

LESSONS LEARNED *from* POINT OF GRACE

HOW YOU LIVE





HELLO, FRIEND

No matter the situation, experience, or transition we go through in life, one thing is certain: we all learn lessons along the way. Seasons change, and hopefully, as we grow and learn, we change with them.

For you, perhaps the season right now is one of beginnings—a new job, a new school, a new baby, or a new home might be on the horizon. Or, maybe your current season is one of reflection, as you think on your marriage, your parenting, your struggles, your work, or your friendships. Perhaps, instead, it's a period of endings you find yourself in—soaking up the final days with a child about to head to college, closing the chapter to a job you've had for years, or saying goodbye to a beloved community as you move on to another city.



Or, maybe this book isn't in your hands for you at all, but for someone else. Perhaps you have a loved one in mind—someone who is approaching a certain event, season, or change in life that you want to commemorate. Maybe you simply want a way to say, “We’ve all braved this kind of thing before, in some way or another, and we’ve all come out on the other side of it with valuable lessons learned. You are not alone.”

Now, we don’t pretend to have all the wisdom or knowledge or answers in the world. There’s no way we could. Truth be told, we’ve gotten life wrong a lot more times than we’ve gotten it right! But through it all—the ups and the downs, the seasons on the road and at home, the failures and the successes—God has taught us some things along the way, and we can’t thank Him enough for it.

As you read through this book, our prayer is this: that you’d look beyond the lessons we’ve learned in various seasons of life, toward the One who taught them to us. No matter what you face, no matter who you might be trying to walk beside right now as *they* brave the next few steps in their journey, no matter what the particular season of life may be, God will meet you, keep you, and teach you. Though you may learn it the hard way or the easy way, *always* He will be exactly what you need.

And the best part? The back of this book offers a tangible way for you to move beyond our stories and record what really matters: your own lessons learned. Use this as a dedicated place for you to document what God has taught you over the years, so that you can remind yourself of His great grace in the future, or perhaps even pass on these insights as a gift to a loved one who might need your wisdom right about now.

With love,

[Point of Grace? Or individual names?]

**Our prayer
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CONSISTENCY

Have you ever had a moment so impactful, that even though it happened long ago, you can remember every detail in your mind's eye?

It was probably 1992ish—as Point of Grace was just ramping up—that we spent a lot of time in the city of Houston. A man named Steve Seelig was the singles pastor at First Baptist Church there, and he was working hard on our behalf to make sure the entire world knew about us and our music. We loved Steve with all our hearts; he was a true fan from day one, who eventually became our first booking agent, and ultimately a father figure to us. He introduced us to a wonderful woman from the church who was teaching Sunday school there, and also beginning her own speaking and teaching ministry for women. Her name was Beth Moore.

Even in Beth's beginnings as a women's Bible teacher, she was so full of wisdom, and you naturally wanted to push the godly insights she gleaned from the Word straight into your soul. I remember so vividly sitting down in Steve's office with Beth one hot Houston day to talk about where things were headed with our group. She told us that we were no doubt on the brink of beginning a long career in Christian music. I'll never forget Beth looking at us straight in the eye and asking us, "What do you want people to say about you when your ministry is complete?"

We all had trouble figuring out what to say—is there even a right answer, we wondered? After we stumbled around for a bit, Beth prodded us in the right direction: "I think the greatest thing you will want to be said of you is that you were



faithful.” Truer words were never spoken, and I remember thinking that on one hand that sounded so simple, but being faithful to the Lord’s work would come to hold so many complexities throughout our career. In the end, that’s exactly what each of us wanted to be said of us and our ministry—that we were “steadfast, immovable, and always excelling in the Lord’s work,” as 1 Corinthians 15:58 puts it.

Faithful. Steadfast. Excelling. I think these culminate in the word *consistency*. Whether we are on tour, in our homes, or making everyday little decisions, we wanted to be consistently faithful to do the next right thing that came our way. While we certainly stumble every day, we are ever-aiming to be women who consistently get back up and walk in the faithful direction. We want to know and live out a secret truth: small but consistent and faithful decisions we make to the glory of God over the long haul are the ultimate freedom! Consistency, as it turns out, is the abundant and good life. That’s been true for us over the course of our ministry, and it’s true for you too. •

“Years ago, as new parents, my husband and I were visiting some friends who had a son who was probably three. After a long day of playing, his mother told David to go and take a bath. There was no screaming, yelling, kicking, or crying. David immediately got up from the floor and went to take a bath. She only asked him once. I was stunned, and as a new mother I asked her, ‘How did you get him to do that? How did you get him to take a bath without a fight?’ His mother shared her secret. Consistency. She said, ‘I knew I needed to be consistent in everything I asked him to do, and follow through with discipline if needed. It only took a few times for him to realize who was lovingly the boss.’ My husband and I followed our friends’ example of being consistent as parents, and that rewarded us with many happy days with our kids. We enjoyed every minute, every age, and every phase of life with our kids. They were a joy . . . and that made us joyful!”

BONITA SEELIG
good friend, wife, and mother

**“Therefore, my
dear brothers
and sisters,
be steadfast,
immovable,
always excelling
in the Lord’s
work, because
you know that
your labor in
the Lord is
not in vain.”**

(1 CORINTHIANS 15:58)

GOD'S TONE OF VOICE

My youngest son informed me the other day that I have rude "texting etiquette." I had no idea what he was talking about. Apparently, when you put a period at the end of the word, the receiver assumes you are saying something with a sarcastic tone. For example:

Price: *Hey Mom,
I'm going to stop by
Sonic on my way home.*

Me: *Okay.*

See, when I read that text, I think I was simply saying "Alright. Sounds great." But to Price? In Price's mind my text reads this way instead: "**Sigh.** Okay, if you **HAVE** to." He read my words, and assumed I was frustrated by ending the whole ordeal with, you know, a period.





HOPES AND DREAMS

I've been singing in church as early as I can remember. My mother was my choir teacher all the way up to my college years. Mom encouraged me at a very early age that I had a special gift of singing.

College gave me the confidence of what I wanted to do for the rest of my life—SING! I gained so much experience and appreciated all styles of music. Those years I was like a musical sponge. I enveloped myself in music, and I eventually ended up traveling every weekend to churches with a live band by the end of college. This experience became the driving force of my hopes and dreams.

Those college years led to yet another leg of the journey, when I joined the musical group “Truth” as a vocalist through the encouragement and recommendation of my college ensemble director, Dr. Rick Brewer. My time in Truth eventually led to industry-wide relationships, not to mention the introduction to my husband!

New opportunities came from my time in Truth, which over time, amounted to four different singing groups, over thirty albums recorded, traveling the globe, and who knows how many shows. I still pinch myself in amazement as I celebrate over fifteen years with Point of Grace.

My hopes and dreams started as a young girl. Along the way, others like my mom and my ensemble directed noticed and encouraged me toward the ways God had gifted me. I think this is a very important element when it comes to the hopes and dreams that we see in the hearts of others around us. Taking the time to notice and encourage others in their gifting can help them identify what God might be planning for their lives, and give them courage to pursue it.

Your hopes and dreams and passions shouldn't be your identity at the end of the day, but they shouldn't be shunned either. Don't underestimate the desires God has placed within you. Ask God to help define and refine them. Ask Him to help you let go of dreams that aren't really good for you, and to take hold of dreams that are exactly what He's calling you to. Ask Him to bring people into the process to encourage you and show you the way. Trust Him with the dream you have, speak encouragement over the gifts He has given to others, and watch Him move. •

"My mom has always emphasized the importance of following my dreams and passions since I was a little girl. She is a beautiful example of using the passion and gifts God gave her to advance the kingdom of God. I have learned that using your gifts for the glory of Jesus has an impact beyond anything you will ever do. I'm grateful and so blessed . . . and strive to follow in the footsteps of my mom; she is my biggest cheerleader and my encouragement!"

DARBY
(Leigh's daughter, sixteen years old)

“Trust God with the dream you have, speak encouragement over the gifts He has given to others, and watch Him move.”

What has God taught you about your own hopes and dreams?

What advice would you give to someone else who is fighting to trust God with theirs?



FEAR OF FAILURE

When I look back on my high school experience, there is one thing that stands out to me more than anything else: I was flat-out terrified of failure.

From making myself literally sick over making good grades, to not taking chances when I should have, most of my decisions were based in the fear of failing.

One particular memory stands out in my mind. Given my involvement in my church choir and also choir at school, I was singing a lot by the time I was in the 9th grade. My high school choir director was so encouraging, and I finally felt like I had found something that I enjoyed and was good at. Try-outs for the high school musical rolled around and they were doing *Grease*. I loved the music from that movie and had the double LP album that I would sing obsessively along with every night in my mirror.

I knew the music like the back of my hand—but every time I went to sign up for try-outs, I just couldn't do it. I was so afraid of failing—so afraid of not being offered a part. So I never did it. I never even tried out. In a school where I was known as “the singer” by my classmates, I couldn't muster up

the tiniest bit of courage to risk failure! It's wild to think that a professional singer would be so cowardly in her younger years, but I was. Now when I look back, it's almost laughable.

I see it so clearly now—how fear of not measuring up can keep some of life's greatest experiences from you.

So I have tried at every turn to encourage my own daughter to go for it every single time. And I'm so proud of her when she puts herself out there—especially in the times when she fails. I know that sounds odd, but it couldn't be more true. It says so much about her character and resilience to lose gracefully and keep her perspective and persistence. Anyone can be proud of their daughter when risk leads to success. But my momma's heart beams

In what area of life do you most fear the possibility of failure?

Why?

What would look different about your life if you believed God truly held all the chips?

Is God leading you to take a chance on something right now? To put yourself out there, try, and trust Him with the results?

What is it?

even brighter when she risks and falls down, only to get back up, keep moving forward, and trust the Lord all over again the next go-around. Resilience is the real success!

If I had a dime for every time I have told Caroline, “Do your best and then let the chips fall,” I would be rich. And in all seriousness, I believe in that little catchphrase with all my heart, because God holds all the chips. He has our best interest at heart. He will “place the chips” or let them fall where they need to be. Sometimes it will be on the side of failure, sometime success, as the world defines them. But in each case, the real win is in trusting Him no matter what.

There are so many reasons to not take a chance on something in this life, but fear of failure should not be one of them. •

“I believe that whenever I ‘fail’ it makes me stronger and causes me to learn something. God allows failure to happen because He knows that it will teach us more about ourselves and Him in the end; this is something that my parents have always taught me.”

CAROLINE BREEN
Shelley's daughter

“Do your best
and then
let
the
chips
fall,
because

God holds
all the chips.”

PRIORITIES, ROUTINES, AND RHYTHMS

The Point of Grace girls and I get this question so often: “How do you do juggle life and also do what you do?”

Let me start by saying that I don’t get it right every day. But for the most part, if I stick to what I call my “foundational commitment,” I have a better chance. The foundational commitment for me is a rhythm of routine and priorities that incorporates the top three things I consider most important. If these three things are part of my day, I consider it a day fulfilled and successful. For me, those three things are prayer with Bible study, thirty minutes of exercise, and a healthy meal with family around the table. This establishes mental peace in order to conquer the day ahead and requires approximately one to two hours, depending on my schedule for the week. If I can make good on that foundational commitment, I feel balanced and faithful to the things that matter in life.

Yes, life can be unpredictable and sometimes wiggle room is necessary for miscellaneous detours, family emergencies, meetings, and so on. However, having daily priorities conducts a rhythm to your life.

If you are trying to juggle too many things, those things will begin to overtake your life and then you are left frustrated and extremely tired. Instead, choose the reverse. Fight to squeeze as much out of life as you can instead of *it* squeezing the life out of *you*! This requires you to simplify your priorities and commit to a few things that matter most.



What are those three things for you? That might depend on what season of life you are in. A newlywed, a new mom, a single professional woman, a widow, maybe caring for a sick family member or friend. Whatever the season, we have to be intentional about nurturing ourselves and simplifying our endless commitments so that we can actually be *consistently faithful* to the few God has actually called us to. This process is not a selfish one. Instead it allows us to be better for those that need us in each capacity. It helps us bring our most healthy self to others in service.

As the famous saying goes, "Every day you should have something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to!" Priorities. Rhythms. Foundational commitments. Whatever you want to call them, take the time with God to ponder what He says yours should be, and then live by them. •

COWBOY CAVIAR

One of my family's favorites; a go-to recipe that creates easy space to catch up, blah, blah, need text to support format of this being "passed down" as a legacy -- sort of...

Serves 6-8

CAVIAR

- 2 avocados cut into cubes
- 1 diced tomato
- 11 ounce can of shoe peg corn (or petite white corn), drained
- 15 ounce can of black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 2/3 cup fresh cilantro (leaves only), chopped
- 3 green onions, chopped

DRESSING

- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoons cumin
- splash of lemon juice
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- hot sauce, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine all caviar ingredients in a bowl. Set aside.
2. Combine all dressing ingredients in a separate bowl.
3. Add the dressing ingredients mixture to the caviar ingredients mixture.
4. Stir and chill for at least two hours.
5. Serve with your favorite tortilla chips.

“S I M P L I F Y I N G

O U R E N D L E S S C O M M I T M E N T S L E T S U S

B E C O N S I S T E N T L Y F A I T H F U L T O T H E

F E W G O D H A S A C T U A L L Y C A L L E D U S T O.”

LEIGH'S QUICK TIP FOR
ESTABLISHING HEALTHY
PRIORITIES AND
RHYTHMS



In today's society, the best advice I can give is this:

Release yourself from your social media feeds and other forms of online distractions at least one day a week. Call it your "Sabbath" if you need to. Then pay close attention to how much actual face time you now have to offer others in your sphere of life!

What are your few foundational commitments in life?

What keeps you from staying true to these priorities in your regular routines?

How can you simplify your life to start maintaining these important routines and rhythms on a daily basis?

FEAR

My life verse—passed down to me from my mother when I was seventeen years old—is 2 Timothy 1:7 which says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.”

There’s good reason behind this being my life verse, for it often helps me fight my biggest enemy: fear. Fear can cause a paralyzing effect within the mind that stifles the heart’s ability to hope. I know it very well.

It was in October 1998 that our family received some news that would change our lives. My dad was diagnosed with leukemia. Before the news got to us, I was traveling nonstop at the time for work, but once it came, I found replacements for my upcoming commitments and booked it to South Carolina. When I finally got to the hospital, I saw my dad (in a state of extreme weakness) and held him so tight. I asked these words to the doctor: “If this were *your* dad, what would you do?” He said, “I would have him at the MD Anderson Cancer Center within twenty-four hours.”

Fear set in like I’ve never experienced it before. I was so afraid of the unknown, but I was more afraid about the fear I saw overtaking my dad. I can vividly remember crying out to the Lord, begging Him to lift the fear from my sweet father. “Lord, allow me to carry some of this burden. He is so afraid. We all are . . . *please, Lord!* Help us in this fear.”

I’m sure you have your own story of fear, or perhaps even cancer, in your own family. I don’t know how it played out for you, but for me, I watched God do miracles, both in my dad’s cancer case and in my own heart: we were able to get to that



center within twenty-four hours. We were treated kindly. Once examined, somehow the doctors said the cancer was not as bad as they originally thought. Funds for the treatment trickled in from family and friends. My entire family sacrificed whatever was going on in their schedules to rally around Dad when he needed it most. The Lord got my father through the terrible fear of the port being put in. God got me through many bouts of terror through moments of divine peace and nearness. The chemo worked. Total strangers became dear friends. I could mention a thousand more ways God moved for our family, but the most unbelievable part is that my dad is now cancer-free, over twenty years and counting!

Looking back on that season, I am so grateful to remember how truly personal God can be during times of fear. He was such a quiet assurance for us. Whether the outcome was good or bad—after all, not all news of cancer ends up with a story of remission—I knew God was *with* us, and that’s what gets you through *any* sort of news. Even if my dad didn’t end up cancer-free, God would still have been with us every step of the journey, and His presence is the thing that lifts all that fear, and brings you back to your senses. When God is in the equation, paralysis is not a given; power, love, and a sound mind really are possible with the Lord! •

“When faced with fear, my source of strength is the Lord. I rely on promises found in the Scriptures. In circumstances I feel too shy or inadequate to handle, I recall God’s promise in 2 Timothy 1:7, ‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.’ In other life-changing situations (such as when my husband was diagnosed with leukemia) when I am fearful of what the future may hold, I recall the comfort and assurance I find in Deuteronomy 31:8, ‘The Lord is the one who will go before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or abandon you. Do not be afraid or discouraged.’”

ROBIN DARBY
Leigh’s mother

What situation is most fearful for you right now? Why?

What passage of Scripture could help you experience God’s nearness during this season of fear?

What evidences of God’s help and nearness do you see in this season? What has God taught you about fear in your own life? What wisdom would you pass down to others as they battle with fear?

“FOR GOD
HAS NOT
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US BUT ONE OF POWER, LOVE
AND SOUND JUDGMENT.
(2 TIMOTHY 1:7)
SPIRIT
OF FEAR,

I'm not sure how I ended up with the topic of aging, as I am the youngest member of Point of Grace. It seems like

it should have gone to Denise who is a whole forty days older than me, or at the very least, Leigh, who is thirteen days my senior. I feel certain they would have *much* more to offer on the subject—as they are so much more seasoned in life than me—but I'll do my best.

By the time this book releases, I will have just turned fifty years old. All of the things I used to hear people joking about, and found ridiculous, are coming true—"the wheels falling off," so to speak. I can read nothing without my glasses, my feet ache from fasciitis for a solid thirty minutes upon waking, and 24/7 hot flashes are my new reality.

AGING

Aging just is what it is. You never think it's going to happen to you, but if you are lucky enough to make it to fifty, let me assure you, it does.

For all the challenges of aging, I am so grateful for one thing: with age comes wisdom and perspective. As believers we should be the most joyful "old people" around! Though the world might say we are getting the bad end of the deal, the truth is, we are just *exchanging* one good thing for another. We are just "trading in" our physical well-being for our mental and spiritual well-being—that's one way I like to look at the process of aging. Or, as 2 Corinthians 4:16 puts it, "Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day."



Our bodies have indisputably passed their physical prime, but as believers, our minds are being renewed and regenerated. As Hebrews 12 famously tells us, if we are seeking to lock our eyes on Jesus each day, letting go of the things that don't matter and holding tight to the things that do, I'd say we have found the "secret sauce." The more we do this, the more our perspective changes, and the more we see this life for what it truly is—our temporary home where things might make us happy for a moment, but nothing truly satisfies the deep hunger in our heart for God. That is, except for more of God Himself. But to get more and more of God, you need more and more time with Him. Which is why aging is such a gift—it gives you that time to become transformed as the days go by.

So do not despise aging. I consider it a gift I get to unwrap a little more every day—in order to gain more understanding of where I'm going, and Who I'm going home to. •

"I'm old . . . still working on wise. Titus 2 tells us that older women should teach younger women. Such a blessing as a younger woman. Scary as an older woman! The wisest thing I've ever done is surround myself with wise people. Actually, God has put them everywhere I turn. The young are craving wise guidance. So, look to older, experienced, seasoned mentors whose path leads you home to Jesus."

BETH MOORE
old neighbor and friend

What is your greatest fear about aging? Why?

What do you know about God now that you couldn't have known in your younger years? How does this encourage you about the process of aging?

What passage of Scripture has been most impactful to you as you've gotten older?

**"EVEN THOUGH OUR OUTER
PERSON IS BEING DESTROYED,**

**OUR INNER PERSON
IS BEING RENEWED**

DAY BY DAY."

(2 CORINTHIANS 4:16)

PARENTING

A lot of people don't know that my husband and I had our first child after ten years of marriage.

And in that particular season, we were in airports and on tour buses so much, we just assumed we were "one and done." Because I was the baby of two older sisters and loved growing up with siblings, I did struggle with our daughter being an only child. But I pressed out the "what-ifs" and pressed on in our current plan. *Until.*

When my daughter was nine years old, I joined a Bible study entitled *Jonah: Navigating a Life Interrupted* by Priscilla Shirer. I had no idea during that time of study, God was preparing my heart for an amazing, well, *interruption*. One that would come about nine months later.

We had just celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary when we found out we were pregnant with baby number two. This was just before my 43rd birthday. Yes. *43rd birthday*. In fact, when I called my parents to tell them the fantastic news my mom insisted that I stop joking around!

LATER IN LIFE



COLLEGE

Going to college is such a privilege, isn't it? It is a place to delve into a deeper education and hopefully enhance your career opportunities. It's also a place to expand your comprehension of the needs and cultural differences of others in this world. It introduces you to lifelong relationships where you can see the value of others who are unlike you in the best of ways—which may result in an understanding and compassion you never had before. This phase in life forces us to step out of our “safe environment” and move into the season of adulthood.

For instance, Ecclesiastes 3 tells us there's a time to gather, and a time to scatter, a time to hold close, and a time to let go. College is the time we scatter from the home we were once gathered in, a time we let go from what we once knew as we come into our own.

My college experience started out like most. I was intimidated the first few semesters, but gradually became more and more comfortable. Sometimes that comfort was a good thing—a time for me to grow more confident in my own skin. Other times that comfort was a bad thing in that it loosened my ropes of conviction. That being said, as I look back, I like to tell others that college should be a time to flourish in such a way to build your faith and your career with confidence and a community of fellowship. (College sporting events can make that community of fellowship so much fun too!)



At the end of the day, if I could do it *all* over again, I would:

If you are the one heading to college, what fears do you have about starting this new educational journey?

What commitments can you make today that will help you get the most out of your college experience?

How will you incorporate your faith in this part of your story?

If you are a parent of a college-aged child, what fears do you battle as they go off to school?

What promises of God can you cling to as you face this new season?

Take some time to record the biggest lessons learned during your own college experience.

Spend more time working on those areas I needed improvement instead of relying on what was very natural and easy.

For me, singing came naturally, but playing piano and reading music was quite the challenge. For you, it might look different. Take the time to build into the weaker areas of your character and skills.

Respect my parents' investment and the resources that were at my disposal—I see now just how numerous they were!

For example, most professors *love* helping students that want to learn! I regret not asking for their help and expertise. I can't go back and invite their wisdom and help now, and I wish I would have.

Find a spiritual community and mentor. College can be a place we drift from our faith. Instead of that, proactively planning to find a tight-knit faith community is essential! Try to find a local church or campus ministry where solid other believers are helping you along in this season of life. And don't underestimate the power of a spiritual mentor—a strong example of faith who can pour into you and build you up in the Lord!

Consider a less expensive education option: college costs are rising, and there are options out there that do not require you to break the bank or exit college with an enormous amount of student loan debt. Some states even offer the first two years free; that's what we will encourage our own kids to do unless they get full scholarships elsewhere. No reason to have a mountain of debt to add to the other new challenges of adulthood once you graduate! •

"Every believer has been endowed with a spiritual gift (or gifts) to be used for His purpose.

College is an opportunity to use your gift and build upon your God-given talents. Although you still have the support of family from a distance, college is your first step into managing life on your own. You have to take responsibility for getting to class on time, meeting assignment deadlines, taking care of personal needs, etc. Your choices reveal your character. May you always choose paths that reflect godly wisdom (Prov. 4:5–6)."

ROBIN DARBY
Leigh's mother

“T H E R E ’ S A T I M E T O

G A T H E R , A N D A T I M E

T O S C A T T E R , A T I M E

T O H O L D C L O S E A N D

A T I M E T O L E T G O . ”

The tongue that heals is a tree of life, but a devious tongue breaks the spirit.
(Prov. 15:4)

Every day we have the opportunity to speak words of life to others. In fact, more and more research is revealing that when a person uses their words positively with another person, “happy” chemicals release in the brain of not only the recipient, but also the one delivering the life-giving words!

In a Bible study that I have been doing recently, we were asked to write a letter to our closest relationship, expressing qualities that we love about that person. Since my husband, Stu, is that person for me, I wrote to him. As I wrote this note, I was convicted of how long it had been since I had spoken some of these things . . . ways I love him and qualities I admire in him. His reaction to this note was so sweet and I was blessed by knowing I had touched his heart by this simple gesture.

Take a look around. Is there someone who needs some encouragement? Is there a person who needs to know how much they mean to you? Are there words of healing that need to take place?

Let me encourage you today. Do it. Say the life-giving words. After all, *your mouth matters!* ♦

DENISE'S PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR USING YOUR WORDS TO EDIFY OTHERS

HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL WAYS I'VE SEEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH OUR WORDS TO EDIFY OTHERS.

Text them words of Scripture when you know they are going through something and they need to hear some encouragement.

SNAIL MAIL: Who does not love getting a handwritten note in the mail?

Be intentionally aware of the moments when those you love do something kind or well. Say it verbally to them that you noticed something positive that they did.

“LET YOUR SPEECH

ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS,
SEASONED WITH SALT, SO
THAT YOU MAY KNOW HOW YOU
SHOULD ANSWER EACH PERSON.”

(COLOSSIANS 4:6)

(As a parent I'm so quick to mention the negative things I see, so why can't I verbally notice the positive things as often? Intentionality is the key!)

When you think of someone that you are blessed by, say it. Don't just think it. Call them and let them know. Why are we so reluctant to just say those things? Don't wait till it's too late.

Hugs—People need them. We've gotten so away from giving out hugs to those we love.

Listen to this wonderful message on the power of words by Shawna Keller: [relayoftruth.com/podcast/2019/2/13/wisdom-our-mouths-matter](https://www.relayoftruth.com/podcast/2019/2/13/wisdom-our-mouths-matter)

Share a time your words had a profound impact in a certain situation. What wisdom did you glean from this experience that you could pass on to someone else?



HOSPITALITY

Everything I know about hospitality, I learned from my mom. When I was growing up, she truly loved (and still does!) having people in our home, and you could always count on her to have an overabundance of “good eats” for all who entered our doors. Making others feel loved and welcome is one of her finest traits! I would even call it a spiritual gift.

The Bible speaks often of welcoming guests and even “strangers” into our home with arms wide open—taking care of people with nothing expected in return. It is so rewarding to set aside a day (or an hour!) to prepare something special and invite others to enjoy it.

Yet, as I look around these days, I believe the art of hospitality is slowly becoming something it was never meant to be. With the pressure to make a meal “Instagram worthy” and a table setting that is “Pinterest perfect,” lots of times it just seems easier to do nothing at all. But hospitality isn’t about perfection, is it? It’s about *people*! It’s about having those you love into your home to feed them and love them with whatever you have the means to offer, and not being anxious about what you perceive that you lack.

The truth is, our time is our most valuable asset, and when you choose to give it to others, it shows them a kind of sacrificial love. Nothing is better than this—not even the most expertly prepared filet mignon! True hospitality brings with it what we all want—human connection!



They say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, but I think the way to *anyone's* heart is through their stomach. This is why I have included a most beloved recipe in this very book—so now you have no excuse to not invite loved ones around you for a simple and meaningful time together. I hope these words are a challenge to fling wide open the doors of our homes, to the saints, sinners, and sojourners alike, and get our kitchens and conversations cookin'!

Don't neglect to show hospitality, for by doing this some have welcomed angels as guests without knowing it. (Heb. 13:2)

Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. (Rom. 12:13) •

MOM'S ISLAND RICE SALAD

This is a great recipe to bring to a big cookout or family gathering.

It makes a very large amount!

RICE MIXTURE

2 cups basmati rice, cooked
according to package
directions
½ cup golden raisins
½ cup dried cranberries
½ cup dried crushed banana
chips
¼ cup diced red onion
3 green onions, thinly sliced,
white and green parts
1/3 cup toasted sliced
almonds

DRESSING

¼ cup red wine vinegar
1 heaping Tablespoon of curry
powder
2 teaspoons cumin
2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic
1/3 cup honey
½ cup light olive oil
fresh ground pepper
salt to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cook basmati rice according to package directions, drain, then rinse well with cold water. Add the rest of the Rice Mixture ingredients.
2. Whisk all Dressing ingredients together, and then stir into Rice Mixture. Adjust salt and pepper to taste.

*Hospitality
isn't about
perfection.
It's about
people.*



MOVING

When my husband Dana and I moved out of our apartment into our first home, we were so excited.

The anticipation of the adventure ahead brought utter joy! Since we had only been married about five years and lived very simply, the amount of boxes and furniture was quite manageable.

Then four years later, we moved to what we thought would be our “forever” home. We picked out the colors, the backsplash, and even a few design elements. In our mind, we were *never* leaving! But then the unexpected 2008 recession hit, and changed our minds. We considered it wise to take advantage of the market, sell the home we were *never* going to leave and move into a home we *never* even dreamed of having.

Talk about emotions. The house we were moving from held unforgettable memories—bringing our baby girl home from the hospital, warm holiday traditions, and foundational moments for our family. We didn’t want to leave those things.

Eventually we did have to move on, though, and the next home somehow surpassed the experience of the last. We ended up moving into the same neighborhood as some of our closest friends, and that season of life gave us precious memories, fantastic fellowship, and best of all, a brand-new baby boy home on Thanksgiving 2012! I thank God for every moment we were privileged to call that house home.

You'd think we'd be done moving at this point, right? Nope. After seven years in that home, we yet again moved for financial reasons—to use the profits to help us become debt-free. We knew this was what we needed to do . . . but our hearts had a tougher time letting go this go around. It wasn't just the house—it was the deep *relationships* that would not be as accessible, and we had to mourn those.

What I have learned in these twenty-seven years regarding the process of moving is very simple: give yourself the permission and time to be emotionally impacted, as well as physically, mentally, and spiritually. As Ecclesiastes 3:4 says, there's "a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance." Give yourself a time to weep, laugh, mourn, and dance around a place God gave you to call home. Doing all of these things—without shame or guilt—is vital to the process of really dealing with a move in a healthy way.

Whether the move is a happy time for you, or a bit more disappointing, being honest with God about how you're doing—emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually—will keep your heart settled. •

“IN EVERY WAY IMAGINABLE, HE IS ABLE TO SEE US THROUGH THE INTENSE TRANSITIONS OF LIFE.”

LEIGH'S TIPS ON PROCESSING A MOVE

1. PHYSICALLY

You need to *declutter*. Otherwise you or someone, will have to *move it, unwrap it, or fix it*. Decluttering changes the literal, physical space around you, as well as your experience within it. To do this, start in the closets and then go room by room. This process will keep you from being overwhelmed.

And remember, we think more clearly when we are not bogged down with so much *stuff*!

There's a reason Jesus tells us to give our things away. Yes, to test if they matter to us more than Him, but also because it's *actually good for us* not to be so burdened with material possessions. Purging our things can lift the heavy excess out our spirits as much as our homes. Have yard sales, donate to people or organizations, and be sure you actually *need* (not just *want*) the items you keep. Keep in mind that the world as we know it is not our final home, and we can't take it with us. If you don't need it, someone else just might.

2. MENTALLY

When it comes to smarts, the big strategy here is buying within your budget. This is key because it promotes less stress, which equals more peace. Owning a home is similar to having a baby: they always need something, and if you have strangled yourself financially, you have no flexibility or freedom to meet the need that arises. Buy the home that suits your needs and not your wishes.

3. SPIRITUALLY

This category will sustain through all of the above, because God is able to meet us in our physical experiences, emotional moments, and even in our minds. In every way imaginable, He is able to see us through the intense transitions of life. This last move exercised my faith and trust in the Lord more strenuously than ever before.

Practically speaking, the best way to accept the change that God is bringing, especially with a move, is to dig in with both feet once you're in a new

place. Saying "yes" to God in this new season means getting to know your neighbors in a deeply relational way; this is very important. God's work in the hearts of those near you usually starts with a relationship. Taking time to interact with your neighbors can change lives! Ask God for those opportunities. He won't let you down. And don't forget to pray God's blessings over your home. Ask Him to use it as He sees fit and watch your house become home sweet home for not only your family, but a warm place of fellowship for your local church and even spiritual seekers within your spheres of influence.

What has God taught you about the transitional time of moving?

What advice could you pass on to someone else who might be braving this experience right now?

SWEEPING THINGS UNDER THE RUG

Housekeeping has never been my favorite pastime. As a child, my mom and I probably argued more about cleaning my room than anything else. There isn't anything I enjoy about it. Some people think it's therapeutic. Not me. I want to get it done as quickly as possible and move on to the things that I enjoy. However, I have learned the hard way, that when we just "get by" and shove things in the closet or under the bed, the junk builds up.

The same goes for our personal lives as well, doesn't it? My marriage is better today than ever, but a few years back we had to undergo a massive overhaul. The junk had been swept under the rug for too long. I was the first Point of Grace woman to be married at the very beginning of our career. My husband, Stu, has been nothing but amazingly supportive of me from the very beginning—almost to the detriment of himself.





Stu suffered from an undiagnosed sleep disorder for *years*. We always chalked it up to strange hours at the ER (he's a Physician Assistant) and a type-A personality. Going without quality and consistent sleep for long amounts of time wreaks havoc on the body. I began to see the signs, but I knew if I addressed the issue, I might have to consider things like taking time off or leaving the group, and if I'm honest, I just didn't want to.

Stu pushed himself to always be "on" for our boys and me, but things were beginning to slide and it was obvious he wasn't well. It all came to a head when he got so sick that we ended up in an ER not knowing what was ahead.

This moment in our family life was a wake-up call to me. How could I have refused to work through some of the "not so fun things" in life just because it might take some effort or sacrifice? Why couldn't I lay down something I enjoyed for something as important as his health? Now, I had no choice. Thankfully our community group at church, Shelley, Leigh, and our pastors helped us clean up our mess together. I will forever be indebted to those friends who held us together, made us meals, and sat with us through some really dark days.

That moment in my life forever changed me. I have experienced grace and redemption in my life through God's healing power in a way I never will forget. I won't say my house-cleaning skills have gotten better, but when it comes to relationships, I've learned a lot. I've learned to bring all that junk building up under the rug out into the light where it can get sorted out, and I'm better for it. And you will be to, as you start dealing with what's under the rug in your own life. And let me tell you: it's okay if you need a few friends to help. Just know God's amazing grace will meet you no matter how big the mess. As one of our songs says, "There's Nothing Greater than His Grace!" •

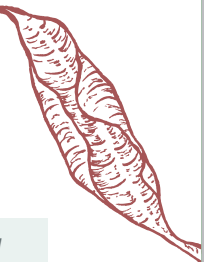
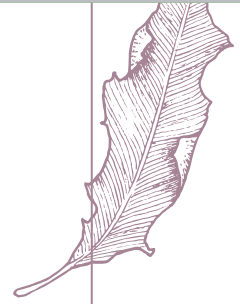
"If we do not deal with the issues in our lives, those issues will eventually deal with us."

NANCY ALCORN

friend and Founder and President of Mercy Multiplied



“God’s
amazing
grace
will meet
you no
matter
how big
the
mess.”



*What might you
be hiding under
the rug?*

*What have you
shoved in the
back closet that is
piling up so high
it could tip over at
any moment?*

*What did you
learn from this
experience?*

*What wisdom
would you pass
on to someone
else who is afraid
to deal with their
own mess that is
building up?*

REGRETS AND GRACE

I grew up in a wonderful Christian home where I grew up involved in many wonderful things—VBS, youth choir, Bible studies, and more.

As I got older and began dating, things started to change. I gave more time and attention to boys than protecting my relationship with Jesus and His Word. I didn't realize how important it was for God to have true authority in all of my relationships, especially when it came to boyfriends.

In a particularly insecure season during college, I got involved in a sexual relationship (even though I knew somewhere in my head this wasn't God's plan for me). In many moments of weakness, I crossed lines I wanted to cross in the moment, but knew were wrong in my heart. I let my emotions make my choices—choices that would scar me for life.

Just after my nineteenth birthday I found out I was pregnant, and I had an abortion. Similar to my experience with sexual sin, I knew the right thing to do, but let my fearful emotions make my choices instead of the Lord. I didn't have the courage to face the process of pregnancy, birth, and young motherhood—things I knew the Lord could empower me in and see me through—so I took the easy, yet lethal way out. This



experience brought with it the most intense shame and guilt I have ever felt.

I never thought in a million years that this would be part of my story. No one does. Through all the secrets and hiding of my sin, God sent so many messengers to me about His love, His gospel, and His forgiveness. Eventually, I acknowledged my sin to Jesus and others. I confessed that what I did was wrong—something so many women don’t do for fear of others, and I wish they would. The Lord helped me see that yes, my decision was wrong, but it was thankfully not unforgivable. His death on the cross was the payment required by God for all sin, every sin, *even this hidden, horrible, heavy sin of mine!* That’s real love!

It was God’s love and kindness in this very situation that brought me into a real relationship with Him. I finally understood His unconditional love for wretched sinners and hidiers like me. My story is my story and you have your story, but God wants all of us to have His forgiveness and His power so we can make better choices—choices informed by Him and His Word, not our faulty perspective or emotions. When we obey what He wants instead of what we want, we can live in protection and peace! No regrets!

I am living proof of God’s mercy and grace. I’m not sure where you stand but if you are like me, bearing a hidden scar from your past, let my story be a reminder of what Christ did on the cross for each of us. He bore our scars, our sins, and He washed us white as snow. Remember that. No matter what you hide, if you come to Him with it, and surrender and believe in what He’s done for you in the gospel, you can be white as snow. •



“THOUGH YOUR SINS ARE SCARLET,
THEY WILL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW.”

(ISAIAH 1:18)

- Do you have any hidden scars?
- What holds you back from being honest with God about them?
- What do you need to do in order to overcome this barrier, and enjoy the forgiveness and love offered to you in the gospel?
- What has God taught you over the years about your own past regrets? What advice would you pass onto others about this?

AUTHENTICITY

There is a lot of talk about authenticity these days—social media is filled with endless images telling us to “be our authentic selves.” My sixteen-year-old daughter tells me she likes this or that YouTuber because they are “authentic,” and it seems like we are all trying to prove to each other that we are “being true to ourselves” or “living our best lives.”

Okay.

Those ideas seem pretty harmless on the surface, but they also beg the question—what does “authentic” really mean? Some phrases that might come to mind these days are “telling your truth,” “being true to who are,” or even over-sharing to the point of self-obsession.

Well, since I knew I was writing on the topic of authenticity for this book, as I do every time I play Scrabble—I decided to just look up the word itself. I wasn’t prepared for the wave of relief and gratitude that washed over me when the definition popped up.

Three beautiful words stared back at me: “of undisputed origin.” Meaning, for example, that the painting of the *Mona Lisa* housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris is truly authentic, because there is certainty



ENJOYING YOUR TIME WITH GOD

I celebrated my fiftieth birthday last year. It wasn't nearly the milestone I expected it to be, but it was a sweet time. We were in Florida for my son Price's last high school spring break. His baseball team had a tournament there. My oldest son, Spence, was able to fly down and spend a few days with us as well. As we sat there with our two boys who will soon be out of the house, I thought to myself, *This is the best birthday ever.*

As I sat there laughing and listening to them make fun of Stu and me while we waited on dinner, there was this sense of completeness. All of my people just there together enjoying each other. I adored the moment we had, just the four of us.

As I was lying in bed that night, reliving that night full of food, gratitude, and absolute love for my kids, it hit me: *God feels this way about me.* He desires to just hear me laugh and talk, and He has this sincere pride for this child He created. He wants to have these moments with me, His child.

