

# Baby Come Home

A bank robbery,  
a riot , free  
jewels, and the  
hair-raising  
adventure of  
home schooling  
three children .

**Dr. Christine Cecil**

*A  
Jerusalem  
journey  
to the Father's  
Heart.*

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# *Baby Come Home*

Pretty tough girl  
takes dramatic license with semi-autobiographical anecdotes.



## Foreward

Leave the porch light on. Wait. Look out the window. Look again. Wait. Reassure yourself. That lost child will return. They'll make it home safe. Look out the window again. Try to sleep, then pace the floors. Cry. Wait for dawn.

If someone turned out the porch light, imagine your anger. If somebody guides your beloved child back into your arms, imagine your relief. While shopping in the market, search every face and wonder if they know my child. Then, wonder if they've seen my baby. I wait. I ache. I long. My heart is now and forever outside my body. Oh, Baby, come home.



Chapter One: The red. See.  
Totaled Baby.

The gears ground. The VW lunged forward. I popped the clutch and almost popped a vertebra.

I paid \$700 cash. The chartreuse green color attracted the bees. The beat up fenders attracted disapproving looks as I lurched down Wilshire Boulevard in the upscale neighborhood surrounding UCLA.

Still, I needed transportation that summer of my Bruin Sophomore year. Even though I'd barely turned 17, I'd landed an off campus bank job; little did I know, years later, I'd be part of a bank robbery. Who cares if I couldn't drive a stick shift. I'd learn. Meanwhile, I needed to know just enough to find my way home...

Crash! Crunch!. Smash! Bam! Like an exploding cartoon, my little car crumpled.

I no longer commanded the stick shift. After driving all that summer to my bank job, now, the red leaves heralded the onset of fall. The traffic light signaled red for stop. The driver behind me closed his eye to the change. He totaled my car.

When life overtakes you from behind, with an engine housed in the back, a rear collision signals the end. The timeline for my zippy little car began and concluded on Wilshire Boulevard.

Once the color of whirled peas, now, an insurance check in my pocket, and then, green cash in hand, I quickly forsook my first love. Brazenly, I contemplated a black BMW, then a sleek Audi in Compton. When my father found out that I might have a car payment, he swiftly intervened. Thus began a love affair that continues to this day. My passion may one-day wind up on the roads of Mount Carmel, Israel. But to find my heart's desire, I would have to follow my father home...

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

Exodus 40:1-2

### Run Baby.

Rain trumps smog. Los Angeles almost sparkled as light forced itself upon this city of angels known for grime, crime, and celebrity's doing time. Crisp morning air whistled through the little VW bug as it plugged, due east. Unknown to me then, my destiny calls from the East. The land would capture my heart forever. In my most difficult and gut-wrenching moments, in joy and in pain, I would turn and face toward Jerusalem.

I just headed home. Since I'd totaled my car, a girlfriend gave me a lift from UCLA for the Christmas break. As we turned our back on the ocean, her VW buzzed toward the desert; I'll never forget the two giant mountain sentinels, guardians of the dunes and dust and date palms, gateway into Palm Springs, crowned in the most majestic, perfect rainbow I've ever seen. Astonishingly similar to the terrain of Israel, the California desert is a beautiful and rugged place.

I can't tell you how many times I've driven that stretch of Highway 10 due East or even the 15, headed North into the HighDesert. I grew up in the desert. Just like my parents, I grew up running the roads.

My father did a lot of driving. He loved it. Our sweaty backs stuck to the vinyl seats in our Dodge Charger. As life progressed, he logged the dusty miles in Cadillacs, one the colors of a bumble bee and the other a sparkling aqua blue reminiscent of a princess gown. Dusty desert towns marked the endless wanderings of my youth. My father drove and drove.

He always paid cash for the cars. So, my father wasn't about to have me incur debt for transportation or any other reason. He'd been through the Great Depression; he would never allow me to be on the hook. Furthermore, he would never co-sign a car loan for me.

Much of what he did coincided with Biblical wisdom, although I didn't know it at that time. All I knew is I wanted a car.

So, when I came home, he raised the creaky garage door of our old ranch house. The space held only one car. The vehicle hadn't been driven for years. It sat in storage so long that the last time I rode in it, I fit snugly between my parents without blocking the stick shift.

I sat in that car back when computer discs seemed as big as bicycle tires, larger than a good-sized frying pan. Key punch cards took up boxes of space, and we piled it all in this svelte, curvy, coveted little convertible.

My father came through. I lost a Vw. I got the MG. The 1957 MG belonged to me. Restrained jubilation ensued. I came home but saw no point in staying. Soon, my father watched me drive away, running the roads. He quietly whispered, Baby, come home.

You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony,  
and partition off the ark with the veil.

Exodus 40:3



## Drunken, Baby.

Being in a riot is surreal. People run all around you. You walk through it. You're oblivious. You didn't see it coming. You have your own rebellion to execute. The Cal Poly drunken riots are nothing more than a blurred memory until you wake up and wonder, "How did I get to this place?"

I chose Highway 1. This classic winding coastal road forged the perfect proving ground for my red convertible. I made friends with that road at the end of my Senior year at UCLA. On warm Malibu nights, I'd meander up the coast. I lacked a destination.

Speaking of wandering, my boyfriend at that time lived in San Francisco. Of course, there's always a boy. I found it convenient to meet him halfway; that's called compromise. About half way between the city of Angels and Saint Francisco is a sleepy central California town; it's affectionately called SLO. San Luis Obispo is a college town. I could pick up a quick Master's degree. An impressive British repair shop dominated the sleepy main street.

Somehow, my classic car always managed to break down on North bound excursions. There could be worse places to pause and make repairs.

So, I left my father's home and enrolled at Cal Poly, SLO. My plan consisted of two years toward a master's degree. I never envisioned rolling my sister's car twice and taking out a telephone pole, but I did. I lived. I continued on – driven.

I found odd jobs. I hosted in a fish restaurant. I taught pre-school to under privileged children. I landed a job as a supervisor in the campus recreation program. It's ironic that an intense workaholic would be in charge of recreation; my drive only increased.

I down shifted. Two years is too much time. I carried an insane course load, published my research project, worked crazy hours, and picked up the master's degree in a year instead of two.

Then, I collided with a Moroccan whose drug-dealing, gun-selling friends should have scared me. Clearly, I had forgotten my destiny and found myself in the midst of a riot.

Sadly, I did not drive home. Instead, I went on another binge.

There's a lot of ways to get drunk. People drink in power. They drink in possessions. I drank in people. I drank in places.

At age 21, I caught a plane to the U.S. Virgin Islands and settled into a small cottage on Tortola. I intended to write the next great novel. I stayed exactly one-week.

Drunkenness is no cure for thirst. I came back from the Virgin Islands parched.

Sure, I came home. I lacked the foresight to stay.

You shall bring in the table  
and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it;  
and you shall bring in the lampstand  
and light its lamps.

Exodus 40:4

## Whiny Baby

My college professor offered me a job. I had nothing better to do since my Caribbean writing career collapsed.

The professor hired eight of us – four men and four women. Seven superstars recruited from throughout the nation, and me.

I disliked the golden boy immediately. I didn't like his swagger, his East Coast ways, or the fact that he went on that year to win every major award in our profession. I had a competitive non-pulsed after thought: I didn't see much in him.

“I'll be the best thing that ever happened in your life.” He spoke pretty, confident for a man I'd known barely a week. “The Hell you say.” I replied just as confident.

He worked hard to get a ride in my red convertible. He cast creative bets such as “If I lose I take you to dinner. Or, if you lose, you take me to dinner.” As if I couldn't see through that. Somehow, his schemes always led down meandering roads, to intimate meals, and maybe a wine tasting.

He proposed to me in a winery –I think, ironically, a monastery. Who cares? He looked good in Levi's. He told jokes. This guy had staying power. He put up with my passions and would calmly ask, “What cause are we fighting for this week?” We worked together, and for a driven woman, working together and being loved are like a deep red wine.

Wine is no good for a parched personality. It's lovely and sparkling. Sadly, it can't quench a deep thirst. I just didn't know that at the time.

I thought love beats loneliness. Lust equates love. I long since forgot the straight and narrow road. I guessed marriage must be the way.

Imagine my shock and dismay when life stripped away hopes. No sooner than we came back from our honeymoon on Kauai, he started a new job. He worked at the University of San Diego surrounded by gorgeous young co-eds. Like a

water logged submarine sandwich, I left an unfinished doctorate degree, along with my identity, at the University of San Francisco. Deep loneliness set in. Please understand, my husband is the most handsome, the most engaging, best, coolest guy I know. I say this after 20 plus years of marriage and some really awful dark and difficult roads from which I only emerged unscathed because of the grace of God and faithful people who prayed. It's just that he could not and never will, be able to completely satisfy longings of a thirsty soul.

So, I did what I knew. I kept driving. I worked and worked and worked. I worked in unusual places – heart hunting with foster children in a locked down facility, head hunting and dialing for dollars, also with brain injury survivors. I worked to get ahead.

Then, our daughter arrived. But, nothing squelched my drive.

I cranked out a doctorate at the University of San Diego, before age 30. Next, I downshifted, dropped my daughter in day care, and landed that six figure job everyone always dreams of. A few years later we became pregnant with our second child. I got hospitalized for dehydration and exhaustion. I worked a lap top and a cell phone from my hospital bed and logged 14 hours at work the next day. I'm tired just re-capping it.

You can't outrun yourself, even in a spiffy red convertible. Somehow, emptiness always caught me around the next turn. I drove so far, so fast. I stopped hearing voices beckoning me from across the oceans. I felt no tug, saw no point. I felt out of place. I had no peace. We owned our house, but I had no home.

You shall also set the altar of gold  
for the incense before the ark of the Testimony,  
and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:5

## Beige Baby

So, we moved. We bought a giant beige house, with beige floors, and beige blinds, and we settled into our beige life. No color. No thing white. Red clashes with a beige world. The classic red convertible became impractical. So, we simply shut it down. We stored it. There's no room for red in a beige life.

Let me spare you all the details of the beige days other than to insert that our third child survived near death at childbirth while our fourth miscarried. A few shining moments did stand out. One summer, at the start of each day, I gathered the children in our pantry; it's a narrow closet under the stairs. We called it the clubhouse and kept their toys in there. What a mess! Despite the chaos, I read Psalm 136 every morning and the children repeated after me in their loudest voices, "His love endures forever."

I longed for love in dazzling color. I didn't know that God's love is always at work, even in the beige.

I might have stayed in beige for the rest of my life, except for that pesky second law of thermodynamics; everything tends toward increasing disorder. It's a law. That's because scientists all have linen closets, and they are intellectually honest enough not to think bangs and chaos actually keeps towels in order or that chance can yield something as magnificent as a human eye. My literary ramblings only prove the point. Where was I?

Oh yes, all Hell broke loose. Rats! Literally, rats over ran my beige house. Forget the gauntlets of losing a child in the womb, or a neighborhood meth lab. We females endure the change of life and other miscellaneous betrayals, loss of friends, and financial strife. But, there are more creative ways of breaking a person's spirit.

Picture your bright red, beautiful manual transmission convertible on the steepest hill ever. It begins to back slide. You can't stop it. You have no

choice. You need to get a grip and get over the hill. Instead, you just backslide all the way to the bottom and crash.

While trying to get some traction, I suffered. When the communists crush intellectuals in China, they sentence creative, inventive minds to manual labor in beige rock piles. They literally made them pound sand until it drives bright and talented people completely insane.

That's right. Christians all over the world are being tortured and martyred for their faith. I joined their ranks. My burden became almost too much to bear. Poor baby – I did laundry. I sobbed. I washed dishes. I cried. I picked up stupid broken things and dirty socks and did menial chores and was unimportant and no one applauded or paid me or cared or even thanked me or helped and the world didn't watch and wait breathlessly for my every word and the voice in my head said you can't win here and I pouted and complained and my attitude stank while laboring in a quarry of obscurity and boredom and mediocrity. You should see my dry, brittle, cracked-nail hands. Worse yet, I wore \$4 polyester pants.

Thankfully, at some point, the whining ceased. When I stopped crying and sobbing, I started marching around my living room in the middle of the night praising and praying.

My red car remained in storage while I began to fight for an idea, a dream, a little hope, really. The power broker, fame seeker, people pleaser began to dream of belonging. I wanted a permanent residence for my restless heart. I began to cling to the idea of returning. I started to fight my way home.

Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering  
before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

Exodus 40:6

## Stomping Wicked Baby

I battled while the little red car sat in storage for at least 15 years. I didn't even think about the fun times or the sad times in the MG. I didn't remember sobbing uncontrollably while driving home to the desert. I didn't reflect on winding ocean roads at night with no lights on. I dared not dream of my hair in the wind on a moonlit night in Tel Aviv. The car just sat – plus or minus a dozen rats.

Then, for our 20th wedding anniversary, my husband got that lovely, romantic car back on the road. I'm glad. It's not really a car for a driven woman. We know a driven woman when we see one. She is the wicked queen. She walks briskly, head up, eyes straight ahead. She does not stop. She stomps. She's the perfect picture of a driven woman. She wouldn't enjoy a '57 MG. She'd just push it.

A snow-white character, on the other hand, never stomps. She sings. She sways. She notices little things. She kisses children and laughs with joy. She's a picture of delight and grace. The MG is the kind of car she would relish. Only God can take a stomping wicked queen and make her keep house for little people.

In soccer, the keeper is the one person who defends the goal. The keeper of the house guards the heritage. In fact, castle designers engineer the very highest, most protected point to save the children. The Blarney Castle in Ireland boasts a narrow staircase built backwards to protect the children so that oncoming invaders are distinctly disadvantaged being forced to fight with their weak hand. Castles are designed to keep the King's children from harm. Battling marauding castle invaders is more my style than washing and making beautiful meals. It's unnatural to keep house and slow down long enough to enjoy life. I attack problems. I am hyper-vigilant. I contemplate every possible scenario, prepare, and as a result, experience a high degree of resilience against adversity. Mirror, Mirror on the wall whose the most guarded character of all?

Constant, alert readiness takes its toll. It wears down the body and corrodes the soul. Reserves of love and patience and prayer are not available to a woman who stomps. It puts other people on edge. It creates scars.

One day, I looked in the mirror. A dermatologist told me I had extensive skin damage, but the good news is most of the damage comes to the surface and clears out. I try to be a quick forgiver and a good forgetter. Still, I told God, “I don’t like these marks on my face”. In His quiet way, He assured me...”One has not traveled with me far who has no scar.”

Despite the scars on my heart, I can hear His voice more clearly now. He’s whispering, He’s calling, You’re mine. Baby come home.

And you shall set the laver  
between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar,  
and put water in it.

Exodus 40:7



## Chapter Two: Sea in the Mirror

### Baby Hates Cliques

Breathe. I breathe out, and a light fog settles on the mirror. It disappears. I breathe out life again. My breath manufacturers clouds on the mirror. They evaporate. That's what vapors do. They fade away.

Some people never come close enough to the mirror to see the vapor. They may envision themselves and see intelligence, an athlete, wealth, popularity, prestige, and power. It's easy when you don't look at the truth in the mirror. Mirrors and scales do not lie, but it's hard to let the scales drop from our eyes. Look in the mirror. Now, breathe. I see a young girl who made her own dress. Her shoes are too tight, but they were on sale. She is the Valedictorian of her eighth grade class. She's also awarded best in class at her 12th grade graduation. She looked fat. Vapor.

Breathe. Now, a young lady, she applies to only one school. She's accepted to UCLA without question. She belongs to a sorority. She moves on to a master's degree, then a doctorate degree from an expensive school. She didn't have to pay for it. Breath condenses on a mirror and then fades to vapor you cannot see.

Breathe. Six-figure incomes, dirty floors, corner offices, unkind words, fine foods, waste, beautiful clothes, ugly shoes, a lovely home, more dirty floors, travel, loneliness, beautiful children, elegant gifts, emptiness. Vapor just fades.

I look in the mirror and just breathe. How did I get here? I look for anything beneath the surface that will not fade.

I can see myself sitting in front of a telephone. I dial the thing at least 100 times a day. "Do you want a job?" "How's your job?" Who wants a better job? I'm a headhunter. Curiously, I never ask if I should recruit these people from their current work. I only know that if I do, I will be paid handsomely.

So, I hunt for people. I dial for dollars. It's so fitting since I am always looking for my next move, my next job, my next breath that won't fade to vapor. I wonder if I should have left my last job. Me and my mirror spent cold, long nights in a lock-down facility for troubled children. I passed the time. I had to be trained in self-defense to work there. I don't think I touched their lives. I try not to let people touch mine. Vapor.

There were jobs before that and more jobs after that. Ever since age 14, I worked. Baby-sitter, grocery bagger, lifeguard, front desks, security teams, dorm director, bank teller, grant writer, author, executive, business owner, consultant, professor – those endeavors that took so much of my identity and energy are all gone.

Sure, I traveled and enjoyed fancy dinners and lavish gifts. In all these years of inhaling and exhaling, I wonder if anything will last. I fear most of my breaths have simply been vapor on a mirror.

I search for the true desire of a hungry heart. Someone must be satisfied being the smartest one or the richest or to have the coolest car or the most beautiful friends or to have a little house or a sweet family or to be the most lovely or to have the prestige or the awards or to sell a painting or write a book. What do you see before the vapor fades in your mirror when you have the courage to look?

The richest, smartest man who ever lived said the whole of our existence is simply vapor. He had women and kingdoms and gardens and riches and books and servants and clean floors and soft words and loveliness and everything a soul could want. He said the bottom-line, the conclusion of the whole of existence is to fear God and keep his commandments. That is our job. But, of course, my personality is to test the limits of experience. I had to see for myself.

You shall set up the court all around,  
and hang up the screen at the court gate.

Exodus 40:8

## Beat it, Baby.

Repeatedly banging your head against a wall can cause a brain injury. Life hitting you over the head may have a similar impact.

I spent several years of my professional career working with brain injury survivors. Talking to a person who has hit a wall can be very much like talking to a wall; they can't and don't hear. Emotions can be non-existent or over-exaggerated. Initiative may be lacking or self-control totally absent. An injury can impair speech or vision. Symptoms vary depending on the location and extent of the injury. In the instance of a deep trauma to the brain, a person may not even be able to breathe or perform the most basic of bodily functions. Surprisingly, I learned a lot from working with people who have difficulty learning. Structure can be comforting. As I watched brain injury survivors lick envelopes, fold flyers, and affix stamps on a mailings, for them, repetition enabled a sense of accomplishment.

They separated work from their identity. What they did was not who they were. They found simple tasks gratifying because when it met the needs of others. They liked to help. Work let them see that they mattered and belonged. Yet, their idea of work hadn't become blurred or out of focus. Work reinforced relationships.

Through their eyes, I reconsidered my own reasons for working. Work is a way to bring strength to home and family. Work is a way to provide and express a spirit of excellence and diligence. Work is a way to connect and show caring. These concepts seemed foreign in a world where people view work as just punching a time card, or as a way to get your own needs for fulfillment met – freedom, fame, friends, finances, fun etcetera.

While seeking fulfillment, I banged my head against the wall for a long time. There's something in me that wants to matter and belong. I want to be important. I want to know that I am loved. I want a special place in this world that's just for me. I kept thinking work would fill that emptiness.

For years, I pressed on with “work I had to get done”. Anxiety pressed in on me. I could never simply be in one place. I must keep moving. Work compels me to keep doing, even without clarity where I am going.

On this particular day, the fog closed in on me. A once clear sunny day, now suddenly turned to driving rain and sheeting snow. My convertible car wasn't equipped for these conditions. As the car skidded and slid through the treacherous mountain highway now shrouded in gray, I couldn't see anything. I cried and prayed. I begged God to get me out of this mess. Alone and scared, I could only blame myself for trying to take control. The car fishtailed and I inhaled. I'd never make it off the mountain.

Then, I saw the most beautiful sight! A great big orange savior – a snow blow pulled right in front of me and scraped and salted and paved the way to safe ground. God was right there where I needed him, even though I didn't deserve Him, plowing the way. God plowed the roads of my life for years while I drove myself without really seeing the needs of those closest to me. The thought of bringing other people safely home never occurred to a woman who could barely make it home herself.

And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle  
and all that is in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils,  
and it shall be holy.

Exodus 40:9

## Baby, Don't Clique.

Click your heels to go home. My heel clicking transported me to another world.

First, I had to drop her off. I'd drop my daughter off at a local church daycare. Next, rush to the grant writing meeting, then I'd pick her up again, and enjoy the rest of the day.

She still crawled instead of walked. Just a little thing, she couldn't even be called a toddler yet. But, she'd been in day care before. What could go wrong?

I carried her into the sweet little school with a sipper cup and diapers. I deposited her safely in an elderly woman's arms. Then, I strode confidently to the car.

I looked sharp in my high heels and smart suit. I felt exhilarated at the prospect of this big break. I'd have an opening to publish articles and write grants. I could see open doors for a bigger salary, a larger office, a title, power, and of course, new suits.

As my high heels clicked confidently, I anticipated what would come of this short meeting.

Looking back, I had it pegged. I wrote the grant. I published articles. I landed an excellent job. I found success in every sense of the word, including glamorous travel, a big office, secretaries, elite interviews, benefits. I kept clicking until my dreams morphed into reality.

Then, I realized I'd forgotten something. I grabbed my daughter's blanket from the car. I made a U-turn and clicked my heels back into that sweet day care.

I saw that kind elderly lady sitting in a rocker. She sweetly held another child. She rocked and cooed at a little boy. Meanwhile, my daughter clung to her skirt screaming in emotional anguish, begging to be held. She languished in anguish. While that woman just rocked and loved someone else.

I told myself, "It's only a couple of hours." I can't remember if I admonished the church lady, or if I left my child clawing and crying in a sweet church day care with a nice elderly lady who rocked someone else's child. I can tell you clearly, I got the job I wanted.

Then I justified my selfish choices. I told myself, "I work for my family". "I'm working to pay for college." "We're saving for vacations and retirement." "I'm really doing it for them."

I'd read books that explain how you can have two incomes and still be broke. I knew how costly it is for a woman to work outside the home. I'd also read the books that concisely explain how a woman who stays home and lives frugally is such an asset to her husband. I'd even read the Bible where God commands in Titus 2:5 that women love their husbands and children and be keepers at home. My goodness, I had even seen the research studies that prove a man whose wife stays at home earns more money. I just didn't take it to heart. I could not see myself in the role of housekeeper. So, blind to the needs of others, I kept clicking my heels. I found myself, a long, long way from home.

You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils,  
and consecrate the altar.

The altar shall be most holy.

Exodus 40:10

## Baby Hold the Line.

I tried to fit in with the cliques at work. That did not work.

“You can’t teach that.” Everyone knows faculty members are supposed to publish and then teach their theories. So my boss’ comments came as a shock. “Your book is not appropriate. You can’t teach it.” My boss insisted I set aside Courteous Rebel. “It’s too divisive.” So, I surrendered my will to his request.

“Plastic ware. Evangelizing is like having a plastic ware party in the workplace, and we can’t have that.” My boss held firm. I could not talk about Jesus in this once “Christian” place.

The Bible says preach the word in season and out of season. I didn’t. I surrendered my actions to his wishes.

After my boss issued his decrees, co-workers pummeled me with their erroneous logic. “You’ve just got to be more loving. Love everyone. Accept everything.”

I wanted to be a loving, gracious person. The Bible says God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. Instead of standing for the love of God, I surrendered my heart to their suggestion. I had not yet learned how to hold a hand while holding a line. I let go of the line.

The curriculum committee implemented their new guide lines that included me teaching the Big Bang Theory and other anti-creation, anti-God ideas. I took it in – hook, line, and sinker.

The Bible says you shall love the Lord your God with all your mind. Instead, I surrendered my mind to bad science and utter falsehoods. I let go of the line. Sure, I still integrated Biblical ideas in the classroom. One night, I taught the story of Esther. The next day one of my students died. You can bet I’d wished

I preached the cross of Christ that night. I didn't. I'll never get that chance again. I will never know if that man is safely home in the heart of God. I could not hold the line. I surrendered. I may have surrendered his soul in the process.

Meanwhile, my soul collapsed in utter defeat. This little voice inside said, "Your faith is too strong. It's putting other people off. Stop praying. Stop reading your Bible. They will come along. Just give them time. Tone it down. They'll come up." I listened.

The Bible says pray without ceasing. The Bible says man does not live by bread alone but by every word from the mouth of God. I stopped praying. I stopped reading my Bible. I surrendered to the Satanic. All Hell broke loose.

You can imagine how a prisoner of war dreams that someone will toss them a lifeline. They long for home and hope for a safe place with good food and people who make you laugh and cherish you. Even though I slept in the same house, with the same loved ones, I surrendered. I now lived as a POW – a prisoner of a spiritual war. Nothing changed physically, but spiritually I lived a long, long way from home.

And you shall anoint the laver and its base,  
and consecrate it.  
Exodus 40:11



## Baby Fight

Like the unraveling of any great love story, it started gradually. I kept silent while friends joked. I didn't want to be judgmental so I gave a little ground. I denied my conscience, suppressed what I knew to be right. I went along to get along. I gave in so I wouldn't disrupt the peace.

As a dutiful first-born child, I responded to the requests from those in authority to let go of my passion, my faith. I surrendered. I thought I stood in the way of others finding God, so I stopped praying. I stopped reading my Bible. I quit talking about God. I gave up my so-called high horse, hoping others would take higher ground. I traded what land I had, for peace.

You may guess that peace blossomed after I divided myself from the plans, purpose, and protection of God. My family could breathe free from intrusive prayers, no nudges to attend church, no scripture plaques on the walls, and get that silly fish decal off my car. What a relief. Now, unencumbered by God's rules we could relax and enjoy our lives. I wish I'd thought of trading land for peace before.

Until, God reminded me, "Many in that day will cry Lord, Lord and I will say depart from me I never knew you, be cast into outer darkness where there is much weeping and gnashing of teeth you worker of iniquity." Cut off from God and any allies who might have prayed for me, I felt completely alone. Land for peace did not work in my home.

So, I did the only thing I could do after a bad break up. I begged God to take me back. I feverishly searched His word, the Bible, for any promise I could stand on. I struggled, terrified, to witness. I went forward for prayer every Sunday. I planted my feet and started fighting for my family.

I waged war based on His promises. I held my ground on the Bible. I clung to Him. My ammunition stockpile of verses and prayers grew as I searched every word from His mouth so I could live and not die.

Amazingly, God's promises performed a wonderful work in the aftermath of a cruel and vicious war. He's restores in every way.

My children are safe because every promise in God is yes and Amen. God's word is alive. It does not return void. He who has promised is faithful. What He has promised to perform He is faithful to complete. Just as Issac was, we are the children of promise. And, He has promised us eternal life which is to know God.

Now, you may claim to know God intimately and be a New Testament believer holding that Issac, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, and Jacob are dead and God is done with Israel. Read Romans Chapter II. The Apostle Paul makes it clear; if you belong to Jesus Christ then you are Abraham's seed. Your salvation hinges on precious promises from God.

God promises that it is appointed once unto a man to die and then the judgment. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, not one is righteous. God promises the wages of sin is death. But God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. That everlasting life, our very salvation, is a promise from God – a promise that salvation is from the Jews. We are the children of promise.

If one promise falls, they all fail. It's a slippery slope if God's a liar. He's is not trustworthy. He's impotent. He's unfaithful.

But, God is not a man that He should lie. And, He is faithful. He's omnipotent. We can choose to deny Him; He cannot deny His word. He cannot deny Himself. Jesus says not one tiny point of God's word will pass away unfulfilled. God is not done with Israel, and God is not slack concerning His promises.

I knew that God promises to bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel. So, I started to bless Israel from my pocketbook and in my prayers.

In Israel, all the nations of the Earth shall be blessed. Israel is the apple of God's eye. God promised the land to Abraham long before Abraham purchased the plot to bury his wife. God promised the land to Issac and Jacob long before they dug their first wells. God promised long before David bought the Temple Mount. But, if one promise fails, they are all in doubt. Thank goodness Israel stands, or I could not have survived the fall.

Israel's story is my story. It's about claiming and planting every inch of ground in my heart, mind, soul, and spirit. The highest mountain in Israel is called Mount Hermon, which means devoted. I want to be totally committed, completely responsible, out looking for God's blessings, and producing fruit for His kingdom. I want a crop of spiritual blessings that make the world tremble in awe of God's passion for His people and their home.

Holding your peace will not bring peace. I learned the hard way. Land for peace didn't work in my home. It won't work in a country. The persecution of the Jews since 750 B.C. is not a coincidence. It's war. It's war against redemption and salvation. It's war against your children, and the battle is in your home. Come home and fight.

Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons  
to the door of the tabernacle of meeting  
and wash them with water.

Exodus 40:12

## Don't Cry Baby

I just cried inside. I stood in front of a vendor table at a huge convention. The brochures depicted the most beautiful university in Virginia. It's for homeschoolers. Many of the students clerk for judges and the who's who of Washington D.C.. I could only dream of such a Christian school for my beautiful daughter/would-be lawyer.

The tuition cost seemed like buying a trip to the moon. The battle for my family raged on while I just mourned the loss of a beautiful dream. Then, like a slap, He said, "That's not my plan for her." God had my immediate attention. I stopped sniveling and quickly inquired, "Well, what is your plan for her?" "Exceedingly abundant above anything you could ever ask or think or hope." Satisfied with the answer, I decided to go with that.

I drove home from the conference, and reflected on how much my career had changed. I went from six figures to total dependence on my husband's salary. I plunged from powerful professor to a home school mom, which is like doing heart surgery on your own child. Substitute power lunches for peanut butter and jelly. Abandon a glamorous wardrobe of suits for casual pants, painting smocks, and gardening clothes. No more nylons. I opted for much prettier shoes on nights out with my husband; we all know that those who bring the gospel have beautiful feet. Take your big desk, and I'll work the kitchen counter. Forget hailing the taxi; I am the taxi. Don't write a grant to change the nation; teach your child to write a three point essay, bake cookies, freeze waffles, save seeds, sew a tablecloth, run a small business, run a new basketball play, learn how to win, learn how to lose, say prayers, and do dishes, and praise God that you got to do it for one more day.

Now, you have to be wondering if I had it to do all over again would I walk away. I did it you know. I turned my back on everything the world says is important. I got a better job offer and yes, I do my own laundry.

It's an impossible job. I cried a lot. No one can live up to the job description, but here it is:

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.  
The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,  
so that he shall have no need of spoil.  
She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.  
She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands.  
She is like the merchants' ships; she brings her food from afar.  
She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a  
portion to her maidens.  
She considers a field, and buys it: with the fruit of her hands she plants a  
vineyard.  
She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms.  
She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night.  
She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.  
She stretches out her hand to the poor; yea, she reaches forth her hands to the  
needy.  
She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household [are]  
clothed with scarlet.  
She makes herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.  
Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.  
She makes fine linen, and sells it; and delivers girdles unto the merchant.  
Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.  
She opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.  
She looks well to the ways of her household, and eats not the bread of idleness.  
Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also,  
and he praises her.  
Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excel them all.  
Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain:  
but a woman that fears the LORD, she shall be praised.  
Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

It's from the 31st chapter of Proverbs in the Bible. It's the toughest, best job I've had yet.

Here's just a few of the perks. Our family flew to 10 states and two different countries in a 30 day whirlwind of non-stop air travel. I've been to Israel 5 times, Europe once. I've been able to re-decorate an entire house, experience the joys of learning and growing with my children. I've truly smelled the roses while working harder than I have ever worked.

I realize that there are many great jobs. There are a zillion endeavors that I would enjoy. There is only one job in this world that no one else, not a single other human being can or should do – that is treasure and raise my children to love and reverence God.

So, on that drive home, I stopped crying. I looked forward to what God could do, above and beyond my expectations, for my daughter. I could not wait. I didn't have to wait long.

You shall put the holy garments on Aaron,  
and anoint him and consecrate him,  
that he may minister to Me as priest.

Exodus 40:13

## Chapter Three: Taste and See Remember Baby

Remember your first love. I remember how we met.

Frog Goggles – I wore glasses so big that he ultimately, affectionately referred to them as frog goggles. Decker in that stunning eye wear when I first opened the door, I must have been a sight to behold.

I stood 5'9", slim at that time, with long brown hair twisted and rolled up into a bun and held in place with a pencil. I wore a beat up baseball jersey, tattered mint green and pink boxers, blue bunny slippers, a warm smile, and without contacts, the largest pair of eye glasses known to mankind.

Of course, I invited the two men in. I can't remember what flimsy pretext they used to get a foot in the door of my cozy little home, but I'm sure they had manufactured something predictable such as "may I borrow a cup of sugar".

Sweet homes have always been my taste. I like order and beauty. While a tad, or more than a tad short on cleanliness, I make up for it in organizing. Not decorating, but arranging. I like to have things set in such a way that's pleasing to the eye and balanced.

That eye for balance is surprising since I grew up almost completely blind in one eye, wore an eye patch for many years (my mother thought drawing a fake eye ball on the flesh colored patch made it more realistic), and glasses and contacts. I also had a severe astigmatism, which included difficulty judging both distances and apparently, character, so I somehow offered to fix these two men something to eat.

At this juncture, any reasonable person might be asking questions. Why is she dressed like that? Why isn't she self-conscious about being dressed like that? Who are these people in her house? Why on earth is she cooking for them? Were those glasses really that big and if so, why did she buy them? I assure

you these are all fair questions. The most important issue, however, is what's for dinner.

I prepared the most sensible and practical of items for a man who would one day become my husband, along with his best friend from Boston. In true California fashion, I delicately peeled and halved ripe avocados, removed the seeds, and filled the soft green flesh with a bounty of fresh shrimp, doctored with a white sauce. I don't believe I had any fresh tarragon on hand, but that would have been a nice touch.

Now, you may say the bunny slippers and my clever organizational skills that won me my man, but I'll go to my grave convinced that those avocados clinched the deal there and then. What fearlessness. What bravado. What courage in the face of danger. What woman can whip up a snack like that on demand? Baby, you ain't seen nothin' yet. Get me a real house, fill it with children, and just watch what I can do.

For the next year, I never cooked again, but I can tell you what we ate. We enjoyed juice smoothies before they went corporate. Juicing took root in San Luis Obispo, and we loved it after we worked out.

Yes, I impersonated someone who actually cared about exercise in order to impress a man. I love to play hoops, but aerobics is terrifying especially when the back of the room suddenly becomes the front. There might even have been a coral colored leotard involved, but I won't admit it. We also sampled the extensive granola bar at Linnea's after these so-called aerobic activities. Then, we ate some more. We ate frosted pumpkin muffins. We ate cowboy steaks. We ate tortellini. We ate honey BBQ wings in the park while reading the Sunday paper. We ate and ate. I did not cook. I did no cooking whatsoever.

In the second year we dated, I cooked exactly one meal. Honestly, we made it together. We enjoyed a lovely Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings from a fantastic Italian market in the heart of downtown San Francisco. That



meal is burned in my memory because I did not burn anything. From every appearance, I could man the hearth of any home. Baby, I remember we cooked together without cooking.

You shall put the holy garments on Aaron,  
and anoint him and consecrate him,  
that he may minister to Me  
as priest.

Exodus 40:14

## Baby Pick a Bone

“That tastes terrible!” I spit it out. “Let’s go get a pizza.” At one point, I prepared something for my husband to eat and, distracted, went about my own business. He said, “Honey, try this?” I think I muttered something about not being hungry. He kept insisting, so I took a nibble. Disgusting – apparently, you are supposed to boil the water before inserting the pasta.

When we newlyweds set-up house keeping with every starry-eyed intention of perfection and bliss, we began with a spaghetti sauce cook-off. I can’t tell you how much fun we had that night. He must have boiled the water for that event. And then, reality settled upon us.

I did not really know how to cook, and I what I did know how to do, I was not willing. I could spark a romance, but didn’t know how to build a fire and bank the heart of the home.

I mean really, who would willingly sign up for a day after day, meal after meal marathon of drudgery. Just run the numbers. Some poor woman is making 50,000 meals in her lifetime. You expect her to be creative, satisfying, and come in under budget. That’s insane. I couldn’t win so why even try. So, I didn’t.

In those early years, I ate ice cream for breakfast. There seemed to be a lot of popcorn around the house; microwave popcorn is much more convenient, of course. I do seem to recall a few Christmas cookies. Oh yes. I tried a couple of times. I made ostrich steaks and teriyaki shark. The ostrich gave my husband food poisoning.

Now, let’s analyze this. Supposedly, you are what you eat. The good book has this to say about ostrich. God is speaking to a man who thinks he’s got a bone to pick with the creator of the universe.

Did you give good wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto  
the ostrich?

Which leaves her eggs in the earth, and warms them in dust,

And forgets that the foot may crush them,

or that the wild beast may break them.

She is hardened against her young ones,

as though they were not hers: her labor is in vain without fear;

Because God hath deprived her of wisdom,

neither hath he imparted to her understanding.

What time she lifts up herself on high, she scorns the horse and his rider.

(Job 39)

Uh oh. This passage hit a little too close to home. I didn't have time to care about cooking because I kept too busy looking for my needs to be met outside the home. I wanted acceptance, appreciation, accolades – I knew how to get that in the workplace. I never even considered that my needs for freedom, fun, friends, and my deep unidentified need to be in relationship with God might actually be met within the context of caring for and feeding my family.

As for the consumption of shark meat, I acted like a shark and even had a shark poster in the bathroom. I spent a lifetime perfecting my invincible exterior to protect myself from harm. It's impossible to build a loving comforting home while cursing through the waters of life ready to strike at any moment. By the way, I discovered the word comfort literally means "with strength", but not strength that comes from prowling like a predator. Rather, a strength that comes from giving love and grace and truth in a supernatural way. Sharks simply can't and won't do that.

Besides, kosher rules say don't eat any fish without scales. Sharks are garbage eaters. How disgusting that I spent so many years with my head in the sand like an ostrich shoveling garbage into my family's heart, bodies, and souls and covering it all with sticky teriyaki sauce. How sad that I could be standing in my kitchen and have a heart so very far away from home.

And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics.

Exodus 40:15

### Baby Care Less

I look back over the years, and I see careless cooking. I simply chose not to put much thought into the importance of nourishing people, despite the fact that I'd been well-trained by my family members who excelled in the art of entertaining and hospitality, coupled with the fact that we have an expansive and lovely home.

For example, we had the pee wee soccer team over for a party. Instead of hosting those precious little children in grand style, I laid a blanket on the floor in the garage, opened a huge bag of candy, dumped it. Then we watched those chubby hands scramble for the goodies.

We had a birthday party. I forgot to serve the cake. I looked strangely at a mom who took the time to heat her daughter's bean burrito; I would have served it cold.

Why can't we eat ice cream from the tub? I hate using measuring spoons. Do I really have to? What's wrong with cold cereal for dinner? Just grab a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, I'm busy.

For potlucks, I always brought bar cookies in a big sheet. No fancy icing. Just cut and serve. I couldn't really understand why those women spent hours to decorate and detail something that would be ferociously consumed in seconds. I'd rather start a company, build something, solve world hunger (does anyone else appreciate the irony of that?), bring a small nation to justice. I just didn't get the whole homemaking thing. Maybe I still don't.

A lovely Jewish lady once told me that women inherit jewelry. Men inherit companies. I can't help it; I want both.

Still, a part of me longs for an elegant, every day table. I'd like an extra touch of something special, something that says safety and love and a little kindness. But it takes time. It takes thoughtfulness. How quickly bread and water becomes tea and toast, but someone has to have enough gumption to set the table and toast the bread.

The French word for bread is "pain". You've even it heard it said, "She took great pains with this meal." It's a sacrifice to prepare beautiful nutritious food for someone. Sadly, hurt people hurt people. They don't sacrifice. They are in too much pain.

Pain is a problem. At the extreme, ineffective strategies for dealing with pain include killing people when you feel hurt. Other people numb themselves with drugs. Some people drown the pain with alcohol. Some people overeat or over shop. Other people cope with pain through socially acceptable outlets like running grueling marathons. Other people earn high rewards and acclaim for their ineffective pain management. They're called workaholics. This approach seems to work. Until, it doesn't.

One night I had a dream. I needed to travel through a dark underpass. Unsavory characters, women of the night, thugs, and dark figures hovered nearby. A dapper gentleman extended his arm and offered to guide me through the fearsome surroundings. I took his arm. He walked me out into the bright sunshine.

A white van waited nearby. The gentle man pushed me in. The van drove me high into the mountains where I lived as a hostage, a captive, underneath a clear blue sky. After years of good behavior, I earned a reprieve. I got to have breakfast in a little mountain cafe. What a treat! I now had a baby with me and unfortunately, I did something to displease the ladies in that cafe and they sent the man and the white van. He beat my baby and I over the head with a lead pipe. What a horrible dream.

Unfortunately, coping mechanisms are just like that man in a suit; they get you through dark places and then take you captive. You and your babies, your future, your dreams, are held hostage to the capricious whims of catty women drinking coffee. You never get to enjoy breakfast.

I learned that Jesus cares about breakfast. After Peter betrayed the Lord, Jesus actually cooked breakfast for Peter. Jesus didn't come just to get people out of eternal Hell. He came to bear the burden of the living Hells we put ourselves through. He says, "Look at me. I want you to look at me and give all that pain to me. Quit pretending you are not hurt. Put that pain on me. Join me for breakfast."

But, my emotional tank felt too empty, my soul too hungry, my spirit prowled this world for something to feed an aching heart. When you're like that, you can't really pause to decorate a cookie or fold a cloth napkin. A depleted, frustrated woman can't take the time to put a vase filled with fresh flowers on a table or brew the tea; she's parched in her own desert. Dessert is the last thing on her mind.

So she's careless and the little flowers in her garden start to think she cares less and less. Soon, they begin to care less for themselves. Everyone withers. They still live in one house, but nobody is at home.

Then Moses did; according to all that the Lord  
had commanded him, so he did.

Exodus 40:16

## Starving Baby.

If a muscle in your body experiences continuous, unrelenting pain, it may actually shut off the blood flow. It starves itself. When the pain is so great, that muscle actually cuts its own blood supply to gain some relief from the suffering. This self-preservation strategy only brings more pain.

It began as a fast. I fasted forty days. I prayed and prayed and nothing seemed to happen. I gave up and stopped praying. All Hell broke loose. So, I started fasting again.

When my grandfather had a stroke, I fasted nothing but juice for forty days. I fasted all fruits and vegetables for forty days when the baby, in my womb, died. Then, I fasted bread and water. No butter. No jam. I ate just bread and water for a very long time.

I never thought of my fast as a prison diet. I had no idea what havoc those simple sugars wreaked on my body. I relished the weight loss. I grew so thin that my co-workers thought I had cancer.

Somehow, when my vision grew blurry from lack of nutrition, I couldn't see that I was starving me. I couldn't see when the refrigerator grew empty. I couldn't see all the loved starved people around me.

I said, "Ok Lord, I'll give you 40 more days. You gotta get me out of here." Then, I said, "All right Lord, I'll give you 30 more days of prayer and fasting. Please get me out of here." "Ok. 10 more days. I can last 10 more days." Next, "Lord, I've got three good days left in me. I'll pray and fast for three more days, then, you've got to do something." "One day, that's it, I can take it one more day." I prayed and fasted for another day.

Finally, I reached the end. I didn't have one day left. I couldn't go another day. That is when He said, "You don't have to be faithful another day."

“Whew. What a relief. Great! Super! Show me the plan. How am I getting out of this?”

The Lord said, “You don’t have to be faithful for one more day. Just be faithful right now. And, when you’re not, just ask me to forgive you. I will. And, then I want you to be faithful again, right now and right now and right now.”

I looked out the window and planned my escape. Anywhere I went, I would still be there. So, would God.

So, like a very, very hungry caterpillar, I started to look around. I only found a giant hunk of gouda cheese in that barren wasteland known as the refrigerator. The hunk of cheese measured literally six inches high and at least four inches wide. Our neighbor brought it over. I have no idea why.

Maybe that hunk of gouda, my favorite cheese by the way, served as a metaphor for a moldy life. Perhaps God provided in an unusual way, or maybe it just speaks of how cheesy we can be. I don’t know. I do know it’s possible to be starving and not even see it.

“The world needs glasses; can’t you see. Organic food won’t make a soul healthy....” What does a soul eat? Where can a hungry soul feed? Without being cheesy, how can I drive a point home?

And it came to pass in the first month of the second year,  
on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up.

Exodus 40:17



## Bank On It Baby

The smell of bacon fat wafted through the morning air. New Years Day, I awoke and prepared the most decadent, delightful breakfast – fried pork bacon slathered in white wine Dijon mustard and drizzled with brown sugar. My overwhelmed sense of smell and taste, collided in an explosion of food ecstasy unlike any other I have ever experienced, unquestionably confirmed the conception of our third child.

Now, certain foods are simply not good for you. The Bible speaks of animals that chew the cud and split the hoof. Pigs are unclean because they divide the hoof but don't chew the cud. In my mind, these are like people who are very kind and moral, but don't have anything to do with the Bible. Rabbits are no good because they chew the cud but don't divide the hoof. These seem to be like people who read God's word, but they don't do it. Either way, pork is just an unclean animal and not fit for pregnant ladies to eat. This is especially true since all my pregnancies are characterized by non-stop sickness, wrenching pain, dizziness, and of course, at least 50 pounds of weight gain.

Each child brought its own unique cravings. With our first child, I ate BBQ potato chips with a cheddar cheese sandwich. With our second child, I felt desperate for cantaloupe melon and white chocolate covered Oreo cookies. With our last, I indulged in an unconventional late breakfast each morning on my way to work – exactly one chicken soft taco from a local fast food restaurant. You can see that I needed a revision in my physical diet. My spiritual diet needed beefing up as well.

When I take a bite of food, it becomes part of my body at the cellular level. Eating takes commitment. I think that's why partaking of communion is so intimate, yet some people have that act of remembering Christ confused. They believe communion is what saves them rather than Christ's atoning work on the cross. They pray to Mary even though there is only one mediator between God and man and that's Jesus. They seek authority from an earthly church and call men Father, which Christ told us not to do. I know all about this because I

looked for food in a place where people love God but may not read or follow their Bibles.

One of my students asked me, “If I took away your Bible, would you be the same person.” “Of course,” I replied confidently. I later learned that the Bible is the only food that can satisfy a hungry soul. In life, the word of God is the only sustainer. I found this particularly true when our six-month old son choked on a bagel.

We went to a local pancake breakfast. This woman marched up to me and put her finger in my face. “If something happens to one of your children, stand in the word of God and your child will be fine.” I’d never seen that women before or since. I laughed off her forceful interjection and said “yah, yah, yah.” I sounded like a bored teenager who knows better than a droning parent. I didn’t give her comment a second thought.

We went home. I put our baby in his bouncy seat and gave him a bagel. I started to work on the computer. Then, I decided to go and get the dog. A voice in my head said, “Don’t go downstairs.” So, I didn’t.

I click clacked the computer keys until I heard a gasping, gargling sound behind me. My son choked and struggled for air.

I stayed calm. I scooped him up and went for the phone. Someone moved the cordless handset. No problem. No need to panic. I flipped my son over on my forearm and gave him the proper back blows. Nothing seemed to change, but I remained composed.

I ran downstairs and dialed 911. At this point, my son started to turn blue. I flew into action and did the one thing I knew I should not do. I rammed my finger down his throat to dislodge the bagel. Eureka! The doughy substance came out and the airway cleared. I hung up on 911 and breathed a sigh of relief.

I lay my son down and called my sister. She and I performed CPR on my father when he died. I recounted my son's ordeal with her. Just as I started to hang up the phone, my son stopped breathing again. This time I knew I couldn't remove an obstruction or pound a back to dislodge a bagel. So, I called 911 and waited for my son to die.

God sent that woman at the pancake breakfast to tell me what to do. He sent an angel to prevent me from going downstairs before the choking, and the God of the universe brought every scripture to my mind in that moment when I stood in front of my house waiting for our son to die. I cried out from the depths of my soul.

“You promised you would never leave me or forsake me. You said my children will have the peace of the Lord and be taught by the Lord forever. You said your eyes go to and fro throughout the earth seeking to prove yourself strong on behalf of those who love you. You said you know every hair on his head. You said. You promised. You said.”

That is God's word can do. No ceremony, no ritual, no incense, no priest could have saved me then. God says, “I exalt my word above my name.” He honored His word that day. My child breathed. If something happens to one of your children, just stand in the word of God and your child will be fine. God saved me that day and countless others, despite the fact that my life had gone awry. I guess that's the definition of lost – being where you're not supposed to be. Even Christians can be terribly lost, but God has uncanny ways of moving His children. He used a bank robbery to move me.

We hosted a rather large party. I tucked away some rather large checks I feared to leave out in the open. The next day, I couldn't find those checks. I kept looking and looking, but they never showed up. Finally, I prayed, “Lord, you've got to show me what's going on with these checks.” Needless to say, the papers turned up quickly.

So, I headed right to the bank to make my deposit. While standing at the door, endorsing my checks, I prayed silently for the Lord to show me why these checks gave me so much trouble. As I looked up, I started to laugh out loud at His answer.

I witnessed a bank robbery in progress. I stood, endorsing those checks, right in the middle of a bank robbery. Only one door served as an exit. The robbers could not get out that door without going right by me. I bowed my head and prayed like crazy. God cloaked me. I never saw those bank robbers leave, and I know they never saw me. The helicopters swarmed overhead. The officials locked down the premises.

My sweet bank teller friend offered to deposit the checks for me while we waited for the authorities to conduct their interviews. I politely declined and gently laughed when the time came to give my statement. I'd seen nothing at all. And, in case I had any doubt about continuing as a customer, when I told the manager how sorry I felt for his bank being robbed, he said, "Oh, don't worry it happens all the time."

I took my checks and marched over to a credit union. When forced to choose the right credit union for my deposit, I went with the teller who had a huge calendar at her desk with the quote, "Trust in the Lord with all your might and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path." The path of a prodigal may take a bypass through the pigpen, but God can bring any wayward heart back to the father and turn a hungry soul toward home.

So Moses raised up the tabernacle,  
fastened its sockets,  
set up its boards, put in its bars,  
and raised up its pillars.  
Exodus 40:18

## Hey Baby, What's Cookin' Good Lookin.

When I think of home cooking, I picture hearty soups and hot bread. I can smell warm apple pies and thick cinnamon rolls. I remember coffee cake and meat on the grill. But most days, lots of good things came from the crock pot. Imagine your grocery budget slashed. Cut your food preparation time down to minutes instead of hours. Picture your caloric intake cut in half without feeling hungry. Enjoy the benefits of organic produce. Relish the flavors of herbs and spices grown in your own backyard. Hear the compliments and accolades of your spouse who comes home smelling a mixture of love and goodness. With a crock pot, you choose your ingredients in the morning, the process takes place on low heat all day until the whole house smells delicious. The vegetables and meats and spices add rich flavors.

I never thought a day would come when I would wake up in the morning and load our crock pot with a leftover turkey breast, bits of turkey bacon, some slightly stale tortillas, herbs grown in 99 cent pots in our backyard, and some frozen organic vegetables. I'd come home a few hours later and slice an avocado from the neighbor's yard and enjoy delicious turkey tortilla soup. Honestly, I'm eating it right now. It tastes amazing and costs little.

The avocados were free. The herb pot and plant together cost me less than three dollars. The turkey cost about 1.29 a pound and it didn't take much. Stale tortillas used to get thrown out. Frozen organic vegetables at warehouse stores are reasonably priced. I even discovered that green onions can be planted and grow prolifically; if you snip off the tops they keep producing for an ongoing supply.

A miracle occurs when a woman who couldn't boil water moves to growing herbs and making soup in a crock pot. It's more than a shift in food; it's a shift in identity, and role change, and a change of mental model.

I had a mindset to work outside the home. When I quit "work" and started to work even harder, I responded like a man called into retirement during his

prime. I felt like a star professional basketball player forced to ride the pine on a freshman team. I languished as a famous chef on a fast food prep line. I whined harder than a journalist with no press-pass did, and I felt lower than a past-President with his first amendment rights snatched by the Secret Service.

For years, I confused my roles with my identity. If I my efforts involved the political, powerful, or profitable, then pursue it. Anything done in private with no apparent praise or at least mild applause, then forget it.

So, here's to the energizing nutrition of crock pot soup. Here's to soup kitchens and women who feed the hungry with love. And, we owe it all to the best cookbook; the Bible promises that when you love God, even your kneading bowl, your cooking and your finances, your home will be blessed. Baby, I'm glad I came home.

And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle  
and put the covering of the tent on top of it,  
as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Exodus 40:19

## Chapter Four: Making the Seen

### Fire Waltz Baby

I relished a day off. For a driven woman, a day off meant a side job.

I got a consulting gig in Riverside for a county health program. I planned to build the team, share the latest technology, offer solutions for staff conflicts, and provide encouragement. As an extrovert, a room full of people who I get to teach is like a smorgasbord to a starved castaway. Like I said, I relished it. What a treat to drive up with no pressures and then teach. I love to teach. Maybe they would provide a light lunch then, relaxed and refreshed, I could drive home.

Full of hope and promise, I hopped in my car. As soon as the engine turned over, I sensed something had gone wrong. Oh, the car worked just fine. Traffic flowed smoothly while my thoughts wreaked havoc.

I could not stop thinking about work. Every second, images of co-workers, paperwork, department heads, and expense accounts bombarded my mind. Truly, I felt assailed and emotionally drained. I did relentless mental battle to fight off the images with no success. They wouldn't stop. They persisted. They pushed. They poked, prodded, and pounded. The worries of work pressed into my head.

I arrived to give the training. I felt worn out.

I did what I came to do, but derived no joy in it. I felt distracted and disoriented. I anticipated nothing but grief on the way home.

I

got pure mental anguish. I imagined this is what drug addicts must experience when suffering withdrawal. It's like trying to run through a muddy bog wearing a 50 pound pack and construction boots. The harder you try, the more you're sucked down.

Then, an idea came to me. I needed a fire wall. You know how it works. Your computer is shielded while external electronic devices mysteriously and methodically assail your entity. If you're fortunate, the fire wall holds.

So, I constructed my mental fire wall. In my mind's eye, I held up the image of Christ on the cross. While I drove, the entire gruesome scene, of Christ bloodied on the cross, engulfed in flames. His pain became my shield and mental firewall.

Little did I know that my co-workers circulated a book on dream energy. The text detailed how to get into someone's thoughts and dreams to manipulate events and actions for their own purposes and plans. Certainly, a how-to book for getting inside another person's head is nothing short of Machiavellian, but this felt downright evil.

When confronted by evil manipulation, King David said the Lord is a shield to all those who trust in Him. I am here to tell you that in the battlefield of the mind, my cross shield held. The more my invisible enemies assailed me, the brighter my fire wall burned.

It took me a few hours to get home. All along the drive, I kept putting up my firewall. As I pulled into the driveway, worn-out, I sighed with relief. I made it home in victory.

For some reason, before shutting off the car, I flipped on a radio station. The soothing announcer's voice proclaimed..."and now, we conclude, the fire waltz." God's son, once again, saw me safely home.

He took the Testimony  
and put it into the ark, inserted the poles  
through the rings of the ark,  
and put the mercy seat on top of the ark.

Exodus 40:20



## Speak Baby

After battling mental torment, I lost my voice. I could not speak. When I tried, my vocal chords cracked and squeaked. Another one of my long drives left this driven woman with time to ponder and pray about how and when my voice might return.

After succumbing to so many seemingly benign requests from authority, I stopped evangelizing. I misunderstood the Bible verse about blessed are the peacemakers. I since learned do not make peace with evil. Being a peacemaker means helping people to find peace with God and to come into right relationship with their maker. When people said, “You’re too strong. Just be in unity. Tone it down” they were really saying “get comfortable with our sin. Stop talking about righteousness.”

Well, I toned down it so far that no audible tone remained. So, I planned to go public and bring the whole nasty business to light. I envisioned myself explaining why you can’t ask a Christian to deny the Bible; it’s their life.

Surprisingly, I received permission to speak. I stood before my peers, praying the words would come. As I opened my mouth, about 90% of the people walked out. There could be little sympathy for Christianity and even less, apparently, for me.

I would love to report to you that I gave a sophisticated oration marked by impassioned elocution, with profound erudition. I didn’t.

I blubbered, muddled, shook, and struggled. I didn’t care. I finished ugly, but I did what I came to do. Under intense pressure, I stood.

I cried my way home. Choking and gasping, I poured out my heart to God. I got my voice back.

I came to the realization that once I had considered life as a steady climb to the top of a mountain. Instead, I reached the top of the mountain, only to behold numerous mountain ranges, vistas, peaks, and valleys unfolding before me.

Because of my experiences as a professor without a voice, because of a student who died the day after my class, because I have children who may one day be lost and desperately need someone to gently turn their heart toward home, I determined to profess Christ as much as possible. Against all odds, I hoped to never again surrender to lies, but instead to hold tight to God and cling to His word and stay very, very close to home.

Yet, even as I pen this chapter, I'm sitting poolside at a five star resort, watching my children play, realizing that evil resides just steps away from my door. We face Christian schools teaching evolution, a Catholic nation trying to legalize abortion, Christian genocide in Nigeria, anti-Semitism rising, men calling good evil and evil good. I want to go home. I just want to go home, and when I go, I want mine to be a strong, clear voice. By God's grace, may I never surrender again and may I stand until He takes me home.

And he brought the ark into the tabernacle,  
hung up the veil of the covering,  
and partitioned off the ark of the Testimony, as the Lord had commanded  
Moses.

Exodus 40:21

## Baby On Fire

I wanted to beautify my home. I searched for the finest textiles and fabrics I could find. She did the same.

Her husband owned a famous steakhouse. She dabbled in fabric. He adored her. She asked for imported textiles. He paid. She bought thousand dollar tables. He blessed her. She opened an upholstery store. He financed it. She got bored. He didn't mind. She gave the store away. He took a write off. She gave away the beautiful tables and exquisite fabric. She gave to a humble man. He faithfully served her business. He gave her his finest handiwork and honored God in all his efforts as an upholsterer. He acted kindly and with patience. He performed with excellence. Everything she acquired in fabrics and equipment she gave to this man of God.

I now stood in his fabric store. I perused the fabrics with a keen eye for quality. I found remnants of the softest, most supple leathers for pennies on the dollar. I chose rich velvet in blue, purple, and red (the colors of the temple). Then, I found a fabric, normally \$50.00 a yard. Now I bought it for \$4 a yard to use in a tapestry for my husband. I couldn't believe how God could so richly bless me.

Filled with exuberant joy and delight over my fabric find, I turned to a fellow shopper. "Excuse me, ma'am, may I ask you a question?" "Of course." she replied. "Who do you say Jesus is?" I asked.

"Well, I am Jesus, of course." She replied indignantly. "Furthermore, you should know better than to ask such a question."

I waited and paused what seemed to be a long, long time while we looked at each other. She blinked.

"Ma'am." I asked.

"What?" She snapped.

"May I ask you another question?"

"Fine." She harrumphed.

“If you were in a building and it exploded in fire, would you want me to get you out?”

“Of course.” She resigned.

“Well Ma’am, that’s what I do everyday.”

When we parted ways, I considered what a miracle God did in me. Once a people-pleaser, compliant chameleon, and a flatterer, now, I spoke the truth in love. It’s amazing how I even learned to remember people’s names out of my desire to pray for them.

It astonished me that God changed me from a passive Christian, to a passionate campaigner to boycott Hell. It is flatly the cruelest thing in the world to know that there is eternal torment and a fire and worm that never goes out and to not tell people. It’s also the kindest, most political, powerful thing I can do, to turn people’s hearts toward home.

He put the table in the tabernacle of meeting,  
on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil.

Exodus 40:22

## Poor Baby

Since food is so central to a happy home, I spend a lot of time in grocery stores and grocery store lines. These moments used to frustrate and exasperate me until I used that time to either tell people about the love of God or encourage people or pray. Every grocery store line became an adventure as I couldn't wait to see what God did next.

"I am poor. I am so poor." The checker looked at me pitifully. He lived around the corner from my house. We'd spoken before. Every check out line jammed. Every bagger worked furiously. My own children bickered and begged for treats. The store teemed with impatient, harried people, as the checker gave me deep, sad eyes.

He repeated the phrase, "I am so poor."  
No sooner did these words leave his lips than the Holy Spirit got in my ear.  
"You gotta tell him."

As the chaos whirled around me, I started arguing in my head with God Almighty. "I'm not going to tell him."  
"You gotta tell him." The voice insisted.  
"I am not going to tell him." I fired back.  
"Tell him."  
"Fine."

All Hell raged around me. I looked down at my hand. I wore a sterling silver ring inscribed with Hebrew words.

I bought the ring on my first trip home. I purchased it in Jerusalem. I stuck out the ring, and I began to speak..."God says"...as I began to speak, time stood still. My words came out in slow motion. I read the words on the ring to the distressed, poor checker. "I know the thoughts and plans I have for you, a future and a hope to prosper you and not to harm you." The words exited my mouth in super slow motion.

I re-enacted a moment in history when Joshua battled the enemies of Israel; God literally made time stand still. No one in the store moved a muscle as I spoke the very words of God to this pitiful young man. When I finished speaking, one of the baggers said, “What just happened?” Then all the chaos resumed.

I fumbled in my grocery bags. I pulled a giant good candy bar. I said, “God is good.” I haltingly pushed the candy bar toward him. Then, I clumsily blurted out again, “God is good.”

When we left the store, I turned to my children and told them “The Holy Spirit fell in the grocery store.” God exalts His word above His name and in that moment, he punctuated the grocery store with a holy pause with His word from scripture in Jeremiah 29:11.

Not too long after that, God moved me to another grocery store. I enjoyed a new round of checkers to encourage, more scripture to share, until God said “That’s it, no more speaking.” Chills went up my spine. Could it be that there would come a time when God would stop speaking? He would simply call his children home.

Then, I thought better of it. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. When He called His children out of Egypt to their home in the Promised Land, He spoke clearly and with increasingly severe consequences. He generated intense birth pains until He issued out a new nation.

I wonder if God is still doing the same today – using pressure and pain and even poverty, if necessary, to call His children back to His heart and back to the land. I wonder if they are hearing His persistent call to come up to the joy of the whole world. I wonder if they hear Him calling them to Jerusalem. He’s calling them home.

and he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord,  
as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Exodus 40:23

## Baby, Come Fly.

Today, I am a one country, one book, one man, woman. If I'm going to travel somewhere, I want to go to Israel. That's why I hesitated when my husband came home with startling news. A major airline offered a promotion; jet anywhere they fly for thirty days at a cost of \$499 with a small extra charge for international taxes. As a home school family, we enjoyed great flexibility. We could feasibly take flight for thirty days.

I ran our budget. I ran it again. Then I ran it again. The numbers just didn't work. Even if I could buy all the tickets, how could I feed a family of five with airport prices for thirty days and being on the road and cab fare and souvenirs and hotels and what would I do and how would this ever work?

By the end of my struggles, everyone in the house slept. I crept downstairs into the living room and put my face on the floor. I cried out to God. "You are my joy and my delight. You are my song in the night. You come to the fight. You make everything all right. You do for me what I cannot do for myself. For me, there is you and no one else. You are my knight. You are my song. You are my U turn when I've gone wrong."

Well, the Lord heard me. It's time to fly and stay at a famous hotel chain.

The next morning, we bought the tickets. We planned to be in the air for an entire month. A whirlwind of excitement commenced.

Before departing, God told me to get myself, and the children, CPR certified. My children grumbled all the way. But, even the youngest passed his CPR test. Then, our school year started, in the air.

Everywhere we went, I gave out scriptures and prayers for Israel and Jerusalem. I told people, "Jesus will get you out of Hell and put you in the air." We got free tickets behind home plate to the a major league ball game in the windy city, box seats to another game in Boston, free food, free treats at an amusement park in Florida. We saw the largest collection of Bibles in the

United States. We visited 10 states and 2 countries. We stayed in that famous chain of hotels; they practically paid us to visit with concierge service and hotel transfers and fitness rooms and pools.

We relaxed in our private apartment with our own island in Aruba; after evangelizing the manager of the hotel, he sent us a huge plate of chocolate chip cookies with ice-cold milk to our room – free of charge. I even prayed about what dryer to use when washing my clothes. God directed me to the one on the left. I never put one quarter in that machine. I dried all my clothes for free and used the money to tip our maid.

I faithfully did what I could do. I shared literature and spoke of God's love, particularly His special love for Israel and for the Jewish people, and His word never returns void. God did things only He could do. In the little and the big things, God amazed us.

Sure, we encountered challenges. Buses didn't always run on time or even on the published routes. I fast-talked and out-prayed a taxi cab driver who kept meandering around the island saying I would make a fine wife for him. I felt scared sometimes with the responsibility of three children in unknown towns. We ran tight on funds, and my husband negotiated to turn around an airplane that already left the gate. Yes, they came back and got us so we could arrive in the Bahamas with no room reservations, and then end up in the penthouse suite.

Even when it looked like defeat, we won. One day we flew into an airport in New Jersey, flew out of the other in New York at the end of a rainy day after battling subways and angry locals. Our delayed flight brought us bedraggled into Boston. At the exact moment our luggage came down the ramp, our shuttle drove out of site.

While we waited for the final bus of the night, we struck up a conversation with a flight attendant. We'd been in and out of airports so much that we knew many of the personnel. We talked at length with this lovely airport worker.



We discovered she and her husband longed to be missionaries to the Seychelles islands. She wanted to know everything about home schools, and we talked late into the night as the shuttle headed to our destination. By the time the ride ended, she got all the tools she needed. The shuttle driver even took us all the way home, so we didn't have to by a taxi. What a blessing.

As for those CPR classes, they were a blessing too. On the second leg of our trip, the children and I flew from Chicago to New York and then on to Houston. In the TSA line in Houston, BAM, the man's head slammed into the floor. We did CPR with him and prayed for him. Then on the flight from New York to Houston, in the back of the plane, a second person went down and we assisted her. My children may have mocked in the beginning, but we were glad we followed instruction.

Knowing God is thrilling, exhilarating, and exciting. He knows what is coming. He directs where we're going. He shines the light to guide us safely home.

He put the lampstand in the tabernacle of meeting,  
across from the table,  
on the south side of the tabernacle;  
Exodus 40:24

## Baby, Get Better? Baby, Got Best.

Happy endings are hard to write. Happy endings never seem to grip your soul like the struggles and battles fought and trials endured. Happy endings are the resolution we long for, the closure we need, and yet, somehow, they seem anti-climatic.

Since I am an adventurer and a conqueror, I can't wait for the next call to action, the next victory, the next opportunity to do something that's never been done. For me, rest is stressful.

God is so real and miraculous; He calms the restless heart. He draws the wayward one to His side. In His presence, I become a little lamb with my head in his lap.

King David sang better is one day in the courts of God than thousands of days elsewhere. He knew that one shining moment in the arms of your Creator is more rewarding than all the adrenaline of climbing the highest mountain. I have a friend who has eleven children. Her mother served as a missionary in Iran. Somewhere around the eighth child, her missionary mother came to her and asked when she would stop having children. My friend firmly responded to her well-intentioned mom. "Mother, you lived your great adventure in Iran. These children, this family, they are my great adventure."

I can't tell you that I don't still dream of building companies, creating new products, making things, making things more efficient, solving big problems and solving little problems, and specializing in turn around operations, and being the leader of the band. But I can tell you that I have created and organized and hugged and cleaned and blessed in such a way that is so satisfying and so challenging. I've had so many special night time tuck-ins with my beautiful children. I've proclaimed God's love in more places and prayed with more people than I ever thought. I've needed God more than ever. I've known Him more intimately and desired Him more deeply. He's my friend. He is my hope. I get to see God do miracles, and I cannot wait to see what He will do next.

My husband asked me what is next. He asked about my bucket list. I'd love to bring many, many people to Israel. He asked how many is enough? I would like at least two million. I'd love to lead many souls to the heart of God. But, if none of those things happen, I've taken all three of our children to the Holy Land. I am teaching them to know and love God even more than I do. He's the only one who could turn this weary, wayward heart, safely home.

and he lit the lamps before the Lord,  
as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Exodus 40:25

Chapter Five: Baby, You are Out to Sea.  
Don't Drift Baby

The Raft is a true story by Robert Trumball and Tom Parker. It details the survival of Navy men cast adrift. I've been adrift and not even known it.

My friend and I were having lunch one afternoon. We both held excellent jobs at a large organization. I casually said with a magnanimous wave of my hand, "If God doesn't want you here, He will pick you up and move you." I was gone the next week.

"Hey, I wasn't talking about me. I was talking about her." I didn't stop to ask God about His plans.

I opened the Sunday paper. I dived in. Of course, I gulped a lungful of air beforehand.

We took our children, the youngest just turned two, and my mother-in-law on a tour. We visited England, Wales, Ireland, and enjoyed a lovely apartment in Paris. When we returned, I plopped the children in school and began my next tour of duty.

It never occurred to me that maybe God intended the loss of that "great" job might benefit my family, to create a space for me to love and cherish my husband and little ones. I didn't grasp how precious those years might be, that once the soil of those toddling days eroded, there would be no solid ground to hold an anchor. I had only one thought, even if it meant abandon ship, land the next job.

Don't get me wrong, I had a cushy situation. The new role cut my hours in half. I had summers completely off. Unfortunately, my hours were from 2 pm -10 pm when my children needed me most. But, my husband filled in and of course, we traveled. I had a nice office, a desirable title, opportunity and prestige. Nice, good, better – none of these words describe God's best.

I wanted God's best. I guess I didn't have the guts or the fortitude to see it and walk in it. But, I started in His direction with the need to off load many things that were not of Him.

I owned a massive library, an arsenal, of intellectual weapons that could be unleashed in a variety of scenarios. Unfortunately, many aspects of intellectual thought don't always line up with the truth. So, I needed to clear the decks.

I loaded up thousands of dollars in textbooks and transported them to my new job. On a Saturday morning, I hunched over the car trunk in the empty parking lot. One by one, I scanned each item and silently prayed, "Lord is this of you?" The majority of those books did not make the cut.

As I looked at the reject pile, I started to weep over all the years I wasted married to untrue, half-true, out-right lies. A deep sadness came over me for the worthless dollars invested. I'd been wrong. Do you have any idea how hard it is to make an 180 degree turn a multi-ton ship that's heading in the wrong direction?

I loaded the now worthless books into my car and started toward the nearest library. I prayed and wept while I drove. I got to the closed campus library. I stood on the stately steps while wondering where to go next.

I prayed harder. If these books weren't safe food for me, they weren't safe food for anybody. "Lord, if you want me to destroy this stuff, then send me a dumpster within the next two miles. If not, I'm giving it to the thrift store." One thing you should know about me. I have a tendency to help my own cause. I wasn't about to circle behind grocery stores or drive down a back alley. Any expulsion would occur in broad day light. I wasn't going to slink around to dump my cargo. So, I felt pretty confident those books wouldn't be trashed.

I almost arrived at my safe harbor, when out of nowhere, stood the most beautiful dumpster ever seen. Right under a lovely oak tree, out in the open, in front of everything, the appointed dumpster stood ready to receive my refuse.

Still crying, I popped the trunk and tossed the cargo overboard. One by one, dollar by dollar, I broke up with the lies. My chains are gone. I've been set free by a lovely dumpster under a shady tree.

I drove away feeling as light as a feather, unencumbered by the lies. It wouldn't be the last time I tossed cargo overboard. It wouldn't even be the least painful time I trashed things that held me down. But, I made a good start. That's where heroism begins, in the little moments of truth that no one but God can see.

There's a heroic story that I like to call Hurling Hueys. It's one of the greatest humanitarian missions of the U.S. Navy. Million dollar Huey helicopters were literally hurled into the ocean in order to save the lives of those, desperately low on fuel – a family who needed to land on the flight deck.

In my own way, I hurled more Hueys than I care to count. I tossed aside valuable cargo to make way for my family. I traded my sparkling Hueys to do menial tasks that made me feel like reorganizing the deck chairs on the Titanic.

I did this because I feared God. I did this because I believed God. I wanted Him to give me His very best for my family. I asked everything from Him. He didn't require everything from me, only a little more than some people and less than others. If all I worked to obtain had to be sunk into the ocean or cut loose, adrift on a raft, it is worth it as long as my family makes it safely home.

He put the gold altar in the tabernacle of meeting  
in front of the veil;  
Exodus 40:26

## Camp Baby

Fast-forward six years. I gave birth to another baby. I gained 50 pounds. I lost 50 pounds and then lost way too many more as I stood 5'9" in a baggy size four. I lost most of my friends. I'd lost my confidence. I almost lost my husband. I lost the peace in my home. I thought I lost pieces of my mind. So, when I took stock of what I needed to right the ship, the last thing I hoped to find was a pink slip.

Oh, of course, they call it reorganization and downsizing. But, they wiped out my entire department across multiple states. Somehow, knowing you're not the only one doesn't really help.

So, once again, I searched for a dumpster. In my high heels and my smart suit, dragging the heavy hand truck loaded with boxes of files, I looked really cute. It is called a circular file. I need to chuck all the hurts and pains of my past. I needed to toss disappointments and doubts. I needed to let go of every derailed project and every disjointed proposal.

More importantly, I needed to dump all the lies of this empty and dying world. Books betrayed me. I paid for empty philosophies that led to a dead end road. Jonah 2:8 reads, "Those who observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." Imagine all the years Moses spent on the backside of a desert, simply to purify a soul indoctrinated in the Egyptian, pagan ways.

I offloaded more cargo than just textbooks. This time I threw almost everything overboard. I trashed original presentations. I chucked hours and hours worth of work. I heaved resources. I tossed out contacts. I littered that dumpster with power points, and emails, and proposals, and people. What I didn't throw away, I left behind.

Other than a vicious cycle of binging and purging, one might wonder why so much of my life got kicked to the curb. A logician might surmise that

subtracting possessions and ideas and dreams might not necessarily lead to a positive place of peace. So why do it then?

The heart is deceitfully wicked. Who can know it? We don't even know our own hearts. If I rebel and hurl myself off a cliff, will God still love me? Can I hurl myself off a cliff and prove I love God?

The fact is I wanted something pure. I longed for real love and truth and had a deep unanswered need to be the bona fide, faithful, real deal. I keep pretending that I need to know if God really loves me. What a farce. He proved His love on a bloodied cross. I need to know that I love God. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love hopes all things. Love believes all things. Love never fails. Love seeks not it's own. Love never boasts. Love endures all things.

So in my existential angst, I did the only rational thing. Every woman in America surely would have done the same. No, I didn't shop, or eat ice cream, or go on vacation. I took my children camping.

We drove to the mountains. We popped the tent by the lake. The hot dogs broiled while we fished.

Then, the ranger came and told me I must move. I picked the wrong spot. While getting the fishing rods out of the water, a hook caught on one of the children who started to bleed while the keys got locked in the car and my youngest ingested the mosquito repellent.

Thank God, I repelled mosquitoes with organic peppermint oil. Furthermore, I can't say enough good things about those auto clubs that come and get your car doors unlocked. And, as I drove down the mountain to take my children out to a sit-down dinner before tucking them safely into their own beds, the clouds in the sky formed a giant mushroom. The metaphor was not lost on me; when a nuclear bomb explodes in life, pack up and go home. It's for your own safety, really.



Many women long to stay at home. I picture them dropping their children at school, going for a leisurely run in spandex, afterward sipping a latte' while the gardeners quaff their manicured lawn, later their immaculate hands are manicured by delicate ladies in warmly lit salons, and a fine restaurant prepares a take out meal they serve to smiling children over a white tablecloth while their husbands beam.

That is not my experience. Imagine a completely grueling, grey existence with no meaning or purpose, endlessly trying to accomplish an impossible task that when completed will make absolutely no difference to anyone other than your tormentor.

I am such a wimp. I cried over the laundry. I cried over cleaning. I whimpered at cooking. I fought in the garden. Oh, forget budgeting and accounting. I lugged and depressed and whined. The voice in my head said, "You cannot win here." "No one cares". "It's not important." "You stink."

I looked at my own brittle broken fingernails. I eyed this dry dock of a life and thought I cannot be a decent mother or wife. I cried out to God and said, "Let my people go. I cannot make bricks with out straw."

I share this with you so that you will not have any preconceived notions about staying at home. If you sign onto this Lord's Navy, you better be prepared to peel potatoes. You'll have to dig deeper and try harder and fight longer than you have ever fought before. But, the rewards are amazing.

Today, I awoke and spent the early part of my day with the Lord. I read His love letters to me, and then I spent time talking with Him. Then I cherished my husband. I made him breakfast. I did an hour of accounting. I mended some garments (yes, God is alive and well and changes people). I took my daughter shopping and found items I needed for my next project. Then, my youngest son and I smogged the car, went to the bank, the library, had a frosty. Then, I drove the other child to his sports practice while I researched ways to

save money for our family. I came home to a dinner cooked by our daughter, and then enjoyed a quiet night with our family.

It seems that for every valuable thing I chucked in that circular file, God gave me back diamonds and treasures. For every brilliant idea, hope, dream, and little creation I tossed out, God gave me a new life. But, I still had so many items to toss on my way home.

and he burned sweet incense on it,  
as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Exodus 40:27

## Forgive Baby

I knelt by the bed and made a laundry list in my head. I thought of all the significant people in my life – father, mother, husband, aunts, uncles, children, friends, and enemies. As God brought each person to my mind, I recalled fond memories and then I recalled hurts and pains done to me and done to them. I had some apologies to make. It takes courage to be humble. Some situations I could simply let go and let God take care of them. Others were more difficult to surrender such as my own lack of forgiveness toward others, or even to myself. No one has caused me as much trouble as me. Then there were the situations, simply too painful to erase from my memory bank. In those cases, I invited Jesus into the mental pictures and watched while He enfolded the offending parties into His loving nail-scarred arms. I washed a lot of dirty laundry until made clean. It's amazing how many hurts you can carry on one heart and a brain.

Then, I made a practice of praying for people who came to my mind. Truly, I had one person who hurt me so bad that thoughts of their maliciousness bombarded my brain non-stop. In those cases, I just prayed and prayed for them to be blessed.

This person actively, intentionally tried to destroy everything I loved. I prayed for that person for over ten years until finally, bumping into them in the grocery store. I said, "I've been praying for you." They said, "I know. I can feel it."

The downward spiral I experienced is preventable. You can be contentedly resting in God's love while being totally on fire and passionate. You can be resting in God's purposes and plans without losing the ground on which you stand. You can learn to hold the line while holding the hand. You can make people feel cherished and valuable while walking in the truth.

This prescription is written from the heart of a mother who wasted too many precious days, and out of the brokenness of spiritual Prisoner of War. Come home.

There are only two kinds of people in the whole world; there are people who need to know God and people who need to know more of God. Come home. You probably are quite confident of where you'd go if you died tomorrow. You may already read your Bible every day. You have people who love the Bible and Jesus Christ, the one and only true All Mighty God and study with them and pray. You cling to Christ and beg Him not to let you go astray. You know God.

You probably even read Romans 11. You know that God is not done with Israel. You may even pray from Ezekiel 36 for the mountains, rivers, valleys, and waste cities to be covered with flocks of men. You may even pray for the peace of Jerusalem every day. God says I will prosper those who love her. Please don't say, "Next year in Jerusalem". Instead, say "Today is the day of salvation. Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob." Baby, come home.

He hung up the screen at the door of the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:28

## Civil War Baby

A lovely entryway graces our home. I needed to paint. I wanted the walls to be special. I used Italian plaster.

I never did it before. I never had the courage to lovingly pour myself into a place and into people.

I globbed the paint on. I slathered the thick mixture on the walls in sweeping circular strokes. Then, I ground and polished it down with a power sander. Finally, I burnished and beat the walls until they shone. The results are stunning and pleasant to the eyes and to the touch.

The beauty did not come easily. I had to be ground and polished and beaten down until I could shine.

God's work is not civil. It's civil war. The Bible divides soul and spirit. That's a division from all my pretexts, my so-called noble motives, my selfish ambition, my pride. It's a constant battle. Cleaning toilets, wiping noses, picking up socks – these are cleansing for a soul that longs for gratification, exaltation, and even manipulation. I can not tell you how many times I wanted to throw up, run away, scream, cry, pout.

I responded just like Rusty. We owned a beautiful golden retriever, Rusty. An abused animal, he thought he ran the house, generally attacked every other dog, and refused to obey. So, Rusty and I need to be trained.

I walked him around in circles as he refused to heel. I persisted. He fought. I persisted. He resisted. Next, he doggy depressed and lay down. I persisted. He growled. I persisted. Round and round we went until he learned that I am in charge and he is not.

God trained me similarly. If I depressed, he squirted vinegar in my circumstances and told me to get up. If I angered, He persisted. He polished. I pouted.

I mean really, who wants to lay down a doctorate and six-figure income for the glory of wiping up spilt milk. No one does unless they understand that Jesus says those who lose their life for my sake shall find it. No greater love has this than that a man would lay down his life for his friends. And, this gem...where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

We have a giant eucalyptus tree in our backyard. Too many branches threatened to collapse the entire tree. When the gardener hacked off the offending branches, his saw left a lovely heart-shaped stump.

God wants to hack off every branch that threatens to topple your family tree. He wants to reveal to you the true desires of your heart, desires you may not even know or are afraid to acknowledge. Sometimes our deepest needs hit so close to home that we can't acknowledge them or pursue because the thought of loss or failure is too costly. We pretend we don't want and don't need to love and be loved.

So, what could be worth all the hacking, burnishing, and burning eyes and brokenness? For me, it's freedom. It is the freedom to love.

There is a popular idea in many circles. It goes like this: serve others to serve yourself. It's a dangerous proposition since I, like most people, am essentially self-serving. Serving others to serve your self is not love. It's selfishness. It's a lie. It is the opposite of love.

Love seeks not its own. Love rejoices in the truth. Love never fails. I wanted love, but I wanted my self more. I wasn't free to love. I loved myself. Whatever I did for others, I did to get them to love me.

It's a sick game. Tit for tat is not love. Planting your feet in pain and standing for God; now that's something quite different.

It's funny that when you have to fight in every fiber of your being for something, you find out the depth of love. When you scrape and dig and persevere, your character changes and you see a different person in the mirror. A civil war can make you realize how much you love your land. A civil war can make you realize your own desperate need for God. A civil war can leave you bloodied, battered, and bruised but better for it because you refused to be a slave to your own selfish desires and instead stood and fought for something bigger than you.

I asked God if there might be another way, some other path apart from the pain. There wasn't. But, He brought me through. Some people get bitter. Some people get better. Baby, get better. Baby, come on home.

And he put the altar of burnt offering  
before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting,  
and offered upon it the burnt offering and the grain offering,  
as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Exodus 40:29

## Baby, We Took a Vote.

I sat on the floor. My back pressed against the wall. I prayed. I prayed hard.

A picture formed in my mind. I saw a giant white theater. A massive delegation assembled. The onlookers faces blurred in a mass of humanity. I could feel the presence of thousands.

A voice spoke to me in quiet, confident tones. “We took a vote.” The voice slowly and deliberately stated the fact. “We took a vote. It is time.”

“Ok.” I replied. I earned that nickname on the high school softball team. No matter how much the screaming coach berated me, I never talked back. Even when he made me do push ups or kiss the softball when I dropped a catch, I just said, “Ok.”

“We took a vote. It is time.” The words sunk in. I scanned this huge body of faceless, seemingly infinitely wise delegates. Surely they must know. Surely, they have the power and authority to decide. They took a vote. I guess it’s time. “Okay.” I acquiesced.

I started to let go. I felt a floating sensation. I seemed to lift upward until almost out of my body, then...WHAM! “No one took my vote!” “No one took God’s vote!” He’s my Father! Until I hear from Him, I’m not going anywhere!

How many times does one woman have to do battle? I’ve been attacked by lies while praying at the foot of my bed. I’ve put up with deception, distraction, disappointment, discouragement, depressions, and disruption. After getting hit with this nonsense, I started to wonder what could be so important that the enemy of my soul would work so hard to take me out. Perhaps, it’s because of an earlier vision.

When my Father and mother divorced, it affected me. It affected me and my relationship with God. I even went so far as to tell God, “Hey, if you come



back for all the people who love you, if you gather up all your faithful ones and take them to heaven, but you leave me here, that's okay. I'll know that you still love me even though you don't take me with you. I'll work hard to bring other people safely home. I'll still believe in you. I'll bring many people home to your heart even if you don't take me home just then." I rationalized that because my Father left me that my heavenly Father might leave me too.

God showed me the truth. He showed me, in my heart, standing before Him. I paused. In His Holy presence, I paused. Then I brought many, many people with me. I brought many, many people – the abandoned, rejected, or dejected. They made it safely home.

He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting  
and the altar, and put water there for washing;  
Exodus 40:30

## Baby, You Got Twins.

I know of many ways to turn a heart toward home. Prayer is powerful. Scripture is dynamic. God can use just about anything, and He loves gifts. For example, I brought two T-shirts to Israel. Red shirts, covered with beautiful hearts said “Made in the USA” designed slim cut for teen-age females. At the Sea of Galilee, when an entire bus load of Israeli teenagers arrived, I knew one of those young women would enjoy a gift.

I grabbed the shirts, wrapped them in some extra white ribbon, and headed toward the youths. I felt God leading me to a slim, young lady with long, dark straight hair, big brown eyes, and a teal plaid shirt. I introduced myself and we chatted easily; both she and her friend seemed to know English. She said her name was Or which means light, and I gave her the shirt.

As soon as she showed her delight in the shirt, a big, overbearing girl tried to grab the shirt. She tugged and tore at Or, mocking and whining, like some kind of angry bird trying to fight for a fish. She identified her self as Rose, and then she began to mock me. I started to doubt myself and wondered if I made a mistake.

Just then, another slim, dark-haired dark eyed girl appeared. She looked exactly like Or. Or had a twin. Imagine my joy. I gave her the other shirt and discovered her name was Keren, which means horn or strength. Rose also berated her, but it didn't matter. I found twins to fit my two beautiful heart shirts, twins to pray for, twins to confirm that God was using me to do His will.

God uses gifts as tokens and signs of his plan and His presence. A wonderful Jewish man's camera didn't work; my girlfriend's extra camera battery fit exactly – a sign? His shop teemed with business while she shared God's love with him – a sign? A beautiful silk rug, a sterling silver candelabrum, purchases in Israel that serve as tokens of God's love.

This idea of looking for signs and tokens from God is not new. In the Book of Joshua, when Rahab hid Jewish spies in the city of Jericho, she asked for a

token of protection. The scarlet line, or rope, served as a sign of hope, over her home, for the safety of all who dwelt there. The word for line is the same word Naomi uses in the book of Ruth to bemoan the fact that she has no hope.

This is almost laughable since Naomi will one day have a Kingly grandchild, named David, whose “line” or house will never end. Jesus Christ will be her descendant and the blood of Jesus will cover the doorposts of people’s hearts for eternal deliverance just as the line covered Rahab with hope and the blood of the Passover lamb covered the Israelites with hope before their Exodus from Egypt.

God promises that signs and wonders follow those who tabernacle and dwell with him. These signs and wonders are nothing short of miraculous. It takes a trained eye to see His wonderful works and a line of hope to draw in those who are out to see God’s children come safely home.

and Moses, Aaron, and his sons  
would wash their hands and their feet with water from it.

Exodus 40:31

## Chapter Six: Do You See?

### Baby on TV

The further we went, the sicker she got. On my first trip to Israel, my friend just got sicker and sicker. She made the trip as a way to thank God for saving her life from lupus and kidney failure. She needed a doctor now.

When we touched down in Tel Aviv, five of us girls piled into a taxicab and raced her to the hospital. I ended up in the front seat next to the cab driver.

“Are you Jewish”, I asked him.

“I’m Solomon, of course I’m Jewish.” He replied with a shrug.

“Well then can you help me?” I queried.

He said he’d try.

“Well you guys have ten rules, right? Don’t lie. Don’t steal. Don’t want other people’s stuff. Don’t put anything before God. Don’t even look at a man or woman with lust.” “Solomon” I said seriously. “I have broken all ten of these rules.”

He glanced my way. “Me too”, he nodded.

“Well, then how do you have peace with God?” I sought an answer, while he tried to race us to the doctors while solving the deep issues of life. He finally rendered a verdict.

He said, “I don’t know.”

I said, “I’m a Christian. I came here to bless you because God says I will bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel...What the law could not do in that it was weak in the flesh, God did. He sent his own son and crucified sin in the likeness of human flesh, so that if you believe in him, you will not perish. You will have everlasting life. You will have peace with God.”

Do you know what that cab driver did? That man from the other side of the world said, “I’ve seen people like you on TV and now I’ve met one”. We pulled up to the hospital, and he hugged me.

I cheered inside. “Look what God is doing. He is turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. The Jews are the fathers

and we Christians are the children – the branch grafted into the root.” What a great first memory of the Promised Land.

You may be wondering what happened to my sick friend? She checked into the emergency room. A team of handsome Jewish doctors surrounded her, treated the infection and for less than \$300, she went on her way and spent the rest of the evening eating a sumptuous hotel buffet. God is so good.

I tell and re-tell that story. Because my friend endured brief suffering, I received a lovely way to share a little bit of love and light with people when they talk about their travels or even their illness. The story is a simple gift from God to encourage people to turn their heart toward home.

Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting,  
and when they came near the altar,  
they washed, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Exodus 40:32

### Baby, Rise Up.

“I’ already washed my feet. I am in bed. You wrote the Song of Solomon. I don’t want to get up in the middle of the night.” I tried to roll over and go back to sleep, but I heard that small, gentle voice, “Get up. Come outside. ”

I wear a light running suit when I sleep and keep flip-flop shoes or slippers by the bed. That way, if I need to leave the room for some reason, I am dressed decently. One night, I felt God’s spirit prompting me to get up. I felt a gentle tug at my heart. I went outside into a black dark night.

The grounds overlooking the Sea of Galilee lay deserted except for two lovers who embraced at the other end of the dock. Suddenly, BOOM!.... BOOM!.... BOOM! the heavens thundered and lightning exploded in a magnificent display all around me. I witnessed a command performance for just one woman. God flaunted his magnificent power. What a show-off. I will never forget it, and I am sure glad I dressed for the occasion.

In addition to a running suit, when I travel, I always bring a dress, preferably polyester to avoid wrinkles. On my second trip to Israel, we arrived in Jerusalem, hot and dusty, just before dinner. With hunger and buffets on my mind, I planned to race to the meal without changing out of my travel clothes. I felt a prompt from God, “Aren’t you going to dress for the evening; it’s your first night in Jerusalem.” Begrudgingly, I showered and put on my dress with a little beaded purse purchased in Tiberias. Then, I headed for dinner.

Strangely, I got lost in this hotel, which I knew quite well from a previous visit. To my delight, I ended up back-stage at the wedding of a most famous Rabbi; he and I came out of separate elevators at the exact same moment. I stayed as long as he did to preside over the event, then I went to dinner as planned.

My Lord took me on an adventure, a wedding in Jerusalem, and none of my friends even looked surprised. When I arrived late at dinner, I inquired,

“Didn’t you miss me?” I pretended to be hurt. “No. We knew you’d be at the wedding.”

Sadly, some people exclude themselves from the wedding. No one who goes to heaven will be there against his or her will. Some people reject God. They will not walk or talk with God. They do not want to know Him or care about what hurts or delights His heart. They miss a whole feast of His very best, and when they die, they chose to sit alone rather than dine with Him.

I want Him. He wants me. At this moment, God is with me. I know it. He knows it. He is the prize of my life. Together, we are at home.

And he raised up the court  
all around the tabernacle and the altar,  
and hung up the screen of the court gate.  
So Moses finished the work.

Exodus 40:33

### Open Your Eyes, Baby.

It is so hard to lose the prize of your life. I prayed with her last year for her cancer-ridden son. I hoped to return and hear a good report of mended bodies and joyful spirits. I brought gifts for her from across the world (luxurious pomegranate soaps and lotions and rich dark chocolate covered pomegranate seeds) to my idyllic spot, the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

I entered her small gift shop and looked up in dismay. There on the top shelf of her store, stood two large bottles of cologne. One bottle depicted a fierce, venomous cobra, the other vicious and menacing bottle displayed the words “toxic” and “poison” prominently. I immediately knew. The mother is bitter. The boy is dead.

I knew her son died without a word from her. You can read a toxic environment quicker than you can do a scan on a broken heart. I cried with her. She offered me exactly one toilet paper square. Sometimes, there is simply nothing to spare.

I went to my hotel room to pray. I looked at the water where Jesus walked. I looked at the palm trees. “Don’t look at the jagged trunks.” He told me.

“You call the top of the palm tree the crown. Don’t look at all that jagged, painful stuff in life. Look at the crown.” The next morning, I grabbed my purse and went back to the gift shop.

“I would like to buy the cologne bottles.” I pointed to the top shelf. She got hysterical. “They are not for sale.” She hyperventilated and protested through tears.

I gently, slowly assured her that I knew exactly what those bottles meant to her. I knew that God wanted to heal. Her husband wrapped the items, and I completed the prayerful, patient extraction.



I went to breakfast that morning with the toxic colognes in my handbag. I asked a co-traveler, he served as a naval commander and explosives specialist, what is the most important thing to know when carrying a bomb. His obvious reply came in one word, safety.

I delicately carried the spiritual bombs as we left Tiberias, circled the Sea of Galilee, and then went to the Golan Heights to pray for the land. I doubted myself. I had no idea how to dispose of the cologne.

There on the mountains my friend relayed a sad story. Her pastor had cancer. He refused chemotherapy. He prepared for death.

Amazing! God could use toxic things intended for evil to bring about good and glory. I gave the two tightly wrapped bottles of toxic cologne to my friend.

“Tell your pastor, He must take the chemo therapy. It’s for his own good.”

Then I shook with tears of grief as I looked out over the Promised Land and bemoaned the future suffering of my own land. Surely, God would use chemotherapy to remove cancer in the body of Christ. He would unleash toxins to kill mutated cells and deliberately attack His beloved in order to purify, refine, and strengthen those who are His own.

Since that windy day on the Golan Heights, I experience God performing many such operations. If you see people, they will tell you what hurts and where, and if they trust you, they will let you take care.

We walked into the darkened front room of their house. Their holocaust was not a metaphor. Their entire home immortalized the death and destruction they endured. Pain emanated in every room.

He bemoaned the travesty through an interpreter. He held his head in his hands. His eyes implored us for answers. None came. We prayed. We prayed hard.

When the tour group passed on through the museum of death they called home, I sat down quietly beside him. Prayers poured out of my heart while my external demeanor conveyed only stillness, unhurried, unruffled perfect tranquility amidst a cavalcade, the raging unseen battle for the soul of one wounded man.

Our pastor soon came and sat next to me. We never spoke to one another. It takes no interpreter to understand a desperate why? why? why?. It echoes across the continents into the unending darkness of silent galaxies of suffering, into the throne room of heaven, to the only one who knows the answer and the pain of each tiny frame, of every broken bone, to the heartbeats of generations silenced by mass graves.

Miraculously, this beloved Jewish man who chose to speak to us through an interpreter, trapped in a self-imposed house of death, spoke beautiful English. We talked/prayed and my pastor just kept encouraging this weary soul. “Your name is Judah. Judah means praise. Don’t ask why. Praise God. Trust God. Don’t ask why.”

I turned to this dear soul and assured him. “Every woman knows there is no new birth without blood. You are in the land. Praise God.”

I pulled another one of my small gifts from a pocket. As we left their home, I gave his wife the stack of printed recipe cards, as if giving a prescription for healing a soul, “Please tell him to praise God.”

God inhabits the praises of His people. If you are suffering or fearful, praise God. You will see His glory. Come home to His heart. Let Him comfort your pain. Baby, please come home.

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting,  
and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:34

### Get the Picture, Baby.

“You took my picture.” The twenty-something, tall, handsome, Arab man flashed me an award-winning smile. His casual good looks and warm demeanor made me wish I had taken his picture. He repeated himself.

“Remember, at the Jordan river? You took my picture.”

We stood in the middle of a busy, modern coffee shop in an upscale neighborhood near Hebrew University. While my face held a gracious smile, and I forced my body not to tense, my brain ran a quick scan of all the combinations of remote possibilities and statistical probabilities that might put me behind a camera.

“Got it!” All my synapses shouted internally. “Oh.” I laughed lightly, with a waive of my hand. “I didn’t take your picture.” “That was my daughter.” A tall, fair-skinned blonde teenager, she made a lovely contrast to the rugged desert terrain. This young lady stood out as we rafted down the Jordan with our tour group. I might have been slightly flattered knowing he mistook me for my twenty plus years younger child, except for the fact that I knew he’d only recognized me because my daughter and I shared the same spirit.

Acutely aware of the spiritual needs of this young Muslim college student, I invited him to join us for lunch. He politely declined, but said to meet him outside after he finished a cigarette. It is possible to pray passionately while eating quickly. I did both.

When I exited the coffee house, our pastor, full of joy and humor, already remembered and delightfully engaged the young man. I waited prayerfully.

Then our pastor brought the young man over and I told, again, the wonderful story of my first experience in the Middle East. I spoke of the cab ride and the driver Solomon, and the fact that no one is righteous, and all have sinned, and once to die, then death and judgment and the power of the blood of the perfect lamb, Jesus, to bring peace with God.

I stood corrected. I had taken a picture of this young man. I captured a picture of his soul. The picture showed that he, like all of us, desperately needed God. Then, I gave him a new picture of a soul united with grace and truth, a Holy soul, blameless and perfect before God. Our adroit pastor prayed with that young man in Jerusalem. I am confident another dear child found his way safely home. Baby, will you please come home.

And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting,  
because the cloud rested above it,  
and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:35

## Baby Plans

“Woe, if I don’t prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy.” When I read that in my Bible, one autumn morning, I quickly inquired, “What’s my chief joy, God?” “Your home and your children. Take every penny you have and take those children to Israel. Teach them to love my land and love my people.” So, I did.

Once we returned from the trip, only seven weeks remained before my daughter started college. “That’s not my plan for her.” I remembered His words hitting me like a slap. I followed and obeyed God, now He would make good on His promise to exceed anything I could even think or dream. He did.

Sitting on the hot cement outside of the tire store, I placed a phone call to the one place God took me every time life broke and beat me down. I wrote my dad’s eulogy there when he passed away. Years before, I prayed and dreamed one of my children could go to school there. My daughter did not.

Seven weeks later, I flew to Budapest, Hungary. I slept in a luxury hotel in a restored palace. The next morning, we took a train to Austria and enjoyed lunch with my daughter in their castle. Then, I deposited my daughter in a pastoral country estate, another castle, also in Hungary where she studied God’s word and grew among God’s faithful shepherds.

That next year, she visited 14 different countries. She taught kindergarten to Muslims in a volatile nation. She went to the Far East and cared for orphans. Youth with a Mission certified her to teach English – a \$1400 dollar program for only \$300 including a month long room and board in the Ukraine. Not coincidentally, when I first started home school, I trusted only two things, God’s word, and true stories that featured missionary testimony, from YWAM.

Releasing my child to God’s mission and purpose for her life is one of the hardest things I’ve ever done – to let my daughter go. I remember laying quietly while God just did a surgery on my soul, pulling all the attachments off me, so I could surrender my daughter to His tender care.

When I did, she experienced an incredible first year based on a magnificent promise from God. To this day, I wear the ring I bought in Israel. It is inscribed with Jeremiah 29:11 “I know the thoughts and plans I have for you, a future and a hope to prosper you and not to harm you.”

Whatever the ocean drags out to sea, the waves of God’s love will bring crashing back to me. I wait and whisper gently, Baby come home.

Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle,  
the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys.

Exodus 40:36

## Baby On Fire.

Every alarm in the place went off. I couldn't believe it. I did not care. I wanted that ring.

The first time I visited Eilat, at the Southern tip of Israel, I really wanted the Eilat stone. It's a rich blue that resembles lapis stone, intertwined with a dark rich green that appears as brilliant as emeralds with the substance of turquoise. In my mind, it depicted the perfect union of grace and truth. Oh, I wanted that ring.

I had only one problem. God said no. He plainly, precisely, purposively, and powerfully told me I could not leave the hotel except when the tour organized an event.

I only left the hotel to go to Petra. That is a place in Jordan. Jordan is a Muslim country. There are almost no trees except a few surrounding the King's summer palace. The climate stifles your breath while the spirit of the country makes a heart go cold.

As our tour bus progressed through a local town, the guide proudly boasted of internet calves. "We have internet calves." As he repeated the phrase, I got more and more curious how their cows had the worldwide web. Then I saw one of the calves, and I knew the answer.

Spry, wiry, and determined, our guide, while short of stature, stood proud as he described the most magnificent formations I could never imagine. Although my legs stretched twice as long as his, I had trouble keeping step with him, as he charged forward, compelling our tour group through twists and turns of solid rock.

"Sir", I inquired a bit more out of breath than I would prefer. "In my country, when we love you, we tell you the truth. If we have a girl friend and she does not tell us if we have toilet paper on our shoe or spinach in our teeth, she does not love us. If she loves us, she will tell the truth. May I tell you the truth?"

“Of course.” my dear guide replied without slowing his pace for an instant. I began. “You said you have internet calves, internet calphs, internet calfs.” It’s not internet calves, the term is internet cafe.”

He stopped immediately. “Oh. I did not know this. Thank you very much for telling me the truth.”

I spent the next 40 minutes glued to that man’s side. While he ploughed and trudged through geological wonders, I ploughed through the solid rock of a soul that needs God.

He said, “I get my energy from the plants. The plants are my god”

“No, that’s pagan.” I replied.

“What is fagan?” he asked.

I shared the gospel, that God so loved the world, He gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. I answered all his questions as best I could about where he came from, where his soul is going. He posited reincarnation. I countered with “it’s appointed unto man once to die and then judgment.”

I barely noticed the distractions. Several men hooted and hollered toward my voluptuous roommate, “Oh you are number one. You are so beautiful, I want to marry you.” With catcalls and hoots, they applauded her at every turn. For me, one lone voice called out of this pack of by-standing men...”Hey! Happy middle-aged lady!” I beamed and then focused on my task.

All I knew is I had to get a Bible in the hands of this man. God kept telling me no. I respond poorly to no. Finally, I gave up and yielded. I gave the man all the verbal scripture I could. I would not give him a Bible.

I got on the bus to return to the hotel. I would not get an Eilat stone ring and that man would not get a Bible. What a lousy deal. I pouted.



When we loaded into the tour bus, my friend whispered to me in her most excited voice, “Guess what I did?” “I don’t know” I retorted dejectedly. “What?”

“I gave our guide a Bible!” I felt overjoyed. God came through.

So, the next morning I made up my mind what I should do. I am going to leave the hotel and go get that ring.

I’m not kidding you. From the moment I tried to set foot outside the hotel, I grew violently ill. I vomited constantly and laughed intermittently. My roommate thought I lost my mind.

I laughed in between trips to the commode. “God can even keep me from me.

I tried to disobey Him and I couldn’t. Isn’t that great!!!” I’d go throw up some more, and she just shook her head.

You know, as soon as I got on the bus to leave the hotel, I never felt sick again. But, I still didn’t have my Eilat stone, grace and truth, ring. I could feel the tug at my heart for that beautiful and unique stone. I told myself resolutely, “Baby, you gotta get back home.”

But if the cloud was not taken up,  
then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up.

Exodus 40:37

## Baby Ring

Back home in California, I woke one morning and considered my daughter's future. I trained her to love God, to work, prepared her for college, developed her athletic ability, taught her to cook, love children, keep a home, and even made sure she could join the military. I forgot one thing. I did not prepare for her wedding.

So, I silently prayed for a hope chest and a nice bottle of red wine so I could plan for her special day. I told no one of my desires.

Imagine my delight when, three hours later, my husband came home with a surprise. He received a gift – a small chest that held two good bottles of wine. I laughed inside when I realized, no pots and pans could fit inside that little treasure chest. So, I bought a sterling silver, 5 karat deep purple amethyst ring. I put it inside the box with a prayer for God to make my daughter a king and a priest. Then, I felt guilty.

Missionaries struggle reaching the lost. Bibles are in short supply. Pastors preach without churches. Prisoners endure without food. How could I splurge on lavish jewels while the rest of the body of Christ languishes? So, I stopped.

Then, some of the young ladies in our church participated in a purity conference. Their leader and I prayed together in the parking lot for God to send beautiful promise rings for each one of those precious girls.

Since prayer and action go side by side, I wrote to the CEO of a jewelry store. I told him all about the ladies' love for Christ. I said that I knew he probably received numerous requests and simply asked what he might be able to do. Nothing happened. The purity conference came and went with nothing happening. Then, one day, I received an email. The notice designated one package en route with no charge.

At my doorstep, I beheld a huge box. That CEO wrote me back and said, “You’re right. I receive many such requests and my company simply cannot grant them all. These stones are from me personally.”

That dear man gave over 500 karats of semi-precious stones to honor young women who commit themselves to love Jesus and preserve their purity until marriage. He inspired me to pray and prepare the Bride of Christ. Naturally, that required a trip back to Israel to get more Jewels.

We sat on Ben Yehuda Street, eating pizza, waiting to scoot up the hill to buy a lovely blue fire opal for my daughter’s graduation. All of a sudden, the air sirens blasted. No one moved. Everyone seemed frozen. No one knew what to do. We sat, shaken in fear. Stunned, not one person took cover. I guess we listened but did not hear.

The alarms stopped, and I went and bought two gorgeous opal necklaces. One I kept for my daughter. The other necklace is gone. That is a story for another day.

So, when we went to the Red Sea, I felt primed to make Israel a little bit greener. I vowed to purchase the coveted Eilat stone.

When we arrived in this beach resort town, I got ready to shop. My daughter and I looked all over town. Finally, I realized the hotel gift shop held a lovely assortment in the styles I wanted. Surely, this must have been why God held me in the hotel that trip before.

So, I did my reconnaissance. I counted my cash. I left the children in the hotel room and went downstairs to pay. As soon as I set foot in the gift shop, every fire alarm in the building went off.

I dropped the rings on the counter and raced up the stairs to secure my precious children. The porter said, “Nothing but a drill and not to worry.”

I went back downstairs to buy the rings. I got all set and realized I forgot all my cash in the room. Back upstairs, I trudged, scooped up the money, and huffed back down again. My goodness, it takes a lot of perseverance to get this jewelry.

Now, with money in hand, my selections chosen and wrapped, everything looked in order. When I held out the cash, the fire alarms sounded again. This time I did not budge.

It never occurred to me not to buy those rings. I looked at the shop owner and his wife standing, covering their ears from the sounds of the alarm horns, and I knew this meant only one thing.

I dove in without waiting for them to put down their arms or for the alarm horns to cease. I weighed in with every bit of scripture I could share in the most polite and gracious way I could. I pulled no punches. I left nothing out. I watched the visible lumens of light increase over 200% in that little gift shop. You could measure the dramatic emittance of light if you owned a lux meter, or just marvel with the naked eye. Instead, the angels marveled at the dramatic utterance because God's word is so powerful. When he says the entrance of His words gives light, He is not kidding.

As far as those rings go, I probably should have listened to the alarms going off. My finger turned green and the base included brass and not silver. I don't care. I will return.

When I come, I will bring a feast of God's word. I will buy rings at the jewelry store, not the hotel gift shop. Today, the joke may be on me, but God's love and light will last for all eternity.

One more thing, there will be a time when I come back, and I will come back to stay. I won't stay in a hotel or live on the street. I'll have my own home, kept tidy and neat. If you are wondering about my 57 MG; I will put it on a container ship and bring it with me. My little convertible will zig zag on

Israel's hills. I am not surrendering this roadster to my offspring; that's the purpose of wills. Speaking of will, next year in Jerusalem is what many people may say, but every day in Jerusalem, that's what I pray.

Until then, you'll find me making a home fit for a king. A home where He resides and conducts His business; it's a dwelling for His reign – an embassy for His rule.

Yes, I am a housekeeper. The keeper is the most important position in soccer. She defends the goal. Good Lord willing, I'll defend it well, while pulling as many lost souls as I can out of Hell. Can you hear me? Baby, please come home where all is well.

For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day,  
and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel,  
throughout all their journeys.

Exodus 40:38

## Afterword

In 2004, I made a list of every broken thing in my home. I plugged that list into a spreadsheet and determined that if Nehemiah re-built the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days, I could surely repair and improve one residence. That was 10 years ago. I feel pathetic and embarrassed that it took me so long. I guess if I knew what my perseverance was buying, I wouldn't be crying.

Coming home may be the hardest choice you ever make. Coming home involves determination and stick-to-it-ness and "true grit". It will take every ounce of your heart, soul, and strength to make it home. It's worth it.

God is searching. God is waiting for His children to return. God is eternally grateful for those who care enough to leave on the porch light. God is thrilled for those who fearlessly trudge into the dark of night to bring back His lost ones. God is calling you. Baby, come home.



*About the Author*

*Mrs. Christine Cecil, Ed.D. is a wife, mother, and great lover of Israel. Her heart's desire is to see all the Father's children safely home.*

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