

Women of Faith Conference Urges Women to Expect Impossible From God

More than 10,000 Christian women's voices were raised to sing the hymn "Ten Thousand Reasons" at Hartford's XL Center Nov. 1 and 2 during the regional stop of the **Women of Faith** "Believe God Can Do Anything" tour. Women from many different **denominations**, from all over New England, gathered together for **worship, prayer** and sisterhood during the two-day nondenominational Christian conference.

Women of Faith showcased musical performers, worship services and Christian speakers who spiced up their presentations with "girl power" jokes, hilarious one-liners and personal stories of their struggles, failures and epiphanies along their faith journeys.

Christian author Liz Curtis Higgs, whose books include *Bad Girls of the Bible*, related her journey out of what she called "the pit" in her youth.

"I turned 16, I got a license to drive and a license to sin," she said. "I spent 10 years doing everything we pray our kids won't do."

Copious amounts of promiscuous sex, drugs and alcohol fueled Higgs' life, but she said when she gave her life over to Christ, "He said, 'I have always been with you.'" Her mortified response was, "Please tell me You weren't there then!"

Higgs said she is "living proof that nothing is impossible with God. God loves the impossible." She asked her listeners to identify their own "anything" and trust in a response in God's own time. "God is in this," she said. "Believe it. He's in it, and He's got this."

Higgs offered support and prayer for those in the audience who have a child or loved one in “the pit.”

“God has a plan,” she said. “Don’t beat yourself up; don’t second guess what you did as a parent. As a girl who was in ‘the pit,’ I can tell you we beat ourselves up enough. You cannot get them out of the pit—they’re not done yet. ... You love, you pray, and you wait.”

Angie Smith, another featured speaker, asked anyone in the audience who had ever struggled with doubts about the existence of God to raise their hand.

“You bad people,” she joked.

On a more serious note, she added, “God’s people are a lot harder on others’ doubt than God is. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that you have to feel your faith is exactly right.”

Retelling the Bible story of doubting Thomas—the apostle who didn’t believe Christ had risen until he saw Him for himself—Smith noted that other gospel passages reveal Thomas as a devoted follower of Jesus; he is simply uncertain about the path salvation will take. What Jesus tells him—“I am the way, the truth and the life”—shows “it’s not a path, it’s a person,” she said.

“There’s a difference between a doubter and a cynic,” Smith continued. “[Thomas] wants to believe so desperately. ... Doubt is an emotion. Belief is a choice.”

Renie Ellis was among the 126 women from two separate churches in Taunton and East Bridgewater, Mass., who traveled to the conference and wore matching pink headbands. The group has been attending the event for three years, each time with a bigger contingent.

“The Holy Spirit fills the seats,” Ellis said.

Hasmig Pianpiano came with a 27-woman contingent from Armenian Memorial Church in Watertown, Mass.

“It gets better every year,” she said, sharing that even though she attends church every Sunday, she finds the Women of Faith events bring her faith a different kind of fulfillment.

“Being with other women renews your faith and makes you stronger,” she said.

Holly Speed, an 18-year-old college student, was one of the youngest women on the eight-hour bus trip from her church in Maine. She said she was grateful for the depth of the teaching she heard at the event.

“The speakers are so relatable. They’re really fun to listen to,” she said. “They’re so real, so open. I think that’s one of the best parts of it.”

The speakers’ insights, Speed said, helped her realize that everyone, no matter how “perfect” their lives appear, struggles with challenges to their faith.

Outside the main arena, participants could sign up for classes at Liberty University, a faith-based college; buy books, jewelry and T-shirts; or sponsor a needy child through World Vision, an international Christian humanitarian organization.

Apart from the hubbub, quiet reigned in the event’s prayer room, where participants could retreat for quiet prayer.

“They can pray for themselves or just sit quietly if they want to,” said Clara Ruffin, a minister’s wife from Hartford, Conn., one of the volunteers who held hands and prayed with those who felt they needed it.

“There have been some wonderful things here—many tears and heartfelt relationships with God,” Ruffin said. “There’s so much power when you’re praying for someone else.”

Those who wished could write their prayer intentions on slips of paper, adding them to a basket that would accompany the rest of the tour for continued prayer.

By **Janice Steinhagen**. *Reprinted with permission from* Reminder News.