to take the word 'blessing' to a new level. She had no idea what we were going through. She didn't know how much money we needed. Before she left, she handed me an **envelope**.

I thought it was just a **goodbye card**. But when I opened it, I found a **check for \$1,500**—the **exact amount** we needed to rent a moving truck and relocate to Wyoming.

God had not forgotten us.

The most amazing part of this story is that she, unbeknownst to me was going through an incredible

crucible of her own. Her husband had left her and her six kids. I knew none of this at the time. By the time I found out, I was long gone on my way to Wyoming.

Lessons in Trust

I had thought God was **letting us fail**. But really, **He was moving us forward**. I had thought **tithing should work like a transaction**. But really, **it was about trust—even when the numbers didn't add up**.

I had thought my friend had given out of **excess**. But later, I learned **she gave out of love**—and she had given out of **obedience**.

The Training Ground of Faith

Life is a **training ground**. We learn in the **messy middle**, not in the neatly tied-up endings. And the greatest lesson of all? **God is always working, even when we can't see it**.

So, no matter how impossible things seem—**keep trusting**. Because He is already making a way.

Reflection:

How do you keep trusting when you are in the midst of chaos?



Chapter 13: A Broken Commitment

Life had been a series of battles—some spiritual, some emotional, and many of them physical. But no matter the struggle, I prayed then as I pray now: **that my faith in God would never waver.** That I would always recognize the power He had given me to endure, to face challenges, and to come out stronger on the other side.

When we moved back to Wyoming, I had an uneasy feeling. I knew that being closer to friends and family would test my husband's already fragile testimony. **And I was right.**

Outwardly, he played the part well. He attended church. He accepted a calling in the **Elders Quorum Presidency.** But behind closed doors, he confessed to me something that shook me to my core. **"I joined the church because I wanted us to be on the same page and work toward our financial goals."** I remember just standing there, staring at him, the words ringing in my ears.

I had always believed that faith was something **sacred**, something deeply personal, something that connected us to God. But to him, it was just another **step in a strategy**—a means to an end. And that end was *money*.

The Illusion of Stability

For the first time in our marriage, **money wasn't the issue.**

- ✓ He got a job working at the school district.
- ✓ He was going to college.
- ✓ We were still receiving **Social Security benefits.**
- ✓ I was making money teaching **Kindermusik** and **piano lessons.**

We even had **extra money** to put our kids in activities—**t-ball, music lessons, and school programs.** But no matter how much we seemed to make, something **always** drained it.

First, we outgrew our car and had to buy a **minivan**—which, of course, meant **a new car payment.** Then, our **refrigerator broke.** Then, our **dryer gave out.** Then, we realized we had no actual furniture, due to our previous experiences—just **bean bags**—and had to furnish our living room.

No matter how much we made, **it was never enough.**

A New Life on the Way

Despite the constant whirlwind of financial strain, my heart whispered something to me:

It's time for another child. I felt it deep in my soul—this would be my last baby. When I told my husband, he was **hesitant,** but he didn't outright refuse. The night I conceived, I gave him a choice. **"If you don't want a baby,**

there's protection in the drawer." He didn't use it. But when the pregnancy was confirmed weeks later, **he was furious.**

He looked at me with anger burning in his eyes. **"You did this on purpose."** I remember feeling a wave of disbelief crash over me. *You had a choice. You knew what could happen. Why are you blaming me?*

It was in that moment I realized just how much of our marriage was built on **shifting sand.**

The Last Child

My fourth baby—my last baby—**was late, just like baby one, two and three.**

My doctor decided to induce labor on **Thanksgiving Day**, November 25th. His **nurse**, who I knew well, let it slip: **"He's inducing you because he doesn't want to spend the holiday alone. He just went through a divorce."** I was annoyed but grateful it wasn't Pitocin. He simply **broke my water**, and labor progressed naturally.

Before I gave birth, I told him I wanted my **tubes tied**. He hesitated. **"You're too young"**, he said. **"What if all your kids died in a car accident? What if you want to start over with a new family?"** His words hit like a slap. **Who thinks like that?** I was firm. **"No regrets."**

For years, I didn't regret my decision. But after I remarried, I sometimes wished I could have given my second husband a child of his own. Life, it seemed, always had a way of

making me question my choices.

A Marriage on the Brink

Our marriage had never been smooth. There had been **moments of joy**, but the **fighting overshadowed them**. I remember one fight early in our marriage—I can't even recall what started it. We were in the **basement**, yelling, the tension thick in the air.

Then suddenly, **he lunged at me**. I turned to run up the stairs, but **he caught me halfway up and threw me the rest of the way**. When I landed at the top, pain shot through my neck. I had to **go to work right after**, but when the pain didn't subside, I went to the doctor. I had a **cracked vertebra**. That night, I made a vow.

If he ever laid hands on me again, **I was done**.

The Breaking Point

Years later we moved to Utah and something shifted. Before leaving for Utah, he made friends with a member of our church who was not living the standards of the church. He found an ally in his wobbly testimony. That person also moved to Utah. They continued to spend time together. Also, one night before my brother was going on a mission for our church, he told me about several times when he and my husband had spent time together engaging in behavior that was against the standards of the church. My brother had changed his ways and repented. He did not know that I was unaware of their activities. When I went to bed that night, I cried.

In addition, I started noticing **little things**. Things that didn't add up. There were some instances that I could point to where I 'believed' he cheated. One night, I woke up with a deep, unsettling feeling. **He's cheating on you**. I had no proof. No evidence. But the feeling was so strong it nearly knocked the wind out of me. I buried it. What could I do? Confront him without proof?

I had children to think about. So, I put the feelings aside. I worked harder. I poured myself into our **business, our home, our kids**. I barely slept. I stopped eating. My **body began to shut down**. I ended up in the **ER—twice**.

- ✓ **Chest pains.**
- ✓ **Shortness of breath.**
- ✓ **Pain radiating down my arm.**

Both times they ran tests on my heart which indicated there was nothing physically wrong, so they told me the same thing both times. **"You need to see a psychiatrist."**

I left angry. These were **physical symptoms**, not some imaginary problem in my head. I refused to acknowledge the truth: **my body was breaking under the weight of a marriage that was killing me**.

The Final Blow

One Saturday, I was getting the kids ready for a birthday party when my husband started working on a cabinet in the living room. As the kids left, he looked up at me. **"Do you want to talk about it?"** I barely glanced at him. **"What is there to talk about?"** We had talked about these issues a

hundred times. Nothing had changed. Something in my dismissal **set him off.**

In an instant, he was on me—**grabbing me, slamming me against the wall.** I gasped, my heart pounding. “I’m going to stay with my parents for a while,” I managed to blurt out. But before I could move, he took me to the bedroom and **he threw me on the bed, pinned me down, and pressed a pillow over my face.**

Jesus Sent Them Home

I don’t know how far he would have gone in his anger. But at that moment, the **front door burst open.** My **children had come home really early.** They became aware of the situation. They came in the bedroom. While standing at the foot of the bed, they were **crying and screaming.** They were **begging him to stop.**

I screamed for them to call **911,** but they were too scared. Their cries must have reached him, because he suddenly let go. I **ran to the phone** and dialed. The police arrived. He was still **enraged,** smashing pictures, breaking the fish tank.

They restrained him, handcuffed him and hauled him off to jail.

Days later, when the world was spinning around me, I was feeling detached from reality. Really detached. I felt like I was removed from the world and watching life by pass me. I cried and cried and cried some more. How could I be so distraught over something that there was a part of me during the darkest hours I wished would end? I sat in a

stupor feeling like life continued on, while I watched from the sideline. In that moment I felt like Jesus had forsaken me. I actually called the suicide hotline one night when I felt the world was so dark and I could not go on. They talked me off the ledge and I called my mom, my earthly savior who came and stayed with me until I could gather myself together.

A few weeks later, when I got my bearings back, I asked my kids why they had returned without going to the birthday party. My daughter told me clearly, "Jesus said to come back". And so they did.

And just like that, **the life I had been barely holding together shattered completely.**

A Whispered Answer

For months, I prayed for **clarity.**

- ✓ Should I stay?
- ✓ Should I go?
- ✓ What was the right thing to do?

I felt lost, trapped in a cloud of confusion. One night, I knelt beside my bed, my heart heavy, and begged **one more time.**

The answer came. **"I have already told you several times that you should not stay. I will not tell you again."** A peace washed over me. God had spoken. And this time, **I was listening.**

The Hardest Truth

I never thought God would **approve of my divorce**. But He saw what I **refused to admit**. A marriage built on **lies, fear, and broken trust** could not be saved **no matter how much I wanted it to be**.



Reflection:

Have you ever felt like Jesus had completely forsaken you?
How did you respond?

Chapter 14: Starting a New Chapter

The house felt empty in a way I had never experienced before. Not just physically—though it was certainly that—but in a way that settled into my bones, hollow and foreign.

I had expected him to take things when he came by to collect his belongings. I had even braced myself for it. But I hadn't anticipated walking through the front door to find the home we had built together stripped bare.

The couch was gone. The kitchen table. The dishes. The towels. The lamps.

He had left behind the kids' beds and a few odds and ends that must not have been worth the effort to haul away. But beyond that, the space was gutted.

For years, I had dreamed of this moment—the day I would be free. The day I wouldn't have to look over my shoulder, waiting for the next cruel action, the next fight, the next betrayal. I thought it would feel **lighter**. But standing in that bare living room, I felt the weight of it pressing down on me. Not grief. Not regret. Just exhaustion. A bone-deep, soul-weary **exhaustion** that I wasn't sure I'd ever shake.

I had spent sixteen years fighting for something that was never mine to keep. And now, all that was left was silence. I closed my eyes, drawing in a breath. There was nothing left

of what we had built.

But maybe that was the gift. Maybe now, I could finally begin again.

Fear Dressed as Freedom

The six-month separation had been excruciating. The divorce was necessary—I knew that—but the in-between, the waiting, the legal proceedings, the shared custody arrangements that forced me to send my children into the arms of a man who terrified them...it nearly broke me.

He had threatened me. He had threatened them. And yet, I had no way to protect them.

The night he had pinned me down with a pillow over my face, my children had been the ones to save me. They had screamed, they had cried, and somehow, their desperation had reached him in a way my own struggles never could.

But that hadn't been the end.

One afternoon, while my two youngest were staying with him, he had taken out a gun. With his hands wrapped around a Barbie doll's tiny plastic head, he pressed the barrel against it and pulled the trigger—**click, click, click**—dry-firing the weapon over and over as he told them in an eerily calm voice: **“This is what I'm going to do to your mom.”**

The police could do nothing. It was hearsay. Just the words of small children. And besides, they reminded me—

—how could a **blind** man shoot anyone?

How, indeed.

The judge had been no better. I sat across from my ex-husband in the courtroom, my stomach twisting as he played his part perfectly—dark glasses, a neatly folded cane resting against the table, the picture of helplessness.

The judge smirked, shaking his head as he denied my request for a restraining order. “I just don’t believe he’s a danger to you.” I swallowed my rage. Of course, they couldn’t see the danger. They had never lived in my skin. They had never woken up gasping for air with a pillow pressed against their face. They had never heard the cold, detached way he had spoken of murder to their children. No one was going to save us.

So, I did the only thing I could. I offered him the one thing I knew he couldn’t resist during mediation. Money.

During mediation, the mediator went back and forth and back and forth over visitation. All I asked was that there be a cooling off period where the children could choose whether to visit him for a time, until their fear subsided. That was not an option. We needed a permanent visitation schedule that allowed him ample time. Finally, after wearing me down again, an idea just popped in to my head. I gave him a choice: I would take on the **entire** \$100,000 of our shared business debt **if** he gave up his court-ordered visitation rights.

He agreed without hesitation. And for the first time, me and

my children were free.

The Christmas That Changed Everything

There had been one person who had been quietly present through it all. He had worked for our business for a long time, and when my ex-husband left, he had stayed—not because he had to, but because he knew I couldn't do it all alone.

The kids adored him. So when Christmas rolled around, they begged me, eyes wide with hope. "Can he come over for Christmas?" I hesitated. He had his own family. His own traditions. I didn't want to intrude. But they were relentless, and finally, we compromised.

Instead of Christmas, he came over for a simple dinner in early December. That night, after dinner, I sat in the rocking chair, watching as he wrestled with the kids, their giggles and shrieks of delight filling the empty house. It was a rare moment of **lightness**, a breath of fresh air in the middle of a storm I had long since accepted as my life.

And then, something unexpected happened. For the briefest moment, the chaos stilled. He looked up at me, and **before I could even think**, the words left my mouth. "**The Lord says we're supposed to get married.**" The second I said it, my heart stopped. I hadn't planned it. I hadn't even considered it.

But the words had come **too easily**, as if they had been sitting there all along, waiting for their moment. And he—he didn't even flinch. He just nodded. "I know."

And then, as if I hadn't just **upended both of our worlds**, he turned back to the kids and kept playing. I sat there, stunned, my pulse roaring in my ears. What had I just done?

I wasn't ready for another relationship. I had only been divorced for **two weeks**. I didn't trust myself. But maybe that was the point.

Maybe God was stepping in **because** I couldn't trust myself.

Marching Around Jericho

Weeks passed, and neither of us brought it up again. We just kept showing up. Kept working together. Kept moving forward. I wrestled with doubt. How could this be right?

I was **thirteen years older** than him.

I was **divorced** with **four kids**.

He was **twenty-five, never married, still living at home**.

How could this possibly be what God wanted? And yet, the more I prayed, the clearer it became. One day, the kids were watching **VeggieTales** on tv and the story of **Jericho** came on. I half-listened, distracted—until something **hit me**.

The Israelites had been told to march around the city walls and **blow their trumpets** seven times. That was **God's plan**. It made **no sense**. How could marching and noise bring down massive walls? And yet, they obeyed. And **the walls fell**.

I sat there, frozen, realization sinking deep into my soul. **That was me.** God was asking me to step forward in faith, even though it made no sense. Even though it felt crazy. Even though I couldn't see how it would ever work.

The Wedding

On **May 6, 2000**, we were married civilly in the temple. It wasn't a grand romance. It wasn't a fairytale. But as I stood there, hands clasped in his, I felt something I hadn't in years. **Peace.** The road ahead wouldn't be easy. The battle wasn't over. But for the first time, I knew I wasn't walking alone.

And that?

That was worth everything.

Trusting the Unseen

God will ask us to do things that seem **crazy**. Things that defy logic, that stretch the boundaries of what we think we can handle. But **faith isn't about understanding**—it's about **trusting**. The Israelites marched. The walls fell. And when I stepped forward in faith, **so did mine.**



Reflection:

Has God ever asked something of you that seemed bizarre, even crazy? How did you response?

Chapter 15:

An Eternal Perspective

The moment my divorce was finalized, I thought I had reached the end of a painful, exhausting chapter in my life. Legally, I was free. But in the eyes of my faith, there was still another step to take—a final severing of the past before I could fully embrace the future.

My first marriage had been sealed in the temple after years of marriage, a binding not just for this life, but for eternity. If my current husband and I were to be sealed in the temple, I needed to obtain a temple divorce, a process far more complex than a legal one. The court system had granted me my freedom with the stroke of a judge's pen. The temple, however, required something more—a higher standard, a deeper level of scrutiny.

At first, I approached it with optimism. My current husband and I had been married civilly for two years, and we were ready to take the next step. I met with my Bishop, explained the situation, and he agreed to start the process. He asked thoughtful questions, taking notes as I spoke about my first marriage, my reasons for seeking the divorce, and my desire to be sealed in the temple.

And then he paused. Before he could submit the request, he wanted to speak with the Bishop who had presided over my previous marriage. He assured me it was just a step in the process. I nodded, trusting that everything would move

forward. But then, a few months passed. And nothing happened.

We moved to a new home, which meant a new church congregation and Bishop. I met with my new Bishop and explained the situation. He promised to reach out to my previous Bishop and retrieve the paperwork. A few weeks later, he came back with bad news. The paperwork had been lost.

We would have to start over. I swallowed my frustration and nodded, determined not to let this shake my resolve. And then, six months later, our congregation was reorganized. A new Bishop was called. Again, I sat down, explained the story, and waited.

Again, the same response—**the paperwork had been lost.** Again, we started over.

With each delay, my patience grew thinner. Was this a sign? Was God trying to tell me that this wasn't meant to happen? If He had truly led me to my current husband, if this marriage was part of His plan, why was every door slamming shut in my face?

Doubt settled in like a thick fog. But deep down, I still believed. If God wanted this to happen, then He was going to have to make a way.

And so, I let it go for many more years. We moved to Virginia and had lived in our current ward for three years. During a Sunday school class, the topic of temple ordinances came up, and I shared my experience with the

group—not in anger, not in frustration, but simply as a testimony that sometimes faith is about waiting.

What I didn't know was that sitting beside me was the Washington, DC temple president's wife. She listened quietly, taking in my words. And unbeknownst to me, she made a commitment in her heart that day: She would pray for us and she silently, without telling me, committed that we would be sealed before her term in the temple presidency was over.

The Lord's Timing

One Sunday, months later, after church, my Bishop approached me. "I have a question," he said, "Why haven't you and your husband been sealed in the temple?" I exhaled sharply. How many times had I told this story? I explained, expecting the same sympathetic nod and the same bureaucratic delays. Instead, he set up a meeting immediately.

Unlike my previous Bishops, he was also a lawyer. When he sent the required letter to my ex-husband, requesting his permission for the temple divorce, my ex did what he had always done—**he refused**. And just as before, he accused me of infidelity. Accused me of owing him money.

I believe that these lies had been enough in the past to make the previous Bishops hesitate, to make them abandon the process entirely. But this Bishop was different. He responded like a lawyer. He sent back a formal request for **proof**. If the accusations were true, my ex-husband needed to provide **evidence**.

That was when everything changed. Two months later, my ex-husband sent a single, curt response: **“I’m tired of fighting this. Do whatever you want.”** And just like that, the walls that had stood between us and the temple for **years** crumbled.

The paperwork was completed in June of 2008 and sent to Salt Lake City. Within weeks, my temple divorce was granted. I barely had time to let out a breath of relief before the next shock came. One month later, in July of 2008, my ex-husband **died**.

Had this process been delayed just a few weeks longer, the temple divorce would have been impossible. Had the paperwork been “lost” just **one more time**, we would have been forced to wait until the next life for a temple sealing. But God had **moved**.

And He had moved **just in time**.

The Sealing

We set the date for September 2008. I knew it wouldn’t be a grand event. It couldn’t be.

The children had just lost their father. Though our relationship had been deeply broken, he was still a part of them, and I refused to make them feel like his memory was being erased.

Instead, my current husband and I chose a quiet, private ceremony. The temple president himself would officiate. Our Bishop and his wife would be our only witnesses.

And sitting in the room that day was the **temple president's wife**—the woman who had prayed for us **years** earlier, the woman who had made a quiet promise to herself that this would happen during her husband's tenure. He was scheduled to be released from his calling **in October**. One month later.

She smiled at me that day, tears in her eyes, and I knew—**God had been in this all along.**

When the Path is Unclear

Sometimes, we mistake delays for denials. We assume that if something isn't happening in **our** time frame, then it must **not** be God's will. But **faith isn't about ease**. It isn't about straight roads and open doors. Faith is about **trusting**—even when the doors are slammed shut. Even when the paperwork was lost **again**. Even when the answer seems **so far away**. Because when God **moves**, He moves with **perfect timing**.

And the blessings that come from waiting? They are always, always worth it.



Reflection:

Have you ever had to wait on the Lord for answers? Have you felt like the doors of heaven were closed? How did you respond?

Part 3: Faith, The Rock on Which I Stand

For some, faith is a label—a box to check on a form, an identifier of religious affiliation. But for me, faith is so much more than a name or a tradition. It is the foundation beneath my feet, the unshakable ground that has held me steady through every storm.

Faith is what has kept me going when everything else threatened to pull me under. It has been my anchor in uncertainty, my light in the darkest moments. But here's what I've learned—faith isn't something that simply exists. It must be **built, tested, and refined**. It grows in the small, daily decisions to trust God, even when nothing makes sense.

And sometimes, it is in the moments when faith feels weakest that we discover just how strong it really is in our lives.

Chapter 16: Shaky Ground

I have always had faith. Some people say I was born with it, and maybe they're right. Even in the hardest seasons of my life, I have never doubted that God was real. I have never questioned His presence. There were times when I felt Him more clearly and times when I was distant, but I **always** believed He was there, working in my life.

But in 2020, my faith—this unshakable thing I had stood on my entire life—suddenly felt fragile.

The world shut down due to COVID-19. The rhythms of life that once gave me strength were stripped away. Church doors closed. Churches and their leaders caved to government demands. The government became the enemy of the people. They did not allow open and honest discussion. It became the beginning of the censorship industrial complex. I felt like I was in a prison of their making. I am extremely claustrophobic and wearing masks for extended periods was next to impossible. Going in to public spaces without a mask was social suicide as people openly decried that I was trying to kill people. I could not speak and since I refused to take the shot I was extremely limited in my ability to go anywhere.

I knew in my mind that God was still there. But in my heart?

I felt abandoned.

I had never understood how someone could lose their faith. I had always imagined that if I were ever tested, I would stand strong. I thought faith was like a solid rock—immovable, unchanging. But what I failed to realize was that faith is **not** a stagnant thing. It is alive, shifting, growing, and sometimes trembling beneath the weight of life's burdens.

It reminded me of a child learning to ride a bike. At first, the child is confident, pedaling forward with the comforting knowledge that their parent is right behind them, holding on. But at some point, they look back and realize—**no one is there**. Their heart races. Panic sets in. The world suddenly feels unstable beneath them.

This is how I felt during that time. I had been pedaling forward in my faith, trusting that God was holding on. And then I looked back. And I couldn't see Him. I was afraid. I was frustrated. I was **angry**. How could He let go?

When Faith Feels Like a Lie

I had always thought that people only shared their testimony at church when they had something uplifting to say—when they had overcome, when the miracle had arrived, when the prayers had been answered. So when I heard someone stand up one day and say, **“I would like to bear my testimony, but I don't have one right now”**, I was stunned. I had never heard anyone say that before.

But instead of judgment, the room was filled with an unspoken understanding. Heads nodded. People murmured their agreement. Sometimes our testimonies are too far distant to see in the moment.

Faith isn't always pretty. It is raw. It is messy. Sometimes, it is nothing more than **choosing to hang on** when everything inside of you wants to let go.

If I had written this book fifteen years ago, I might have painted a picture of faith as a straight road leading to a glorious, happy ending. I would have focused on the miracles, the answered prayers, the divine interventions.

But now, I know the truth. Faith is a **journey**, not a destination. It is full of twists, setbacks, and moments of utter despair. And sometimes, you have to keep riding the bike **even when you feel abandoned**.



Reflection:

How have you navigated your journey of faith?

Chapter 17:

The Language of the Lord

God speaks to us. I know this to be true. But what I've learned is that **His language is not always easy to understand**. It is like translating a foreign dialect. We might recognize the words, but without the right cultural context, we can completely misinterpret their meaning. I have seen this happen in my own life more times than I can count.

A Whisper in the Darkness

I remember a time, years ago, when I was drowning under the weight of my circumstances. Every time I thought I saw hope, another wave would crash over me, dragging me back down. I prayed—**begged**—for relief. One night, as I sat alone, exhausted and broken, I felt something shift in the air around me. A warmth settled over me, and though I could not see them, I knew—**angels were there**. I felt them wrap around me like a blanket, whispering the words my weary soul longed to hear: *“Everything will be okay.”* Peace flooded my heart.

God had spoken.

But here's where I got it wrong— I assumed okay meant my circumstances would change. I believed the trials would lift, that relief would come soon. But that's not what God meant. He hadn't promised to take the burden away. He had promised to give me the strength to carry it.

Lost in Translation

Years later, I had another moment of deep inspiration. I was driving alone through Yellowstone, taking in the vastness of the mountains and the stillness of the wilderness. It was a Sunday afternoon, and as I pulled into a small camping area, something **shifted**. I got out of my vehicle and took my brown bag lunch to the picnic table and sat down.

I felt it before I heard it. The air around me felt thinner, as if the veil between heaven and earth was **paper-thin**. And then the words came. *“Your life is about to change drastically... and soon.”* I sat there, stunned. I was excited but skeptical. Change could mean many different things. Life to this point had been beyond hard. But despite it being hard, it had been good, and the Lord had helped me navigate the many challenges.

Finally, **finally**, things were about to get better.

I was sure of it.

God’s “Soon” vs. My “Soon”

I returned home, full of anticipation. I was waiting for the **breakthrough**, the **miracle**, the **rescue**. Instead? Doors slammed shut. Opportunities disappeared. Finances crumbled. The weight on my shoulders grew **heavier**, not lighter. I couldn’t understand.

Hadn’t God just told me that change was coming? Hadn’t He said things would get better soon? And then I realized—**God’s “soon” and my “soon” were not the same thing.**

When the Bible says that “a thousand years is like a day” to the Lord, it suddenly made sense. What felt like an eternity to me was merely a blink to Him. He hadn’t **misled me**.

He had simply been speaking **His language**. And I had misinterpreted it.

The Death That Wasn’t a Death

When my current husband and I were told we were supposed to get married, we both received a strange impression: *“You (me) will die shortly after the wedding.”* It wasn’t a warning. It wasn’t frightening. It just **was**. And so, we got married—half-expecting that my time on this earth would be short. But I didn’t die. At least, not in the way I expected.

Instead, **a part of me died**—the part that had been running on empty for years. My body **shut down**. The years of stress, trauma, and exhaustion finally **caught up to me**. And for the first time in my life, I had no choice but to **stop**.

I spent months in bed, healing—physically, emotionally, spiritually. I had misunderstood what God was telling me. But **His words had still been true**.

I have come to appreciate this myth:

The eagle has the longest lifespan among birds. It can live up to 70 years. But to reach this age, the eagle must make a hard decision.

In its 40's, its long and flexible talons can no longer grab prey which serves as food. Its long and sharp beak becomes bent. Its old-aged and heavy wings, due to their thick feathers, become stuck to its chest and make it difficult to fly.

Then the eagle is left with only two options: die, or go through a painful process of change which lasts 150 days. The process requires that the eagle fly to a mountaintop and sit on its nest. There the eagle knocks its beak against a rock until it plucks it out. Afterward, the eagle will wait for a new beak to grow back, and then it will pluck out its talons. When its new talons grow back, the eagle starts plucking its old-aged feathers out. And after five months, the eagle takes its famous flight of rebirth and lives for 30 more years.

We sometimes need to get rid of old memories, habits and other past traditions. Only freed from past burdens, can we take advantage of the present.¹

Understanding the Language of God

Faith is messy. It doesn't always make sense. And sometimes, when God speaks, we assume we know what He means—only to find out later that we had it all wrong.

But one thing I do know? **God always follows through.** Even when we don't understand. Even when His "soon" feels like an eternity. Even when we think He has let go of the bike.

He is still there. Always.

¹ Suzie Gilbert. June 19, 2015. *The Eagle's Rebirth, Yep, Seriously. 10,000 Birds.* "Birds"
<https://www.10000birds.com/the-eagles-rebirth-yep-seriously.htm>



Reflection:

Think of time where you clearly heard the Lord speaking, but maybe you misinterpreted the message? Because we are all fallible humans, we might not be understanding the message in the language the Lord is speaking. How did you resolve this issue?

Chapter 18: Twelve Stones

The Old Testament is filled with stories of struggle and redemption, of battles fought and won, of people who walked through impossible circumstances only to emerge on the other side with a deeper faith. But among those stories, one in particular has always stayed with me—the story of Joshua and the twelve stones.

After years of wandering the wilderness, the Israelites finally stood at the edge of the Promised Land. But between them and their future was the Jordan River, overflowing its banks, wild and impassable. Crossing it was impossible.

Unless, of course, **God made a way**. And He did.

At His command, the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stepped into the raging waters, and the river stopped flowing. The people crossed on dry ground, just as their ancestors had crossed the Red Sea decades before. But this time, God gave them an instruction:

“Take twelve stones from the middle of the river—one for each tribe—and build a memorial. So that when your children ask, ‘What do these stones mean?’ you will tell them what the Lord has done.”

I have always loved this story, not just because of the miracle, but because of **the remembering**.

Because faith is built on remembrance.

Each of us has moments in our lives that define our faith—our own **Jordan River crossings**—times when God has shown up in undeniable ways. And just like Joshua's stones, we need to **mark them**.

I have had many of these moments, times when my belief was tested, refined, and strengthened. But if I were to gather my **twelve stones**, these are the moments I would choose—the defining markers of my faith.

Stone #1: The Power of Prayer—Even When the Answer is No

I was young when I first put my faith to the test. I had prayed to make the cheerleading team, and when I saw my name on the list, I believed—**God answers prayers**.

The next year, I chose **not** to pray. I told myself that making the team the first time had been a coincidence, and I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it on my own. I didn't make the team.

That moment might seem trivial, but it taught me something about faith. Faith is not about manipulating outcomes. It's about trusting God **no matter the result**. It was the first time I realized that faith was something to be nurtured—**not only when things go my way but especially when they don't**.

Stone #2: Trusting God's Plan Over My Own

I had dreams of adventure, of flying, of traveling the world. Being a flight attendant felt like **the answer**—the life I had always wanted. But God had other plans.

Motherhood changed everything for me. The moment I held my firstborn in my arms, I knew—**this was what I was meant to do**. I had spent so much time chasing what I thought I wanted, only to realize that God knew me better than I knew myself.

That lesson has stayed with me.

Whenever I am faced with uncertainty, I remind myself: **I can trust Him. He knows me better than I know myself. Because He is my loving Father in Heaven, I can trust Him.**

Stone #3: God Will Provide—Even in the Hardest Times

There were times when I didn't know how we would make it. Money was tight. Bills were piling up. I worked myself to the bone, trying to provide, trying to make ends meet. And yet—**we never went without.**

Neighbors showed up with meals. A friend slipped an envelope with a card and cash into my hand to allow us to move. An unexpected check arrived in the mail **at just the right time**. These were only a small handful of the many miracles I have seen in my life.

God didn't always give me what I wanted, but He always

gave me what I needed.

Stone #4: God's Plan Comes One Piece at a Time

When my dog, Shalom, fell ill, my children and I prayed for her recovery. They even fasted—believing with all their childlike faith that God would heal her. But she died in my arms the day we came home from church at the end of our fast.

My children were devastated. I was devastated. **It felt like God had ignored us.** But then, something strange happened.

For months, my two year old son had been sick with no explanation. Doctor after doctor gave us no answers. He has several hospital stays with high and unexplained fevers that threatened his life. But after Shalom passed, my son's illness **disappeared.**

I can't explain it. But even my pediatrician agreed—whatever was making Shalom sick may have been making my son sick as well. What felt like an unanswered prayer had been the answer all along.

I learned that day that **God does not show us the full picture.** He gives us **pieces**, one at a time, and asks us to **trust Him with the rest.**

Stone #5: When I Couldn't Stand, God Carried Me

The aftermath of my divorce left me shattered. I was physically broken, emotionally drained, financially

devastated. Despite my feeling like the Savior on the cross when He said, “my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He never left me.

He surrounded me with people who cared. He provided in ways I couldn’t explain. He held me up when I couldn’t stand on my own. It was in that season that I learned—**faith isn’t just believing. Sometimes, faith is letting God carry you when you have nothing left to give.**

Stone #6: Learning to Language of the Lord

He had told me, *“Change is coming... soon.”* I hoped “soon” meant **immediately**. But weeks passed. Then months. Then years. It wasn’t until much later that I realized—**God’s timing is not my timing**. And when He says “soon”, it might mean **tomorrow** or it might mean **a decade from now**.

But it always comes.

Stone #7: When God Feels Silent, He Is Still There

There were times during my divorce when I begged for answers. And all I got was **silence**. I felt abandoned. Lost. Forgotten. But looking back, I see now—**He was there all along**.

Even in the silence, He was working.

Stone #8: When God Asks You to Do Something Crazy, Trust Him

Marrying my current husband made **no sense** on paper. I was older. I had children. He had never been married. It defied every expectation. But God asked. And we obeyed.

And it was the **best decision I ever made**.

Stone #9: God's Plans Are Eternal, Not Just Earthly

For years, I thought I would never be sealed in the temple to my current husband. But I trusted that **God would make it right—whether in this life or the next**.

And then, at just the right time, He opened the door because of my prayers and the prayers of another sweet angel in my Sunday School class that day.

Stone #10: We Are Never Alone

When my youngest son was struggling during his early teen years, we made the difficult choice to send him to a wilderness program. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done. We did not have the money to send him but during this time their father had died and there was insurance money available to the kids. His siblings gave up a significant part of their inheritance to pay for his stay. It was a crucible for both him and me.

But God was with him. And He was with us. We both feel that this time in his life turned him around, although not immediately, but in the long term.

Stone #11: Faith Is a Journey—Not a Destination

The pandemic tested me in ways I never expected. It stripped away my sense of control. It shook my faith. It left me searching for solid ground. But I learned—faith is not about **never wavering**. Faith is about **clinging to God, even when everything feels uncertain**.

Stone #12: There Is Always Hope

In my lowest moments, I have learned this truth: **God is not done**.

No matter how dark the night, morning will come.

No matter how deep the wound, healing will follow.

No matter how broken we feel, **grace is greater**.



What Are Your Stones?

Joshua's twelve stones were a reminder—a monument to what God had done.

What are the stones in your life?

What moments define your faith?

Take time to name them, to mark them, to remember.

Because the same God who parted the Jordan River is still moving waters today.

Chapter 19:

An Upright Soul

There are moments in life when we feel invincible, as if we are standing on solid ground with the favor of heaven shining upon us. We move forward with confidence, believing that as long as we do what is right, life will unfold as it should. I spent much of my life believing this. It was a quiet, unwavering faith—one that carried me through trials, heartaches, and moments of deep uncertainty.

And then, like Job, **the rains and floods came down.**

The Fall from Favor

Job was a man of great faith, a man who walked righteously before the Lord and was blessed beyond measure. He had wealth, land, family, and a life that others envied. And then, in what must have felt like the blink of an eye, it was all gone. Every last thing.

I have often thought about Job as I have watched my own life unravel in ways I never expected. Though I could never compare my suffering to his, I understand the disorientation of loss—the feeling of standing in the wreckage of a life you once recognized, wondering how it all slipped away.

I once had stability. I grew up in a home where I never wanted for anything. I had dreams, and I pursued them.

I was blessed with talents and opportunities.

But then, one by one, **the losses came.**

I lost homes. I lost financial security. I lost savings. Each time I thought I had built something lasting, the storm would come again, tearing it from my hands. It didn't matter how hard I worked. No matter how much effort I put into rebuilding, something would come along—fraud, recession, bad investments, failed businesses—and suddenly, I would be starting over yet again.

It wasn't just money. I lost relationships. I lost the dreams I had for myself and my children, watching them take paths I never would have chosen for them. I lost trust in the people I once thought would always stand by my side.

I even began to lose pieces of **myself**. The trauma of my past refused to loosen its grip. The scars of my first marriage, the relentless battles to survive, the constant state of **fight or flight**—they buried themselves deep into my psyche, wrapping around my thoughts like vines. PTSD, they told me. **Trauma responses.** My body and mind were reacting to things that had long since passed, but to me, they were still real, still immediate, still suffocating.

There was a time when I felt like I had been **thrown into a pit**, left to claw my way out only to be kicked back in. I did not even want to look up.

It was safer down there.

The Voice That Whispers, “Curse God and Die”

I have never said the words out loud. But I have felt them.

I have felt them in the depths of my exhaustion, when the weight of my life pressed down so hard that I couldn't breathe.

I have felt them in the quiet moments, when I wondered if it would be easier to simply slip away—to let go of the fight and sink into nothingness.

I have felt them in the questions that haunt me: If God is good, why does He let me suffer? If He loves me, why does He keep stripping things away?

Job's wife, in her grief and despair, looked at him sitting in the ashes of his former life and asked, **“Why do you hold on? Curse God and die.”**

I understand her now more than I ever did before.

And yet—I **hold on.**

Not because I have all the answers. Not because I have an unshakable certainty that everything will get better tomorrow. But because, like Job, I know that **even when I do not see Him, God is still there.**

And I still believe in resurrection.

The Choice to Rise Again

I have a choice. I can let the pain swallow me whole, or I can allow it to transform me.

The myth of the eagle, in the middle of its life, must make a painful decision. Its beak becomes too bent to catch prey, its talons too dull to grip, its wings too heavy with old feathers to fly. And so, if it wants to live, it must **break itself**.

The eagle flies to the mountains, beats its beak against the rock until it shatters, waits for it to regrow, then pulls out each of its talons, waiting once again for renewal. Finally, it plucks its old, heavy feathers one by one until it can once again soar.

It is excruciating. But it is the only way to **keep living in faith**.

Redefining Identity

In this world, we are obsessed with labels.

We define ourselves by our careers, our marriages, our accomplishments. We check boxes—single, married, divorced, employed, unemployed, mother, father, student. We use these things to build our identity, to give ourselves a sense of worth.

And yet, **none of those things last**.

I have had titles stripped from me. Wife. Business owner.

Financially stable. I have watched as things I built with my own hands disappeared, as relationships I treasured unraveled.

And it has forced me to ask—**who am I when everything is gone?**

Who am I when I have nothing left to give?

The answer, I have come to realize, is this: **I am His.**

I am not defined by what I have or what I lose. I am not the sum of my successes or my failures. **I belong to a God who does not measure me by earthly standards.**

I may not understand why I have walked this road, why safety and security has been removed from my lifetime and time again. But I do know this:

I will not curse God and die.

I will break. I will bleed. I will wrestle.

And I will **rise.**

The One Thing That Will Satisfy

I have spent much of my life reaching—grasping at things I thought would bring me peace.

If I could just have financial stability.

If I could just have a happy marriage.

If my children would just walk the path I prayed for them.

But none of those things were ever meant to be **the thing** that fills me.

Solomon, one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in history, had everything a person could ever want. And yet, at the end of his life, he called it all meaningless.

“I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 1:14)

We spend our lives hungering for things that will never satisfy. **But we were made for more.**

We were made for **Him**.

Holding On When You Have Nothing Left

If I could go back and tell my younger self one thing, it would be this:

The storm will come. The earthly things you believe in will fall. You will lose more than you ever imagined you could lose.

But do not let go of Him. Even when you are angry. Even when you do not understand. Even when the silence is deafening.

Because on the other side of this suffering, there is redemption.

There is restoration.

There is resurrection.

BLOCK QUOTE: “If you are seeking fulfillment, purpose, or meaning from this world and from human accomplishments, I have some bad news: you will never find it. There is nothing in the world that will fill the deepest void in your life—not the ultimate car, not the greatest job, not the most beautiful girl or the most handsome guy, not the greatest education, not winning it all on American Idol. There is nothing that can even come close.

King Solomon, one of the wealthiest men who ever lived, had everything he wanted. Yet he went on a binge, trying to satisfy his appetites with the wrong things. He went after passion. He went after possessions. He went after things of beauty and buildings and land. He drank, and he partied. After all of that, here was his conclusion: “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 2:11, NLT).

Have you ever been ravenously hungry and tried to satisfy your appetite with snacking? It just doesn't work. You want a real meal. In the same way, we were created with a God-shaped hole in our lives. We have been created to love God, to know God, and to bear fruit. Everything else is secondary.

Think about it: everything else in life, every other responsibility, no matter how significant, must be ordered behind the central purpose of your existence on earth—knowing, loving, and serving your Creator. Yes, God cares about your career, your marriage, your family, and your ministry. But knowing Him, prioritizing Him, is number one. And when you do, the Bible says you never will be a loser for it.

Jesus said it like this: “Your Heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need” (Matthew 6:32-33, NLT).” – *Greg Laurie, Created to Know Him*²

Where Do You Stand?

I don't know what you have lost. I don't know what storms have beaten against your soul.

But I know this: **God is not finished.**

Hold on. Keep believing. **And do not curse God and die.** Because one day—one glorious day—you will stand, like Job, and say:

“The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21)

Anne-Laure Le Cunff. Confirmation bias: believing what you see, seeing what you believe Ness Labs. Retrieved May 5, 2022. <https://nesslabs.com/confirmation-bias>

James E. Faust. Where Do I Make My Stand? October 2004. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2004/10/where-do-i-make-my-stand?lang=ase>

“Endowment”. Retrieved 6/21/2022. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/endowment?lang=eng>

² *Greg Laurie. Created to Know Him. iDisciple.com. Retrieved July 19, 2022.*

https://www.idisciple.org/post/created-to-know-him-1?_hsmi=219849594&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8i-_wyArtyZjeBNcxT00-rf0dREQP9_eIn4KLgHY0KCRT2AV9_I8Yn1Ozq5m579Uox645WW6jfO2-Gpe7hiakHBuV5rwDHunPorY3eF6yYoInS9YU