



# *Wholehearted Woman Stories*



## *WELCOME*

*Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story. ~Psalm 107:2*

Over the past year, we have collected stories from wholehearted women just like you! In this mini-devotional, we feature 15 of these women and share their stories of courage, authenticity and wholeheartedness. As you read about these strong women of faith, we pray your heart is encouraged, inspired and challenged in your own wholehearted story! Remember, as we fully surrender to God through each season, HE will write our story and orchestrate every step.

LOVE, JENNI AND BETH

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# *Through Every Season*

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*In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul. ~Psalm 138:3*

*He set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth – praise to our God! ~Psalm 40:2-3*

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. ~Isaiah 43:19*

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. ~Proverbs 3:5-6*



## *Anna's Story Journey of Faith*

*Armed with a Master of Divinity, Anna felt called to teach collegiate biblical studies. However, her journey took a sharp detour.*

As graduation from my Master of Divinity program was on the horizon, I knew that the final step needed to teach at a college full-time was a doctorate, and I sensed that God was calling me to this next step. I sent out numerous applications to highly competitive and prestigious institutions. Despite that I had a high GPA, good references, and a solid writing sample, I was only accepted to one school. This school was not my first choice, but I felt that this was my 'Jonah' moment. I thought God was calling

me there, and I did not want to run away like Jonah; I wanted to be obedient and go. I packed up my life and moved half-way across the country in faith that God was leading and directing me in this next phase of life.

Unfortunately, after several weeks at the school it became clear to me that, for a variety of reasons, it was not the right school for me. After much prayer, I decided to leave. I felt like I had just given up on my dream and my calling, and that I was returning to my home state with nothing, except for a pile of debt. I was honest with God about my feelings; I was mad at him and felt like he had abandoned me. I questioned his goodness and his love. Little did I know, he was working out all things for my good.

A few weeks after returning home I went back to my alma mater to have a discussion with a former professor and the head of the Bible department. I felt ashamed. I thought that I had failed and that I had let down everyone who had helped me get to this stage. To my surprise that very day he offered me an adjunct teaching position; he told me that God's call was irrevocable and that perhaps if I got back in the classroom I would someday want to return to academics.

He was right; after one semester of teaching, I enrolled in a local seminary for a Master of Theology degree. I recall getting a call from the financial office on my first day of school saying that they had recently reinstituted a scholarship for my degree program and that my entire first year was paid for; this felt like a confirmation that I was doing the right thing. On my first night of class, despite my fears, I felt completely at home with the material and was relieved to be back doing something I knew I loved.

I slowly began to see the good that was coming from a very difficult experience and how it was making me a better teacher, mentor, and student of Scripture. God then renewed a desire in me to pursue a doctorate. I remember telling God, admittedly in frustration, that if he wanted me to get a doctorate then

He would have to make it happen, and that is exactly what he did. It was four years after I left my first doctoral program that I began my second. I know it will be a long, hard road, but God has taught me that he has always been with me and always will be. I had surrendered my heart to Jesus years ago, but it was when the rubber met the road that my surrender to him was tested. He brought about good in what I thought was a hopeless situation. Such is the journey of faith, a journey that I can now share with my students as they walk their own lives of faith with God. There will no doubt be many more valleys ahead, but I walk into them knowing God is with me and that he is using them to further conform me into the image of his Son.

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# *Priscilla's Story Steady Heart*

*Priscilla had the seemingly perfect Christian family, but her father lived a very different life at home. After he abandoned them, her mother clung to faith in God's Word, but for Priscilla it wasn't that easy.*

I've been a "Christian" all of my life. Faithfully attending and serving in local churches for as long as I can remember. It's the one thing my mom never wavered on, her faith and her commitment to keeping us rooted in the Word. But it wasn't enough to shake my core truth. I believed in God, I believed I had a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, but I also believed His promises were more relative to other people than me. The facts of my life seemed to point to one truth: that I wasn't worthy of His love.

It wasn't until my birthday weekend two years ago that I met the real Jesus through one of the most difficult events of my life. I learned that the father I grew up without had passed away, and I was invited to the

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something!*

funeral. My brother and I attended, and it felt very surreal. It was as if we were attending a stranger's funeral watching others have an overwhelming emotional response to the loss. But, why didn't I feel anything? Why was it so hard to hear from his family members that spoke at the funeral that he was the most kind, loving, and giving man? A person who loved the Lord and would give you the shirt off his back and would help anyone in a time need. But... he never loved me?



That week, in the middle of worship during a Wednesday night church service, I finally broke. In the midst of an onslaught of tears, snot, and ugly crying, I allowed myself to finally face what I was really feeling. "Why, God?? Why, if you are good, and loving, and beautiful, and powerful, why did you keep my relationship with my father away from me? Why couldn't you make him love me? I grew up without a father, and it's your fault." In that moment, an overwhelming sense of love, peace and understanding washed over me as He showed me in a flash what my life would have been like if my father had been a part of it. I wouldn't be married to my amazing husband or have the incredible kids I have, and I wouldn't be following God. I would have known a life of true despair, sorrow, and brokenness. Then in His loving and beautifully corrective way, He said to me, "I have been trying to be your Father all of these years, and you wouldn't let me."

In that statement, I felt no condemnation, but I did feel loss. A loss of time I could have spent in full communion with Him. A loss of restoration and forgiveness I could have been walking through if I had only allowed Him to be the Father I'd always longed for. But that's not the end of my story.

Today, I am the Next Steps pastor at my church, and my husband is the Outreach pastor. Jesus didn't just save me from something; He saved me for something! God is an expeditor of time, and He doesn't waste anything. He didn't waste my brokenness, my pain, my unbelief. He took all of those things and redeemed it into a beautiful testimony that every time I share with others, it brings greater and greater healing, forgiveness, and freedom. He never promised a life free from pain, but He did promise to never leave us or forsake us. He promised to be a Father to the fatherless. And with a Father like that, I know my real identity is now rooted in love. His love.

# *Rose's Story* *A New Season*

*Rose was serving faithfully as a missionary in Haiti when God called her back to the United States. Navigating an uncertain future, God showed her she is exactly where He needs her.*

On January 12th, 2010, there was a catastrophic earthquake that struck the nation of Haiti. Something in me felt compelled to go help if at all possible. I ended up joining a small team from California for a short term trip. When I reached the area of Saint Marc, it's as though God put a hook in my heart much like a fisherman would a fish. And I knew I'd be back. Fast forward 3 months and I was. With a one year commitment to teach at an English speaking school, that one year turned into two and two turned into just shy of 10. Nearly a decade of serving on the mission field mainly with a focus on children and the educational sphere: teaching, child sponsorship for school, and foster care.

When I first went to Haiti, I was coming out of a season of heartbreak. In many ways I'd been shattered - but not beyond

repair. When I arrived in the capital city of Port au Prince - the brokenness there was almost palpable as much as it was visual - in so many places. But the Lord continually spoke to me about being struck down but not destroyed and how He makes beauty from brokenness. He often gave me the image of a mosaic. That's how I see this nation. And somehow He allowed me to be a tiny piece of rose colored glass.



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I've been back stateside for a while now. What led me back was the Lord telling me I needed to. Transitioning back off the mission field is not for the faint of heart, and God has shown me that there is more for me to do - and that in many ways I'm still a missionary. I've come to realize that while I may be geographically out of Haiti, I am not off the mission field.

In just my first few months back in the states, I have had ongoing prayer, mentoring and discipleship conversations over the phone and via email correspondence. In this way, God is allowing me to stay connected in ministry to the people that I love.

I have known that ongoing ministry to this nation and her people would still be in the future - and now the next step is here.

Next month I will be traveling back to Haiti. It seems a bit odd to say that I will be going on a survey trip to a country that I have already lived in for 10 years, but here we are. Of course I will be reconnecting with the people I love, but it is also a time for looking forward and watching God connect the dots He has been showing me over the last year. I care so deeply for the people of Haiti, with a special pull towards youth and children. The areas of education, physical needs, mental health, trauma care and identity have been highlighted throughout the decade of my time there, and it has been impressed upon me even more so since leaving. In this new season, the verse God has given me is Joshua 1:9, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."



# *Beth's Story Beyond Brokenness*

*After a miscarriage, Beth struggled with intense grief and longing for a child. As she determined to stay close to her Lord, God met her in brokenness and showed she was still in His hands.*

"Come close to God, and God will come close to you" (James 4:8). "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in Your book" (Psalm 56:8). These verses tugged at my heart after the miscarriage of my husband's and my first child at seven weeks. The weeks and months that followed were full of grief and disappointment as we sought healing in our Lord and asked Him to give us another child. I can only tell you of the disappointment and even anger brought on by my monthly reminder of being without child.

Despite the suffering in this world, God promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. Knowing this truth, Corey and I were committed to seeking our Father wholeheartedly in our sorrow, even when it was painful to open up our hearts to Him. How did we do this? Although it was not always easy, we had to choose to respond in faith, to continue to hope in a loving God, and to entrust our dreams to Him.

During our time of waiting, I was greatly encouraged by the biblical example of Hannah, mother of Samuel, who continued to hope in God even through her pain and disappointment (1 Samuel 1 & 2). Hannah's choice to continue hoping inspired me to do the same.

*God does not want His children to be without hope—for He is our Lord!*

To stop hoping would have pulled my heart away from God, not closer to Him. Instead, I chose to hide my heart in God, that He might be my Comforter and Strength. I also knew I had to trust God's timing. Although Corey and I knew in our minds that God was capable of giving us a child, we also had to emotionally hope that He would. Hope can bring pain, because it opens us up to disappointment. Yet God does not want His children to be without hope—for He is our Lord and Savior!

In due time, one month after our first child would have been born, we learned we were expecting again. God had fulfilled our hearts' desire!! Our waiting was over and a new journey of trust in our Heavenly Father began with the arrival of our son, Hunter. Just as Hannah dedicated her son to the Lord in faith, I prayed, "He will be Yours for his entire lifetime" (1 Samuel 1:11). This prayer is perfect surrender—knowing that my son is a gift from God entrusted to us, but ultimately belongs to the Lord. We now have a second son, Jason, whom we have also dedicated to the Lord with Hannah's prayer.

In retrospect, I can see how God's timing really was perfect to conceive again. The months after our miscarriage were a needed journey toward healing and wholeness. The experience of loss, although it was not what God wanted, has made us more appreciative of our children as their parents and as ambassadors of Christ in their lives. The renewed joy of bringing forth children is a testimony of God's faithfulness that He is completely trustworthy and will lovingly fulfill the desires of our hearts as we seek Him wholeheartedly. May we continue to press closer to God through our sorrows and to trust Him in times of brokenness by responding in faith, continuing to hope and entrusting Him with our dreams.



## Krystal's Story Step by Step

*From Bible school to marriage and parenting, Krystal has sought to have an openhanded life of faith bathed in Scriptural truth. As she and her husband plant a church, she continues to experience God one step at a time.*



There are so many layers God has added to my personal story that have prepared me and my husband to plant a church and launch into the ministry to which we have been called. I studied Biblical Literature in college and then went to Bible school 110% by faith. I did not know the outcome, but I knew it was where God had called me.

I met my husband, Paul, in Bible school. Coincidental? No. Part of God's plan as he directed my steps? Absolutely. I will stop right here to tell any unmarried woman reading this that one of the most significant choices you will make outside of committing your life to Jesus is who you decide to marry. This is a life trajectory altering decision. I gave the desire of having a husband to God and, by his providential hand and grace, he led me to a man that was exceedingly, abundantly above all I could ask, think, or imagine.

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it was where God had called me.*

After our first year of marriage, my husband stepped into full time vocational ministry. We became pregnant and both felt that God was calling me to stay at home with our baby after she was born. I loved my job and for a moment considered staying, but I released this to God. The tug to be at home to raise my daughter was too strong, and I stepped down from my position.

Living off of one income was tighter but doable, and it was 150% worth the sacrifice. Openhanded with the idea of what my life and career would look like, I ended up becoming a stay-at-home mom and further down the road a homeschooling mom. It was all by faith, in his grace, and with us leaning into God's provision that was always there. God knew best as to what my home and family life should look like, so I trusted his leading and still small voice in the direction of our home.

One way I have cultivated a fully surrendered heart toward Christ is through becoming a student of the Bible. I will admit that pre-marriage and pre-children, it was significantly easier to cultivate this surrendered heart to Christ. I had more time! Consistency is key here. During my single years, I developed a consistent rhythm of practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer, quiet reflection, and reading of Scripture that has carried me into my early 30s and through the stresses of life and raising children. Yes, it is trickier to find time to spend doing these practices now, BUT I strongly believe everyone makes time for what is important to them. As I live my life and make decisions based off of the desire to live a Gospel-centered life, the easier it is to surrender my heart and will to God. By following Him, He leads us step by step.

We currently are in the beginning stages of planting a church. Leaving the stability of a full time pastoral position to plant a church in the midst of a global pandemic, in uncertain times when hundreds of churches are closing their doors, makes no sense in the natural. We said yes to God, and His hand of provision is with us. We are committed to building a healthy, disciple-making, biblically literate church full of people equipped to fulfill the great commission in whatever spheres God has called them to live.



# *Fashioned Individually*

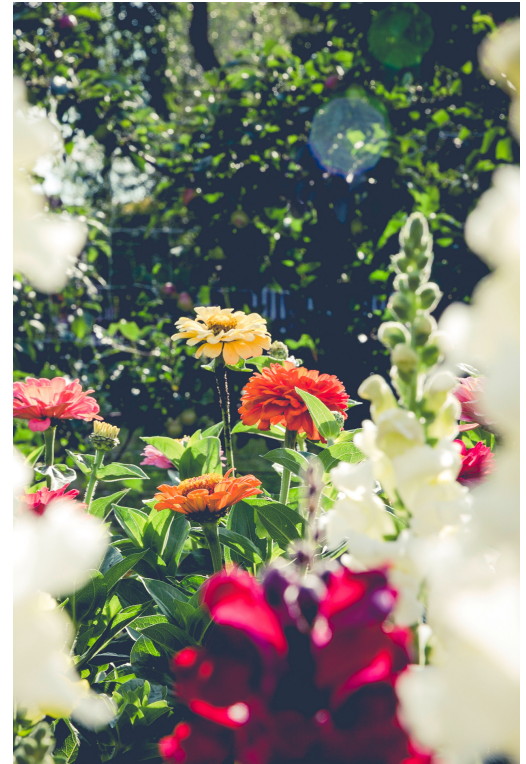
*Yonah's Story      Music and Miracles*

*Bj's Story      Race to the Finish*

*Charity's Story      Fully Surrendered*

*Ronda's Story      Filling in the  
Mission*

*Marah's Story      Wholehearted  
Waiting*



*The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations. From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works. ~Psalm 33:11, 14-15*

*And yet, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are the potter. We all are formed by Your hand. ~Isaiah 64:8*

*If we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is brought to full expression in us. ~1 John 4:12*

*For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works in which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. ~Ephesians 2:10*

# *Yonah's Story    Music and Miracles*

*As a Messianic Jew, Yonah has dedicated her life to ministering across the nations. Through the gift of music, she tells her audience about the love and power of Jesus Christ.*

I am Jewish, was born in Israel and raised in Arizona. I have been a believer in Yeshua for more than 30 years. However, experiencing the true nature of God as my Father, Jesus as my Lord and the Holy Spirit as my Guide has been a lifelong journey. I grew up in a Messianic household, volunteered in a non-denominational church, and went on frequent mission trips from the age of 16. I've learned to hear the voice of the Lord in common, daily decisions made as a wife, mother of two toddlers, as a teacher and as a Minister of music.

Surrendering to the Lord is a decision I have chosen to make, no matter what storms I am facing – and there have been many. My husband and I experienced infertility and had a miscarriage two years before our two miracle-babies came along. We had to surrender all preconceived ideas of what our life would look like and trust that God knew the answered prayers that would come throughout the timeline



of our lives. We had been unemployed for three months and had to surrender our financial situation to the Lord while standing in agreement for a job for my husband. He has now completed nine months of working for an incredible company, and we're continuing on our goal of becoming debt-free. And of course, in the current situation in our nation, we are surrendering our family and know God has called us "for such a time as this."

My husband and I have collectively been to 12 countries and hope to continue in local and international ministry and in Missions. We've had words spoken over us about what God has in the future. Some things have taken place, some things have not taken place yet. Our pastor speaks a lot about how your world is your mission field. People that you encounter at the grocery store or wherever you are, that's your mission field, and it's as real and effective as being on stage at a church. We have learned that ministry opportunities are all around us and in the most common of places. That has truly become our "mission field."

God has also called me to music ministry. I am a musician, worship leader and am involved professionally as a soloist for various organizations. I have learned to have an open ear to hear what the Holy Spirit is wanting to do in each situation. Ministering with love and authenticity to those around us is what being the "hands and feet of Jesus" is all about! Music is SO powerful. I recently recorded and released my first album called "You Bring Peace" (by Yonah Black). Writing the songs for this project took about five years and was birthed out of honest conversations with the Lord. Each song focuses on the faithfulness, healing and restoration of Yeshua as my family experienced several challenging seasons. My prayer is that these songs will bring shalom-peace and hope as people are drawn to the true heart of our Heavenly Father. God will speak through anything, has spoken through anything, and can heal through anything. Music is a great conduit of God's healing power.

*People that you encounter at the grocery store or wherever you are, that's your mission field.*



*Through a surrendered heart, BJ discovered God's delight in how He created her, and she now shares that truth with others in a powerful and timely way.*

## *BJ's Story Race to the Finish*

I am so blessed to share about my journey with the Lord. For a time, I occupied the space of a teacher in student ministry. Children's Pastor is what they called me. It was a rewarding, challenging, honest, spiritual space. I thought, *If I keep my head down and teach the children, I will find success in God's will.* However, He wanted more.

I discovered a discarded me in the process. A me that had been abandoned, by me, for acceptance from others.

God said, it's time for YOU, to LOVE who I created. The YOU who I created YOU to be--brown skin and all. God began to birth in me a stance for spiritual justice of others that look like me. He spoke to me to create a safe place. A place where those who look like me can express their beauty. The beauty an ugly world had shut them out of, in so many ways.

As this stance was building inside me, the death of George Floyd occurred. I was heartbroken. I looked for other leaders to speak out for me, to defend those who looked like me. God cradled me in His arms and gently said, "You do it. You speak out about the injustice that is happening." It was a big step to present the discarded me, risking the acceptance of friends, especially those who did not look like me.

*The reflection of  
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cultivated my heart.*

Out of that step of faith, Race to the Finish was born. Race to the Finish is a candid conversation about humanity's colorful differences. How beautiful those differences are to our Creator; how beautiful our differences are on earth if looked at through God's eyes of love instead of the world's eyes of hate.



The reflection of God in me cultivated my heart. Only the true masterpiece God has created in us through Christ can allow us to commune with Him. Everything else allows us to seek a shallow acceptance in this frail world that changes at a moment's notice. God NEVER changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This definitely plays a role in being on-mission. The goal of Race to the Finish is to provide ongoing opportunities for "an honest talk about race relations in our nation." But what is unique is how we make this happen: With honest conversation and the expression of Christ's love. 1 John 4:11-12 says, "Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is brought to full expression in us." We are "bridging the gap with love." God dreams in color, not in black and white.

# Charity's Story Fully Surrendered



*As a teenager, God tugged on Charity's heart with a desire to teach. But when she ran out of funds for school, she discovered God's grace is sufficient in a surrendered heart.*

I remember going to the financial aid office, and I was like, "I don't have any more financial aid. I have nothing." I was going to actually have to drop out of school and go home to get some money put back. (His grace is sufficient!)

I worked two jobs. That was my "spring semester," working full time and then some after dropping out of college for a time to work that next semester, and I was able to return to college later that year in fall of 2016. I was still able to substitute teach, I was able to make it through my student teaching, and I was able to graduate in May, 2019!

During this season, I was deeply encouraged by James 2 which says, "So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless... Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works" (verses 17 & 26). Because of those "hindrances" I experienced, because of all of those "works," it really did improve and strengthen my faith.

Teaching is a profession that has truly showed me how God loves us. No matter what mistakes my kids make, I will always love them. And a thousand times more, the Father loves me. God has led me to be on mission for His purpose by

reminding me that it's not about "going somewhere" like a mission trip to be on mission, but to see His cross and be mindful of His sacrifice for me and each one of my students on a daily basis. He is my Savior, as well as my students' Savior. It's not about crossing the sea, but seeing the cross. (His grace is sufficient!)

Now I work back in my home school district, but I am also teaching kids where the odds are against them; I'm teaching them that even if you're poor, maybe you're not "smart enough," maybe you're a first generation college kid, that doesn't mean that you can't create a better future and a good life for yourself. God has allowed my story to encourage them to apply those lessons to their life. And of course, being fully surrendered to Christ, because I was in Christ through this whole thing, and He showed Himself faithful-- and He still does!

Working in the classroom now as a full-time teacher, I am still able to instill confidence in my students. I am able to lift them up, and I am able to give life to them. And off the record, my students are asking about Jesus, and I get to tell them because they've asked questions.

His grace is sufficient in EVERY part of my life, and living the fully surrendered life to Him allows Him to work in my classroom and in my students every single day because I'm surrendered to Him, and because He provides me with the grace that I need for each and every day. HE is in my classroom, He is working in the lives of my students whether they know it or not, and He has shown Himself faithful in every step of the journey!

*It's not about crossing the sea, but seeing the cross.*



# *Ronda's Story Filling in the Mission*

*Ronda gave her heart to Jesus and longed to become a missionary as a child. Years later, she realized God had a specific calling for her as part of the ministry of reconciliation.*

In 1999, I had an opportunity to travel to the country of The Gambia. This place captured my heart fiercely. It wasn't the physical poverty that connected me to the region. It was the spiritual poverty. There wasn't a Church on every corner. There were people who had never heard of Jesus Christ and the message of the Gospel. There weren't Bibles in the languages of the people and very few people to reach out to them with this message of salvation. I was struck with the friendliness of the people. In this region, they called me sister and wanted to connect.



It was there I heard for the first time that there were people that thought Christianity was "the White Man's Religion." How could this be? Historically, Christianity reached Ethiopia long before it made it to Europe. Nearly everyone in my family line were Christians. It was in the Black church that people would relate strongly to the "Children of Israel" in the Old Testament of the Bible. The first missionary sent from the US was George Liele in 1793, a freed slave who longed to share the gospel to Jamaica. Worldwide, we also can see that Christianity doesn't have a race or ethnicity. It should be obvious that Christ came for all of humanity. Yet, there are people that feel that they have been excluded by their skin color.

Good friends of mine have dedicated their lives to this region of Africa. They are White Americans. Their children were born and raised in Africa. On a 2007 visit to work with them, Amadou, a Moorish villager, asked my friend Jacob (not his real name) to call me to the side to talk to him. Why me, I thought? My friend Jacob had been there over 20 years and learned several of the languages and culture. As a matter of fact, he was the one who had to interpret the message Amadou shared with me. Amadou expressed through Jacob that he felt a kinship with me, and others like me, because of my skin color.

Since then, Jacob and his wife Lisa have become very close friends to my husband and me. We encourage one another and pray for each other's children as we partner on mission to overcome barriers and display Christ's unity in our diversity. We can fill in the gaps because we fit together as a part of the picture of the ministry of reconciliation.

My passion now is to make more Black Americans aware of the need for us to travel back and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our brothers and sisters in Africa. Out of this desire, the Lord has birthed the 10:40 Africa Mission. Our mission is to spread the Gospel in areas of Africa where there is the least exposure to the Gospel. Specifically, we seek to inspire people of color to join in sharing the good news, while emphasizing that we all belong together as believers in God's kingdom. I cannot think of a better way to show Christ I love Him than "filling in the mission" by walking in this work that he prepared for me.

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# Marah's Story Wholehearted Waiting

*God laid a mission on Marah's heart to help young people in the Philippines as a licensed counselor. Her journey to get there has been a process of waiting.*

Living as a missionary in the Philippines has brought many joys and challenges. The first time I landed in the Philippines, after 30 hours of travel, I breathed in the warm, thick air, looked at the beautiful palm trees, and felt a joy I never had felt before. I was stepping off the plane into the desire of my heart, God's promise for me. I knew God had called me to reach young women, but finding that mission required a season of waiting. I spent the first two years adjusting to the culture while serving other ministries as kids ministry director, counselor, English teacher, and as Ate (older sister) to many young ladies in the church. Standing on the balcony of my studio apartment several years into my time in the Philippines, I looked behind the building, saw a large house, and started to dream. The waiting had not always been easy, but in that moment, God gave me the idea of having a home for young ladies in need of a family and hope for a better future. "Bahay ng Pag-ibig" (House of Love) would be a home for the orphaned, a family for the lonely. God made the vision clear. Even in my time of waiting, He had given me renewed hope.

By 2019, I was still waiting for Bahay ng Pag-ibig to become a reality. After researching all the ins and out of social services' requirements to start my own non-profit and open a home for young ladies, I was overwhelmed by the amount of time, effort, and expenses it would take. But God! Again, the Lord came through by giving me a simple idea, "What about foster care?"

He planted a clearer vision and strong desire to bring four teen girls into my home and love them as my own. With God's help, I will teach them, speak life into them, give them a desire and hope for the future, and help prepare them for a life beyond their wildest imaginings. Girls 14 and older who, coming out of



orphanages or other institutional homes, are unadoptable by 16 and aging out by 17, need homes and families. The Lord brought the connections together through relationships and, in the right time and place, I started my journey to become a foster mom. I sent my foster application in January 2020 and received my license in July. Today, I am still waiting. My girls are out there waiting to come home. God knows them by name, and I know them by faith. Even through the waiting, God has been faithful by fueling my faith. Every step of the way I've had a nudge in the right direction. I've been surrounded and encouraged at just the right times. By God's grace, I've kept moving forward toward the goal, especially when I've wanted to give up. Today I look at their purple room with white trimmed windows and cabinets that I've been working on for the

past year, and I thank God that they will be here soon. I don't know date my girls will arrive. I don't know their names or stories. I don't know how truly challenging it will be as a first time mom to teen girls who have lived through only God knows what. I do know that God is faithful, and His promises are true. I know that He's been preparing me my whole life for this. I know He will provide and carry us through. I know they are worth the wait.

*Quick update: Marah's wholehearted waiting has led to God's promised fulfillment as she now has two teenage girls placed in her home!*

*I know that God's  
been preparing me  
my whole life for  
this.*



# *In His Keeping*

*Jenni's Story      At His Feet*

*Allie's Story      Dynamic  
Difficulties*

*Jen's Story      Grit of Gratitude*

*Megan's Story      Forever Changed*

*Hannah's Story      Heart Talk*



*Then Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ~Matthew 11:28*

*In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will. ~Ephesians 1:5*

*God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. ~Psalm 46:5*

*One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, 'Praise God!' He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. ~Luke 17:15-16*

# *Jenni's Story At His Feet*

*When Jenni and her husband started trying to have a baby, months turned into years of waiting. With grief of delayed hopes, Jenni brought every part of her heart to the Lord to receive His joy.*

I have been told my husband's and my fertility results are all what they should be. We should be getting pregnant. But it has not yet come to pass. Needless to say, it has been quite a journey of the heart! Admittedly, many emotions washed over my heart in this season, and some of my deepest desires have been tossed to and fro. I had to lean into the ongoing grief of the unknown. I had to be real and vulnerable. And yet, this is where I have experienced the joyful courage of Christ in a way that I can only say has been supernatural. It couldn't have been me. On my own, grief would have stayed or bitterness taken root. Yet in this season, God challenged me to draw close to, and receive from, HIM. It was not my strength but true, supernatural joy and encouragement that God Himself ministered to my heart. It was an ongoing process that involved stages of grief, intentional surrender, seeking support in my Christian community, and asking God to speak His truth to my hurting heart through Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit. I could rest in His plan as I sat at the feet of Jesus.



Several years ago, the Lord also laid on our hearts to take steps toward becoming an adoptive home through Oklahoma DHS. We made the call, filled out paperwork, completed our home study, and participated in hours of required foster/adoptive parenting classes. Then we waited. Month after month went by, and we were not contacted about any children. When we excitedly and finally received information about a little girl months later, the Lord made it clear to us that we were not to proceed with meeting her and, instead, to continue to wait. With so many waiting children, why were we still waiting to become adoptive parents?

The Lord ministered to my heart even in this process as we waited some more, hoped, and kept it in the Lord's hands, knowing that He knew what He was doing. And then early last spring, I received a text from our adoption worker asking if we were willing to meet an 18 month old little boy. That Friday, we met his caseworker at the DHS building. We were escorted to a conference room, Bryan and I standing close to one another, and I was handed a bright-eyed, curly-haired little boy.

The rest is history. Today, we are the parents to our wonderful son, Xander. He was officially adopted in early 2020, and I am now a stay-at-home mom. It still seems a little surreal and, yet, like this is how it has always been. The Lord fulfilled His promises to our hearts in His perfect timing and made them a reality because of who HE is, HIS purposes, and HIS faithfulness. We have been able to tell our story to so many people, saying, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy" (Psalm 126:3)! The Lord has demonstrated His loving faithfulness so powerfully in bringing sweet Xander into our lives.

*I have experienced  
the joyful courage  
of Christ.*

When we share the details of how the Lord made us a family, people can hardly help but be in awe of God's handiwork. (We did not realize until later that the Lord put adoption on our hearts right after Xander was born!) What a beautiful, fulfilled promise and calling! And yet, it was like the Lord was also reminding me in that moment not to lose sight of what I had learned so deeply these past several years: that I must never stop sitting at the feet of Jesus.



# *Allie's Story*

## *Dynamic Difficulties*

*When Allie's husband stopped attending church, she felt grieved and uncertain how to respond. In that season, her faithful God showed her how to continue loving her husband, and that He was at work behind the scenes.*

My husband had stopped regularly going to church for a while, and I had to walk through that time with a quiet strength. It was really hard. But I learned really where my relationship with God was and that I wanted to get closer to Him. And I never had it on my heart to talk to my husband about it. It may sound strange, but for a year we didn't even acknowledge that he wasn't going. I kept it to myself so much that I never talked about it with anyone. I was embarrassed being a pastor's kid and worship leader, and my husband wasn't coming to church.

Finally, I talked to two very trustworthy, strong-in-the-Lord friends, and they were like, "We are going to pray for him." I kid you not, within a couple weeks he came back to church. Did I handle that year perfectly? No! In addition to learning more about my relationship with God and where I was at, I turned to some of the wrong distractions as well.

It really was God who worked on his heart; it wasn't me trying to change him. That would've made the situation much worse. Like I said, I wasn't perfect, but I had to "die to self." It was very much about my husband and what he was doing at that time (MBA, CFA, and working full time). I HAD to be his support, I was the only person who was. I had to listen when he was stressed, even though I was tired of hearing about it and I was going through stuff too, but he needed me. If your spouse is pursuing this huge thing, and even though you may not be totally happy with how things are, you need to be their support. Do not nag them. Choose to trust God.

During this season, we continued to just do things that still strengthened our marriage. In marriage, we all have things that annoy or bother us with our spouse. Step back, take a moment to think before speaking. And if it is more serious to you, pray about it. Either God will help you speak to your husband in love about it, or God will work on him. Give it to God, BE PATIENT, things don't happen overnight, and watch your husband surprise you. When change happens in God's timing instead of you trying to force it, it's a beautiful thing.

In the smooth and difficult times, experience and do things TOGETHER. Be quick to say sorry. This is an important part of your surrender to the Lord and helps you grow in intimacy. Intimacy (both physical and emotional) and vulnerability with your husband is beautiful. Don't neglect this.

Last but not least, be best friends and partners. Utilize what this relationship is all about. God made marriage. You're doing life together. You're doing things and experiencing things together. You're helping each other; burdens aren't just on one person. Making decisions together, laughing together, learning about each other and growing in your relationship every day.



*When change happens in God's timing, it's a beautiful thing.*

*When Jen's daughter Charlie was diagnosed with Down syndrome, her mind spun with sadness and fear. Yet, God spoke to her heart that He had chosen her for Charlie; she was a priceless gift.*

## *Jen's Story Grit of Gratitude*

It was love at first sight. After thirty-eight weeks, I finally held my firstborn. My beautiful Charlotte Joy. "Charlie," as we would call her, lay on my chest and wriggled under the bright hospital room light. My husband and I stared at her blinking blue eyes, the tuft of strawberry blonde hair atop her head, her tiny shriveled hands, her precious little body. "We've been waiting for you," I cried. I couldn't look away from her precious face. "Momma loves you so much."

Just a few days later, we received the phone call that confirmed the doctors' suspicions: Charlie had Trisomy-21. This genetic abnormality, commonly referred to as Down syndrome, was something we never imagined for our family. We knew, of course, that parenting would be a challenge. But parenting a special-needs child, who could possibly be ready for that?

The test results didn't surprise God. He didn't worry when the doctors expressed their initial concerns. In God's great design, He has chosen me out of everyone else in the world to be a part of this precious child's life. Viewed this way, we are the lucky ones. We are the ones who are blessed to be given such a precious opportunity.

But I'll be honest. I didn't feel "chosen" when I first heard our daughter's diagnosis. Instead, sad and afraid, I initially turned to anything I could get my hands on that could teach me about this disability. I searched for information on how to best parent our precious Charlie. I found endless information in books and articles, most of which left me more fearful.

*God, thank you for  
choosing us for Charlie.*



In the midst of reading of all that could go wrong in my daughter's body, I found a few personal testimonies of families facing our same situation, stories that stirred hope. But I didn't find anything for parenting a special-needs child. I needed something to help guide my faith through this journey. Out of the need I faced years ago, I wrote *Chosen for Charlie: When God Gifts You With a Special Needs Child*. When we published *Chosen For Charlie*, the door was opened to bring a message of hope through radio, television, in schools, various churches, local events in the area, and countless one-on-one conversations that led to profound impact. Later this year, my second book entitled *Champion for Charlie* will be released as well!

When the Holy Spirit helped me to change my prayers, my hurting heart began to become whole. He gave us the grit of gratitude we needed – God, thank you for choosing us. Thank you that we get a front row seat to the miracles that will unfold in our daughter's life. Thank you that you will be with us as we parent this child. Thank you that out of all the families that could have been gifted with this child, you blessed us! To be grateful is to find healing and be made whole.



# Megan's Story Forever Changed



*After Megan and her husband had three biological children, they began to pursue God's calling to adopt another child. Megan's heart was tested through seasons of disappointment, but God guided their family at just the right time.*

Since I was little, I've been fascinated by stories like Anne of Green Gables. A vulnerable child with nothing but personality to offer is loved and invited into community. Throughout my teenaged years, I was around some foster and adoptive families and loved watching that process. I knew that that was a deep desire of my own heart put there by God. So when my husband and I talked about having kids, I told him that I wanted biological children but wanted to make sure we left room for adoption and he was 100% on board.

Fast forward a few years and we had three precious biological children. At the time, we still had adoption on our hearts and sensed God leading us to take a step. We soon began the process of going through DHS for local, in-state adoption. Unfortunately, our experience of that was a chaotic mess. In the middle of that mess, someone else contacted us about needing an adoptive family for a pregnant mom. We said yes. And a week later, that baby went to heaven. A week after that, DHS dropped our case because after four months we were "wasting their time," even though the caseworker had completely forgotten about us.

Brokenhearted and so confused about why God would place this so deeply on our hearts with no hope, we began looking at private adoption. We met with a few agencies and just didn't have peace. And then God dropped our nephew in our lap for eight months and holy moly did that test us. We helped him how we could until his mom got on her feet. And then we were back to square one.

Four months later, we heard of an agency that is basically a (fantastic!) mediator between you and DHS, and we felt like that's where God pointed us. And it took us a year to get our stuff together!! (Note: This was totally on us, but the agency was on top of it!) Then in December of 2019, we were asked to take a baby the age we'd been hoping for. And there was no peace. We had to say no. My heart broke again. GOD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?! And then God told our friends who'd been fostering to close their home and He told us to take both of the kiddos they'd been caring for. Not the age we were thinking, and TWO. But there was no question about it. There was just peace and YES. The rest is history.

When I was going through it (Who am I kidding? Some days it's still this way), it was messy and chaotic, and I couldn't see Him. But when I look back, I see that He was cracking me wide open to show me the equivalent of how He sought after me to adopt me into His family. His relentless pursuit of me and throwing His arms wide open for ME. My understanding of the depth of His love is forever changed. When I stop and think about how He was glorified through it all and how many people He's allowed little ol' me to be an influence to in this area, I'm wrecked all over again but in the most beautiful way.

*My understanding of  
the depth of His love is  
forever changed.*

# *Hannah's Story     Heart Talk*

*When Hannah heard her church was starting a campus in a women's prison, she immediately knew God was calling her to help. She quickly got involved and soon became a ministry leader. God is transforming hearts every week, including her own.*

When I started volunteering at the women's prison campus, I knew I was about to have the opportunity to interact with some of the most broken and hurting women in our state of Oklahoma. There was a fire in me for them I could not wait to allow God to use.

Each week I tell myself and the team that we are here to serve and love without our own agenda. We are walking out God's plan, His agenda. There is no pressure involved in this ministry opportunity. This is ALL on Him. I ask them to be themselves, with an open heart, open hands, and an open mind. To listen more and speak less. These women need to be heard first, then encouraged. Let the Holy Spirit be our guide in every interaction.

Very quickly I saw them begin to come down those stairs into the gym with smiles on their faces and hope in their eyes. We were building a foundation with them, hundreds of them. Showing them a little more each week that we are authentic. We are for you. We are here to serve you, to care and to show you what Jesus looks like in the life of a woman of God.

The women began to worship so loud; you could hardly hear the blaring speakers that echoed throughout the gym over them. They would shout and holler, "Amen!" Hands began to raise, and the tears began to fall. God was moving. Our team stood in the back wrapping around them, praying for them, worshiping with them, and we, too, were brought to tears watching God shower them with His mighty presence and unfailing love.

I had no idea that what I said yes to would bless my life so deeply and change me forever. THIS was ministry, THIS is our God, and I get to be a part of His workmanship. We have experienced miracles of many kinds in Dr. Eddie Warrior. We have had over 100 salvations this year since pandemic-related visiting restrictions have been lifted. God is moving! Miracle healings have happened such as back pain healed, ongoing Covid 19 symptoms healed, broken and hopeless hearts healed, freedom from addiction (losing the desire!), freedom from sexual perversion and much more.

After each service, I get 7-10 minutes to make the message they watch personal. To share with them practical life application partnering with the Word of God, and God shows up faithfully every week! Luke 12:12 says, "For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said." The enemy would love to convince me that I'm not qualified, but he has no authority because I already know this. I lean on the Holy Spirit and am fully confident in Jesus Christ who lives in me to speak to his daughters. We are teaching these ladies that our God - THEIR God - is bigger than everything they face. To trust in Him regardless of what they see with their eyes and experience in their emotions. Our Mighty God will move mountains and if the mountain does not move how they hoped, He is a heart healer and a circumstance redeemer!

*THIS is our God, and I get to be  
part of His workmanship.*







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*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

*~Ephesians 3:20-21*