

# Refrigerator-Magnet Theology: True or False?

How many magnets grace the front of your refrigerator? One? Five? Twelve?

Refrigerator magnets can be silly, serious or snarky. They can be cute, corny or classy.

Refrigerator magnets have also generated much theology that sounds good—but isn't.

Consider these catchy quotes:

- “God never gives us more than we can handle.”
- “Cleanliness is next to godliness.”
- “God helps those who help themselves.”
- “We’re all God’s children.”

Phrases passed down from generation to generation. Easily remembered sound bites with a whisper of biblical wisdom, a hint of Christianity ... and a bucketful of error.

Let’s look at these four examples:

*‘God never gives us more than we can handle.’*

*This probably originated with 1 Corinthians 10:13:*

*“No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

*As you can see, the context of this verse is temptation. God always provides a way for us to stand against temptation. But what about other life experiences? Let’s face it, most of us have experienced situations way beyond what we can handle on our own. The key in that last sentence is the phrase “on our*

own.”

*We live in a fallen, sin-sick world. Tragedy strikes. Suffering happens. Betrayal blindsides us. Most of the time, it is indeed more than we can handle on our own.*

*But Christians are never “on our own.” We have the presence of the Holy Spirit in us to strengthen, guide and give wisdom. When God allows us to experience more than we can handle ourselves, it’s an invitation to run to the One who provides what we need when we depend on Him.*

***‘Cleanliness is next to godliness.’***

*This phrase probably developed in response to all the Bible verses that reference being cleansed—verses such as:*

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).*

*“You are already clean through the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3).*

*But once again, if we examine the context, we’ll see these verses are talking about being cleansed from sin, not from physical dirt. (Although my mother may disagree).*

***‘God helps those who help themselves.’***

*This phrase does not appear anywhere in Scripture.*

*One of the biggest traps we can fall into spiritually is thinking that we must help ourselves before God will help us. The difference between Christianity and every other religion is that we cannot help ourselves into heaven. God has accomplished all that we need for our salvation. Consider Romans 5:6:*

*“While we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the*

ungodly” (Rom. 5:6).

*God helps the helpless.*

***‘We’re all God’s children.’***

*This phrase is more wishful thinking than anything else, because John 1:12, NASB, tells us:*

*“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”*

*Becoming a child of God does not happen by physical birth, it happens when we receive the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. At that moment, we are adopted into God’s family. In case you think this verse is the only one that teaches this, consider Galatians 4:4-5, MEV:*

*“But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born from a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*

*We are all created by God, for He is the One who gives physical life. Becoming a child of God—being adopted into His family—comes through faith in Jesus Christ.*

Let’s guard against believing a statement because it sounds good or because it has been passed down from generation to generation. A refrigerator magnet is not the best source for sound theology. Check it against God’s Word to know, beyond any doubt, what is truly true. {eoa}

**Ava Pennington** is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. She also authored *Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A*

Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at [.](#)

*This article originally appeared at [.](#)*

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## **Intimacy With Jesus: It's More Than a Trip to Israel**

We were slouched on the couch, in a jet-lag stupor, when he leaned over to me and said, "You know what?"

I let my weary head swing his direction. "What?"

"Israel was great and everything, but I feel like I didn't get to spend any time with the Lord while I was there."

"Seriously?" I answered. "I've been feeling the same way, but it just seemed so weird to say it after spending 10 days in the Holy Land."

We talked about the eight-hour days of touring and learning, combined with not-the-best sleep coming off of jet lag and getting used to new beds. It didn't leave much energy for getting up to have a quiet time with the Lord, and we were both missing that.

Made me think of the lady I saw in the old city of Jerusalem, down on her knees in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. In front of her was a stone, where it's thought Jesus was laid when they took him down from the cross. Next to her was a stack of white cloths, with a T-shirt store stamp of Jesus' face on each one. She was grabbing cloths from the stack and rubbing them on the stone, while fervently praying something we couldn't understand.

We speculated that the lady would be selling those cloths back home to people who desperately wanted a special connection to Jesus.

Is that what it takes?

I remember years ago when our good friends went to Israel and came back to tell about it. Somebody asked me then if I didn't wish I could take the same trip. My answer was no, I didn't care to. Didn't feel like I needed to go to Israel to have some special experience with God.

Well, a week ago found me standing in the special places of the Bible stories—looking out on the same valley where David killed Goliath (note the picture of us at this site on this blog post), standing on Mount Carmel where Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal, looking at a first-century synagogue, by the Sea of Galilee, where it is highly likely Jesus would have spoken to the Jews on Shabbat.

And do you know what I thought each time?

*Ah, so this is what it looks like.*

And do you know what I felt?

*Ah, so I was right. Seeing these things does not give me some increased feeling of intimacy with God but only gives me visual confirmation of what I have believed all along.*

Because back in Wyoming, when I was a kid in a little Baptist church, I was watching my Sunday School teacher use a flannelgraph to tell us the story of David and Goliath.

And I was believing. With all of my heart I was believing that God used that little shepherd to kill a mighty giant with a stone.

I looked out the tour bus window as the guide said, "Look to your right, and there you can see the little stream where

David would have picked up the stone.”

“Cool,” I said. “So cool to see.” But it didn’t change anything in my heart, because for so long—for decades—I had been opening up my Bible in the morning and reading all of these stories and leaning hard on the God who wrote them.

When our tour team sat in the beautiful garden, located outside of what is thought to be Jesus’ tomb, we celebrated the Lord’s Supper together. But back in the States I had remembered what Jesus had done on my behalf before I ever touched the rock wall or stepped my foot into the place where His body might have lain for three days.

So the preacher and I agreed that Israel was an indescribably rich experience, but our hearts longed for a quiet room in our own home and time spent intimately with Jesus.

Many times during our Israel trip, I thought of Jesus’ words for those of us who would come to him long after his appearance on earth:

“Blessed are those who have not seen, and have yet believed” (John 20:29b).

I highly recommend a trip to Israel, if you ever have the opportunity to go. But if it’s a deep connection with God you’re looking for, you can find that right where you are. Open your Bible and believe what you read. All of the locations and the stories and the truth are real. You don’t need to see Jerusalem or rub a stone or see some special place to know God.

Only your heart needs to travel. {eoa}

*This article originally appeared at .*

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# 20 Thanksgiving Journal Prompts for Your War Room

In March of 2016, after seeing the movie *War Room*, I looked around my house, trying to find even a small corner that I could call my war room.

After coming up empty-handed, I came up with a great idea: I would make my war room a journal.

Not only was creating a war room journal more practical for me, I could take with me anywhere. I could let it grow with me as I grew in my prayer life.

It wasn't long before I realized that many other people were creating war room journals as well. Some of them elaborate. Some of them simple, like mine.

I love the idea of a war room journal, because it's a great place to write out our prayers.

Writing out our prayers is a great form of prayer, because it forces us to slow down and really think about our prayers as we're writing.

## 20 Thanksgiving Journal Prompts for Your War Room

1. A prayer of thanksgiving for something you've been blessed by lately.
2. A prayer of thanksgiving for your church.
3. Write out your favorite verse, and then use that verse to write out a prayer.
4. A prayer about something you feel is lacking in your

spiritual life, and thank God that He is completing a good work in you.

5. A prayer of thanks for who God is—use a specific name of God.

6. A prayer of thanksgiving and blessing for your neighbors.

7. A prayer of confession and then thankfulness for God's forgiveness.

8. A list of worries and then thankfulness that we can cast all our cares on Him.

9. A prayer of thanksgiving for your spouse.

10. A prayer of thanksgiving for someone in your life.

11. A prayer for your needs and thanksgiving for God's provision.

12. A prayer of thanksgiving for a missionary.

13. A prayer of blessing for someone with whom you do not get along.

14. A prayer about a spiritual battle you are having, and then thanksgiving that God has won the battle.

15. A prayer of thanksgiving for your favorite memory.

16. A prayer of thanksgiving to God for all you have.

17. Your Bible character, and a prayer of thanksgiving for how this character has helped influence your life.

18. A prayer of thanksgiving for your governmental leaders.

19. A prayer of thanksgiving for something in your life you cannot change.

20. Your favorite worship song.

I hope you enjoy your Thanksgiving war room experience. Check out these printable Thanksgiving War Room Journal prompts. {eoa}

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## How to Have a ‘Smart’ Halloween

Today is Halloween. It’s tempting to post about it.

**Logic-smart** people would expect me to. It’s the logical thing to do. Maybe they’d enjoy hearing the different perspectives on why some Christians don’t have their children participate in the holiday.

**Word-smart** people might like me to research the history of the word “Halloween.” And, we could read about different candy—how was each invented and named?

**People-smart** people would enjoy learning how people choose their costumes while getting friends’ reactions while shopping.

**Nature-smart** people might enjoy stories about how weather affects costume choices and how long children are allowed to be outside going from house to house in inclement weather.

**Self-smart** people might prefer thought-provoking quotes or poems to reflect upon.

**Picture-smart** people would enjoy details about unusual costumes and decorated haunted houses.

**Music-smart** people might enjoy knowing if there are any songs associated with Halloween.

**Body-smart** people would enjoy thinking about acting out different roles their costumes would require them to play: the happy clown, the old man, the rock star and so on.

## **Should All 8 Smarts Always be Included?**

So, how could I possibly write one blog post about Halloween to please everyone? I probably can't. Or, maybe I just did (if you're easy to please).

That's why I recommend that when teaching one short lesson, we don't necessarily try to include all eight smarts. We'd have a headache, and so would our children. The content might actually not be taught well. The same thing is true in our writing. We can and should make sure we don't always teach or write to the same smart. But, including them all isn't always a good idea.

When we teach a topic *over time*, we can and should include all eight smarts. And, if our lesson or written work is long enough, we can work to include as many smarts as seems appropriate. Our learners will benefit with greater motivation, learning and ability to apply the ideas.

If you participate in Halloween activities, watch to see how the different smarts show up and influence your thinking and reactions. {eoa}

**Dr. Kathy Koch** *is the author of* Screens & Teens: Connecting with Our Kids in A Wireless World.

*This article originally appeared at .*

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# Lessons in Genuine Acceptance From a Special-Needs Child

Being an advocate for children with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, I recognize the many terms thrown around when discussing the issues they face. There have been times I wanted to scream listening to the continuing identification of people with disabilities as being different than other people. When someone looks at my Grace Anna, I don't want them to see someone different. I want to them to see someone that is just like anyone else with a mind to think, a heart to love, while living with hopes and dreams of her own.

Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female created he them." From the very beginning God chose to make us in His image, all of us, each with his or her own divine purpose. What an awesome reality that God chose us to be more like Him than any other of His creations. To me, each person He has formed has an awesome ability to make this world a better place by serving our Lord with all our heart. Grace Anna was no different. Her little body may not have been ideal for some, but when we looked at her, we saw God's hand at work.

Grace Anna has always had the ability to see past the outside shell of people and see into their souls, finding that piece of them that ached for acceptance and love. One moment in her young life made me realize how important it is to see others with our hearts instead of noticing how he or she may be different than we are.

Grace Anna was scheduled to sing at the Military Veteran Project Gala in Topeka, Kansas. We were all honored for the opportunity for her to bless men and women who had served our country. One veteran we were excited to meet was Bobby

Henline.

Bobby had been injured while serving our country in Iraq. He was the only survivor when his Humvee was blown up by an explosive device. Although he escaped with his life, his left hand had to be amputated, and he sustained burns over 40 percent of his body, including his face. The injuries completely changed his outward appearance. Some may have focused on this when they interacted with him, but not our Grace Anna.

We were awaiting the start of the gala and were exchanging pleasantries with our dining company. Bobby was sitting right beside us. The entire time I was very aware of how I interacted with him, I didn't want to say anything to offend him in any way. I think the overanalysis of what I was how I was interacting caused me to become extremely nervous, I should have just relaxed and been myself. Grace Anna was the same little girl she always was.

"Can I take a photo with Grace Anna?" Bobby asked.

"Of course," I replied.

Thinking I would stand beside him holding her, I started to move over to put Grace Anna beside him. Grace Anna was having none of it. If she was going to be in a picture with Bobby, she wanted to be in the picture completely. The next thing I know, Grace Anna leaped forward into Bobby's arms, never noticing his scars and holding his prosthetic hand.

She felt at complete ease in his embrace. She smiled her megawatt smile and cradled her body into his chest. Bobby's face softened when she snuggled her tiny body even closer as I snapped the photo. She saw into his spirit and embraced who he was in his totality. His scars and prosthetic arm were beautiful to her, it made him who he is: a hero.

Grace Anna has continued her life as a little girl

accomplishing great things. When she meets new people, the first thing people gravitate to is her infectious personality, not that she was using a wheelchair or that her body was not what some might consider “normal.” Very few ever notice the difference in the lengths of her arms and legs, because they are so focused on the joy that pours from her soul. Our bodies do not define who we are, it is our spirit, and Grace Anna’s spirit inspired people to see beyond stereotypes and connect her heart.

Galatians 3:28 states, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, and there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” We are all one. That’s a powerful verse to help us realize we are not different from each other at all, no matter if we have an intellectual disability, developmental disability or something that makes our appearance seem different to others.

Although our upbringing, culture, race, gender or outward appearance may lead to the tendency for people to classify us by our differences, it is the oneness of God’s love that joins all of us. We all have been chosen to be here by God. We all are united by the first moment of life breathed into Adam, it is an awesome reality that we are all connected all the way back to the beginning.

God chose Grace Anna as well as the rest of us to use our uniqueness to serve Him and fulfill His purpose, not to point out the differences to ostracize each other. We all are alike, in that we serve His purpose. When we unite focusing on loving each other and serving each other, there are no differences; there is understanding and growth.

Showing respect for each through the loving Spirit of our Lord helps us see people with His eyes. We begin to see the heart of the person and the outward differences disappear and then we truly begin to grow. People with disabilities are not different; they are just like everyone else living today,

doing the best they can do.

Grace Anna's life is an example of how someone who does not fit the mold of what society deems as an "average" person can prove that deep down, we are all the same searching for our place and purpose in this world, using our abilities and strengths to live the best life possible. Grace Anna's ability to help other realize God loves us and wants us to love each other helps us move toward being one gigantic family accepting each other no matter what some may say is different, because deep down, we are all the same. {eoa}

**Angela Ray Rodgers** is a native of Liberty, Kentucky. She is happily married to her husband, Jeff, and mom to two wonderful children, Isaiah and Grace Anna. After Grace Anna's birth, Angela's plans drastically changed; she went from being a veteran science teacher to an advocate for her daughter. Angela continues to advocate for all children with disabilities as well as being involved in charities for our veterans. She lives daily relying on God to guide her path. Angela is the author of *Grace Anna Sings: A Story of Hope Through a Little Girl with a Big Voice*. Visit her at .

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## Why You Might Need to Repurpose Your Life

We're in the midst of repurposing the basement area of our home as the original space it was intended to be—a family room. We envision hosting extended family gatherings, small

groups from church and fun time with friends and family.

Since we move to this house 18 years ago, the basement has served to house foster children and young adults. Through the years little has been done to the basement. To bring it back to its intended design, we are in our own season of demolition.

## **Remodeling**

As always one thing leads to another and before new flooring can be installed, the old carpets and pads had to be removed along with tack strips. Then, the floor has to be prepped and leveled. Before that happens, though, the walls have to be primed and then painted. And before that, baseboards have to be removed.

Then, somewhere in the process, the decision has to be made to paint or not paint the brick fireplace. Finally, the flooring has to be installed and baseboards reinstalled. Then, window coverings, furnishings and finishing touches completed.

The tasks seem endless because one thing leads to another. Often in the midst, we just need a break from it all and tell ourselves why we are doing this in the first place.

It so reminds me of my weight-loss journey. I knew with the state I was in, I needed a major upheaval of some sort, but I had no idea how to get there. I really thought I just needed to lose weight. That in itself was a daunting task since I weighed 430 pounds at the time.

## **Surrender**

What I finally realized, though, was that I needed to surrender all the obstacles standing in my way of going forward towards the life God had already designed for me.

That initial process was hard because the first thing that had to go was my dependence on sugar. I had to admit to God and

myself that I was a sugar addict and that my life had become unmanageable. I was weak around sugar. I couldn't say, "no." Still, I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt this was my main issue.

So I laid that on God's altar. Out of love and obedience, I surrendered sugar to God. I asked Him to show me the next step, to show me how to walk out the journey.

He brought people into my life to help me, to guide me and goad me, to coach me and encourage me. Without them, I never would have gotten as far as I have on my own life-repurposing project. I would have stopped halfway through and gone back to my addiction. I would undoubtedly be in a much worse shape than I was when I started.

## **Transformed**

Instead, my life has changed, transformed in astronomical ways. Not only have I lost 260 pounds and kept it off for over four years, but I've written four books and two study guides and have over 800 blog posts on my website.

Then, God called me to coach others. He and I have coached hundreds of people who have lost thousands of pounds. By the grace of God, I have appeared on numerous Christian television shows and shared in workshops and speaking at numerous places, always knowing the God in me will not fail to give me the right words to say.

None of this was in my mind when I began my journey. I had two things I wanted. I wanted to lose weight and I wanted to write a book that mattered. God took my destiny far beyond my limited imagination.

## **Designed to Live**

It reminds me of Joanna Gaines on *Fixer Upper*. She can walk into an old, dilapidated house and immediately see the

potential. Through the magic of television, we see in her mind the drawings of what she is thinking as she removes walls, moves hallways around and remodels bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens and living rooms.

Usually, the homeowners want three or four bedrooms and an open floor plan, but when Joanna and Chip, her husband the Demo Day guy, get done, the house is something that is beyond the homeowners' wildest dreams.

That's what God did for me. I look at myself in the mirror today and I am amazed at what I see. From where I was to where I am today is so over the top. He did far more than I could ever imagine or guess or request in my wildest dreams! God had more in mind for me than I did.

I'm so glad I allowed God to change me from the inside out. He showed me that only happens when I take my eyes off myself and my own selfish desires and fix my attention on Him.

This week in Sweet Change Group, we're talking about Demo Day and surrendering what stands in our way of becoming everything God wants us to be in order to allow Him to repurpose our lives.

Believe me, friends, what Jesus has in mind for us only comes through surrender based on loving and obeying Him.

This journey we are on starts and ends in Him. He is our author and our finisher. If we stay close to Him and follow Him in everything He tells us and shows us, we can't help but be repurposed, remodeled and remade into the new design He has waiting for us. {eoa}

**Teresa Shields Parker** is the author of seven books, all available on Amazon. Her latest book, *Sweet Hunger: Developing an Appetite for God*, is available now, and *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds is the No. 1 Christian weight-loss memoir*. She is also a writing and weight-loss coach, blogger, speaker,

wife and mother. Visit her online at [to find her books, coaching programs and free gifts.](#)

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## **The Romans 12:15 Solution for Your Pain Problem**

When people hurt, do you notice? I want to get better at being aware and fully present. I don't want to turn away or walk away. And I want people's pain to affect me. What about you? Are you good at this? Are you able to feel people's pain? Willing to feel it? Prepared to feel it?

There's so much pain. It feels like it's everywhere sometimes. Much of the time. I ache, and sometimes I don't want to. It's hard because I wish I could just fix things. Fix people.

What can we do? What should we do?

### **The Book of Job Is Helpful**

My pastor is teaching from Job during his Wednesday Bible study. He chose the book for us to study because of a corresponding sermon series about pain and suffering.

This is truth he shared while talking about a section of chapter 2. I want to remember this. I want to do this. Be this.

**"Meet people at their emotion before trying to move them through the emotion."**

So I need just to wait. Feel. Be present. Because it's not

about me being uncomfortable. It's about people getting comfortable. And in their own time.

In the context of my pastor's teaching, this applies to people's pain. Hurt. Heartache. Brokenness. Does this concept work when people are experiencing joy? It's the same truth. Absolutely!

If I'm not others-centered and fully present to joyful people around me, I can be guilty of wanting them to push through their joy. *Get to the other side, people! Enough of this happiness!*

It's true. I'm a thinker before I'm a feeler, so sometimes lots of laughter and joy makes me uncomfortable. I don't know what to do. If I'm not careful, I'll say something or ask something because I want people to move from their emotions to their thoughts.

But it's not about me being comfortable. It's about others not being uncomfortable. It's about people being. Just being.

Romans 12:15 is relevant. I'm grateful the Holy Spirit brings it to my mind often.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

So look at this next verse. Wow! Job shares it after his "friends" start the long debate with him about why he is suffering.

I need this instruction. The world needs this instruction. I pray it may bless you today. Let's act on it.

"A despairing man should be shown kindness from his friend, or he forsakes the fear of the Almighty" (Job 6:14). {eoa}

**Dr. Kathy Koch** is the author of *Screens & Teens: Connecting with Our Kids in A Wireless World*.

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# The Hidden Danger in Christian Communication

Who are you?

Whoever you are, does your vocabulary reflect your identity?

Or are you masquerading as someone you're not?

Lately, I've been hearing Christians say things such as:

- "Sending good thoughts your way."
- "What's your sign?"
- "Sending you good vibes."
- "You're so lucky!"
- "Bad karma will get him."

But what are we communicating? Does our communication reflect our Christian identity? Do these phrases convey our relationship with the sovereign God? Are we proclaiming our trust in Him or in cosmic coincidences? Do we expect good thoughts and good vibes to substitute for the Holy Spirit in accomplishing His work?

You might think I'm making a big deal about something that's insignificant. The words may not be significant, but what they illustrate is definitely important.

If we're not careful, the world's philosophies and values can influence us in ways we don't realize. The process starts slowly, with a change in the way we think about our life and circumstances. Then it moves into our words, and finally our

deeds.

We let down our guard in the little things, thinking they're not important anyway. It's just harmless fun, isn't it? Besides, don't we have to relate to unbelievers in order to share the gospel with them?

As someone taught me many years ago, bad influences and habits begin with a toehold in our life. Then they grasp a foothold. And finally, the thing that started out as a little harmless fun—something we thought we could control—is now a stronghold that controls us.

I've often wondered why some Christians feel as though they have to fit *into* the world before they can share Christ *with* the world. The solution is not to offer a weak copy of the world. Neither is it to beat up unbelievers with a fire-and-brimstone message of hell and damnation.

The answer is to be true to who we are in Christ while forming sincere relationships. People need to hear about the Savior. If our words are merely an imitation of what they already know, how will they learn what they don't know?

Let's communicate the truth in love, giving others what they need instead of what they already have. {eoa}

**Ava Pennington** is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. She also authored *Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional*, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at [www.ava-pennington.com](#).

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# 'This Is My Fight Song' From 2 Chronicles 20

I'll never forget watching this young woman belt out her battle cry on *America's Got Talent*.

My family and I were sitting in our living room relaxing. My husband was flipping through channels on the TV and landed on a replay of *America's Got Talent*.

A young girl with cropped hair got up and shared her story about how she found out she had cancer, and all through her treatments, she played the song she chose to sing that day.

It was very profound, given her story—such a young girl to walk through such a huge storm. But she endured and came out stronger on the other side.

It reminded me of another story.

An alliance of nations was forming against Judah, threatening to crush it. You can imagine what the king must have felt at the moment he heard about what was happening.

Actually, the Bible says, "And Jehoshaphat was fearful ..." (2 Chron. 20:3a).

Of course he was!

Who wouldn't have a little fear in that moment?

But then it says this, "... and set himself to seek the Lord, and he called for a fast throughout all Judah" (2 Chron. 20:3b).

Instead of pacing the floor, wringing his hands and then going to consult his great military leaders, he sought the Lord and asked the nation to fast and pray with him for divine

guidance.

The whole nation came together in corporate prayer and this is what we see in King Jehoshaphat's prayer:

- A proclamation of God's sovereign authority and power
- A remembrance of how God had delivered them in the past
- An acknowledgment of their helplessness apart from God's divine hand

Jehoshaphat was a humble king.

He was not so impressed with his own title, "king of Judah," that he could not stand before the entire nation and acknowledge the fact that his position didn't give him supreme power.

He was king, but his power was limited.

He took a huge risk and acknowledged before the whole nation that apart from Almighty God, he was pretty much powerless in face of this alliance gathering against them.

And his humility positioned himself for this amazing word from God:

*"Do not fear, nor be dismayed because of this great army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. ... It will not be necessary for you to fight in this conflict. Take your positions, stand, and observe the deliverance of the Lord for you, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be filled with terror. Tomorrow, go out before them, and the Lord will be with you" (2 Chron. 20:15b, 17).*

In Jehoshaphat's moment of greatest humility and authenticity before the people, God gave him a promise of salvation.

Then he did an even odder thing—more risky than choosing to humble himself before the nation.

The next morning, they woke up and started out to prepare for battle. Instead of ordering his troops as one would for combat, he chose to put the worshipers on the front lines.

As the army marched into battle, the worshipers sang and praised the Lord, and the Bible says that ambushes went out against the alliance of nations and no one escaped.

The army of Judah arrived at a place where they could overlook the wilderness where the nations had gathered against them, and all they saw were dead bodies lying all around, and they had not even lifted a finger to fight against them.

Their fight song was a declaration of God's mercy: "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever" (2 Chron. 20:21c).

I have a question for you.

What is your fight song?

Is there a song in your heart that declares the goodness, mercy and grace of God that you sing on those dark days when the enemy has gathered against you with a strategy to take you out?

Is there a song you sing to remind your soul and spirit that there is no reason to fear, because you will see the salvation of the Lord?

Is there a song that you can stand up and sing at the top of your lungs to remind the enemy that he is defeated and that Jesus Christ has already won the victory on the cross?

What is your fight song?

Maybe you have a whole list.

Throughout Scripture, we read of the power of worship. Jehoshaphat's story is not a unique one. There are several accounts of how worship defeated God's enemies.

And it still does today.

When we stand in faith and declare the sovereignty of God, remind ourselves of the great things He has already done, throw ourselves on His mercy, and then sing out.

Maybe our voice is a little wobbly at first, because maybe we have some fear, as Jehoshaphat did. Maybe we aren't actually singing just yet, maybe our voice is just a whisper because our faith is literally the size of a mustard seed, but as we warble out or whisper those words, our faith will start to grow.

Soon, we'll throw our hands in the air in a sign of victory, because as we've crested that hill, we look down and see our enemy on the ground.

Defeated!

Demolished!

What is your fight song? {eoa}

**Rosilind Jukic** *Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together they live in the country with their two active boys, where she enjoys fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an associates of practical theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of A Little R & R where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. 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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# The Life-Draining Power of the Empty Threat

It was happening two lines over from where I stood in line waiting to pay for my groceries. A mother was yelling at her child. "Behave, or I will whip you," she said for the fourth time. "That's it. I'm never bringing you out of the house again! You can just sit home alone while the rest of us go out."

Nothing changed in the boy's behavior. In fact, his disobedience elevated. He knew the sound of empty threats. (I will set aside commenting on yelling, "I will whip you" to a child for another time, but right now, I want to comment on the poor parenting.) You see, he knew his mother didn't mean what she was saying.

Mean what you say—say what you mean.

Numerous times, I have heard a parent start "the count." You know what I'm talking about. "I am going to count to three. If you don't behave by the time I count to three, you're going to be in real trouble!"

And then "One ... two ... three." Nothing. "I really mean it!"

It seems the only punishment the child will face if he doesn't correct his behavior is the annoyance of listening to his parent repeatedly count to three.

Mean what you say—say what you mean.

The problem is the child is actually doing a better job of parental training than the parent. The child knows the family history. Repeatedly, they have witnessed a parent who threatens but does not follow through.

They are being nurtured by a person who does not mean what they say.

Part of the development of a child is establishing his limits. When parents don't mean what they say and don't say what they mean, those limits are confused.

Frustration mounts as well, and parents can tend to up the ante into ridiculous empty threats and punishments they will not follow through on.

"Eat your carrots or you will not be served another meal in this house."

"Clean your room, or I will give all your clothes to charity."

"If you're not dressed in five minutes, we're all going to leave without you."

Uttering empty threats is easy for frustrated parents. At times, we underestimate how smart our children are. They know the parent won't—and often times can't—follow through with those threats.

Ridiculous and empty threats should not be enacted, but the lack of follow-through is telling a child he will have freedom to do as he pleases. A good parent is careful not to make any discipline promises they have no intention of fulfilling.

Children believe what we do far more than what we say, so mean what you say—and then follow through on it. {eoa}

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