



SEAMLESS SOUTHERN

SUMMER 2023

Style!

WITH
SONYAMACDESIGNS

SEAMLESSSOUTHERNSTYLE.COM

FLORIDA ROOMS
FASCINATING
FURNITURE
FRESH GREENS
FINDING FREEDOM
MEET NEW FATHER:
BRENNAN STEELE
FOUNDER OF BREATHEBROTHA



The
good news
sunday show



Chit - Chat
with
sonya mcclough lockridge

Season 9
Sunday July
02 -2023



**WELCOME
SUMMER**





*The stranger did not lodge in the street;
but I opened my doors to the traveller.*

JOB 31:32 KJV



WELCOME

TO OUR SUMMER 2023 ISSUE!

Welcome to the Summer Issue of Seamless Southern Style Magazine with sonyamacdesigns! This jewel of a seasonal magazine has been a dream of mine for many years. As the founder and Chief Creative Officer of Key Word Bible Studies, I am overjoyed to welcome you to the newest publication in our product line up. Our aim here at Seamless Southern Style Magazine is to glorify our heavenly Father in all that we do. And folks, family friends and foes please know, our lives are more than Bible Study. The lifestyle of a believer is full to the rim with homes and gardens, food and fashions, fish and fixing and so much more. We joy to linger in lower case, while living, loving and leading a One And Only Jesus lifestyle in this our one life.

I hope and pray you enjoy perusing this summertime gathering of words and images as much as I have enjoyed the task of making.

SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE
Editor-In-Chief

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Editor's Note

The bridge and the bay to a new America

Only the love of Jesus Christ trumps hate! Our love lacks the wisdom of God and is therefore weak and wobbly! His love builds bridges and overpasses while walking on water and sleeping in sinking ships. His love provides, protects, keeps and shapes his sheep. His loves gathers people to move stones, allows the dead to rise and walk. Only the love of Jesus Christ trumps hate, just ask the blind man, the man with leprosy or the woman with the issue of blood. They were all outcasts! But, when the king of kings and the lord of lords steps into their life, they are healed and some see things they have never seen before. They step into places and places they never dreamed of. And, they sit without the fear of quietly standing alone in worship of the one who hung the moon, placed the stars and sent his one and only sone to save us from our sins. The one and only Jesus in not only the bridge, but he is also the bay to a new America.



Sonya McCollough Lockridge

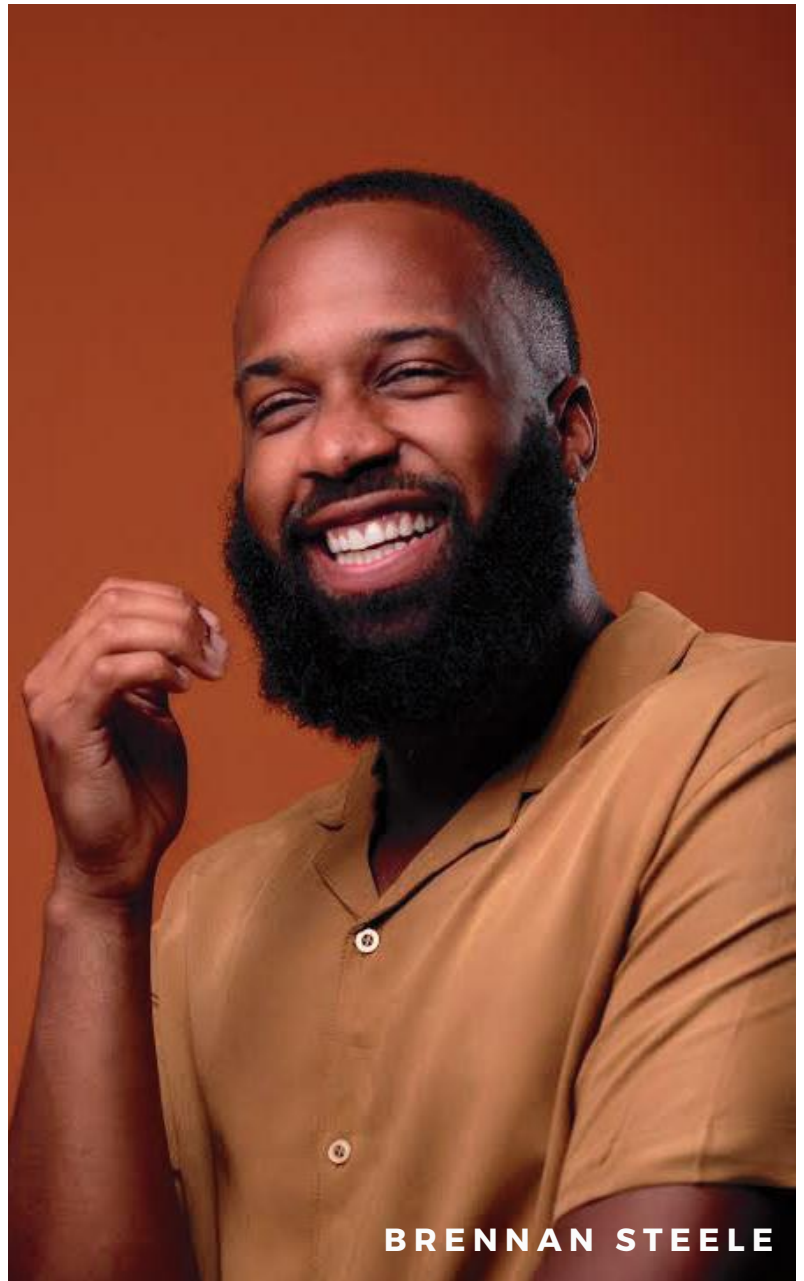
EDITOR IN CHIEF

In This Issue

Meet New Father:

Brennan Steele is a middle school educator and leader in Memphis, TN. In his current role, he serves as the Director of Advancement at BMA, a 4-8 charter middle school. In this role he is responsible for fostering external partnerships, securing philanthropic funds, and developing high school pathways for 8th grade students.

He is also an author passionate about the wholeness, mental health, and catalyzing healing of black men. He published a journal entitled "breathe: a guided healing journal for black men" in August 2020 in the middle of the global pandemic and on the heels of continued murders of black folks. In conjunction, he is the founder of Breathe Brotha, a campaign seeking to promote healing and wholeness for black men. To deepen his impact, Brennan is currently a graduate student at the University of Memphis, working toward a Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. He hopes that upon completion of his degree he is able to provide space for people of color seeking representation in their mental health service provider.



BRENNAN STEELE

Brennan is an alumnus of Duke University. At the culmination of his college tenure, he was the only black male in his class inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, and he graduated summa cum laude with high distinction for his senior thesis. In 2022, Brennan was selected as part of the Memphis Flyer's 20<30, which recognizes young leadership and talent in Memphis, Tennessee.



A Space to Breathe



Brennan Steele



@breathebrotha



@breathejournal



FRESH

FIXINS FOR SUMMER

5 Tips for Baking FRESH BREAD

THIS SUMMER

1

WORDS: STAFF

Please Note: The 5 tips for baking fresh bread this summer are sourced from BREADBYTHEHOUR.COM

Use Cool Water in Your Recipe during the summer: warm water will contribute to a fast-rising loaf.

2

Add a Little More Salt:
during the summer, you may want to consider adding an extra gram or two of salt to slow your yeast's activity and counter the high temperatures in your kitchen





2



3

Reduce Yeast Amount:
during the summer, you
don't have to use all of
the yeast that the recipe
recommends

4

Decrease Fermentation Time: during warmer temperatures consider bread dough at 86 degrees fahrenheit will rise twice as fast as dough at 68 degrees.



5

**Consider Quick Bread Recipes:
If you struggle to bake bread
during the summer**



FRESH GREENS



SEAMLESS SOUTHERN SALADS

WORDS: SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE

Call for less thinking and more making, simply pile on the fresh stuff and eat your way to better. Start with some fresh greens and then pile on whatever fancies your taste buds. I like to pile on some fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, green or red onions and then top it all off with some fresh corn straight off the cob. Then, I finish the pile on with some cheese dressing and avocado. Can, we just say fresh is so yummy.



FRESH TOMATOES

WORDS:SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE

Fresh tomatoes are my late summertime favorite and since, I no longer eat bacon, I've found it greatly necessary to get a little creative in the tomato department. My new favorite way to eat a tomato, other than directly from the vine is baking a fresh tomato pie! Y'all, a good ole fresh tomato pie is a vey tasty thing. Last year, I made mine with a shredded sweet potato crust!



A tall, clear glass filled with vibrant red tomato juice stands on a light-colored wooden cutting board. The board is garnished with fresh ingredients: a whole red tomato, a sprig of green rosemary, and several small white cubes of cheese. To the left, a sliced tomato is visible. The background is dark, making the colors of the food stand out.

FRESH TOMATO *juice*

WORDS: STAFF

Spruce Eats writes: When you have lots of garden fresh tomatoes on hand, turn them into homemade tomato juice that can be frozen or canned. It's a perfect way to preserve tomatoes when they're in season, whether you find them at a reasonable price or because your garden yielded more than you can use right away. With jars of tomato juice ready, you'll be all set when soup season arrives. It can also be thawed for a cold glass of tomato juice.

By doubling or tripling the amounts in this recipe, you can keep a frozen stash in your freezer to use for recipes all year round. The basic juice needs any garden fresh tomatoes you can find plus salt and pepper to enhance the flavor. You can add more seasonings to suit your taste as well. See thespruceeats.com for instructions and the recipe.



**WHERE
WOMEN
WRITE**

WHERE WOMEN WRITE

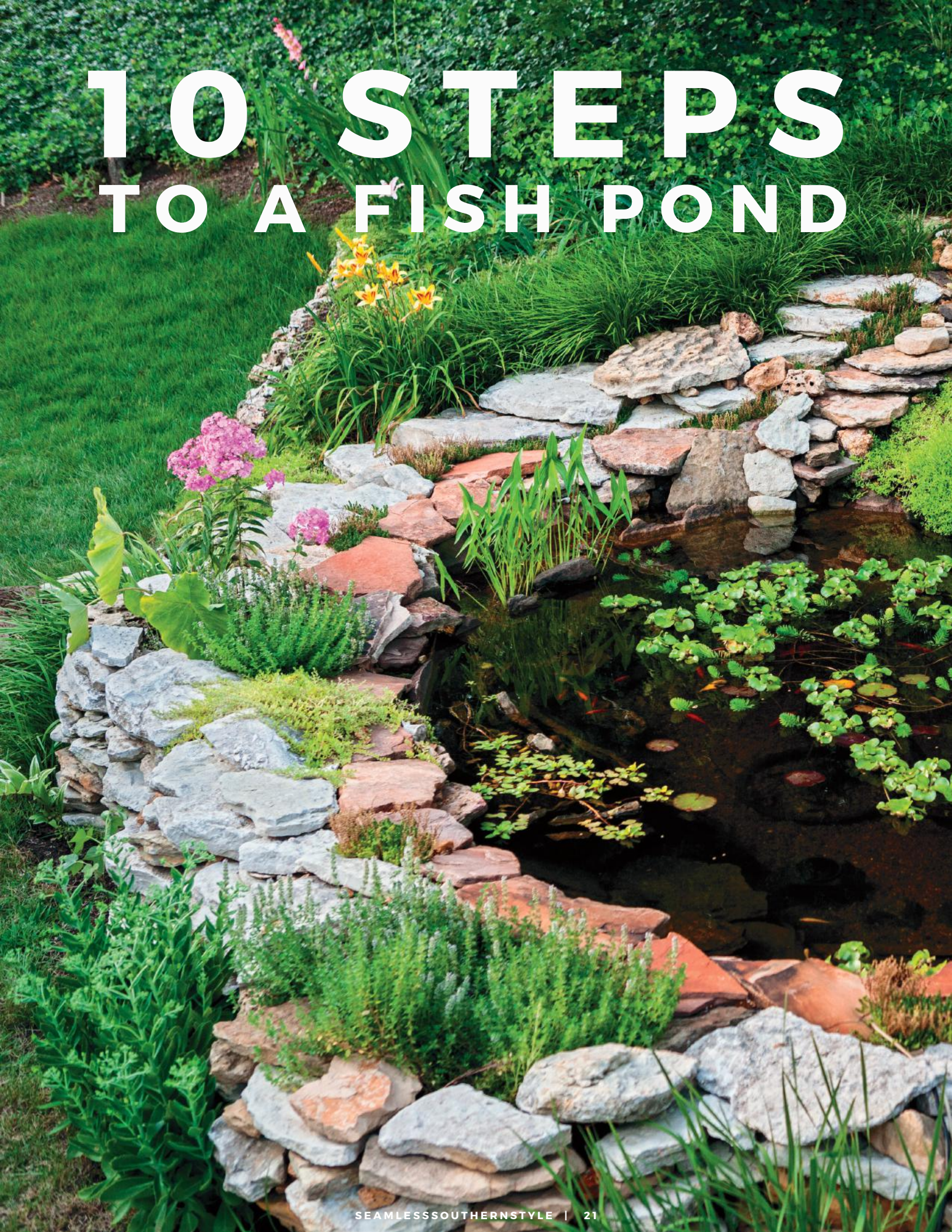
WORDS: SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE



Alan Ziegler writes most writers are self deployed and must provide for themselves a place where to write. In his book *The Writing Workshop*, Alan advises, the most reasonable place to write is at home. He suggests transforming a part of your living space into a writing office by simply creating invisible walls and hanging out a shingle. He is also quick to remind us that Hemingway wrote in a cafe in Paris. Finally, he goes on to say if you live in a major city, you can create a moveable writing feast by simply moving your writing office to the next cafe on any given day.



10 STEPS TO A FISH POND





10 STEPS TO A FISH POND

WORDS: STAFF

A pond is a great additional feature to your backyard or your backyard garden. Backyard ponds provide places to pause and ponder while enjoying the greenery of outside entertainment. Ponds with water features help reduce noticeable noises from the street. Installing a pond in your garden is a mid-level do it yourself project and the basics ten steps are listed below. Find the detailed steps at Fitz's Fish Ponds Online.

- Step 1: Mark Area
- Step 2: Position Skimmer, Waterfall Filter & Pipe
- Step 3: Pond Area Excavation
- Step 4: Skimmer And Pump
- Step 5: Underlayment And Liner
- Step 6: Connect Liner to Skimmer
- Step 7: Add Boulders
- Step 8: Attach Liner To Waterfall Box
- Step 9: Add Plants
- Step 10: Add Waterfall Foam



LIFE MOMENTS WITH LILLIAN



WORDS:
LILLIAN
LOMSDALE

TIK TOK TRENDING

The Diaper Caddy is everything to a new Mom these days. The portable baby organizer is moved around the home, from room to room, as the family settles into their new routine.

Where baby goes, the caddy goes. And most Moms may even own one just for traveling around town and running errands.

#diaperbag, #diapercaddyrestock,
#babynursery, #diapercaddyorganizer

DIAPER CADDY



A WORD ON WICKER

WORDS: SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE

Y'all

I am really watching this wicker trend. I've always been attracted to wicker, I just like all of it's natural beauty. I most definitely would label myself as a snobby wicker fan! At, this point in time I am seriously thinking of starting myself a vintage wicker collection. Since, I'm thinking about collecting vintage wicker, cause y'all already know, I like aged things. I decided to do a deep internet dive on wicker and what I discovered is a wee bit astonishing to me. For one thing, wicker dates back to the times of ancient Egypt! The term "wicker" describes a technique of weaving to create furniture and homewares, dating as far back as 5,000 years ago. Currently, people make use of other malleable plants such as seagrass, and corn husk for natural wicker products. *continued on page:25*



A WORD ON WICKER

WORDS: **SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE**

continued from page:24

I learned from Patio Production or one of my other searches that wicker is also the oldest furniture making method known to history. Wikipedia states archaeologists working on the tombs of the wealthy pharaohs have uncovered a wider variety of wicker items, including "chests, baskets, wig boxes, and chairs! The popularity of wicker passed from ancient Egypt and Persia to ancient Rome! The 19th century brought immense popularity for wicker in Europe, England, and North America. It was used outdoors as well as indoors. People in the Victorian Era believed it to be more sanitary than upholstered furniture. Even though it's costly now, It was inexpensive, resisted harsh weather and was adaptable to many styles.

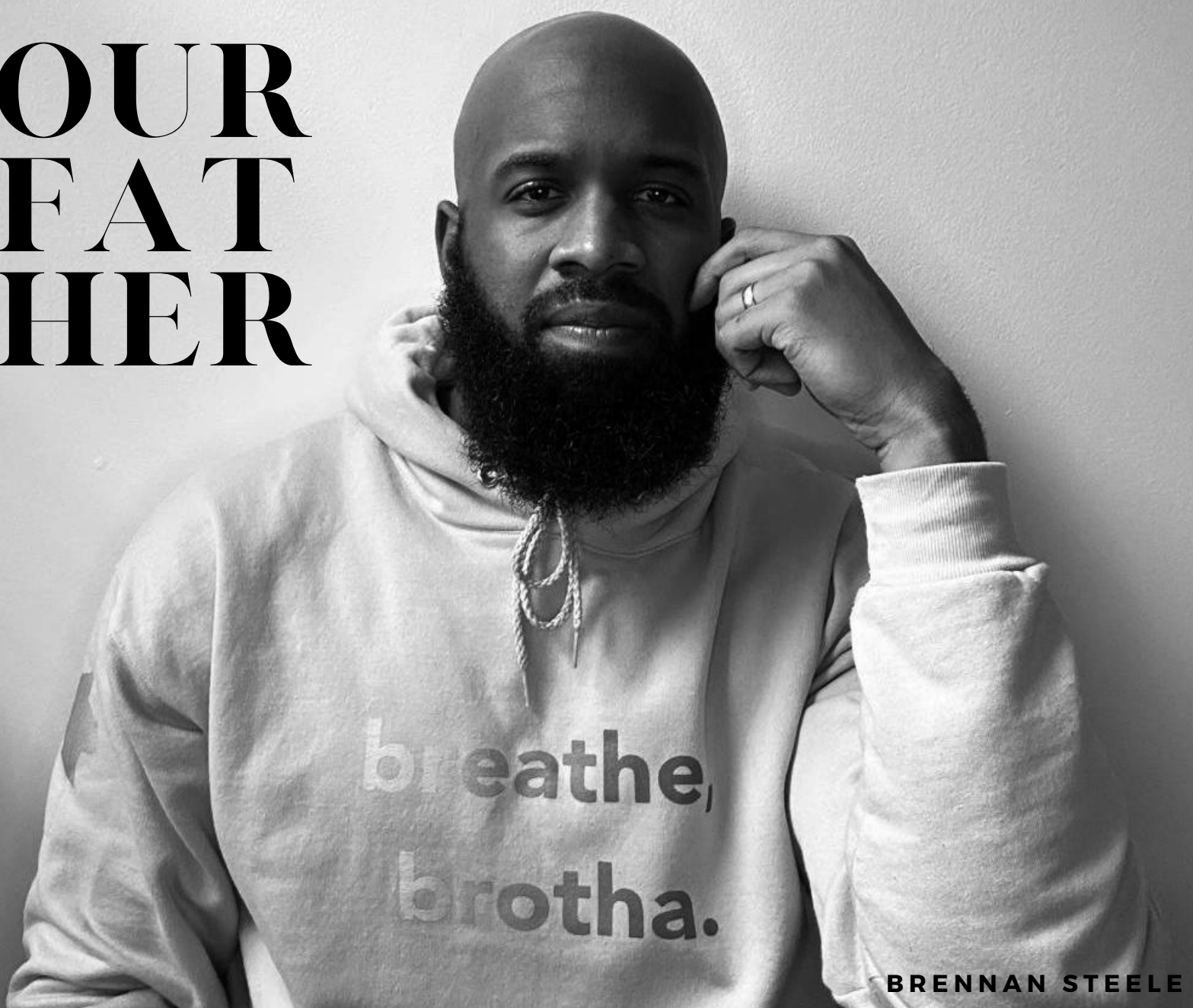
Bob Vila also writes, the first piece of wicker furniture landed in America on the Mayflower in 1620. The item was a wicker baby cradle. Artex Nam-an also states Cyrus Wakefield discovered a large bundle of rattan at a Boston dock after witnessing by products of his in-laws shipping business and immediately started wrapping his furniture in wicker. Artex goes on to state, at the time, wicker was completely new to Early Americans and was fascinating to say the least. Wicker furniture quickly became very popular and the demand for basket and furniture makers grew rapidly. Wakefield was importing shiploads of rattan reeds to meet the growing demand for trendy wicker furniture sets, baskets, and stylish baby carriages. The Wakefield Company became Heywood-Wakefield and stopped making furniture completely in 1979.

While the popularity of wicker furniture began to wane slightly during the 70's, the popularity of wicker remained steady throughout the next few decades.

In recent years, wicker furnishings have become very, very popular and has been featured in many upscale commercial venues and beachside vacation resorts.



OUR FAT HER



Our Father

By Brennan Steele, author of *Breathe Brotha*

When I first found out that my wife was pregnant, I was filled with excitement, joy, and gratitude for the blessing that God gave us. Yet, those feelings were almost immediately hijacked by anxiety, stress, and the pressure I felt to be the perfect father. This is a typical occurrence for me: I experience moments of joy and celebration that are often usurped by perfectionistic expectations and worries I have about the future.

Becoming a father has continued to play out that pattern. I have felt an additional weight as I think about my experience with my father. I didn't always feel that my father was as emotionally present as I needed him to be, even though he was physically there. Moreover, I know the stereotypes that say that black fathers are absent and do not care about the development of their children. Coupled together, I have felt the pressure to give my daughter what I needed from my father and prove the societal tropes of black fatherhood wrong. As someone who holds himself to really high (and unrealistic) standards, this was overwhelming for me.

A couple of weeks ago, though, one of my best friends hosted a "Dadchelor Party" to celebrate this new season in my life, receive wisdom from other fathers in our circle, and cover my journey in prayer. During the time of sharing wisdom, one of my brothers said, "Remember, you are just a stand-in for God. He will be her true Father. How you love and father her should lead her back to Him."

As I reflected, I felt liberated by that statement of truth. My daughter is a gift the Lord has given me to steward, but ultimately, I can trust that He will provide for her. I can find relief from self-inflicted pressure knowing that He is genuinely directing her path. The Lord will never fail her. He will be perfect when I am not. *continued on page:27*

from page:26

This realization also helped confirm what it means to be an Image-Bearer. For folks like me, this identity can cause some anxiety on the surface as it feels that it is another standard we have to hold up. However, there is so much freedom in being an Image Bearer because it is the Lord's power that fills us. I hope that as my daughter sees me, she sees Christ. But the mere fact that I am made in His image guarantees that His grace will be there when I fall short.

Isaiah 64:8 says, "But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand." We bear God's image because He made us. Even though I will be a father, he is still my Father, and will become our Father. I can gratefully rest in this truth, knowing that He is working in and through me as I raise one of His children.



BRENNAN STEELE

HOUSE

& HOME

Florida Room Fundamentals



ALL NEW Florida Room Fundamentals

WORDS: SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE

According to Southern Living Magazine, The Florida room is making a come back! This natural twentieth century idea hit homeowners hard back in the day and it's staging a dramatic come back for the twenty-first century folks and I like it! The Florida room has all the provisions of a porch or patio minus the super pesky little bugs. The number one fundamental of the Florida room is operable oversized panes of glass. Operable windows and doors have greatly advanced since the nineteen seventies, so what better time, then right now for the return of the Florida room. Like, I said before, I'm here for it and below, I've listed five other fundamentals of the twenty-first century Florida room.

1. Live Greenery (plants)
2. Natural Materials (bamboo)
3. Porch like details (lattice)
4. Patterned Ceilings (Wood)
5. Dramatic Lighting (string)



SUMMER PRAYER CALENDAR

Use this Prayer Calendar with The PRESENCE:
THROUGH THE WORD SUMMER 2023 PRAYER
JOURNAL @ KEYWORDBIBLESTUDIES.COM.
Scan the QR code for a no cost download.



2023
06



JUNE

PRAYER CALENDAR

Use this Prayer Calendar with **The PRESENCE: THROUGH THE WORD SUMMER 2023 PRAYER JOURNAL @ KEYWORDBIBLESTUDIES.COM.**
Scan the above QR code for a no cost download.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21 GENESIS 3:8	22 GENESIS 4:16	23 GENESIS 16:12	24 GENESIS 23:11
25 GENESIS 23:18	26 GENESIS 25:18	27 GENESIS 27:30	28 GENESIS 41:46	29 GENESIS 45:3	30 GENESIS 47:15	



WATER SAFETY



WORDS: STAFF

Red Cross: Establish and Enforce Rules and Safe Behaviors

- Do not enter head first unless in a pool that has a safe diving area.
- Stay away from drains and other openings that cause suction.
- Swim with a buddy.
- Only swim when supervised by a water watcher.
- Swim sober.
- Supervise others sober and without distractions, such as reading or talking on or using a cell phone.

2023
07



JULY PRAYER CALENDAR

Use this Prayer Calendar with **The PRESENCE: THROUGH THE WORD SUMMER 2023 PRAYER JOURNAL @ KEYWORDBIBLESTUDIES.COM.**
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SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 EXODUS 10:11
2 EXODUS 33:14	3 EXODUS 33:15	4 EXODUS 35:20	5 LEVITICUS 22:3	6 NUMBERS 20:6	7 DEUTERONOMY 25:9	8 JOSHUA 4:11
9 JOSHUA 8:32	10 1 SAMUEL 18:11	11 1 SAMUEL 19:7	12 1 SAMUEL 19:10	13 1 SAMUEL 21:15	14 2 SAMUEL 16:19	15 2 SAMUEL 24:4
16 1 KINGS 1:28	17 1 KINGS 8:22	18 1 KINGS 12:2	19 1 KINGS 21:13	20 2 KINGS 3:14	21 2 KINGS 5:27	22 2 KINGS 13:23
23 2 KINGS 24:20 2 CHRONICLES 10:2 30	24 2 KINGS 25:19 2 CHRONICLES 20:9 31	25 1 CHRONICLES 16:27	26 1 CHRONICLES 16:33	27 1 CHRONICLES 24:31	28 2 CHRONICLES 6:12	29 2 CHRONICLES 9:23

FIRE WORKS SAFETY

WORDS: STAFF

FIREWORKS are often used to mark special events and holidays. The only safe way to view fireworks is to attend a professional show. It is important to know that fireworks are not safe in the hands of consumers. Fireworks cause thousands of injuries each year.

A few ideas to get into the patriotic spirit, without fireworks:

1. Use glow sticks
2. Noise makers
3. Silly string



2023
08



AUGUST

PRAYER CALENDAR

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SUMMER 2023 PRAYER JOURNAL @ KEYWORDBIBLESTUDIES.COM.
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SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 2 CHRONICLES 34:4	2 NEHEMIAH 2:1	3 ESTHER 1:10	4 ESTHER 8:15	5 JOB 1:12
6 JOB 2:7	7 JOB 23:15	8 PSALM 9:3	9 PSALM 16:11	10 PSALM 17:2	11 PSALM 31:20	12 PSALM 51:11
13 PSALM 68:2	14 PSALM 68:8	15 PSALM 95:2	16 PSALM 97:5	17 PSALM 100:2	18 PSALM 114:7	19 PSALM 116:14
20 PSALM 116:18	21 PSALM 139:7	22 PSALM 140:13	23 PROVERBS 14:7	24 PROVERBS 17:18	25 PROVERBS 25:6	26 PROVERBS 25:7
27 ISAIAH 1:7	28 ISAIAH 19:1	29 ISAIAH 63:9	30 ISAIAH 64:1	31 ISAIAH 64:2		



PREVENTING HEAT RELATED ILLNESS

WORDS: STAFF

Risk Factors Online states preventing heat-related illnesses comes down to mitigating water loss, replacing nutrients, and reducing the amount of work your body has to do to regulate your core temperature. Take the steps below to prevent or treat heat-related illnesses and to protect yourself, your family and pets from extreme heat.

- Drink plenty of water or electrolyte-rich sports drinks to replace water and nutrients lost through sweat.
- Wear light, loose fitting clothing that allows your body to release excess heat and moisture.
- Avoid direct exposure to sunlight by staying in the shade or wearing a hat that provides ample coverage from the sun.
- Reduce the amount of physical activity you perform through labor or exercise.
- Take showers or baths in cool water to keep your body temperature low.
- Stay indoors in air conditioning. If you don't have an air conditioner for your home, find a public place nearby that has air conditioning and go there.
- Put reflective coverings on your windows to reflect sunlight that would otherwise warm your home.
- Don't leave children, pets, or vulnerable individuals unattended in hot cars. Small enclosed spaces like cars heat up faster and at higher temperatures than homes. After just 10 mins, the average in-car temperature in the sun is nearly 20°F higher than the outdoor temperature, which is why leaving children and pets unattended can be fatal.
- Avoid paved areas like parking lots and sidewalks as these surfaces absorb heat and release it very slowly, eventually becoming much hotter than air above. At just 85°F outside, concrete can get to 105°F and asphalt 130°F. Pets and children can easily get burned by paved surfaces on hot days.

riskfactozr.com



HATS: MORE THAN FASHION

WORDS: STAFF

The World Health Organization states a hat with a wide brim offers good sun protection for your eyes, ears, face, and the back or your neck. Tightly woven, loose fitting clothes will also provide additional protection from the sun.



HATS: MORE THAN FASHION



WORDS: STAFF

UPF measures the amount of UV radiation that can penetrate fabric and reach your skin. Sun Protection Factor, or SPF, is based on the time it takes for UV-exposed skin to redden; if you burn after 20 minutes, if used correctly, an SPF 15 sunscreen may protect your skin 15 times longer. Another important distinction: UPF measures both UVB and UVA rays, while SPF measures only UVB.



LEARNING TO LOVE MY FATHER



by Michelle Donice



I stood jet lagged in the hospital's morgue five-thousand miles away from my home. Several weeks prior, I had learned on Facebook—of all places—that my biological father had died. My father had children all over the world, and one had posted a status on Facebook without considering that the rest of us had not yet been notified. After reading the announcement, I logged off the computer and went into the next room to tell my husband, Julian. When I think back on that moment, I remember feeling as if the air had been knocked out of me. I didn't cry then, although I cried later. But at that moment, I felt numb because my father and I were finally beginning to rekindle a relationship that had been turbulent for my entire life.

He hadn't been around in my childhood and did nothing to support my mother and me financially or emotionally. I grew up feeling that if I had somehow been better, he would have been there for us. His absence made me feel unworthy, and I carried that feeling into my adulthood. Society (and family) often reminded me that I was illegitimate. Many years before I was born, an illegitimate child was referred to as a bastard or a base-child and was unable to own property or carry their father's surname. Society looked down on this child born outside of marriage as illegal and against God. Deuteronomy 23:2 even said, "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation..." I felt ashamed!

Although by the time of my birth, the stigma of illegitimacy was not quite as harsh, there were still many who judged me as if I had any choice in the circumstances of my birth. Sadly, I took this feeling of being outside of society's norms with me in every relationship I had. I allowed people, especially men, to treat me as if I were an afterthought or inconvenience, and I failed to take into consideration the redeeming power of God's love.

But as my father had aged, he had tried to make amends. He would call me daily to remind me that he loved me—always had—but life's circumstances, and the choices he made as a young man, had not always allowed him to show me. Each call from him was like a motivational speech. It was as if he knew the damage his absence had caused and wanted to set me on the right course.

There was a story that he often told me. It was about a very violent man who had spent his youth hurting everyone who crossed his path. Late in his life, he met a spiritual man who told him how to find God. It was simple really, there was a path he needed to walk, so the wicked man set off at once. Along the way, he met people and animals who were in need, so he helped them.

The man had been traveling for quite some time when he fell ill. As he was taking his last breaths, the wise man appeared alongside him again, but the man was ashamed because he had not made it to the place of God.

"But you did so much good along the path," the spiritual man said.
"But I failed to get to where I was going."

continued on page: 40

continued from page 39:

Right then, the heavens opened, and God told the wise man to measure the distance between the bad place where the man started to the good place he was going, and when he measured, the formerly wicked man was equal distance between the two. God instructed the wise man to measure again, and when he did, he realized that the bad man had fallen a hand's width closer to the good place, so God opened up heaven and allowed him in, and the spiritual man resumed his travels.

It wasn't until I stood looking down on my father's corpse that I realized he was the formerly wicked man on the road. In that moment, I knew I had done the right thing to forgive him because God already had.

As a child, I longed for my father and would spend countless hours imagining what my life would be like if he were around. My mother and maternal grandparents did their best, but since my father was never mentioned, I grew up thinking that I was half a person somehow. It was as if the only part of me that existed or mattered was my mother's family, and in my childish way, I reasoned that this other part of me—this secretive, unspoken part—the part that my father gave me—was deficient in some way. I reasoned that a portion of me was bad because everyone agreed that he was bad. Because of this, there was a sadness that permeated my childhood because I believed that I was only half good, only half-worthy, only half deserving. All of my friends had fathers, so that confirmed something deep within me that there was something wrong with me, I thought.

I did establish a brief relationship with my father after I graduated from high school when he sent me several one-way tickets to London, England, to visit him. He believed these trips would make up for all of the birthdays and celebrations he missed and the child support payments he failed to make. One of the worst arguments he and I had was about my refusal to remain in England with him after I graduated high school. He wanted to show me his life, but I wanted to live my own. On one visit, I realized that I needed to walk on eggshells around him. His anger with me reinforced the belief that something was wrong with me. If I could do better, be better, I would be loved.

There was one time in particular where we had reservations at his favorite Italian restaurant. The owners were friends of his, and he was happy that I was going to meet his friends and that they were going to meet his daughter. When it was time to order, I had no idea what to ask for, so I requested the familiar spaghetti and meatballs. Little did I know that the food was served family-style, so when the waiter sat a small mountain of spaghetti in front of me with meatballs the size of softballs, I was overwhelmed. When it was obvious that I wouldn't be able to eat it all, my father began to berate me. As he screamed obscenities at me, I forced the food down my throat and wiped away my tears. Every few minutes, I would get up from the table and go into the bathroom to stick my finger down my throat so that I could make room for more of the pasta. I finally finished the meal, but my father was still not satisfied.

I never knew why my father was so angry with me that evening or why he had taken my passport from me the next day. Maybe he did it because he knew that he could, or maybe he saw something wasteful and ungrateful in my attitude. It might even have been that I was not the worldly and sophisticated daughter he wanted.

Over the next twenty years of my life, I lived as if my father didn't exist. Often, he would try to reach out to me, but I would ignore his calls. On the rare occasions when I did speak to him, he would eventually say something hurtful, and I would go months without speaking to him again. After our arguments, he was always apologetic, but the damage was done. I learned the lesson that it was okay if people, especially men, mistreated me. Because of my fractured relationship with my father, I felt illegitimate, unloved, and unworthy. If truth be told, I felt that if I were prettier, taller, thinner, smarter, or somehow better, my father would have loved me and would not have abandoned me. If I were lacking in those areas, how could anyone love me? How could I love myself?

Later in his life, my father learned to love me unconditionally. He learned to watch his words, and he apologized profusely for the unkind things he did throughout my life. He tried so hard to make amends. Yet he died before he could. He had not been sick, and I truly believe had he received prompt and adequate healthcare when he was taken to the hospital, he would still be alive, but none of that mattered as I stood in the morgue and looked down at his corpse.

Me, the illegitimate child of a father who had never loved me the way I needed to be loved. Me, the abandoned child who was told in spoken and unspoken ways that she was not good enough. Me, the child who felt that no one really wanted her was the one God chose to lay him to rest.

But there are no accidents, mistakes, or coincidences in life. Things happen just as they should, and we are exactly where we're supposed to be at any given time, but we have to get still and listen to make sense of it all.

After seeing the Facebook post, I got still and listened to my inner voice, my North Star. What was I to do to make sense of everything? My North Star, my inner knowing, revealed to me that I needed to fly to Accra, West Africa, and claim my father's body from where it had lain for thirty days in the morgue.

Julian, my son, Matthew, and I were jet lagged and exhausted when we arrived at the hospital, and we were annoyed that everyone whom we had spoken to expected a fistful of American dollars before they would share any information with us. *continued on page 41:*

"But there are no accidents, mistakes, or coincidences in life. Things happen just as they should, and we are exactly where we're supposed to be at any given time, but we have to get still and listen to make sense of it all."

continued from page 40:

Finally, the officials rolled my father's body out from the morgue, and there before me was a man who had caused me so much hurt and shame but who had also tried to make peace. Here was a man who had known me my whole life but who never got to know me. With his death, I had lost possibility. It was no longer possible for me to receive the love, protection, and acceptance I had craved so desperately from my father. Things would never be the way I had imagined them to be, and I understood that clearly as I looked down upon his face.

But my North Star whispered, "All is Well," and I understood that my father had earned his final rest, what we call savasana at the end of a yoga class, because his work was done. He had done his best to say he was sorry to me and to other people he had hurt during his life, and deep within the recesses of my heart, I had the power to forgive him completely.

Media mogul Oprah Winfrey has described forgiveness as "giving up the hope that the past could be any different." And that's exactly what I experienced at that moment. I let go of the childhood I wished I'd received and the type of parent I yearned for. I forgave my father for not being what I expected him to be.

I had not realized how much I had formed my image of God to fit the image I had of my father. The God I had created was spiteful and judgmental at times. The god of my imagination was willing to put his selfish desires before the needs of his children. The god I modeled after my earthly father knew how to withhold his love or affection until I performed or behaved in some way.

The God I yearned for was a loving, protective father, unlike what I had experienced in my own life.

The reason I share this is because so many of us have had failed relationships with our earthly fathers, and because of this, we've given these human attributes to our concept of God.

I believe that part of hearing and trusting your North Star is about repairing the relationship you have with God. Further, you must know that nothing you could ever do could separate you from the love of God. Once you know this, truly know it, you'll be unstoppable. There will be no place for fear or worry because you will know that God will provide for you. The Bible clearly says, be anxious for nothing, and that's how you will live because just as the lilies of the field do not worry, neither shall you. (Matthew 6: 25-34).

I would encourage you to search your heart for any forgiveness you may have for your own earthly father, whether living or dead and understand that he did the best he knew how to regardless of whether or not that was what you needed or was in your best interest. Just forgive him and accept the past for what it was. So many people get comfortable in their unforgiveness and move farther and farther from God's love and total acceptance because of it.

If you had a wonderful relationship with your father, give thanks for that and if he's still alive, why not pick up the phone and call him and let him know how much you appreciate all that he's done and thank him for being a godly example of what a father should be. I'm sure he would be happy to hear from you.

If your father wasn't there for you or if he was a negative factor in your life, can you give the situation to God today? Can you let go of the relationship you wished you'd had and accept the one you experienced? Can you find any good at all in the situation? If so, focus on the lesson that experience has taught you. Perhaps it wasn't your father but your mother or caregiver who didn't give you the love you needed. Can you find it in your heart to release the hurt today and give your pain to God?

I could easily have spent the rest of my life lamenting all the ways my father disappointed me, or I could look for the tiny glimmer of good that was there. I chose to look for the good. When I laid my father to rest, I was surrounded by men of faith who had been friends and confidants of my father for over thirty years. I had traveled to Africa to bury one father, and I left having the love of five men who stood in the gap to be my earthly fathers. That was the guidance that came from following my North Star. I listened to that inner voice that told me to travel to Africa to lay my father to rest when it didn't make sense to do so, but when I trusted and followed that inner wisdom, it led me to so much more than I had before. But even more than that, I learned that I was limiting God because of the human attributes I had given God. It was time for me to take God out of the human box I had created.

Learning to Love My Father

by Michelle Donice

An Excerpt from:

Following Your North Star

(Atmosphere Press)



HAPPY FATHER'S DAY



KINGDOM WOMAN: FACE TO FACE

BRENDA DEMONBREUN



KINGDOM WOMAN: FACE TO FACE

Cultural distortions of self and social media have become our life coach swarming in illusions of what our worth and self-confidence should look like. The high value woman and boss chick has burdened our souls to attain healing through a fabricated resemblance of being in control. My concern is who places the value? Where is the root of our self-confidence?

If we place our value on earthly things, well things depreciate. Our value must never be determined by the amount of money, tangible possessions, physical fitness, or the constructed alpha we emulate to feel valued and appreciated. Could it be boss chick is a protective barrier we place before others to alleviate the fear of vulnerability?

Femininity is soft, peaceful, strong yet humble. We are created by the Almighty God perfectly, wonderfully, and fearfully. Even with the fall of man in the Genesis of biblical record we are still loved. Love though desired is also feared because of the broken view of love we have experienced.

Never did I imagine my heart would beat again in the caregiver role of my late Daddy. Rejected and abandoned my life was estranged from his love. Not only his love but love for me. Elbow deep in adult pull-ups, meal prep, and laundry I found the hope in love again. Vulnerability led me to forgiveness and forgiveness led me to love. Love led me to the everlasting. I lived through the shattered image of my value being based on my bank account, clothing labels and the measurements of my waistline. Never again would I be left in the cold by a man! The very thing I battled to never revisit from my childhood is what I served daily.

My value was the price tag on clothing, shoes, and make-up. My inner appraisal was the wall I built to never be hurt again. My boss chick was my anthem of denied pain. That is until I came face to face with the first man I ever loved. Elderly he laid limp in the disparages of his frail body. Though the shimmer of love from his weakened eyes gripped my soul to revisit the wounds of rejection and abandonment.

Our journey's are often filled with wrongs, heartache, and regret but the treasures along the way are gems of hope, forgiveness, and love.

I came to realize my worth was determined on the cross of our Lord Jesus' blood shed for me and every woman (and man) throughout history past, present and future. Self-love is really a self-respect birthed through obedience. Accepting our humanity and need for others. Need not in the murky waters of emotional bondage equating to neediness but the sincere need for others.

Self-confidence is the outpouring of hope I execute in my purpose to fulfill this journey I have been assigned. I can fail and win in self-confidence of who I am as a woman. My silhouette is the etching from a God who knew me before I knew myself. His divine confidence in equipping me to meet every challenge with hope, vigor, and tenacity.

A Kingdom woman is an evolution of the shattered image into the image of the God who knew us before the creation of the world. He formed us, breathed purpose into us. Earthly value fluctuates that is the burden of this earthly high value woman. Boss's fade yet leaders thrive. A Kingdom woman leans on the everlasting love of Lord Jesus. A never-failing unlimited throne of hope.

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FINDING SONYA MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE FREEDOM



FINDING FREEDOM (FERRY TO FREEDOM)

The very first time I tasted freedom I was but a wee child. The very first time I touched freedom, I must have been around four years old. The very first time I stood super still and shook freedom's holy hand is a memory seared in the depths of my soul. In order for me to meet freedom the very first time I had to board a very large boat. This first freedom travel did not find me lonely. This very first freedom travel was a family affair.

You see, it was all six of us. There was Daddy and Momma and my three older siblings, in a car on a boat. One day we were living in a metal box and the very next day a countryside english chalet would be our home.

But first we were required to sit in the car on a boat. I was but a wee child, sitting like a little prisoner in car on a boat.

This boat is actually an unknown Ferry To Freedom. Likely, my Dad and Mom were highly informed of our destination but I was not. For what seemed like an extended eternity the six of us, were all stuck sitting in a car on a boat, which traveled from France to England via The English Channel.

I now know the English Channel is an arm of The Atlantic Ocean that separates Southern England from northern France. I now know The English Channel is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the whole wide world. I now know there are sharks in the waters of The English Channel. But, I also know I first found freedom on the other side. It's interesting to note my initial taste of freedom was found miles outside of an Air Base in the rural farming area of Mildenhall England.

I was but a wee child and the temporary conditional confinement in such vast waters likely felt much like bondage to the all of me! But the truth is The Ferry To Freedom was but twenty-one miles. The very first time I touched or tasted freedom was in the rural farming community of the wildly known Monarchy of the United Kingdom.

After living in the French Trailer and sitting for a few hours in a car on a boat, the English countryside tasted like a feast of freedom. The fields were spacious for free play and daily picnics plus adventures. I touched, tasted and held freedom in the heart of both of my hands.

I was not old enough to know to anything about looking for freedom, but I found freedom in the British Monarchy of Mildenhall England.

Continual conditional confinement in spacious places and spaces taste like daily eating a ball and chain to the all of me!

The nasty truth is conditional confinement in spacious places and spaces causes any type of premeditated or accidental found freedom to taste like an all you can eat free farm to fork freedom feast on any given Friday.



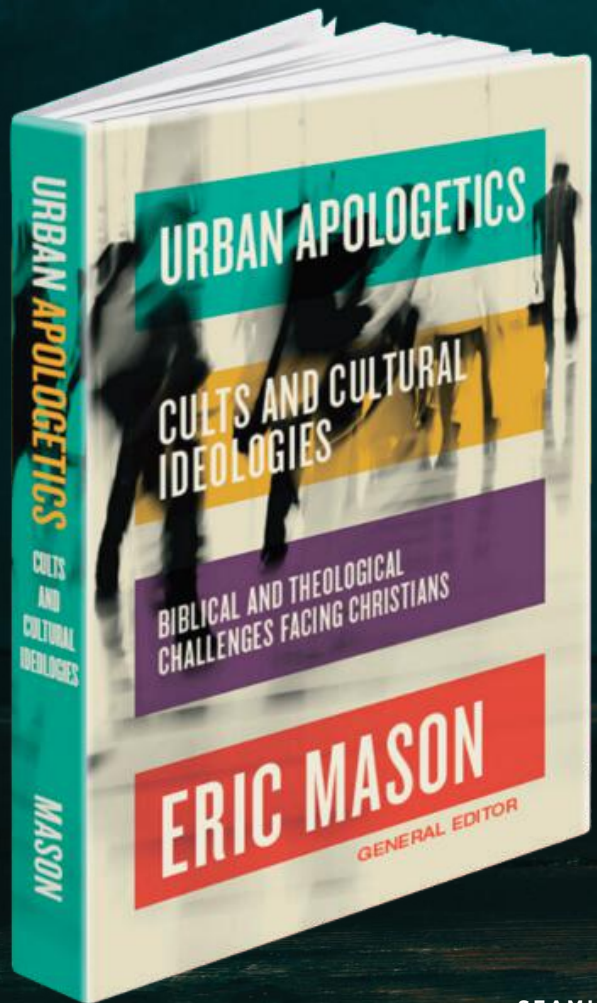
An excerpt from : Finding Freedom
Chapter 2



**SONYA
MCCLLOUGH LOCKRIDGE**

SUMMER SALON READING STACK

OUR SUMMER 2023 BOOK CLUB PICK





Full Page 7.5 x 10	1/2 Page Horizontal 7.5 x 5	1/2 Page Vertical 3-1/4 x 10
1/3 Page Vertical 2-3/8 x 10	1/3 Page 4-5/8 x 5	1/3 Page Horizontal 7.5 x 3-3/8
1/4 Page 3-1/4 x 4-7/8	1/4 Page Vertical 2 x 10	1/4 Page 7-1/2 x 2.5



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understand your emotion
and **breathe**, brother.



Brennan Steele is a believer, educator, and currently residing in Memphis, TN. Through process of healing, he has become passionate at mental and emotional health of black boys and



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