

# I See Victory

J.J. Hairston & Youthful Praise (*Light Records*)

For 12 years, Stellar Award-nominated contemporary gospel group J.J. Hairston & Youthful Praise has delivered albums of inspirational praise and top radio hits such as “Incredible God, Incredible Praise,” “Resting On His Promise” and “After This.”

*I See Victory*, the group’s seventh release, once again spotlights its high energy and heart-affecting worship.

Recorded live, *I See Victory* moves like a camp-meeting style church service, kicking off with the electrifying worship of “Nothing Compares” and funky gospel of “You’re Mighty” before moving into more melodic praise such as “Bless Me” and the triumphant declaration of “You Are Worthy.” A more traditional, toe-tapping gospel style is employed in the upbeat “The Blood Still Works.” The songs are well delivered by the group and are written to encourage and declare the goodness of God.

When confronting trials, “It Pushed Me” puts a positive spin by proclaiming how the valley has “made me stronger and taught me to trust Him.” Of the song, Hairston says, “We’re pushed by negative situations, whether it’s a death in the family or something else. Our negative situations force us to make decisions that become positive in the end, and this song talks about those things that pushed us to become who we are now.”

The album closes with “Everything I Need,” which begins softly and builds into a powerful testament to God’s provision. During the song’s reprise, faith is stirred as the singer testifies of God’s healing power—“You are a healer!”—and asks listeners to declare His faithfulness in their own lives.

While *I See Victory* acknowledges the challenges believers

face, it's evident through the songs that the focus should be on the victory at the end of the spiritual battle. Through the songs and spoken encouragement, Jesus is lifted up and proclaimed to be true, kind, all-sufficient and all-powerful. The release should be a welcome listen for those who need their faith energized. —*DeWayne Hamby*

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## **Jim Caviezel: Building Faith Through Film**

**CHARISMA:** What drew you to this story?

**CAVIEZEL:** I love football more than I do basketball, even though basketball was my main sport in high school and college. In high school, we did very well one year. We were on our way, approaching the state tournament, and we had to play the No. 1 team in order to get in. That team was better than us on every level. We really didn't have a chance to beat them. By chance, we went and saw *Hoosiers* that day, about a major powerhouse basketball team playing this little Indiana school team, and that little Cinderella team won. We went out and played that night. We won. I tell you, by the fourth quarter, I wasn't focused on winning. One thing I felt was fearlessness.

I didn't want the moment to end. I didn't care where we were or anything, I didn't want to let my teammates down, because I felt love in my heart for my teammates.

I read this script and it reminded me of that. Take away basketball and put in football and it's the same story, Coach Ladouceur being able to take his players and do that on a daily basis. What we felt in one 24-hour period for each other

and continued through the state tournament was what they felt all season long. He got his teams to do it on a day-to day basis for 12 years and for many other years outside of that. He had multiple streaks. How does a coach do that? What is that process? If I were going to do a sporting movie, does this movie transcend sports?

Yes, it does. It has qualities in it, virtues of trust, honesty, to have courage, to have a brotherhood, to not focus on winning. ... The end result is the victories, but they do it through love.

**CHARISMA:** Did you spend much time getting to know Bob Ladouceur?

**CAVIEZEL:** Yes, I did and I still do. He's become a very dear friend. One thing I remember when I watched the footage on him and watched him speak to his own team in the last game was the way they looked at him. Their eyes were glossy, and that happens before one cries and before their heart is burning. He talked about that. He said, "Whatever you gotta do to get your hearts burning, get to that place." You have all of these boys come in and a lot of them don't have fathers. Yet they come into this and he becomes a father to them.

They win because the players love each other. They're not afraid to say it. They're not afraid to embrace each other in the sign of that affection. To love someone, words are nice, but words are insufficient; actions speak volumes. That's not too easy. This translates into being responsible and that is learned. It's not inherited. And that's why those boys, 45 boys, that's why they go in and beat teams that are the best in the nation.

There's also a thing that he mentioned that, "It's not how hard you hit but how hard you're going to get hit and you choose to get back up." Champions are not made without adversity. Adversity will occur and you basically look

adversity in the face and say, “Today, I will not be defeated.”

**CHARISMA:** Speaking of the movie industry, there’s been a surge of family- and faith-friendly films lately. Why do you think that is happening?

**CAVIEZEL:** It’s very simple. The Truth. It’s been here for thousands of years.

People can choose to be obedient and follow that way, or they can choose to reject it. I do believe in choice. It’s what kind of choice you’re going to make. These movies, just like in every leader that has ever affected me, every coach that has ever affected me, the best coaches have been great teachers, and we know who the greatest Teacher of all time was. Those teachers have one thing in common—they are like their Father. Love is what breaks the heart. Love is what changes a man, turns the course and gives him a chance in his twilight that he still has a chance for redemption, and he chooses that. Faith is what you see—it’s insurmountable: “We’re not going to beat this. We are not going to beat the Philistines. We have no chance.” But stay with love, and with love you can conquer anything. —DeWayne Hamby

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## Experience the Impossible

Bill Johnson (*Baker Publishing*)

Bethel Church Senior Pastor Bill Johnson was so moved after studying and meditating on 1 Corinthians 13:13 that he wrote *Experience the Impossible: Simple Ways to Unleash Heaven’s Power on Earth*. The devotional includes 79 short chapters, each tagged under three categories related to Paul’s famous

verse: faith, hope or love. Each chapter ends with a prayer and confession.

“Jesus commissioned us to heal the sick, raise the dead and much more,” Johnson writes. “He said that nothing shall be impossible to us. It is time to take the Master at His word and experience the impossible in His Name.”

Johnson challenges readers to not strive in their faith but surrender as an act of faith. “Faith is called both a fruit and a gift of the Spirit,” he writes. “You have never heard a fruit tree groan and travail to produce fruit. Growing fruit is the evidence that the tree is holding its place (abiding) in the soil in order to receive nutrients, sunlight and moisture correctly. In the same way, those who abide in Christ cannot help but grow in faith as the result of being continually exposed to His nature through His Word and His manifest presence.”

For hope, Johnson exhorts readers to completely depend on God’s presence as He positions us for miracles.

His presence is for our assignment to disciple the nations.

The best-selling author reminds us that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is in us—“and He wants out.” And just as Paul points out, this begins and ends with the greatest of the three elements highlighted in the 1 Corinthians verse: love. God’s love flows through us as we carry His heart and His passions. “The power of God is expressed or released from us in all life and ministry that is truly pleasing to Him,” he said. This rich devotional will increase your faith to see heaven’s power released through your life. *—Leilani Haywood*

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# 7 Ways Jesus Sets You Free

When I began to study and meditate on the last sayings of Christ, I discovered that each statement carries with it an important freedom for believers. Jesus spoke seven times when He was on the cross—the number of completion or perfection. In so doing, He secured our complete redemption from every kind of problem we can face.

The powerful anointing released 2,000 years ago through Jesus' last words is available to you—today! Walking in these seven freedoms will transform your life.

## **Freedom No. 1: Forgiveness**

In the midst of His torment on the cross Jesus poured forth an endless supply of forgiveness when He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34, NKJV). With this statement, He forgave those who had crucified Him, became our example, and pointed toward everyone's need to be forgiven of his sins.

Jesus will pour forgiveness into your life, enabling you to unconditionally forgive every person who has wronged you as well as forgive yourself. God wants to pour the freedom to forgive into your life!

In the Old Testament, God named Himself *El Shaddai*, God Almighty, the Source of blessings. *El Shaddai* literally means the “many-breasted one,” which signifies nourishment and productiveness.

God doesn't just save you and take you to heaven; He supplies everything you need to successfully live your life. He provides forgiveness, comfort, healing, prosperity, and provision for every need. God is revealed as the One who is more than enough.

## **Freedom No. 2: Salvation**

One of the greatest freedoms we inherited from Calvary, aside from forgiveness, is freedom from sin's torment. Jesus saved a thief next to Him just moments before his death, and He is able and willing to save you—no matter how serious your sins.

The thief said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," and Jesus replied, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). In the face of death and humiliation, Jesus freed us from shame, suffering and death. He fought the principalities and powers of darkness and took the full weight of sin upon Himself so that we could be free of Satan and sin.

Two convicted criminals were equally near to Jesus. Both were wicked, suffering, dying and in desperate need of being set free from their sins. Both were only a few feet from the Savior. Yet one died unrepentant, and the other went to Paradise.

The conversion of the one is remarkable when you think about it. He accepted a suffering, bleeding, crucified man as his God—One who apparently had lost all power to save and by outward appearances couldn't even save Himself.

How was the thief able to do this? Jesus gave the answer when He said to Peter, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17). The thief separated himself from death by his faith. In the same way you can separate yourself from things that are holding you back—through faith in the crucified and risen Lord.

## **Freedom No. 3: Affection**

After Jesus demonstrated His compassion for the thief, He turned His attention toward His mother. The Bible describes the scene: "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother,

'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!'" (John 19:26-27).

I marvel that while Jesus was engaged in the most momentous and painful undertaking in the history of mankind—suffering the anguish of crucifixion and taking on Himself the sins of the world—He didn't overlook His responsibilities as an earthly son. Both His humanity and His deity were displayed for the world to see. His words reflect the human love, gratitude and respect He had for His mother.

Jesus gave the example for all human relationships. An important key to our success and freedom is embedded in the way we treat our parents. Ephesians 6:2-3 says, "'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with a promise: 'that it may go well with you and you may live long on the earth.'"

Once you learn to honor your parents, you can apply that lesson to everyone in your life. You will be set free to become a loving spouse, parent or friend.

Jesus' disciple John is the other key person in Jesus' third utterance on the cross. John's legacy is his faithfulness. Many of Jesus' followers deserted Him, yet John remained faithful to the end. He showed both unconditional and brotherly love.

When Satan is trying to destroy your relationships, remember Jesus carried your offenses so that you could be free to be in fellowship with others. Don't take offense; give it to Jesus!

#### **Freedom No. 4: Acceptance**

Our freedom from rejection was established by Jesus on the cross. When Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46), He took the pain of all our rejections—so we could be accepted by the Father and by

others.

No one but Jesus can erase the pain of rejection or satisfy the need for acceptance. When you are in right relationship with God, rejection has no sting.

You can love others despite what they do to you if you know your Father accepts you. His approval is more powerful and more important than any man's disapproval.

In Old Testament times, before Jesus came, the Jewish high priest performed an annual ceremony on what the people called the Day of Atonement that symbolized God's taking our rejection (Lev. 16:7-22). More than any other feast, the Day of Atonement is symbolic of Jesus' work on the cross.

For the ceremony, the priest took two goats from the Israelites. He sacrificed one and sprinkled its blood on and before the mercy seat as an atonement for sin. He took the other, the scapegoat, and laid both his hands on its head. Then he confessed all the iniquities, transgressions and sins of the children of Israel, symbolically putting them on the goat's head, and sent it away into the wilderness.

Too often, when rejected, we try to make someone else our scapegoat. We blame our mother, father, pastor, boss or someone else.

But Jesus is our scapegoat. He took all the rejection we will ever experience on His own head, making us "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6).

When you experience loneliness and pain, you can look to Jesus because He experienced that kind of suffering as well. No one was there to help Him on the cross. Yet in His aloneness He began to praise God, quoting from Psalms 22, 31 and 69.

You, too, can praise God during your hardest and most difficult times. Carrying rejection will cause you depression

and loss of joy. But Psalm 16:11 says, “In Your presence is fullness of joy.” And Nehemiah wrote, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). So give your burden to Jesus; He carried it for you!

### **Freedom No. 5: Righteousness**

The Bible tells us that on the cross Jesus, “knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’” (John 19:28). You might ask, what does Jesus’ being thirsty have to do with freedom?

He bore all our thirst, or lust—emotional, physical and mental—on the cross. Jesus took it all to free us from sinful lusts and replaced it with His righteousness. The Bible says, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). God wants His children to be free to enjoy the peace, joy and righteousness we have in Him.

It’s also important to understand that Jesus went to the cross as our faithful High Priest. Hebrews 2:17 says, “It was necessary for Jesus to be like us ... so that He could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God, a Priest who would be both merciful to us and faithful to God in dealing with the sins [suffering] of the people” (NLT). Today, Jesus stands next to the Father making intercession for you.

### **Freedom No. 6: Victory**

Jesus purchased our final victory with His sixth utterance. When He gave His triumphant shout, “It is finished!” (John 19:30, NKJV), He was announcing that the battle was over and our victory secured. He conquered death, sickness, nature, the devil and every situation. Because we are identified with Jesus’ death and Resurrection—we too have victory over everything we can possibly face.

God used the events surrounding Jesus’ death to confirm that

Jesus had finished the work of atonement. The veil's being torn in two gave us access to the throne of God (Heb. 4:16). Christ's resurrection provided proof that God had accepted Jesus' sacrifice. His taking a position at the right hand of the Father demonstrated the value of His work and the Father's pleasure in His Son. His sending the Holy Spirit made provision, on an ongoing basis, for the church to learn how to apply the freedoms and benefits of Christ's atoning work.

### **Freedom No. 7: Contentment**

The final word of Jesus was for our contentment, faith, confidence and love. When Jesus yielded His life to the Father in payment for our sins, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46). In saying this, He released us to enjoy one of our greatest freedoms—the ability to rest in the arms of our Father God. How blessed we are that His Father is our Father. We can now put our entire life and being confidently into God's hands. We are to follow His lead by completely surrendering to God.

When Jesus presented Himself to God, He also presented us. He prayed, "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21). Jesus did this so that we would be safe in God's Presence. Like Jesus, we can have fellowship with God, regardless of the circumstances!

### **His Death—Our Freedom**

Each of the seven last statements made by Jesus demonstrate God's supreme power and His foreknowledge of all that was to come.

"Forgive them for they know not what they do" was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12: "He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Jesus' statement to the thief, "Today you will be with me in Paradise," was the fulfillment of Matthew 1:21: "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

His words to His mother, "Woman behold your Son," fulfilled Luke 2:34-35: "[Jesus] is destined ... for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

At one point Jesus asked, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" These same words were spoken by David in Psalm 22:1: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

His comment, "I thirst," fulfilled Psalm 69:21: "And for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

His declaration, "It is finished," fulfilled Psalm 22:31: "They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—for he has done [finished] it" (NIV).

And finally, Jesus' final words, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit," were prophesied in Psalm 31:5: "Into Your hands I commit My spirit."

Jesus overcame the world to give you freedom in every area of your life—freedom from unforgiveness, freedom from sin, freedom in relationships, freedom from rejection, freedom from suffering, freedom to live victoriously, freedom to trust God! By faith in what Jesus accomplished on the cross, you can finish the course He has set for you.

Hebrews 12:2 says He is the "author and finisher of our faith" (NKJV). He has started you in faith and will stay with you until you have the complete victory! You have the seven freedoms you need to be victorious and prosperous in every way.

Read a companion devotional.

**Marilyn Hickey** is known for her extraordinary teaching gift.

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## When You're Pulled Between God's Call and Life

Yesterday, I filmed some devotions to go with my new book. It was a pretty involved process since we needed lots of them and each one requires several takes. By the time I fell into bed last night, the whole experience was still buzzing around my brain to the degree that I dreamt about it. And in my dream, as soon as I was done filming a video, the tech crew would remove it from the camera and pour it into a feeding tube.

Now, I'm no dream analyst, but it would seem my work life and my home life are colliding.

This dueling focus between my investment in the career that I love and the man and family I adore is a battlefield for me. I have chosen to stay committed to work and writing during Steve's illness for a variety of reasons, but the main one is: I feel certain this is the will of God for my life. I know many spouses who quit their jobs and devote themselves entirely to the care of their beloved. Others walk away from the marriage entirely (and I have to assume that's a result of preexisting issues in the relationship and not just because of the diagnosis.) This decision to embrace both caregiving and career is the most difficult thing I've ever done and some days I feel my toes dangling over the edge of that great and terrible cliff called *burnout*. Some days I feel certain God has overestimated me. So when I want to call in sick to my life, I have to keep reminding myself of a few primary truths and they are thus:

1. The call of God comes bundled up with the resources we need to accomplish that call. He equips us in the same way we equip our kids with the right backpack on the first day of school.
2. I don't have to do this perfectly to do it well. Screw ups are part of the landscape and that's okay. In a season of life when the watching world is being so generous with their approval (i.e. we hear a lot about how inspiring we are), I am living in undeniable proximity to my own inadequacies. My dumb mistakes and obnoxious self-centeredness smack me in the face on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis. It is built-in humility. And I'm grateful because I am old enough to have seen the profound impact humility makes on those who hope to change the world.
3. He will not be in debt to me. I can easily play the martyr ("I just give and give and give...") but sometimes when it's quiet and I'm surveying the blessings our great Creator has piled on my life, all I can do is whisper, "You're outrageous." His love has been lavished over me in handfuls and heaps and I will never be able to pay Him back. He will not be in debt me. Not ever.

So, I'm thankful today to serve the One who came to bring ever-increasing levels of peace into our collision-course existence. He is God at the intersection of too much and not enough, of sorrow and celebration, of beauty and ashes. He is God at the corner of Saturday work and Sabbath rest. He is. And we are His.

**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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# **What to Do While You're Waiting for Your Dreams to Come True**

I'll never forget the moment the dream was planted in my heart.

I was sitting in our mid-sized church—left side three rows back—in Bowman, North Dakota, and the visiting missionary was telling a riveting story based on the Psalm *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves [with him]."*

I went home that night and wrote down everything that was in my heart.

It was a vision larger than life. It was bigger than big. It was incredible. And I was fired up.

I went to bed that night dreaming about all the incredible things God was going to do through me and how He was going to use me in Croatia.

Those dreams gave fuel to my decision to go as I struggled to fit my entire life into two suitcases, two carry-ons and one large bin that I sent to my Croatian address via ship.

They soared with me over thousands of miles from Portland, Oregon to Zagreb, Croatia.

They gave me determination as I walked home from my first

Croatian language class certain I was incapable of learning the language. If only God had given me a vision of me seven-and-a-half years later taking my Croatian Language Proficiency exam when I got 100%. That glimmer of hope was really needed then!

They kept me company when the novelty of my arrival wore off and people went about their lives with their friends, and I fought to find a place where I fit in. It's always like that as a new person in a new town. Try a new person in a new country!

They comforted me when I was forced to leave the country for three months, and I sat on a bus bound for Bosnia where I knew no one and no one knew me. Little did I know that I'd make friends for life in that dear town of Tuzla!

They reminded me of why I was here in the first place as I wept over the precious babies I had so quickly fallen in love with—but that my arms never got a chance to hold.

And so many times I have reflected on those dreams and wondered if they would ever come to pass.

Was God teasing me?

Did I merely dream my own dreams?

The dream I dreamed about what I would do in Croatia was grandiose and over-ambitious. The phrase, "Zeal without knowledge" would be appropriate in this context.

I didn't know anything at all about Croatia, its people, its culture or its history and background. But as I began to learn more about these things, I realized that what I had dreamed would not only be offensive to the people, it wouldn't be appropriate at all for this country or its culture. I was an American having American dreams about doing American things in a country that wasn't America.

Since that time, God has chiseled and sharpened that dream; He has knocked off rough edges, and shaped it into something that fits the culture I live in.

And I pray that very soon I will begin to see the fruit of that vision.

In the meantime, I do not wait idly by; I work, I labor: I am serving in a mission field called "motherhood," I am serving in a mission field that is my neighborhood, I weekly share with my Sunday school class children the importance of salvation.

And as I do so, I realize that doing these things are—in fact—a small part of that big dream!

**Rosilind Jukic** is an American girl married to a Bosnian guy who lives in a small village just outside of Zagreb. They have two crazy boys 3 and under who are as opposite as boys can be. When Rosilind isn't writing, she is dreaming up recipes and searching for ways to organize her home better. You can find her at A Little R & R where she writes about missions, marriage and family, toddler activities and her recipes.

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## Why You Shouldn't Strive to be 'Normal'

Dear little peanut,

I pen these words on Monday, in celebration of your whole big first week of life. I'm practically ancient compared to you, with my wrinkly elbows and a tummy that made me a little depressed when I tried on skirts yesterday.

I need to tell you something, and maybe you'll be quick to learn it and a whole lot happier most days than I am:

**You are different from everyone else.**



I was just at a family reunion of ours, and I think the family may be shocked to know how much of the time I spent in misery, saying to myself, *Why can't you be normal like all the rest of them?*

A wife and husband went on a run together and then jumped into the lake for a swim. *Why can't you be more athletic like her?*

A cousin-in-law played for hours with my nephews in the lake. *Why can't you be sweeter with little kids like she is?*

An aunt in her 70s went zip-lining. *Why can't you be more adventurous like her?*

A mother-in-law set up Minute-to-Win-It Games. (I shook hands with my son, in agreement that I would pay him \$10 if he could deflect attention from me so I wouldn't have to play. NOT JOKING. I owe him \$10.) *Why can't you be more playful like them?*

A brother-in-law whipped together breakfast. *Why can't you be better in the kitchen like him?*

One night I burst into tears in bed next to that preacher man of mine. *"Why can't I just be normal like everyone else?"* I cried. With his six years of training in psychology and 20 years experience in professional counseling, he laughed. A guffaw really. (And can someone tell me why we spent 10 years paying off the debt for his master's degree, if that's all he learned to do in that school?)

*"Honey, tell me who is normal. Who is it that you think is normal here?"* he asked.

Here is the secret he told me. Let me whisper it in your ear, precious baby, while I inhale the scent of your Johnson & Johnson lotion:

**No one is normal.**

So you too, sweet little Madelyn Paige, are not like anyone else.

God is an artist, and a true artist creates something new every time. He does not have His people made in a factory line. Instead, He puts his finger to His lips and says *Hmmmmm* a lot while he is making a person—knit one, pearl two. Nine months of detail work.

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,*

*I know that full well. (Psalm 139:13-14 NIV)*

There will be lies—that you have to be like somebody else in order to be valuable. But you are simply a one-of-a-kind masterpiece, and all we expect is for you to just wake up every morning and be yourself.

And little sister, you don't have to be good at everything. My word, you do not have to shine at every single thing. **You'll shine in a few ways, and those will be the little glimpses of God's handiwork we get to see every day.** That's enough for us. By the way, we already think you're perfect.

I don't want you to grow up too fast—let's keep those dimpled handles for a long, long time—but I sure can't wait to see who God has shaped you to be.

It's gonna be good.

I'm clapping already.

Happy Every Day, my lovely girl.

**Christy Fitzwater** *is the author of A Study of Psalm 25: Seven Actions to Take When Life Gets Hard. She is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers and resides in Montana.*

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## **Will We Ever See Peace in Jerusalem?**

“For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (Is. 9:6-7).

As the National Day of Prayer Honorary Chair for 2014, I heard the familiar promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 frequently invoked: “If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Yet I wondered how many of us, including myself, have earnestly followed through in focused prayer? Are we just mouthing the words or are we truly humbling ourselves and praying and seeking God's face and repenting of our sin? I have felt deeply convicted that it's time for you and me to

stop talking. It's time to pray. And repent.

Yet the promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14, that is often quoted as applying to American believers, was originally given to King Solomon to claim on behalf of Jerusalem... Israel. So 3,000 years after that promise was first given, as the Islamic extremists tighten their noose around His Land, as terrorists bombard Israel with rockets, as enemies threaten God's people with annihilation, once again it's time to stop talking and to start praying. Not just for our people and our land, but for Jerusalem and all that she symbolizes: His Land, His people.

Actually, in Psalm 122:6-7, we are commanded, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." Yet as I have attempted to obey, I have sensed my faith to believe God for the answer has been small. Because peace treaties are continually broken. Negotiations between enemies keep unraveling. No sooner is a cessation in hostilities declared than it is shattered by another missile strike.

And then it has dawned on me. There will be no permanent peace and safety for Jerusalem until the Prince of Peace Himself comes to establish His reign on earth. So in effect, when I pray for the peace of Jerusalem, what I am really praying for is not the terms of a treaty. I'm not praying for an independent Palestinian state or the Muslims' recognition of Israel's right to exist. What I'm really praying for is the return of Jesus. Yeshua. Israel's Messiah. The Prince of Peace.

So I'm on my knees, praying for the peace of Jerusalem. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

**Anne Graham Lotz** is the founder of AnGeL Ministries. She is also the author of several books.

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# Are You Lost in the Crowd?

“If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” (Mark 5:28)

In the kingdom, no individual is small.

No one gets lost in the crowd. One person, even one whom society has labeled worthless or impure, looms large in the Father’s sight. The power of one small, helpless unspoken plea.

In Mark 5:21–43, wedged into the story of a high-profile healing, we find the story of a nameless woman who suffered from an undiagnosed illness.

We only have a snapshot of her. She appears on the scene briefly. We know one fact about her: She had been hemorrhaging for 12 years. Because of the ritual impurity her condition entailed, we know that for 12 years, no one has touched her. If a man had brushed up against her, he would have been made unclean because of her impurity.

Imagine the times over the last 12 years that she had accidentally defiled a man. Imagine her humiliation and shame as the man scolded her and demeaned her. He would have had to rush home, tear off his defiled clothes, and cleanse himself in an elaborate ceremony. It was very inconvenient to be touched by this impure one. Surely she had learned to hide herself even in crowds. Surely she had learned to gather her garments in closely, to cover her face, to become invisible.

Before we look at her story, notice how her story is framed. The framing of a picture brings out the details, focuses the eye. Look how her story is framed: It is framed by the story

of Jairus.

Jairus, a leader in the synagogue—an important man, a man of influence—burst through the crowd that mobbed Jesus and, tossing aside all pride and dignity, threw himself at Jesus' feet. No doubt the crowd parted for such an esteemed man as Jairus.

“Look! Here comes Jairus! Make a way for Jairus!” they might have said. No doubt they stared as he humbled himself and begged the Teacher, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live” (Mark 5:23). Jairus was a daddy, and his little daughter was dying.

If you're a daddy, and your little daughter is dying, then no price is too high, no sacrifice too great. You'll do anything. You'll forget all your pride and position. You'll ignore every other duty. If you're a daddy, and your little daughter is dying.

The crowd followed as Jesus headed for Jairus' house. They were not a quiet, sedate crowd. They were calling His name and reaching out to grab hold of Him; talking and shouting and clamoring for His attention. As they moved in the direction of Jairus' little daughter, I imagine that the crowd grew as the word went out, “Jairus' little daughter is dying! Rabbi Jesus is going to her! Come along!”

A woman stood on the fringes, watching. Alone. Unclean. Her uncleanness might rub off on anyone she came in contact with, and that person would be forced to go through a time-consuming cleansing ritual to wash away the stigma of her touch.

She had learned to be careful in public, avoiding brushing up against another person. But a thought kept worming its way into her imagination, “If I could just touch the hem of His garment, I would be made well.” The thought grew stronger

until, in a moment of reckless hope, she began to work her way through the crowd. The crowd didn't part for her as it had for Jairus. She prayed not to be noticed because to be noticed was to be rejected and humiliated.

Suddenly she was close enough to reach out and touch His hem, and she was flooded with His power. Her touch didn't make Him unclean; instead His touch made her clean. She felt the cleansing, healing power of His touch transform her from death to life. Joy! Celebration!

Then, to her dismay, He stopped dead in His tracks. Brought the whole crowd to a screeching halt. "Who touched Me?" He demanded. She tried to hide, tried to disappear into the crowd, but He wouldn't stop asking, "Who touched Me?"

The crowd and the disciples were agitated. Why would He stop? He was on His way to do an important job. Didn't He remember Jairus' agonized cry: "Jesus, my little daughter's dying!"

There had been no daddy to part the crowds for the woman with the issue of blood; no daddy to cry out on her behalf; no daddy whose heart was breaking for her pain.

Or was there?

When at last, trembling in fear, she confessed that it was she who had touched Him, He looked into her eyes and said, "*Daughter!*"

Maybe, then, it wasn't just her touch that stopped Jesus in His tracks. Maybe it wasn't just her touch that caught His attention. Maybe it was the voice of her Daddy whispering, "Jesus, My little daughter's dying."

You'll stop at nothing, if you're a Daddy, and your little daughter is dying.

She had braced herself for the scorn she knew was coming.

And found instead that He looked her in the eyes and called her by a new name: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering” (Mark 5:34).

Jesus was not satisfied just to heal her body. He wanted to heal her soul. When the healing flooded her body, she had what she desired from Him. But He did not have what He desired from her. He longed to bring her into His presence where He could shower her with love. He wanted to make her whole. He wanted her to know she had a *Daddy*.

### **Lost in the Crowd?**

Do you ever feel lost in the crowd? Overlooked? Maybe even judged? You might believe that if anyone could see through your carefully crafted disguise—the veil you pull over the real you—he or she would call you unclean. Do you keep your true self hidden behind actions and a lifestyle meant to protect you from scrutiny?

A moment of radical obedience. One step.

The Scripture says that we can live unveiled. “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). We can live out loud and on display because we are reflections of the Lord’s glory. That’s how people see the reality of Christ in the world—through us living authentically and transparently.

Like the woman in Mark’s story, you have been flooded with the presence of Jesus. Your shame has been removed. He can call you front and center in front of the whole crowd and say, “Your faith has made you whole.”

### **Small Change**

Today be intentionally aware of the Father’s tender mercies

and loving kindness toward you. Let yourself enjoy His attention. Revel in the fact that you are not a face in the crowd to Him, but rather you are His dearly loved son or daughter.

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## 5 Keys to Survive Raising Teenagers

Midlife teen years are no fun. *This is the moment when you want to take back every mean thought you ever had toward your mom during your teen years.*

Seriously, I didn't like the teen years the first time around, and I'm not liking them any better today as a parent.

To add to the complexity, I get to share this midlife experience with a house full of teens. We've all agreed that I'm just occasionally nuts, and I overheard my teens discussing the "stages" of my transition. Thankfully, we are a family that easily laughs at ourselves—when we aren't sniping at one another.

So, at this unique point in history (not yesterday and not tomorrow) I bring you my current list of how to survive the midlife-teen years:

1. **Exercise.** I know—they say that all the time, but it turns

out that if you don't use your body, it starts to break down. Also, exercise (like walking, running, etc.) keeps blood flowing to all the parts of the brain so you can more easily handle the stresses of life. Also, it releases serotonin, which is a serious need for women over 40, according to the kindle book *Happy Hormones, Slim Belly*. I am currently enjoying the Sisterhood of the Skinny Jeans monthly fitness calendar challenge to add variety to my workout.

2. **Pray.** Don't give God your list. If He doesn't already know it, you are in trouble. Instead, crawl up in God's lap and listen to His heartbeat. As things come to mind, hold them up to Him and listen for His perspective. If you must make a list, then recite all the things that God is doing. Train your brain to see the positive.

3. **Laugh.** Recently, in a five-minute time period, I was overwhelmingly anxious, felt God's deep peace wash over me, and was moved to tears by beauty. If you can't laugh at those crazy transitions, you will be tempted to ride the roller coaster, believing that each state is something you have to pay attention to.

4. **Give.** Your family will drain every last drop from you, and you won't feel replenished—but if you find opportunities to give on purpose, send encouragement to a friend, rally support for a need – these are God-given opportunities to get outside yourself and let Him work through you. For the rare individual who is able to give endlessly to her children and feel fulfilled, please ignore this one – you are already up for sainthood.

5. **Wait.** I am tempted almost daily to apply for five new jobs, establish my next priority, make a life plan for the next 15 years. Seriously not a good idea. Do numbers 1 through 4 during transition times. The process of transition is: 1-knowing what you are letting go of, and letting go of it; 2-re-establish who you are without what you lost; 3-new

direction.

The teen years, both the first ones and the mid-life ones as a parent, are about the second part of transition—re-establishing who you are. #3 comes out of #2. If you try to skip to #3, you are riding a bicycle in soft sand—spinning your wheels and making a mess.

Some transitions are more painful than others, but experience shows us that if we try to skip over the painful parts, we will get stuck. Instead, actively wait. Do the hard work of exercise, listening, prayer, honest assessment and community building. Your new direction will come soon, and you will be great at it.

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