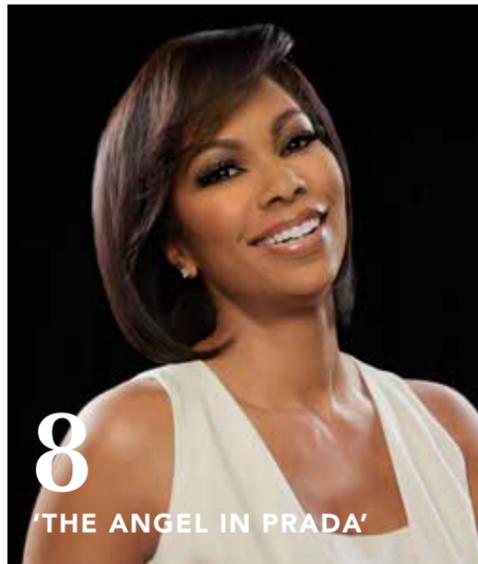


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The host of FOX News' *Outnumbered* has had a successful but sometimes stressful—and even dangerous—journey to the top of her profession. How did she do it, and how does she keep moving forward with her faith and family? The answers are in this edition's cover story by Publisher Laine Lawson Craft.

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letter from the publisher



Dear *WHOA*women,

Summer is here, and the long hot days are bearing down in full force. But even if we're in "the good old summertime," some of us have a hard time finding fun, joy and happiness.

In this edition of *WHOA*women *Livin' Lively with Laine*, our contributors have used their experiences to either set you on the path to happiness or, if you're already there, teach you how to make the most of your journey. Their articles will teach you how to be transformed by joy, how to break strongholds keeping you from happiness, how to let go and have fun, and even how to laugh at yourself.

The subject of our cover story is Harris Faulkner of FOX News, one of my favorite women in the media. I flew to New York City and was honored to watch Harris on the set of *Outnumbered* at FOX News. She had such joy and great wisdom, and I know you will enjoy getting to know her as much as I did. Her journey brings such encouragement and allows us to celebrate her success with her.

We are excited about the growth of the new brand *Livin' Lively with Laine*. We appreciate your joining us and offering your positive feedback. If you have not connected with us, please do so through Facebook, *Livin Lively with Laine*, Twitter, @LivielywithLaine, or Insatgram, *LivinLivelywithLaine*. Together we are learning to live with more hope and life than ever before!

My prayer for all in the times of this world today is to not miss the "Now" moments of life. Also, I pray that all of us can find the light in the dark and joy in adversity and challenge. Most of all I pray for us to find happiness that truly flows from our hearts so that we can touch others who may need a smile.

No matter how hot the days of summer get, I hope we can find a cool place and splash in a dash of laughter and joy, knowing that God has got this.

*Livin' Lively with Love,
Laine*

Laine Lawson Craft

LAINE LAWSON CRAFT
publisher & editor-in-chief

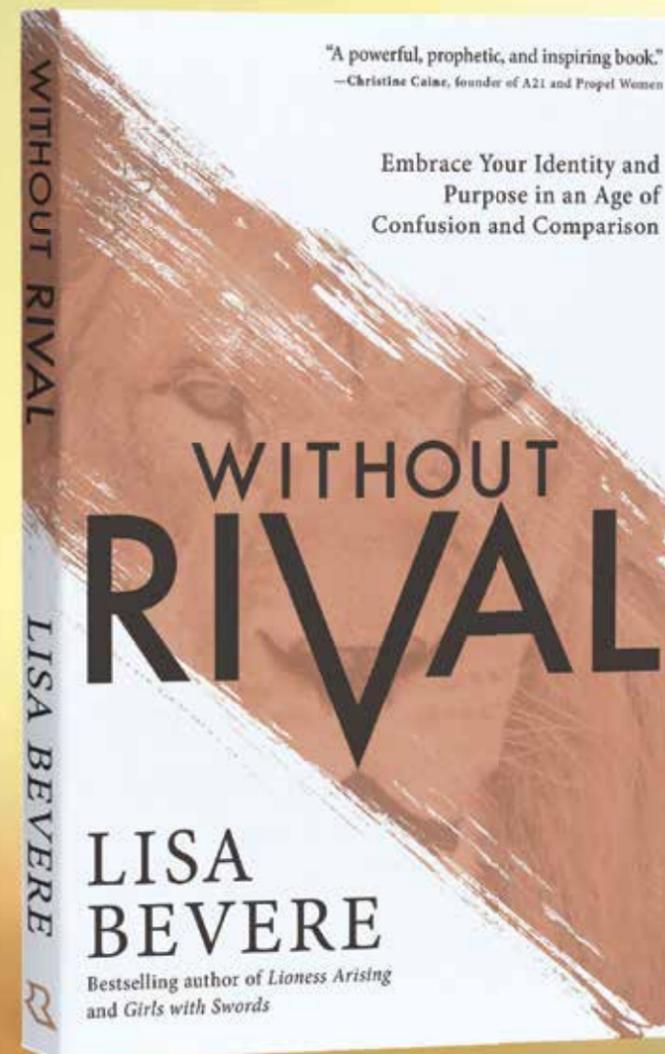


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Published by: WHOA Publishing
P.O. Box 2430
Madison, MS 39130

Printed by: R. R. Donnelley

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'THE ANGEL IN *Prada*'

FOX News' Harris Faulkner lives her faith
in success as well as struggles

By Laine Lawson Craft

When we were creating this edition of *WHOAwomen Livin' Lively with Laine*, we knew we wanted it to be all about having fun and having joy. As we made a list of women who look like they are loving life, FOX News Channel's Harris Faulkner was at the top of my list.

I am a huge fan of the daily show *Outnumbered*, which airs at 11 a.m. central every day on FOX News. Harris is the co-host of the show, and her smile radiates every single day. I wanted to learn more about

her journey and how such a beautiful woman who has reached the top of her game handles the pressures and challenges of life with an amazing joy that affects so many viewers every day. Additionally, while talking with Harris, I discovered that she had faced a tremendous test that led to her faith testimony, which she details later in the interview.

As I entered the FOX News studio where *Outnumbered* is produced, Harris was sitting on her couch in her favorite position. The energy from her smile penetrated the entire room. She immediately hugged me



Harris Faulkner and her husband, Tony Berlin, with daughters Bella, left, and Danika

and made me feel like she had known me all my life. She invited my best friend and me to sit and watch the show behind the scenes.

It was amazing to watch Harris doing what God created her to do. Her grace was so evident. Her gift of delivery and communication is just remarkable. Her show just flies by because it looks so warm and effortless. I could not wait to go to lunch and find out how this fantastic woman who carries such joy had become so successful.

We immediately ordered lunch and began to retrace her journey. Born in Atlanta, she moved a lot during her growing-up years. Her dad was a combat pilot in Vietnam and is her hero, but her mom was the one who really taught her the graces of life. Her mother instilled a powerful notion of integrity within her, and Harris gives her all of the credit for the successful career she now has.

According to Harris, her mom would say, “No mat-

ter what is happening, don’t let the storm get in you.”

Harris continued, “I have had success here at Fox with *Outnumbered* and the *Fox Report* on Sunday nights, but there are a lot of storms that come with success.” Some people, she said, are just waiting for that ah-hah moment to say, “Oh look, the devil wears Prada and I do like Prada, but I want to be the opposite of that—the angel in Prada.”

We both just laughed hysterically. But it is true. Harris has become an angel bringing the light to a sometimes very dark job. Harris was taught that in the times of testing, we all are going to fail at some point because we are human, but she advised that when you meet people, treat them with the same amount of grace that you would want them to show.

“If someone is having a bad day,” she said, “make it better. Don’t be the person in the back gossiping. Make sure you belong where God has put you. These blessings

“OH LOOK, THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA AND I DO LIKE PRADA, BUT I WANT TO BE THE OPPOSITE OF THAT—THE ANGEL IN PRADA.”

are no accident. My dad would tell me, ‘Know whose you are,’ which means know who you belong to—your parents and God.”

From the moment she was born, her parents were on a mission to help her become the woman she was designed to be. She always had two people in her corner, and she knew it. Her mother encouraged her often by saying, “Whatever it is that you are going to be, make sure you find that purpose and live it.”

Harris did just that—she found her purpose and has found great success with it. “It all started when I was in junior high school,” she reflected. “My mom and dad took me to a local television station for me to experience. I had told my dad that I wanted to be on television but deep inside it seemed impossible.”

So they arranged a visit to the local television station, and she knew immediately that’s where she wanted to be. The rest of the story is history.

She graduated with a mass communications degree from University of California, Santa Barbara. She started in journalism with *LA Weekly*, where she contributed as a freelance business writer. Then she started her television career with an internship at KCOP-TV in Los Angeles doing small tasks before moving to Greenville, North Carolina, to work as a reporter and anchor at WNCT-TV.

Faulkner worked for Kansas City’s WDAF-TV between 1992 through 2000 as an evening anchor. Faulk-

ner’s next job was at KSTP-TV in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, where she served as part of an evening anchor team. She left the station in July 2004. She was a correspondent for the 2005 revival of *A Current Affair* until its cancellation in October of the same year. Then she arrived at Fox. Her gift quickly made room for her and now she is on the air six days a week most weeks.

Harris has won six Emmy awards, including the 2005 Emmy for Best Newscaster and Best News Special.

Although her path might look smooth to an outsider, Harris had had some major challenges, including being fired and enduring a traumatic experience with a stalker. The stalking occurred in Kansas City, where she was harassed by a former acquaintance who followed her from North Carolina.

“It was a long process,” she shared. “At first I did not take the situation serious. I thought I could handle it, I thought I could handle someone who was acting in a violent manner. I don’t know why I thought I could handle it but I did. And by the time I had asked for help it was a beast. Our general manager at the time said to me, ‘Why did you wait so long? You put lives in danger.’

“I was just shocked. The research from the detectives on the case said that there were threats being made and they found evidence and pictures that he had been at our front desk. I think at the end of the day the lessons from that experience was that when things happen domestically, we don’t take those seriously enough either.”

Most stalking incidents, she said, involve people who know each other. Random stalking occurs less frequently and less violently. Older research shows 40 percent of stalking cases that are born from domestic relationships become violent. “That’s too high a number for anyone,” Harris said. “We should never be comfortable with that number. People are not educated about it. I mean I speak about it. I helped push legislation to put stalking on the books as a law because it is often from a domestic situation. Those are the calls that are the most unpredictable. That’s a situation from people who intimately know each other. So we need to take it seriously.”

She advocates a stalking registry, particularly now with the prevalence of social media. “I look at where we are with regard to social media, people being able to post anonymous things, wherever they want to, and say the vilest things. They also make

threats. We have to ask, ‘So where is the fine line in what you take seriously and what you don’t?’ I think we have become sensitive to setting the bar extremely low.”

For those being threatened on social media, she urges action. “Let somebody know about it. Block them. And document what is happening. It’s bigger than you are. So let somebody know you think you might be getting harassed. Sometimes we want to be so independent that we don’t need anyone sometimes and especially coming from a sense of a situation where you know somebody.”



Harris on set, preparing for *Outnumbered*

In her case, she said, “I was embarrassed. I dated him and worked with him. I wanted people to judge me with a good filter on my personal good decision-making. When I stood before the first judge and she said exactly what the general manager said to me, I suddenly realized I’m in trouble because by ‘waiting so long’ they meant beyond their help at this moment. For me it was a heightened sense of security.”

Her stalking episode ended in a very public case. “It was about my faith walk and really starting to listen to God without my parents. It was my own journey,” she said. “And to get through that court process—it was hard.” She went from being the reporter to being the story.

She described the reporters covering her case as so kind and generous, but it didn’t matter because it hurt. “It hurt to be looked upon that way. Saying my life was out of control. But the stalker did some time behind bars, a period of 36 months. I was told, as the victim in the case, of his whereabouts. Extended restrictions were put into place so he couldn’t come near me. His family came and it made me feel good.”

“You know, we’re not on our own. He needed help. I was angry and that was part of the reason why my faith played such a critical role, because when you are angry all the time you do not sow seeds of goodness. And I had to find my way out of that but it was driven by fear. So

I can look back at that and say I’m glad his family was there, he needed help, and they were the reassurance that somebody would love him enough to get him help. I don’t mean to sound Pollyanna but if you are being stalked and there are no gates checking on that person, you could very well end up dead.”

We shift our conversation to her family life. Her marriage is amazing. She and husband Tony Berlin, a former WCCO-TV reporter whom she married in 2003, find fun and such joy in their relationship. Every time she talked, her face just lit up. She was actually celebrating their wedding anniversary the week we did our interview.

She was positive about Tony’s support of her success and what an amazing father he was with their two

daughters. Part of their successful marriage is a date night almost every week. “We have a date night on Friday nights usually with a little limoncello,” she said. “I call him my forever boyfriend. And it is important we see ourselves besides our titles and roles.”

Harris shared on how her influence as a mother plays out in her life with her daughters. “I try to model to my kids that my decisions are based on my abilities to stay connected to the Lord who loves us. My husband is Jewish and I am Christian. We will talk about it and the course the faiths have had. We try to give our families an understanding that we all serve the same Lord and that people can love the Lord in different ways and can understand His gifts in different ways.”

She also paints a realistic picture of life and mother-



The Faulkner-Berlin wedding took place in April 2003

hood. "My kids have seen me when I'm tired," she said, "and one day last year we had two dance performances in two different areas so from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. I had to look excited and say 'Oh, my goodness' watching them dance. And in between all that I bowed my head and my daughter said, 'What are you doing? Are you OK?' And I told her I was praying for strength and grace.

"Because I find that if they can see me in those raw human fleshly moments to gather myself, that counts for a lot."

I asked Harris what she would like to instill in her daughters' generation. She quickly responded, "Strength and integrity. I think strength can take a lot of different forms, but I'm talking about the inner strength that powers you to be who you are in every moment. The strength and power that enables you to do

the things that are about you because the world will tell you that everything else is better than what you choose."

She defines integrity as "what we do when we think no one is watching. It's who we are when we think what we can do for someone who can offer us nothing but other than their company. Integrity is not about a scorecard. You don't do things for people to get noticed but you do it because it's the right thing. I don't think the Lord is keeping score."

Harris has fun in all areas of her life. We witness her happiness on camera every day on television. Her marriage overflows in abundance of love. Her daughters also have great fun with their mom.

As a family, they love jungle gyms. Harris said, "Saturday afternoons we come out to Central Park. And we

just go jungle gym-hopping." The girls love playing and enjoy the outside so much. It is a great time for all of them.

Harris loves to cook, too. She grew up in the South, where everything was about cooking. Her mom used to say, "You can make someone feel loved by what you put on their plate." So Harris is having fun cooking with her daughters today.

I really was interested in how Harris can still enjoy work while being under the daily scrutiny of a TV audience.

Harris said, "That's a great question. I recently re-did my office. So now I have a standing desk. I ordered it in white. I have a lot of little sayings around my office. I'm responsible for a couple of teams, and they are funny, strong women. So I feel really blessed that

brings that spirit out.

"We do Super Bowl tailgates in the workroom, and a bunch of pot lucks. And at the end of the day I think what I do is really special. I have been put in a place where I can be myself. There's room to grow. People around me believe I am going to do the right thing. I consider just being there fun."

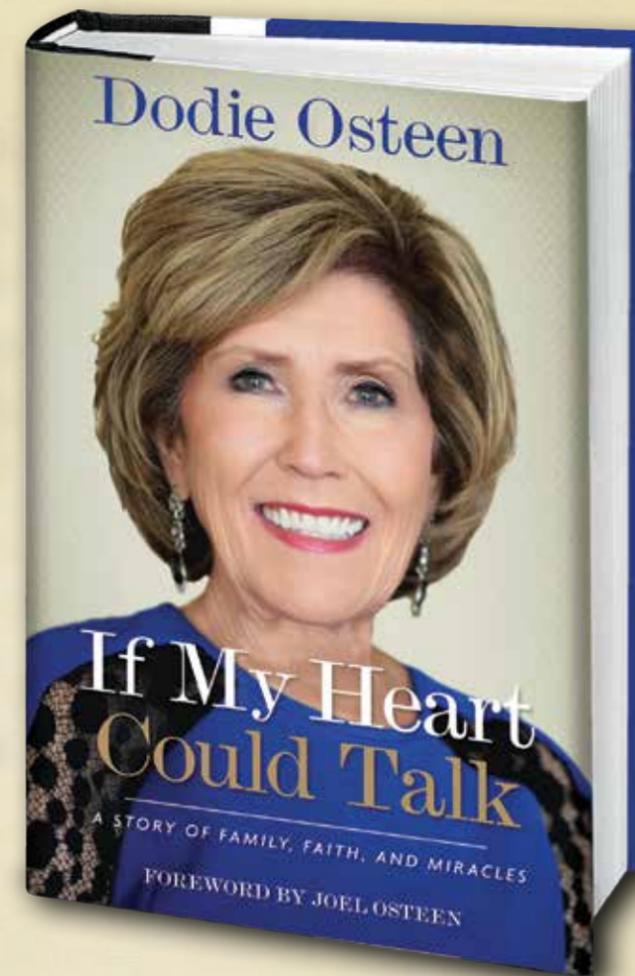
"One extra thing I would add, when I first started in the business 20 years ago people would talk about a lot of things. You knew all the dirt on people and not the good stuff. Throughout my career I have made it very well known that I am going to make mistakes; pray for me. I don't think there's a boss I could work for that doesn't know that about me.

"And when I came out with a book that says 'break-

"WHAT WE DO WHEN WE THINK NO ONE IS WATCHING...INTEGRITY IS NOT ABOUT A SCORECARD. YOU DON'T DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE TO GET NOTICED BUT YOU DO IT BECAUSE IT'S THE RIGHT THING. I DON'T THINK THE LORD IS KEEPING SCORE."

"There is a lot of my mother's life, example, and wisdom in this book. The lessons she taught me have changed my life, and these simple truths can change your life as well."

*— Joel Osteen
Senior Pastor of Lakewood Church and New York Times Bestselling Author*



"Over the years, people have often referred to me as Pastor John Osteen's wife. He was the founder of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, and a remarkable husband, father, and man of God. Now many refer to me as Joel Osteen's mother! But I'm just Dodie, a lady who loves God and

people and a mother of five wonderful children who all happen to be in the full-time ministry. I hope that as I share bits of my story with you, you will be encouraged and blessed."

—Excerpt from IF MY HEART COULD TALK

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Harris on her Sunday prime time show, *FOX Report*, with her guests, the FOX News political insiders.

ing news—God has a plan for you,’ you had to go to management to get that sort of thing. I met a lot of judgment. When you cover stories and deliver news that children have been slaughtered in a schoolhouse and you go home to your own kids—where do you take that? You take it to the throne. In my career, I’ve promised not to judge others and in return expect not to be judged. I haven’t kept my foundation of faith a secret because sometimes there are answers in sharing how we stay strong. So I have been really fortunate to work in an environment where people are comfortable.”

That doesn’t mean, she said, that she will prophesy on air. “That’s not my role and that’s not what I’m here to do,” she said. “I’m not sowing my own seeds or making it about me. I will never deny the fact that I didn’t get here on my own and I do find there is more openness

now for people to know that about me than when I first started.”

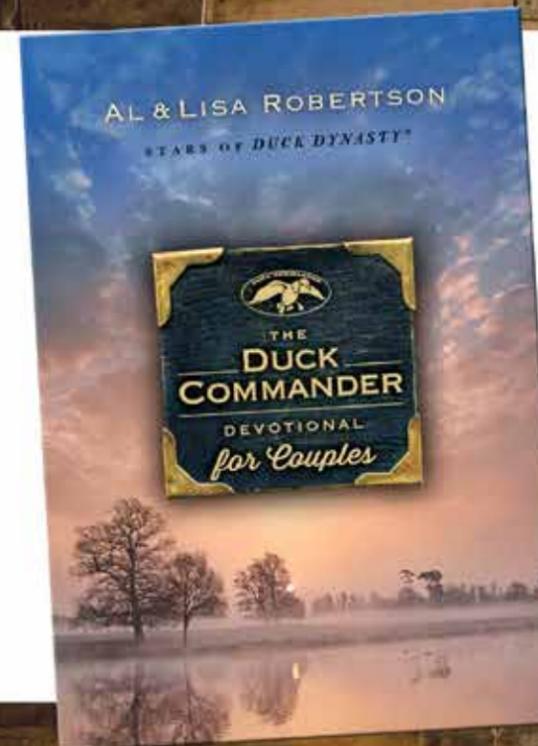
She acknowledged her own skills and the contributions of others in her career, but she added, “My journey in life is guided by something completely out of my control. I don’t hit people over the head with it but my faith in God has brought me here.”

As we wrapped up lunch and our time together, I really didn’t want to leave. Harris’ energy and joy were captivating. Her love for life and people was obvious and in overflow. Harris was blessed to have parents who made her life their mission, shaping her into the best she could be with God’s guidance.

Her personal story illustrates a great formula for fun and joy: Know whose you are, make the most of your gifts, love your family and give credit to God. 🌸



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PRAYER AT GUNPOINT

A LIFE SAVED THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD

By Kim Watson

As I lay in the back of my mother's red Astro van, clenched in my boyfriend's arm, I glanced at the gun that he held tightly around my stomach. I whispered, "God save me!"

How did I end up here? Did I not see the signs? Did someone try to warn me and I failed to listen? Numerous thoughts ran through my head as I lay hostage.

I was not prepared to die; I was only 20.

At a time when I should have been enjoying college life, meeting new friends and traveling the world, I was staring death in the face. With tears streaming down my face, I remembered my Sunday school teacher's words: "You must fight to live!"

With my life flashing before me, I found myself with one reason to fight. I couldn't fathom the thought of what would happen to my 9-month-old son.

I couldn't see what time it was, but as I lay looking at the moon, I could hear that he was now asleep. My heart said run, but my mind knew I needed to be careful. Trying not to move, I sought for a way of escape. There was no way out.

As I tried to move his arm from around me, he was awakened. I couldn't give up, I had to survive. I had to fight to live.

I couldn't physically fight him but I had to allow

God to guide me in my steps. At that moment when I knew God had to help, my boyfriend asked, "Will you pray for me?"

I survived the night. and 19 years later I am a living testimony that the power of prayer works.

Today, I want to persuade you to fight to live. No matter what your circumstances are, you can live. If you find yourself in an abusive relationship, or if you

find yourself being taken away by the floods of life, don't give up. Fight to live.

It does not take much to die but it takes everything in you to live.

You have to fight mentally, physically and emotionally to pull out of some situations, but never doubt that you can live. ✿

"I SURVIVED THE NIGHT. AND 19 YEARS LATER I AM A LIVING TESTIMONY THAT THE POWER OF PRAYER WORKS."



KIM WATSON

Kim holds a bachelor of science degree in communication and is a mother, sister and mentor. Author of Daughter of the King, Kimly takes her life lessons and biblical principles to inspire, inform and uplift women all over the world. She lives in Bastrop, Louisiana, where she is employed by CenturyLink Inc. She also is employed

by Mercy Multiplied, where she uplifts young women through her warm smile, prayers and devotions. No matter her title, it is her desire to point women to the Cross.

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IN TOO DEEP?

LISTEN CLOSELY FOR THE SAVING VOICE

By Mary M. Jones

The good news is that God always gets the message through when He wants us to hear it, no matter how He chooses to deliver it to us. How wonderful it would be if God spoke to us today as He did in the Old Testament.

Then again, the world is so noisy with technology, would we even hear it?

Many Bible-believing Christians already make excuses and reason away any spiritual incidents, so would we even believe it if He did speak to us through a burning bush as He did for Moses?

I think believers have developed caution when it comes to the unexplainable movements of God in our lives. We don't want to be frowned upon when we refuse to contain God in a box and limit Him so that He can be explained and understood. When we try to limit a limitless God, sometimes we miss His movement because of logical thinking. God doesn't operate within the boundaries of our senses or understanding. He can't, because He is God and He is everything.

I received salvation at the age of 7, and I always chose to look for God in everything around me. I somehow knew that there was more to God than the limits placed upon Him by mere human understanding. His power wasn't just words in a book for me and I wanted to experience whatever He would allow me. I yearned to audibly hear the voice of God, but was told time and time again that New Testament believers did

not have those types of experiences and that I was being silly.

I continued to listen.

I have a strong personality and a large imagination, so there was a lot of trial and error while learning to discern God's voice from the world or from my own thoughts. I prayed for Him to teach me.

More times than I would like to admit, I have followed what I thought was God's leading into a situation, just to find out that it was not God at all. Years passed and that little believer grew into a married woman with three children. My heart began to slowly accept that maybe I was believing for an Old Testament experience in a New Testament world.

That is, until the moment that I thought that I was going to lose my life.

The day was beautiful as we lay on our blankets soaking up the sun next to

the river. Our children were playing near the edge of the water and the adults were keeping a close eye on them as we chatted among ourselves.

The river near where we camp can be a fun and relaxing place, but it also can be very dangerous if you don't pay attention and respect the area. When the water is high, it can be swift, and its undercurrents can pull even the strongest swimmers beneath the water and hold them there. A river is an ever-changing body of water, so areas that were once shallow can become deep and dangerous over time.

On this particular day, the water was a normal level

"I SOMEHOW KNEW THAT THERE WAS MORE TO GOD THAN THE LIMITS PLACED UPON HIM BY MERE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING."

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with lots of sandy shoreline to enjoy. We were located at a bend in the river, so the water tends to have a strong current stream while moving around the bend, then it eases up as it straightens out. We kept telling the kids to stay close to the bank to ensure that no one got swept away in the faster moving water.

Suddenly, my mother-in-law stood up and began yelling that the current was pushing her nephew farther out into the middle of the river. As we all stood to survey the situation, panic rose up in me. I knew that he was too far out and not a strong enough swimmer to keep his head above the water. Realizing that I was the strongest swimmer among us, I ran toward the water in an instant.

“REALIZING THAT I WAS THE STRONGEST SWIMMER AMONG US, I RAN TOWARD THE WATER IN AN INSTANT.”

As I was swimming toward him, I saw his head go under once or twice and I knew that drowning victims usually did not resurface for a third time. It is easy to swim downriver with the current pushing you along, so I was able to reach him fairly quickly.

I placed my left arm around his body to keep his head above the water. Thankfully, he did not struggle, even though the look on his face was sheer terror.

I held on to him tightly while fighting to keep the gravity of our combined weight from pulling us both beneath the water.

The force of the current had pushed us toward the middle of the river and the current was not as strong, but the water was much deeper. We were slowly moving downriver together.

I reached down with my feet, hoping that I had been pushed to an area where the river bottom had changed and possibly be able to stand up, but nothing was beneath me except water. I looked back at the bank and saw everyone watching and waiting to see what I did next.

I suddenly realized how tired I was. I had been holding myself and a child who was half my body weight above moving water.

I knew better than to try to fight the current, but the river was keeping us pulled toward the middle and I didn't know how much longer I could hold both of us up.

My only thought was getting this child close enough to the shore so that he would have a chance to be rescued, even if I had to push him as I went under. But the farther we drifted out from the bank, I knew that I was too exhausted to save either one of us.

Oddly, I was not afraid.

Instead of shouting to the onlookers on the bank that I could not make it back and causing the boy to panic even more, in my mind I spoke to God. I simply said, “God, I can't make it back.”

Suddenly, a voice spoke out of nowhere, so clear and audible that I was amazed that no one heard it except for me. I heard it not only with my physical ears, but in my mind and in my soul as well. It was powerful and booming yet soft and calming. It came from above my head, but from within the inner core of my body. I didn't question it for a second, and my body immediately did what was instructed to me. I trusted It completely.

Even though I knew that I had just tested the depth of the water and did not feel the bottom, the voice said, “Put your feet down.” So I did. And there was solid ground underneath my feet. I was shocked to feel it.

“I ALSO REALIZED THAT I HAD JUST EXPERIENCED THE VOICE OF GOD.”

I stood up in the chest high water and I dug my feet into that precious ground until I reached the shore. We both collapsed onto the sand as the crowd gathered around us.

I began crying uncontrollably as the young boy began heaving and vomiting up water. I was thankful

JOHN 10:27 SAYS, “MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME.”

that the ordeal was over and we had both lived through it.

I also realized that I had just experienced the voice of God. I knew it without a doubt.

John 10:27 says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” That verse has always been taught in a spiritual sense of knowing and following Jesus, but it applied physically to me that day. My body, my mind and my logic never once questioned the direction of the Voice that I heard.

“NO ONE CAN EVER TELL ME THAT MY LORD IN HEAVEN IS SILENT, NOR CAN THEY TELL ME NOT TO EXPECT MIRACLES TODAY.”

He knew me when I called out to Him in my time of despair. He spoke and I knew His voice even though I had never heard it that way before. I followed without hesitation.

No one can ever tell me that my Lord in Heaven is silent, nor can they tell me not to expect miracles today. My God is real and He is alive. I have never experienced His voice like that again since that moment, but I'm joyously awaiting the time when He chooses to do it again. Be assured in your faith that we serve a mighty Savior and He is still on the throne. 🌸



MARY M. JONES

Mary has been married to her husband, Ronnie, for 30 years. They have three children and four grandchildren. She teaches a weekly Sunday school class called Life Class in which Scripture is applied to life situations. Mary and Ronnie were featured in a 2015 episode of The 700 Club.

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WHAT IS YOUR BRAND OF DISTRACTION?

By Sharla Fritz

Nike or Avia. Coach or Fossil. Ann Taylor or Liz Claiborne. We each have our favorite brand—a trademark symbol that draws us in and tugs at our wallets.

Each of us also has a distinctive *brand of distraction*, a signature diversion that not only draws us in but also pulls us away from the job at hand. It's a frequent interruption that diverts our attention from the people we care about, and constant disruption from the life we were meant to live.

Life in the twenty-first-century living has no shortage of distractions. Cell phones in our pockets. Piles of unfinished work on our desks. Endless meetings written in the pages of our calendars.

Modern life gives us the ability to continuously connect with others and be endlessly entertained. But it rarely offers the capability to focus. Like the *small screens* in our pockets, we are continuously bouncing from one task to another.

And looking at the big picture, we see that distractions often prevent us from accomplishing our purpose in life. They draw us away from meaningful relationships with friends and family. Endless diversions pull us from the one thing we are to relentlessly pursue—loving God.

Even though we all face the distractions of life, we each favor one particular *brand of distraction*. The pull of this diversion is often stronger than your resolve to complete the task at hand, more powerful than your determination to follow God's purpose for your life.

What is your most problematic distraction? Following are some steps to take to sweep it away so you can accomplish the work you need to do now. Plus, there are some big picture ways to avoid detours from your pursuit of God.

If your brand of distraction is stuff: Pretty new things bring a little joy. You find it hard to pass up sales. Shopping is a favorite pastime. You also find it hard to part with things, so papers, clothes and household items pile up, preventing you from focusing on what is really important in life.

Small screen: Before typing the report due today, clean off your desk. Set a timer for 15 minutes and toss out month-old memos, neaten files and put pens in a drawer. If your desk looks like the set of a disaster film, simply use the 15 minutes to shovel all the stuff into a box and block out an hour

in the next week to deal with the deluge. Without the distraction of all the stuff, you will be able to concentrate on the job that needs to be done now.

Big picture: Remember Christ's words, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." *Matthew 6:19-20*

Our hearts can easily be distracted by having the coolest gadgets, the latest fashions and the newest

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designer purse. This week declare a shopping fast. Buy only necessities. Stay out of store as much as possible. Use the time to read Scripture and draw close to Christ.

If your brand of distraction is busyness: To you, a full calendar is proof of a full life. So you sign up for Bible studies and Zumba classes. Your children are involved in baseball, soccer and math teams. But now you've said yes to so many activities that few are fun anymore. You are so distracted by your schedule that your friends and family are feeling neglected.

Small screen: Declare a week off from all activities that you don't absolutely need to attend. Let the kids miss ballet and karate. Skip book club and Pilates. Hunker down in the family room with board games, home videos and a big bowl of popcorn. Read the book that sat on your nightstand for three months. Call up a friend for a long chat.

Big picture: Use the week-off-experience to determine which activities are most important to you. Which pursuits give you meaning and joy? Which ones have become merely duties and life-noise? Ask God for wisdom to choose the best. "It is my prayer that your love

may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent." *Philippians 1:9-10.*

If your brand of distraction is what is going on inside your head: You're the person who continually listens to Worry, Anxiety and Self-doubt carry on a conversation in your head. Your own thoughts keep you from completing your work on time. They prevent you from enjoying the people in your life.

Small screen: It is nearly impossible to simply shut off those thoughts, but we can learn to replace anxious thoughts with positive phrases. Instead of "I'll never get this report done in time," try "I will work on this project for one hour and see what progress I've made." Instead of repeating, "I'll never be a good enough mom" tell yourself, "God has entrusted these children to me. He will also provide the strength and wisdom I need."

Big picture: The best way to overcome negative thinking is by spending time in God's Word. God wants to transform our minds: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God,



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MIND

34 SUMMER THRILLS ALL 'KIDS AT HEART,' NO MATTER THEIR AGE

"I thank God that He created all four seasons for us to enjoy, but summer brings such an excitement not only to kids, but also to grownups who are really big kids at heart."

32 HOW YOU CAN SAY 'I CAN'T COMPLAIN' AND REALLY MEAN IT

"All you'll do for this major paradigm shift, however, is stop complaining. It can be difficult, especially since we have so much yet tend to be a complaining society ..."

44 THE 'EX' FACTOR: PUT CHILDREN FIRST IN SUMMER PLANS

"When divorced parents, or never-married parents who live separately, can get to a place of making summer fun for the kids instead of playing tug of war over their time, then the kids can win."

what is good and acceptable and perfect." *Romans 12:2*

Although it may seem counter-intuitive to spend time reading the Bible when so many other things need to be done, storing God's Word in our hearts and minds is the best way to shut up Anxiety and Self-doubt and live a purposeful life.

If your brand of distraction is technology: Checking out your friends' latest Facebook posts and your Twitter feed prevent you from being in the moment with your family. Ringing phones and countless emails distract you from finishing the article due tomorrow. You find it hard to concentrate on your friend at the coffee shop because a little screen beckons your attention.

Small screen: Turn off the Internet when you need to get real work done on your computer. Shut off all push notifications. Put your phone in your purse when you're with a friend. Declare no screens at family dinner time. Connect with the people you're with.

Big picture: Consider declaring Sunday a computer-free day. In Exodus God said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." *Exodus 20:8*

To make something holy is to set it aside for God's

use. No email, Facebook, Twitter or video games on Sundays helps you and your family concentrate on the Giver of time. Breaking free of technology for one day helps you to spend quality time with your loved ones.

Perhaps you will always buy your favorite Nike shoes. Maybe you still can't resist that new Coach handbag. But hopefully you will stand firm against your favorite brand of distraction.

Decide which distraction is pulling you away from your responsibilities and your God-given purpose. Take steps this week to turn off the distractions and follow Christ. He is graciously holding out His hand to guide you into a fulfilling life. 🌸



SHARLA FRITZ

Sharla makes her home in the Chicago suburbs with her husband. She loves shopping at resale shops (but is learning to avoid that distraction). Sharla is a Christian speaker and the author of *Divine Design, Bless These Lips, and Soul Spa*.

If you would like more information on how to overcome life's distractions, get a free lesson at Sharla's website: <http://www.sharlafritz.com/2016/01/distraction/>

TAKE A VACATION FROM *Complaints*

SHIFT YOUR THINKING IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION

By Camille Gaines



Summertime breaks the normal rhythm of work and life with longer days, plenty of sunshine and renewing vacations. But what if, for this summer, you choose to invest in a dramatic life change that won't cost a dime and takes no time, but can reap huge rewards?

The investment is a shift in the habitual way that you speak.

The impact of positive thinking has been touted by many leaders throughout time, including the influencers and writers of the Bible. In *Proverbs 17:22*, you'll find "a joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."

The New Testament has many suggestions for positive thinking. Paul said in *Philippians 4:11*, "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content," and Paul was in some pretty bad situations.

We all know it's good to think positive, right? This knowledge brings to light that slightly annoying yet powerful paradigm that, as crazy as it seems, the simplest things are usually the hardest to do. Stop eating when you're full, spend less money than you make, and exercise to be healthier—all come to mind to support this truth.

All you'll do for this major paradigm shift, however, is stop complaining. It can be difficult, especially since we have so much yet tend to be a complaining society, whether it's about the traffic, the rain or the extra five pounds that we carry.

Here are three suggestions to make this powerful shift now:

1. Get support. One of the great things about summer is that you can share this new way of being with your family and friends while you're with them more than usual. Solicit them for support. Who knows? Maybe they'll stop complaining, too.

2. Commit to an accountability method. Choose a ring or bracelet that you'll move to the other finger or arm when you catch yourself complaining. You

won't believe how effective this is. I got this idea from minister Will Bowen in *A Complaint Free World*, one of my favorite books. This strategy will blow you away since most of us drop attempts at new habits because we just forget about them during our busy days. You can even get your supporters on board by supplying a bracelet or ring for them to wear, too, during your time together.

3. Be firm with yourself. Stating that Aunt Betty's salsa gave you heartburn, you gained three pounds from the s'mores or it's hot as the Dickens on the 100 degree days of August—all count as a complaint.

My family wouldn't join me in this endeavor, but they did have fun calling me out when I complained.

"A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."

I'm not preaching to the choir here, as you can see from my results. After months of switching a rubber bracelet back and forth to the point of near exhaustion, the longest I went without complaining was two whole days.

The great thing is that ever since then, I have become much more aware of the effect that my complaints, and the complaints of others, have on my life. Plus, I can always have an instant refresher by just putting on the bracelet again.

It sounds simple, but you're going to love this new awareness. You're also going to be happier and start getting better results in your life. If you aren't ready for a lifetime commitment to being positive, then try it for a full day. There's just not much to lose, and there's a whole lot to gain. 🌸



CAMILLE GAINES
Camille, best-selling author and founder of *FinancialWoman.com*, motivates women to discern what they really want, and then gives them simple yet life-changing solutions to get it. Through her programs, she shares her proven process for helping women live a "rich life" while fulfilling important financial goals.

KID'S PLAY

LET YOUR INNER CHILD LOOSE FOR A
SUMMER TO REMEMBER

By Angela Wells

Summertime is always an exciting, fun-filled time of the year. When I was a little girl, I eagerly awaited going to the beach and flying kites, fishing with my family or simply staying inside playing games and waiting for the ice cream truck to come through the neighborhood.

One of my favorite summertime activities was going to the amusement park. As a young girl and even still today, I find the anticipation of summer fun and being with family and friends exhilarating. I cherish the precious memories that summertime fun creates—seeing my family and friends together, the roars of laughter and the smiles on their faces. Summertime is here, so let the fun begin!

I love when God drops His sweet kisses from heaven. I'll never forget how excited my cousins and I were one summer when we were inside watching cartoons and then heard the beautiful music of the ice cream truck getting louder as it approached my grandparents' house.

We ran to my grandparents and asked for a quarter so we could buy some ice cream. After promising to be good for the rest of the day, we ran after the truck and picked out our favorite ice cream. We thanked the driver and enjoyed our treats under

the big oak tree in my grandparents' yard, listening to the truck's music fade as it drove away. Wow!

I thank God that He created all four seasons for us to enjoy, but summer brings such an excitement not only to kids but also to grownups who are really big kids at heart. And it can be more fun with a little planning for activities the whole family can enjoy.

Planning summertime activities can turn into a stressful chore for busy parents, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some ideas to get your started. You can choose from indoor and outdoor activities that are fun, free and full of adventure. And get the kids involved as well.

Let's start with some suggestions about one of my favorites—amusement parks. Consider big-time theme parks, such as Six Flags and SeaWorld, as well as your local zoo or nature park.

- Check your local grocery store, credit union or Groupon for discount coupons and great deals.
- Avoid peak times and go on a weekday. You will have more of the park to yourself.
- Make it a multifamily or large group outing—more people, more fun.

Or you can introduce your family to some of the



things you enjoyed as a kid outdoors:

- Swimming, going for a bike ride, jumping rope, skipping, roller-skating, blowing bubbles and flying a kite
- Going to the beach, fishing, going for a nice boat ride, kayaking
- Running through the sprinklers
- Collecting seashells at the beach
- Tossing a Frisbee with friends
- Having a water balloon contest
- Pitching a tent in your backyard and watch the stars at night

Staying inside? Try some of these:

- Having a game night with friends and family, or putting a puzzle together.
- Painting, doing artwork or coloring in a coloring book
- Making a homemade pizza
- Making homemade lemonade from scratch
- Visiting your local library
- Grabbing some friends and having a puppet show

Let us never forget the fun, excitement and lasting memories the summertime creates for us. It's so enjoyable to share our memories with our children, our family and our friends. Let's keep creating those special times that we will cherish for a lifetime.

Take advantage of the bright, sunny days and warm summer nights. Summer is here, so let your inner child come out. Laugh, have fun and love hard! 🌸



ANGELA WELLS

Angela is a compassionate artist who radiates with the joy of the. Her love of life, joyful personality and enthusiasm to pursue her passion is contagious. Angela is an powerful vocalist who sings with emotion and a confident conviction. She has a genuine heart to sing and create music that not only entertains, but moves your soul. Her music is powerful and uplifting with a message of hope, faith and endurance. Her heart's desire is to encourage others and inspire them to live life with their whole heart.

GENERATIONS OF

Fun

When the family got together, laughter flowed and songs filled the air

By Marilyn Scott

I am from what some would call a poor family; however, looking at what God blessed us to have later on in life, some would think we were from the middle class.

Dad and Mom were blessed to build a four-bedroom house with minimum wages and non-government help while raising 14 children. My mother didn't need well-known financial advisers to give her information about finances.

She had a gift to budget and managed every penny she and Dad brought home. Mom taught us we should be great handling a budget and know how to live within our means to have comfortable lives.

We didn't take family vacations while I was still at home because we had to work during the summer months. When my parents planned a family get-together, it was always on a Sunday afternoon to go to fellowship church services.

I love and miss those days, especially when the afternoon fellowship church services were in

another town. That was our opportunity to travel as a family. I looked forward to seeing the other church members' children. We would talk about who was winning in sports and, most importantly, who won the Books of the Bible contest. The adults made it fun to participate in those services.

As a matter of fact, I was brought up in a singing family with 13 siblings. We would get together at home and practice songs to sing for Sunday morning. My older brother was the guitarist and my younger brother was the drummer. Most of the time, we were the church choir. When we went to church, the preacher would say, "Will the Covington children come up and render an A and B selection?"

On the way to fellowship with other churches, we would practice and my little brother would find something to beat on to give us rhythm. The sibling with the best voice would give the rest of us their key so we would be in tune. The trip would be one or two hours away, so we had plenty of time to practice.



“OUR PARENTS TRAINED US UP THE WAY ‘A CHILD SHOULD GO’ AND INSTILLED IN US WAYS WE CAN ENJOY BEING AROUND EACH OTHER.”

Our parents never said, “Hey, hey, y’all stop that noise” when we were not always in the right key. We were having fun, laughing at one another, telling the others they were not in the right key or were off beat.

But by the time we got to church we were all anticipating the preacher saying, “Now we will have an A and B selection from the Covington family.” We were ready and had our beat together. Everybody was in the right tune and we had church.

Those were the great family fun times that I remember growing up. We had a busy week—Mom and Dad working daily, the children in some extracurricular activities at school, all of us at mid-week church services. Now, as I reflect back, it was our way of taking a break and getting everyone together to have some fun in a Christian atmosphere.

We are all adults now and have our own children, so when the immediate family gets together, our children do the same thing we did growing up. At a family reunion about four years ago, as we gathered in the living room with our parents, the nieces and nephews started singing gospel songs. It was fun, and we were all having a great time with laughter in the room.

This is one of our family’s ways of having a good time. They have taken the “The Covington Children

Singing” to a whole new level. They can really sing! In fact, some of them have songs on record labels and one is a recording artist who travels and leads many songs in a gospel group.

The Lord has called our parents home to be with Him, and my siblings and I reminisce about the family fun days and laugh about those wonder years. Hopefully, other families can relate to the kind of fun our family has when we all get together—the good old fashioned Christian family fun time.

Our parents trained us up the way “a child should go” and instilled in us ways we can enjoy being around each other. Thanks to our Mom and Dad, we have great family fun times to look back on and share these moments with our children and others. 🌸



MARILYN SCOTT

facebook.com/dreammessengers

Marilyn is known as a praying woman who exercises the gift of prophetic dreams and intercessory prayer. She is the author of *God Speaks: Discover How He Communicates through Dreams and Visions*, which also has

been published in Nigeria. Marilyn has more than 30 years’ experience with companies such as IBM, Xerox and American Airlines. She is married to Nathan Scott, a minister and an author. Email Marilyn at marilyn@blesscott.com.

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TAKE 5

Tips for a great vacation

WHEN YOU WORK HARD, GIVE YOURSELF
THE BREAK YOU DESERVE

By Lynetta Jordan

We work hard, so why don't we play harder? Most employed Americans work 50 weeks out of the year just to earn two weeks of paid vacation. That means we spend over 90 percent of our weeks working and less than 10 percent playing and enjoying the fruits of our labor. I believe God wants us to enjoy more of our days and increase the amount of time we have fun.

We are often forced to travel for bereavement, but how often do you plan travel for enjoyment? According to recent research on StatisticsBrain.com, only 45 percent of Americans take summer vacations. That's less than half of all who should be enjoying a fun reward for their labor. If you are not yet in that 45 percent, it is time to maximize fun and prioritize taking a vacation. Families should plan

one or more annual vacations. Singles should, too.

Vacations create happy, lifelong memories. Life is short and the years fly by faster than we think. As I have advanced in age and unfortunately experienced loss of loved ones, the more I realize how priceless it is to spend precious moments with family and friends.

Friend, make it your goal to create as many fun, playful memories as you can with your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, siblings, spouse and friends.

Vacations can be the goal that motivates and helps you make it through tough workdays. Benefits of vacationing include a needed change of scenery from home and the workplace, true rest and relaxation without the daily alarm clock and exposure to new events, opportunities and activities that you cannot

“You work hard, so play hard, too. Tomorrow is not promised, so we should live each day to the fullest.”

do at home. The results of purposely spending quality time having fun outside your hometown can be amazing.

Here are five tips for summer vacation fun:

1. Plan and save monthly for a vacation: You work and focus on paying debts to others, but are you paying yourself? A vacation is a great way to do that. Did you know many multiple destination all-inclusive cruises cost less than \$1,000? If you save \$100 a month, you will have \$1,200 for vacation. That is a minimal sacrifice for unlimited fun.

2. Shorten your travel time so you have longer to enjoy the destination: Road trips are nice, but you can travel by airplane for the quickest trip and spend more time at the destination. Buy tickets as early as possible for best prices. Trains are also faster than driving. Comfortable charter buses for group travel are an option, too.

3. Ask for complimentary upgrades: Scripture says, “We have not because we ask not.” Recently, I nicely asked for a complimentary upgrade at a four-star hotel. When the clerk completed my check-in, she upgraded my deluxe room to a spacious \$800 one-bedroom suite with a separate living room. Nice! If I had not asked, I would not have received that.

4. Rent a car: No fear. Navigation is here. When I am traveling to conferences with transportation provided, I often do not reserve a rental car. However, when it is vacation time, I want to see all that I can. I admit that I was once nervous about driving in new cities, but adding navigation in your car rental

gives you extra peace of mind. You can also take advantage of it to visit tourist sites you may not have known about before your trip. Cabs, limousines and even Uber rides often are more than the cost of the rental.

5. Plan excursions. Don’t just plan to stay in your hotel room. Do something. Even if you are attending an event, make time for sightseeing. Most cities have museums, walking or riding tours, and other attractions. Tropical beaches have snorkeling and more water activities. Mountains have hiking trails.

If you have not done so yet, suggest a group vacation with family or friends. Get their input on where they would like to go. Research the costs. Contact a travel agent for help in planning a vacation you will remember. Plan to spend as much time as possible relaxing and enjoying your time there. Remember, life is meant to be fun. You deserve it!

You work hard, so play hard, too. Tomorrow is not promised, so we should live each day to the fullest. While you are working hard to build your own business or someone else’s, be sure you are investing in your own health and well-being with vacations.

Vacation tips for time-limited professionals:

Are you a busy professional who feels like you don’t have time for a vacation? Vacations of a week or more are ideal, but they do not always have to be that long. An extended weekend getaway with Friday and Monday off work can offer needed fun, relaxation and rejuvenation.

For busy professionals, it is often possible squeeze



in fun while making the most of a business event. A recent four-day business trip to Hollywood for my first celebrity photo shoot turned into a mini-vacation for me. It is amazing how invigorating that brief but blessed journey was.

Here’s how I made that business trip fun: I traveled from East Coast to West Coast by plane for fastest arrival, arrived a day early and left the second day after my event. I reserved a rental car rather than use cab service.

My photo shoot was during the Oscars weekend. I stayed in the Oscars’ host hotel (where I asked for and received the complimentary upgrade). Before my event, I went to the Dolby Theatre, walked on the red carpet and the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

After it, I took a riding tour of Hollywood, Bel Air and Beverly Hills to see celebrity homes. Later, I took a quick drive from Los Angeles to Long Beach,

enjoyed the palm-tree lined beach and even got to see the famous Crystal Cathedral Church founded by Dr. Robert Schuler, now owned by the Catholic diocese. This trip was quick, but now I am planning to go back with family and spend a longer dedicated vacation there. 🌸



LYNETTA JORDAN
LynettaJordan.com

Lynetta, “The Motivator,” is a speaker, author and life coach who builds women’s confidence in God and themselves. A former college queen who graced the pages of *Ebony*

magazine, she motivates the masses at church, corporate and community events. The founder of Lynetta Jordan Ministries, she has been heard on Rejoice network, and her book, *Love Without The Drama*, has been featured on CBN.com and Women.com. She holds a master’s degree from Regent University and bachelor of arts degree from Elizabeth City State University. Connect with her on Facebook (LynettaJordan) and Twitter @LynettaSpeaks TODAY!

Share with Care

WHEN PLANNING THE SUMMER WITH YOUR EX,
KEEP THE CHILD'S INTEREST AT HEART

By Tammy Daughtry

"I wish my parents would not argue so much about who I spend time with!" - Jenny, age 15

"I hate feeling like I am on the clock all summer and always have to make my divorced parents happy." - Aaron, age 16

Being a kid with mom and dad in two homes is a tough thing sometimes, but it does not have to be that way all the time. When divorced parents, or never-married parents who live separately, can get to a place of making summer fun for the kids instead of playing tug of war over their time, then the kids can win.

We often hear kids say that they wished their parents would not fight over their time or treat them like a time clock with a daily, weekly and monthly "balance" that has to be sure it is always "equal." Kids of all ages and stages need to have a summer that is full of relaxation, adventure, relational time and hopefully the chance to make life-long memories with each parent, even if parents are living separately.

Why is it good for kids to have a meaningful time with each parent? At the core of every kid is a longing to be "attached" and to be valued by mom and dad. When parents are traditionally married and everyone lives under one roof, it can still be a complicated process to be sure kids have individual time with both parents;

however, when mom and dad are married it is encouraged and supported when a child spends individual time with a parent.

When mom and dad are in two homes, the positive encouragement and support by each parent are often lacking because of the pain or anger between the divorced or never-married parents.

One of the keys to helping children feel "securely attached" is to encourage them to enjoy the time with the other parent. Saying out loud, "Go have fun with dad this weekend; he loves you and I know you will enjoy being with him." Or dad saying, "You and your mom are going to have such a good time on your trip to see your grandparents. I am thankful you have so much family to love you."

These verbal messages can alleviate so much stress for kids and can actually empower them to enjoy their other parent, which in turn adds to their "secure attachment" that they so desperately need. Children who are securely attached to mom and to dad is a child who will grow up and thrive into their young adult years.



“ONE OF THE KEYS TO HELPING CHILDREN FEEL ‘SECURELY ATTACHED’ IS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO ENJOY THE TIME WITH THE OTHER PARENT.”

Being aware of this in the journey of co-parenting can help counteract some of the negative impact of divorce on kids.

One other thing to remember for the summer is that regarding vacations: it’s not a competition with the ex. Kids who have quality time talking and taking walks and enjoying meals with their parent are going to benefit as much, if not more, than kids who are constantly being “entertained” all summer and never slow down to have one-on-one communication with their parent.

We all love to travel and see new parts of the country or go to sporting events and amusement parks. But again, we need to remember that every child desires to be seen and to be attached. When planning summer trips or vacations, be sure to incorporate quality “connecting” time and not just running from one activity to another. Often it’s the late-night talks and the rained-out plans that create the long lasting and most memorable moments in families.

If you can’t afford a fancy vacation, who cares? Invest time and attention into your children and do things that don’t cost your whole retirement savings this year. Don’t compare your vacation to the other parent’s vacation. Don’t try to outdo each other. Do what is going to reasonably fit your budget and your available time, and don’t focus on what you don’t have or wish you could do. If you are the parent with more financial resources, don’t use them to try to win the “favorite parent” award with your kids.

Kids don’t need to feel pressure to choose favorites or feel like one parent puts down the other or looks down on the other. If you have resources, that is a blessing; just be sure your motive is always to bless your children and not compete with your ex.

Co-parenting through the summer can be challenging, depending on everyone’s schedule, locations and lifetime routines. In my co-parenting journey, we usually start working on summer schedule about six months ahead of time with all four parents at a co-parent meeting (my ex and I are both remarried).

It takes a few weeks to organize because we both have extended family that live out of state and we both have church camps and other important events to incorporate. However, we never try to “outdo” each other. We just work on it like a 100-piece jigsaw puzzle until we can get all the pieces to fit. We don’t send messages through our daughter or put the pressure on her to “pick” what she wants to do in the summer. Now that she’s 16, we incorporate her requests but never pressure her to figure it all out.

Together we continue to communicate and make parenting decisions for her best interests. We don’t always agree, but we sincerely try never to compete or make it about us as mom or dad. Our goal has always been to do what is best for our daughter and her overall life development. 🌸



TAMMY DAUGHTRY
CoparentingInternational.com

Tammy is the founder of Co-Parenting International, an organization dedicated to addressing the critical impact of co-parenting on children of divorce and in remarried families. Her book, *Co-Parenting Works! Helping Your Children Thrive After Divorce*, was released nationally through Zondervan/HarperCollins July 2011. Tammy is the executive producer of the new DVD series, *One Heart, Two Homes: Co-parenting Kids of Divorce to a Positive Future*. This multimedia resource includes 33 other guest experts and explores many different scenarios of co-parenting; it can be used in a small group setting, a seminar or by individuals at home.

BODY

48 TRY A LITTLE COLOR FOR A BIG CHANGE AROUND THE HOUSE

“Do not be afraid to use color. Color and paint are the easiest and least expensive way to add a big change to a room.”

58 LET YOUR IDEA OF FUN INCLUDE ACTIVITIES FOR BETTER HEALTH

“Maybe you need to ask yourself what could you do that is healthy but also fun for you. Find something that will make you feel good about yourself, especially when you wake up the next morning.”

60 MAKE CARING FOR YOURSELF A LAUGHING MATTER-SERIOUSLY

“Laughter is strong medicine for the body and soul. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body’s natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.”



Color YOUR WORLD

A DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO USING THE BASICS
FOR EYE-PLEASING EFFECTS

By Margo Gramling and Ann Platz

Margo: I love layering color in an interior. It's fun to be able to bring a room to life just by mixing colors and adding color beauty to a space. But first it's important to understand the psychology of each color and how to best use that color.

Let's start with the color wheel. There are three basic colors: red, yellow and blue. These are the pure colors, meaning you can't mix these three colors.

Next are the secondary colors: orange, green and purple. They are colors that come from mixing primary colors. Example: Red and yellow make orange.

It's from this six-color palate foundation that we begin to experiment with colors. The six-color spectrum is straight from the rainbow. Sir Isaac Newton first presented the color wheel in a circle in 1666.

Do not be afraid to use color. Color and paint are the easiest and least expensive ways to add a big change to a room. I love a splash of bold color in every room. It is very unexpected and encourages conversation and interest.

YELLOW

Ann: Yellow has been a longtime favorite color of mine. I prefer yellow in the softer golden hue. It's almost a neutral in my color palate.

Yellow is the brightest color choice, but use caution with yellow walls. Yellow becomes brighter as you paint a room. Always use a softer tone than the color choice you've selected.

My two favorite yellow wall paint colors: Benjamin Moore HC-4 lighter and Benjamin Moore HC-12 darker.

Margo: There is nothing more beautiful than a yellow entrance hall. It provides a happy cheerful welcome and encourages you to pause and greet and then head to other parts of the home. Yellow is a hot trend right now, especially mixed with gray, and leans more into the modern look with that color combination.

Yes, it's great for public rooms in your house—entry,



halls and public areas. Think lemon, butterscotch, mustard, gold and sunny colors.

Yellow, however, is not a restful color choice.

ORANGE

Ann: Peach tones are my choice of color in this orange series. It complements my gold color choice. Orange is the universal warm color and can be used anywhere. Think peach, salmon, apricot, rust, cantaloupe and terra cotta. Orange in different hues is a noted historical color choice. You can research classical English interiors for examples.

Margo: Orange is one of those colors that can go with so many other colors and achieve a different feeling with the combination. Light peach and soft green welcome an earthy feel, while bolder rust and black provoke a more modern look and mix well with black and white photography or modern art.

RED

Ann: Red is the power color. It's one of my top choices for accessory color. When I need to give a room some "color punch," I look to the color red. Just bring a

vase of red roses in a room without any red in it. Voila! Point made.

Margo: Red is my go to shade for accessorizing. It is so hard for me not to use red in an interior because I love the impact it provides to a room. Red is an instant "wow!" If I can't use red in fabrics or paint, I love to have accents of bold red art, frames in red tones or red in the rug.

The color red causes a person to lose track of time. Casinos use it for you to stay all night. High-end restaurants do the same.

In the home, red is not the best choice for a big dose

in the bedroom. You might oversleep. But do use it for the dining room, the family room, the library and even the laundry room.

GREEN

Ann: Green in every shade may well be my favorite color. Green is clearly a neutral and can be used with all the colors on the color wheel.

Margo: Green comes in a variety of shades, which makes it a great color to have fun with the emotion green provokes. The range is from a bright lime green



"Red is an instant 'wow!' If I can't use red in fabrics or paint, I love to have accents of bold red art, frames in red tones or red in the rug."





“Do not be afraid to use color. Color and paint are the easiest and least expensive way to add a big change to a room.”



“Purple is the most exotic color choice.”

(lively) to a soft moss green (serene).

Green is the universal color choice, and one never tires of it. Look at nature. It’s mostly green. All greens can go together. You don’t look at the forest and say, “Those trees don’t match.”

BLUE

Ann: The color blue is enchanting. It can be as pleasing to the eye as a soft pale French blue or as dramatic as a dark regal navy tone.

Margo: Blue is the hardest color to get the right shade. There is a fine line between the red blues and the green blues. Whether you have natural light or fluorescent light will affect the shade of blue you will come out with on the walls.

But blue is the No. 1 favorite color choice. It is

non-threatening and a symbol of trust and longevity. It is refreshing, soothing, calm, dependable, anti-inflammatory and an insomnia and headache relief.

PURPLE

Ann: Purple is the most exotic color choice.

Margo: Purple is a fun, universal and unexpected color choice. It looks great when combined with green, gray, yellow and off shades of blue.

It’s the favorite high-end color selection in interiors. It’s a first choice for women in transition and young girls who toss their former pink rooms.

Purple suppresses appetite and fosters love, wisdom, reverence, inspiration, spirituality, quietness and an enlightened feeling and quietness.

Don’t be afraid to use purple in your interiors. 🌸



ANN PLATZ

Ann and her daughter, Margo, work together in design. Ann is a native South Carolinian who has lived in Atlanta since 1973. She founded her interior design firm in 1976 and specializes in high-end estate residential homes. Her work has been featured in many national design publications as well as on PBS and HGTV. Known for her strong color sense, Ann enjoys sharing her talent with groups and readers. She is the author of 13 books.

MARGO GRAMLING

Margo’s career as an interior designer has broadened in the past few years from the one-on-one client work to writing her first book, speaking at conference, appearing on television and teaching at Emory University. Her work has appeared in publications such as Southern Living and Atlanta Magazine, and on networks including NBC and HGTV.

FUN WITH Benefits

HAVE A GOOD TIME AND STAY HEALTHY , TOO

By Kim Alexis

The idea of having fun can encompass a variety of activities. Many people associate it with being part of a social scene and partying. But I suggest that you think of new ways to have fun that can bring an extra benefit: staying fit and healthy.

“TO ME, THAT IS HAVING A HEALTHY MINDSET.”

I looked up the definition of “fun” and found many ways to describe it: an enjoyable activity; entertainment, especially from an activity that is not important or serious; and pleasure, especially with leisurely activities.

Fun is pleasant, personal and, to some extent, unpredictable. These definitions still leave a lot of room for interpretation. For some people, fun is being active and moving, such as participating in or watching sports, enjoying hobbies or being outside.

For others, it could mean the party scene, something illegal or other unhealthy activities.

I think of staying in shape as fun. It is easy for me to have fun while working out. For some, staying fit and healthy requires a change in mindset. What does that mean? Well, fun for me is being outdoors and “doing” something physical, such as hiking, biking and running. And I look forward to doing them over and over. To me, that is having a healthy mindset.

“IF YOUR IDEA OF FUN IS SOMETHING THAT DAMAGES YOUR HEALTH, YOU MIGHT WANT TO TRY TO CHANGE YOUR MINDSET. ”

If your idea of fun is something that damages your health, you might want to try to change your mindset. Maybe you need to ask yourself what could you do that is healthy but also fun for you. Find something that will make you feel good about yourself, especially when you wake up the next morning.

Here are some suggestions:

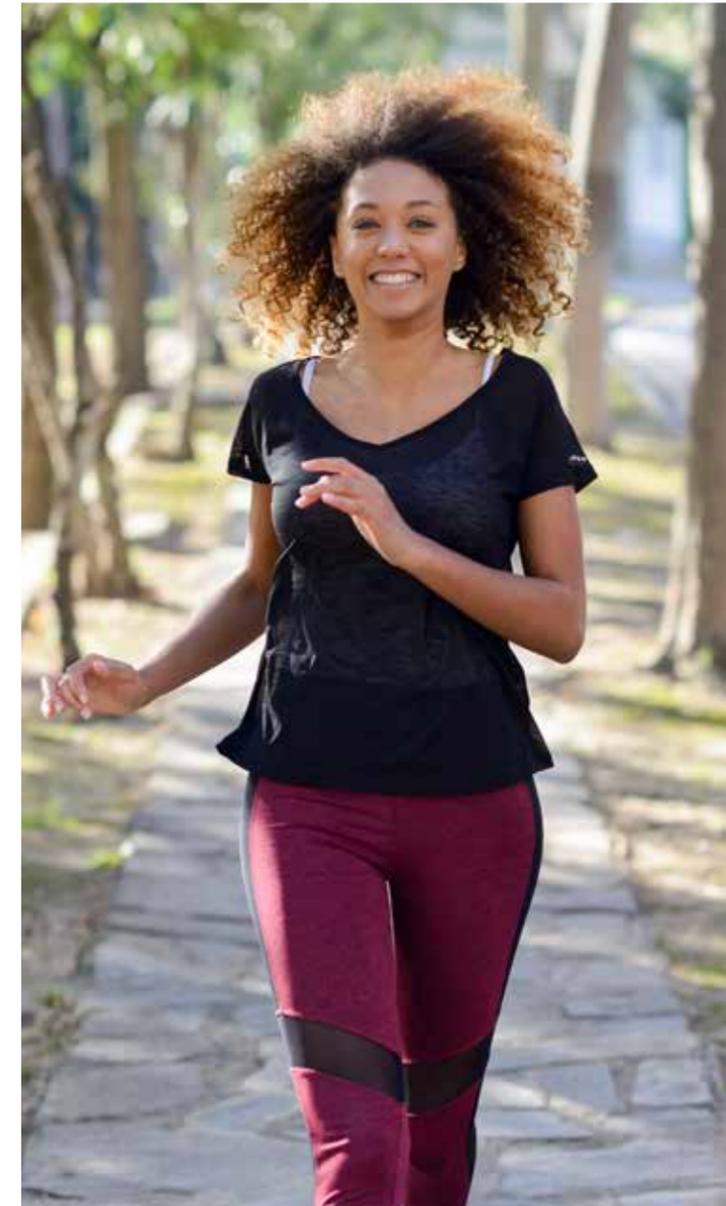
- If you are more of a loner, try going on a nature walk to look at the beautiful outdoors or animal life. Climb to the top of a hill or mountain and enjoy the peace of nature, walk on a quiet path or enjoy the beach.
- If you are more social, go to a health club and learn a new way to work out. You could also join a new group that does something you have been thinking of doing but not gotten the chance, or had the nerve to try. If you are shy but want to be in the presence of people, take a friend.

Whatever your plans this summer, try to find new ways to have fun and stay healthy. Remember, at the end of the day, it helps to reflect on what fun you had and also to feel good about yourself. 🌸



KIM ALEXIS
KimAlexis.com

One of the most recognized faces in modeling, Kim has graced the cover of more than 500 magazines, done countless commercials for print and television, and appeared in six *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issues. Kim has broadened her brand to encourage women of any age. She has written fiction and nonfiction books, speaks on women’s issues and serves as a spokesperson for products she believes in. Kim also has been fashion editor for *Good Morning America* and maintains her love of fitness, having completed eight marathons and three triathlons to teach other women that if she can finish, so can they.



WIGGLES & GIGGLES

ADD LARGE DOSES OF LAUGHTER TO YOUR RECIPE FOR GOOD HEALTH

By Dr. Leesa Haire

Sweating out a dance routine with a dozen other gyrating women may not be your cup of tea, but I learned a lot from that Zumba class. You have to understand that my mama did not teach me to wiggle my backside in any of the directions that class showed us. I did not lose a spectacular amount of weight or come away with ripped muscles, but I did pick up a valuable lesson.

I would like to be a graceful, fluid dancer, but somewhere along the way I hung up my dancing shoes. And that decision showed up big time in class. At that point you either have to tuck and run or own up to your lack of finesse and enjoy the ride. I chose the latter. I could not hold back the laughter at all the silly wiggles we were doing and accepted the real value of the class for me.

Laughter! That's right. Yes, I was sweating it out burning 500-1,000 calories per class—or so they say—but the real health benefit was being forced to stay in

the moment. I had to watch every little step where to put my two left feet, my arms and and hips. It was too funny. That release had a multitude of benefits, and I got them all.

Laughter is strong medicine for the body and soul. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain. They lower blood pressure and increase vascular blood flow and oxygenation of the blood. Defense against respiratory infections and improved alertness, creativity and memory are also benefits. It even gives a workout to the diaphragm and abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg and back muscles. Who knew?

True health can be found in hundreds of little daily habits. Each one compounds upon the next to either support your total wellness or tear it down. A critical element needed to build a strong, healthy system is a

"AT THAT POINT YOU EITHER HAVE TO TUCK AND RUN OR OWN UP TO YOUR LACK OF FINESSE AND ENJOY THE RIDE."

joyful attitude. When someone does not feel well, that goal sounds a million miles away, but I am here to tell you that joy is waiting for us in funny little places.

I think of the belly laugh my grandmother would have had if she saw the trouble and expense I go to buy organic fresh food. My mother's family lives in southern Arkansas, and we traveled there once a year for a two-week vacation when I was growing up.

Since we lived inside the city limits in our Florida town, the farm was a huge adventure. Fortunately, my very loving family tolerated all our city-girl mistakes and kept us from harm. Champion among them was my grandmother, Big Momma. Nothing got past her, and even with nine kids she could work circles around younger souls.

Her idea of organic was to go out the kitchen door and through the chicken yard to pull vegetables out of her garden. Now that's organic. No sprays, pesticides, fungicides or herbicides. It was a high-fiber diet with

fresh vegetables, hormone-free meats, dairy and fats. Our bodies may need fewer calories because we certainly don't do the manual labor, but they still need the same nutrition they always have.

Don't make a healthy lifestyle difficult or complicated. Each and every one of us can obtain a stronger, healthier version of our current selves. Eat whole, unprocessed foods; use natural supplements to support your health; and move your body.

Giggle at your wiggles. 🌸



DR. LEESA HAIRE
Leesa holds a doctorate in naturopathy and is a licensed registered pharmacist. Having worked for more than 20 years in natural health and wellness, she incorporates biofeedback health scans, essential oils, fundamental lifestyle changes and the best nutritional support to restore vibrant health.

"A CRITICAL ELEMENT NEEDED TO BUILD A STRONG, HEALTHY SYSTEM IS A JOYFUL ATTITUDE."

Summer Love

By Elizabeth Bergman

Dive into summer fashion with plenty of fun colors and pretty prints. From ballgames to beach days, you can create a look as simple as 1-2-3. Who has time for outfit planning when so much fun in the sun is calling?

Photo Credit:
Kendra Scott
Kellen Ear Jackets \$80
Eleanor Pendant Necklace \$65
James Body Chain \$95
Gavin Cuff \$85
Nordstrom and nordstrom.com

easy summer looks



Red Dress \$17.99
H&M and hm.com



Kate Spade New York
Stripe Shirtdress \$398
Nordstrom and nordstrom.com



Velvet by Graham & Spencer
Crochet Layer Top \$152
Nordstrom and nordstrom.com



Patterned Shorts \$12.99
H&M and hm.com



Thalia Sodi Chambray Shirt \$59.50
Scuba Skirt \$49.50
Macy's and macys.com



Heart Button Down Shirt \$19.99
T.J. Maxx and tjmaxx.com



Navy Peasant Top \$24.99
H&M and hm.com

WATER EVERYWHERE



Round Tortoise Sunglasses
\$9.99 H&M and hm.com



High-Rise Floral Swim
Bottoms \$14.99 H&M and hm.com



Striped Cover-Up \$24.99
H&M and hm.com



Metallic Woven Tote
\$39.99 Marshalls



Blue Lace-Up Sandal \$34.99
H&M and hm.com



Rainbow Kaftan \$29.99
H&M and hm.com

Striped Cover-Up \$24.99
H&M and hm.com



Suede Fringe Beaded Sandal
\$34.99 T.J. Maxx and tjmaxx.com



Nautical One Piece
\$29.99 Marshalls



Beaded Necklace \$14.99
H&M and hm.com



Portrait Tankini
\$24.99 Marshalls





ELIZABETH BERGMAN
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Elizabeth is the youngest certified Christian image consultant in the nation and was formerly a photo coordinator and copy editor for *Designed to Flourish Magazine*, a Christian women's publication. Elizabeth also has a style blog that encourages women to look and feel their best, hoping to bring out the celebrity in every woman.

Beauty PRODUCTS

SUMMER 2016 EDITION

By Elizabeth Ortega



HOOLA MATTE BRONZER

Benefit

Put this award-winning bronzing powder on your chin, cheeks and forehead for a healthy, natural-looking “tan” year-round. It’s pure matte color, with no sparkle or shine, and is great for contouring. A soft, natural-bristle brush is included.



RED CURRANT PROTECTIVE MOISTURIZER SPF 30

Eminence

An ultra-light replenishing moisturizer with SPF 30, Red Currant features the exclusive Youth Shield Antioxidant Complex. Experience a refreshingly cool sensation from sustained release tea tree oil, which helps reduce the visible signs of breakouts while hydrating and invigorating your skin’s appearance.



DIORSKIN ROSY GLOW

Dior

Re-create the look of just-pinched, rosy cheeks with this finely milled light-pink blush. The unique formula adjusts to your skin’s natural chemistry to create a customized look. The universal shade Petal #001 is flattering on all skin tones, and its rose fragrance offers a moment of pure indulgence with each application.



BEACH BABE TEXTURIZING SEA SALT SPRAY

Not Your Mother’s

Add sexy, tousled waves and a light matte finish to any hair type. Beach Babe Texturizing Sea Salt Spray is infused with natural dead sea salt and sea kelp.



ELECTRIC PRESSED PIGMENT PALETTE

Urban Decay

With 10 bright, exciting shades plus a double-ended brush, this palette is the ultimate fix for color addicts. Inspired by Chaos, a brilliant matte blue from the Vice Palette, the Electric Pressed Pigment Palette marks the return of Revolt in addition to the nine new shades.



CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

Guerlain

Just a spritz of this happy little perfume will carry you through your day. Champs-Élysées is created with flowery notes of rose, blackcurrant flower, mimosa leaves and hibiscus. These scents meld with hearty almond and wood tones that add a subtle strength to the floral fragrance.



STAY ALL DAY WATERPROOF LIQUID EYE LINER

Stila

Stila’s top-selling waterproof liquid liner enables you to create a variety of eye-opening effects, from thin, precise lines to thick, dramatic looks. The formula glides on with ease, dries quickly and won’t smudge or run day-into-night. The fine marker-like tip offers precise application for everyone from novices to pros.



LIQUID LIPSTICK

Anastasia Beverly Hills

This ultra-saturated liquid formula delivers an intense shot of matte pigment in one easy swipe. A single application provides smear-resistant coverage that stays put for hours.



ELIZABETH ORTEGA
makeup4realfaces.com

Elizabeth is a professional makeup artist who believes that all things work together for a common good. She feels we are all called to care for the world we live in, effect meaningful changes and give back heart and soul.



SUMMER FRESH

THE SEASON'S VEGGIES, FRUITS AND HERBS STAR IN THIS BACKYARD MENU

By Debbie Greenhill

Summer is here, and that means it's time to get outside and have some fun entertaining.

There is a Scripture in Hebrews that I love: "Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love. Be ready with a meal or a bed when it's needed. Why some have extended hospitality to angels with out ever knowing it." *Hebrews 13:1-2 MSG*

Summer is a great time to put these words into action. Entertain your visitors, neighbors and family by having a backyard gathering.

Summer is also the best time to take advantage of all the fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs. Some of you may grow your own produce while others, like me, support our farmers by visiting the local farmers' markets.

Fresh is best, and I love the opportunity to cook with fresh. I have a great menu for a backyard gathering.

Keep it simple by offering things that can be made ahead. Make your setting fun and cheery by using bright colors on your table with dinnerware, napkins,

flowers and a few simple decorations. But let your food be the star, taking advantage of the fresh produce and herbs available.

I start this menu with a delicious, colorful salsa using fresh roasted corn. I have a great Italian Hoagie with a homemade dressing made from fresh herbs and adding meat and cheese with summer tomatoes and onions. The chicken salad adds pesto for a little different twist on a favorite.

Who does not love bacon, lettuce and tomato together? I have prepared a layered salad using these tasty, familiar ingredients. Cucumbers are an abundant summer vegetable, and this Dilly Cucumber Salad is a great way to use them. It tastes like summer.

I have added a bowl of watermelon chunks sprinkled with fresh mint that makes a light and refreshing addition to this menu.

Last, I have a beautiful blueberry dessert that will surely become a favorite part of your summer menu. So gather the family, friends, neighbors and that fresh summer bounty for a fun backyard gathering, and remember to always celebrate The Family Table. 🌸



FRESH CORN SALSA

MAKES ABOUT 6 CUPS

- 1 2/3 cups fresh corn roasted (can use frozen corn)
- 1/2 cup sliced ripe olives
- 1 medium red pepper, diced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons fresh oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 4 medium ripe avocados, peeled and diced
- Tortilla chips

Shuck, silk and wash corn. Rub corn with olive oil and roast on a sheet pan in a 400-degree oven for 20 minutes. Remove corn from oven, cool and remove from cob. Place corn in a large bowl; add olives, red pepper and onions. In a small bowl, combine garlic, oil, lemon juice, vinegar, oregano, salt and pepper. Pour over corn mixture and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Just before serving, add avocados and stir into corn mixture. Serve with tortilla chips.



BACON, LETTUCE AND TOMATO LAYERED SALAD

SERVES 6-8

- 1 pound thick-cut bacon, cooked crispy
- 2 heads of romaine lettuce cut into bite size pieces
- 3 large ripe tomatoes cored and cut into bite-size pieces

DRESSING:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh chives, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Whisk ingredients together. Cook bacon crispy with your preferred method. Drain on paper towels; crumble when cool. Place half of the lettuce in a clear glass salad bowl or trifle bowl. Sprinkle half of the tomato pieces and half of the crumbled bacon over the lettuce. Press down and spread half of the dressing over the top. Repeat layering with remaining lettuce, tomato, bacon and dressing, reserving some bacon for garnish. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours.



BASIL CHICKEN SALAD

MAKES 6-8 SANDWICHES

- 4 boneless chicken breast, cooked
- 1/2 cup celery, chopped
- 1/4 cup green onions, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup prepared pesto (sold in Italian section of grocery)
- 3/4-1 cup mayonnaise.
- Fresh basil leaves for garnish

Dice chicken breast and add other all ingredients together. Chill until ready to serve. Serve on your favorite bread. I love to serve on croissant rolls.



ITALIAN HOAGIE SANDWICHES

MAKES 4

- 4 12-inch sub rolls
- 1 pound deli sliced ham
- 1/2 pound hard salami slices
- 16 slices provolone cheese
- 16 sliced mozzarella cheese
- Sliced tomato
- Sliced red onions
- Lettuce

For the dressing:

- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon flat leaf parsley, chopped

- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons fresh oregano finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 large garlic clove minced
- 1 shallot, minced finely
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

In a mixing bowl, combine the vinegar, herbs, sugar, garlic, shallot and lemon juice. Whisk in the olive oil, mustard, salt and pepper. Whisk until ingredients are emulsified.

To assemble sandwiches:

Slice hoagie rolls and spread top and bottoms with the dressing mixture. On the bottom of roll layer ham, salami, four slices each of cheese, tomato, onions, and lettuce. Place on top the top of the hoagie roll and press down. Wrap in plastic wrap until ready to serve. Slice each roll into three pieces.



BLUEBERRY DESSERT PIE

MAKES 10-12 SERVINGS

- 2 piecrust sheets
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 2 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened
- 4 cups confectioners sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 cans blueberry pie filling
- 1½ cups fresh blueberries
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- Zest of one lemon
- Whipped topping

Roll piecrust out with a rolling pin to make a little thinner. Lay piecrust in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. May need to cut crust on ends to fit. Bake according to package directions for a blind piecrust. Remove from oven and sprinkle pecans on top of piecrust, pressing down gently. Mix cream cheese, confectioners sugar and milk with electric mixer until smooth and creamy. Spread over the piecrust and pecans. Place blueberry pie filling in a bowl and gently stir in 1 cup of the fresh blueberries and lemon juice. Spread the blue berry mixture over the cream cheese mixture. Sprinkle with remaining half cup blueberries and lemon zest. Chill for at least 4 hours. When ready to serve, slice in squares and serve with whipped topping.



WATERMELON

Watermelon sprinkled with fresh mint

Dice watermelon into bite-sized chunks. Take a handful of fresh mint and finely chop. Sprinkle the mint over the watermelon just before serving.



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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The Bellamy Brothers: Letting their love flow for cancer victims

By Chuck Dauphin

Country music artists have had a long history of giving back to charitable causes, and The Bellamy Brothers are proud to be able to continue that trend.

The duo this year is celebrating the 40th anniversary of their first hit, “Let Your Love Flow,” and they were looking for a way to mark the occasion for a good cause. According to Susan Bellamy, the wife of David Bellamy, they found it by pairing with the Susan B. Komen Foundation.

“When the guys were about to celebrate their 40th anniversary, they decided to give something back,” Susan Bellamy told *WHOAwomen*. “As we were deciding what charity we wanted to affiliate ourselves with, we thought about the many fans who had reached out to us over the years through letters and phone calls about how their music had touched their lives through illnesses and cancer and different things.”

As it turned out, the quest took on a very personal

turn.

“David had a longtime friend from elementary school named Sharon Glavich, who was recently diagnosed with breast cancer, and there was another longtime fan who was dying, and we also had a former publicist who had battled breast cancer,” she said. “I’m from Fort Worth, and Susan B. Komen is based out of Dallas-Fort Worth, so I thought that would be appropriate.

“My friend, Charlie Spradling South, got us in touch with Ashley Cunningham, who is the manager of corporate affairs there. We wrote a proposal about doing a video of ‘Let Your Love Flow,’ and doing this promotion around it. It’s such an uplifting song, and thought it would be good for cancer survivors.”

After conferring with the executives at Komen, Cunningham gave the Bellamys the green lights. “We decided that we would donate \$1 for every entire download of the 40th Anniversary (*40 Years*) album on iTunes from July 4, 2015, until Dec. 31 of 2016, as well



as T-shirts that we made with the hashtag of ‘Let Your Love Flow.’”

But, Susan said the brothers didn’t want to simply stop there. “We also had the concept to make a video of the song. We were going to shoot it in Fort Worth, so Ashley got the chapter there involved. We had a barbecue lunch, and we were at this really nice ranch in Weatherford. We got such an overwhelming response that there were 60 women who wanted to do it.”

Bellamy said that the afternoon proved to be rather unforgettable. “We had the best time with all the ladies. They were so excited to get there, and were so excited to share their stories with us, and hang out for the day. It was a very neat and uplifting day.”

Though the breast cancer survivors that were involved with the project—and the Komen Foundation

might have felt as if it was the beneficiary—Bellamy says that wasn’t entirely the case. She admitted that the day made her much more cognizant of her blessings than ever before.

“It makes you realize that you need to be happy and thankful every day. You can’t even imagine what these women have gone through and how they are so happy just to be alive. They were so happy to be there on the set. We had a concert at Billy Bob’s, and several of them came backstage as well. Cancer survivors can be ‘Redneck Girls;” she said in reference to the Bellamys’ iconic 1982 Billboard No. 1 hit.

And, at the end of the day, Bellamy said that it made their organization more aware of the struggles their friends have faced in their battle with the dreaded disease. 🌸



Let go, HAVE FUN

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO DO WHAT DELIGHTS YOU

By Leslie Vernick

Having fun does not come easily to me. I know I'm not alone. When my children were young, I didn't know how to relax and simply play. I got bored and restless. Being a first-born overachiever, I excelled at the doing part of life. But the letting go and having fun part of life—not so much.

My attempts to have more fun always morph into a work project or an achievement to be accomplished. For example, I don't play a game for fun. I play to win.

A few years ago I thought it might be fun to try flower gardening. I live on three acres of land so I had lots of practice space. At first I loved going to the garden

center choosing plants, but soon it turned stressful. What plants do I pick? What if they aren't the right ones for my climate or soil? Did I read up enough on how to group the right plants together?

And then there was all the weeding, deadheading, mulching, cutting down, transplanting and edging. Gardening no longer felt fun. It felt like work and I already had enough work in my life. I soon hired someone to maintain my fledgling gardens.

This year my sister encouraged me to take a painting class. I love to doodle, and all of my first draft work papers and to-do lists are filled with squiggles and sketches. I especially like mixed media art where you

“And as I kept going, I discovered that what I didn't like at first now delighted me when I saw bits of it peeking out from under the newest layer I laid on top of it.”

can paint meaningful sayings on beautiful backgrounds. I signed up, bought all my supplies and eagerly looked forward to making beautiful pictures.

I threw my first painting in the garbage. My heart pounded as I tried to copy the teacher's techniques, and my creativity felt frozen inside my fear of failure even though no one was judging but me. This class was supposed to be relaxing and fun but instead I was turning it into an achievement, something I had to do well in order to feel good.

During one class the teacher randomly put various colors of scrapbook paper and acrylic paint on the canvas. She had no rhyme or reason for why she picked certain colors or textures other than they “delighted” her. She was being creative, free to experiment, trying different techniques, layering various paint colors with paper and paper with stencils and stamps. She looked like she was having fun.

But as I watched her I thought to myself, “How do you paint a picture if you have no idea or design of how you want it to turn out? How do you let go and have fun and simply watch and wait to see what happens next?”

This idea of letting go of my agenda was totally foreign to me. I always have an idea of how I want something to turn out. As I watched my instructor “playing” with her paints and papers, her painting didn't look that good. Yet she kept going. At one point she said, “I really like this paper.”

But then she covered most of it up with paint. And as she played, something magical began to unfold on her canvas. The picture began to show itself. We could all see it. And once it became visible, the teacher became more intentional, adding a few more strokes, lines and colors that made it more beautiful. “You can't overthink art,” she told us. “It emerges from somewhere deep inside you.”

I decided to try that approach. I told myself that I would have no pre-agenda to my painting. I was going to slap things down on my canvas however and wherever it delighted me at the moment. I experimented with stencils and stamps, played with mixing various paint colors, sprayed water on my canvas and then let all the wet paint drip on the canvas until it looked like it was covered with giant pink tears.

Some of what emerged I liked, most of it I didn't, but I let it go and kept doing what my teacher said: simply enjoying the process and doing what delights you. And as I kept going, I discovered that what I didn't like at first now delighted me when I saw bits of it peeking out from under the newest layer I laid on top of it.

I kept experimenting with different papers, various techniques and every color in the rainbow. I had nothing in mind other than to have fun playing by doing what delighted my soul and spirit. And it worked. I had fun, even if my picture had not yet emerged.

This is what I have learned. Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a time for work and a time for play. There is a time for a to-do list and a time to let go and be present to what delights you.

And that is my new definition of fun: being present to whatever delights me at the moment. Even when I do have an agenda, such as taking my daily 3-mile trek down the road, I have learned I can stop for a moment and smell the fresh cut grass or watch a bird gather bits of twigs for its nest.

There is no work to that. It's just pure joy. 🌸



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Step UP, Step OUT

Volunteering will show you the fun in giving back

By Kathleen Cooke

I grew up in Las Vegas in the '60s and '70s. Summers were brutal. The heat on most July and August days would soar to 125 degrees and would drop to a chilly 100 degrees at midnight.

Central air conditioning didn't exist. If you were lucky you had an attic fan, and if you were really lucky you had a swamp cooler. Swamp coolers were water-cooled, loud contraptions that usually covered only one room—your parents' bedroom. But we learned to endure, knowing that God made swimming pools just for us, and we generally lived in them all summer.

Vacation Bible School was always a highlight of the summer, and mom was always the first to volunteer to teach a class. As a young child, I learned how to be an expert picture cutter for mom's flannel board stories. When I was 10 years old, I got to lead the hymn singing, the praise and worship part of the VBS service. I'd search the hymnbooks for the loudest toe-tapping songs that I could find and then encourage everyone to clap as loud as they could.

It was my introduction to ministry, and the fun I had while volunteering made those hot summer days more tolerable.

As a child, I learned at VBS that volunteering could be rewarding, and it's something that I passed on to my two now-grown girls. Their summers in California were packed with going to the library so they could read to the younger kids, volunteer for VBS or Awana, or pass out snacks after softball games.

Sometimes, in the summer, the music school they attended would perform at retirement homes for the elderly. We had lots of fun as a family participating in all those activities, and it never ceased to amaze me that what seemed like a chore ended up as one of the highlights of the summer. For example, one time an elderly woman in her nightgown stood up out of her wheelchair and started dancing around the room at the retirement facility.

Finding the fun in giving and volunteering should be taught early and often. It can be one of the most important lessons you teach your child as a parent.

Here are a couple of suggestions to get you going:

1. Create a group with parents and children your child already knows. Then look for places to volunteer that would fit that unique group's personality. A respon-

sible adult will need to take the lead to create and organize the activity, but set up shared responsibilities so one parent is not left with all the work. It's easy, and it allows the adults to grow friendships as well. For our family, some of these friendships continued long after our children went off to college.

2. Focus on the interests of your child. Christian organizations always need volunteers, but look for the opportunities that match your child's passion. Sometimes the groups may need someone to play with babies, fold flyers or set up chairs, but find ones that might fit the child's personality.

Then, once they've volunteered for something and found it to be rewarding, challenge them with more unusual situations. The goal is to teach your child to care for others and see beyond their normal environment. Playing a musical instrument in a retirement home was intimidating at times for my girls, but they were more comfortable when they had to visit their grandparents later on in life. The Salvation Army has centers in almost every town in America, and it always need an extra

hand.

Moving outside a child's comfort zone opens up their eyes to the larger world.

This summer, as you schedule family times together, plan to volunteer. It may create your most memorable experiences of the season and create a family tradition that endures for generations to come. 🌸



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IT'S TIME TO GO *Swimming*

DON'T LET FEAR AND INDECISION HOLD YOU BACK

By Lisa Bevere

When I was 5, I was fearless, especially around water. My annual family vacations to Florida ignited my love for body surfing. I spent my entire day at the beach. I would wade out and position myself for that precise moment when I could ride the wave to shore to be tossed head over heels into the shallow water.

I would struggle to my feet among the swirling sand and water and again I waded out, diving through the middle of the oncoming waves. I had no fear of the waves or water. I enjoyed exchanging my control and contact with the ocean floor for the exhilaration of the wave's ride.

As I got older I was not so free. I became self-conscious. Perhaps I looked awkward tumbling in to the shore. Then there was the matter of the bothersome sand in my suit and the issue of modesty as my top would come up or my bottoms would fall down. The fears of how I looked to the nameless observers on the beach robbed my joy of swimming.

But I was dealing with more than just the uncomfortable or undignified. I had become afraid—not just of water but also of anything that possessed the power or the strength to sweep me off my feet and go over my head.

I can hear some of you saying, “I don't like swimming.” But what is it about swimming that you do not like? Is it the temperature? Are you afraid when you can't touch or see the bottom? Are you afraid of what is under the water? Is it still and deep water that frightens you or shallow and turbulent water? Is it depth or waves? Is it because you cannot breathe under water? Do you feel uncovered in a bathing suit?

Some of you desperately long to leap with abandon into the water. If you could, you would be in over your head in a moment's time, but something holds you back. Your heart is drawn by the water, but you feel compelled to stay with those on the shore of indecision. When we pace the shore, we find nothing but fear—fear of failure, fear of error, fear of staying ashore, fear of leaving it.

Fear seemed to immobilize me more than anything else in my life. I was becoming irritated by the limits I

had set to protect myself. My restlessness occurred in conjunction with a release in my life that came as I read *Isaiah 52:1–2 (NLT)*: “Wake up, wake up, O Zion! Clothe yourself with strength. Put on your beautiful clothes, O holy city of Jerusalem, for unclean and godless people will enter your gates no longer. Rise from the dust, O Jerusalem. Sit in a place of honor. Remove the chains of slavery from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.”

God was awakening my interest in adventure. It seemed He wanted me free from my bondage so I could turn total control over to Him. No sooner did I throw off my chains than He told me to jump into water that was over my head. I went from feeling apprehensive and timid in water to making my entire family learn how to surf.

The hardest thing about surfing is paddling the board out against the waves. When you finally get out there among all the resistance, the very thing that fought you will be the thing that propels you forward. Lovely one, the same is true of life. Resist your fear and propel into the fun adventure that God has waiting for you.

Had I never reclaimed what fear stole from me, I never would have experienced the joy in all four of my sons as they caught a wave and rode it back to shore. My youngest was 8 years old at the time, fearless just like me when I learned to body surf. Kids aren't born afraid. You have to teach them to be afraid.

God wants you back to when you were a child with no fear. He wants you to dive over your head and out of control into the joy He has waiting for you. 🌸



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Lisa believes in women and empowers them by weaving the practical with the profound truth of God's Word in award-winning curricula and best-selling books (*Lioness Arising, Fight Like a Girl, Nurture, Kissed the Girls and Made Them Cry* and more). Her heart breaks over social injustice. As an advocate for change, she rallies others to be an answer to desperate problems near and far. She and her husband, John Bevere, co-founded Messenger International, an organization established to teach, reach and rescue. Lisa is the mother of four sons and grandmother of three.

NO QUIT IN THIS HOUSE

Mom's lesson: Keep on, even if you're not perfect

By Kerri Pomarolli

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

Psalm 139:14 (ESV)

OK, so sue me. I'm not one of those fancy Pinterest moms who make organic cotton candy machines that spew out our Scripture verses. I don't have Tupperware with matching lids, and when I go on Pinterest for more than 30 seconds I get a severe stomachache.

Why? Because it brings up all my insecurities. I am not crafty. I had to repeat kindergarten because I couldn't cut a straight line. My vocabulary skills were off the chart but I couldn't draw a circle. So every time I see all the adorable things I could be making for my family, including food items with faces, I kinda want to throw up a little.

I have Pinterest friends and I attend their gatherings. I marvel at their party platter creations shaped like Noah's ark and "ooh and aah" over their new hand-stitched curtains with homemade lamb's wool from Uganda. I listen intently about their latest gluten-free bread recipes that are delicious and also cure cellulite, fibromyalgia and diabetes all at the same time.

My neighbor Anne puts Martha Stewart to shame. The first day I met her she was baking her own birthday cake right from the pin page of Martha's Easter Bunny 3-D cakes. She invited us over and I took my handmade chocolate peanut butter balls, which actually came out looking more like blobs than balls.

I placed my creation by her perfectly shaped realistic bunny cake and said, "Well, here are its droppings!" She

smiled, and we've been friends ever since.

She sent her kids to preschools that used only organic clay, stuck to schedules and were so expensive you had to give a kidney to get in. I sent my kids to a preschool where the drop-off time was "whenever you feel like it" and my kids ate the Play-Doh and it seemed OK to me.

I recently attended one of Anne's "Gingerbread Making Parties" with my daughter. Unfortunately, Lucy has inherited my skills for crafts. We were working as a team to build one of these monstrosities and all my "issues" from kindergarten surfaced. I kept sneaking bites of all the toppings under the table. I caught Lucy doing it a few times, too.

Lucy got so mad when her house wouldn't stand up that she ran to the side of the garage pouting. I didn't blame her. Our house was horrific, to be honest. Anne had everything, including the homemade sugar glue, perfectly laid out but did not include any instructions on how to make the darn things.

I approached Lucy and I tried to comfort her. She wanted to leave. I knew this moment would be important to her later. I wasn't going to let her quit because she wasn't succeeding.

She also inherited my perfectionist quality, which can be a gift as well as a curse, depending on the day. I persuaded her to join the table again by promising her we could eat all the toppings secretly. I grabbed Anne's crafty husband and said, "Danny, can you hook us up

with a gingerbread house that stands, please?"

He immediately went to work. Lucy and I happily ate gumdrops and chocolate chips as we saw "our" gingerbread house come to life. We then decorated it with joy and took all the credit. It looked totally ghetto but we were very proud. I told her it was the best-looking gingerbread house in the world and the other kids were staring at it because they were so jealous of our "modern abstract art" concept. We ate the roof.

Lucy learned a lesson that day: We may not be good at everything we try, but quitting is not an option. I learned the importance of nurturing my daughter's self-worth, even when she was not excelling. The house might not have looked like anyone else's house, yet she was proud of herself and that's what mattered.

We also learned that gumdrops and sprinkles are a perfectly acceptable lunch on special occasions, as long as we wash it down with some organic, gluten-free Pinterest freshly squeezed lemonade with lemons that come from Spain.

Take a **MOMENT** to think about...

1. Do you march to your own drummer in certain areas? Does that make you feel insecure?
2. Do you find yourself comparing your skills with

other moms? If so, why? Do you think it's a good thing to compare you and your family members against others? Does Christ do that to you?

3. What can you do to receive the acceptance of your Heavenly Father for who He made you to be? How can you accept others for who God made them to be?

Dear God,

You always show me how to make lemonade out of my lemon situations. Thanks for giving me a creative, unique mind. I know I'm like no one else and that's the way You created me. Please allow me to raise my kids and appreciate how special and unique they are and encourage them to be their own person. Remind me that You don't make mistakes.

Amen 🌸



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Kerri, known as Hollywood's God Girl, is a stand-up comedian, author, actress, mom and out-of-the-closet Christian. She has been seen on the *Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *Showbiz Tonight* and *General Hospital*. Her latest book, *Guys Like Girls Named Jennie*, is being considered as a motion picture.



Rest, Relax, Rejoice

DISCOVER CONTENTMENT IN
EVERY SEASON OF YOUR LIFE

By Cheryl Lane

In my 60 years on this earth, I have learned a few things. One is that we as women go through many different seasons of life, and many times we are not content in whatever season we are in.

Some single women can't wait to find that one true love, get married and live in wedded bliss forever after. Once they are married, they begin to ask themselves, "What was I thinking?"

Mothers with young children look so forward to the time their babies can feed themselves and go to the potty alone.

When those babies become teenagers, the moms want them to be babies again. When our children grow up and leave home, we face the dreaded "empty nest syndrome." Women who have a career desire to stay at home, while those who stay at home long for a career.

We tend to think, "If I could just get that bigger home, go on that desired vacation or make more money my life would be great." Understand that I am a big advocate of expecting better things in the future. *Proverbs 29:18* says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." It

"We must remember that if we find ourselves in the middle of a difficult season, we should restrain our complaints and trust that God will strengthen us to come through in victory."

is imperative that we have faith in God and a vision to obtain all He has supplied for us in His Word. However, we must also learn to rest, relax and rejoice in God, whatever season we are in.

Paul wrote in *Philippians 4:11-13*, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Basically, Paul is telling us that he had seasons of abundance and seasons of need, but he learned how to be content in both. He knew he could get through each and every difficulty through Christ who strengthened him.

The Webster's 1828 dictionary defines "content" as "rest or quietness of the mind in the present condition; satisfaction which holds the mind in peace, restraining complaint, opposition, and often implying a degree of happiness." I like that! I think it covers the notion that instead of complaining, we need to learn how to rest, relax and rejoice in whatever season we are in.

We must remember that if we find ourselves in the middle of a difficult season, we should restrain our complaints and trust that God will strengthen us to come through in victory. *Romans 8:28* says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

If you are the called, God is working for you. One thing we need to notice about this Scripture is that it uses the phrase "working together." I am convinced that many times in the middle of difficult seasons people work against God instead of with God. Think about it. If we are working with God, we will be rejoicing instead of complaining. Instead of worrying, we will be resting and relaxing in His promises. We will put our trust in

Him and speak His Word instead of talking negative about the situation.

We can't always make the seasons of our life change, no more than we can have June weather in January. And sometimes the seasons change unexpectedly, without warning and at the wrong time. Sometimes there may not be anything we can do in the natural to change that season, but there is always something we can do spiritually.

Even though we may not know what season is ahead, we can always be assured of two things.

- Your season WILL change. No storm has lasted forever. Just hang on to God and His Word and ride it out, because there is surely an end in sight. Trust God to bring you to the other side.

- God is a good God and He NEVER changes. This is good news. You may feel sometimes as if you are on the roller coaster of life and it seems like you will never get off, but your wonderful God is still the same yesterday, today and forever. He never looks at our situation and says, "Oh no, I didn't know that was going to happen!" He knows exactly what season we are in, and He will deliver us through to victory just like the stories we read in the Bible. 🌸



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FAITH, FRIENDSHIP AND FUN

Better together: The 3 F's of community

By Susan Milligan and Shea Wood



Have you ever noticed that the best times in life involve other people? We believe that the best parts of life are lived in community.

Family, friends, church, work and school all provide us with opportunities for community, but we are not just talking about hanging out on a Friday night; we're talking about walking out our faith together. Doing life together is essential in both personal and spiritual growth.

In 2007, after an intense time of healing and restoration, we started Lock & Key, a two-by-two ministry. Jesus sent out his disciples two-by-two (*Mark 6:7*) and we felt strongly that He called us to follow this example.

Our ministry began with a leap of faith. Small steps lead to larger ones, but without faith it was hard to take even the tiniest of steps. We were asked by a pastor to simply share what we had experienced through our healing journey with God. As we began teaching our class, our book also began to take shape. *Moving Him* In was birthed out of these classes and it has taken us on a grand faith journey. Not only did that first step require faith, it required each other.

Each of us in our everyday lives has our faith questioned, challenged and stretched. Whether we watch television, see posts on Facebook or visit with our neighbor, it seems that in this season faith is being scrutinized.

Community is the glue and part of the foundation that helps us to live a faith-filled life. God is our example and He is relational. God does everything through relationships. *John 1:1-5*

If you believe in the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), you believe in community. The 3 Fs—faith, friendship and fun—define the type of community we are talking about. It is great to worship Sunday mornings with your local church, but the kind of community we

believe we all need is the kind that has permission to get in your business and sharpen you like iron. *Proverbs 27:17*

A faith community is vital to living life to the fullest. We live in strange and difficult times and if you think you can get by all alone, you are not living according to God's design. We know that leaning on one another for prayer and encouragement through difficult seasons is crucial. When times are tough, we need a physical body to look us in the eyes to remind us who we are.

The reminders help us to get our bearings, decide our next steps and foil our enemy's plans of keeping us in an emotional state. Having someone to walk with you through trials and then celebrate your victories and special occasions is another benefit found only in community.

Friendship is an important part of that faith community, too. Friends share clothes, makeup, secret recipe ingredients—all kinds of things. It is good to have friends who share the same faith in Jesus. When you hang out together, you can continue being who you are. No need to put on the "church" face, just be you.

It is so fun walking out faith inside of friendship. Companionship was important to Jesus, too. He had 12 disciples with Him day and night. Now there's a commitment to friendship that challenges us.

While you are walking in faith with your friends, fun is a key component. Laughter brings a level of healing and relief to our weary bodies, and our friends can help us laugh. We can share our ups and downs, but we also can laugh at our shortcomings and mistakes. Our friends helps us not take life so seriously and let loose. We recently had the opportunity to visit the publisher for *WHOAwomen*, Laine Lawson Craft. Her friendship has meant the world to us through the years and sharing our faith together has strengthened our bond as friends.

Each one of us has had our ups and downs and leaned on one another for prayer and encouragement.

"When times are tough, we need a physical body to look us in the eyes to remind us who we are."



We also find hope in the laughter we share. If you have spent any time with Laine, you know you are going to laugh. She is lively, fun and very hospitable. We laughed into the wee hours of the morning.

Our time together refreshed us and set us on a course for the rest of the year. Although our time is often short, as being with friends often is, it was a much needed retreat for all of us. We had fun on the beach, in the boat and simply just hanging out. God knows we need those in our lives that we can cut loose and have loads of fun.

Our step of faith into our ministry has had its good and bad times, but we wouldn't trade what we have seen God do for any amount of money. Our leap of faith led us into a wonderful adventure. And without the faith, friendship and fun of community, we would not be where we are today. 🌸



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WHY WAIT? Enjoy your life now

MAKE HAPPINESS A PART OF YOUR LIFE JOURNEY

By Debra George

There is nothing that I find more fun than spending time with my crazy, loud and extremely funny Italian family. We love to gather together and cook homemade Italian food. Spaghetti and meatballs, lasagna, stuffed pasta shells—you name it, we cook it.

Since both of my amazing parents are in heaven now, our family sets aside several dates during the year to come together. We have the most fun talking. Yes, that's right. Talking, talking and talking.

We love telling stories of our upbringing, and here's a good one. Growing up on the dirt roads of Clodine, Texas, we made our own fun and entertainment. My brothers and family are all very athletic, and every one of them excelled in some sport, especially baseball.

When I was a young girl, my brothers would put a plastic bat in my hand and pitch me a plastic ball until I learned how to hit. After I got a little older, the plastic bat was switched for a real bat—a Louisville Slugger, to be exact. The plastic ball turned into a hardball and the pitches they threw to me became faster.

Clodine had no baseball teams or baseball leagues.

Even though all of my siblings and I played for other leagues with our public schools, my brothers wanted more. They wanted their own baseball team out in the country, where there was lots of land, railroad tracks and dirt.

They wanted to play so bad that they turned my Daddy's cow pasture into a baseball field. The bases were Mama's catalogs she received through the mail. You can imagine how bumpy a cow pasture was with the ruts and holes that the cow's hoofs made on a rainy day.

When we started playing on our makeshift baseball field, not only did our Clodine friends join us, but many friends came from the city of Houston to join the fun. We played ball and ran the bases until our parents forced us to come into the house at 6 every night for supper.

Supper was another fun time because we all sat around the table, ate the best homemade cooking ever and chatted and laughed about who was the best at baseball.

We didn't have a lot of money to spend on fun, but it doesn't take a lot of money to have a great time. A simple baseball field with catalogs for bases meant the



“I love what Jesus said in *John 10:10*: ‘I have come that you might have and enjoy your life to the full until it overflows.’ Don’t say you’ll enjoy life when you get out of debt, or when your kids act better or when you shed 10 more pounds.”

world to us when we were growing up.

Another fun thing we loved to do was pick dewberries. They grew wild on vines right in front of Mama’s house next to the railroad tracks. We would put on our black rubber boots and grab a big stick to move the high grass as we were picking, just in case there was a snake.

We wanted to spot the snakes and have time to get away from them before they spotted us. We didn’t have the fancy rain boots in all colors and patterns like we have today, but we thought we were really styling in our jeans, T-shirts and black rubber boots. We picked berries until we were exhausted.

We then took them to the house, washed them and helped my Mama make jelly and dewberry cobbler. And oh my goodness, cobbler with vanilla ice cream on top is still to this day one of my favorite summertime desserts.

We rarely ever bought ice cream from the store, but why would we when we could make it ourselves? I would get in the kitchen next to Mama as she poured canned cream, butter and tons and tons of sugar into a container,

getting it ready for the old-fashioned ice cream crank.

In the garage, we would carefully pour all of the liquid sweet cream into the crank and place a bunch of ice around the outside of the container. One of my strong brothers would grab the handle and start turning it around and around.

At first it was easy to turn, but as the cream thickened and turned into ice cream, the crank became harder to turn. Sometime the crank would want to jump around in the garage, so they always sat me on top of the thing to keep it from moving.

It wouldn’t be long before the ice cream was ready and we could hardly wait to put a bunch of spoons filled with this luscious treat right on top of the hot berry cobbler.

We also thought fun was getting a big ol’ watermelon in the summer, putting it in the fridge until it turned ice cold and then taking it outdoors to slice and share it with family and neighbors. When we sat down to eat these desserts, we felt like we were the most blessed family in

the whole world.

And do you know what? We were blessed. Large amounts of money, a huge home and the latest cars are awesome to have, but nothing can buy you happiness. No amount of money can replace precious time spent with your family.

In the summers, I have another family that I want to tell you about, one that I love to spend time with. That’s my family in the inner cities of America. One of the most fun things I get to do this summer is go into some of the poorest areas of our country and give to children and families.

We love giving single moms, prostitutes and drug addicts big bags filled with necessities such as toothbrushes, soap, and shampoo. We throw in a little bling-bling and also give them a Bible.

Fun is when a beautiful woman who is living out on the streets breaks down and cries as tells us that no one ever comes into her region to give out gifts. Fun is when we get to bring the children of the inner cities toys, school supplies and clothes.

Fun is when we have the honor of sharing *John 3:16* with hundreds and hundreds of people and seeing Jesus transform their lives.

Fun is when we take a team of women into the strip clubs to hand out beautiful jewelry and gifts to the dancers.

Fun is when we see a huge smile break out across

their faces and see their countenance change after they receive the free gift of life through Jesus Christ.

What do you like to do for fun? Ask yourself, “Am I having a good time in life?”

I love what Jesus said in *John 10:10*: “I have come that you might have and enjoy your life to the full until it overflows.” Don’t say you’ll enjoy life when you get out of debt, or when your kids act better or when you shed 10 more pounds.

Don’t put your happiness off another moment. You can be happy right now. On your way to your destination, don’t forget to enjoy your journey. Make it a point to have fun moments every day with family, friends, classmates and co-workers.

Laugh more, love more, live more! God wants you to have an amazing life. *Jeremiah 29:11*

This summer, as you schedule family times together, plan to volunteer. It may create your most memorable experiences of the season and create a family tradition that endures for generations to come. 🌸



DEBRA GEORGE

Debra has devoted her life to winning souls and raising up a soul-winning army for Jesus Christ. Whether Debra is walking the streets of the inner city to spread her message or speaking in a church or at a conference, her mandate from God is to bring hope to people from all walks of life.

Time for YOU

In the rush of life, it's important to stop and recharge—alone

by Tammy Turnage

Today, I walked out of my house. I left the clothes dryer buzzing, the floors unmopped and the dishes undone. I walked out—to my back porch, that is.

I'm sitting in one of the metal chairs we bought a few years ago when we were sprucing up our back porch; it's been months since I sat there. The clouds have hidden the morning sun, the birds are singing in the pine trees in our backyard, and I'm realizing how I needed to stop just long enough to catch my breath. I also realize that I never truly ever stop to do this.

From the time my feet hit the floor in the morning until I go to bed at night, it's non-stop.

"Mom, I've got to tell you what happened today."

"Honey, can you iron my shirt real quick before I have to leave?"

"Do you have a minute? I really need a friend to talk to."

I often say to my husband, "I don't think I've sat down all day. It's just been one thing after another all day long." Can you relate?

Our to-do lists seem to grow longer all the time. It's constantly a challenge to keep everything running smoothly as we deal with endless children, home, work,

social events and family obligations. We all try our best, but after a while, we find we just need some time for ourselves.

I want to ask you something. When was the last time you took the time to take care of YOU? Sometimes, it takes a little planning and juggling to accomplish, but it's worth every effort it takes to carve out some time for YOU.

Summer is a great time to stop, think back over the past few months and plan for the upcoming fall and Christmas season. Without planning, days flow into months, and before long we find ourselves overwhelmed and don't know why. We need to stop, pray, ask for guidance and plan. I hope the following tips will help:

Ten tips for making time for YOU

1. Get out your calendar and plan a day, or even a few hours, just for you. Mark it down just as if it were an important appointment, because it is.
2. Enlist help with child care if needed, and tell your family that you will not be available for a few hours.
3. Turn off your phone; let the messages go to voicemail.



4. Plan a place to go where you can relax, whether it's the beach, park, spa, local coffee shop or even your back porch. Find a quiet place just for you.

5. Take along a basket with a small notebook, your Bible, a favorite devotion book or magazine, a calendar, and a tall glass of iced tea or a mug of your favorite coffee.

6. Spend the first few minutes just relaxing and listening to the sounds of nature.

7. Thank God for the blessings you have in your life. Focus on everything you are grateful for: family, friends, work, home, church, ministries.

8. Then, open your Bible and read some of your favorite passages, reflecting on them. Ask God to speak to you in a special way during this time.

9. Pray. Ask God for guidance and direction in your life. Do you need to shift some priorities around? Do you need to mend some relationships? Is your spiritual life where it needs to be, or do you need to renew your walk with God? Now is a perfect time to do that.

10. Then, open your notebook and calendar and begin writing down new goals and ideas to make your life more abundant in every way: your walk with God, family

relationships, time with friends, home organization, work responsibilities. Set goals for the things that you want to achieve and mark time for the important people in your life you want to spend time with.

I think you'll find that sometimes just a little time for YOU is all you need to get your life back on track and headed in the right direction. In fact, I think it's about time I pick up my Bible and notebook, head to my favorite coffee shop, order a frozen iced coffee and enjoy time just for me. And who knows, maybe I'll see you there. Hope so! 🌸



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Tammy began studying the piano when she was 3 years old and has a degree in piano performance. As a pianist, organist and vocalist, she has been featured as a soloist with symphonies, solo concerts, and church and local theater

productions. Her new piano CD is *Classical Praise*. She writes and blogs from life's experiences and is working on a new book. Making their home on the Mississippi Coast for over 28 years, Tammy and husband Kendall stay busy with daughters Kristen and Maria, son-in-law Brian and granddaughter Summerlyn. Follow Tammy on her blog, Pinterest, Facebook and Twitter.

Make every day a joyful day

Enjoy 'doing life' with God all week long

By Joyce Meyer

Back in the 1970s, I used to bowl on Friday nights. One night when I wasn't doing very well, I heard the Lord speak to my heart, "Ask Me to help you bowl."

I immediately thought, "I can't ask You to help me bowl!" But I went ahead and prayed, "OK, Lord, please help me bowl better." And He did.

I remember this experience so clearly because it was a great eye-opener that made me realize God cares about every part of our lives, and He wants to be involved in everything we do.

John 10:10 (AMPC) says, "The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)."

Jesus died so we can have life—not just a barely-get-by, "I'm hanging on till Jesus comes back" existence.

God wants each of us to have a deep, intimate, personal relationship with Him so we can enjoy our everyday lives and learn how to "do life" with Him. This means we do every single thing in our daily life with and for God. And when we realize we are just as close to Him at home doing laundry or at the grocery store as we are at church or during our time in prayer, we are serving Him in everything we do.

It's all about balance

I didn't enjoy it my first several years in ministry. I

worked too much and was too concerned about what others thought about me. I had a tendency to be this way because growing up, it seemed that the more I worked and the more I accomplished, the happier people were with me. Over time I became a first-rate workaholic.

It took me awhile to realize that "all work and no play" is not healthy, and God wants me to have abundant life. This meant I had to learn how to balance my priorities so that my relationship with God is always first, and then everything else follows. This includes my relationships with family and friends, along with work and taking time to relax.

It's not wrong to work hard, and I like to work. But if I don't make time to rest and just have fun, it won't take long for me to get out of balance and lose my joy.

Turn the ordinary into the extraordinary

So much of life can become a mundane routine that we really enjoy it only when we do something out of the ordinary, like take a vacation, go to a special event or do something exciting, like shop for a new dress. And many people have a "working for the weekend" mentality. But this type of enjoyment is based on emotional excitement, not the joy God gives.

The joy of the Lord is much greater than simply feeling happy. It brings peace and contentment to your soul, even when your circumstances are difficult and it doesn't make any sense. *Nehemiah 8:10* says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."



This kind of joy makes the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday routines enjoyable. And since most of life is Monday through Friday, we need to enjoy it.

The world can't give it to you

In *John 15:11*, Jesus says, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." The Amplified translation says "that your joy and gladness may be of full measure and complete and overflowing." In the 10 verses leading up to this one, Jesus is talking about abiding in Him, because that's the key to living with His joy.

Abiding means "to live, dwell and remain in." It's not just visiting once a week at church. It's having a personal relationship with Christ, being one with Him and doing life together. The truth is apart from Jesus, we

can do nothing of real value, but with Him, we can bear much good fruit. *John 15:5*

God wants to abide with you every day, all throughout the day. He doesn't just want you to seek Him when you go to church or when you're desperate. His desire is to have a personal relationship with you, so you can experience His presence in everything you do. That's when your everyday life is really enjoyable. 🌸



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Joyce is a New York Times best-selling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *The Mind Connection* (Hachette). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide.

Please note: The views and opinions expressed throughout this publication and/or website are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Joyce Meyer Ministries.



A LAUGH A DAY

How to celebrate the life you've been given

By La-Tan Roland Murphy

When was the last time you cried tears of joy, or doubled over because you actually laughed so long and hard until your belly hurt? Was it 10 years ago, or a week ago?

Perhaps laughter has taken a little hiatus from your life.

Laughter is really good medicine that keeps us from becoming grumpy, old folk before our time. But if you already consider yourself grumpy and old folk, thinking it's too late because life has passed you by, please remember that it's never too late to learn to laugh again.

If you struggle to find humor in your life right now and are simply fresh out of joy, try looking into the mirror and make faces at yourself. Hey, it beats the alternative of sitting in the corner all day, Grumpy.

There's much to be joyful over, even in our worst circumstances. Perhaps it's time we learned how to celebrate the life we've been given. Sometimes we need a reality check to remind us how truly blessed we are:

- Take a walk through the cancer center. Be thankful it's not you held hostage by I.V. bags.
- Visit a homeless shelter. I bet you'll laugh for joy as you walk back into your warm, cozy house.
- Cover your eyes for the day to experience what it's like to be blind. Celebrate that you have sight, even if your glasses are thicker than the lens on NASA's Hubble

Telescope. Laugh for joy and pray for those who can't enjoy viewing the beautiful world around them.

- Imagine what it would be like to have no legs, arms, hands or feet. Celebrate that you can stand, hug, walk and dance.

- Spend a day in silence, communicating only in written form to friends and family. It won't take long for you to realize how blessed you are to have the gift of speech.

We need to learn to live in the moment, like children. I love watching children play, and I am amazed by the way they are able to celebrate the wonder of life, no matter what. Their contagious laughter makes me linger in want for more.

Raw innocence helps them laugh with abandon. Children know how to have fun at the highest level. Their lives have not yet been inundated with the junk that puts us in a funk. The good news for us old Grumps is this: It's never too late to celebrate the life we've been given. Sometimes we just need a jolt of reality to help us remember.

Don't you think it's high time we learned to laugh again? Don't you think it's a quarter past laughing-time?

Your life is unique; no one else gets to live it but you. Maybe you are thinking, "It's a good thing, La-Tan, because no one would want to live my life!" Well, all of our lives have points of stress and places of struggle.

There's no way to avoid it. As long as we are breathing air on planet earth, we will face hardships of various kinds. But, if we focus on the hardships alone, then, we fall into despair and an attitude of "I don't care." Our perceptions really do become our realities.

My dear friend, ask God to help you celebrate the life you've been given—just as it is—right here, right now. Ask Him to change your perception from sad to glad. You are far more powerful than you can begin to imagine, IF you have accepted Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. If you haven't, today is a great day to receive Him. And I would be honored to walk you through the process of how to pray the Sinner's Prayer. Simply email me at latanmurphy.com. Accepting Christ will be the best decision of your life and your eternity.

Still, there will still be days when you will want to throw yourself face down on the pillow and have a good

old-fashioned "ugly cry." Go ahead if it makes you feel better, but remember that you are not alone. And what joy it is to know God catches our tears in His bottle. He loves you, He sees you, He wants to give you a life worthy of celebrating.

The power of heaven is fighting for your daily joy. Your sinful debt has been permanently canceled. No more shame, no more guilt, no more self-punishment, no more being crushed to despair by uncontrollable circumstances. God is fully capable of managing all of our accounts. He is on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He does not sleep.

Because He lives, we can face tomorrow and the day after and the day after that as we experience abundant life to the fullest, through Jesus, the Son of the living God. Now that's something to laugh for JOY about, all the days of our lives.



As you look to Jesus, He will teach you how to soak in the many blessings all around. In doing so, you will find joy in the simple things. Fun times can be in our emotional forecast, if we live our lives centered on looking for fun in all the right places.

No matter what is happening in our lives, no matter the stresses or the messes, there is always someone, somewhere who has it way worse. Don't waste another day in misery.

- In winter, snuggle under the covers a bit longer than usual, thanking God for a warm, comfortable bed in which to sleep.
- Drink in the cool breeze of springtime and celebrate your life as new life bursts forth all around.
- Be still. Truly feel the warmth of a summer afternoon and be cognizant of how the summer breeze caresses your skin.
- Build castles in the sand, and then race to tear them down.
- Jump in the fall leaves and be thankful for your colorful life.
- Giggle ... just because you can. Give your brain a little vacation from your problems.

• Sprinkle every dramatic life experience with laughter.

• Start fresh today and celebrate the life you've been given. God has entrusted you to live it. Experience it fully knowing He is right beside you.

• Reminisce of days gone by and celebrate the days yet to come, remembering that nothing is too difficult for God.

Friends, remember: A laugh a day pushes the sad away and helps us celebrate the blessed lives we've been given.

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.

Job 8:21 (NIV) 🌸



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HOW TO TEAR DOWN STRONGHOLDS

START WITH TRUE REPENTANCE AND GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD

By Bev DeSalvo

Excerpted from *Return to Joy: Finding Healing In the Arms of Your Savior*

Have you been puzzled by the fact that you are a Christian and yet continue to experience negative feelings and devastating defeat? Like many believers, you sometimes fall back under the influence of the evil one and live a frustrated and defeated life.

I don't believe a Christian can be possessed by a demon because "possession" denotes ownership, and those who have been bought by the blood of Christ belong to Him. However, when we agree with Satan's lies we allow his influence to dominate our thinking. This can build a stronghold in our minds against the truth of God.

Tearing down strongholds begins with true repentance and becoming right with God. True repentance isn't just feeling remorseful because you are caught doing something wrong. Rather, your heart is broken because the Holy One has revealed your sinful behavior—and you turn away from it. When you bring that which is in the darkness into the light, the power that the evil one has over it is broken.

SHAKE IT OFF!

I learned a valuable lesson about tearing down strongholds from my 18-month-old grandson, Kase. He loved being the center of attention, so whenever he

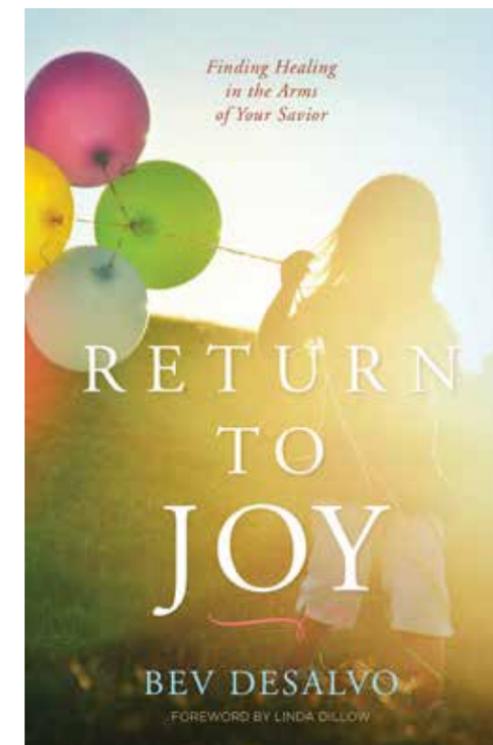
was slightly hurt he would wail loudly and sometimes hold his breath until he passed out. His parents lovingly helped him toughen up. They began to say, "Shake it off, Kase! Shake it off!" and Kase would shake his whole body until he regained his composure.

The next time I was tempted by one of Satan's lies, instead of giving in to the deception and losing my emotional balance, I spoke Scripture out loud and said to myself, "Shake it off, Bev. Shake it off!" Instead of marinating in lies from the evil one, I began to meditate on the truth of my Beloved—and slowly a stronghold was torn down.

WE ARE NOT FIGHTING ALONE

In many Old Testament battles, God led Israel in a glorious victory without any help from the Israelites. Usually, however, He fought alongside them, but the victory was just as miraculous. Either way, they were always assured that they didn't need to be afraid: "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (*Joshua 1:9*)

Once again, we see the important impact that these two simple words, with me, can have in the life of a believer. The knowledge that the Almighty King is always with me, leading, guiding and providing divine



"Tearing down strongholds begins with true repentance and becoming right with God."

power for the battle, has changed the way I view spiritual warfare.

What do you think about when you contemplate the words with me? I think of "Immanuel" a name for Jesus which in Hebrew means "God is with us." It gives me great peace to know that I am not alone in the battle because Jesus, Immanuel, is with me. The psalmist understood this truth: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." *Psalms 23:4 (NASB)*

We can know God's truth in our head, but if it isn't in our heart we won't be able to use it effectively. So how do we recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd? One of the Greek words used for voice is related to a word meaning "to bring forth into the light, cause to shine, shed light." These words describe what happens when we hear the Good Shepherd's voice. His words are revealed when we read the Bible. The Holy Spirit shines

His light on the Word to make the Scriptures come alive and reveal what had been previously hidden.

The following prayer will help you discern the voice of the Good Shepherd: "If this is from the True and Living God, I accept it. If it is not, I reject it. Show me Lord, if it is from You."

As I tore down the strongholds in my life, I began to realize that I am not defined by what I did or what people did to me. I am defined by what Christ did for me! With this knowledge the lies began to come out of the darkness as God shed His glorious light upon them. 🌸



BEV DESALVO

Bev is a speaker and Bible study teacher who enjoys teaching across the U.S. and internationally. She was the director of women's ministries at Temple Bible Church for over six years. She lives in Temple, Texas, with her husband of 32 years, Gary, the senior pastor of Temple Bible Church.

Learn to LAUGH at yourself

IT'S TIME TO QUIT TAKING EVERYTHING SO SERIOUSLY

By Elizabeth Persons Taylor

Why is laughing at ourselves so difficult at times? Because life can be stressful. It is so easy to become overwhelmed by the mundane, uncontrollable factors around us.

Many times the trivial aspects of adult life weigh us down. A friend cancels dinner at the last minute. You're late for an appointment and traffic is terrible. Your child throws up as you're walking out the door to church.

Stressing about things that are out of our control can be paralyzing. If we can't adapt to these situations, we aren't really living in the present moment, the here-and-now. We need to stop taking our lives and ourselves so seriously.

Life is hard enough at times without us allowing these things to become even more significant. There are certainly times in life that truly demand that we be serious, but not all of life does. Here are just a few benefits you might experience with the habit of laughter:

STRESS RELIEF: When you laugh at yourself, it's like releasing your automatic safety valve. Did you know that laughter releases endorphins that help you

feel more relaxed in times of stress? Learning to laugh while living this chaotic, unplanned, surprising and sometimes difficult life, is about keeping things in proper perspective.

The ability to laugh at ourselves shows we possess resilience, mental toughness and the understanding that making errors is part of being human. You know that feeling when you're out with your girlfriends and you're laughing so hard that it hurts? Doesn't that feel wonderful? Yes! Yes, it does!

GOOD HEALTH: Did you know laughter is actually beneficial for good health? *Proverbs 17:22* says, "A happy heart is a good medicine and a joyful mind causes healing." If we can figure out how to laugh at ourselves more frequently, the Word of God tells us that healing for our soul and mind will come.

Clinical research shows we experience less tension, less worry and better immune health when we incorporate laughter into our lives. It can help us manage our stress by actually lowering the levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. It has even been shown to increase our ability to retain memory and enhance learning. I don't

know about you, ladies, but I can certainly use some help with memory and learning.

BEING FREE: Being able to laugh at ourselves is one of the first steps of being free from ourselves. Give yourself permission to enjoy life. Get comfortable with you.

When I talk to my counseling clients, I use the phrase, "becoming comfortable with the skin you're in." What I mean is not just physically, as in the size of jeans you wear or the number on the scale. Getting comfortable with the skin you're in doesn't mean that you like everything about yourself. Rather, it refers to being aware of your own unique, individual process of growth and maturity as your life unfolds. It means being OK with the things you do like about yourself, while working on the things you don't. That's what it means to be comfortable with the skin you're in.

That acceptance of self is one of the keys to being able to laugh at ourselves. I struggle with this component especially, because of my natural personality "bent" that leans toward perfectionism. But years ago, God showed me that it was my own unrealistic expectations of self that

caused my own greatest degree of stress, and that letting go of those unmet expectations would bring me great freedom. And it has. Releasing myself from impossible standards has brought me tremendous freedom.

So, I challenge you to find out what makes you laugh—out loud—and incorporate that into your daily routine. It might be a silly cat video or watching those awesome videos of babies giggling uncontrollably. It could be listening to one of your favorite comedians or a funny show. It might be bowling with your spouse or family because that's just how bad you really are. Whatever it is, do it. Make it a part of your daily life. Find every possible reason to laugh out loud and start enjoying your life. 🌸



ELIZABETH PERSONS TAYLOR

Elizabeth, a licensed professional counselor master's in counseling psychology and has more than 10 years clinical experience. Currently working in private practice, she has been married for over 20 years and has two boys, Matthew and Joshua.

TRANSFORMED BY JOY

The circumstances might not change, but your perspective can

By Colleen Rouse

Have you ever been surprised by God? A few years ago, I traveled to visit my mother. Honestly, I wasn't looking forward to it, because she was then in the latent stage of Alzheimer's.

I didn't know how to pray for the situation at that point. Have you ever been there? However, as I turned to Him, in His gentle way, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart about the power of joy. His joy transformed those visits with my mother, and to this day, I continue to marvel at the many facets of joy. If we can truly grasp the power of joy, all aspects of our life—including the most difficult days—can be transformed.

JOY IS TRANSCENDENT

Joy is not dependent upon circumstances. In fact, it is most meaningful and powerful amid adverse circumstances. We see this beautifully illustrated during a turbulent time in Israel's history: "He has sent me to provide for all those who grieve in Zion, to give them

crowns instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of tears of grief, and clothes of praise instead of a spirit of weakness. They will be called Oaks of Righteousness, the Plantings of the LORD, so that he might display his glory." *Isaiah 61:3 (GW)*

To understand this, you must step back in time and imagine entering an extravagant Jewish celebration. You are decked out in an elaborate headdress (crown of beauty). You are greeted by a servant who applies fragrant oil to you and the other guests (the oil of joy). You are dressed in gorgeous, colorful garments. Guests float from person to person, gushing how marvelous each one looks (praise garments).

Why would Isaiah depict such an elaborate celebration in the midst of such difficulty? The joy in their future was meant to reach into their present hardship and strengthen them.

Think your current situation. What promise from His Word awaits you in your future? Is it healing? Is it the hope of seeing a lost loved one saved? Allow the



reality of His Truth to transcend your circumstance and the joy of the future to enter your current reality. No matter what you are going through now, He has already redeemed it. You don't need to postpone celebrating what He has promised.

JOY IS A CHOICE TO PRAISE

Every day you make choices. You decide what to wear, what to eat and what to say. So it is with joy. It is a choice, not a mood. It is an act of your will.

A friend of mine lost his wife in an accident while he was ministering overseas. As he cried out to the Lord in despair, He heard the Lord say, "Begin to praise me!" He thought of the passage, "Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus." *Thessalonians 5:16-17*

Notice he says to be thankful "in" the circumstance, not "for" the circumstance. My grief-stricken friend began to whisper his praise to God, simply for Who He was. It felt very contrived and forced, but he did not stop. In doing so, he chose joy.

The whisper became louder. An hour later he was shouting, tears streaming down his face and basking in the comfort of God's presence. He saw a vivid picture of his wife, radiant and rejoicing in the presence of Jesus.

When we choose to lift our voice to praise Him for Who He is, He lifts our spirits to the reality of what He is doing in our midst. Though the situation may not change, your perspective can.

JOY IS CULTIVATED

Galatians 5:22 depicts joy as a type of fruit, a byproduct of love. The Holy Spirit will produce things



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in our spirit that will spill over into our souls in time of need, if we cooperate with Him.

Remember the visit with my mother? The Lord told me simply to focus on loving her. As I sought ways to pour out love on my mother, I noticed joy began to well up in my heart, displacing the sadness. The right conditions for joy to be present have nothing to do with external circumstances. When we choose to pour out love, the fruit of joy will be produced in greater measure in our lives.

JOY IS EMPOWERING

"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." *James 1:2-3 NLT*

When we view difficult circumstances with this perspective, we become resilient. If we can resist the temptation to feel sorry for ourselves and choose to trust Him, we will experience His joy as a steel rod in our spine.

I have a little saying when difficult things surround me: "The enemy is not going to steal my joy. This is a workout and its making me stronger!" This attitude has brought me through some trying times. Joy is given to you by God, not by the world; therefore, don't let the circumstances of this world take it from you.

WEEPING MAY LAST THROUGH THE NIGHT, BUT JOY COMES WITH THE MORNING! *PSALM 30:5B NLT* 🌸



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Colleen, along with her husband, Dennis, is co-founder and lead pastor of Victory World Church in Atlanta. Victory is a multicultural church of more than 115 nations and 13,000 attendees on a weekly basis. Colleen is heavily involved in leadership development with a specific focus on supporting women in the workplace. Her dedication to supporting career women led her to form THRIVE, an organization focused on empowering women in the workplace to thrive as disciples in every area of life.

How to find joy in the trials of life

By Laine Lawson Craft

And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

Daniel 3:27-28 New King James Version

WHOA! What an example of loving and trusting God, no matter what we face in life. Isn't it an oxymoron to even talk about finding joy when facing the fierce fires and challenges of life? I know all too well about facing fiery trials. Some of my tests have been caused by my own disobedience to God, while others were just plain attempts from the enemy to seek, kill and destroy me.

But God! He taught me how to chill out when I am faced with immense opposition. I pray that you can learn a few nuggets from the experiences that saved me and taught me how to stay cool in the refining fires of life.

First, I have learned to remind myself of what God has already brought me through. I look at my dead 17-year-old marriage and how God resurrected our love for one another. Now going into 30 years of marriage, I love my husband more than ever. I also remember that my very sick daughter escaped

death numerous times and now is healthy and soon to graduate from college.

Every time I face the heat of another fiery trial, I remind myself of how God has walked with me through earlier troubles. This keeps me calm in the chaos of the battle. So now my first response today when facing panic is to stay calm in Him. I remember that He will get me through whatever I face. Thus the enemy can't steal my smile anymore for long periods of time.

Second, I have learned that there is always something to learn in facing the fire. God does not waste one tear. So when I face the mirror with a tear-stained face, I know God wants to reveal something to me. Sometimes God wants to refine me and make me more like Him. Other times He just wants me to learn how to battle against evil.

So no matter what the heat of the trial may be, I know God is refining me to be a better person and more like Him.



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Therefore, I have joy knowing that when I get through the fire, I will be more like my heavenly Father.

Last, I have learned that everybody faces fires at one time or another. No one can get through this life on earth without battling through a fire. The only thing I know that sets us apart and gets us through the fire is that we never give up on God. Through every fire that God brings us victory, our trust in Him increases.

Our confidence builds too that God will in fact fight evil with good. He will bring us through the fire just as He did for Daniel and his friends, without singed hair or even the smell of smoke on our clothes. Knowing that God has us in the palm of His hands no matter our circumstances brings a sense of peace and happiness that no devil in Hell can steal.

The next time you face the fires of life, I pray that you can find joy in them. If you remind yourself of past victories, know that you will learn something that will make you more like God, and realize that no one goes through life without tests—you can come out of any fiery trial without any residue

of the fight.

You will be able to find a smile in the midst of tragedy. Peace inside the turbulent storm. Joy in the battle of your life.

God promises us that no weapon formed against us will prosper. God fights every battle for us. Today when you face the fire, know that God has your back and that you will come out on the other side with a level of joy that surpasses any you have ever had. ✿



LAINA LAWSON CRAFT
Laine wears many hats: author; founder of WHOAwomen; publisher of Livin' Lively with Laine WHOAwomen magazine; and host of an upcoming television program. Her passion is to bring broken parts back to life through the process of being, doing, and having a lively and abundant life. Laine and husband Steve have been married for more than 29 years and are blessed to have two sons and a daughter.

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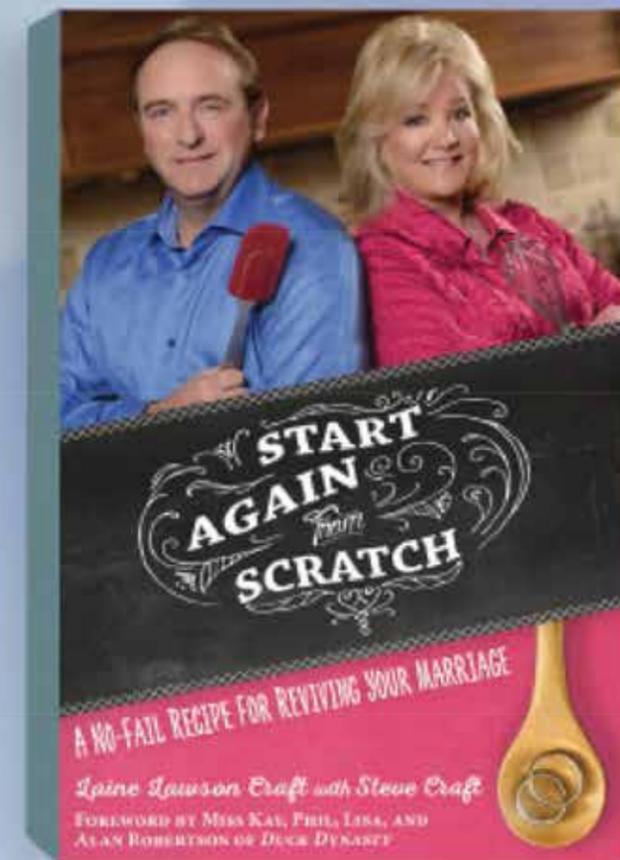
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