

# SISTERHOOD

2019



One morning, in the middle of the long war, he emerged from the tomb and the decisive blow was struck. Though the outcome is certain, our own battles aren't over. We are attacked from all sides, but God himself fights at OUR side and he calls us CONQUERORS. He has won, the end is in sight, and we press on toward it. We march on with joy because we know he is with us, and we have everything we need to win this fight. **WE WILL ENDURE. WE WON'T WAIT TO CELEBRATE.**

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IT'S TIME TO SING AND SHOUT —

**VICTORY**

YOU SEE, EVERY CHILD OF GOD OVERCOMES THE  
WORLD, FOR OUR FAITH IS THE VICTORIOUS  
POWER THAT TRIUMPHS OVER THE WORLD.  
SO WHO ARE THE WORLD CONQUERORS,  
DEFEATING ITS POWER? THOSE WHO  
BELIEVE THAT *Jesus is the Son of God.*

- 1 John 5:4-5







## DEAREST SISTERS,

I've always been competitive. One of my earliest memories is searing pain over the loss of a game of Candy Land with my brother—ridiculous, I know. We are all going to face battles in this life that make us wish we could go back to the times when the only victory that mattered was winning a board game.

During World War II, women faced an unprecedented turning point on the home front as well as on the battlefield. They became nurses, factory workers, pilots and so much more. They planted Victory Gardens using any vacant lot or available curb space. They stepped up and did their part, each in their own way, fighting for nothing less than victory over evil. Christ has overcome the enemy and won the war, and he has given us the tools to claim victory, too, because "...Our faith is the victorious power that triumphs over the world," 1 John 5:4-5 (TPT).

I love Exodus 17, when Moses sends Joshua and the Israelites to battle against the Amalekites. As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage. When Moses' arms grew so tired he could no longer hold them up, Aaron and Hur stood on each side of Moses, holding his hands steady until sunset. As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle.

We are never meant to do battle alone. Without the support of sisters in Christ, I would have probably given up fighting some of the more difficult battles. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the women God has placed in my life to help hold up my arms. "Two are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed," Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NLT).

There is a big difference in competing to win versus pursuing victory in what God wants us to overcome. Regardless of your competitive nature, we all want to hold on to the hope of having victory in our battles.

Romans 8:37 (NLT) has brought me great comfort in the midst of some ultra-difficult times, "No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us." He is the Champion! And we are his Chosen daughters.

However desperate, frustrated, or overwhelmed you may feel, you can claim God's victory! And, if you are in a place of strength, hold up the arms of the women God has placed around you. Whatever you are facing, my prayer is that you would be surrounded with other believers who will support you in your pursuit of victory. Let us help you find your Sisterhood.

Blessings,

Jenna Surratt  
Pastor, Women's Ministry



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A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE PATRIOTS POINT NAVAL AND MARITIME MUSEUM AND EVENT MANAGER, BOBBY KOTLOWSKI & SILO FARMS, A BOUTIQUE FARM IN MCCLELLANVILLE, SC WHOSE MISSION IS TO PROVIDE FARM-FRESH FOOD THAT CAN HEAL OUR BODIES AS WELL AS OUR LAND.



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# SPEAKERS

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**LISA BEVERE** has spent nearly three decades empowering women of all ages to find their identity and purpose. She is a New York Times bestselling author and internationally known speaker. Her books, which include *Adamant*, *Lioness Arising*, *Girls with Swords*, and *Without Rival*, are in the hands of millions worldwide. Lisa and her husband, John, are the founders of Messenger International, an organization committed to developing uncompromising followers of Christ who transform their world. Messenger International has given away nearly 20 million resources in 106 languages.



**BIANCA JUAREZ OLTHOFF** is a Bible-teaching, book-writing MexiRican who is passionate about raising up a generation of people passionate about Jesus Christ. As an author and speaker, she knows the power of words and wields them wisely. As a church planter (tfhoc.org) and leader, she is committed to proclaiming the gospel domestically and internationally. For more information, follow along on social media or visit [BiancaOlthoff.com](http://BiancaOlthoff.com).



**HOSANNA WONG** is an author, pastor, and spoken word artist sharing stories of freedom and hope around the country year-round. Her teachings are rooted in her upbringing on the streets of San Francisco, her firsthand experiences with loss, hope, and redemption. Her desire is to see lives restored through the truth and power of Jesus.

Hosanna is the Associate Teaching Pastor at EastLake Church in the San Diego area and the Executive Director of Calvary Street Ministries, an outreach bringing hope to the homeless in San Francisco. Under the name Hosanna Poetry, she has released spoken word albums *Maps, Boots, & Other Ways We Get There* and *Figless* and has authored books *I Have a New Name* and *Superadded*.





# PLACES TO NOTE

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## CHOSEN MERCHANDISE

Celebrate Chosen all year long! Chosen shirts and sweatshirts can be purchased at the Seacoast Bookstore.

## CHOSEN MARKET

The Chosen Market is the place to find local vendors selling a wide array of interesting items, from clothing and scarves, rugs and baskets, to jewelry and art.

## SEACOAST BOOKSTORE

Seacoast Bookstore carries all of our Chosen merchandise, along with Bibles, gifts, and books by our Chosen speakers. A portion of the proceeds supports Seacoast's Global Missions projects, such as church planting, building clinics, and starting schools around the world. The bookstore is open throughout the conference. You can also order online at [seacoastresources.org](http://seacoastresources.org).

## SEACOAST CAFÉ

**Thursday 5:00–7:30pm**

**Friday 7:30am–2:00pm and 6:00–7:30pm**

The Seacoast Café proudly serves coffee from Springbok Coffee Roasters, a local roaster in downtown Charleston. All profits support local and global missions. Enjoy a variety of specialty coffees, espresso drinks and teas—including decaf, as well as cold brew and cold drinks. All drinks are \$3. The café will also be offering snacks and a special Chosen treat!

## SISTERHOOD LOUNGE

The Sisterhood Lounge is a cozy place to connect and enjoy free coffee and casual conversation. Sisterhood leaders are on hand to answer questions, and if you'd like, help you get plugged into a small group. Make sure to take advantage of plenty of Sisterhood giveaways!

## AFTER PARTY / AUGUST 22

Join us for music, dancing, and late-night treats following Session One. During the After Party, you can also shop for local items at the Chosen Market or sit back and relax with a girlfriend in the Sisterhood Lounge. Get ready for a girls' night out!



## 7 IN 7 SESSION

Join us for 7 in 7, where 7 speakers each share for 7 minutes how their nonprofit organizations address local or global hunger. These organizations are committed to being a part of the solution. Following this event, we will have several serve opportunities for you in the Student Center.

# SEEDS OF CHANGE

Every 5 seconds a child dies from hunger or hunger-related causes.

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POVERTY IS THE PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF HUNGER. LET'S PLANT SEEDS OF CHANGE. AFTER THE 7 IN 7 SESSION, HELP US PACK FOOD BAGS AND SEED PACKETS TO SEND TO AREAS IN NEED AROUND THE WORLD.

## BACKPACK BUDDIES

Partner with Lowcountry Food Bank to pack 2,000 food bags. Thousands of children in our community rely on free or reduced meals at school. But what about the weekend? Children enrolled in the BackPack Buddies program at partner schools will receive a backpack containing nutritious food every Friday during the school year to help ensure kids don't go hungry over the weekend.

## GAIN PACKHOPE SEED EXPERIENCE

Help pack 60,000 seed packets to send to areas of need around the world through GAIN (Global Aid Network). Break the cycle of poverty by providing communities with seeds that can be grown into sustainable gardens filled with nutritious vegetables. Successful gardens generate an excess of produce that can be sold to fund community projects such as school repairs, student school fee supplements, and orphan care. Gardens and agricultural technology make a big step toward self-sufficiency. Through your partnership, you are showing humanitarian kindness to relieve suffering, restore dignity, and reveal hope to people in need.

## VICTORY GARDENS

Visit our Victory Garden Experience anytime during the conference. The garden is located in the outside corridor between the Worship Center and the Chapel.

## ADVOCACY TABLE

Learn how to make a difference by stopping by our partners' tables and joining a faith-based coalition for global nutrition.

## VICTORY CHALLENGE

You will receive a small gift with a challenge to share with friends and family. Learn more about global hunger and what steps you and your family can take to make a local and global impact.

## GIVE

To give to our local and global partners addressing hunger, please text or give online.

*Text "Victory" to 320320 (including the amount you would like to donate), or visit [chosenwomensconference.com/challenge](http://chosenwomensconference.com/challenge).*

Help plant seeds of change. Visit [seacoast.org/missions](http://seacoast.org/missions) for more information on ways to serve individually or with a group of sisters.



*"There is victory in resilience. In the war and afterward,  
I learned you do what you have to do. You don't think  
how you're going to do it, you just do."*

Jeanne Gay 1944

# A CENTURY OF LIFE

By MARNEY MCNALL, Written from an interview with JEANNE GAY

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**JEANNE** Gay joined the Navy in December 1944, during a critical time in WWII. In Europe, the Battle of the Bulge was raging, and in the Pacific, the first kamikaze pilots had begun dive-bombing U.S. ships. As a registered nurse, Jeanne hoped for overseas duty, but after her initial Navy training, she was assigned to Mare Island Naval Shipyard near San Francisco, the premier West Coast submarine-building port. There she discovered she could still be of great assistance in the war effort.

“I loved being a nurse at the Naval hospital,” Jeanne said. “Many wounded soldiers and Marines were brought in to Mare Island from the Pacific, especially from Okinawa. I made sure to get to know each patient. When you spent time with them, they healed faster.”

Not only did Jeanne’s time as a nurse in the Navy help her learn how to help others heal; it also led her to the ultimate healer. During training she met Betty Butterfield, a fellow nurse and friend who was a strong Christian. “I asked questions and she answered them, but it was mostly by what she did and who she was that I learned about Christianity,” Jeanne said. “She’d pray every morning and every night, and she went to church regularly.” Eventually Jeanne became a Christian, too.

After the war ended, Jeanne stayed in the Navy. She felt she belonged there. But when her father had a stroke, it created a serious dilemma. “I needed to go back home to Ohio and take care of my father. I ended up baptizing him in the bathtub because I wasn’t sure he had been a believer before. If my father hadn’t been ill, I would have stayed in the service much longer.” Jeanne left the Navy in 1947. “...Plus, I had met a man.”

Jeanne’s future husband, a hospital corpsman, worked with her. “I was a commissioned officer—and he was enlisted. Officers and enlisted were not supposed to date, but we did. Once I left the Navy, he asked me to marry him and we had five children in five years.”

Although they eventually divorced, Jeanne is thankful for the incredible blessing of her family. Moving to Charleston, South Carolina, Jeanne returned to work as a nurse, and later became a founding member of Seacoast. “It was then I really felt a personal relationship with God,” she said. “And God has blessed me beyond all I could imagine to have three generations of my family here at Seacoast with me.” Jeanne recently celebrated her 100th birthday.

“My life doesn’t feel extraordinary. But I’ve been happy to live it.” Like most women, Jeanne has worn many different uniforms throughout her life. “There is victory in resilience. In the war and afterward, I learned you do what you have to do. You don’t think how you’re going to do it, you just do.” 📌

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On June 11, 2019, Jeanne Gay passed away peacefully, surrounded by her family. She was a founding member of Seacoast and will be greatly missed. March 7, 1919 – June 11, 2019.

# DOUBLE BARRIERS, DOUBLE VICTORY

By MARQUITA WINDER

*I was a woman at war  
Deep in the whirlpools  
And intrigues of war;  
Dark like the days  
That shroud my generation,  
Brown like the khaki I wore.*

- Hazel L. Washington, African American writer

**WHAT** if you were asked to accomplish a task where you would face obstacle after obstacle, but never be recognized for what you achieved? What if you could make a difference at a critical time in history, but no one would ever know? If there were no thumbs up or red hearts on social media to tap, would you consider the mission?

In 1941, Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers from Massachusetts marched up to a General and told him she was introducing a bill to form the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Okay, maybe she didn't march, but that's how I imagine it. The bill faced many objections from men, including "who will then do the cooking?" After months without a hearing, the bill eventually passed, followed two years later by another that ensured equal rank and pay to their male counterparts—thus creating the Women's Army Corps (WAC).

This was a giant step forward for American women, but racial barriers remained. Forty black women entered the first WAAC officer-candidate class. Although they attended classes with their fellow candidates and had similar educational backgrounds; post facilities like beauty shops were segregated, and

jobs were divided into "whites" and "coloreds." Rosie the Riveter posters called out, "We Can Do It!" but who was "we"?

Yet, when the war created shortages in the armed forces and ancillary industries, African American women answered the call to fill these positions. They abandoned domestic jobs for factory work. Around 40 percent of black women were already in the workforce when the war started, while 25 percent of white women worked outside the home.

"Of course the work is hard and sometimes dangerous, but victory in this war isn't going to come the easy way, without danger. Victory is vital and I am vital to victory. ...By doing my share today, I'm keeping a place for some brown woman tomorrow..." - Hortense Johnson, Picatinny Arsenal, New Jersey

Hortense Johnson worked a dangerous job, inspecting munitions boxes of bombs and shells. Every evening, she took a 45-mile ride home on an unheated bus with an extra sweater and woolen socks in tow to keep warm. She worked in the shadows to make a difference.

Growing up, I watched my maternal grandmother, Annie Louise Golar, who was alive during World War II, work hard for better shifts, fair wages, and unity in our family. She advocated for getting an education to make opportunities that women in her generation were not afforded. A college degree, let alone the graduate-level pharmacy degree I have, were mere dreams for her. She made salads at Lucy's Café and slaughtered chickens at the Tennessee Egg Company. She could clean and skin a fish in under 10 minutes. Though we were poor, we were rich—rich in faith, rich in love, rich in determination. She taught me what true strength was.

“The events of life—even such dark events as war, famine and flood...are not irreversible fatalities but rather carry within themselves the possibility of becoming a moment of change.” - Henri Nouwen, Dutch Catholic priest

African American women in WWII became the change they wished to see. They left us a legacy to follow and take farther, first a mile and then another. “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up,” Galatians 6:9 (NIV). When God asks us to persevere and take new ground, he is right there with us. He sees it even if others don't.

“We cannot do this as individuals...For work today is more than just livelihood. It is a sharp weapon useful in bringing the day of victory nearer.” - Leotha Hackshaw, inspector in the NY Ordnance District

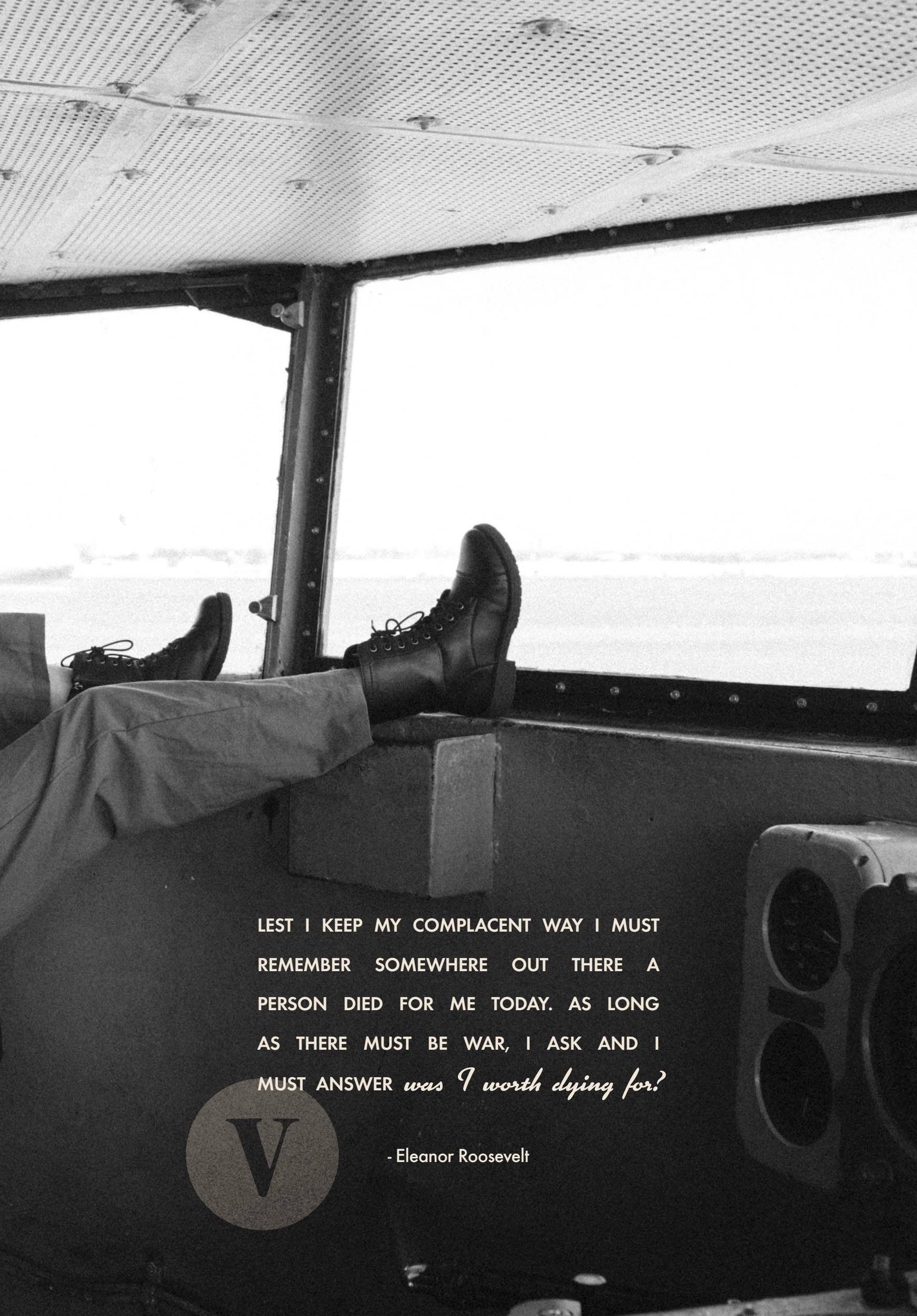
As a young black woman, I see these women's legacies of perseverance as a challenge to do my part for a cause even greater than for any earthly country. In God's kingdom, the barriers we've made will



not exist. We are his image bearers. To see this first and foremost in each other—here and now—is to take new ground and claim victory. **▼**







LEST I KEEP MY COMPLACENT WAY I MUST  
REMEMBER SOMEWHERE OUT THERE A  
PERSON DIED FOR ME TODAY. AS LONG  
AS THERE MUST BE WAR, I ASK AND I  
MUST ANSWER *was I worth dying for?*

V

- Eleanor Roosevelt

# WHERE I BELONG

By MARNEY MCNALL, Written from an interview with ANGEL PETIT



**THE** whole family often slept in a potato field, but Angel preferred nights by the river where she could catch fish. To sleep with a roof over their heads was a luxury...and rare. Her family had fled China during Mao Zedong's communist revolution and arrived in Taiwan with nothing. When Angel was born in 1951, she was #4 out of 13 kids.

Although her family was Buddhist, Angel knew at the age of eight that there was something more. Waiting for her mother one day, she had an overwhelming feeling of God's presence. It was so intense that she cried—and in their culture, you didn't cry; it showed weakness. "That day, I told my grandfather I wanted to go to the mountain to look for God. I thought that's where I would find him. My grandfather said, 'Well, you better get going. Pack some food.'" Angel did search for God on the mountain that day, but as it grew dark, she became afraid and returned home.

"I got older and bad things happened," Angel said. "I got angry at God. I said, 'I'm gonna find you, God, so you can explain everything!'" When she was 16, her parents sold her into servitude for a period of two years, actually signing a contract—a far too common practice in poor families. "I lost a lot of my memory from that time, and that is okay because I wished I was dead then."

At age 19, she was sold again, but this time flatly refused to do anything but labor. "I promised to work hard and pay off 'my debt.' And surprisingly...he agreed. I did lots of extra jobs: stirring concrete, working for a lumberjack clearing trees. I worked in a department store, did hair, and babysat for friends."

At age 21, Angel earned her freedom and began planning a future of her own choosing. She wanted to be a professional bowler. She practiced four hours a day and eventually joined a traveling team headed to Hong Kong and numerous countries afterward.

But at a friend's house in Taipei, she met John, an Airman in the U.S. Air Force. A southern boy from Charleston, South Carolina, he had been scheduled to go to Vietnam just after boot camp, but at the last minute his orders had changed to Taiwan.

"When he saw me, his eyes got so big," Angel said. "I looked behind me. 'What? What's wrong?' He did not tell me right away, but before coming to Taiwan he'd had a dream about me. I was his dream girl. One date and he was already planning our wedding! But I was not. I had plans. I wanted to go to Hong Kong for the bowling competition."

"If you go," he told her, "I'll never see you again. I don't want to take the chance."

**"I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU WANT THIS BROKEN LIFE. BUT YOU CAN HAVE IT."**

She did not think he realized what she would be giving up for him. But already she knew he cared more for her than anyone ever had.

It was a short engagement. John's job in security prohibited him from marrying a foreigner because it created a conflict of interest. Ignoring his boss' warnings, he was relieved of his post. John and Angel married in Taiwan in 1972 just before he was sent back to the States.

The Vietnam War still raging, Angel's welcome to the U.S. was people yelling and throwing rocks at her, thinking she was Vietnamese. It got to the point she barely left the house.

It was only later at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii that Angel found a close friend, a fellow Chinese girl whose husband was also Air Force. "Many Chinese treated me as an outcast, a traitor. 'What? Your own kind not good enough for you?' I did not fit anywhere."

Angel accepted her friend's invitation to church, but found the theology hard to understand—until receiving her first Bible. "Somehow, I looked at the words and understood John 3:16." She became a believer that day, telling God, "I don't understand much, but I surrender. I don't know why you want this broken life. But you can have it."

Yet, it was while driving to her mother-in-law's in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina that she inadvertently found her church home. She pointed out a beige-colored building to her brother-in-law. "Is that a country club?"

"No, a church! Seacoast. If you want, we can go together."

Rejection was what she'd found most at churches, a woman once stopping her in the grocery store. "You and your husband will go to hell." However many years passed, those words remained fresh.

"God, if you want me here, show me." She felt at home at Seacoast, which she thought strange since she was probably the only Taiwanese person there. Later, a note came in the mail, thanking her for her visit. "I told John, 'That's gonna be our church! No one ever did that before!' At Seacoast, I finally let go of fear and shame. God gave me spiritual parents in Pastor Vern and Migsie Jensen, and my small group was my family."

Angel has gone to Seacoast for 26 years, the last few without her beloved John. Cancer took him quickly. Her own health declined after surgery and a subsequent staph infection, and recently, she suffered massive bleeding from an undiagnosed colon illness and nearly died.

"I was prepared to go," she said. "I saw a figure in white standing a ways off, and I called out to him, but no response. Then I heard a voice calling me back. I was disappointed. But God brought me back for a reason. I never thought what I do matters, but my victory is in hearing God say, 'It's not what you do, but who you are in me.' In him I finally know who I am and where I belong." ●





# POWER OF PRAYER

By JENNA BOSTWICK

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**I**n the prayer room at Chosen a few years ago, I was blessed to pray with Julie Hiott, a counselor in the Care ministry. My husband and I had been trying unsuccessfully to have a second child for two years. In the following months, I carried Julie's encouraging words with me, as my faith was tested by an ectopic pregnancy that ruptured one of my fallopian tubes.

My heart devastated and confused, I again shared my burden with Julie at the next Chosen conference. As we prayed, my faith was strengthened and I gained the courage needed to trust God and follow his will.

That spring, my husband and I felt led to take a break from all the tracking and testing of trying to get pregnant, and celebrate our 10th anniversary on a cruise. God gave us the best anniversary present. I was pregnant! Ultrasound confirmed the egg had come from the ovary on the side missing a tube. Our miracle—our daughter was born in February 2019.

In his own way. In his own perfect timing. **V**



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Prayer team members are available to pray with anyone during any of the plenary sessions.

# LOW TIDE

By MARNEY MCNALL, written from an interview with JESSICA KEY



**FACE** unnaturally white with powder and lips stained bright-red, she leaned over the bathtub and held Jessica down by the neck, submerging her. Too young to put up a fight, Jessica might have drowned if not for her brother. Whenever their mother came down from a high, she was volatile. Usually, it was just beatings.

Placement with their maternal grandmother and step-grandfather proved the abuse generational. “My grandma beat me for losing a \$5 tip on my paper route,” Jessica said. “She’d send me on my bike to buy her cigarettes. No way could I confide that my step-grandfather had started sexually abusing me. I lived in fear through 2nd grade, dodging the fist fights they got into.”

After one of those fights, police placed Jessica and her brother in foster care where, for the first time, they celebrated birthdays and Christmas. “I didn’t know how to pucker my lips,” Jessica said. “My family never kissed or hugged.” Yet, within two years, their foster father’s cancer diagnosis uprooted them again.

“I saw our adoption ad,” Jessica said. Children of Hawaiian descent. Brother and sister looking for a home. Not to be separated. A celebrity heavyweight wrestler and his wife adopted them into their family. “My adoptive father was the legendary Sammy Steamboat Mokuahi Jr. Because of him, I discovered my love for paddling and surfing. I was naturally athletic. Sports helped balance me for a while.” The Mokuahis abstained from alcohol, but Jessica felt

a strong urge to drink in high school—even choosing the same beer she saw at home as a little kid. “I started following in my mother’s footsteps, taking drugs and getting into toxic relationships. My boyfriend and I beat each other. I had so much rage inside.”

On the bathroom floor of a drug house, Jessica prayed for the first time, “God, I don’t want this life. Please help me.”

**“I WENT FROM  
A RAGING SEA  
TO A CALM,  
SLACK,  
LOW TIDE.”**

The next day she contacted an Army recruiter and, at nineteen, left Hawaii for basic training. “I was born for it,” she said. “I was an athlete. A good soldier. I got clean of drugs, but the alcohol, I couldn’t shake. In the military, it was everywhere.”

While Jessica was stationed in Colorado, a fellow soldier invited her and her boyfriend, Shaun, to church, using the best incentive possible: “They feed you.” After hearing the Gospel, Jessica walked to the altar and bawled, something radically changing inside. She and Shaun continued going to church and soon married.

Her need for alcohol faded, but something darker remained. Only months into marriage, Jessica flew into a rage at Shaun for commenting she’d over-seasoned his steak. They ended up choking each other. “I went to a military chaplain to end our marriage,” Jessica said, “but seeing the bruises on my neck, he called the MPs.” Shaun was arrested on domestic violence charges. Although receiving no jail time, he was sentenced to anger management and prohibited from carrying a firearm.

“I was the instigator,” Jessica said. “Violence was what I knew. I had become the abuser...like my mother. Shaun had tried to talk to me about my anger, but I couldn’t see it.”

In the following years, their marriage was a rollercoaster plummeting toward divorce, only to twist at the last second and rise with the staying force of love, commitment, and the blessing of three children. After leaving the military, the family eventually moved to Charleston and found Seacoast.

“A girl from Hawaii told me about a local dragon boat club,” Jessica said. “I hadn’t picked up a paddle in 22 years. I’d forgotten how much I loved it, loved the water.” After months of intense training and fierce competition, Jessica made the premier USA national dragon boat team as a starter for the 2017 world championships in China. She became the best of the best.

Yet, returning home, all she could think was: what now? Coming down from such an incredible high, she withdrew from her family, feeling the deadly pull of an undertow that could not be overcome with physical strength, that could not be fixed by winning competitions.

Jessica finally sought counseling at Seacoast. “I exhibited all the symptoms of PTSD and never recognized it!” she said. “But hardest to get past was my guilt and shame over what I put Shaun through all these years. It took a lot of hard work, but God has restored and deepened our marriage with grace and forgiveness. I went from a raging sea to a calm, slack, low tide. This is my victory. Face your past and live your passion. Live salty, live aloha.” 🍷

*Oi kau ka lā, e hana i ola honua,*

WHILE THE SUN YET SHINES, DO ALL YOU CAN.

- Hawaiian Proverb



**WE CAN'T**

*control our destiny, but*

**WE CAN**

*control who we become.*

- Anne Frank



"BUT YOU DON'T KNOW YOU'RE MAKING  
HISTORY WHEN IT'S HAPPENING.

*I just wanted to do my job."*

- Lieutenant Colonel Charity Adams Earley

*First female African American  
officer in the U.S. Army*







# ROSIE THE RIVETER

By ELIZABETH REPPARD

*She's making history,  
Working for victory,  
Rosie the Riveter.*

Song written by Redd Evans and  
John Jacobs Loeb, 1942

**ROSIE** the Riveter is one of the most iconic images of World War II. Artist, J. Howard Miller, was commissioned by Westinghouse Electric to create an image of a glamorous, yet hardworking woman to encourage women to join the workforce. Wearing a blue jumpsuit and red bandana, her arm raised and flexed, she depicts both a willingness and strength to get the job done. Above her head is the now famous slogan, “We Can Do It!”

Norman Rockwell’s version of Rosie is strikingly different. Big and muscular, she sits holding a ham sandwich, with a rivet gun on her lap and a copy of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* under her feet. While the artists’ depictions are different, their intents seems the same: to get women to join the workforce to help win the war. The images of Rosie were never intended to remain just one face, but to serve as a rallying point for all women to do their part, in whatever ways they could.

Hazel Virginia Abrams, my grandmother, was one of these women. She worked at the Vigo Ordnance Plant near Terre Haute, Indiana. Unable to drive, she would catch rides to work with her friends. My grandmother was never known by many or seen on a poster. She was one woman from a small town in the middle of Indiana, simply doing her part in the fight for victory.

The stakes were high in fighting for victory during WWII, and in many ways, they remain high today. The Kingdom of God hinges on One but is brought to life by many. It can be easy to associate a particular face or ideal with what it looks like to be a woman of God. Looking at others, maybe we start to believe that only “She Can Do It.” But it wasn’t one woman who aided in the fight for victory, it was a great effort made by many who rose to the occasion in a time of great need, their roles unique and vital.

In Christ, we are already victorious, the war has already been won. Now we get to do our part in bringing this victory to the world around us.

We are all Rosie,  
and together...

*We Can Do It!* 🇺🇸







**WE CAN DO IT!**



# THE PRODIGAL RETURNS

By MEREDITH RIETZ



**WHEN** I was 17, I began questioning the validity of the Bible. Did heaven and hell even exist? Was Jesus truly the only way to God? With all sincerity, I asked God to show me the truth.

I became a Christian at age 11, when a friend's mom told my sister and me about Christ. For several years I was all-in, even convincing my not-at-all religious mom to let us go to a Christian school, attend church, and participate in any Campus Crusade and retreat anywhere remotely nearby.

But questions gnawed at me in college. Why was Jesus the only way when this world was so big and full of religions? Why was mine the right one? I began studying world religions and befriending Buddhists, Hindus, and atheists. I became fascinated with energy medicine and chakras, and read books that seemed to just land in my lap. I never denied Jesus, but I started seeing him in a broader way—as no longer THE way, just one of many ways.

I dove into metaphysics and new age philosophies... astrology, numerology, and the law of attraction. I became certified as a reiki practitioner and got into alternative healing. For much of my young adult life, I felt fundamentally flawed and suffered low self-esteem and depression. I was sure if I could just understand natural healing of the mind, body, and spirit, I would find true wellbeing.

In downtown Charleston, I co-founded a wellness center to introduce eastern wisdom and healing practices to the Bible belt. Beautifully decorated and classy, the center allowed people to “dip their toes” in Ayurveda, biofeedback, past-life regression

hypnotherapy as well as tarot card readings. The center was doing well, but within a year, I started seeing manipulative behaviors in my business partners. Power struggles were rampant and integrity absent. I couldn't stay.

A short time later, I felt led to Los Angeles to get a masters in spiritual psychology that, at its core, taught you could manifest whatever you wanted, that you are your own god. You just needed to tap into your true divine identity to control your own destiny.

I poured money into the best Vedic and intuitive astrologers, shamans, numerologists, and psychics. I couldn't make a decision without consulting them. I became an addict. I even had twelve tarot decks of my own and used them simultaneously, looking for signs...for guidance. I took expensive transformational workshops. But nothing filled the void inside me. My fear and anxiety attacks only worsened.

“Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come?” Ecclesiastes 8:7.

Even as I rubbed shoulders with some of the most well-known people in the new age world: speakers, bestselling authors, and influencers, my career never advanced like theirs and my relationships were full of heartbreak. It was like standing alone in a glass house, cut off from a world of people who were somehow getting it right.

My turning point came when a friend's four-year-old son kept having nightmares, seeing a terrifying figure in his playroom. I got chills in entering the room and experienced a palpable sensation of pure evil, and it rattled me to my core. I thought I had the ability to clear it. I was wrong. This was far bigger than me.

No longer could I imagine I was my own savior...I needed a true savior.

No longer would I accept universal spirituality that lulled me into what felt like a field of poppies, into things that weakened and betrayed me.

One small crack and the enemy wedges in. I know now that we need discernment and the Word of God to find our way. "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand," Ephesians 6:13.

All I could think about was the innocent purity and holiness of my childhood God, Jesus—the one who never abandoned me, though I abandoned him. I fell to the floor, renounced all other gods, and asked Jesus to come back into my life after 25 years apart.

I started going to church again and listened day and night to worship songs. Steadily, Christ revealed the truth I had dismissed for so many years. I found it intact and unchanged. God's truth is the only truth, and this time, it settled deeply into my soul. This is my victory.

God loved me so much that he let me wander as far as I did, so when I returned home—as he knew I would—I could help other prodigals find their way back, too. **V**

**"NO LONGER  
COULD I IMAGINE  
I WAS MY OWN  
SAVIOR...I NEEDED A  
TRUE SAVIOR."**



**AT ALL TIMES, DAY  
BY DAY, WE HAVE TO  
CONTINUE FIGHTING FOR  
FREEDOM OF RELIGION,  
FREEDOM OF SPEECH, AND  
FREEDOM FROM WANT...  
FOR THESE ARE THINGS  
THAT MUST BE GAINED IN  
*peace as well as in war.***

- Eleanor Roosevelt

# NO MATTER THE OUTCOME

By SARAH WOLF, Written from an interview with LAURA QUAMME



**SITTING** in the hospital looking over her newborn daughter Olivia's fragile body in the neonatal intensive care unit, Laura Quamme prayed for God to take care of her family. She and her husband, Andrew, had been in this situation before. Six years earlier, they had received the same medical diagnosis for their son, Noah, who had not lived past the day he was born.

Laura remembered Pastor Greg Surratt's message the weekend they'd buried Noah—Easter weekend 2010. "Imagine what it would be like to give up your only son." Immediately she'd felt the love of God consoling her and heard him say they would be blessed with more children. Fourteen months later, God had reassured her of this with the birth of their son, William, and twice more with daughters, Anna and Jillian. With a 1-in-4 chance of the genetic defect happening again, they cherished the blessing of their children.

Olivia, however, had the same rare, unknown genetic condition as Noah, preventing her from breathing or moving on her own. In the hospital for six weeks caring for Olivia, Laura chose scripture to read and paste on Olivia's crib. Philippians 4:7, the peace of God which transcends all understanding, gave Laura peace and hope as she sat rocking, softly singing worship songs to soothe both herself and the baby.

One of Olivia's NICU nurses found Laura's faith in God and her love for her child so compelling that when she saw on Facebook that Laura was going to the 2018 Chosen Women's Conference, she bought a ticket so they could attend together.

Olivia lived for 40 days. She died on her due date.

Since the loss of Olivia, Laura has continually asked for God's direction for their family.

"I prayed every day for him to put inside my heart what he wants for us. We wanted another child, but we could not continue to take the risk."

In March 2019, Laura attended a healing service at Seacoast Church.

The scriptures she spoke over Olivia in the hospital were spoken over her by the guest speaker, Joshua Silverberg, during the service. Her friends encouraged her to stand for healing prayer for "...infertility, multiple miscarriages, and afraid to have kids because you are afraid to pass a disease on to them." Fellow guest speaker, Wes Pickering, repeatedly prayed, "In Jesus' name, conceive, carry, and deliver healthy full-term babies."

Driving home that evening, Laura felt uterine cramps. "I never have these and knew something was going on," she said. A week later Laura learned she was pregnant, her due date, the same day Olivia died. ♣

**"I PRAYED EVERY DAY FOR HIM TO PUT INSIDE MY HEART WHAT HE WANTS FOR US."**

The Tyed to Grace grief support group provides a safe environment for women to talk about their similar experiences of loss and pain. For more information, contact: [tyedtoGrace@gmail.com](mailto:tyedtoGrace@gmail.com).

# REACH OUT

By KATHY ROSEBOROUGH



**TWELVE** years. 4,380 days. That's how long she endured the pain and isolation, relentlessly seeking a cure from doctors. She spent all she had. She had nothing left. How long have you had to endure what you're going through? Maybe you do not struggle physically, but you struggle emotionally, relationally, or financially. We all have issues. But like this woman, have we spent everything looking to Man to fix what only God can restore?

In Luke 8, Jesus is on his way to heal a young girl. Jesus, who is The Way, was on His Way, to show The Way to Jairus and heal his twelve-year-old daughter who was dying. That Jesus was on his way to heal a girl defies the expectations of the crowd. The way Jesus treated and valued women went against the grain of cultural norms.

As Jesus made his way to Jairus' house, the woman who had been sick and bleeding for twelve years, pushed through the crowd and touched him. This woman, considered unclean, would have been forbidden to touch anyone, or to publicly worship in the temple. She was isolated and lived in physical pain.

To get to Jesus, this woman breaks the rules—the law—knowing she could be punished severely for touching him. But she was willing to risk everything to get to the only one who could heal her. Jesus turned toward the woman. There is something beautiful about the way he turns toward us. While she was breaking the law, he was fulfilling it!

Jesus stopped and said, 'Who touched me?' Jesus knew who touched him, but was teaching a lesson to both the woman and the crowd. He is moved to action by our faith, even when he's in the middle of doing something else! Jesus could have healed the woman and kept on walking. Only he and the woman would have known what had taken place. Yet Jesus stopped what he was doing and acknowledged this woman's faith that resulted in her complete and instantaneous healing. When you reach for Christ, he stops everything for you.

**NO  
MATTER WHO  
YOU ARE, WHAT  
ISSUES YOU HAVE,  
OR HOW LONG  
YOU HAVE HAD  
THEM, JESUS  
SEES YOU.**

The woman, seeing she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet, declaring in the presence of all the people, why she had touched him. No matter who you are, what issues you have, or how long you have had them, Jesus sees you.

He could not and would not overlook her. The miracle of healing would have been enough for the woman, but it was not enough for Jesus. The miracle restored her health, but listening to her story restored her dignity. He called her daughter and gave her, her true identity.

Why is the woman in Luke 8 not named? I believe it is so we can all put our name in the story. In faith, she received healing, freedom, and identity. She experienced victory at the feet of Jesus—and from that place, found her voice, telling a story that has strengthened countless generations of women. ♣



*For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight  
for you against your enemies to give you* **VICTORY.**

- Deuteronomy 20:4



# ON THE FRONT LINES

By MARNEY MCNALL, Written from an interview with JESS REGER & JENNY MAYER



IT could have been any other parent bringing their kids to the hip-hop dance class in the back of the Rusty Bull Brewery. But it was Jess, only 34-years-old and in the middle of chemo, who came and sat in the lounge chair beside Jenny while their kids learned to “pop” and “boogaloo.”

“We got to chatting and I really admired how Jess handled her breast cancer diagnosis,” Jenny said, “...and how open she was about it, making it seem okay to ask questions. She said if it could help someone else, that’s what she’d do.” That’s when Jenny thought to ask Jess to share at Chosen her story of going through cancer. “It never occurred to me—eight months later, I’d need her for the same reason.”

Jenny found a lump in her breast this past winter. The first person she told was her husband, Ben. The second was Jess. “I texted her. I knew she would understand and tell me what to do.”

It has been over a year since Jess began battling cancer. Recently, the port was removed that provided the poison to save her life. Chemo...done. Double mastectomy...done. Radiation...done. Physical therapy, ongoing. Until recently, her youngest daughter, Delaney, had only known what she looked like without hair. Jess and her family remember the bad, but have exchanged it for good. “God didn’t give me cancer. He got me through cancer. He is healing me through medicine. He provided the right doctors at the right time and with the right knowledge. Every piece is a God piece. And I’m here to tell people, cancer isn’t always a death

sentence. Too often people hear only the bad stories, not the victories. And I am going to be one of the victories.”

Jess arrived early at the hospital for Jenny’s first appointment to answer her questions and to help Jenny determine what to ask the doctor. “When the appointment took several hours,” Jess said. “I knew what that meant. And my heart hurt for her.

Jenny didn’t have to explain things to me.

We speak the same language.”

The morning of Jenny’s first mastectomy, Jess texted at 3:45 am. “I know you’re up. I’ve been praying for you.”

So far, their treatments have followed almost the same exact course, and it has bonded them in an even deeper sisterhood. “We text every day,” Jenny said. “I don’t know how a person can go through this without support. And not just for me. Jess’ husband, Chris checks in regularly with Ben to see how he’s doing. Chris knows what it’s like having a wife who is ill. Everybody checks on me, but this takes a toll on a marriage. At times, Ben has to handle everything... work, the house, the kids. There are all the emotions. I have moments I cry, and just shout, ‘This sucks, I hate this!’ But then I remember the support I have and...the incredible doctors like Dr. Beatty, my breast surgeon. Even she texts me inspiring messages. But still, fears and what-ifs go through my head. There are days when the only thing I feel able to tend to is my garden—my Victory Garden. When I water the cabbage, and cauliflower, and lettuce, it helps me know things are living in my life. When I planted the garden, I didn’t

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**“THERE ARE DAYS WHEN THE ONLY THING I FEEL ABLE TO TEND TO IS MY GARDEN—MY VICTORY GARDEN.”**

#### ON THE FRONT LINES CONTINUED

feel victorious. It was winter. But in summer...there is color...and flowers. I look forward to watching beautiful things grow and bloom. I know God didn't cause this illness. He has grieved with me, but he absolutely will not let it be in vain. I'm praying for healing, but I won't trust him any less, believe in him any less."

Jenny bought a wig soon after her cancer diagnosis, yet felt more self-conscious wearing it. "Nothing felt like me," Jenny said. "And Jess not wearing one helped do what felt best for me. Women stand stronger together."

During WWII, Rosie the Riveter was an iconic image of strength and empowerment for women, and one of the reasons why she endures is how women see themselves in her. "Yes, you're on this scary new journey," Jess said, "but you have to maintain who you are. People assume if you have cancer, you're fragile. You're broken. You can't possibly do this or that. They think they're protecting you. But I was never going to be weak and sulk at home. My victory is that I'm a survivor. My victory is that I'm here. Now my family and I are finding a new normal that doesn't center on cancer."

God knew it wasn't a chance encounter when their kids attended the same hip hop class. "You never know," Jenny said, "if the person next to you could become a friend for life. So, be present. Be open. Be real. Don't hide your stuff. There's victory in vulnerability. Don't allow yourself to go through something hard, alone. And for those on the other side of a battle: help someone else walk through it. Be their champion, text or call, ask how they're doing. Celebrate every little win and make plans. We'll make it together! Like Rosie says, "*We Can Do It!*" 📌





"IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU, OR ME, BUT IT'S ABOUT  
*what we can give to this world.*"

- Dr. Olivia J. Hooker

*First African American woman to  
serve in the U.S. Coast Guard*

# THE STORM

By BRITTANY TODD



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*His footsteps were loud on my hardwood floor, but my brain couldn't process what was happening before he was on me. The way movies show an assault is frighteningly accurate: The slowed responses, the loss of hearing, the fading in and out of consciousness, the shock and dizziness. I feared for my children above all.*

**FEBRUARY** 13, 2018 began as usual—with me waking up late and scrambling to take my two oldest kids to school. Still in my pajamas, I loaded all five children into my SUV and tossed out snacks to hold them till breakfast. In traffic, I texted my husband. “Have a great day, I love you!” A Damage Controlman in the Coast Guard, he was out of state for training. Just that past July, we’d moved from a small town in Alaska to Charleston, where we didn’t know a soul. My knowledge of the South came from Hart of Dixie and Sweet Home Alabama. But by February, we were finding our place: we’d made some friends and started going to Seacoast Johns Island Campus. As a registered nurse, I was hoping for a job in a hospital emergency department.

That day, after dropping off my two oldest at school, I returned home, carrying my five-month old, Alice, into the house in her car seat. Heidi and Henry followed behind, reminding me of my promises of pancakes and a Tinkerbell movie. I set Alice down and headed for the kitchen.

That’s when I heard footsteps and was grabbed from behind. I screamed, but then told myself to stay calm, to show no fear. I didn’t cry—not even when he threw me to the ground, held a knife to my throat, and demanded my phone. “It’s in the diaper bag by the door,” I said. With him on top of me, I tried the “grab, twist, and pull” defense maneuver, but his pants were too baggy. I fought back hard, but remember feeling

like a failure at everything I tried. I yelled for my four-year-old, Heidi to hide, knowing she would take Henry with her. Alice was still buckled in her car seat.

He beat me semi-conscious and tied me up, first using fabric from my sewing room, then shoelaces from Heidi’s sparkly Snow White sneakers, the baby monitor cord, and then the pants I’d been wearing. He tied my wrists so tight I lost circulation in my left hand.

I thought he left when he finished tying me up, but as I lay on the living room floor, I felt the reverberation of his footsteps upstairs. After he finally did leave, I slid over to the drawer with art supplies, grabbed kid scissors, and eventually cut my hands and legs free. I didn’t put it together that Heidi was no longer in the house. I wasn’t thinking straight, and tried to focus on setting out breakfast. Somehow I turned on a movie for Henry on Netflix and put Alice in her crib. Maybe I looked for my phone, I don’t know. My neighbor’s car was gone and the other houses seemed so far away. Maybe I’d feel better if I “slept it off.” I don’t remember much else.

A police officer was banging on the door. Apparently Henry opened it for him, but I don’t remember speaking with the officer. I just thought: This is the good guy...he can take care of us now. It was evening by then and the school had called my husband and 911 when no one arrived to pick up our kids.

I spent the week in the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) surgical trauma ICU with brain hemorrhaging. It took three surgeries and six metal plates to repair my facial and orbital fractures. I remember nothing from this time, so here is what I've been told...

Police, fire, Coast Guard search and rescue, K9 units, neighbors, and possibly half of Charleston searched for Heidi. For 24 hours, helicopters flew overhead and a dive team searched the lake across from our house. Police went door to door and set up checkpoints on the main bridges on and off our island.

Around midnight, our case turned from a missing to kidnapped child, and the FBI got involved. I gave a basic and slightly inaccurate description of my attacker. What kind of car he drove, I had no idea, which made it impossible to issue an Amber Alert.

Late the next afternoon, Police Chief Rick Oliver in Riverside, Alabama, responded to a call from three men working for Norfolk Southern Railway about a suspicious vehicle parked well off the road. When Chief Oliver approached the vehicle, he found the driver asleep, and a child in the passenger seat. He knocked on the window, waking the driver who then got out and gave his name and social. He said Heidi was his stepdaughter and her mother was on Johns Island.

Chief Oliver ordered him to hand over the child. The driver followed Chief Oliver's orders to hand over the child, but took advantage of Heidi gripping on to the Chief, refusing to let go. The driver jumped in his car and sped off. Chief Oliver fired two rounds into one of his tires, with Heidi still locked around him. Fortunately, the stolen car was one equipped with a built-in tracking system. Near the Mississippi border, the driver was located and arrested after a high-speed chase on a donut tire.

**"GETTING THAT  
TATTOO OVER MY  
SCARS WAS REALLY  
THE STARTING POINT  
OF MY HEALING—  
REPLACING ASHES  
WITH BEAUTY."**

We have been overwhelmed by the immense support and love that people in the Lowcountry and beyond have shown our family. It has been so hard and taken a lot of prayer and healing, and I can't imagine what life could look like without the help we've received from mental health professionals. We're moving forward with lots of hope for the future.

Yet, I knew I needed to do something when Heidi kept pointing to the ligature scarring on my arm, saying, "Those are from the bad man." The scars were a daily reminder of victimization and powerlessness. A former "Coastie," now tattoo artist, offered to cover my scars for free. For me, there was no better image to choose than Rosie the Riveter—a cultural icon during WWII—a symbol of feminine strength and capability.

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## THE STORM CONTINUED

Getting that tattoo over my scars was really the starting point of my healing—replacing ashes with beauty. We are not victims of our past, but strong and capable and worthy of life. Heidi now talks about how beautiful Rosie is instead of how the bad guy hurt me.

“For God is going with you! He will fight for you against your enemies, and he will give you victory.”  
Deuteronomy 20:4 (NLT).

God was with me in court when I looked my attacker in the eyes and said, “What you meant for evil, God meant for good. I forgive you of your crimes against our family.”

Forgiveness is key for us to move on. *“To be a Christian,”* C.S. Lewis said, *“means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”* Since I came to the decision to forgive my attacker, I have felt much more at peace.

People ask how we can move forward after something like this. Honestly, I don’t know. I just make the choice to—every, single, day. I mourn what was lost, but I choose to move on for my children, for my husband, for joy—and for me. That is my victory.

I love this quote, author unknown. *“The devil whispered in my ear, ‘You’re not strong enough to withstand the storm. Today, I whispered in the Devil’s ear, ‘I am a child of God, a woman of faith, a warrior of Christ. I am the storm.’”* ♣





"WHAT WINGS ARE TO A  
BIRD AND SAILS TO A SHIP,  
SO IS *prayer to the soul.*"

- Corrie ten Boom



*Look at how a single candle* **CAN BOTH DEFY AND DEFINE THE DARKNESS.**

- Anne Frank

# THE UPSIDE TO STANDING IN LINE

By MARNEY MCNALL, Written from an interview with ADRIANA FRANCO AVANT



**ARUBA** for the weekend. The deal was too good to pass up—and only an hour flight from her home in Cali, Colombia. Vacationing alone was not an issue for Adriana, having traveled extensively in her former job as a systems engineer at IBM. Working for a large corporation, however, had been stressful, so she had traded engineering for her own wedding invitation and design company—and was loving it. Though the stress wasn't much less. Two peaceful days in Aruba would be a nice break.

When the plane landed at Queen Beatrix International, a grand name for a tiny airport, several other flights apparently arrived, too. The line for customs and immigration was long. Waiting with Colombian passport in hand, Adriana noticed a fair-haired man in a white collared shirt and linen shorts, looking at her. Smiling, he asked, "Where are you coming in from?"

His name was O'Malley and he was from Charleston, South Carolina. His attempts to impress her by speaking Spanish made Adriana laugh, but they were also endearing enough for her to accept his dinner invitation that evening. At sunset, they enjoyed fine dining in flip flops at a restaurant right on the beach, lanterns flickering in the breeze off the Caribbean. Adriana felt comfortable with him, despite her uncertainty with how well she could really express herself in English—a language in which she did not consider herself fluent.

O'Malley had gone through a divorce the same year she had, and like her, often traveled alone. Straight away, he showed her photos of his kids: Tidewater, then 12, and Isla, 8. "He was honest and a gentleman from the start," Adriana said. "And very religious." Adriana had always believed in God, but for a time she'd stopped going to Catholic mass in college and then married an atheist. Her later decision to return to church proved a major factor in their deepening divide and subsequent divorce.

**"HE TAUGHT ME LOVE AND BELONGING ARE CLEAR IN ANY LANGUAGE."**

That first evening in Aruba, as lazy waves slid over the sand, Adriana and O'Malley listened to each other's stories of Charleston and Cali, one city known for its Southern charm and the other, its salsa dancing. That weekend was too short. So for the next two years, they continued talking every day and earning (and using up) lots of frequent flyer miles to see each other.

During one of Adriana's early visits, O'Malley invited her to Seacoast. "It was very different from what I was used to," she said. "But I fell in love with it! The worship was fresh and I felt the sermons applied to my life. I felt at home."

She also spent time with O'Malley's children, who were supportive of the relationship, wanting to see their father happy again. At a local restaurant, Isla soon said, "We know you like her, Dad," and pointed to a jewelry shop across the street.

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### STANDING IN LINE CONTINUED

O'Malley had his own plan though. Returning to Aruba, this time accompanied by Tidewater and Isla, O'Malley proposed. "I had an idea it was going to happen," Adriana said, "because Isla took my hand and walked me into another jewelry store, asking which I liked best." September 2017, Adriana and O'Malley were married on Sullivan's Island, with Isla a grinning bridesmaid—mission complete.

Despite all the blessings, it was still a major life change—Adriana was suddenly a mom of two teens, newly married, and living in a foreign country. She was far from family and friends. Her design business, AF Market (All Female: made by women for women) needed to be adjusted to meet American preferences and translated into English.

Hoping to connect at Seacoast, Adriana attended Sisterhood One Night and signed up for several groups. She bought the books. And then...didn't go. "I was afraid I wouldn't understand enough. Will they understand what I really mean?"

But then, her father accompanied her to Seacoast during a visit. "He didn't understand English, but he was almost in tears," Adriana said. "The music... the feeling of welcome. It comes through in any language. When I translated some of the message for him, I enjoyed it. So, I joined Seacoast's translation team to help others be comfortable here, too. We all have gifts and skills that can be used for the Lord and our community. Sometimes I even teach salsa dancing to my small group."

"God has brought victory to my life in so many ways, showing me I didn't have to be afraid to start over—in my career, in marriage, and in my faith. He taught me love and belonging are clear in any language." God also taught her that having to wait in line is not always a bad thing. ❶





# SOMEONE TO RELY ON

By MARNEY MCNALL, Written from an interview with MARY HECKMANN



**MARY** came home from school to a house emptied of all furniture except for her and her sister's beds and dresser. Her mother had even taken their old dolls and bathing suits. "Crazy part," Mary said, "she put them in storage. I was 14. My sister met my dad at the train station to tell him Mom had left us."

"I wasn't going to rely on anyone but myself ever again."

Long before college graduation, Mary secured a good job in marketing and sales. By age 28 she was making extravagant money. "I married an incredible man, a Marine, who later chose for a time to be a stay-at-home dad for our two young daughters while I steamrolled through life. We bought a beautiful home, cars, and a boat. I felt in control. And that's when I found out I wasn't at all."

Mary and her family started attending Seacoast right before life fell apart. "God knew we would need the church badly, and God definitely got our attention! In a two-year span, my husband fell off a ladder, breaking his back. Our youngest daughter underwent a life-threatening surgery that spawned huge medical bills. I was laid off from my job during the economic downturn, and ten days later, my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic and lung cancer. He died 42 days later."

Suicidal thoughts plagued Mary. Months earlier, she wouldn't have comprehended how a person could feel so low to even consider it. Now, she understood. "I convinced myself that my husband and I had

done a good job with the girls, and they'd be okay if I wasn't around anymore. We'd broken my family's dysfunctional cycle. I wasn't thinking how my actions might create a different one."

After discussing it with her family, Mary checked herself into a women's retreat facility in Tennessee. "There, I came to the end of myself and found God waiting for me. Every day, I ran miles through the surrounding hills and woods, listening to Martin Chalk's album, *Always*. God's grace helped me find my way back, but the road was long."

**"I'M  
THANKFUL  
GOD TOOK US  
TO OUR KNEES...  
BECAUSE THAT'S  
WHERE TRUE  
VICTORY IS  
FOUND."**

Several years later, at a Sisterhood event highlighting upcoming classes and groups, Mary stopped to speak with Wholly Woman founder, Linda Howard. For Mary, weight and low self-esteem had always been a problem.

"I didn't feel worthy or healthy enough to participate in a Bible study/small group not centered on depression." But Linda put her hands on my shoulders. 'Mary, God wants to set you free.' And I just cried. I had found a mentor and a community. Over the next few years, I lost 50 pounds and greatly reduced my medications. I intend to be there for the family I love."

Despite losing their home in the financial struggles, Mary views it as God opening their eyes. "We'd become so materialistic, keeping up with the Joneses. We took Financial Peace University (FPU) as a family and have almost finished paying off debts. My daughters have a healthy view of finances to pass on to their future children. I'm thankful God took us to our knees... because that's where true victory is found." **V**

For more details on Wholly Woman, follow on Facebook or Instagram. For more details on Financial Peace University, visit: [seacoast.org/events](http://seacoast.org/events) to find FPU classes at your campus.



TODAY WE NEED A SPECIAL KIND OF COURAGE. NOT THE KIND NEEDED  
IN BATTLE, BUT A KIND WHICH MAKES US STAND UP FOR EVERYTHING  
THAT WE KNOW IS RIGHT, *everything that is true and honest.*

- Queen Elizabeth II



# A SHARED BOND

By JILL FORBES, Written from an interview with SHAMEKEI GRAY



**SHAMEKEI** Gray grew up watching her grandmother put money in socks. There was never talk of saving or managing finances. As a single mother of five, Shamekei used to live paycheck to paycheck, feeling lost and discouraged. “I was just buying and spending on stuff I couldn’t account for or didn’t even need,” Shamekei said.

“Lack of knowledge knocked me down several times. At one point, I was depressed because I mismanaged my money.” Shamekei found herself homeless and living in a shelter with her children. She just wanted a place to truly call home.

“Getting out of homelessness was a process. It was at a dark point in my life,” Shamekei said. A transitional house seemed her best option. That came with steps to complete: enrolling in a Dave Ramsey course, getting housing, finding a job, figuring out transportation, and attending counseling three times a week. All within 90 days! Shamekei had to learn to relive in society. She had to change her mindset. “It was hard at first and I felt like giving up. But I had five reasons living with me in the transitional house and I had to do better!”

Truthfully, that wasn’t the end. Life got hard again and Shamekei allowed it to get the best of her financially. Her rescue boat came in the form of another Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University class. This time it

was geared toward single moms! She knew this was her time to dig in, begin to break generational mindsets, and find her way to financial freedom. Having the accountability and support of her FPU sisters was vital to Shamekei’s success. As single mothers, they shared a bond. Successes of others gave her hope in the process.

Where is Shamekei now? She’s driving the car she bought—with cash! The gratitude spilled out of her as she said, “I am forever changed. I just love the new me!” Shamekei now has goals of buying a house. More importantly, she is working to change the next generation, teaching her kids how to handle money. “We are doing the envelope system together and are saving money for trips.”

Shamekei wants what every mother wants: for her children to live life to the fullest; that they go to college and travel. She desires for them to learn to save, budget, and buy a house. She would love for them to own their own businesses. Shamekei is so excited to pass her knowledge down to them and to change generations to come.

Single motherhood is tough and providing for your family can be daunting. Shamekei is proof that with supportive people, a proven program, and a faithful God, you can accomplish anything. You can claim victory. 📌

**“AT FIRST MY MIND MADE IT SEEM HARD, BUT AS I APPLIED PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD, IT BECAME EASY.”**

Visit [seacoast.org/events](http://seacoast.org/events) to find FPU classes at your campus.

Contact [DavidLooney@seacoast.org](mailto:DavidLooney@seacoast.org) for more information on North Charleston single moms FPU classes.

# NEVER QUIT

By MARNEY MCNALL, Written from an interview with KARA SLICK MAJEWSKI



**KARA** ran back inside the house. “Where’s my phone?” Training for the IRONMAN Triathlon while working full time as a fitness instructor was making her forgetful.

“Right where you left it,” Johnny called down in a sing-song voice from upstairs. A typical answer from a fifteen-year-old boy.

She was going to be late for the girls’ soccer team training session. Spotting her phone on the table, Kara grabbed it and headed for the door. “Love you!”

“Love you, too.”

Those were the last words Kara and her son, Johnny ever spoke to each other.

There are no ordinary moments.

“We were super close,” Kara said. “I was a single mom and he was my only child. Johnny’s dad and I divorced when he was three. Johnny and I, we’d go hunting and fishing together on my parents’ farm and ATV riding. And he was always a hugger, even though I know teenage boys usually aren’t.”

Johnny’s favorite phrase was “YOLO, Mom!” You only live once. As a child, he hated naps, afraid he’d miss something. Matching clothes? He didn’t have time for that. He loved to stomp through puddles in pouring rain, and would’ve played football barefoot if he’d been allowed. “He was present,” Kara said. “Walking outside,

he’d often look down, pick up a rock, and put it in his pocket. He noticed things, noticed people.”

“We first went to Seacoast because Johnny wanted to go. A friend had invited him. For me, the church was so big. I felt overwhelmed. But something Pastor Greg said in a sermon struck Johnny and me and became our mantra—our pact: Do good, be good. Never quit.” They would say it to each other at night during prayers and Kara would write it on notes stuffed in with Johnny’s lunch.

“The only time I didn’t like it was when he carved *Do good, be good. Never quit* into our fiberglass bathtub! Johnny got himself into trouble here and there. He was like a Tasmanian devil. Fearless, an adrenaline junkie, always on to the next high, the next rush. It became an addiction.”

The evening of July 26, 2016, while Kara was training the girls’ soccer team, Johnny decided to play Russian Roulette as his friends watched online. He took four bullets out of the gun, but left in one. “I found him that night,” Kara said, “It wasn’t a bloody scene. I still picture his beautiful blue eyes, and how it felt like his spirit passed right through me, having waited for me to get home.”

Johnny was only 15.

When the EMTs arrived, they asked Kara if she had a church home. “Next thing I knew, Pastors Josh Surratt

**“YOU  
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and Michael Morris were in my house,” Kara said, “praying for me, and they didn’t leave my side. I couldn’t believe they’d come. I said to Josh, ‘I never filled out a card. Not for years. I thought I was a number. That you wouldn’t know me.’ But they were there for me, and Seacoast held a beautiful funeral service for Johnny. Over a thousand people came.”

“You don’t really understand faith until trauma hits. It can save you, anchor you back into life when you don’t feel like living it. My son was playing a stupid game. He thought he was invincible.”

Kara forgave Johnny that very night, but for months she couldn’t eat or sleep. Even moving around the house took so much effort. Yet, *Do good, be good. Never quit*, kept ringing in her ears. Finally, there came a day when she wanted to ride her bike. Her boyfriend, Doug, (now husband) was quick to put air in the tires and bring her bike outside for her, knowing God and exercise were her ways to get through this. “I didn’t want to do the IRONMAN race anymore,” she said. “But I needed to finish what I started, and not quit.”

Her coach and friend, Glen Raus, told her to just get in the pool, to not worry about times and laps. Kara spent hours floating on her back, letting the water take the heavy weight of emptiness for even a little while, letting it cover her ears and leave her in that strangely comforting, underwater quiet.

Weeks before the race, her coach informed the IRONMAN race staff about Kara’s story to ensure she wouldn’t be alone out there. He created a private Facebook group and had everyone praying for her. “It was comforting,” Kara said, “to know there were people out there praying for you that didn’t even know you.” The night before the race, athletes of faith did “iron prayer” holding Kara’s hands and praying for her finish and safety.

#### *Race day.*

*October 9, 2016, Louisville, Kentucky.*

The IRONMAN Triathlon included a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 26-mile run.

Kara had Johnny tattooed on her pulse, where she could easily see it. With the air temp at 55 degrees and the sun yet to rise, the water made for a frigid swim, followed by a soaking wet bike ride without gloves. Kara could hardly use the gears. Two hours on the bike, she still felt frozen. I’m not going to be able to finish this race. But then, just ahead of her, she saw a fellow athlete who had #WithKara on her calf—the first of many who helped her continue on. They would appear whenever she most needed the encouragement #WithKara. “I couldn’t quit. I had to do this.”

Kara finished the race in under 15 hours. Yet, in crossing the finish line, eyeing the tattoo on her wrist, her first thought was: *That’s it?* She was tired, but fine. “That’s it? I wanted to hurt more than my heart hurt.”

Returning home, Kara felt the listlessness rebuilding. She’d started Griefshare before the triathlon, at Pastor Michael Morris’ suggestion, but was all-in now. “The group was key for me,” Kara said. “Anyone who suffers loss should go through the program. And I also realized the fastest way to start feeling better was to serve. I kept thinking: *Do good, be good. Never quit.*” A fitting name for the nonprofit she and her husband created. “It energizes me, gives me purpose. We help those who can’t help themselves. I’m on a mission to help kids make better choices and keep out of trouble—to think things through before they turn tragic.”

Kara is now an arbitrator for Charleston and Berkeley counties in South Carolina, helping adolescent first-time offenders. “You’d be surprised how common it is, this need to take risks, to feel an adrenaline rush, especially in single-parent homes where mom or dad works a lot, and in situations where the parents fight.” To promote awareness, Kara has given out over 5,000 “Johnny bands,” bracelets imprinted with: *Johnny’s Friends*, and *Do good, be good. Never quit.*

“Johnny was my gift,” she said. “God lent him to me for 15 beautiful years. I didn’t quit. That is my victory. I’m thankful for all the extraordinary moments I’ve been given...and I’m trusting there are more to come.”



# SISTERHOOD GROUPS

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## **Small Groups**

### **Various Times and Locations**

Small groups help women connect, grow, and be transformed through life-giving relationships. Whether you're interested in a Bible study, topical study, or a group focused on fitness and nutrition, take your next step toward community and growth by choosing one of the groups at your campus. Visit [seacoast.org/smallgroups](http://seacoast.org/smallgroups) or text CONNECT to 320320 to request a complete list of women's small groups.

## **Sisterhood ONE Night**

**October 16 // 7:00 PM**

This is a night for the women of Seacoast in the Greater Charleston area to come together as ONE! Bring a neighbor, co-worker, or girlfriend for a fun night of worship and inspiration. For more information and to register for childcare, visit [seacoast.org/mtpsisterhoodonenight](http://seacoast.org/mtpsisterhoodonenight).

## **Sisterhood Serves**

### **Local Ongoing and Special Projects**

Sisterhood Serves is passionate about making a difference in our community while finding and growing our relationship with God and each other. We have partnered with many local organizations and are always seeking new opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus. For more information, contact [sherrellspoelma@gmail.com](mailto:sherrellspoelma@gmail.com).

## **Sisterhood Global Missions**

Sisterhood will be conducting global missions trips to Honduras, Togo, Nicaragua, and Sri Lanka. We invite you to join us as we transform lives, churches, and communities around the world. For more information, visit [seacoast.org/missions](http://seacoast.org/missions).

*We believe God created us to be in relationship with him and others in every season of our lives.*

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V



You start with energy and excitement.  
You quickly meet fear and disappointment.  
Do you give up?  
No.  
You punch fear in the face.  
You plow through disappointment.  
The path to victory is paved in setbacks and failure.  
There is no victory without sacrifice.  
And failure?  
That is the greatest teacher of all.  
You see others bask in the sun.  
You hustle in the shade.  
There's no time for excuses.  
Only time for opportunity.  
Success comes by getting up  
More often than you fall.  
So pour some coffee.  
Take a victory sip.  
Then get back to work.

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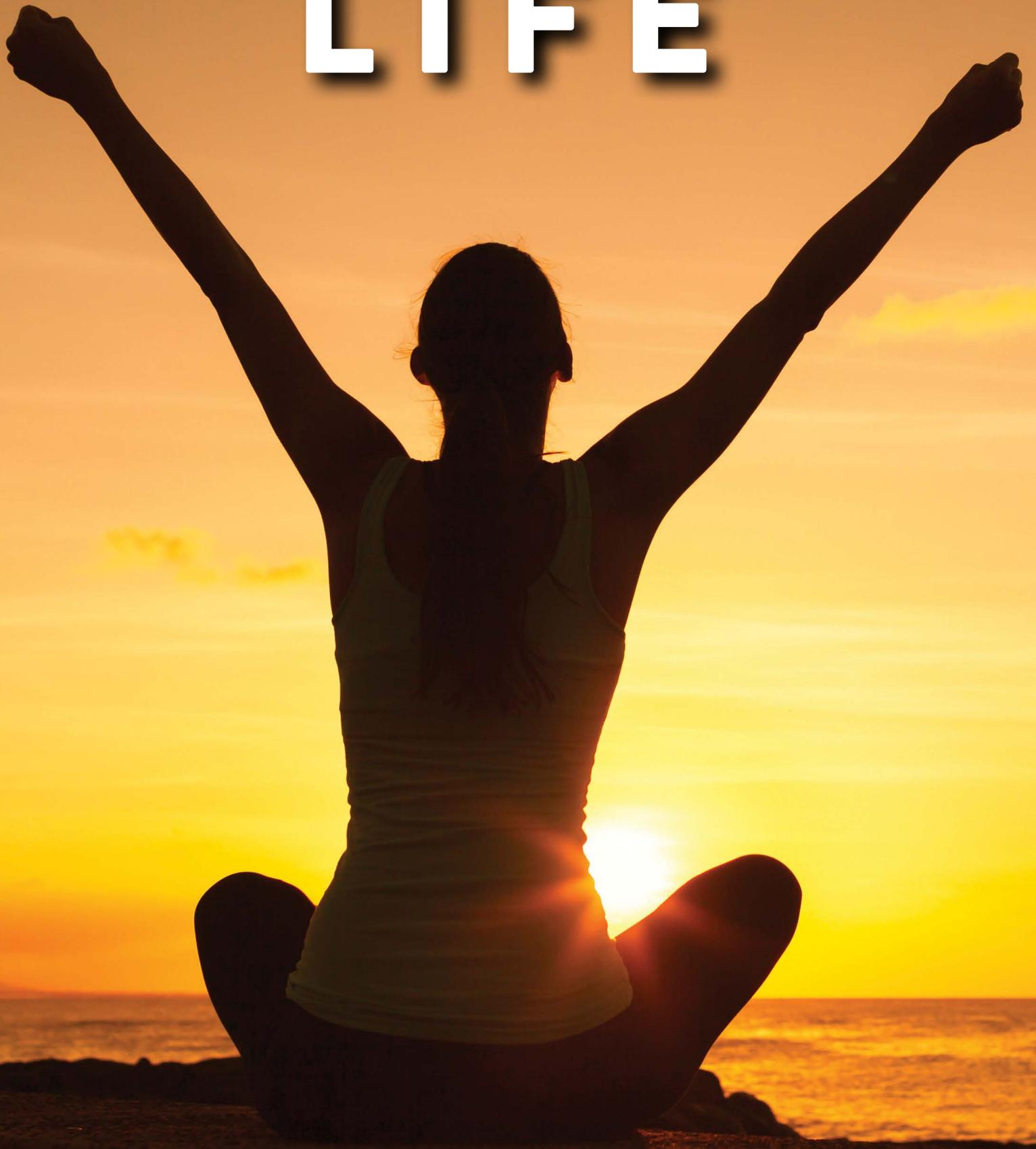
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*The very nature of women is to take a house and make it home. And it's not just in furniture and decor, but in family culture. Sisterhood is a tribe of women that takes this big church, God's house, and makes it a warm, welcoming home. It's hygge! It's where we live and breathe, discover a big God, grow in our faith, raise our kids together, develop lasting, life-giving friendships, and make it beautiful and fun along the way. And Chosen is a celebration of all of that!*

*Yet, it is so much more. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

*Life is messy! It is filled with ups and downs, twists and turns. But God has given us the incredible gift of this community – this sisterhood – to find strength and encouragement, to spur each other on! No matter what life throws at you, you have a place here, to know others and to be known yourself, a place to call home.*

*Now, here in Charleston, you better believe that if you visit our home you're going to be invited back. So we want to take this chance to encourage you to sign up for next year, when we have our loudest, biggest, most joy-filled Chosen ever! It's time to REVEL, and we can't wait to see you there, because this house wouldn't be a home without each and every one of you.*

*We look forward to seeing you there!*

*Lisa & Josh Surratt*



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# REVEL

*Coming Fall 2020*

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*[chosenwomensconference.com](http://chosenwomensconference.com)*

