

UNVEILED LIVING MAGAZINE | VOL. 14 | SUMMER 2025

# BEAUTY IN THE BREAK

DIGITAL EMAG

FINDING GOD  
IN THE BARREN  
PLACES





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# Unveiled Living Magazine

CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

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# Letter from the *Editor*



*God doesn't just  
restore what  
we've lost, He  
brings new  
things out of  
the break.*

Maybe you didn't choose the breaking.

Maybe the wilderness season came without warning  
—dry ground, hard days, quiet prayers.

But look at you now.

Still here.

Still standing.

Still reaching for beauty, even when you weren't sure  
it was possible.

As I pulled together the stories for this edition, I  
couldn't help but reflect on how much of my own life  
has been shaped not just by the good seasons, but  
by the ones that felt barren. The ones that left me  
asking, "God, is anything growing here?"  
And yet, He always surprises me.



God doesn't just restore what we've lost—He brings new things out of the break. Things we didn't even know to pray for. And if you've lived through a season like that, then you know:

Some of the richest things in us are formed right there in the middle of the breaking.

"The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom." Isaiah 35:1 (NIV)

That's what this issue is about.

Not just the dry places. But what starts to grow from them.

Joy. Wisdom. Peace. Strength.

Not overnight—but steadily. Deeply. Faithfully.

This is what grows here.

And friend?

You're growing too.

Thanks for opening this issue. I pray every word waters something in you.

*Tracee Padilla*  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



An artistic illustration of two women walking down a city street in autumn. They are wearing long, light-colored trench coats and dark pants. Their hair is blowing in the wind. The background shows trees with yellow and orange leaves, and a building on the right. The overall mood is warm and contemplative.

# CHASING FREEDOM

LET GO  
AND LET GOD

UNVEILED LIVING MAGAZINE | VOL. 15 | FALL 2025



# Behind the Veil

WHAT'S NEW + WHAT'S COMING AT UNVEILED LIVING



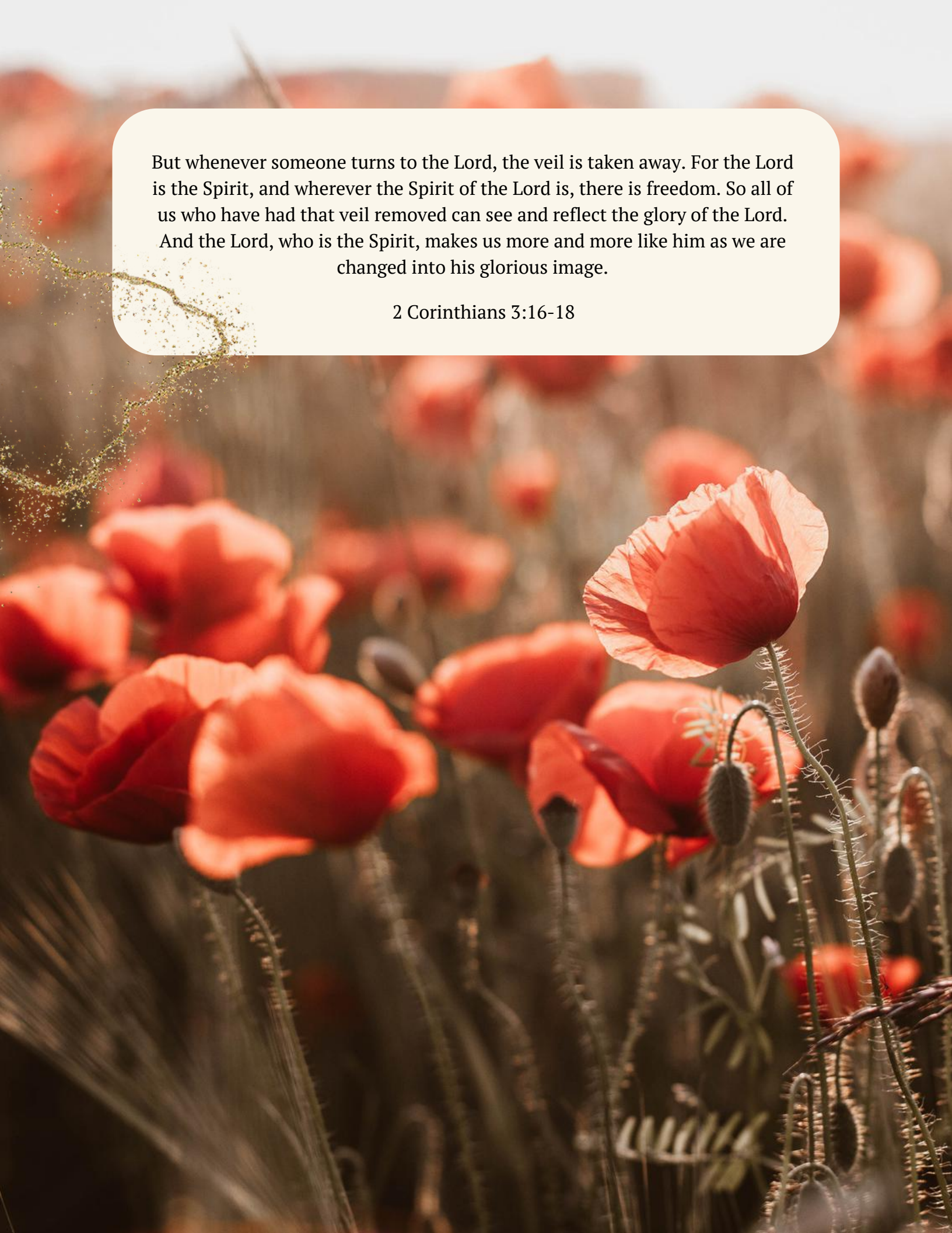
*A look at what's unfolding inside Unveiled Living—fresh vision, soul-deep resources, and the heart behind it all.*

**BIBLE STUDIES**

**HEART TALK**

**UNFILTERED FAITH**



A close-up photograph of a field of red poppies. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a soft-focus field of more poppies. A white, rounded rectangular text box is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image. The text is in a black, sans-serif font. The overall lighting is warm and golden, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting. There is a subtle, sparkling light effect on the left side of the image, near the text box.

But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord, who is the Spirit, makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18



# Why We Do What We Do

Whether you've been with us since the beginning or just found your way here, we want you to know something from the get-go:

If we were sitting across from you right now, we'd pour the coffee, slide over a journal, and remind you—Jesus sees you. He hasn't forgotten you. And He's not done writing your story.

Unveiled Living is growing into more than a ministry—it's becoming a go-to space for soul-deep Bible studies, truth-soaked devotionals, faith-building books, and our quarterly digital and print magazine. It's also where real conversations happen—Heart Talk moments that strengthen your walk with Jesus and remind you that you're not alone.

We're here to meet you right in the middle of real life—with honesty, hope, and the kind of truth that helps you breathe again, dig deep into the Word, and remember who you are in Him.

Wherever you're coming from, whatever season you're in—there's room for you here.



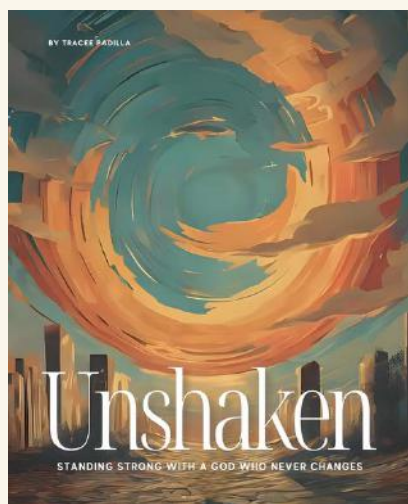


# Bible Studies

Where soul-deep truth meets real-life faith

Our Bible studies aren't just something to read—they're something to live. Each one is designed to meet you right where you are and lead you deeper into God's Word with purpose, reflection, and real-life application.

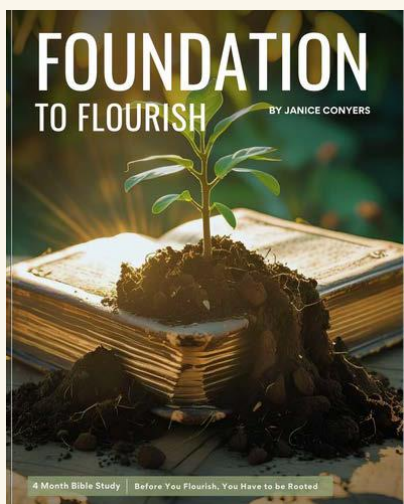
Whether you're studying on your own, with a group, or leading others through it, these studies are built to strengthen your foundation, anchor your heart, and help you flourish in every season of faith.



## UNSHAKEN

Standing Strong with a God Who Never Changes.

When everything around you feels unstable or out of control, Unshaken is a 4-week Bible study that will help you stand firm in a shifting world. Through weekly teachings and daily devotional-style readings, you'll discover how to anchor your life in the unchanging character of God—so you're no longer tossed by emotions, headlines, or hard seasons. This is your invitation to live steady, unshaken, and confident in who He is—no matter what comes your way.

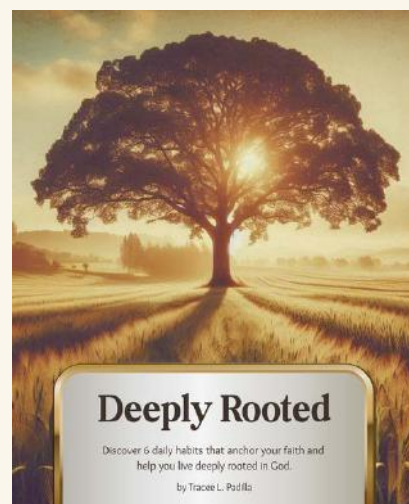


## FOUNDATION TO FLOURISH

A 16-Week Journey to Build What Lasts

This isn't a quick fix or a feel-good devotional—it's a deep dive into what it takes to build your faith from the ground up. Foundation to Flourish is your guide through 16 core areas of spiritual growth, helping you clear out what's been holding you back and lay the kind of groundwork that leads to real, lasting change. Think of it as blueprints for a stronger, braver, more aligned walk with God.

Leader's Packet Coming Fall '25.



## DEEPLY ROOTED

A 6-Week Study to Anchor Your Faith in Everyday Life

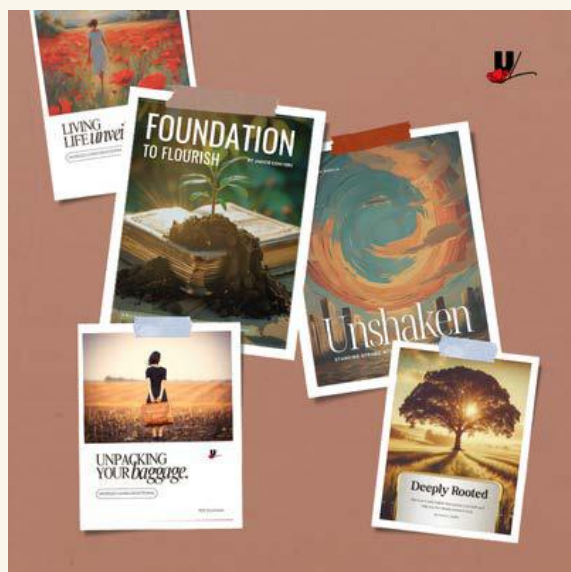
Finding cracks in your foundation?

When life gets loud and unpredictable, your faith doesn't have to crumble. Deeply Rooted is a 6-week Bible study that helps you build steady, daily habits with God—truths that hold up when life doesn't. Each week offers one powerful anchor to keep you grounded, no matter what comes your way.

Leader's Packet Available.



# New Website



## MORE THAN A NEW LOOK

We've been dreaming, designing, and building—and now it's finally here!

The brand-new Unveiled Living website is live and ready to explore and we believe you're going to love it!

But this isn't just a visual makeover. It's a whole new experience. We've created a space that's easier to navigate, full of soul-deep resources, and built with you in mind—from your very first click.

### What You'll Find:

- Bible Studies: All our print + digital studies in one easy-to-browse space
- Devotionals + Downloads: Quick access to truth-based encouragement, Scripture cards, and faith tools
- Free Devo every single month!
- Heart Talk Podcast: Listen in and catch all our episodes directly from the site
- Pursue Worship: Engage with music and content created to stir authentic worship and deeper connection with God
- Magazine Archive: Read past Emag editions and checkout our new ones
- Unveiled Connect: Sign up for exclusive downloads, email updates, early access, and weekly encouragement
- Fresh Start Design: Clean layout, better flow, and mobile-friendly too (yes, we heard you )

This space was created to help you go deeper, not just scroll further.

Come explore. Come reset. Come and build a deeper rooted life with Jesus living in the freedom He gave us.

👉 Visit [unveiledliving.org](http://unveiledliving.org) and take a look around—we can't wait for you to see it.

# Devotionals



## UNPACKING YOUR *baggage.*



UNVEILED LIVING DEVOTIONAL

[PDF Download](#)



## LIVING LIFE *unveiled.*



UNVEILED LIVING DEVOTIONAL

From our hearts to yours—our devotionals are 1-5 day PDF downloads full of real stories, steady truth from God's word, and reminders you're not alone.

Around here, we don't write from a stage—we write from the middle of life. From moments we've walked through. Questions we've wrestled with. Things God is still gently working out in us.

These devotionals come from that place—real, unfiltered, and rooted in His Word.

Sometimes they show up like a quiet whisper.  
Sometimes like a needed reminder.  
But always with the prayer that they'll meet you exactly where you are.

Whether you're starting your day with Scripture, resetting your mindset midweek, or just need a breath of truth to carry into whatever's next—we hope these words remind you of who God is... and who you are in Him.



## IN OVER MY HEAD BUT NOT OVER HIS *reach.*



UNVEILED LIVING DEVOTIONAL

[PDF Download](#)

# Heart Talk & Pursue

Words to steady you. Worship to stir you.

Not everything we create at Unveiled Living is meant to be read. Some of it is meant to be heard. To be sung. To be carried with you as a steady rhythm for your spirit.

## Heart Talk Podcast

Our Heart Talk Podcast are unfiltered conversations for your everyday walk with God.

Sharing real-life stories where we unpack faith, identity, and the things most of us are wrestling through but rarely say out loud. Expect truth, Scripture, a little laughter, and a whole lot of Jesus.

Whether you're driving, doing dishes, or just need to hear something steady in your ears—there's space for you here.

New episodes return Fall 2025

Listen at [unveiledliving.org/hearttalk](https://unveiledliving.org/hearttalk) or our Youtube Channel @unveiledliving

## Pursue Worship

Original worship born from quiet places—and meant to draw you deeper

Worship has always been part of our heartbeat.

Pursue Worship is where we share songs, moments, and melodies created in hidden places—designed to help you connect more deeply with the presence of God.





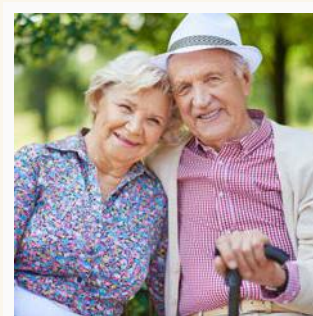
# Unfiltered Faith

Where real life meets raw faith.

This is where the polished words come off and the honest ones begin.

Unfiltered Faith is Tracee's personal blog space—part devotional, part journal, part “me too” moment—where she shares the real walk, the wrestle, and the goodness of God in the middle of it all. And yes, you'll be sure to laugh as well!

If you've ever thought, “Is it just me?”—this is where you'll find out you're not alone. You'll find stories you relate to, scriptures that steady you, and weekly reminders that God is in the thick of it, even when it's messy. Subscribe on her substack page today.



# Our Team



**TRACEE PADILLA**  
*Founder*

Tracee is the founder and visionary behind Unveiled Living, passionate about empowering others to walk in the true freedom God has called us to. Her greatest desire is to shine the light of Jesus to as many as possible. She has dedicated her life to ministry, from growing up as a missionary kid in Spain to roles in Youth Ministry, Worship Leading, and as Girls Ministry Director. Her greatest joys are her husband, Edwin, their three adult children, five grandchildren, her bundles of joy, and of course, Mr. Kiko the cat. She is currently the Assistant Worship Pastor at Beach Assembly in Ocean Isle Beach, NC.



**EDWIN PADILLA**  
*Video Production*

Edwin, the husband of Tracee, is an Emmy Award winning videographer, having worked in the Media Industry for the past 25 years doing videography production for CBN (Christian Broadcasting Network, Joyce Meyer Ministries, and PBS). Check out his work at [www.britelightmedia.com](http://www.britelightmedia.com)



**JANICE CONYERS**  
*Connections Manager*

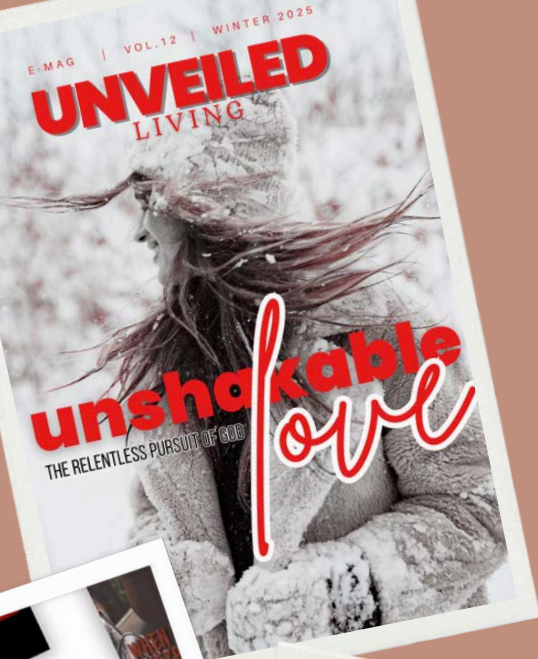
Janice resides in New Hampshire with her husband, William, and their dog Mia. They're both ordained and on staff at Tower Hill Church. She has an eclectic background that includes expatriation in Japan, and reflects her diverse interests, skills, and experiences, including serving as the Connections Manager with Unveiled Living.

In addition to being an office and event manager with 20+ years' experience, Janice is a writer currently working on getting her first book published. Follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). She is passionate about furthering God's kingdom by creating meaningful experiences and inspiring readers with engaging and informative content.



We'd love to stay connected with you. Subscribe on our website to receive our weekly Unveiled Connect. Stay connected and inspired!





# EMAG 2025

*This Year!*

Every quarter we are empowering women to live life unveiled in the freedom that God has called us to live.



[www.unveiledliving.org](http://www.unveiledliving.org)



# Coming 2026

## The Joy Revolution Conference



### Hosted by Unveiled Living & Beach Assembly Church

In a world where joy feels hard to find, we're not waiting for it to show up—we're starting a revolution.

Not a hype movement. A Holy Spirit revival of strength, joy, and freedom. Because the joy of the Lord is our strength—and it's time to get that back.

Join us for a powerful 2-day experience where we'll gather to worship, grow, laugh, cry, and remember what's true. This isn't about pretending everything's fine. It's about learning how to live unshaken, unveiled, and anchored in joy that doesn't break when life does.

Be the first to know at [unveiledliving.org/conference](https://unveiledliving.org/conference)

This is your invitation to come back to the source of true joy—Jesus Himself. The kind of joy that strengthens, sustains, and sets your heart free.

**June 12-13, 2026**

**Beach Assembly**

**Ocean Isle Beach, NC**

**Registration Opens Fall**



# JOY REVOLUTION


*Conference*



COMING: JUNE 2026

Beach Assembly Church - Ocean Isle Beach, NC





# WHY, GOD, WHY?

BY MARGARITA BECK





**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its water roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.**

Psalms 46:103 NASB

It had been a difficult pregnancy. I was too young to recognize the danger signals that had been flashing for several months. Somehow I thought that being pregnant was synonymous with being sick. The doctor could tell that I was getting very large very fast, but he just kept remarking, "You must be eating like a horse!"

On Thursday I went for a regular checkup. The doctor reprimanded me again for gaining too much weight. In six months I had gained 24 pounds. As I was about to leave his office, the doctor decided to check my blood pressure again.



It was too high. He ordered me to bed, but it was too late for precautions. Less than 24 hours later I went into labor. Over the phone the doctor encouraged me not to fret about an early delivery. As large as my abdomen was, the baby certainly would be big enough to survive.

At the hospital, after 14 hours of labor at home, I got on the bed as the nurse instructed me and she began a listening session over my protruding abdomen. Finally she said, "You're going to have twins!" Twins. I could hardly believe it. I was so miserable by that time, though, that I couldn't concentrate on what that would mean for us.

There was a lot of confusion in my room then, too. Nurses in and out. Mother caught part of one conversation. "She has toxemia." That didn't tell my Mom anything. All she knew was that for the next ten hours I was delirious and getting worse as the hours went by.

Mom tried to reassure me all the while. Over and over she told me that God was with me. I could depend on Him to help me. I heard her from time to time, but I had little faith in the truth of those words.

Saturday morning the doctor's voice broke through to me. I had delivered two tiny boys. The joyous news filled my heart. The doctor came to talk to me again when I was back in my room. What was it he said? Something

about the smaller twin having difficulty breathing. Both twins had been put into incubators.

"No need for concern," I told myself as I drifted back to sleep. "The incubators will help them...no problem..." I slept most of the day. By suppertime I was awake, hungry, and anxious to see our new sons. I walked the few steps to the nursery and beheld our firstborn sons. My arms ached to hold them, even to touch them, but their glass cages allowed me only to look at them.

"They're so darling," I exclaimed to the nurse, "Identical, and so dark!" The nurse avoided my eyes as she scurried me back to my room.

Jim waved as he passed my room. "I'm going down to see the babies, Be right back, Hon." I waited...and waited. My parents waited with me. When Jim came back, we were all puzzled. He came into my room sobbing, unable to utter a word.

A nurse came in at that moment. Little Jeff had just died. Little Jimmy was experiencing the same problem. We weren't to get our hopes up too high for him either.

I looked at Mom through my tears. My eyes glared, "Where is God now?" Two hours later the nurse came in again. I didn't cry this time. I wanted to. But there was only numbness and confusion.

"Why, God, Why?"

A deep sleep enveloped me. For the rest of the night I didn't have to think about the baby sons I never got to hold.

Sunday was agony for me, listening to cries of the other babies. But again, I didn't cry. Maybe I was afraid if I did I would be

consumed by the screams that were building up within me. I went home the next day. Immediately I gathered up all the baby things and I threw them to the back of the closet.

Again, I cried, "What did I do, God? Where were You when I needed You?" God seemed like a stranger to me, a far-away, unloving stranger. I knew He existed, but I really didn't know Him at all. Mom tried to soften my hurt and to assure me that God really did care about my agony, but I wouldn't listen. How could a loving God take my babies?

For months my resentment and agony mounted. Neither Jim nor I wanted to see or hear any babies. I didn't want to hold somebody else's baby or see a mother holding her own baby.

About eight months later we spent a weekend with Jim's parents. While we were in Lakeview we decided to look up some old friends from our courtship days. It was a warm summer evening. Jack and Laura greeted us on their front lawn. As we exchanged greetings, I became aware of a sickening realization. We didn't know that they had a baby. I now heard the baby's cries from inside the house.

We had just gotten there. We couldn't just leave. It was now or never. I steeled myself as I walked determinedly into the house and followed the baby's cries to his room. Without hesitating I plunged into the bedroom, made my way to the baby's bed, picked him up and squeezed him to my chest.

A few sobs escaped me. The baby was startled into silence. It quieted my sobs, too, and I allowed the healing process to begin.

*"God seemed like a stranger  
to me, a far-away,  
unloving stranger."*

After that experience I forced myself to be with babies and to hold them. It was hard to do. I still hurt. For two years the bitterness and resentment lingered in my heart. But each time I held a baby the resentment toward God and each mother's baby grew less.

I began listening more closely to Mom's reassurance about God. One verse she shared with me was Psalms 107:43. "Who so is wise....shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." (KJV) "Who so is wise..." At 18, I certainly didn't feel very wise or understanding. The more Mom persisted in her assurances, however, the more I allowed her words to penetrate my heart. I still didn't understand why I wasn't allowed to keep my babies, but I began to see God differently.





In church one Sunday, when the twins would have been a little over two years old, the minister read from Lamentations 3:20-26. "For I can never forget these awful years...Yet there is one ray of hope: his compassion never ends...The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for him, to those who seek for him. It is good both to hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." (TLB)

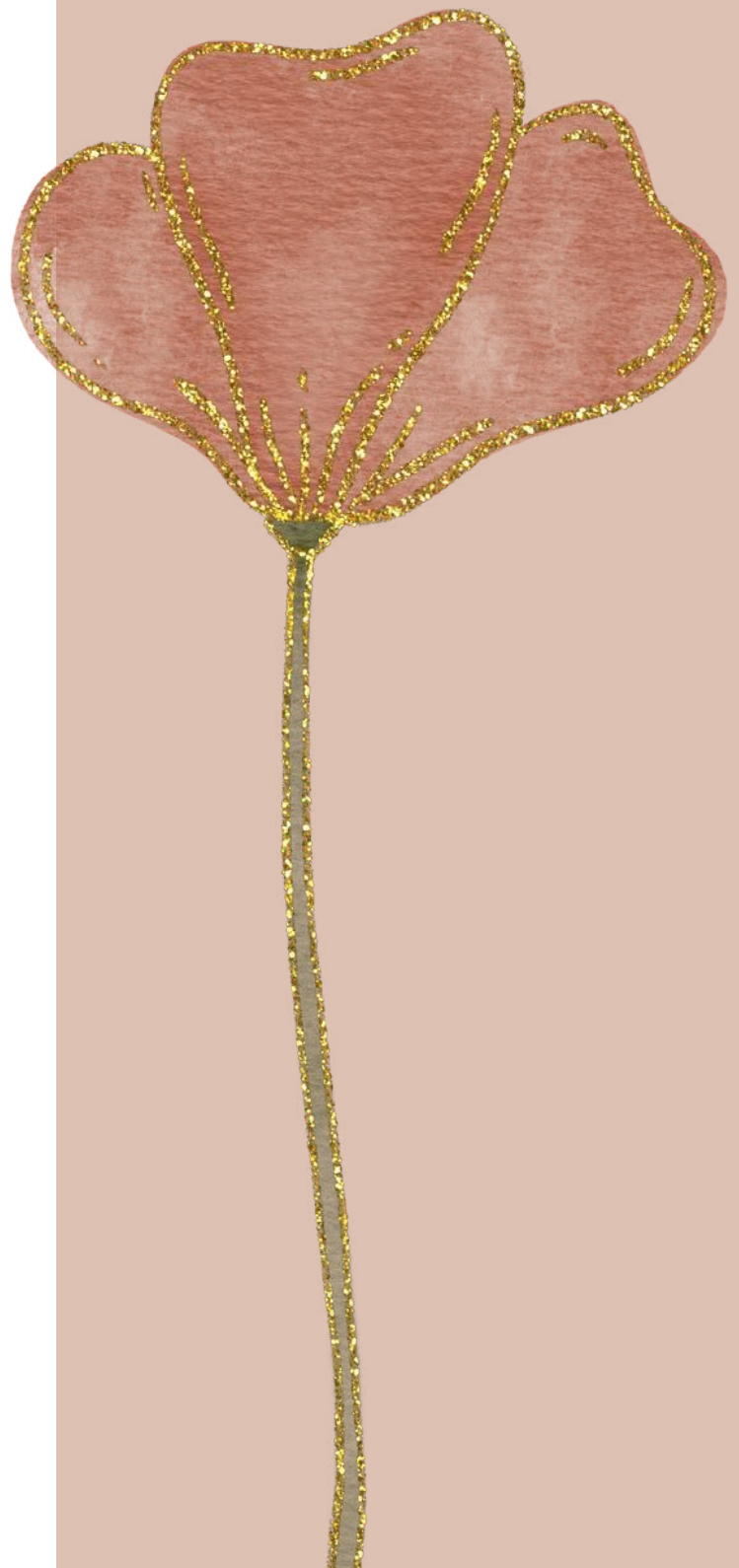
Hope. There was hope. God wanted me to wait for Him, for His salvation, to set me free. I didn't have to live in resentment. As the minister continued, I quietly surrendered my resentment and my life to God. God's love became a reality as I understood and accepted Christ's death on the cross for me.

Dear God, thank you for setting me free. I still don't understand. I still have questions, but I do know that you are "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1 (KJV)



### **About Margarita Beck:**

Margarita lives in Nashville, TN with her husband of over 70 years. She is a retired ordained minister, mother of four sons, and the Aunt of Tracee Padilla.





# Walking ON BROKEN GLASS

by Carmen Chase

*Walking with the broken without breaking yourself*



*"Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me."*

*—Psalm 23:4 NLT*

*"Can you please call and talk to Dad? I've done all I can and can't get through to him. I think he will listen to you."*

My spine snapped up straight in my chair at the desperation in her voice. I began pacing the small break room, knowing of course I would call him. But what do I say to a preacher who's been in hospice for months, his life dangling between faith for healing and grace for dying? Who suffered unimaginable pain as his bones brittle and broke from cancer, while unfulfilled dreams and unfinished projects drifted out of reach?

Abandonment, grief, hurt, shattered dreams, abuse, disappointment, betrayal... they come for us all. And when they do, there's nothing like having someone in your corner—someone to help you sift through the noise and find your way to healing.



# When your empathy drives you to prayer, you've immediately given them a heavenly advantage.

When that special, heaven-sent someone is you, do you stay grounded in peace, or do you fall headlong into their agony? Do you jump in, emotional guns blazing, stirring up more drama with your reactions? Do you struggle for the right words to say, and wonder what you could possibly do to help?

Navigating the brokenness of others is a tricky thing. And the closer you are to them, the harder it can be. But with the Holy Spirit's voice in your ear and a few "tools" in your first-aid satchel, you'll be better equipped than most. Here are a few things I've discovered walking shrapnel-littered paths...

## Love Is Enough

You don't need to be a trained expert to make a difference. And you don't need to have experienced the same brokenness as they have. Your love and compassion are a gift in themselves.

When your empathy drives you to prayer, you've immediately given them a heavenly advantage.

## Be Genuine

Don't say things you don't feel, even if they're socially expected. Clichés like "Heaven needed another angel" or "It's probably all for the best" can do more harm than good. And avoid "I know how you feel." Even if you think you do, they are a unique individual with a history all their own. A simple "That must be tough" or "That sounds painful" often fits better.

## Be Present

Sometimes there are no words. A hug or silent presence can say more than a sentence ever could. A grieving mother once asked our church staff to be at her home when her kids got off the bus. Their father had just died in a tragic semi accident. I guarantee they don't remember what we said—but they remember we were there. They knew they weren't alone.

## Listen

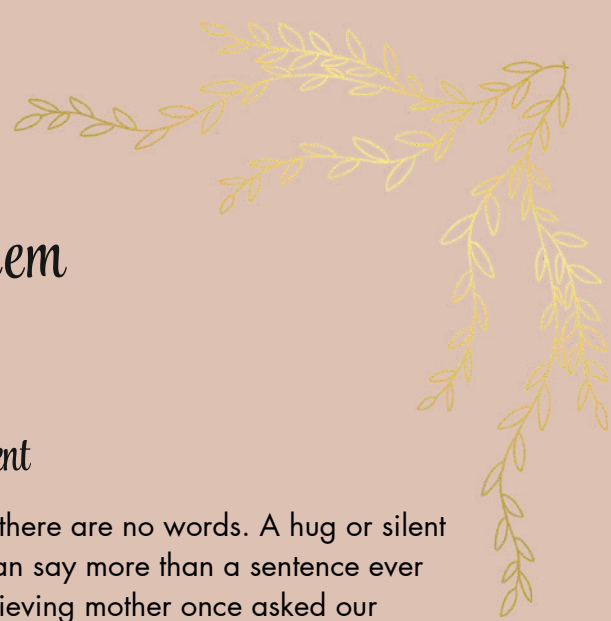
When they're ready to talk, listen. Keep your responses short and let them process. Try not to jump on bandwagons of blame. Most conflicts have two sides, and your loved one can only share theirs. Avoid endless cycles of venting—at some point, forward movement is needed.

## Don't 'Should' On People

I've tried to eliminate this word—especially in how I talk to myself. "You should have..." breeds shame. "You should..." sets impossible expectations. Try "Could you...?" instead. It opens doors without forcing them through.

## Victor, Not Victim

Validating pain matters, but staying stuck there doesn't bring healing. Encourage them to imagine who God is growing them to be. Celebrate the breakthrough before it comes.



## Ask Good Questions

Help them explore.

- What are you most afraid of?
- What's the next right thing?
- What might God want to show you here?

Coaching is more empowering than advice.

## Time Doesn't Heal All Wounds

Grief doesn't follow a timeline. Childhood trauma especially can surface unexpectedly. A thoughtful note months later can mean everything.

## Boundaries Are Beautiful

Their pain isn't yours. If you feel heavy afterward, ask God to remove anything you're not meant to carry. If your health is suffering, something's out of balance. Sometimes, limiting the interaction or redirecting the conversation is a necessary kindness to both of you.

## Social Media Quicksand

Public platforms are poor places to process pain. Don't share their story without permission. Respect their healing process.

## Proceed With Caution

Mental illness, emotional trauma, and spiritual abuse often require professional help. Don't dig beyond what the Holy Spirit is revealing in the moment.

## Jesus Is the Answer

Not you. Not a counselor or pastor. Not a solution or strategy. Point them back to Jesus—again and again. You're walking with them, not for them.

## Let Go and Let God

You can't heal anyone. Like a doctor, you can clean wounds, offer care, and create a safe environment. But only God can make the heart whole.

## You're Fired

If someone refuses healing, continues to spiral, or begins draining your own health—it may be time to step back. Even doctors dismiss patients who won't accept care. You may need to fire yourself from trying to be their savior. Trust God to do what only He can do.

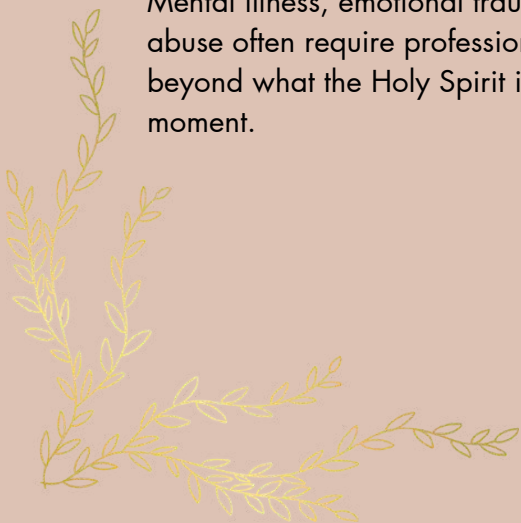
## Prayer Can Be Simple

A voice message prayer is sometimes the most personal, lasting gift. Keep it honest and heartfelt:

"Dear God, please silence the lies of the enemy. Silence the lies in our own minds. Let us hear Your truth."

"Heavenly Father, You are our Healer. Please heal the hurt, heal the memories, and help us walk in abundant life."

*You're not the answer—  
Jesus is. Your job is to walk  
beside them, not save them.*



## Sample Conversation

Empathy:

"I'm so sad this happened to you. I can't imagine what you're going through."

Curiosity:

"What might God want to show you in all of this? Who do you think He's growing you to become on the other side?"

Prayer:

"Can we ask Him together before I go?"

After I hung up with my mom, I whispered a prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to speak through me. I had no idea how powerfully He would show up when I called my dad. His pain was deep, and his resistance was stronger than usual.

"I haven't walked on my own two feet in six months. You don't know what that's like!"

"You're right, Dad, I don't. I'm so sorry for everything you're walking through. But even here—what treasures might God still want to show you?"

I asked questions. I stayed steady. And eventually, I asked:

"Hey Dad, you're filled with the Holy Spirit, right? You can hear His voice, can't you?"

"Yes."

"What's He saying to you right now?"

Silence.

Then... "He's telling me I should listen to you. That you're here to encourage me."

Breakthrough.

We prayed. And just like that, light broke through the dark. Not because of me. But because the Holy Spirit showed up. As He always does.

"He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name."  
—Psalm 23:2–3 NLT



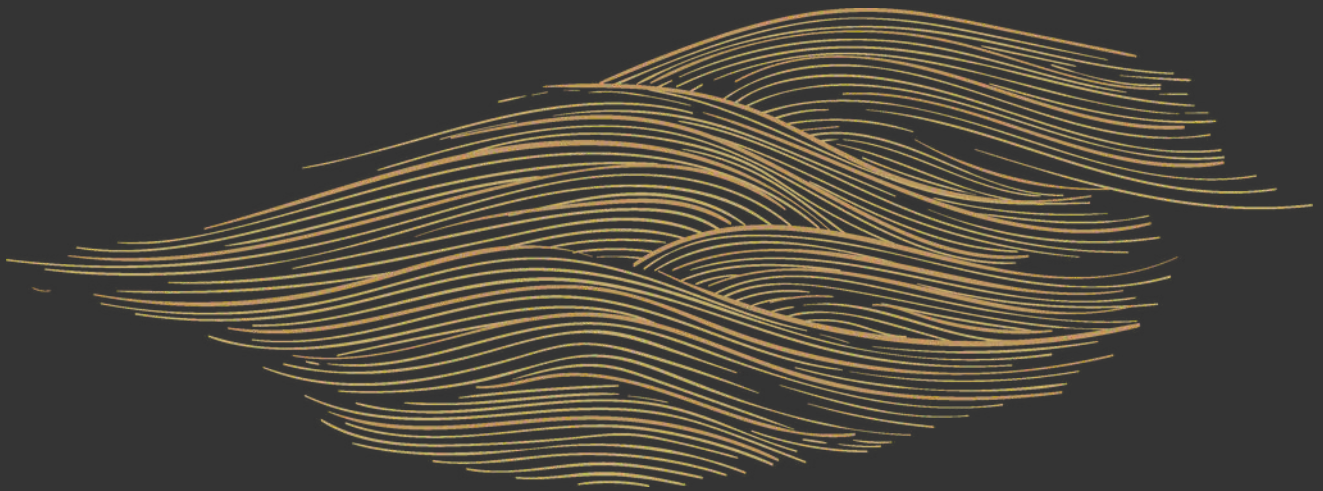
### About Carmen Chase

Carmen Chase is a worship pastor in coastal North Carolina. While some know her best as a professional clown, face paint artist, musician or teacher, her favorite title is wife to her husband, Jimmy, and mom to her two grown children. A suspenseful book in her lap (in the shade!) at the beach may be a top pick for a day off, but a deep-dive study of the Bible—with coffee and dark chocolate nearby—is her go-to on any given day.

[Social Media](#)



# Between *His* Shoulders



*Finding Safety In the Arms of God*

by Sherry Micucci

In a world where many seek safety in human arms, God gave me a powerful revelation that my true refuge comes not from man, but from God. He gave me divine insight that a woman is not meant to find her ultimate safety in a man's chest, but in the dwelling presence of the Lord.

He then painted a layered image of divine order and divine protection—of where our safety is found. Deuteronomy 33:12 tells us, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him, who shelters us all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders." This speaks of a place not just of closeness, but of strength, where the weight of our lives rests between God's shoulders—not man's.

In this layered image, I saw how Jesus came from the bosom of God (John 1:18), manifested out of the heart of divine purpose. Jesus, our mediator, holds the husband in His bosom. The husband then holds or carries the wife in his bosom, and the wife holds the children—together the husband and wife carry the children, nested within her bosom. This divine order is not about dominance or control, but about responsibility, covering, and divine alignment.

Isaiah 54:5 says, *"For your Maker is your husband."* This reveals God's covenant as our Creator and Protector through the example of a husband-and-wife relationship. God is personally connected to us by His love and commitment, even when we go through periods of difficulty or feel abandoned.

It is not the chest of a man that provides security—it is the shoulders of God. This is where our identity, protection, and guidance are found. When a woman understands that her safety lies not in a flawed human, but in the One who holds all things together, she steps into a power and peace that no earthly relationship can replicate. God is our husband first and forever. When your earthly husband comes along, his chest should be

a "familiar place" because of the divine order. If he dwells between God's shoulders, then you will recognize the presence of God.

In this divine alignment, we see the restoration of Eden—not through control, but through Christ, who holds us in His bosom and bears us between His shoulders.

Let us remember: true safety does not come from the arms of a man—it comes from the presence of the Almighty.

**It is not the chest of a man that provides security, it is the shoulders of God.**



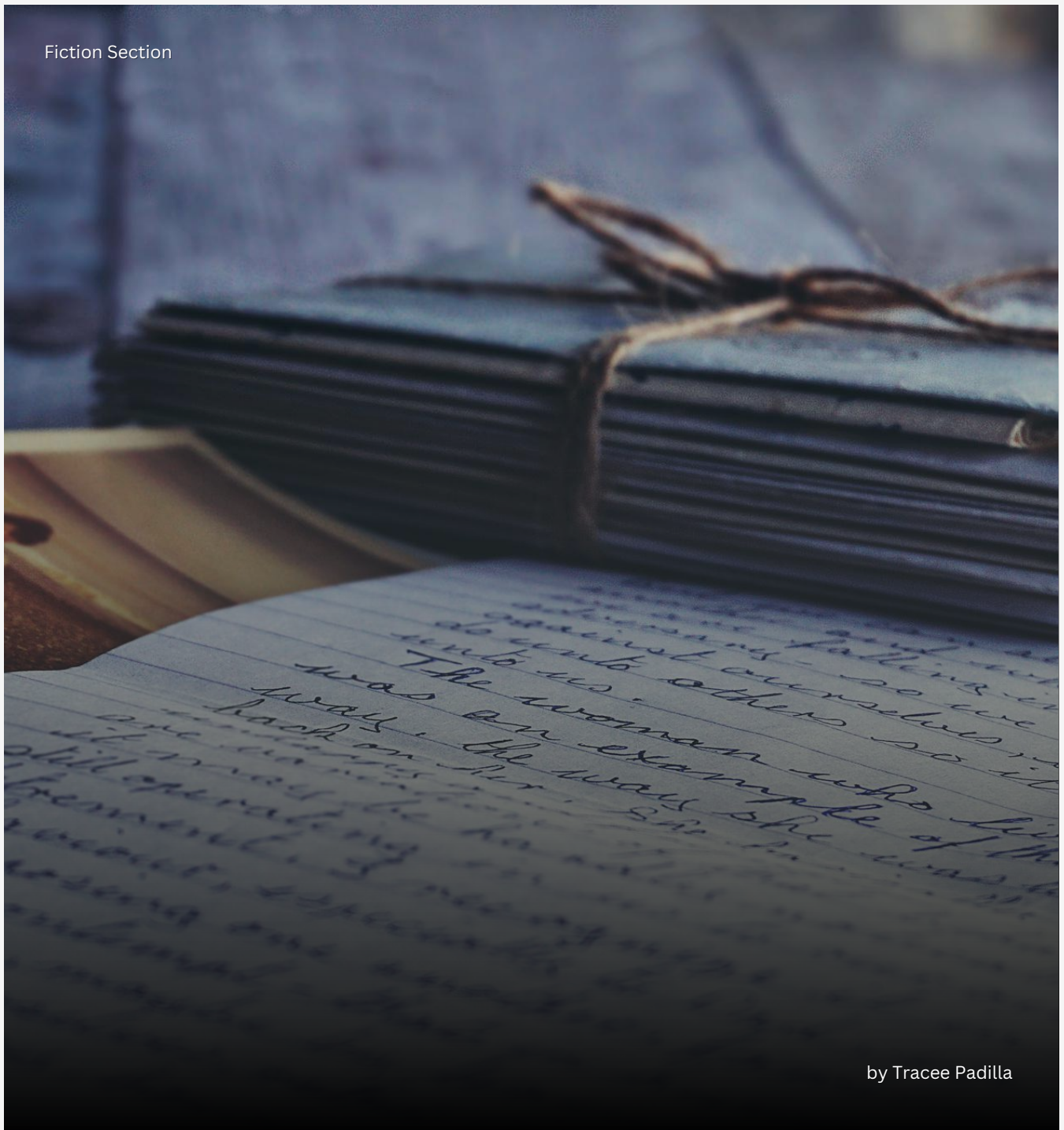
### About Sherry Micucci

Sherry is originally from Missouri and now resides in North Carolina. She works full time as a Respiratory Therapist and Sales Rep for Medical equipment company. She considers herself a student of the Word and graduated from AFCM bible school in 2007. She serves in helps ministry at her local church and loves spending time with her grandchildren.

# THE LETTER

THAT FOUND HER

Fiction Section



by Tracee Padilla



# A forgotten Bible, an unexpected letter, and the love of a God who never let go.

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It wasn't the Bible she would've picked. The cover was a faded burgundy faux leather, warped slightly from what looked like water damage. But it was two dollars at the thrift store, and she needed one—fast.

She'd misplaced hers somewhere between moving out of the dorms and into a tiny basement apartment with mismatched furniture and a leaky faucet. Honestly, she hadn't opened it much in the last few months anyway.

Still, something tugged her hand toward the shelf that day. So she grabbed it. And didn't think twice.

Not until she got home.

She was flipping through pages later that night—half looking for something, half stalling from her Instagram scroll—when something fluttered out and landed on her lap.



It was a folded envelope. Yellowed. Hand-addressed in cursive:

*"To the one who needs it most."*

She froze.

It wasn't sealed.

Inside was a letter, handwritten in ink that had bled slightly with age. The words were careful, like someone had written them through tears.

*To the one who needs it most,  
I don't know your name or your story. But I  
know what it's like to feel empty. I once sat on  
a bathroom floor asking God if He'd forgotten  
me. I once stared at unanswered prayers until  
I couldn't pray anymore.*

*And still... somehow, He came.  
Not all at once. Not in fireworks.*

*But in a quiet whisper.*

*In a moment of peace that made no sense.*

*In a word that reminded me I was not alone.*

*I wrote this letter in the middle of my own  
wilderness because I promised God I'd leave  
behind something for the next girl who landed  
here.*

*So here it is:*

*You are not forgotten.*

*You are not disqualified.*

*You are not too late.*

*And even in the silence—He is moving.*

*Even in the breaking—beauty is forming.*

*Even in the dry places—He is preparing rivers.*

*Don't give up. He sees you. And you will  
make it through.*

*When you do—write your own letter. Leave it  
for the next one.*

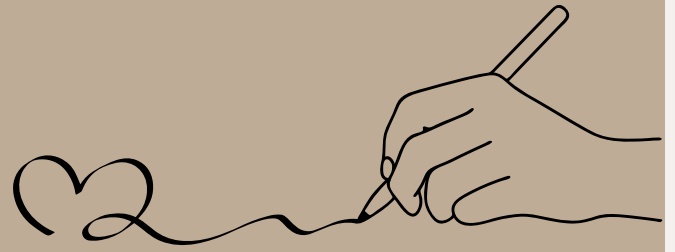
*—A woman who survived the barren place*

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I wrote this letter in the  
middle of my own wilderness  
because I promised God I'd  
leave behind something for  
the next girl who landed  
here.

---





She stared at the paper for a long time.

Tears burned at the corners of her eyes before she even realized they were coming. She hadn't told anyone how dry things had felt lately. How far God had seemed. How long she'd carried the weight of wondering if she'd ever feel whole again.

She hadn't planned to end up in the wilderness. But during her sophomore year of college, she'd let her guard down—just once. The guy had come out of nowhere and swept her off her feet. And suddenly, everything she'd promised the Lord felt blurry. Like maybe love was worth bending for. Until the day she found out she was pregnant. When she told him, he blamed her. Walked away. No call. No care. Nothing.

She was twenty. Confused. Afraid. And in the end, she did what she believed was best. With the support of her church, she placed her baby for adoption. It was done with love—but the ache never fully left.

The years that followed—graduation, a new job, new faces—were full but hollow. Like she was living, but somewhere deep inside, something had withered. She wondered if God still loved her. If He still saw her. If the calling she once believed in had quietly disqualified her without her even realizing it.

And then... the letter.

Found in a thrifted Bible she didn't even mean to pick. Words written by someone who had also known emptiness. Someone who had survived the break.

*You are not forgotten. You are not disqualified.  
You are not too late...*

That letter cracked something open.

One night in her tiny apartment, holding that letter in one hand and her shame in the other, she whispered the question she'd been carrying for years:

"God... do You still love me?"

And in a way only He can, He answered. Not in a shout. Not in a sign.

But in peace.  
In stillness.

In the soft, unmistakable knowing that He had never left.

That day marked the start of something new—not because her past disappeared, but because He stepped into it with grace big enough to cover all of it.

The barren place hadn't broken her.

Jesus had met her in it—and that changed everything.





# THE PORCUPINE

AND THE BEAUTY OF ITS BREAKING

---

by Cendrine Hosoda



## When old defenses fall, healing and wholeness begin.

We all carry pieces of ourselves that were formed in moments of pain—tiny parts that rose up to help us survive when we didn't have the safety or support we needed. They're not always visible as such to others, but we often know when they show up. They can present like walls we put up, the sharp edges that appear when we feel threatened, the silence when we're scared of being dismissed, the over-explaining when we're desperate to be understood.

I've named one of mine Porcupine.

# I didn't break in the way I feared. I broke open.



Porcupine showed up any time I felt unseen, dismissed, or pushed into a corner. She was feisty. She wasn't about to let me get steamrolled. She started operating long ago, when I was just a little girl trying to navigate unmet needs, misunderstood emotions, and unwanted treatment. Her job was to make sure no one could ever get close enough to hurt me again.

The problem is, Porcupine—like most of our self-protective parts—was created in a moment of survival, not strategy. She was a child's solution to an adult problem.

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways."  
—1 Corinthians 13:11 (ESV)



And like many of us, I didn't realize she was still driving my reactions long after the threat had passed.

Years later, as an adult, I found myself triggered again—this time by certain family members. Every time I was around them, Porcupine came out in full armor. I didn't like how I felt, or who I became around them. I didn't yet have language for things like parts work, emotional triggers, or trauma-informed boundaries. I only knew that I was guarded, edgy, cold. Not because I didn't want to care and connect, but because something deep inside me felt unsafe—felt very threatened.

At the time, I was in a Bible study group exploring the idea of surrendering our self-protections. They called it letting go of control and trusting God. One night, I found myself asking God a terrifying question:

"What if I let down my guard, and they walk all over me?"

The answer came gently but clearly:  
"Then I will heal you."

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." —Psalm 147:3 (NIV)

I wasn't expecting that. To be honest, I probably wanted to hear something more reassuring, like: "That isn't going to happen." But what I received was a promise—one that invited me into faith, vulnerability, and trust. Not in people. But in God.



That moment began a shift in me. Slowly, I chose to lay down my armor. No, they had not suddenly become trustworthy. I chose to lay down my armor because I trusted the One who promised to heal me. I chose to have a quiet, vulnerable conversation. I told them I didn't like how I'd been showing up—cold, distant, guarded. I asked for forgiveness, motivated by the desire to own my stuff and learn to live from a different place.

They didn't respond the way I'd hoped. They didn't join me in vulnerability. But something stunning happened anyway.

I didn't break in the way I feared. I broke open.

Where I was driven by reactivity before, I was now responding with calm clarity. The panic and over-defending gave way to peace and groundedness.

# The beauty isn't that the pain didn't happen. It's that the pain didn't get the final say.



I could feel when my boundaries were being crossed, and rather than lash out, I found the strength to speak up. My voice became steady, instead of sharp. My stance became strong, instead of rigid. I was no longer living from Porcupine—I was living from wholeness.

And that was the beauty in the breaking of my self-defense mechanism. The beauty isn't that the pain didn't happen. It's that the pain didn't get the final say. What broke wasn't me—it was the survival strategy that had kept me from truly living.

## **YOUR GENTLE INVITATION TO REFLECT**

If you've noticed parts of yourself reacting sharply or withdrawing quickly, you're obviously not alone. Often, those are protectors doing their best to keep you safe. But sometimes, what they're protecting is a younger, hurting part of you that's ready to be seen, healed, and restored.

# Journal Prompts

- What situations tend to trigger a strong emotional reaction in me?
- What does my self-protective part (or parts) look like? Can I name it or describe it?
- When did I first start needing this kind of protection? What might that part have been trying to help me with?
- What emotions are hiding underneath that protection?
- What would it be like to invite God into the place that part is trying to protect?
- If I believed He would heal me even if I got hurt again, what might I choose differently?
- What would it feel like to live from my healed, whole self?

You are not too much. You are not bad for having protective parts. And you don't have to fear the breaking either.

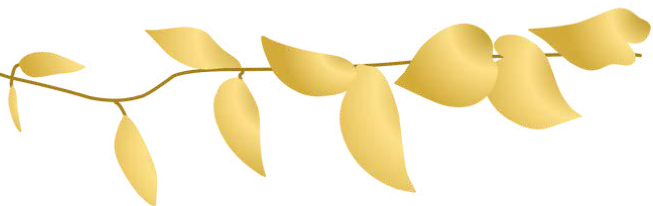
There is a fierce beauty in choosing vulnerability, and a deep strength in surrendering our survival strategies to the God who restores. That beauty is already inside you—just waiting for the breaking to make space for it to bloom.



## About Cendrine Hosoda

Cendrine Hosoda is a dedicated learner with a focus on holistic health and spiritual nourishment. With a background in nutrition and Bible studies, she shares her journey of overcoming health challenges on her blog. A devoted wife and experienced homeschool mother of two teenagers, she enjoys expressing creativity through writing and playing the pan flute. Born in Switzerland and residing in the States for over 25 years, Cendrine's mission is to inspire, encourage, and motivate others in their walk with God.

[www.pursuingwholesomehealth.com](http://www.pursuingwholesomehealth.com)





# MY HEART IS LIKE A *Garden*



by Kathleen Knapp

*Tending the soul with care,  
one seed and season at a time*

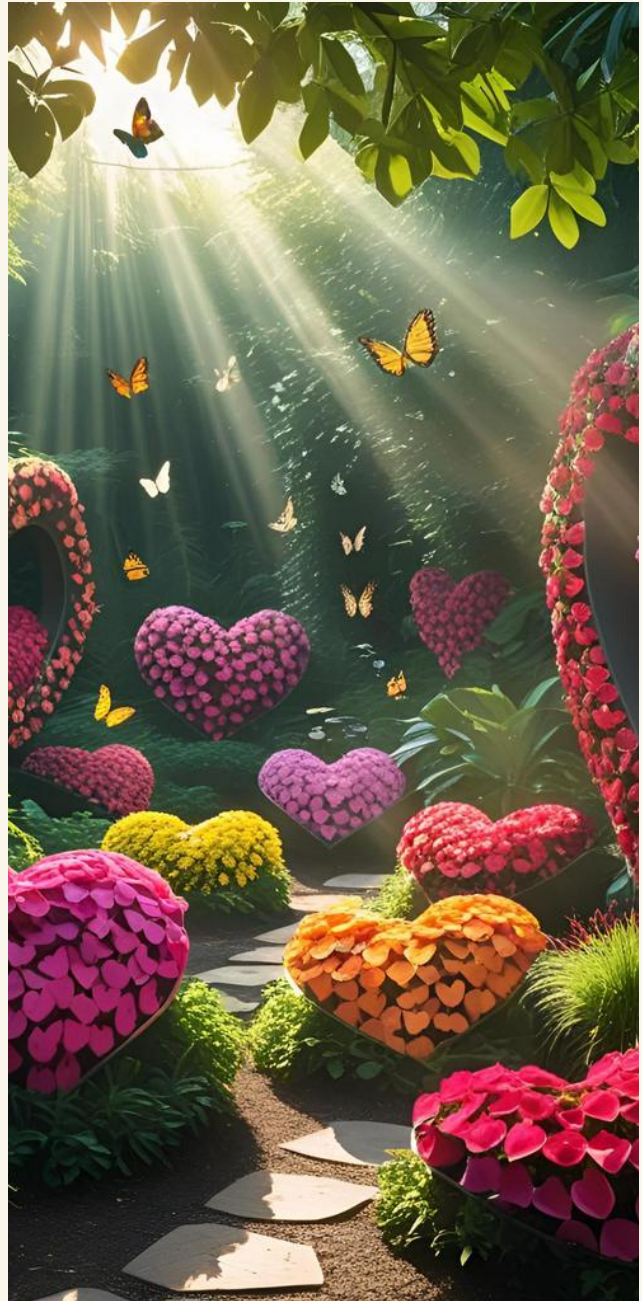
Anyone who knows me well knows I love my garden—but I don't really like gardening. LOL. However, today, I sunk my fingers into the wet earth to freshen up my garden from the winter. It was a long spring here in the western Canadian prairies.

As I dug up the earth, loosened the soil, pulled the weeds, and removed the old debris from the winter, I thought about how our souls are a lot like a garden.

For us to grow, we need to have our souls aerated. We need to have some nutrients added to our souls, we need to be watered well with the Word of God, and we need to have the sunlight of Jesus. Sometimes we even need to be pruned back so that we can flourish, bloom, and produce fruit.

Jesus likens our spiritual lives to branches on a vine:

*"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing." —John 15:5 (NLT)*



For a vine to produce fruit, the branches need to remain connected to the vine. From the main trunk of the plant, the vine receives its nutrients and water and eventually produces fruit. Pruning can hurt. Sometimes it's counterintuitive to cut back branches that look alive, but for the whole plant to thrive, it's necessary to cut off the shoots that are going in the wrong direction.

To be spiritually fruitful, I need to stay connected to Jesus—the vine—and trust Him to provide the nutrients I need to grow in my life.

# For us to grow, we need to have our souls aerated... and watered well with the Word of God.

As I toss the rocks out of my rhubarb patch, pull the weeds from around the hostas, and break up the hard soil around the roses, I'm reminded of the Bible verse about the sower and the seed. Jesus spoke about the Word of God like a seed being scattered on a path. Some seed falls onto different types of soil, or rocks, or is eaten by birds. In this way, our hearts are like the soil of my garden, which requires the good soil of the Word of God to take root for us to grow spiritually (Matthew 13).

There's a funny meme on social media that says, "I need to remember to feed myself, get plenty of fluids, and sunlight—I'm basically a houseplant with emotions."

Funny, but also true. Like a plant or a seed, we need to remember to take care of ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

I need to be reminded to tend the garden of my soul with care—as I stay connected to the vine for nourishment, ensure the soil of my soul is prepared to receive the seeds planted, and remove the weeds that spring up, threatening to choke out the growth.

## *Pause and Reflect*

- How is your garden growing?
- Are there areas of your heart that need tending?



This devotion is an excerpt from my new book *Come to the Table – Pursuing Peace & Joy Through Grace & Mercy*, a 31-day devotional with companion journal available now on Amazon.

**Kathleen Knapp** is an author and blogger. Learn more at:

[www.KathleenKnappWriter.com](http://www.KathleenKnappWriter.com)





*How Jesus teaches us to respond when the world throws stones*

# RESPONDING TO INJUSTICE

by Beth Nelson



“They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, ‘All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!’”  
—John 8:7 (NLT)

Recently, someone dear to me was publicly and harshly judged over a misunderstood situation. The comments were cruel, and my instinct was to defend her with equal force—to throw stones of my own. But holding back was harder, and ultimately, it was the better choice.

In today’s world of constant commentary and quick clicks, unfair judgment spreads easily—especially online. It’s no surprise. The Bible warns us: *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy”* (John 10:10, NLT). And judgment—especially when it’s misplaced or fueled by emotion—can be one of the enemy’s sharpest tools.

### Jesus’ Response to Injustice

John 8:1–11 gives us one of the clearest examples of how Jesus responded to injustice. The Pharisees brought before Him a woman caught in adultery, trying to trap Him with the law. My heart breaks for her—dragged into public, humiliated, surrounded by harsh stares and loud accusations. We’re never told where the man was. Why only her?

And Jesus? Calm. Measured. Compassionate.

Instead of arguing, He bent down and wrote in the dirt. When pressed, He replied, *“Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone”* (v.7).

**Mic drop.**

*Jesus doesn’t call us to shame—He calls us to grow.*

He didn’t raise His voice. He didn’t condemn. Instead, He shifted the focus back onto themselves. Slowly, one by one, they walked away.

### Learning from Jesus’ Example

There are moments when we, like Jesus, are called to respond in the face of confrontation. And it’s hard. Our instincts respond emotionally first and logically later. But Jesus modeled the opposite: steady, thoughtful restraint.



I recently came across wise words from communication expert Jefferson Fisher, who recommends starting with a breath. When you feel confronted, take a breath... then one more... and slowly exhale. This pause gives your brain time to shift from emotion (the amygdala) to reason (the prefrontal cortex), creating space to respond—not react.

Here are a few calm, respectful responses you might practice:

- “I’m surprised to hear you say that.” - This gently redirects attention without fueling conflict.
- “Did you mean for that to sound critical or hurtful?” - This invites self-reflection without compromising your integrity.

Jesus often led people to examine themselves. In Matthew 7:3 and Luke 6:41, He asks, “Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own?” It’s as though He’s saying, “Start with your own heart.”

My mom used to say, “Don’t worry about anyone else—just worry about yourself.” Wise advice I didn’t fully appreciate as a child, but it echoes Jesus’ teaching perfectly.

### In His Word

Scripture speaks clearly against quick or harsh judgment:

- “Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.” —John 7:24 (NIV)
- “You who pass judgment on someone else... are condemning yourself, because you... do the same things.” —Romans 2:1–3 (NIV)

Too often we make assumptions without knowing the full story. We throw digital stones. We gossip. We gather allies. And in doing so, we miss the grace Jesus offers us—and calls us to extend to others.

### In Your Life

Think about your recent conversations or posts. Were you holding a rock?

I’ve had moments I regret, too. Jesus doesn’t call us to shame—He calls us to grow.

Today, take time to read John 8:1–11 in full. Picture yourself in that crowd.

How would you feel being wrongly accused? Misunderstood? Exposed?

Let that perspective soften your heart the next time you witness—or experience—judgment. Instead of reacting, reflect.

Breathe.

Let your response honor Jesus, and let Him be the Judge.



### About Beth Nelson

Beth brings a mix of farm life grit, leadership insight, and laugh-out-loud honesty. With a knack for finding humor in life’s messiest moments, she describes herself as somewhere between hot mess and train wreck—but always chasing truth. Through her own journey with family trauma, spiritual warfare, and tough relationships, she shares how faith and Spirit-led leadership can carry you through.





# Beauty in the Break

*by Tracee Padilla*

## When God Shows Up in the Barren Place

*"Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing." Psalm 34:10 (NLT)*

I stood in the middle of Walmart with \$10 in my pocket, staring at the cheapest mac and cheese I could find and doing mental gymnastics to figure out how to stretch it into meals for four. Four for one-dollar boxes of noodles, 33¢ hot dogs, 25¢ loaves of bread. I knew how to work the numbers. I just couldn't make them feed my family for a full week.

There's a kind of ache that hits when you realize you're not just having a bad day—you're in a barren place. That was me. Right there under those fluorescent lights, watching other people pile groceries into carts while I silently asked God to make a miracle out of ten bucks and broken hope.

I didn't doubt that He was good. I just didn't know how—or when—He'd show up. But before I could even get home, He already had.

*"Before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24 (NIV)*

I opened the door and was met by my two kids and my husband, all smiling like something big had happened.

"You're never gonna believe who just dropped off a bunch of groceries!"

One of our closest friends. \$100 worth. No heads-up. No ask. Just obedience.

That was the start of something I couldn't see coming.

### Back to the Beginning

Let me rewind. I was fifteen when I first felt the call to missions. We were living in Cincinnati, Ohio for a short furlough from the field in Spain, and that year changed everything for me. I knew—deep down in my spirit—that God was calling me to ministry and to the nations.

Fast forward to 1998. I was married, had two toddlers, and out of nowhere, that calling stirred again. My (ex) husband and I both felt it—separately at first, then together. We looked at each other like, Are we really doing this?

Now?!

Because here's what "now" looked like:

- We'd just lost a pregnancy.
- I'd just had emergency gallbladder surgery.
- We had no health insurance.
- And we were \$22,000+ in medical debt.

On top of that, we could barely afford food. The lights had almost been shut off more than once. And to top it all off, the missions organization we were applying to had one very clear policy: no debt allowed.

It didn't make sense. Not a single thing about the timing seemed logical. But we knew—we knew—God was saying go.

## I didn't know how to ask for help, but God knew how to send it anyway.

So we started the process. One year of interviews, paperwork, prayer, and straight-up survival mode. And that's when the miracles began.

### When the Barren Becomes Holy

Remember those groceries? That same friend came back a week later and said, "The Lord told us to buy groceries for you every other week until He says stop."

And for a full year—that's exactly what they did.

I didn't know how to ask for help. But God knew how to send it anyway.

*"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19 (NIV)*

Then came the \$15,000 surgery bill. A family member called out of the blue and said, "The Lord told me you need to go talk to the surgeon's office and ask them to lower the amount."

Now listen—this woman who ran that office? Not exactly a warm and fuzzy personality. I was nervous and a little afraid of her. But I went.

And when I walked through the door, I just stared. My jaw dropped because the woman behind the desk wasn't who I expected.

It was someone from our church who was now the new Office Manager of this Doctor's office.

*"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)*

She sat me down, let me share our calling and situation, and then said the doctor was on a missions trip but she'd pass along my message when he got back.

A few weeks later, I got the call.

"You don't owe a dime. The doctor said go do what God's called you to do."

I cried for three days straight. But wait—it gets better.

### Stacked Miracles

We still had over \$7,000 left in hospital bills when another friend called and said, "God gave us \$5,000 and told us it's yours." So I marched (nervously) into the hospital billing office and asked if they'd accept \$3,500 to clear the full balance. The woman looked at the bill. Looked at me. Then said, "We'll take it."

Debt erased.

*"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." Psalm 23:5 (NIV)*

And just when we thought it was over, we got invited to lunch after church. Red Lobster—which we definitely couldn't afford. At the end of the meal, our friend looked across the



## You are absolutely not beyond the reach of His provision.

table and said, "How much more do you need to be fully debt-free?"

I took a deep breath. "\$782."

She smiled, reached into her purse, pulled out her checkbook, and wrote that exact amount.

Done. Finished. Debt-free.

That week—the very week of our final interview—we had zero debt. Groceries still coming. Faith still standing. And a big, loud YES from our missions board.

We were approved.

### What the Barren Place Gave Me

That year was hard. It was exhausting. It was full of things I never want to relive.

But it was also sacred. Because it was the year I learned this:

- God doesn't wait for you to have it together—He meets you when you're undone.
- Provision doesn't always show up early—but it will never be late.
- And sometimes, the most beautiful things are born in the middle of the break.

*"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19 (NIV)*

We talk a lot about God showing up in abundance—but I met Him in barrenness. I met Him in Walmart.

In debt payoff counters.  
In grocery drop-offs.  
In whispered prayers and wide-open needs.  
And He was faithful.

If You're in It Now...

If you're standing in your own version of that aisle—with bills in one hand and worry in the other—this is what I want you to know:

You are not forgotten.  
You are not disqualified.

And you are absolutely not beyond the reach of His provision.

*"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed."*  
*Psalms 34:18 (NLT)*

Sometimes the barren place is the very ground where beauty is already starting to bloom—you just can't see it yet.

But you will.



### About Tracee Padilla:

Tracee is the Visionary and Founder behind Unveiled Living. She lives on the coast in North Carolina with the love of her life, Edwin.



*by Savannah Moore*

THE BEAUTY OF

# surrender

*How forgiveness opened the door to healing I didn't know I needed*

*Healing doesn't come through revenge. It comes when we let go and lean into God's grace.*

## Forgiveness.

Some of us hate that word, right?

"Why forgive the person who hurt me so deeply?"

"They don't deserve it, God."

Maybe you've said those words—I know I have. But what I've learned is this: forgiveness isn't for them. It's what allows God's healing to begin in us. This is my story of surrender and forgiveness.

When the world shut down in 2020, I didn't realize a part of me would shut down too. I went from working two jobs to losing one and picking up two more just to make ends meet. My church—my lifeline—closed. Everything felt uncertain. I started doing DoorDash just to survive.

One day, while waiting in a restaurant to pick up an order, I got a text that made the world stop.

My pastor had been arrested.

I rushed home, turned on the news, and saw the charges: multiple counts of indecent liberties with a minor and other serious offenses. I was in shock. How could someone I had trusted so much do this?

This wasn't just my pastor.

He had once been my youth pastor, my mentor, my friend. I had babysat his kids. House-sat for his family. He saw things in me that I couldn't see in myself.

Under his leadership, I accepted my call to ministry.

He gave me opportunities that few others did. You can understand—this wasn't just betrayal. This was heartbreak.

But the blows didn't stop there. Three months later, my brother called. That's when I found out he had been one of the pastor's victims.

I saw red. If that man hadn't been in jail, I might have done something reckless. I was shocked. Numb. Furious.

A friend of mine said they had a vision of me with knives sticking out of my back. That's exactly how it felt—like betrayal from every direction.





And that's when that dreaded word started circling again in my spirit:

Forgive.

Have you ever seen *The Shack*?

There's a scene where the father is holding his murdered daughter's body and whispering, "I forgive him" over and over.

That scene haunted me. Because whenever I thought about this pastor, that's what I saw in my mind.

God was clearly trying to teach me something.

So, every day—for four years—I woke up and prayed: "God, I choose to forgive him."

Some days, I could barely get the words out. But slowly, they got easier. Eventually, I started to believe them.

About a year ago, I did something that shocked even me. I wrote him a letter—in prison. In the letter, I told him how I felt when the truth came out. But then... I thanked him. Yes, I thanked him—for the good things. For the moments he believed in me. For the lessons I learned.

I ended the letter with a prayer of blessing and protection over his life, asking that he would feel the love of the Father surrounding him like a blanket.

That's when I knew I had truly forgiven him.

Here's the thing about healing: It doesn't come through revenge or staying stuck in bitterness. It comes when we let go and lean into God's grace.

"He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds." —Psalm 147:3 (NLT)

God's desire is that we live whole, healed, and free—and that journey begins with surrender, even when we don't want to.

Right now, I'm in another season of surrender. This time, it's not about a person—it's about me. God's working on my thought patterns, anxiety, depression, self-hatred... the list could go on.

And let me be real:  
I've fought Him on it (more than once).  
But I'm learning to let go. And yes—it's HARD.

The struggles don't magically disappear. The pain doesn't vanish. But in the surrender, His grace shows up. His voice guides me. He gives me a reason to keep going.

I now say it with a smile:  
**I'm in recovery.** *Haha!* And that's okay.

So if God is asking *you* to surrender—what are you waiting for?

All it takes is one small step of faith for the healing to begin.



### About Savannah Moore:

Savannah lives in North Carolina and has a deep love for history and music. A graduate of FIRE School of Ministry, Savannah is all about raising up a generation that knows who they are in Christ and isn't afraid to live it out.

*He heals the brokenhearted  
and bandages their wounds.*

*Psalms 147:3*





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# Wilderness

To the Woman in the

by Tracee Padilla



# There's still beauty in you.

*A letter of hope for when the ground feels dry and you're not sure if anything good can grow from here*

Hello friend,

I don't know the shape of your barren place right now.

Maybe it's financial. Emotional. Spiritual.  
Maybe it's disappointment that keeps cycling.  
Or a promise that hasn't come to pass.  
Maybe you're walking through something so personal it's hard to even put into words.

What I do know is this: God sees you. Right here. Right now.

And even if you don't feel Him...  
Even if nothing looks like breakthrough yet...  
Even if the ground around you feels dry and quiet and cracked with questions...

This place is not the end of your story.

You're not being punished.  
You're not being overlooked.  
You're not stuck here forever.



# You don't have to climb out of the wilderness to be close to God—He meets you in it.

I've seen God move in places that felt hopeless. I've watched Him provide in ways that made no sense. I've stood in moments where I whispered, "God, I don't know how this is going to work..." and watched Him come through in ways I couldn't have scripted if I tried.

So I can tell you this with every ounce of confidence in my bones:

God doesn't need ideal conditions to do something miraculous.

He moves in barren places.

He speaks in dry seasons.

He brings beauty out of the very ground that once looked lifeless.

"He will make a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." Isaiah 43:19 (NLT)

If all you have right now is a whisper of faith and a handful of weariness, that's enough.

You don't have to climb out of the wilderness to be close to God—He meets you in it.

You don't have to fake joy or hurry your healing—He's not rushing you.

You don't have to figure it all out—He already knows the way through.

So breathe.

Let the tears come if they need to.

Let the questions sit without answers for a while.

Let yourself be held—not by your strength—but by His.

Because the same God who moves mountains also sits beside you in the valley.

And I promise, He's still writing beauty into your story—even now.

You are not forgotten.

You are not too far gone.

And you are not walking through this alone.

There's still beauty in you.

There's still purpose in this pause.

And there's still a God who knows how to turn dry ground into holy ground.

Still believing for you,

Tracee







# The Mirror and the Mask

by Janice Conyers

# WHO TOLD YOU **THAT?**



There's a moment in Genesis that is both heartbreaking and incredibly human. Adam and Eve, once naked and unashamed, suddenly realize their vulnerability. They grab fig leaves. They hide in the bushes. And when God comes walking through the garden, He asks a question that still echoes today:

"Who told you that you were naked?"  
Genesis 3:11, NLT

It's not just a question about their bodies. It's a question about their belief system.

"Who told you that you had to cover up? That you weren't enough? That you should hide from Me?"



It's the same question God still whispers to us when we come to Him covered in emotional armor, false narratives, and fear-driven masks.

We live in a culture that rewards appearance, performance, and strength. So, we adapt. We become “the strong one,” “the put-together one,” or “the one who never needs help.” But underneath those polished exteriors, many of us are still asking: If they really knew me... would they still love me? Would God?

Some of us live under labels that were handed to us in childhood: Too much. Not enough. Too loud. Invisible. Others have believed lies whispered in moments of pain: I'll never heal. I'll always be alone. I'll never measure up.

But in Christ, those lies have no authority.

*“So, you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.” Colossians 2:10, NLT*

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## **SOME OF US LIVE UNDER LABELS THAT WERE HANDED TO US IN CHILDHOOD.**

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We're not all that different from Adam and Eve. We hide because of shame. We wear masks because of fear. And over time, we can forget who we really are.

But here's the good news:

**God doesn't love the mask.  
He loves the woman beneath it.**

### **UNMASKING THE LIES**

If you've ever felt like your identity has been shaped more by what the world has said than what God has spoken, you're not alone.

**Your worth isn't based on your  
perfection, it's rooted in His presence.**

### **GOD CAN'T HEAL WHO YOU PRETEND TO BE**

There's something powerful about bringing your real self into God's presence. Not the filtered version. Not the “fine” version. But the honest, messy, vulnerable one.

In John 4, Jesus meets a woman at a well who's been hiding in plain sight. She's known for her past and avoids the crowd. But Jesus doesn't shame her. He names her thirst, tells her the truth, and then offers her living water.





# TOSS THE MASK. FACE THE MIRROR.

What does she do next? She runs back into the village, without her mask, and tells everyone about the Man who knew everything about her... and still loved her.

That's what happens when we allow ourselves to be fearlessly known.

Toss the Mask and Face the Mirror.

This summer, as you make time to rest and reflect, ask yourself:

- What lie have I been believing about who I am?
- What mask have I been wearing to feel safe or accepted?
- What truth does God want to speak over me instead?

**God is not looking for your performance.  
He's looking for your presence.**

He's not asking you to clean up first. He's just asking you to come out of hiding.

Because the same God who asked Adam and Eve, "Who told you that?"  
...is still asking you today.

And He's ready to tell you who you really are.

- You are seen.
- You are loved.
- You are fearlessly known.

Now let Him teach you how to fearlessly know Him in return.



### About Janice Conyers:

Janice lives in New Hampshire with her husband, William, and their dog, Mia. She's a proud mom of two and is often referred to as a "Jan-of-all-trades" by friends and colleagues.

With over 20 years of experience in office and event management, Janice is passionate about furthering God's kingdom by creating meaningful experiences through events and producing engaging, informative content. She and her husband were recently ordained as pastors.








# A VERY TIDY MOUSE

BY MICHELLE A. BALTS



Let's visit a story that may not be as familiar to us, originally written by Beatrix Potter. If you like creepy crawlers, you'll probably enjoy how they invade her neat and tidy house!

Mrs. Tittlemouse was a wood mouse who lived under a hedge or thick shrubs. She had lots of nooks and crannies to store her cleaning supplies and a pantry to keep all her gathered treasures. She had a daily habit of making her bed and sweeping her floors.

One particular day, she spotted a mother ladybird trying to crawl into her space. Another time, a large spider creepily made its way through her entrance to escape the rain. Upset by the cobwebs left hanging from her ceiling, she threw the spider out of her house! She then heard a buzzing sound coming from an open window. Who was it but Babbity Bumble, offering her some beeswax! She began tidying up her storeroom. As her cleaning continued, she discovered even more intruders buzzing fiercely in the moss on her walls.

She decided to leave the bees until after supper. Then she came upon Mr. Jackson the toad, rocking in her chair! She offered him something to eat, and he gladly agreed—but what he really wanted was honey. She didn't think she had any, but the toad, not believing her, peeked into her cupboards and found none.

Instead, creepy crawlies were hiding among the plates, and Miss Butterfly was enjoying a tasty treat of sugar. She quickly fluttered away as the toad remarked, "Mrs. Tittlemouse, you seem to have plenty of visitors without invitations."

What is cluttering up our lives that needs to be swept and cleared out? Sometimes we're not even aware of what's lurking in our hearts and minds. We can get so used to thinking and feeling a certain way about ourselves or others that we don't stop to ask if it's even true.

Psalm 19 says:

"How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."  
(verses 12–14, NLT)



Our Heavenly Father loves us so much. He has given us His very own power, love, and a sound, disciplined mind so that we can choose —by faith—to think His thoughts, speak His words, and live like we really believe Him.

Let's use our imagination to believe and say what's written in Jeremiah 29:11:

"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."



#### **About Michelle A. Balts:**

Michelle is the sister of Tracee, friend, school teacher with over 30+ years of teaching in the Christian School Sector and having spent the past 15 years homeschooling her daughter. She has been married 23 years. In her spare time, she enjoys sewing, quilting, hand-stitching, drawing, painting, and walking on the beach.

She is a deep lover of the Word of God and has been on a continual pursuit of spiritual growth in her life that beautifully seeps into everything she does.

She is very creative storyteller and a regular contributor for our Kids Corner - writing stories specifically for our kids to help them grow in their faith and walk with God.



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# Recipes

EAT WELL. LIVE BETTER.

## **FIRE UP THE FLAVOR**

**Healthy Marinades for  
Grilling Season**

## **EVERYTHING RANCH!**

**Your favorite ranch dip or dressing  
with a burst of crazy goodness!**





# *Time to Grill!*

DELICIOUS MARINADES  
FOR SUMMER BBQ'S

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by Janice Conyers

Summer is the perfect time to take your meals outside and let the grill do the work! In this edition of Unveiled Living, we're serving up a collection of simple, healthy marinades that pack big flavor without the guilt. Because living life unveiled doesn't stop with bible studies!

Whether you're prepping chicken, pork, turkey, salmon, or a firm fish like salmon, cod, or mahi mahi, these versatile blends will elevate your summer table with fresh herbs, zesty citrus, and bold spices. Get ready to mix, marinate, and savor the season, deliciously.



# Ingredients

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For each marinade, you will need about 1.5 pounds of protein.

## **Lime Fajita Marinade:**

- 1 ½ TBS Fajita seasoning
- 3 TBS fresh lime juice
- 3 TBS olive oil
- 1 TBS minced cilantro, optional

## **Sesame Ginger Marinade:**

- ¼ cup low sodium soy sauce
- 2 TBS sesame oil
- 1 TBS minced ginger (about 1/2")
- 3 green onions, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced

## **Buffalo Ranch Marinade:**

- ½ cup buffalo sauce
- 2 TBS Ranch seasoning
- 3 TBS olive oil

## **Mango Marinade:**

- 1 mango, pureed (or use frozen)
- 3 TBS olive oil
- 1 TBS fresh lime juice
- 1 TBS minced cilantro, optional

## **Pesto Marinade:**

- ¼ cup pesto of your choice
- 3 TBS olive oil



# Directions

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Mix the marinade ingredients together in a small dish. Set the protein in a shallow dish or zip top bag. Pour in the marinade and turn the protein so it all gets coated. Allow to marinate at least 30 min.

- **Slow Cooker:** Add your protein and marinade to the slow cooker with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water or broth. Cook on low for 3–4 hours until fully cooked and tender.
- **Instant Pot:** Place the protein and marinade in the Instant Pot with 1 cup of liquid (water or broth). Cook on High Pressure for 15 minutes, then allow for natural pressure release.
- **Grill:** Preheat grill to 400°F. Oil the grates and grill protein for 5–7 minutes per side (fish may take less), or until cooked through. Let it rest for 5 minutes before serving.
- **Air Fryer:** Preheat to 375°F. Lightly oil the basket, add protein in a single layer, and cook for 10–15 minutes, flipping halfway through. Time may vary based on thickness and type of protein.
- **Oven:** Preheat to 400°F. Place protein on a parchment-lined baking sheet and roast for 15–25 minutes, depending on thickness, until fully cooked. Let it rest for 5 minutes before slicing or serving.

**Tip:** Always check that your protein is cooked to a safe internal temperature, which is 165°F for poultry, 145°F for pork and fish (USDA guidelines).

## Freezing & Defrosting Tips:

**To freeze:** Place your protein and marinade in a gallon-sized freezer bag. Squeeze out the air, seal tightly, and freeze for up to 3–4 months for best flavor.

**To defrost:** Set the bag on a plate in the refrigerator overnight. Once thawed, cook using your preferred method.

**Pro Tip:** Use a freezer inventory chart to keep track of what you've frozen and avoid waste!



# Ranch Everything!

by Tracee Padilla

Back in 2002, I was diagnosed with a severe food sensitivity to MSG—monosodium glutamate. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being my deathbed, I was at a 9. It rocked my world.

From that day forward, everything about how I approached food had to change. Thankfully, I've always loved to cook, but I had to relearn what it meant to cook clean. It launched me into a now 23-year journey of reading every label, decoding ingredients, and figuring out which MSG "family members" my body could tolerate (in tiny doses) and which ones were absolutely off-limits.

One of the hardest things to replace? Ranch dressing.

That classic, creamy flavor that makes taco salad magical? Gone. And let's be honest—who really enjoys a dry salad?

I tried all the homemade ranch hacks out there, but none of them came close to the taste I remembered. They were either too tangy, too bland, or just missing something. I was close to giving up on ever having ranch again... until I stumbled on The Spice Way

on Amazon a few years ago (you can also check out their site at [www.thespiceway.com](http://www.thespiceway.com)).

Game. Changer.

Their Ranch Seasoning Mix is the one I now live by. It's free from MSG, free from fillers, and packed with real flavor. I use it to make a thick ranch dip for veggies, or when I want a salad dressing, I just stir in a little milk—and voilà! Homemade ranch dressing that's actually better than store-bought. And did I mention it's MSG-free?

I'm sharing my go-to recipe below so you can enjoy it too—whether you're avoiding MSG for health reasons or just want a clean, flavorful ranch you can feel good about.

Stay tuned... your taco salad will thank you.



# MSG-Free Ranch Dip & Dressing

*Better than store-bought. Seriously!*

Ranch Dip Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons Tzatziki Seasoning (I use The Spice Way)
- 1 teaspoon dried dill
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder  
(I love the organic kind from MicroIngredients)
- ½ cup Hellman's or organic mayo
- 1 cup sour cream (Daisy or organic brands WITHOUT carrageenan)



Directions:

Mix everything together in a bowl until smooth. That's it!

Now grab your favorite veggies, chips, or crackers—this dip is ready to party.

Want Ranch Dressing Instead?

Just add:

- ½ cup Organic Grass-Fed Whole Milk
- Shake or whisk until smooth.

Pro Tip:

Feel free to sprinkle in more Tzatziki seasoning if you want that ranch flavor to really pop—the milk tones it down a little. And let's be honest: I rarely measure. I go by taste, and I'm generous with spices. So you should be too.

Drizzle it over salad, taco salad, nachos, or anything that could use a little creamy ranch goodness—minus the MSG.

# REPLAY • *episode*



## Renee's Story: From Addiction to Redemption

By the time Renee reached her senior year of high school, the search for love and acceptance had spiraled into a full-blown heroin and alcohol addiction. Driven by deep self-hatred and a desperate ache to feel seen, she found herself enslaved to something she couldn't control.

"I was a slave to something I couldn't stop," she says—a raw confession that marked the breaking point in her story.  
But it wasn't the end.

In this powerful Tapestry replay, Renee shares how God stepped into the wreckage of her life and brought true freedom. What the enemy meant for destruction, God used to bring healing, purpose, and redemption.

This is more than a recovery story. It's a testimony of grace.

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WITH GOD ALL  
THINGS ARE  
POSSIBLE  
MATT. 19:26

A Journey For the Brave, the Weary & the Hungry  
Because When Faith Gets Personal, Everything Changes

*by Tracee L. Padilla*



