

# 6 Things Your Friends in Crisis Wish You Knew

Let me start by saying: I certainly do not speak for everyone in crisis. There are a million different kinds of people and a million different kinds of battle. I've tried to stick to things I've heard many times from many people, but this list reflects my four years in the trenches more than anything else.

**1. Sometimes your life is hard to look at.** I will try to attend your daughter's wedding, and I will be so happy for her. But I will look away when her father walks her down the aisle and I will leave before the daddy-daughter dance. These things are too much for me. I'm not mad; I'm just swimming through some deep-water feelings about the future. I don't need hugs or help; I just need a little room to breathe, and none of it is your fault. This is my heartache. For some, it's seeing an anniversary celebration on Facebook or flirtatious banter between a husband and wife. For others, it's witnessing the baby milestone while imagining how old their own would be. Different things are difficult for different people. Just know that while we love you, sometimes your world is hard to look at. We know you have problems, too, and we're not jealous of your life—we're jealous for the life we used to have before our battle broke out (or the life we're wishing for that hasn't quite started yet). Action point for armies: Don't stop inviting us into your lives, but give us grace when we need to look away for a bit.

**2. How much we feel like talking about our battle can vary wildly.** Some days are very difficult and so I will answer questions abruptly in order to save us both from my messy emotional breakdown. Some days it's very cathartic to talk about it. So, how can you as my friend, know which day it is? You can't. And this is when it's hard to be you (and I'm

sorry); but what you can do is ask: “How are things with Steve?” followed up immediately by, “I understand if you’d rather not talk about it.” Perfect. You’ve shown me you care and also given me an easy exit should I choose to use it. And let me add—even when I don’t feel I can give a detailed answer, it really does matter to me that people ask. (So thank you, sweet friends, for the question. And thank you for understanding when I can’t linger over the answer.)

**3. We’re secretly afraid you’ll grow weary and disappear.** We don’t fear it because we doubt your character, we fear it because we would probably choose to leave our battlefield too, if given the option. Through tears, I type this: I can’t imagine what I would do if I lost my friends as well. I just can’t imagine. I know so many people who run out of steam in supporting a friend and then they’re embarrassed to step back into the battle again. Don’t be give a call and say, “I miss you. Can I bring over some mac and cheese?”

**4. We still want to fight for you, too.** Don’t stop telling us what you’re going through, don’t stop asking us to pray. It gives me comfort to know I’m not the only one in a fierce fight, and it gives me courage to know that I still have something to offer the world outside my war.

**5. We love you.** And we’d be lost without your friendship. Even when we lack the strength to say it or show it, please just know it.

**6. We don’t need answers as much as we need you.** Everyone who deals with a difficult diagnosis also deals with a landslide of medical advice from friends, acquaintances and complete strangers. It’s exhausting. I’m working really hard to get through the demands of each day—taking time to read a book about a miracle cure that Steve’s doctor has never heard about is, honestly, just not an option right now.

I have a small group of trusted advisers who have tackled some

of that research for me and made recommendations based on their findings, but we cannot pursue every option out there, and I sometimes feel people are frustrated with me for not trying their suggestions. Action point for armies is simple: Extend advice cautiously, if at all, and make sure that your friend knows you'll love them whether or not they try what you're suggesting.

**Bo Stern** is a blogger and author of *Beautiful Battlegrounds* (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends, and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.

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## Are You Easy to Offend?

I could see the panic in her eyes the second after she pushed the cart. She could tell it was going to crash into my car, so in one of those slow-mo's she attempted to catch it, without success. At the same time I was doing hand signals to try to get her to relax.

Because really? If she were to hit the 1995 Honda Accord I was driving?

One time in my life I had a new car, and I remember how anxious I used to feel in parking lots. I was always worried about the possibility of sustaining the slightest scratch. Now I park anywhere without giving it a thought.

And I couldn't help but compare the condition of my car to the condition of my soul.

Rust spots.

Dents everywhere.

Windows that won't go up when it's cold outside.

*"What a wretched man I am!" (Romans 7:24a NIV)*

Acknowledging my own sinfulness has been great for my relationships. When someone offends, like a runaway cart in a parking lot, I can say, *"Relax. Have you seen my life?"*

One day the school secretary caught me as I was leaving and said someone had hit a red car, maybe mine, with his door.

I laughed and pointed out my car.

*How would I know if someone had done damage?* I asked.

So I figure when we feel most offended by someone it's when we have delusions of being shiny and perfect.

*Don't scratch my paint, people.*

Actually, I like the old car I'm driving. Sometimes I pull in next to some shiny sports car, which is embarrassing, but I've been using it as an exercise in humility. My car is nothing. And I am nothing, apart from the amazing love and grace of Christ.

Think of that relationship you struggle with—how would it change if you were to drive in humble?

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# Why Your Children Resist You

If you're experiencing resistance from your child when you give an instruction, you may find that using different words will bring a more positive response. Prov. 15:1 says "a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Look for ways to communicate that will encourage a positive response. We recommend that you make a statement about your goal or objective before you give the instruction. "Emily, I'm trying to get things cleaned up before Dad gets home. Would you please pick up your books, shoes and backpack in the living room?" The statement before the instruction gives children a little more information and can help them feel they're part of a team.

The older the child, the more the explanation is helpful, and not just for the purpose of showing value to the child. Older children are developing their own convictions and need to understand more reasons and guidelines behind rules and instructions.

Andrew is 17 now. He told us, "I appreciate the way my mom and dad have treated me these last few years. They don't just order me around like a little kid, but they explain why they're asking me to do something. They allow me to disagree with them at times, and I know I can discuss things with them whenever I want. Sometimes they ask me to submit even though we don't agree. The fact that they listen to me and talk about their convictions makes submitting easier to accept. I may do things differently when I'm a parent, but one thing I've decided is that I'm going to talk about instructions instead of demanding. When I'm at some of my friends' homes, I can't believe the way their parents treat them. It makes me grateful

that my parents love me and show it even when they're asking me to do something."

To learn more about relating to teens take a look at Chapter 8 in the book *Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes*, in *You and Your Kids* by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN or download the MP3 from Session 6 of our live seminars on this material.

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## Why We Need to Pray for the Jews

***And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. –Matt. 24:14***

What do you believe? This past week, while waiting in a car line to pick up my granddaughters at school, I heard a song on the radio that was described as the number-one Christian song in the world. It was sung by the Newsboys, entitled "We Believe."

The same week I heard the Newsboys' hit song, I read an Op-Ed that appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* criticizing my 911 video invitation to pray for Jerusalem because in it I implied that Jews need to be saved. Do they? Or are they exempt from the Gospel?

✘ And what is the Gospel?

When the apostle Paul shared with deep conviction in Romans 1:16 that, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:

first for the Jew, then for the Gentile," what was he talking about?

Prompted by the hit song and the Op-Ed, I have reflected on what Paul was talking about and what I believe. These are my reflections:

*Everyone born into the human race is born with a sin nature, so that all are sinners.*<sup>1</sup>

*The consequence of sin is not only physical death, but spiritual death—separation from God now and in eternity.*<sup>2</sup>

*But God so loved the entire world of humanity that He sent His own Son, Jesus, into the world to die as an atoning sacrifice for our sin, so that whoever believes in Him will not perish separated from God, but will have eternal life.*<sup>3</sup>

*When we confess that we are sinners, ask God to apply the death of Jesus to our sin and forgive us, He will.*<sup>4</sup>

*Following the crucifixion of Jesus, God raised Him from the dead to give us new life here and life in heaven when we die.*<sup>5</sup>

*When we respond and receive Jesus by faith into our hearts, He comes into us in the person of His Spirit, so that we are born again as a child of God, forgiven of our sin, and have eternal life.*<sup>6</sup>

*When we receive Jesus Christ by faith as our Savior and Lord, we pass from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, from death to life.*<sup>7</sup>

And the Gospel is this...

*"Jesus said, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*<sup>8</sup>

*“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Just the name of Jesus.<sup>9</sup>*

*“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”<sup>10</sup>*

*“There is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all...”<sup>11</sup>*

Jews need to be saved? Yes, they do. According to God’s Word, their religion does not exempt them from being sinners. Like the rest of us, they too need a Savior. Which is why God has given Jesus to be the Savior of the world.<sup>12</sup>

That’s the Gospel that Paul was talking about. And that’s the Gospel I believe.

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## **Where True Intimacy Starts in Marriage**

There is no greater joy for me than falling asleep in my husband’s arms. I have been married 37 years, and I am 61 years old. Yet, it feels like I just learned in the last few years how to intimately love someone.

I have always been in love with my husband, but I have never really felt the level of intimacy with him like I do now. Did losing 260 pounds make the difference?

**Just physically losing weight is not the key to greater intimacy. The real key for me was losing the tons of emotional baggage I was carrying.**

Whether that baggage came as a result of the weight or as the cause of the weight issue isn't really important. Discarding it was the thing that set me free to really bond with my husband.

As a former super-morbidly obese woman, I saw myself as less than an ideal woman, especially in the area of sexuality. It is a time when all of a sudden one is uncovered, exposed, open, transparent. There is nothing hidden.

For many women, especially those with any kind of weight issue, the message of skinny-is-better plays in our minds constantly. It's a message reinforced by any romantic novel, movie, television show and almost every form of commercial advertising.

Many women have internalized this whether they are of normal weight or morbidly obese. We just don't feel worthy of anyone's love. We can't believe someone would really love us if we don't look perfect. Of course, no one, not even the models, is perfect. Still, we are ashamed of our bodies and feel our husband or any other man must be, as well.

**I was aware of the reality of how this played out in my own life during a recent interview.**

I've been interviewed numerous times in the last year about my book, *Sweet Grace*, and my weight loss. Arthelene Rippey, hostess of the *Homekeepers* show on CTN, asked me a question on live taping of her show in July of this year. The question caught me momentarily off guard although re-watching the show you can't really tell it. She asked if my weight gain affected my marriage.

Without skipping a beat, the answer flowed out of my heart. "I

have the most wonderful husband in the world. He has loved me no matter what and is very consistent no matter what weight I am. My weight gain did not affect my marriage to a great extent except that it affected me, how I related to myself, how much I gave to the marriage and how I received love. Part of this [obesity] issue is being able to accept somebody else's consistent love in your life."

**Once those words came out of my mouth, I began to see how real they were.**

When we got married, there was one time my husband said to me, "I love the way you look, but please don't gain any more weight." I took that as a slam. I'm sure he meant it as a compliment. He doesn't even remember saying it.

Looking back I realize by immediately thinking the worst of any comment, I should have realized I had a monumental problem, and it wasn't my weight. It was my extreme low self-worth and the feeling that I was not worthy of being loved.

**From day one of marriage, my husband has been the epitome of commitment, loyalty, hard work, peace, care and love.**

However, for years, no matter how much he tried to show me he loved me by his consistency, I couldn't accept that he really did love me. I would manufacture reasons to believe he didn't.

I'd take something he said wrong or out of context. It could be something simple, meant as an observation. I would take it wrong and cry for hours over something I thought he meant, which wasn't the case at all.

I put up emotional walls. I was scared to trust. I was afraid he was just saying he loved me, but one day the other shoe would fall, and I'd find out he didn't.

**Always the guilt and shame about my weight hung over me like a dark cloud.**

How could he stand to touch me when I didn't even want to look at me? And so I would avoid him, make excuses. Years later, my gynecologist gave me valuable insight. "Your husband is like all of us men. We need to know we are making our wives happy. We need to know we are enough."

Truth is, we all need to know we are enough. We all need to know as a child of God we are loved, cherished and accepted just as we are.

**Intimacy is as much about loving yourself as it is about loving another person.**

Jesus gave us this truth in the Great Commandment. "And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."<sup>1</sup>

I cannot truly love another person until I love God and myself. How can I love God with everything that is in me if I don't love myself? How can I bond with my husband if I feel like I am not worth bonding to?

This issue goes to the core of us. We stop at the outward appearance and don't look any further.

**God does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart.<sup>2</sup> If God's focus is on our heart, shouldn't ours be as well?**

In essence, my outward appearance did reflect how I felt about myself. I wasn't sure I was worth all the energy it was going to take to get healthy. When I changed that negative mindset to a positive, things begin to change on the inside and spread to the outside of me.

Having this kind of change both internal and external helped

me finally move toward true intimacy with my husband. That meant risking revealing my wants and needs. I didn't know it at the time, but my emotional vulnerability laid the foundation for true intimacy to grow.

In the past, if my husband had a long day at work and was tired, went to bed, turned off the light, rolled over and began to snore, I took it as a rejection of me. It would set up the cycle of thinking I was inadequate because of my weight, which would escalate into me taking inventory of all of my inadequacies.

Wait! Could it really be as simple as he was just tired?

**We have come a long way since then to the point we reveal our wants and needs to each other.**

We share the simple acknowledgment that it's been a long day, but tomorrow can start early. We know, really know, our love is a commitment we both embrace fully. We are more bonded because of honest communication and total acceptance.

Sex is an act that most any two adults can perform. Intimacy is in a totally different category. Intimacy combines the emotional and spiritual act of love with the physical, taking things to an entirely new level. It's not about an "act." It is all about a relationship.

I have been happily married for 37 years, but I have been enormously satisfied for the last five years. Yes, part of it was because I finally surrendered my food addiction to God and began the healthy-living journey.

I stopped trying to be perfect and finally began to feel comfortable in my own skin. It is so true that love is blind, at least to the physical aspects. Love, however, is not blind to emotional barriers that keep us at arm's length from our mate. They know it. They feel it.

It's not within them, though; we always focus there first. And it's not with our exterior, though that's the next place we look.

It's inside us, maybe buried so deep we are afraid to search for it.

The walls I erected for protection went up in part because of some negative experiences with men and boys in my childhood. When I handed these excuses to God, He gave me joy in return. And the walls crumbled.

**Walls can't stand in the face of joy. It's just not possible.**

Truth hit me strongly: My husband has always loved me. If something happened tomorrow and our relationship ended, I would be the better for having loved full out, for having given him access to every hidden part of me, especially those difficult emotional parts. It was this realization that became the basis for opening up, being real, connecting deeper.

I began with trepidation to reach out, heart in hand, feeling very, very fragile and way too revealed. He responded with care and love in a way that sent our relationship to new levels.

Would it have happened if I hadn't lost weight? Probably not. The emotional barriers and weight gain were so intertwined it was hard to tell where one began and the other ended. The reality is, when I was willing to remove the covering of shame, guilt, anger and frustration and reject the lie that God won't take care of me, any fear of intimacy vanished.

**I know I am loved, but more than that I know I am worthy of being loved.**

When I was writing *Sweet Grace*, I asked my husband what has changed since I lost weight? He answered, "I can get closer to you—physically, emotionally and spiritually." I so love that

answer.

I was listening to an inner-healing session where the coach asked the woman how she felt after giving some things to God. She said, "I feel much lighter. I feel like I've lost hundreds of pounds of weight."

I have lost 260 pounds of physical weight and tons of emotional baggage. I have gained true intimacy.

I pray similar miracles happen for you when you begin to love yourself as God loves you.

**How can you make that happen?**

<sup>1</sup> Mark 12:30-31 NLT

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 16:7

**Teresa Shields Parker** *is an author, blogger, editor, business owner, wife and mother. Her book, Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor is available on Amazon in print, Kindle and Audible [HERE](#). This story is from her blog, .*

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## **When Life Isn't Fair**

I wanted to throw myself down on the floor, kicking and screaming: ***It's not fair!!!!***

The only thing that stopped me is the fact that it just doesn't have the same impact for a woman over 40. So I managed to restrain myself, *but I was still yelling on the inside.*

Everyday for days on end I yelled that same phrase:

It's not fair that my husband has to work 60 days in a row with only two days off!

It's not fair that I am up all night with a teething toddler and never get to rest during the day!

It's not fair that I have to nurse everyone back to health, but when I get sick there's no one to take care of me!

It's not fair that my friends all have mothers who help them out with their babies, but mine lives nine time zones away from me!

## ***IT'S NOT FAIR!!!***

I had trouble drowning out what my dad used to say to me when I displayed such temper tantrums: *"Life's not fair. Get over it!"*

Because while that may sound a bit gruff, it's true.

Life isn't fair.

But there is something we can do to turn those seemingly unfair moments into trials that we can bear with joy—just as James told us to do. And in doing so, give our family one of the greatest expressions of love! After my temper tantrum was over, and I succeeded in driving myself into nice little depression—and dragged my whole family in with me, I realized that if this continued any longer, the atmosphere in our house would be worse than intolerable.

Something had to change—or rather someone. That someone was me.

I set aside some extra time for prayer. Day after day I met with the Lord, and day after day I sacrificed one right after another on the altar, and in their place I accepted my

responsibility as a wife and mother.

*I have a right to have a husband who gets days off* was replaced with my responsibility to maintain order, peace and joy in my home!

*I have a right to sleep all night* was replaced with my responsibility to lovingly nurture the gifts God has entrusted me with.

*I have a right to be cared for when I'm sick* was replaced with my responsibility to care for my physical body by disciplining myself with good diet and exercise.

*I have a right to have a mom nearby* was replaced with my responsibility to discipline my thought life, and replace bitter thoughts with truths from God's Word.

No other act of love can surpass the act of laying down our rights as wives and mothers. Because by surrendering our rights, we sacrifice those things in us that suck the life out of our homes, diminish joy and peace and limit the amount of love that is shared. By sacrificing these rights, we remove all barriers, and the pure love of Jesus is able to flow freely through us to build and nurture our family as God intended!

**Rosilind Jukic**, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together they live in the country with their 2 active boys where she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her best-selling book *The Missional Handbook*. At *A Little R & R* she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at *Missional Call* where she shares her passion for local and global missions. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

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# A Dance With Miracles

One of the most miraculous things to come out of our ALS Fancy Dance was this photo.



Miraculous, because I didn't think Steve would be able to get out of his wheelchair at all that night. It never occurred to me that he would even try—so this moment was entirely spontaneous and, on his part, unbelievably brave. Dancing with my sweetheart to *You Are The Best Thing* will live forever in my memory as one of the most beautiful, meaningful 60 seconds of my life.

I'm so glad some quick-thinking friends grabbed their cameras and captured it because behind every photo are layers and layers of life. The picture shows one story, created from many, woven together and wedged into a 3x5 frame.

The story behind the story is this: Marriage is hard. We are on year 30, and I will tell you honestly that there were some seasons when we didn't know how we would go on. We knew we *would* go on—we're both too stubborn to quit—but we didn't have the first clue *how*.

Hard times and dark nights conspired to sink our ship. Kids and money and mortgages and distractions and failures circle like vultures around even the stoutest hearts and surest vows. We have not been immune to these things, nor have we handled them perfectly. But I'm learning that the beauty in marriage is not in doing it perfectly, but in responding to the imperfections with grace and grit. It's in the getting up and trying again, believing again, hoping again, dancing again. That's where the real magic is.

Also? Terminal illness is hard. It's hard on relationships. Hard on romance. Hard on expectations. Just really so hard in so many ways I could never have imagined before we walked the road.

For much of our quick spin on the dance floor, I helped to hold Steve steady while simultaneously sobbing into his chest. And I have never felt more privileged or qualified to do anything in my whole life. But at 3 a.m., when I am emptying the suction machine and fixing his covers for the third time and wondering if I'll ever sleep through the night again, I do not always feel privileged. And many times, Steve can feel it, too—he feels, not through my words but through my *way*, that his needs are an intrusion on my life.

Caring for him is the greatest honor; it really is. But I would be lying to say I feel that way 100 percent of the time. As much as I'd like you to believe I have figured this thing out, the truth of it is that sometimes I feel selfish, suffocated and entirely insufficient for the job. As I was writing this post, Steve had a crisis choking situation, and I rescued him (and I know *rescued* is a dramatic word; believe me when I say it's the right one) with shaking hands and frantic prayers, and I did not in that moment feel at *all* qualified.

I felt desperately in over my head and hopelessly inadequate to care for a frail body with so many needs. This is our reality. Terminal or chronic illness is hard, and I understand why many couples don't survive it. That we have survived, and in so many ways are healthier relationally than we have ever been, is not a feather in our cap—it is a testimony to the sustaining power of God and to the ways His grace smooths and softens selfish hearts and holds us up when we've done all we know to stand and still can't get our legs to work.

When I look at this picture, I see a third pair of arms. While I am holding Steve up, I am being carried by a bigger God than I knew existed before I needed Him this much—and also by

Steve, who has not stopped loving and caring and cheering for me during his battle with ALS. Turns out you don't need strong arms to hold your wife's heart. He is just as strong for me as he has always been, and that's why he's my hero.

The stories behind it make this photo a miracle because it is life that snuck through our dying. It is joy that seeped through our sorrow. It is hope in heartache. The love you see is every bit real, but it is not perfect or polished or even particularly brave. It's mostly just rugged survival, fueled by the relentless mercy of Jesus Christ. That's marriage.

And that's a miracle.

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## **I Wish I Didn't Have to Yell at My Children**

Do you find yourself yelling sometimes just to be heard? Does the yelling frustrate you, but you feel there's no other way to get through? We find that parents often yell when they don't have a plan. Some parents don't know how to fix a problem with their kids so they become louder, thinking that the intensity created through yelling will have some kind of positive effect. It doesn't work.

Motivating with harshness can keep children in line or get them to accomplish a task, but that method damages family relationships. In Jer. 10:24, Jeremiah prays, "Correct me, Lord, but only with justice—not in your anger, lest you reduce me to nothing." In the end, it is closeness that provides parents with teachable moments and the relaxed enjoyment of family life. Yelling and harshness discourage trust, essential to help young people learn valuable principles about life.

You might be saying, "Wait a minute! My kids won't obey unless I get angry." If that's true, then maybe you've trained your children to respond to your anger as a signal that it's time to obey. Kids are smart. They know they can wait until the last minute before responding. They've figured out how many warnings you'll give, and they recognize the tone of voice that says you're ready to deliver a consequence.

One solution is to teach children to respond to a different cue. If yelling is the sign that you mean business, then change the cue to a more constructive signal. If you teach your kids that you'll back up your words sooner, without anger, then your dependency on anger to get things done will decrease.

*For practical ideas about developing plans and avoiding anger in parenting, consider the book, Good and Angry: Exchanging Frustration for Character In You and Your Kids by **Dr Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN.***

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# **When God Asks You to do**

# Something That Seems Crazy

I'm picturing him bending over to come out of the crawlspace, suitcase in tow. And his wife is all, *What in the world are you doing?*

*We're moving*, Abram says.

They move –the whole kit and caboodle. **Just because God says.** And it's a little nuts.

So there I was...

A few Januaries ago when God first whispered *women* to my heart, and I was all, *You've got to be kidding*. Moses-esque.

Then a woman visited our evening church service for a few weeks. She stopped coming, and I can't even remember her name. But one day she left a book on my husband's desk at church, with a sticky note: *A gift for your wife*. I haven't seen her since then.

Generous but weird, ya know?

But hey –a new book. So I started to read, and it was the testimonies of all the Calvary Chapel pastors' wives and how they came to know Christ. At the end of the first story was a little biography about the pastor's wife tucked at the end. It said, something like, "And now she ministers to women in her church."

I read on. The next testimony ended with, "And now she ministers to women at her church."

*Lord, seriously.*

I read on. The third testimony ended with, "And now she ministers to women at her church."

*You've got to be kidding me.*

Never, ever, ever do I skip ahead and read the end. That is BAD book reading manners (mom!) But I couldn't help myself. I quickly flipped forward. Story after story ended with, "And now she ministers to women at her church."

This was just the beginning of God talkin' to me, you guys. When God is speaking to you, it's like you're in a house of mirrors and you aren't going to turn around without hearing the same message everywhere. For months I couldn't open a book or talk to a friend or be online without hearing about the needs of women. After talking to the women's ministry director at my church, she graciously has given me the green light to do some caring for women, as pastor's wife at our Saturday night worship service.

So yesterday I went to the printer's and paid a few dollars for invitation cards that I'm going to hand out at church Saturday night. They have this cheerful graphic on them:



At the printer's they took my money like it was no big deal. Like people walk in every day and say, *I'm here to pick up the flyers that seem ridiculous and put me at huge risk for humiliation, and what if I'm wrong and that wasn't God talking all along but just my overactive imagination?*

It's a little women's gathering, you guys. Just a humble Bible study and get-together for those Saturday night girls I go to church with. It's not like I need to rent an event center, and it won't even require a microphone.

But for this quivering heart it's scary and big.

God calls us to live big.

*"The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." (Genesis 12:1 NIV)*

At the end of the day, we have to recycle the list of all the reasons we're not good enough to do what God has asked us to do. And then we do what he says, like crazy people.

Cra-zy.

So what is it God keeps putting in front of you?

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## **With Terror Alerts Rising, This Intercessor Reports a 911 Sign Over DC**

"As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given" (Dan. 9:23).

When Daniel poured out his heart in prayer for Jerusalem, he received initial confirmation that God had heard his prayer. The angel Gabriel came to him and told him that as soon as he had begun to pray, an answer was given.

For those of us who participated Monday in "911: An Urgent Call to Pray for Jerusalem," we concluded with an expectancy that God would confirm that He had also heard our heart's cry on behalf of the city and the people that He loves.

I received the following email from the same lovely lady who had prayer-walked downtown Washington, D.C., during 777. She had sent a picture she had taken on July 8 of a full, double rainbow over the nation's capital, which we all took as a "sign" that God had indeed heard our prayers. On Monday after participating in "911: An Urgent Call to Pray for Jerusalem," she wrote the following:

“It hasn’t rained here in DC for several weeks. But, this afternoon a storm swept through our nation’s capital. I saw several reports of a double rainbow over DC—again! Lots of folks posted photos of the rainbow on Twitter.

“Though I sadly missed seeing it with my own eyes, I smiled real big when I read the news. I’ve lived in this town nearly seven years and can attest to the fact rainbows do NOT happen here that often. My friend The Lord has sent us yet another gracious sign that He has heard our prayers.”



Photo: @MaryBonoUSA/Twitter

Could it possibly be that once again God has placed His initial confirmation of our prayers in the sky over our nation’s capital? To let us know that our prayers have moved heaven?

I know God has heard our prayers. Because He promised that when we come to Him in Jesus’ Name, He will. And He always keeps His promises. The rainbow is just the exclamation point.

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