

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is walking on a cobblestone street in autumn. She is wearing a light beige trench coat over a dark top and dark pants. Her hair is blowing in the wind. The street is covered with fallen orange and yellow leaves. In the background, there are trees with autumn foliage and a building. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

CHASING FREEDOM

**LET GO
AND LET GOD**

UNVEILED LIVING MAGAZINE | VOL. 15 | FALL 2025





**So Christ has truly set us
free. Now make sure that
you stay free, and don't
get tied up again in
slavery to the law.**

Galatians 5:1



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Unveiled Living Magazine

CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN

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Letter from the *Editor*



***Letting go isn't
losing control - it's
trusting the One
who never lost it
to begin with.***

There's something about fall that feels like an exhale. The air cools, the leaves release, and creation itself reminds us that letting go is part of God's rhythm.

This issue, Chasing Freedom, is about that same release—the sacred exchange of control for peace. Somewhere along the way, many of us started chasing things that can't carry the weight of our hearts. We chase answers, approval, closure, or even perfection, but the freedom we're looking for can't be earned or caught. It's already ours—found in Jesus.

“For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” —
2 Corinthians 3:17

Freedom isn't about doing whatever we want. It's about living fully yielded to the Lord who knows what's best. It's learning to unclench your fists, to breathe again, and to trust the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit. When we live unveiled—wide open before Him—we stop striving and start abiding.

My prayer for you as you turn these pages is that you'll feel that freedom rise again. That the Spirit will meet you right where you are and remind you: you don't have to chase what's already been given.

Let go. Let God.
And live free.

Tracee Padilla
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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

The background of the entire image is a close-up photograph of autumn leaves. The leaves are in various shades of brown, tan, and orange. Many of the leaves are covered with small, clear water droplets, which are most prominent on the lighter-colored leaves in the upper right and lower right areas. The lighting is soft, creating a gentle, contemplative mood.

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

Who We Are

At Unveiled Living, we believe real life and real faith are meant to walk hand in hand.

We exist to help you live unveiled—free from the masks, the striving, and the weight of trying to hold it all together. It's about finding authentic freedom in Jesus and walking it out in the everyday moments of life.

Our heartbeat is simple:

Be Connected.

Because we need each other. Our stories—the messy, beautiful, in-between ones—remind us we're not alone.

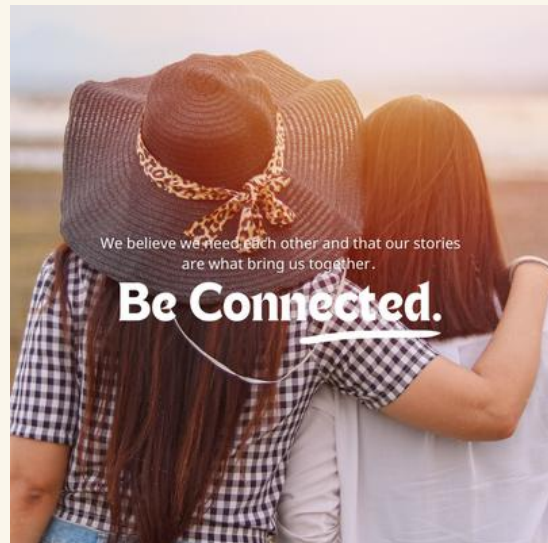
Be Free.

Because true freedom comes when we let go of what we were never meant to carry and live in the grace that God already gave us.

Be You.

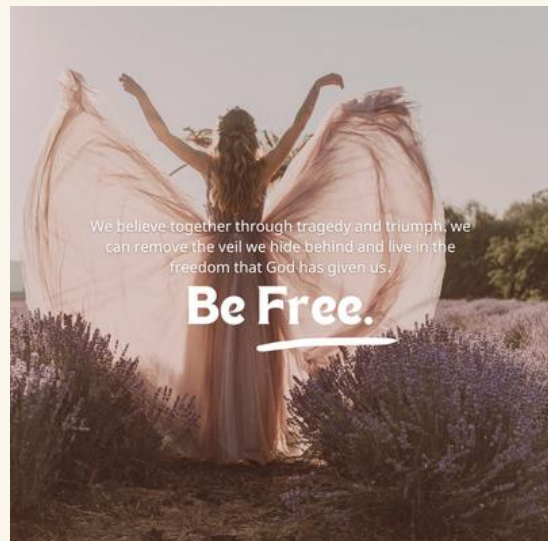
Because God created you on purpose, laughter lines and all. Vulnerability and hilarity go hand in hand when you're living unveiled.

Every page we write, every study we create, every podcast and Emag we share is about this: helping you walk closer with Jesus and live the kind of authentic, joy-soaked life He designed for you.



We believe we need each other and that our stories are what bring us together.

Be Connected.



We believe together through tragedy and triumph, we can remove the veil we hide behind and live in the freedom that God has given us.

Be Free.



We believe vulnerability and hilarity go hand in hand.

Be You.

Why We Do What We Do



When this ministry first began, my vision was honestly pretty small. I figured I'd share a few videos from my phone, post encouragement on social media, and call it a day. Simple. Real. Manageable.

But I've always had a deep heart to help people draw closer to the Lord—to remind them they're not alone, to lift up tired hands in the battle, and to point them back to the truth that God isn't done with their story. That's how Unveiled Living got started—a little seed of faith that God's been growing ever since.

Then came Edwin. My husband, my encourager, and the man who looked at my "small" dream and said, "We're going to dream bigger." Before I knew it, he'd built a full-blown Unveiled Living studio in our basement for the Heart Talk podcast. That one move stirred something in me to start looking beyond what I thought possible—and out of that came this digital magazine.

Now, here's the funny part: at first, I wrote every single article myself. (Insert deep breath and nervous laugh.) Eventually, the Lord must've leaned over to the angels and said, "We'd better send help," because that's when He brought people like Kathleen Knapp, one of our very first contributors and a dear friend who's still part of this writing family today. From there, God began adding incredible writers—women who share the same heart for helping others grow deeper in faith.

The truth? This journey hasn't been easy. There've been tears, too many cups of coffee to count, and more "I'm done" moments than I'd like to admit. But every single time, God reminds me why we started—because people need hope. They need to know they're seen, loved, and not forgotten. And through all the hard days, He's been growing something in us too: deeper faith, stronger focus, and a whole lot more grace.

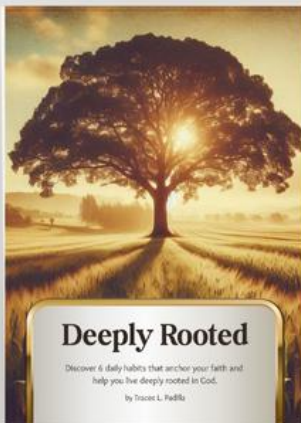
Fast forward to now, and I'm blown away. We've launched two new Bible studies this year and are celebrating the release of my first book, *Unshaken*. My dear friend Janice, who joined me on this journey in 2024, released her first study, *Foundation to Flourish*, and together we've watched God breathe on these projects in ways only He can.

One woman told us after finishing *Deeply Rooted* that it was one of the most authentic studies she's ever done—"Not the norm," she said. It made her laugh, cry, and dig deeper with God. That's exactly what we hope for every time someone opens one of our studies—that they'd meet God in a real way and walk away changed.

And get this—even the guys have started asking to join in! (We didn't see that coming, but we're here for it!)



AVAILABLE NOW

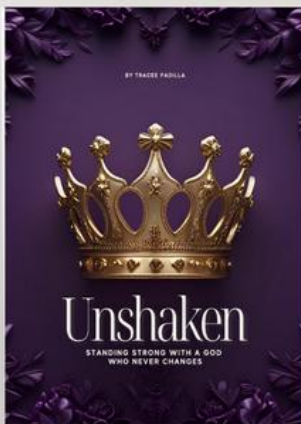


Looking ahead, 2026 is already taking shape, and it's got us both fired up. There's a brand-new focus the Lord's been stirring in our hearts, and it's powerful. There's another book coming, more studies, and next June, we're hosting our Joy Revolution Conference right here on the North Carolina coast! So grab your friends, your small group, or your favorite travel buddy—it's going to be three unforgettable days of worship, laughter, and life-changing encounters with God.

So stay connected with us. Subscribe to our Unveiled Connect emails, tune in to the Heart Talk podcast (on YouTube, Apple, and Spotify), and if you love a good Monday morning faith boost, join me over on Unfiltered Faith.

We believe the best is yet to come.

PRE ORDER



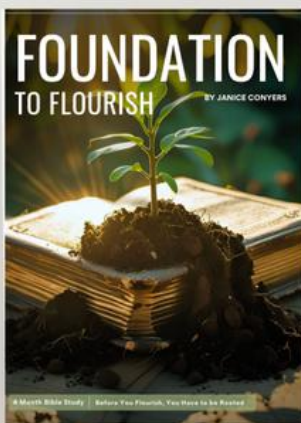
The story's still being written—and we're loving every second of the journey!

~Tracee & Janice

Inside Our Website:

- Bible Studies: All our print 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 current and past Emag editions and checkout our new ones
- Unveiled Connect: Sign up for exclusive downloads, email updates, early access, and weekly encouragement
- Unfiltered Faith with Tracee: Weekly devo newsletter

AVAILABLE NOW



Every study, story, and song we release points back to one thing—helping you live on purpose, right where God has positioned you.

👉 Visit unveiledliving.org and take a look around—we can't wait for you to see it.

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



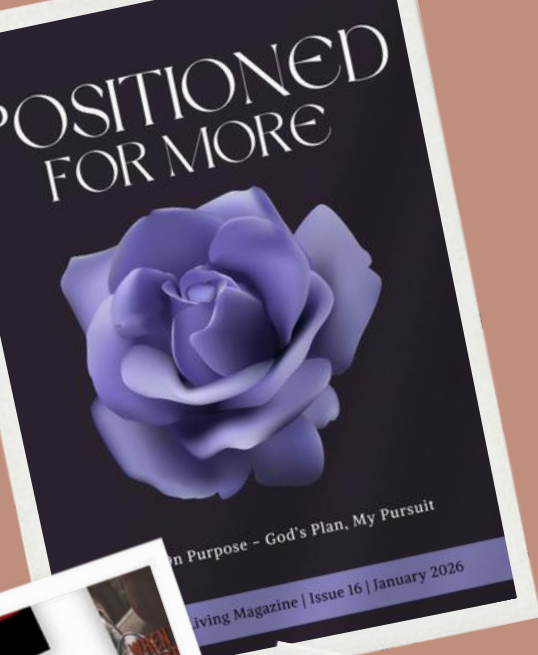
JANICE CONYERS
Connections Manager

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.

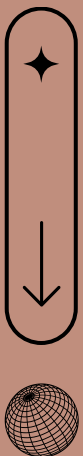


We'd love to stay connected with you. Subscribe on our website to receive our weekly Unveiled Connect. Stay connected and inspired!



EMAG 2026 *Next Year*

THE JOURNEY OF LIVING ON
PURPOSE IN EVERY SEASON.



www.unveiledliving.org

Positioned For More - January 2026



Live on purpose. God's plan, my pursuit. You're not lost—you're placed. This season launches the journey of purpose by reminding you that you're already standing in the middle of God's plan. Purpose isn't out there somewhere—it's right here, right now, waiting to be lived.

Refined For More - April 2026



Becoming who God's shaping you to be. The refining isn't rejection—it's God making room for what's next. This season is about growth in the middle of the mess, learning to trust His hands when life feels stretched and uncomfortable. He's shaping something stronger, steadier, and more beautiful than you imagined.

Called For More - July 2026



Stepping into your God-calling with courage. This is the season to move. No more waiting for the perfect moment or the perfect version of you. If He called you, He's already equipped you. Courage doesn't mean you're not scared—it just means fear doesn't get to call the shots anymore.

Redeemed For More - October 2026



Redemption is just the beginning of your story. This season is about walking free. God doesn't just restore what's broken—He rebuilds it stronger, deeper, and filled with new purpose. Redemption isn't a finish line; it's a brand-new starting point.



Coming June 2026

FOR THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH. YOU WILL FILL ME WITH JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE. I HAVE TOLD YOU THIS SO THAT MY JOY MAYBE IN YOUR AND THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE C



the JOY revolution

CONFERENCE



CARMEN CHASE
6:30PM

THURSDAY, JUNE 11



JANICE CONYERS 9:00 AM
AMANDA CRABB 6:30PM

FRIDAY, JUNE 12



TRACEE PADILLA
9:00AM

SATURDAY, JUNE 13

THUR-SAT JUNE 11-13, 2026 | BEACH ASSEMBLY OF GOD
REGISTRATION OPENS: JANUARY 1, 2026

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER: AMANDA CRABB | WWW.UNVEILEDLIVING.ORG

FOR THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH. YOU WILL FILL ME WITH JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE. I HAVE TOLD YOU THIS SO THAT MY JOY MAYBE IN YOUR AND THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE C

A photograph of a broken mirror in an ornate gold frame. The mirror is shattered, with several large pieces missing. Two heavy metal chains are draped over the frame, hanging down. The chains are also on the floor around the base of the mirror. The background is a dark, textured wall with some peeling paint on the left side. The overall mood is somber and dramatic.

THE MIRROR BROKE, THE CHAINS FELL.

by Janice Conyers

Have you ever found yourself haunted by a moment, a mistake, or a memory you just can't seem to shake? Maybe it's a decision you wish you could undo, words you wish you never said, or even something someone else did to you that left a scar you didn't ask for. The past can be heavy. And if we're not careful, we start to carry that weight like it's part of our identity.

But what if that shame... that guilt... that wound... isn't who you are?

What if you're not meant to carry it anymore?

The Past Is Not a Life Sentence

Too often, we treat the past like a prison cell. We rehearse the what-ifs, relive the regret, and replay the pain.

We keep the door wide open for guilt and unforgiveness to walk in and set up camp. Sometimes it's guilt we carry toward ourselves. Sometimes it's bitterness we cling to toward others.

But either way, we stay bound.
And that's not how grace works.

Grace says, "You don't have to stay here."
Grace unlocks the cell, breaks the chain, and says, "Come out."

Paul reminds us in Galatians 5:1 (NLT),

"So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law."

It's possible to be saved but still live bound.

*Because freedom isn't just what God offers—
it's what we have to choose to walk in.*



Chain Reactions

Sometimes the chains we wear aren't visible.

They sound like:

- "I should've known better."
- "They don't deserve my forgiveness."
- "God couldn't really use me after that."
- "I can't forgive myself."

But here's the truth: Holding on doesn't protect us—it paralyzes us.

Unforgiveness doesn't make us strong; it keeps us stuck. Guilt doesn't make us holy; it just makes us hopeless.

Jesus didn't die so we could decorate our chains. He came to break them.

Isaiah 61:1 tells us why Jesus came:

"He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed."

That means you. That means now.

Releasing the Grip

So, how do we actually let go?

Here are three steps to start chasing freedom:

1. Name What You're Carrying

God asked Adam and Eve, "Who told you that you were naked?" in Genesis 3.

He didn't ask because He didn't know. He asked because they needed to know where the lie came from.

- What chain are you still holding?
- Who told you that God wouldn't forgive that?
- Who told you you're unworthy of healing or joy?

Call it out. Bring it into the light.

2. Forgive. Even If It Feels Unfair

Forgiveness doesn't make what happened okay - it makes you okay.

It's not saying, "They were right." It's saying, "I refuse to let this hold power over me any longer."

Colossians 3:13 (NLT) says, "Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others."

That includes forgiving yourself.



3. Walk in Grace Daily

You don't drift into freedom—you walk into it.
And it's a daily walk.

Every time the enemy tries to throw your past
in your face, remind him of the Cross.

Grace isn't a one-time event. It's a lifestyle.

It's waking up every day and saying, "I'm not
who I was. I'm who He says I am."

Closing Thought: Burn the Maps

You can't chase freedom while carrying a map
back to your past.

Tear it up.

Whatever "used to be" no longer defines who
you are. Not your shame. Not your scars. Not
your history.

Because the God of grace doesn't just free you
from something—He frees you for something.

So, run. Run toward healing. Toward peace.
Run into the arms of the One who broke every
chain for you.

You don't have to chase freedom anymore.
You just have to receive it and walk in it.

**WHATEVER
'USED TO BE' NO
LONGER DEFINES
WHO YOU ARE.**



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.

The background of the entire image is a deep blue space filled with golden stars and swirling nebulae. In the upper left, several bright, multi-pointed starbursts are visible. A large, soft, golden glow emanates from the upper right corner, creating a sense of light and warmth. The overall aesthetic is ethereal and celestial.

The
OPEN HANDS
OF FAITH

Letting Go of Perfectionism

by Carmen Chase

"Religion celebrates perfection. Family celebrates progress." – Wendy Backlund

We've all seen it. Many of us have done it. Chalk up at least twice for me.

We gather 'round and hold our breath as a tiny human wiggles and flails and struggles. And then it happens. She flops over from her tummy to her back and we go nuts. We're calling the family and texting friends, "This just happened!"

A few months and some change later and we're scrambling like the Paparazzi to capture her first wobbly steps. The social media blitz triggers so many hearts, party emojis and comments that you'd think she just walked on the moon.

I'll tell you what you won't see.

You won't see mom with a clipboard, taking note of every muscle that her baby did or did not use to its full potential. You won't hear Auntie clicking her tongue and shaking her head because her little niece leaned too heavily to the left or plopped to her bottom too soon.

But somewhere between Huggies and Depends, that little human will battle voices telling her she's not enough.

She will give something her very best shot and find out someone else can do it better. She will feel the inner prod to do better, try harder or work smarter.

How will she respond?

It will stem from one of two roots: fear or faith.

Fear will tell her that her value as a person comes from what she does. So everything will hinge on her success or failure. She will align herself with a particular idea of perfection...a career position, a dress size, a romantic partner...and then it's off to the races. She might win. But failure is always breathing down her neck. If she loses too often, she will learn to give up without even trying, resigning herself to failure as an inevitable outcome.

Faith will tell her that her value comes from Whose she is. So any challenge, deficit or gap in her performance is an opportunity to learn something. To grow. It's no reflection of how loved she is. She will set her sights on a particular skill or goal she'd like to achieve, and then it's off to the training center. There's no winning or losing here. It's just progress.

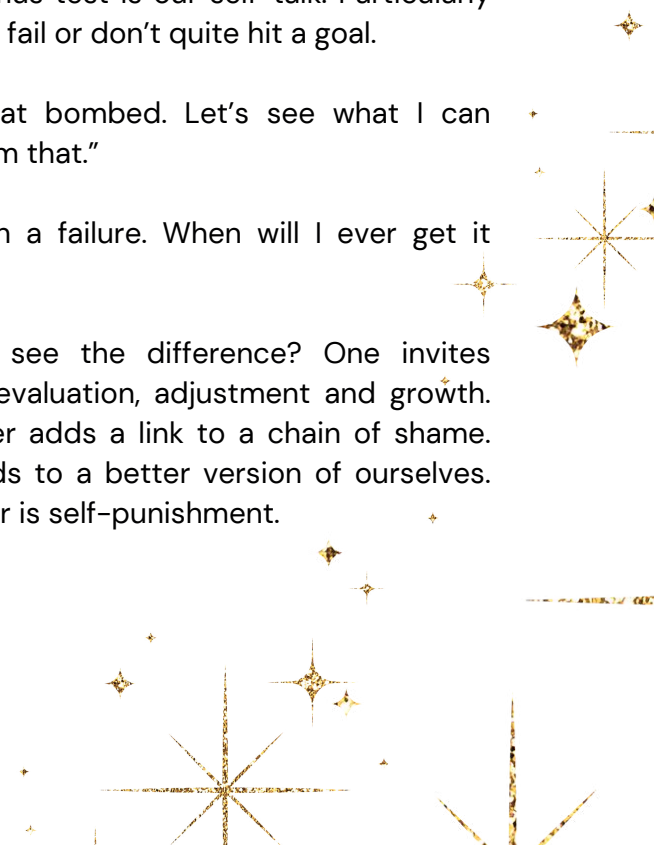
Which root is feeding you? Perhaps—like me—a little of both?

Striving for perfection and developing discipline can appear deceptively similar. A good litmus test is our self-talk. Particularly when we fail or don't quite hit a goal.

"Well, that bombed. Let's see what I can learn from that."

"I'm such a failure. When will I ever get it right?"

Do you see the difference? One invites healthy evaluation, adjustment and growth. The other adds a link to a chain of shame. One leads to a better version of ourselves. The other is self-punishment.



The Apostle Paul said, "I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me." Philippians 3:12 NLT

Back to the baby...when she rolls over for the first time, we celebrate the milestone because it's evidence that she's developing. But if that's all she ever does, there's a big problem. Because she's not a "Roller-Over". She's a human. Daily she's watching more mature humans doing all sorts of things she has yet to do. But she's not discouraged. She just keeps learning, acquiring the same skills as her surrounding prototypes, but with her own flair.

In God's ecosystem—which is the entire cosmos—being informs doing. A star emits mega-lumens of light because it's a giant nuclear fusion reactor. A dragonfly hovers because it's an insect with two pairs of independently-controlled wings.

What are you? A spirit-being made in the image of God with a temporary physical body equipped to fulfill a purpose and destiny in the greater cosmic God-story taking place all around and in you.

Whew! That's a lot. So let's simplify: you were made in His perfect image, equipped to do perfect "God" things. The more God-like you become, the more God-like things you will do.

While the world—and even the church—easily dismisses us if we're not top-dog, top-fashion, first-chair, corner-office, employee-of-the-month, or mom-of-the-year, God embraces us because, in His terms, "she's Me".

How do we progress in our God-like-ness? We spend time with Him, watching and listening until His mindset and values absorb into ours. And just like a little baby imitates her mom swaying to music or clapping her hands, we'll have no concern about doing things precisely "perfect". We'll just be excited to learn the next new thing He shows us, celebrating each mini milestone along the way.



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](#)



The Necklace I Was Never Meant to Wear



by Tracee L. Padilla

Learning to Take Off
what Shame Put On and
Walk in the Freedom
Christ Paid For

So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. Galatians 5:1



Sitting here at my desk wondering what I would write, I keep seeing the word freedom floating above me. It's like it's always right there—hovering in front of us—but we struggle to grab hold of it and actually live in it.

So many things in this life pull at our hearts and keep us from living free. We stay tied to the chains of past thoughts, old battles, or painful seasons. And whether we realize it or not, every time we hold onto those things, it's like we're wearing the most obnoxious piece of jewelry imaginable.

If we could see ourselves in the mirror, we'd probably ask, "Why on earth am I still wearing that?"

Let me take you back for a moment.

In 2012, after 22 years of marriage as a pastor's wife, my world flipped upside down. The shame, guilt, and loss left me believing I was marked forever. I pictured myself wearing a huge diamond-studded D necklace around my neck. Every day I believed the lie that said, "You're marked. No one will ever want to use you in ministry again."

But never once did God tell me I was done. Not once did His Word say, "Your past defines your purpose." Yes, there are always lessons we learn from the roads we've walked, but God never stamps "disqualified" on your story.

And that's when God began stirring something in me again — little by little, He started breathing life back into the things I thought were dead. It didn't happen overnight, but it started with small reminders that He wasn't finished with my story.

I'll never forget two key moments that changed everything.

The first was January 2018. I hadn't led worship since 2012, the year my first marriage ended. I thought that calling was over, so I put it on the shelf to collect dust. After moving back to Tennessee in 2017, the church we started attending was full of incredible worship singers, and honestly, I didn't think I belonged there.

"You are not marked by your past. You're marked by My Purpose."

But one Sunday morning during worship, I felt a stirring I hadn't felt in years—the gentle whisper of God awakening something in me.



I asked quietly, "Lord, will I ever lead worship again? Will I ever speak again?" Before I could even finish the thought, a woman I didn't know leaned over and said, "I have a word from the Lord for you. May I share it?"

Through tears, I nodded. She whispered, "What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for? It's time to step forward — every step you take I will move two steps ahead of you. It's time to do what I've called you to do. Memorize scripture — get into My word and it will be like honey on your lips... It's time."

I wept. It was as if God Himself was peeling that heavy necklace off my neck and saying, "You are not marked by your past. You are marked by My purpose."

The second moment came later that same year. One night, after praying through frustration and reading 1 John 4 about God's love, I received a text from a dear friend the next morning. She said, "I don't know why, but I keep feeling prompted to send you this verse," and then she shared Ephesians 3:18–19 — "May you have the power to understand... how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is... Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."

At first, I smiled and thought it was a sweet coincidence. But later that night, it hit me deep in my spirit. I realized God wasn't just reminding me of His love — He was asking me to rebuild my identity around it. I read words from a book that said when there's a crack in your understanding of God's love, your identity gets shaken. And right there, God spoke to my heart:

“Tracee, focus on wrapping your identity in My love. Don’t define yourself by anyone’s approval, by past rejection, or by what you’ve lost. Define yourself by who I say you are.”

That was the turning point.

Freedom didn’t come in one big moment. It came in a series of small choices—daily letting go of what I thought and choosing to believe what God says. It meant trading the D around my neck for something new—the L that represents His love.

Because when you wear that, everything changes.

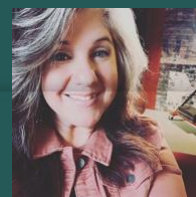
You walk differently.
You breathe differently.
You live differently.

Friend, you are not marked by your past.
You are marked by Jesus.

So take off that old jewelry that was never meant to define you.

Exchange it for the beauty of His love and the freedom He already bought for you.

Because the truth is—freedom looks good on you.



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.

LETTING GO OF *Perfect*



The Freedom of
Faithful Excellence

By Cendrine Hosoda

The Tension We Live In

I have often struggled with the concept of grace and the biblical calls for excellence, productivity, and fruitfulness.

Take the parable of the talents, for example. One servant was given ten and doubled it. Another five and doubled that. And then there was the one who buried his. (Matthew 25:14–30)

When I think of that story and where I would fit in it, I don't see neat little balance sheets in my own life.

Sometimes I wonder, Am I really multiplying what I've been given? Or am I just barely hanging on? On my best days, I comfort myself by saying, "Well, at least I didn't bury them. I'm still at it, trying. That must count for something, right?" But it sure doesn't always feel like doubling.

And then I have seasons that feel more like ice ages, when I'm already running on empty. What about those?

When you've tried and tried, but it looks like your efforts keep falling flat? How do we come to grips with the tension between living from excellence and being crushed under perfectionism?

I think most of us wrestle with questions like these: Am I giving my best, or am I just being mediocre? Am I working in response to God's grace, or am I trying to earn something from Him or from others?

For me, this wrestle goes deep. Growing up in a performance-driven environment where comparison and competition were the currency of value, excellence became tangled up with worthiness. When I do less than I know I could, or less than what I imagine is possible, I'm quick to judge myself as lazy or passive. And worse, I find myself silently judging others who aren't working as hard as me.

That's when I know I've slipped into the danger zone.

There are at least two extremes I try to avoid.

- **Perfectionism**—driven by fear, shame, and the need to prove. It's burdensome, exhausting, and judgmental.
- **Passivity disguised as grace**—using grace as an excuse not to grow, not to stretch, not to partner with God.

Neither extreme is life-giving, and neither one looks like freedom. One leaves me bone-tired and drained, the other leaves me unfulfilled and numb. Both fall short of the heart of God for us.



The Open Hands of Faith

To me perfectionism feels tight; clenched fists, a body braced for impact, energy constricted. There is a hardness. Something that feels very controlled, holding on so tightly that everything feels heavy.

But when I picture faith operating through grace, I don't see clenched fists. I see open hands.

Open hands receive what they need for today, put it to use, and then wait to receive again.

The servant in the parable of the talents wasn't expected to conjure up resources out of thin air. He was asked to use what was entrusted to him. He wasn't judged for how much he started out with either.

That's doable. That feels undaunting, fair, even.

Faith with open hands isn't passive. It's responsive.

We show up. We use what's given. But we aren't enslaved to the outcomes. Oh, those outcomes! How much do our worries about outcomes impact how we show up? How much more can we carry when our hands are open because we entrust the outcome to God?



The parable of the two sons (Luke 15:11–32) also gives some illustration of this.

- The prodigal ran after freedom without responsibility. From my perfectionist lens, I've often judged him as lazy and passive. Wasting opportunities.
- The older son clung to performance and perfection, fueled by comparison and entitlement. For years, I related to him. I always thought he had a point! But his father reminded him that he had also missed the Father's heart.

Both sons missed it. Both had something to learn.

The Father's invitation was never to passivity or perfectionism. It was an invitation to live at home in his love.

Even though the older son did "all the right things," his perfectionism robbed him of rest, joy, and love. How familiar is that for those of us caught in the trap of proving ourselves? We have to ask: What are we missing in all our effort to get it right?

Does God really need us to "get the job done" for His sake? He could snap His fingers and accomplish more than we ever could. The real invitation is to learn something in the doing: something about grace, trust, and all the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23), and what it means to be His beloved.

Both sons were so consumed with what they thought was the way to do things, that they missed out on the blessings and joy that were already and always there for them.



What Excellence Looks Like in Grace

What if excellence isn't about proving but about stewarding? God provides. He always has. He's not asking us to manufacture outcomes but to faithfully use what He places in our hands. (2 Corinthians 9:10)

Perfectionism wastes what God gives because it's fueled by fear. Passivity wastes it too because it leaves His gifts unused. In that sense, perfectionists and the passive aren't as different as we might think. Both miss the heart of partnership with God.

Excellence, on the other hand, comes from peace, rest, and gratitude. Can you picture the father in the parable standing over his older son with a clipboard, evaluating profit margins? Of course not. More likely, he longed to see his son grow in patience, kindness, joy and all fruit of the Spirit more precious than any material return. Might there have been more creativity in the son's work if he had pursued excellence with open hands, creating even more abundance for all affected?

Excellence with open hands trusts God with the outcomes. I propose it also does not worry about failure because it knows it is covered by God (2 Corinthians 12:9). It offers back what was given, like the boy who brought his loaves and fish. The disciples—thinking like perfectionists—saw only scarcity and impossibility. But the boy offered what little he had, trusting it would be enough (John 6:1–14).

Isn't that an example of excellence in grace? And God multiplied it. Way more than doubled it! Now there is something to think about!

It seems like perfectionism is excellence chained to fear. Excellence, in contrast, looks to be faith made fruitful by grace.

A Fresh Call

So what about you? Have you found yourself clutching to perfectionism? Or maybe dropping into passivity, convincing yourself it's grace?

I invite you to take some time with God. Sit with Him and ask, What am I not seeing right now? What do You want me to know about how You've called me to steward this season and the resources in it?

Maybe excellence right now doesn't look like doubling your talents. Maybe it looks like showing up with what you have, offering it in open hands, and trusting God to do the multiplying, just as He has always done. Because God's grace doesn't remove the call to grow; but it absolutely removes the crushing weight of having to prove.

And when we stop marching for Him out of fear and start dancing with Him in grace, that's when we finally learn the freedom of open hands.

EXTRAS

Put Into Practice

Deepen your engagement with this article by putting into practice one or more of the following:



Open Hands Practice: Each morning, open your hands physically in prayer and say, “Lord, I release the need to control and I receive your grace.”



Grace Anchor Verse: Write down one Scripture about God’s grace on a card and keep it where you see it often (desk, mirror, car). Let it remind you to rest in Him.



Excellence Check-In: At the end of the day, ask yourself: “Did I work from rest and love today, or from striving and fear?”



Compassion Pause: Next time you feel yourself judging someone as “lazy” or “not enough,” pause and reflect: “How can I meet myself with God’s grace so I can extend grace to them?”



Celebrate Small Wins: End the week by thanking God for one place you chose excellence with peace instead of perfectionism with striving.



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

By Kathleen Knapp

THE FREEDOM OF *Grace*



Do you ever feel like you've blown it? I mean, really blown it?

Today I got very angry. Loud voice. Defensive words. Anger. Tears. Regret. Wow, did I ever blow it!

Then, after the surge of anger came the condemnation and guilt I heaped on myself. "Who do you think you are? A Christian? Hahaha, what a joke! You can't even keep your temper and tears under control. You'd think by now you'd have matured enough to behave differently."

Sometimes, the enemy is the voice telling us we are no good, we'll never be any good, and why bother anyway? The guilt of not being perfect can sometimes feel impossible to achieve. Then, we are overcome with waves of discouragement, thinking we'll never meet the expectations of being a 'good' Christian.

But friends, we don't have to be perfect. God doesn't call us to be perfect. He loves us and offers us grace. We just need to receive it.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV)

As believers in Jesus, we are free from condemnation. That freedom comes with his grace and mercy. God asks us to lean into, depend on, trust, and run to him when we mess up! We must pray, ask for forgiveness, and accept his grace. We can rest in the mercy and forgiveness that comes from our belief and trust in Jesus. His sacrifice on the cross gives us freedom from the guilt and shame of not being perfect.

“But if we freely admit our sins when his light uncovers them, he will be faithful to forgive us every time. God is just to forgive us our sins because of Christ, and he will continue to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1: 9 TPT)

After my angry outburst, I had to humble myself and ask forgiveness for the harsh words I had spoken, the angry voice I used, the defensive posture I took, the tears I shed, and the regret I felt for my actions. Humbling myself is hard. My very human reaction is to resist, react, and defend.

But there is grace—a grace we don’t deserve, a grace given freely through the love of Jesus, and a grace we need to provide others freely in return.

“So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.” (John 8:36 NLT)

Grace is the only way to heal a heart, mend a wound, and move forward in love. Grace covers a multitude of sins, but we need to humble ourselves, control our emotions, and ask for forgiveness when we blow it.

We weren’t created to go through life on our own without help. Divine help is only a prayer away if we just reach out and accept our freedom with grace.

**God doesn’t call us to be perfect.
He loves us and offers us grace.**



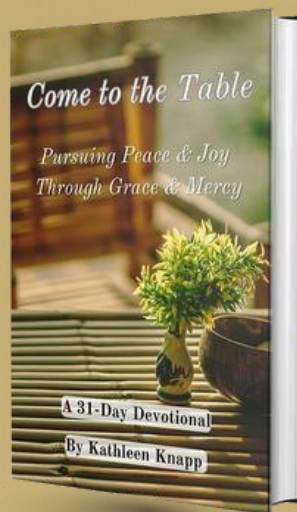


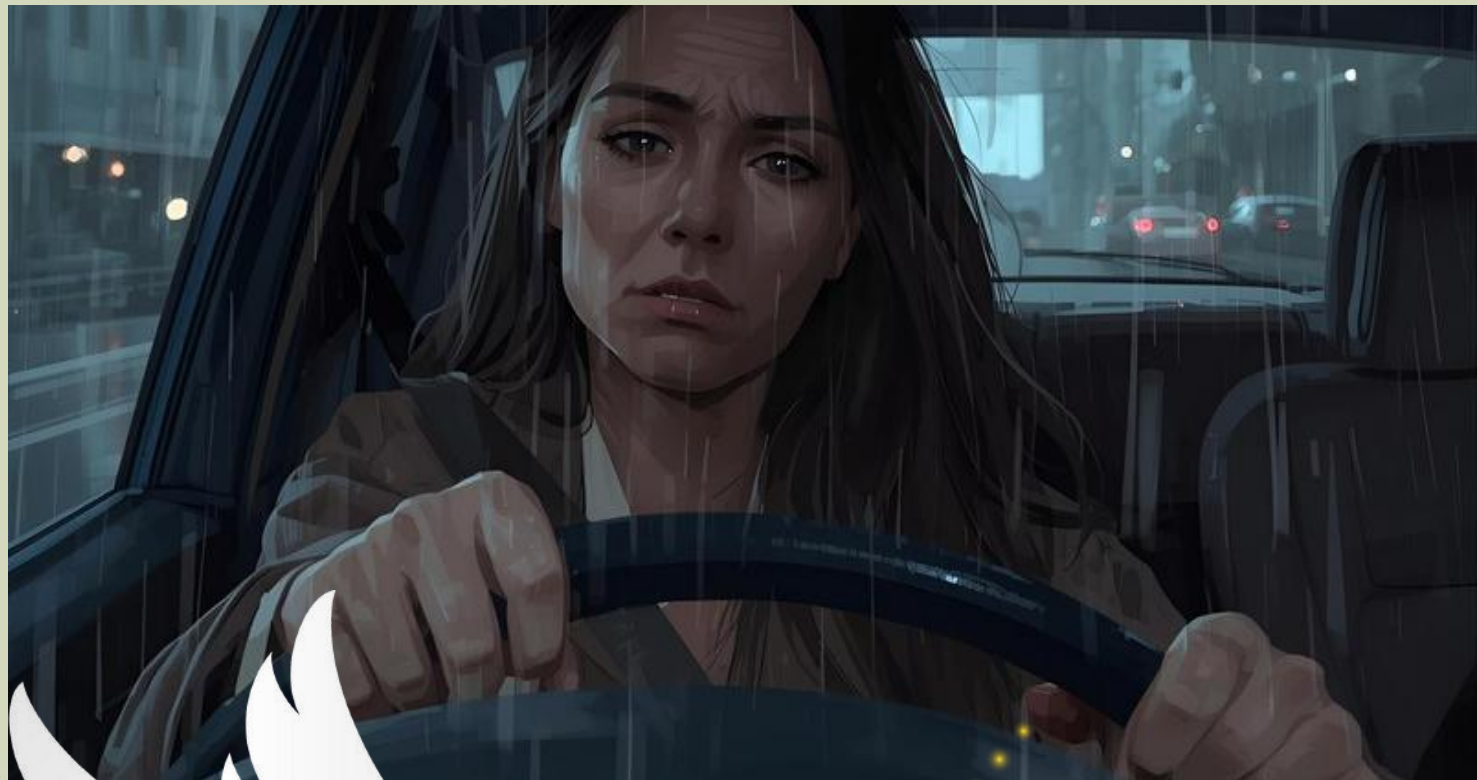
This devotion is an excerpt from Kathleen's new book *Come to the Table – Pursuing Peace & Joy Through Grace & Mercy*, a 31-day devotional with companion journal available now on Amazon.

Kathleen Knapp is an author and blogger.

Learn more at:

www.KathleenKnappWriter.com





LOST & FOUND

by the Holy Spirit



By Beth Nelson

“He renews my strength. He guides me
along the right paths, bringing honor
to his name.” Psalm 23:3 NLT

Have you ever been completely lost? In the pre-cell phone, pre-Google Maps era, getting lost was a common occurrence. You’d drive and drive, hoping to stumble on a familiar landmark. Sometimes you’d pull out a paper map, or if you were lucky, stop to ask a stranger for directions. Life can feel a lot like that—like you’re wandering without a clear path, unsure where to turn.

I learned this lesson firsthand back in the 90s, when I took my two young daughters to the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha.

Excited for the day, and with only a general idea of the way, we set off. But after following what I thought was the right route, I found myself in an unfamiliar part of the city.

There I was, in my Ford Tempo, winding through unknown streets—frustrated and alone. The oldest girl called from the back, “Are we there yet?” Finally, I pulled into a filling station, only to find the doors and windows barred with metal.

My stomach sank. I asked the attendant for help, but he rattled off a confusing jumble of street names and directions that left me even more uncertain.

Tears streamed down my face as I pulled away. My oldest noticed and asked, “Do you know where to go?” In a shaky voice I whispered, “No... not really.”

From the back came the sigh: “Oh no! You mean we don’t get to go to the zoo?”



That was the turning point. Right then, I knew my fear couldn't lead this trip. I prayed silently, asking the Holy Spirit to guide me.

So I slowed down and focused on each street sign, trusting God more than my own memory. Cars sped past, but I kept my eyes firm. Then—familiar street names. And finally, a sign: Henry Doorly Zoo.

Relief washed over me as if a million pounds had been lifted from my shoulders. "Here it is, girls—we're at the zoo!" I said, my heart overflowing with thanks to the Holy Spirit.

When we loosen our grip on fear and control, we make room for the Spirit to do what only He can do—guide, protect, and bring peace in the middle of uncertainty.

My prayer for you today is that in the moments when you feel lost, overwhelmed, or unsure of the way forward, you will pause, breathe, and invite the Holy Spirit to take the lead. May you find comfort in knowing you are never truly alone—God is faithfully guarding your path and lovingly directing your steps.

Heavenly Father, thank You for being my protector and guide even when I feel lost and afraid.

Forgive me for the times I try to take control instead of trusting You. Today I release my fears and my need to figure it all out on my own. Holy Spirit, come and lead me—calm my heart, steady my steps, and show me the way forward. Help me to rest in the promise that You are guarding my path. In Jesus' name, Amen.



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.

HOW TO

BREAK FREE FROM THE TRAP



BY JANICE CONYERS

LETTING GO OF COMPARISON AND GUILT

**“PAY CAREFUL
ATTENTION TO YOUR
OWN WORK FOR THEN
YOU WILL GET THE
SATISFACTION OF A JOB
WELL DONE, AND YOU
WON’T NEED TO
COMPARE YOURSELF TO
ANYONE ELSE.”
GALATIANS 6:4**



Let's be honest. Some of the biggest chains we carry as women aren't visible to anyone but us.

They're the thoughts we let loop through our minds:

"I should be more like her."

"I can't say no or they'll think I'm selfish."

"Why can't I get it together like everyone else seems to?"

Sound familiar?

In this journey of chasing freedom, I've learned that two of the most subtle, but sneaky traps are comparison and guilt—especially guilt around saying "no."

SOMEONE ELSE'S CALLING
DOESN'T CANCEL YOURS.

In this journey of chasing freedom, I've learned that two of the most subtle, but sneaky traps are comparison and guilt—especially guilt around saying “no.”

Both will keep you stuck. Both will rob your peace. But here's the good news: we don't have to live that way anymore.

Let's talk about how to break free—FOR REAL!

1. Start Noticing the Voice of Comparison Sooner

Comparison shows up quietly.

- You're scrolling social media and suddenly feel behind.
- You hear someone's testimony and start questioning your own.
- You walk into a room and feel... less than.

That's not from God. That's a trap. And it's time to shut it down.

Instead, pause and ask:

- “Why am I feeling this way?”
- “What truth can I remind myself of right now?”

*“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb... I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”
~ Psalm 139:13–14*

Friend, you are not behind. You are not overlooked. And her calling doesn't cancel out yours.



2. Trade “Should” for “Could”

Let’s call it what it is: “should” is the language of pressure.

- “I should volunteer for that thing.”
- “I should say yes even though I don’t have time.”
- “I should try harder to be more like...”

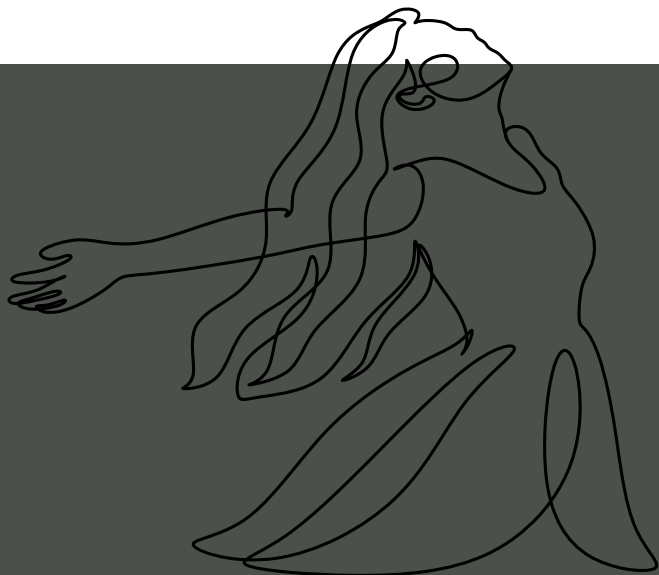
Try this instead:

Ask yourself, “Could I do this with peace?”

If the answer is no, it’s okay to let it go.

Your yes needs to have purpose, not pressure.

*“Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.”
Matthew 5:37 (NLT)*



“Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.” ~ Romans 12:15 (NLT)

3. Say No Without the 10-Minute Backstory

Listen, I know we love to explain ourselves. In fact, I’m a big offender! Sometimes I don’t know why I *feel* the *need* to justify myself!

But every “no” doesn’t need a presentation.

Here are a few phrases you can borrow:

- “Thank you so much for thinking of me! I can’t commit to that right now.”
- “I’ve prayed about it and I’m going to have to pass this time.”
- “I’m in a season of protecting my margin, but I’m cheering you on.”

Saying no doesn’t make you selfish. It makes you intentional.

You’re not turning people down...you’re turning your heart toward what God is actually asking of you.

4. Celebrate Her Without Criticizing Yourself

One of the most freeing things we can do?

Celebrate another woman’s success, even when it touches something tender in us.

**The enemy wants us to compete.
But the kingdom calls us to cheer.**

So, when you feel comparison rising up, flip the script:

- “God, thank You for what You’re doing in her life. I know You’re not done with mine either.”
- “She’s doing what she’s called to do—and I want to do the same.”

There's room for all of us to run our race. No one else can do it your way, with your story, your voice, your anointing.

5. Remember Who You Belong To

This world will tell you to hustle harder, do more, be everything to everyone.

But God? He tells you that you're already enough. Already loved. Already seen.

"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." ~ 2 Corinthians 12:9

You don't have to earn it. You don't have to perform. You just need to stay close to the One who called you.

When you know who you belong to, comparison loses its grip and saying "no" becomes a whole lot easier.

Final Thoughts

Chasing freedom looks like this:

- Saying "no" without guilt
- Cheering other women on without tearing yourself down
- Letting go of pressure and picking up peace

This isn't about being perfect. It's about being free.

Free to be who God created you to be.
Free to live within your limits.

Free to show up fully with nothing to prove and no one to compete with.

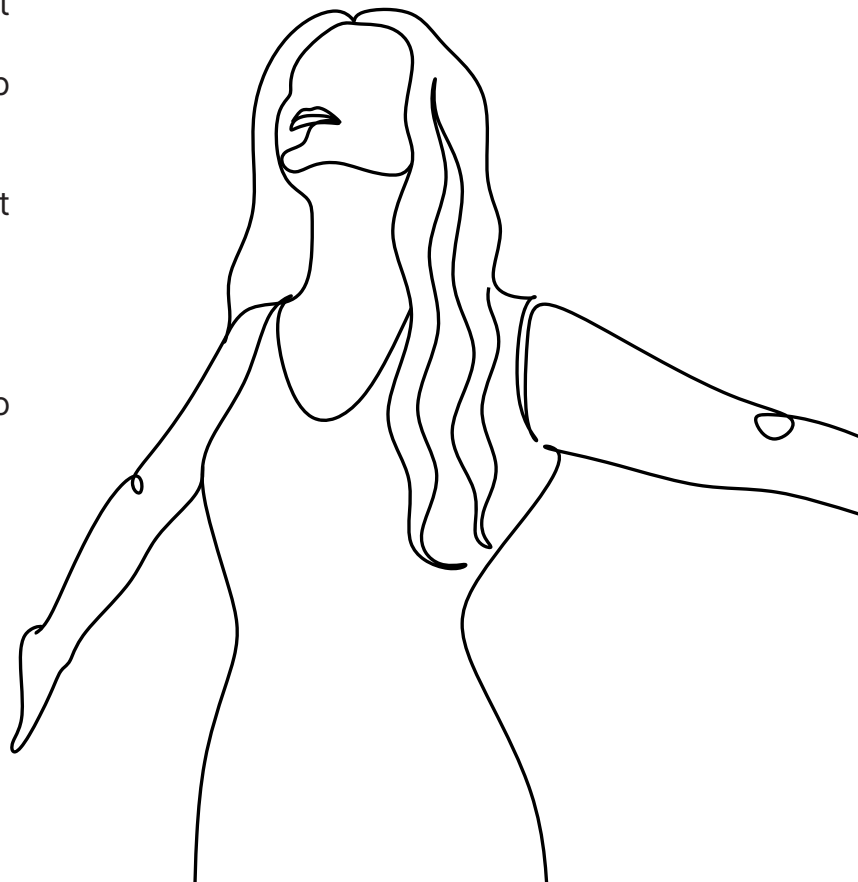
**And friend?
That's where real rest is found.**



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.



FREEDOM IS IN PERIL

*Defending What God
Says is Yours*



By Savannah Moore

I want you to use your imagination. Reach back into that WW2 history you learned in high school, and pretend that you are in London during the Blitz. The German Luftwaffe has been dropping bombs on your city. The streets grow quiet as the air sirens wail, and you hurry to a bomb shelter for safety. On your way to the Bomb shelter, you notice a poster that says "Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your Might."

What thoughts are running through your head? It may be for the safety of your family. One question that would be running through my head; how close are we to losing to Germany? German tactics were known in Europe. Jews disappearing, food shortages, and freedoms taken away, all in the name of war. Hopelessness.

Isn't this the tactic of the enemy? To get you to a place where you are willing to give up your freedom, simply because you are tired of all the attacks? How often do we fall for this tactic? I have fallen for it more than I would like to admit.

In my life, I struggle with lies that come out of nowhere. Some days they are so bad, the only way I know to describe them is like the bombing at Pearl Harbor. It creates doubt, fear, and bondage that is hard to break free from. The thing is, there can be many things that create this bondage. Depression, Anxiety, self-doubt, drugs, alcohol, that TV show you know you're not supposed to watch. We wonder why we are no longer walking in the freedom we once had. The invisible chains that bind us seem almost impossible to break. The thing is, God promises freedom to those who believe.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."
Galatians 5:1 NIV



**God Promises
Freedom to those
who believe.**



Yet we forget that as believers, freedom is ours. And this freedom doesn't come by our doing, it comes with God's help.

Let's look at the story of the Exodus. The Israelites have been enslaved for 430 years. God hears their cry for Help. So who does he send? Moses. A man who was granted his freedom from slavery because of the faith his mom had that God would protect her son. Moses obeys God's commands, and miracles are performed. God tells Moses to lead the Israelites out at the end, and Moses does. God leads the way. Are you picking up on a common denominator here? Moses listens and obeys, God provides the miracles, and leads the way. Moses trusted God and his plan; God gets the glory.

Now let's look at another story, Daniel. My favorite person in the bible, besides Jesus of course! He defied the King's order and prayed only to God. The result....a den of lions and him as the meal. Or that's how it should have played out. But Daniel knew where his freedom was found, not in the king who put him there but in God who protected him from becoming breakfast.

The greatest example of all? Jesus himself. You see, he is the 200% man. 100% human. 100% God. In the garden, what did he say?

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Matthew 26:39 NIV.

Jesus, the one who could call the angels to protect him, knew that the only way for our freedom was through the shedding of his blood, so he willingly took the cross.

Remember that poster? The one that said, "Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your Might".

As believers, those words are true. Our freedom is in Peril. We have an enemy that comes to "kill, steal, and destroy" - John 10:10 (NIV).

We must defend what God has given to us.

How do we defend it?

Just like Moses, Daniel, and Jesus himself, we give it to God. We let him take control. The act of giving up is the very thing that brings freedom.

What things are you holding on to?

What things have wrapped chains around you to the point you struggle to let go?

How willing are you to place it in the hand of God and watch him destroy the chains that bind you?

What is preventing you from walking in true freedom today?

I want to challenge you with this. Choose to say every day the things you are giving to Him. I write them in my Journal, my letter to Jesus. Make it a habit. And don't beat yourself up if you forget, because I'm still working on making it a habit to. When I do it, God helps me, and man, the freedom is so good!

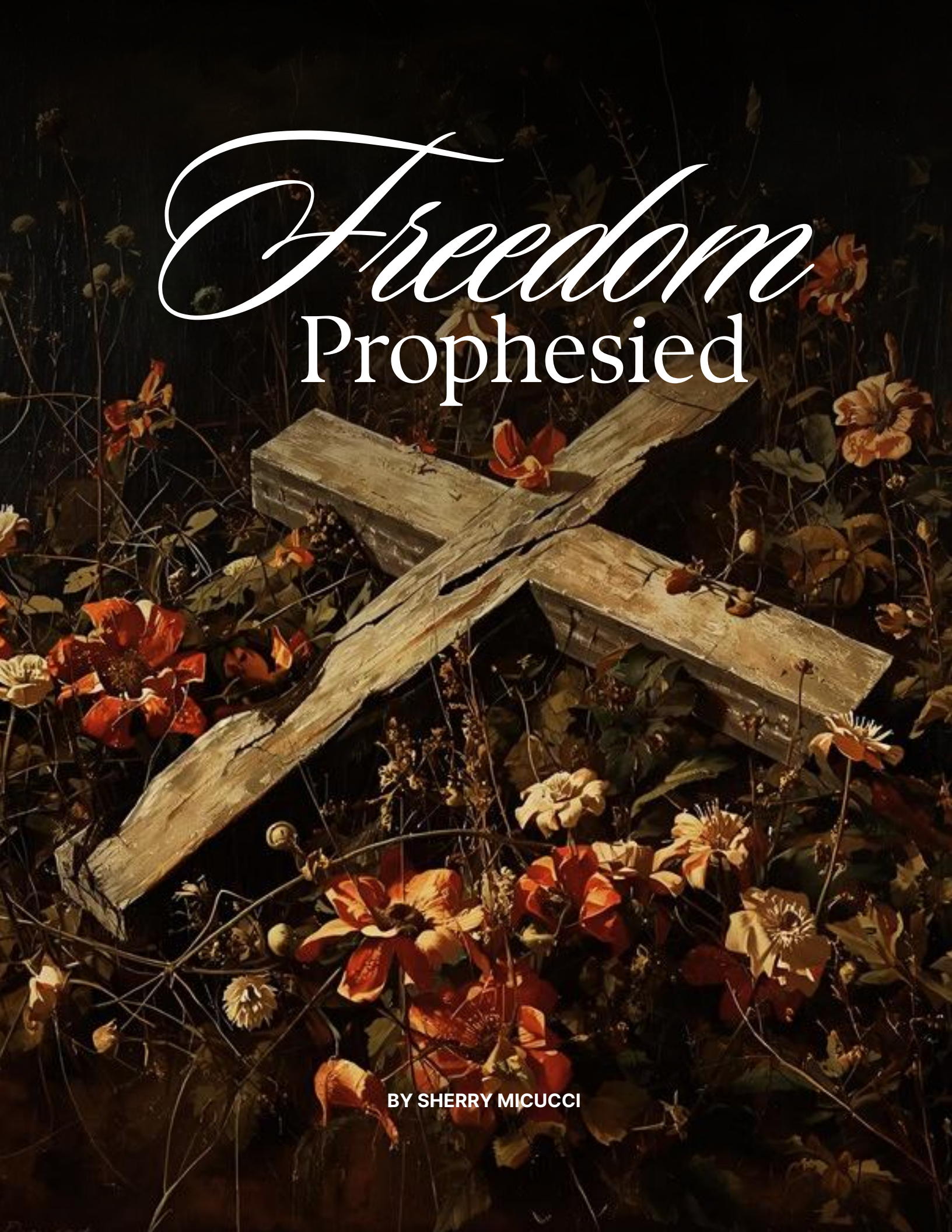
“The act of giving up is
the very thing that
brings us freedom.”



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.



A photograph of a rustic wooden cross made of two weathered planks, lying in a field of autumn flowers. The flowers are in shades of orange, red, and yellow, with some green foliage still visible. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The background is dark and out of focus.

Freedom Prophesied

BY SHERRY MICUCCI

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.”
— Philippians 3:13 (NKJV)

Where the Spirit of the Lord Is

Scripture reminds us in 2 Corinthians 3:17, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

This means freedom; freedom from the power of sin and bondage, and freedom to serve God and live a transformed life. We are free from guilt and shame, free from God’s judgment, and free to walk in the righteousness of Christ.

As Galatians 5:1 declares, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

Through the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live victorious lives. Ephesians 6:18 instructs us to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions,” and Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that we are to “fight the good fight of faith.”

We fight our battles through prayer—and we win them through faith. Prayer is our key, and faith is what unlocks the door.



“I placed the broken cross on my counter and walked by it everyday for weeks, unsure how to feel.”

The Gift of a Broken Cross

Several years ago, my son gave me a cross as a gift. When I unwrapped it, I discovered it was broken into three pieces.

He explained that he found it that way in the store. He had searched every shelf for another like it, but that broken one was the last one left. Though the store refused to sell damaged items, he begged them to let him buy it. Eventually, they agreed.

He brought it to me, still in pieces, saying he planned to glue it back together but hadn't yet done so.

At first, I didn't know how to feel. Should I be offended that he thought it was OK to give me a broken cross, or blessed that he knew it was OK to give it to me broken?

At that time, my son was in the midst of a 15-year addiction. When he was three, he was already quoting Scripture. By five, he had given his life to Jesus and declared that one day he would lead a global march for Christ. But as he grew, the enemy came hard after him. Diagnosed with ADHD, exposed to abuse by a close family member, he began acting out—stealing, problems at school and using drugs by age of fifteen.

I placed the broken cross on my counter and walked by it every day for weeks, unsure how to feel. One day, I finally picked it up, grabbed some glue, and began piecing it together.

As I worked, something powerful happened.

I heard my son's voice in my spirit say, “Mom, I'm broken. I need your help.” Then I heard the Lord whisper, “You are the glue.”



I protested, “No, Lord, You’re the glue.”

But again, He said, “Your prayers are the glue. Keep praying.”

When I finished gluing the cross, which was laying face down, I could see the cracks, uneven and imperfect. But when I turned it over it was seamless, perfect, and beautiful.

In that moment, God revealed that the cross represented my son. Though broken, he was being restored by the power of God through a mother’s persistent prayers. I was holding a prophetic symbol of his future—healed, whole, and free.

The Anointing Breaks the Yoke

Isaiah 10:27 declares, “The anointing breaks the yoke.” The anointing of the Holy Spirit removes burdens and destroys bondage. We cannot fix what is broken on our own, it is the power of the Holy Spirit within us that brings lasting change.

God gave me Romans 8:37: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

I asked God, “What does it mean to be more than a conqueror?”

He answered, “You’ve already won.”

Even though the battle was long and difficult, victory had already been secured through Christ.

Praying Through the Battle

For fifteen years, I fought for my son in prayer.

Through arrests, jail time, and even a prison sentence, I never stopped believing. Each time I received a call from him, I lifted it up to God and said, “This is Your son. You have a plan for his life. You are using this to bring him to freedom.”

I reminded the enemy daily, “You don’t get my son. He belongs to God. I win. I win. I win.”

God’s Word is alive—it’s not meant to stay dormant on the pages. When spoken in faith, it carries power. I declared Scripture over my son and called the Holy Spirit to follow him wherever he went.

I would say, “He can’t sit, stand, walk, or move without bumping into the Holy Spirit.”

Years later, he told me, “Mom, I always felt different. My friends could do whatever they wanted, but I always felt conviction.”

That was the Holy Spirit—answering prayer.

Ephesians 6:13–14 says, “Having done all to stand, stand therefore.” There’s nothing between “stand” and “stand.” So what do you do? You stand. You declare. You don’t give up—because the victory is already yours.

“We cannot fix what is broken on our own, it is the power of the Holy Spirit within us that brings lasting change.”

Freedom Fulfilled

Today, my son walks in complete freedom. He is successful in his work, passionate for Christ, and shares God’s Word with others.

He is living out Philippians 3:13—forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.

The broken cross that once symbolized pain now stands as a prophetic reminder that God restores, redeems, and makes all things new.

Through prayer, perseverance, and faith, freedom was prophesied—and freedom was fulfilled.

Freedom in Christ isn't just the absence of bondage—it's the presence of His Spirit. When we surrender to the Holy Spirit, every chain is broken.

Whatever seems broken in your life, trust that God is working even in the cracks. Keep praying. Keep standing. Keep believing. Because in Christ, you've already won.



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.

UNSHATTERING

BROKEN DREAMS



By Tricia Clark



I felt my entire being shrivel into despair, lifelessly sliding down the empty wall and into the worn, tan carpet.

I left for work that morning, and returned to an empty home. Furniture removed. Cookware? Gone. Not even a television was left.

Yes, my husband and I were going through a divorce. Although our marriage was already toxic, his moving out and taking everything from our home felt very cruel. But this moment paled in comparison to what I noticed next. As I turned the corner to my 22-year-old son's room, I realized he was gone too, leaving nothing behind but the remnants of his scent. The emptiness was palpable. Of all the things taken from me that day, my son was all that mattered; he was irreplaceable. He was my greatest loss. I could not comprehend how he could secretly slip out of my life, following the man who had hurt our family so deeply. I was devastated.

Last night, this was his space. The space

we designed together—the sandy beach and the ocean waves were his theme. This room we had spent hours talking about life, hopes, dreams, and heartbreaks, had disappeared with him. In a few hours, he had packed everything and secretly slipped away with his dad in the lead.

I felt my entire being shrivel into despair, lifelessly sliding down the empty wall and into the worn, tan carpet. Shrinking into a fetal position, comforting myself like a child. My worst nightmare was now my reality.

Would the relationship with my son ever be the same? Or, had I lost him forever? Had my husband woven a fabric of lies into my character, as if I were the villain? I was certain this was the case because I had grown to know his character very well after 25 years.



For 22-years, I had never lived a day without my son. Now, all I had was the lingering scent of my sweetest boy filling the space he occupied just hours before.

But somewhere between the deafening silence and gut-wrenching cries of a mama's devastated heart, was Jesus.

His presence was palpable.

Our family had suffered 25-years of abuse from the man who was supposed to love and protect us. Instead, he almost destroyed us. It had taken everything in me to walk away; to decide, no more.

With eyes wide open, I accepted that my decision might destroy the relationship with my son—a price I would pay for my freedom.

Saying "no more" catapulted our family into uncharted territory. 'Separate' was our new normal...

Separate churches. Separate homes. Separate Christmas. Separate lives.

As I navigated my "new normal," I felt Jesus carrying me.

Isaiah 42:16 became a wellspring of living water for me: "And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in ways they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them." (ESV)

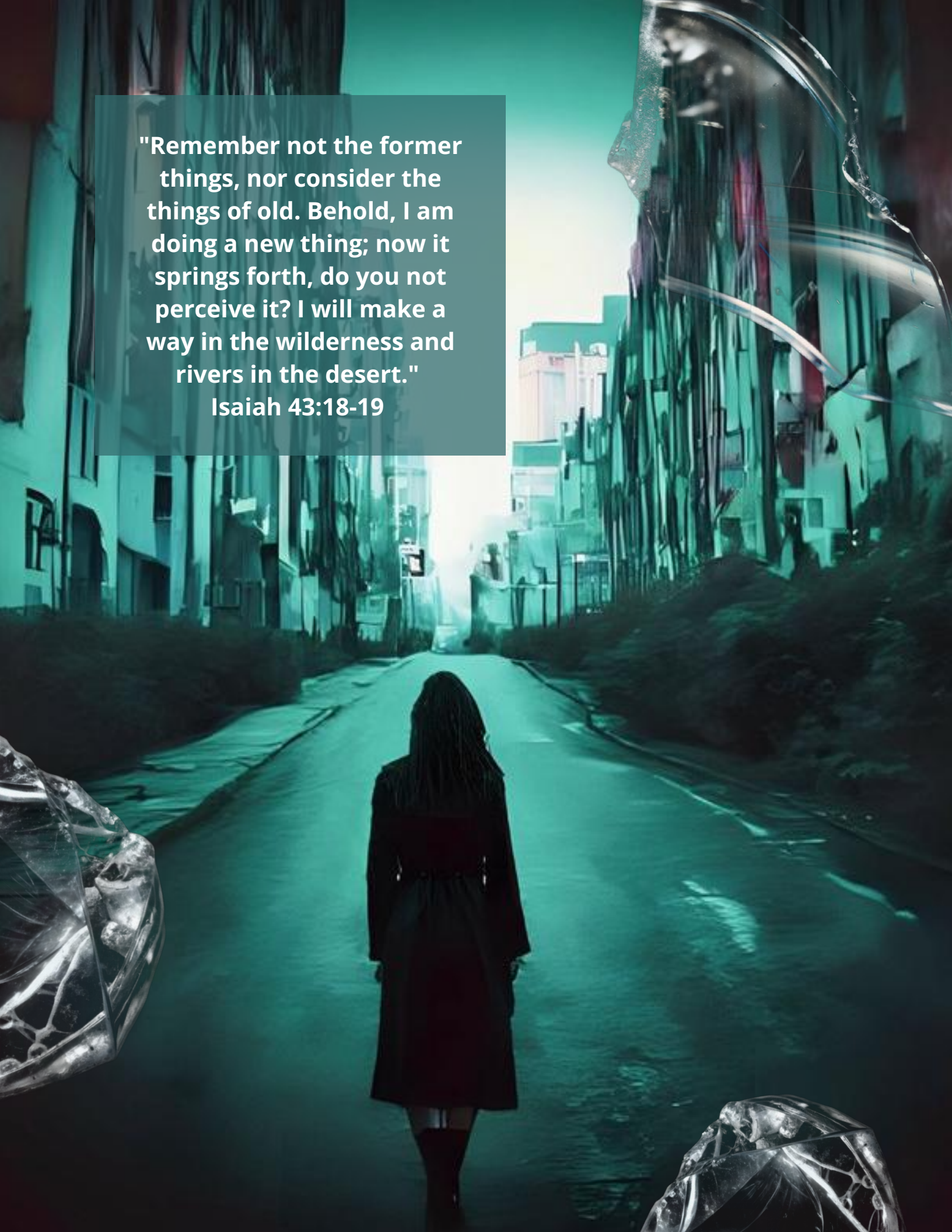
In my deepest despair, Jesus sang over me.

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing." Zephania 3:17

As I gave God my confusion, broken dreams, and fear, I began to...

Feel comfort and acceptance when Jesus healed the relationships with my extended family, even though my husband had worked diligently to

**"Remember not the former
things, nor consider the
things of old. Behold, I am
doing a new thing; now it
springs forth, do you not
perceive it? I will make a
way in the wilderness and
rivers in the desert."
Isaiah 43:18-19**



sabotage them over the years. Jesus knew I would need them to walk with me through my darkest days.

To feel confident of financially providing for myself in tangible ways, as He opened doors for me, a single woman who had previously relied on her husband to bear the economic load.

"And I will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19 (ESV)

Finally, to feel capable of my abilities He gave me: using my strength and my voice to redeem control over my life, something I had unwillingly given up.

God's word became profoundly meaningful to me during this time. Words like Isaiah 43:18-19 told me to "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (ESV)

And Deuteronomy 31:8. "It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (ESV)

If you are stepping into a new normal, don't be shaken. God is with you and for you. He WILL unshatter your broken dreams.



About Tricia Clark

After walking through the heartbreak of divorce, Tricia Clark discovered that healing is possible and freedom is real. Today, she uses her story to help others recognize unhealthy patterns, find their voice again, and begin their own journey toward wholeness. Her heart is to remind you that your story isn't over—it's just beginning.



CHASING ACORNS



BY MICHELLE A. BALTS

There are lots of things that can capture our attention that may seem to offer a feeling of being free, free to do our own thing, our own way; yet nothing on this earth is really for certain. Our Abba Father's Son, Christ Jesus, who came to the earth spoke in his final time here to his disciples saying in Luke 12:22-26 (NIV):

"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet, God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

Did you know that we can live free from worry, free from ANYTHING that would worry us? Instead of being free to think, say and do anything we choose, we can choose to come to Jesus' Father who is now our Father if we've given him our hearts. We can tell him anything, the good, the bad, and even the ugly.





Let's consider another animal story written by Beatrix Potter about an American grey squirrel that she named Timmy Tiptoes. He and his wife, Goody, scrambled around the trees near their home searching for nuts to store for the changing of the seasons.

Although Timmy's wife didn't see the need for gathering so many since she reasoned they'd be snuggled up sleeping through the long winter months, she trudged on with her husband. Together they collected oodles of acorns into bags. They even emptied more into a hole high in a nearby tree.

It was then that Birdie's song 'Who's been digging up my nuts?' heard by other squirrels which prompted them to pounce on Timmy who was determinedly snatching more and more for himself.

Upsetting the bag, they caused nuts to spill out onto the ground as they pulled and pushed him into a tree.



That night Timmy was welcomed into a moss-filled bed in Chipmunk's treehouse, the very tree into which he and Goody had thrown down acorns.

Will Timmy be stuck in a tree all winter long? Search out the rest of the story "The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes" to find out what happens next. And keep these words in your thoughts from Philippians 4:6 and then follow them:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God.



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.



Drops Every Wednesday!!



NEW!!

episode

Jesus is
Coming

Are You Ready?



Jesus is Coming! Are You Ready?

Heart Talk is back—and this episode is one you don't want to miss. Tracee dives into a stirring word the Lord's been impressing on her heart: Get ready. He's coming soon.

In this powerful kickoff episode, she talks about what it means to live ready—not in fear, but in faith. It's an honest, hope-filled reminder that now is the time to wake up, keep your oil full, and stay anchored in God's Word no matter what's happening around us.

👉 Watch or listen now on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or right at UnveiledLiving.org

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Recipes

EAT WELL. LIVE BETTER.

MOVE OVER TURKEY! THERE'S A NEW STAR ON THE TABLE

Carmen's Peruvian Chicken
Peruvian Green Sauce

TRACEE'S DILL
CHICKEN SALAD

KEY LIME PIE - GF

Perfect dessert for Thanksgiving!



Move over Turkey! There's a New Star on the Table

CARMEN'S PERUVIAN CHICKEN

by Tracee Padilla

A lot of times when we think of baked chicken, we get stuck in the same routine recipes we've used a hundred times. Well, that ends today!

The first time I tried Carmen's Peruvian chicken, I said, "I've got to have this recipe!" And I wasn't the only one—every woman at the dinner table that night was asking the same thing. So if turkey isn't your thing this Thanksgiving, this dish will add a fun twist to your holiday meal. Or, when you're just ready for a break from the traditional spread, this is the recipe you'll want! It pairs beautifully with jasmine rice infused with lime and garlic, black beans, and even fresh tomatoes and onions. However you plate it—enjoy, and get ready to add this one to your favorites list!

Ingredients

Peruvian Chicken

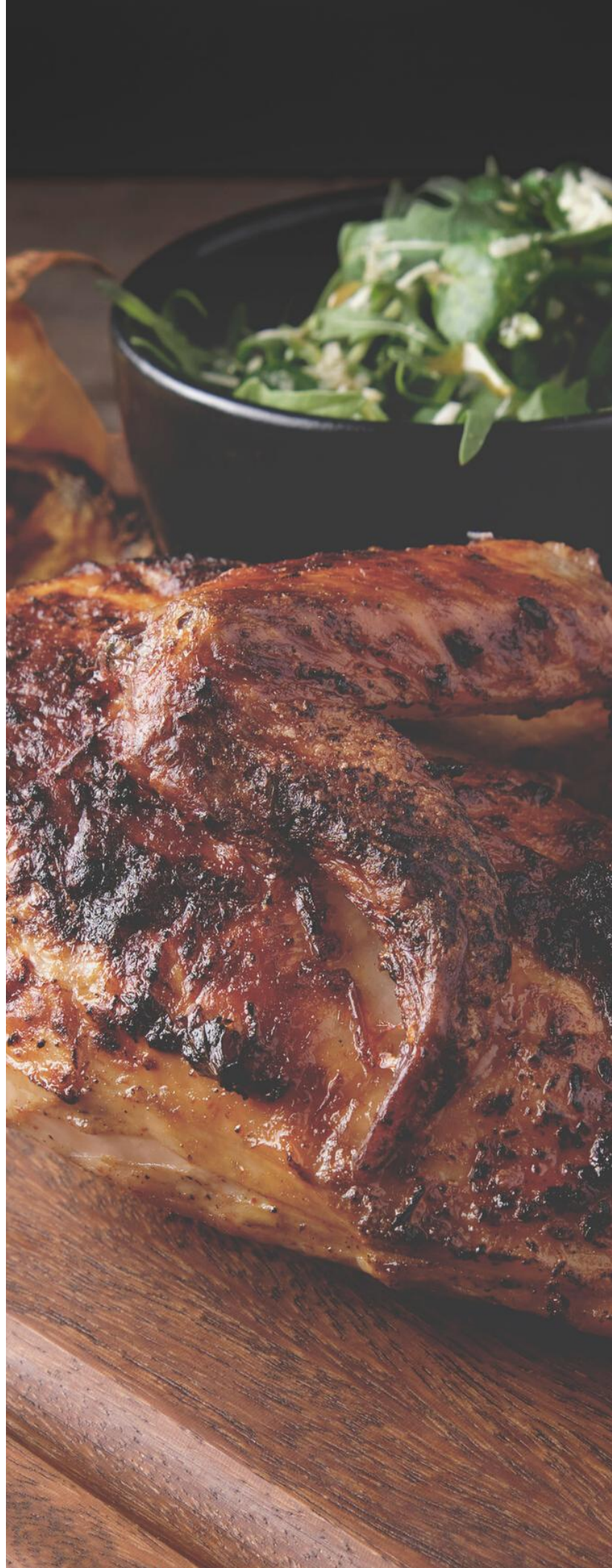
- 4 lb. Chicken
- 3 Tbs. Olive Oil
- ¼ C. Lime Juice (2 limes)
- 4 large garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 1 TBS. Kosher Salt
- 1 TBS Cumin
- 2 tsp Paprika
- 2 tsp Sugar
- 1 tsp Black Pepper
- 1 tsp Oregano

Blend seasoning in a blender or mini food processor. Dry chicken with paper towels and spoon 2/3 of seasoning under the skin of the breasts and legs. Spread the remainder evenly over the skin.

Marinate 6-24 hours.

Bake at 250 degrees for about 5 hours, or until a thermometer reaches 165 degrees.

Serve with Jasmine Rice, black beans, and Peruvian Green Sauce (recipe on next page).



Peruvian Green Sauce

- 1 medium jalapeño
- 1 C packed cilantro
- 2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 1/2 C mayonnaise
- 1/4 C sour cream
- 1 Tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 2 Tbsp olive oil



Seed and roughly chop the jalapeño. Combine all but the oil in a blender or bullet and process till smooth. With the motor running, add oil in a thin stream. Refrigerate.

Notes: Include about 1/2 of the jalapeño seeds to the blender to intensify spiciness to a medium-hot sauce. Wear gloves when handling the jalapeño if you have sensitive skin.



Let's talk Chicken Salad

Let me just go ahead and confess: I'm the oddball when it comes to chicken salad. If I see grapes or nuts hiding in there, I'm out. Nope. Pass me a plain cracker, because I like my fruit where it belongs — in a fruit bowl, not in my chicken. Can I get an amen?

So one day I thought, you know what, enough is enough — I'm making my own version. No fancy tricks, no mystery crunch, just a straight-up, dill-packed chicken salad that makes you want to eat it straight from the mixing bowl with a fork. And friends, it worked. This is my go-to recipe now, and let me warn you — there will be zero leftovers. Not because it doesn't make much, but because you'll eat it before it even has a chance to "chill in the fridge."

A few things you should know about me in the kitchen: I don't measure exact. Ever. I go by "sight" and taste. No "living by faith" here... it's all about letting your taste buds tell you when it's good.

The extra spices for boiling the chicken are separate from what you'll add later when you mix it all together. Think of it as a two-step flavor explosion.

Dill and garlic are like personality traits in this recipe — some of you will want them bold and loud, others will prefer them subtle and quiet. You do you.

Best eaten immediately. Because honestly, who's going to wait around when the crackers are right there begging you to dip?

Consider this your warning: you'll tell yourself you're just having a "taste test," and then next thing you know... half the bowl is gone. Don't say I didn't tell you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracee". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'T' and a cursive 'e'.

Tracee's Dill Chicken Salad

So good you'll finish it off in one sitting!

Ingredients:

- 3 chicken breasts, cooked and shredded (or 2-3 large cans of chicken – you can even scale it down to 1 can, just ease up on the spices)
- 2-3 Tbsp dried dill weed
- 1 ½ Tbsp garlic powder
- Salt & pepper to taste
- ⅓ cup Miracle Whip
- ⅓ cup Hellman's mayo

Extra (for boiling chicken):

- 2-3 Tbsp garlic powder
- 1-2 Tbsp paprika
- 1-2 Tbsp salt

Instructions:

- If boiling fresh chicken: Drop chicken breasts into a pot of water. Add the extra garlic powder, paprika, and salt straight into the water. Boil until fully cooked, then shred. (This gives the chicken a head start on flavor before you even mix it.)
- Place shredded chicken in a large bowl.
- Add dill weed, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. (I probably add more than I stated above)
- Stir in Miracle Whip and Hellman's until creamy. I like "just enough" so it's not too wet but not too dry either — this part is all preference. Do less, do more, or use only one mayo if that's your style. But... the Miracle Whip does add a little zing you won't get with straight Hellman's. Even then, it's still super good (and hubby-tested by my Hellman's-only guy).
- Grab a cracker, pita, or your favorite bread and get to eating!



GLUTEN FREE

Key Lime Pie

by Carmen Chase

Custard

24 oz. cream cheese, softened
1/3 C sugar, granulated
3 (14 oz.) cans sweetened condensed milk
2 C lime juice
2 C heavy cream
1/4 C rice flour
1 C sour cream

Whip together each ingredient with a whip attachment the order listed. Refrigerate.

Ginger Snap Crumble Crust

2 C blanched almonds
2 C Walnut pieces, raw
1 C sugar, granulated
1 tsp kosher salt
20 oz. ginger snaps
8 oz. melted butter
1 Tbsp vanilla extract

Toast the walnuts in a 350° oven for 7 minutes. Toast the almonds in a 350° oven for 10 minutes (less if using sliced or slivered almonds).

In a processor, chop together: almonds, walnuts, sugar, salt, and ginger snaps. Transfer to a mixing bowl and add melted butter and vanilla. Store at room temperature in an airtight container. (Makes 40 oz.)

Gluten-Free Ginger Snaps

3 C gluten-free flour
2 C cornstarch
1-1/2 tsp baking soda
1 Tbsp cinnamon
2 tsp ginger, ground
1/4 tsp black pepper
1 tsp kosher salt
1/2 C sugar
2/3 C brown sugar
1/3 C molasses
1/4 C maple syrup
1 tsp vanilla
8 oz. melted butter
2 eggs



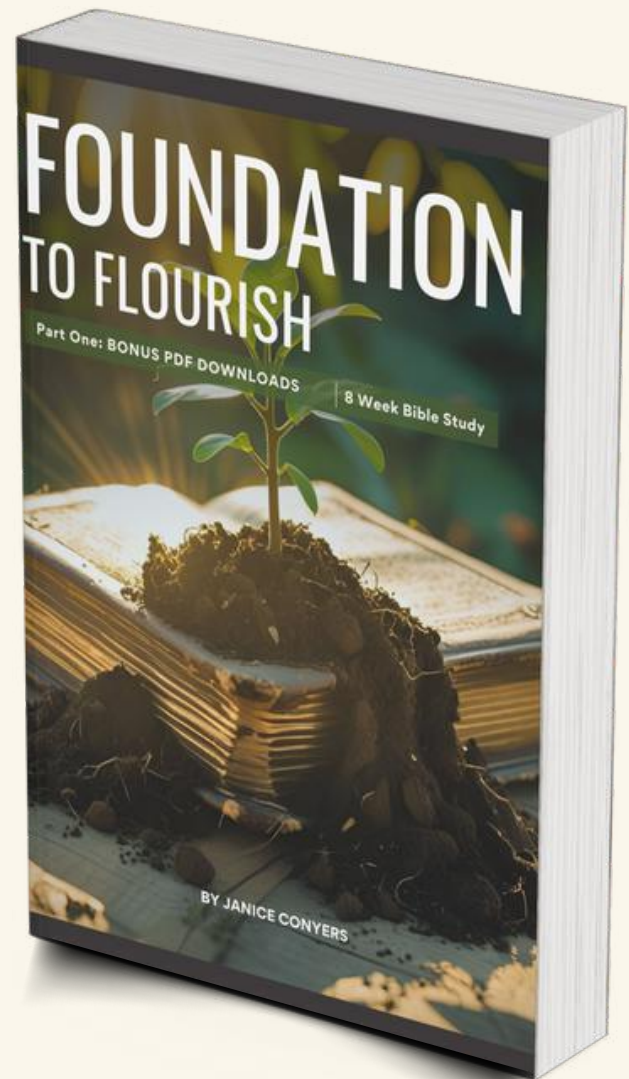
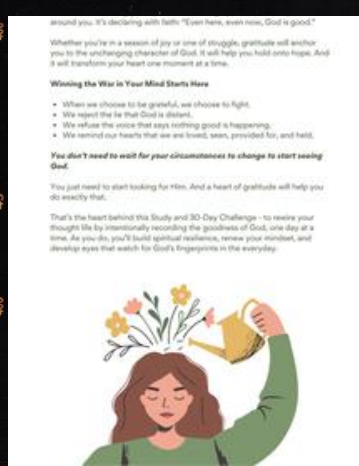
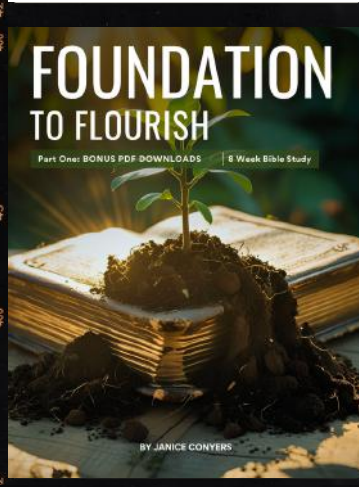
1. Combine dry ingredients and mix well: flour, cornstarch, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, black pepper, salt, sugar, and brown sugar.
2. In a separate bowl, combine wet ingredients and mix well: molasses, maple syrup, vanilla, melted butter, and eggs.
3. Combine dry and wet ingredients until well mixed and dough is fully formed.
4. Spread out on a parchment lined pan and roll to a half inch thick.
5. Bake at 275° for 35 minutes.
6. Cool on a rack. Break up the sheets after cooling. Store in an airtight container.

Shelf life: 7 days.

TO MAKE PIE:

Press crumble crust into any size pie plate or oblong pan. Pour custard to desired depth and refrigerate. Optional: garnish or serve with whipped cream and candied or fresh limes. Enough for 3 pies.

Happy Eating!



It's time to clear out what's been holding you back and build the kind of foundation that lasts. This 8-week (part 1) study lays the groundwork for spiritual growth with Scripture-based teaching, reflection, and space to grow stronger in God. Spiral-bound study. 120 pages.

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destroy us, but to reveal what's truly just. He lets the shakable things—our false securities, our misplaced trust, our rocky foundations—get exposed so we can see what actually remains steady.

Think about it: I couldn't see that illuminating light until everything else went dark. Sometimes God has to allow the shakable things in our lives to be removed so we can finally see what's been there all along—His unchanging presence, His constant faithfulness, His unswerving love.

What Remains When Everything Else Falls

The passage says "only unshakable things will remain." So, what exactly are these unshakable things?

His Voice — When I was lost and crying in that car, my map couldn't speak to me, but God's voice could. His voice doesn't get muffled by circumstances or confused by unmarked roads. Psalm 29:4 says, "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." When everything else goes silent, His voice remains clear.

His Light — That light I saw over the hill wasn't just illuminating the town; it was showing me the way to go. Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in

The moment you opened this book, you stepped into a reminder of who you are and who you belong to: the King of all creation.

You are not just another face in the crowd.

You are a daughter of the King — crowned with His promises, wrapped in His authority, and carried by His victory.

This truth is a declaration over your life, and when we truly learn to walk in it, our shaken foundation becomes unshakable.

That's what this book is about — anchoring our hearts to the unshakable character of God.

My prayer is that by the last page, you'll be standing strong, living every day with the confidence of a daughter who knows her King will not be moved and neither will she.

So take a deep breath, open your heart, and get ready to anchor yourself in the One who holds you steady.

You are His, you are crowned, and you are unshaken.

Unshaken



He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honor come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.

Psalm 62:6-7

Step Into the Unshaken Life

Introduction

I have a confession to make. Mornings and I have never quite gotten along. Being a creative, I'm more of a late-night-owl type, so when I found myself wide awake before sunrise one particular day—sitting at my desk before the birds were even singing—I knew the Lord was up to something.

I'd love to say I had my coffee in hand, cozy blanket wrapped around me, and was smiling like one of those Pinterest-perfect devotional mom's with her pen and journal in hand. The truth? I was just stunned I was awake and alert. That was a miracle in itself! But that morning, God had me right where He wanted me. As I opened my Bible and began to read, the words leapt off the page in a way that stopped me in my tracks.

Why? Because every time I flipped on the news or scrolled my feed, I felt it—the unsettling all around us. The instability. The culture shifting so quickly it makes you wonder if anything is steady anymore. Let's be honest: it doesn't always feel "at ease" to be a Christian in today's world.

But then again, should we be surprised? Jesus warned us in John 16:33: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." From Genesis to Revelation, God never sugcoats it—life is going to shake us.

And yet, that morning, one passage gripped me:

"He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken. My victory and honor come from God alone. He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me." Psalm 62:6-7

Scriptures to Stand On

The Cornerstone

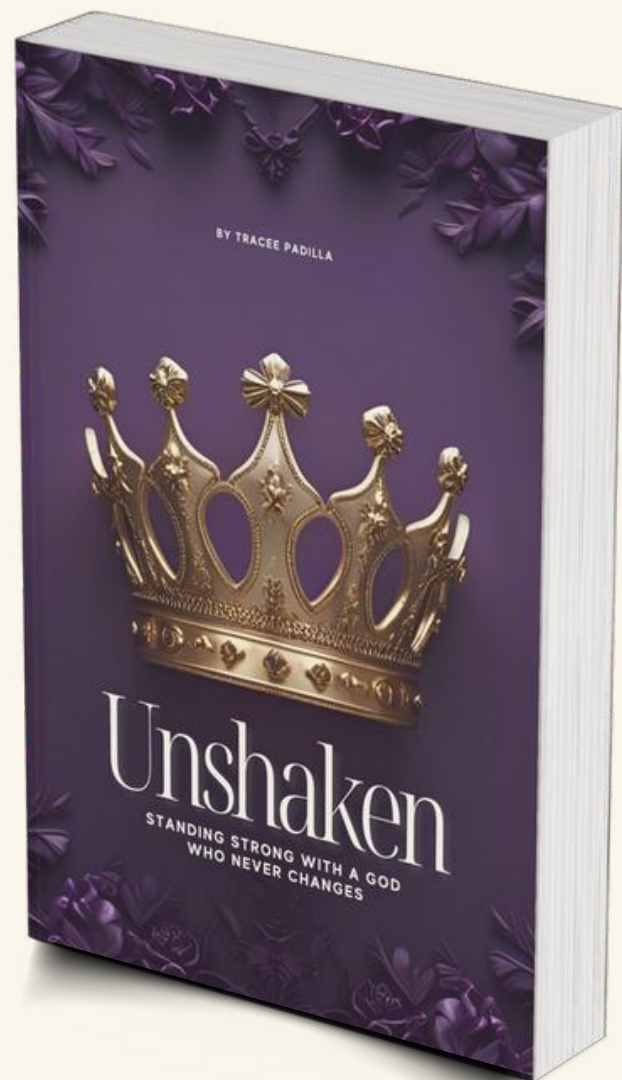
Isaiah 28:16 — Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a firm and tested stone. It is a precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never be shaken."

1 Peter 2:6 — As the Scriptures say, "I am placing a cornerstone in Jerusalem, chosen for great honor, and anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced."

Trials + Endurance

James 1:2-4 — Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

James 1:17 — Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.



The first release in the Anchored Series, **Unshaken** is a book for anyone who's felt the ground shift beneath their feet. Through Scripture and real-life stories, you'll discover how to stand firm when everything around you feels uncertain—rooted in the unchanging character of Jesus and the unshakable truth of His Word.

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The Deeply Rooted Life

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:8

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream; it does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no regrets in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Does It Feel Like You Ever?

Have you ever stopped and really asked yourself what it looks like to have the kind of faith that doesn't fall apart when life does?

Or maybe you've walked through a hard season only to realize—*ouch*—your belief in the impossible had quietly been replaced by fear or complacency.

If we're being honest (and around here, we always are), most of us can look back and spot a few moments where we thought we were more rooted than we actually were. Maybe we knew the right things. Maybe we even prayed the right prayers. But when the storm hit, so did the unraveling.

Here's what I've learned: Being deeply rooted doesn't mean you have it all together. It means you're anchored in who God is, so even when life shakes you, your faith stays put because you're grounded in Christ.

Think you've never been uprooted? Okay, but let me ask you this: Do you lose your patience in those pressure-cooker moments—like when the Wi-Fi crashes during your Zoom meeting or your toddler finger-paints your newly painted walls with peanut butter?

Do you react before you even think about praying? (Like when someone takes your parking spot and suddenly you're having a very un-Christian conversation with your steering wheel?)

Do you hold grudges longer than your phone holds a charge?

If you're making even a little, it might be time for a root check.

Because here's the truth: The strength of your foundation shows up in your

Daily Rhythm: One

THE DEEPLY ROOTED LIFE Why It's Crucial, Not Optional



Action Steps

Time to Get Your Hands Dirty (Spiritually Speaking?)

Let's not just read about being deeply rooted—let's live it. This week, choose one (or more!) of the steps below to strengthen your spiritual roots.

1. Choose One "Soil Habit" (The Foundation Builder)

Start one small practice this week to feed your faith—daily worship, opening your Bible before checking your phone, or speaking truth over your situation.

Fun Twist: Give your new habit a fun name! Like "Morning Glory Time" or "Truth Bomb Tuesday" or "Jesus & Coffee Club." When your name is, you claim it—and you're more likely to stick with it when it has personality!

2. Start a God's Promises Journal (The Faith Tracker)

Begin a "God's Promises" journal. Each day, write down an area where you're struggling to trust God or where your faith feels weak, and then find a scripture that speaks to it. Over time, this will help you see how your trust is growing as you match God's promises to your real-life challenges.

Tech-Savvy Option: I personally use [Thesus.com](https://www.thesus.com), a digital journal I've loved for years. I can look back on past prayer entries and trace God's faithfulness through my journey. It's pretty awesome!

3. The Root Reveal Challenge (The Unexpected One)

Here's something no one sees coming: Take a "spiritual selfie" this week too, not with your phone—with your heart.

How it works:

- Pick a moment when you're stressed, worried, or facing a challenge
- Write it down honestly (no judgment!)
- Then ask, "What would Elizabeth do in this moment?"
- Choose to respond from your deeper roots instead of your surface emotions.

Why this works: It's like catching yourself in the mirror—but for your spiritual growth. You can't change what you don't acknowledge, and this little exercise helps you see what's actually growing in your heart. Like me, you may be

Prayer Prompt

Prayer Starter: The Elizabeth Heart Check

"God, I'm coming to You today with a real heart. I want to be like Elizabeth—someone whose roots run so deep that when You truly move, my first response is worship, not 'what took You so long!'"

The Honest Questions Section

(Don't skip this part—this is where it gets real)

God, I need to be honest with You about:

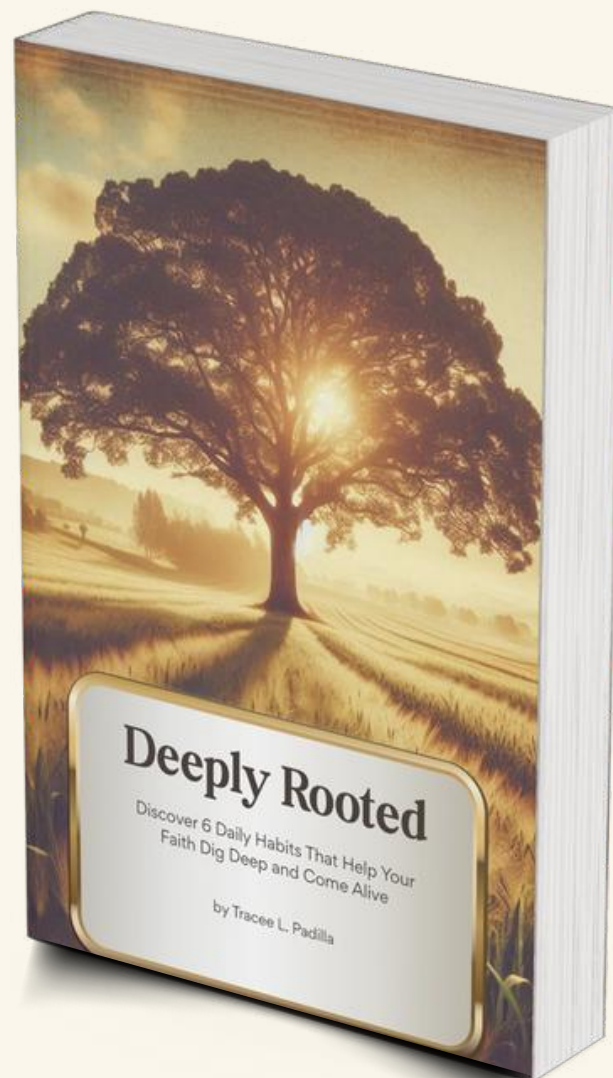
- The area where I'm getting impatient with Your timing...
- The situation where I'm more like Zechariah (doubting) than Elizabeth (trusting)...
- The waiting that's making me want to uproot and run...
- The place where my first response is complaint instead of gratitude...

Take a minute here. Actually name it. God already knows anyway.

The Root Reality Check

"God, when I'm honest about what's growing in my heart right now, I see [be specific]. Sometimes my roots are in worry instead of Your promises. Sometimes they're in what everyone else thinks instead of what You think. Sometimes they're in my timeline instead of Yours."

"I want my roots to go deeper into You. I want to trust You in the silence. I want to worship You even when the promise feels late. But I need Your help to do that."



This 6-week study is an invitation to dig in—not just on Sundays, but in the everyday moments that shape who you're becoming. Rooted in Colossians 2:6–7, it walks you through what it means to live grounded in God through His Word, prayer, worship, active faith, and a heart of gratitude. When your roots go deep, your faith stands strong.

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