



B R A V E
H E A R T

And don't for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind. Ponder and meditate on it day and night, making sure you practice everything written in it. Then you'll get where you're going; then you'll succeed. —*Joshua 1:8 MSG*

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Chapter 1

BRAVE HEART



DAY 1

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.
—1 John 4:18

In her book *Unlikely Loves*, Jennifer Holland shares true stories of animals that have formed an unlikely but deep attachment for each other—animals like an abandoned mallard duck named Fifty Pence and a hunting dog named Skip.

The story of Fifty Pence provides a perfect foundation for our journey through the book of Joshua. You see, the world is a battlefield where brave hearts make a difference. Joshua had to be strong and courageous to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. You too will need courage and strength beyond yourself in order to fulfill the purpose God has given you.

For many years, I served God with a broken heart instead of a brave heart. When I look at Fifty Pence, I see more than just a duck—I see the heart and soul of a woman. A major part of that woman's story is a God who loves her beyond measure, and a Savior who laid down his life for her, who tied her soul to the love and abundant life that only God can bring. In other words, I see my own story, and the stories of many women I have ministered to through the years.

An Instinct to Cleave

Fifty Pence was a helpless baby duckling abandoned by her momma. Thankfully, a couple saw the precious fluff ball on the street and scooped her up. They rushed her to Annette, a woman known to rescue wildlife.

Annette cared for the duckling. And while she did, she was careful to keep a certain distance so that Fifty Pence wouldn't bond with her. Scientists use the term *filial imprinting* for the natural instinct to form a strong attachment. Soon after hatching, ducklings will follow whatever bigger animal they see first—an instinct that allows them to learn important life skills. If Fifty Pence imprinted on Annette, it would be much more difficult for Annette to release the duck into the wild in adulthood.

Despite Annette's efforts, Fifty Pence's natural instinct to cleave to another won out. Apparently, Fifty Pence had eyes only for Skip, the resident hunting dog. Annette tried to keep them apart for fear that mixing a hunting dog and a duckling might create the perfect storm. To her surprise, Skip began to mother little Fifty Pence, and the two became inseparable. Annette wrote,

What touched me most was the trust this little duck showed. Here's this tiny, vulnerable thing putting her faith in an animal that might have been her enemy—it's like

going to a lion for affection! I suppose she was lonely and wanted companionship, and normally she'd have had her mother and siblings. So she turned to Skip. And for some reason, this dog with the instinct to attack decided to be loving instead.¹

A beautiful partnership lasted for weeks between the two mismatched animals. While unlikely, it seemed that Fifty Pence had found in Skip her solution to satisfy her natural, God-given instinct to bond.

Or had she?

One day Annette returned from errands to find that Fifty Pence had flown away. Devastated by her fear that Fifty Pence was not yet mature enough to handle her freedom, Annette searched with great determination for her favorite orphan. Her diligent search stretched into weeks until finally, to her dismay, she accepted that Fifty Pence was gone.

Nor has Annette found Fifty Pence to this day. She doesn't know for sure why this little duck left Skip and her safe haven to venture into the unknown.

But my mind, drawn to clarity, draws my own conclusions. Could it be that, deep down, Fifty Pence's instinct to cleave to her true mother remained? Could it have been this longing that led her away? While Skip the dog was nurturing and provided a connection, Fifty Pence understood instinctively that Skip was *a* connection but not *the* connection—her real mother. The desire for that closer connection won out and gave Fifty Pence the courage to leave the comfort of what was for the allure of what could be.

We Have All Been There

Have you ever felt that way? Felt a longing inside that left you thinking there must be something else in life? In the daily busyness that creates a predictable, mundane rhythm, sometimes that longing is drowned out, but the desire never really leaves you. And at night or early in the morning, when life is still, you still have that childlike faith that, like Fifty Pence, knows you were created for more.

I've been there. The daily rhythm of my life a few years ago was not without God. Church, Bible study, prayer, and serving others were a part of the drumbeat of my weekly life, which I loved dearly. *But the life with Christ that I was exploring through church and Bible study and the life I was actually experiencing were miles apart.* I read about abundant life in Christ, but I was not experiencing it.

And, as with Fifty Pence, an instinct told me there was more to my faith than sitting on a church pew.

Can you relate? You are a Christian, and yet that longing inside you still wonders, *What if there is more to my walk with Christ than I'm experiencing?* Do you want to find the courage and strength to leave *what is* for *what could be* and live life to the fullest? Are you ready to become the woman God created you to be?

That was what I wanted. And that was what I found as I took a journey through the book of Joshua. My relationship with Jesus changed. God's perfect love healed my broken heart and made it brave. You too can find this freedom and live the life you were created to live and give to others.

Ready to JUMP!

OK, deep breath. Here we go. It's time to say good-bye to the wilderness and forge into the Promised Land. Are you ready for the adventure? Yeah, me too.

Today we close with a devotion to keep close to your heart during our journey together. (For a printable version, visit www.boldbraveheart.com.)

Hey, brave heart, I love that you will jump into the unfamiliar. I love that you are bold. I love that you dare to do what I am asking you to do. I love your passion to pioneer (Isaiah 42:16).

So be free to become the beautiful you I have created (Ephesians 2:10).

Let go of what others say and find freedom to walk in your authentic identity in Christ (Galatians 1:10). Let go of every other hand you are holding so you can grab tightly onto mine (Proverbs 29:25).

I am looking for someone whose heart is fully committed to me and not afraid to walk differently by following me completely. Walking outside the world-defined box takes you beyond what is temporary into living for eternal treasures (2 Corinthians 4:14–18).

My presence and my purpose for you do not promise the absence of adversity; rather, they provide the assurance that you will never face adversity alone (Hebrews 13:5). With me, you have a love that will never let you go (Romans 8:38–39).

You see, I need someone to be first (Isaiah 42:16). Yes, I am looking for the pioneering spirit inside you that says, I will not settle for what has always been. I want to uncover what can be. I need you to be the first in your family to walk a different way (1 Peter 1:18–19). I see the generations beyond you who can be blessed. Indeed, my child, I have created you for this time appointed under heaven to leave blessings in your wake as you live for me.

When I formed the world, I did not rest until I'd made a woman, because she was needed to complete my plan. Today I still work to release the God-given potential within women, because they are an important part in a great story written for my glory.

So don't be afraid to jump out of the boat. I created you to be brave! You'll leave ripples of eternal blessings when you walk in courage, trusting in me. Fear is something you learned. Love is what you are wired for, and you'll walk in love when you follow me because I am love.

My dear daughter, if I am for you, who can be against you? (Romans 8:31). My perfect love can cast that fear right out of you (1 John 4:18). Nothing can separate you from my love—and my love is enough.

So walk in that security. If worry walks through the front door, push it back out by casting all your cares on me and trusting me with your whole heart (1 Peter 5:7). And if waves of adversity steal your focus, get your eyes right back on me (Matthew 14:30; Hebrews 12:1–2). Find a promise in my Word and cling to it with all your might (Mark 4:20).

Yes, brave heart, flex your faith muscle. Walk differently by living fully for Christ. You are bold, beautiful, and brave.

DAY 2

Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly.

—Numbers 32:11-12

Like Fifty Pence who found herself in a puddle beside the road, where life was not as it should be, the Israelites, God’s chosen people, found themselves enslaved in Egypt. God sent Moses to liberate his people from their captivity, much like Annette, who rescued and shepherded little Fifty Pence.

Annette’s safe haven gave Fifty Pence a home out of the puddle, but Fifty Pence was not created to live in a backyard attached to a hunting dog named Skip. She was designed for something different.

Similarly, Moses shepherded the Israelites out of Egypt into the comparative safety of the wilderness. But the wilderness was never the final destination God had promised to the Israelites. They too were designed for something more—not slavery in Egypt or wandering in the wilderness but living out their authentic, God-given purpose in their Promised Land.

While in the wilderness, Moses sent out twelve spies, including Joshua and Caleb, to explore the Promised Land and bring back a report to camp. Skim through Numbers 13 and 14 and answer the following questions.

What was the report the spies brought back?

How did ten of the spies respond?

How did Caleb, with Joshua as his silent partner, respond?

How did the people respond?

How did God respond?

Consider the following verses. Why were Joshua and Caleb able to go beyond *exploring* the Promised Land to *experiencing* the Promised Land?

Numbers 14:20–25

Numbers 32:11–12

Caleb and Joshua were more afraid to settle for what was than to pursue what could be. Unfortunately for the Israelites, they listened to the bad report of the ten spies rather than to God’s promises, and they reacted in fear. In fact, they actually reasoned that life would be better for them back in bondage in Egypt and sought to stone Caleb and Joshua. The greatest tragedy was that they explored the Promised Land but never experienced it because of unbelief in their hearts. Whatever voice we agree with will grow the loudest in our hearts, and this will ultimately drive our direction.

Caleb’s report did not deny the existence of the giants. Rather, he saw the giants in light of the truth of God. This gave Caleb and Joshua courage. Willing to believe differently, they therefore lived differently. They saw their lives through the lens of their knowledge of who God is, and so, trusting God, they pursued the Promised Land with passionate faith. They saw adversity not as an obstacle but as an opportunity to push their purpose forward by trusting in God, with whom *all* things are possible. As a result, God said that Caleb and Joshua had *hearts that wholeheartedly followed him*.

A heart that wholeheartedly follows God: this is our definition of a brave heart. Simply stated, brave hearts believe God, experience the Promised Land, and lead others to do the same. Walking by faith in God and his Word and not necessarily by what

she sees, a brave heart finds courage and direction to become the woman God created her to be. Oh, she still feels afraid when adversity arrives. But she understands that her courage and strength come from looking at life through the lens of who God is and believing the voice of truth over the enemies' lies taunting her to fear. Her heart is determined to believe God. In doing so, she invites others to do the same.

This world is a battlefield, and your brave heart is needed.

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

Much as little Fifty Pence didn't settle but spread her wings in courageous flight to find where she truly belonged, you can take flight to soar into your Promised Land as you journey through the book of Joshua.

Do you hear it, brave heart? It's the voice of your Savior calling to you through his Word. Take his hand and become the woman God created you to be. Life is very safe inside sanctuaries and Bible studies, but you were created to go beyond merely exploring your Promised Land, like ten of the twelve spies. You were meant to *experience* your spiritual inheritance, like Joshua and Caleb. The difference is largely a matter of the heart. This study is designed to help you cross the Jordan and experience the Promised Land step by step as we journey through the book of Joshua.



Key Treasure

This world is a battlefield, and your brave heart is needed.

DAY 3

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
—*Matthew 11:28–30*

We were created to cleave—as Fifty Pence did according to her natural *filial imprinting* instinct but on a much deeper level. God made our hearts that way so we would eventually find him. Our souls naturally crave intimate fellowship with our Creator. And we cannot find the peace and rest we crave until we find him and can rest in him.

Read Hebrews 4:6–13. If Joshua’s leading the Israelites into the Promised Land was not the final rest God intended for his people, what do you think our rest, or Promised Land, could be?

Like the Israelites, you have a spiritual inheritance. Our Promised Land is not a physical place like the Israelites’ but rather a resting place in Christ: peace with God now and in eternity. Our Promised Land represents the blessings and the grace preached through the gospel of Christ, promised through the New Covenant and purchased through Christ’s sacrifice.

True Rest

In the beginning, when God created the earth, he blessed Adam and Eve in a special way. Through their relationship with him, they were connected to the source of life. At rest with God, they walked and talked with him. Then sin entered and broke the intimate fellowship they shared with their Maker. From then on, people were born without that relationship. But God already had a plan to restore people’s intimate fellowship with him so they could be tied to him for eternity. And his plan includes you and me.

Imagine that! The Creator of the universe wants to have a personal, intimate relationship with you. God invites you to connect your soul with him not only because he wants to have a relationship with you but also because he is the only one who can fill that empty void in your heart and give you true rest.

Read the two translations of Matthew 11:28–30 below and write down everything you learn from them about what it means to “yoke yourself with Jesus” and experience rest in Christ.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (NIV)

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (MSG)

In biblical times, animals, usually oxen, were yoked together to complete a task such as plowing a field. Each yoke was specifically designed and uniquely handmade for a particular pair of animals. There was always a lead ox that was stronger and smarter, and that lead ox would be yoked to a weaker one. The yoke was designed so the stronger ox would carry the weight, and the weaker one would simply follow along to complete the task.

The truth Jesus taught with this picture is as true for us today as it was for the people who heard him speak it in person. He is speaking this to us right now: *Come, take my yoke. Follow me and let me carry the weight. You will find the rest your weary soul has been looking for. My yoke is specifically designed just for you, and when you lay down what you think will give you life, I can bring you an abundant life. The rest I provide is not a rest from problems or the type of rest that the world offers—it is something far greater. You will never be alone. With my strength, I will lead you to accomplish your God-given purpose.*

I love what The Message translation says—“Get away with me and you’ll recover your life.” Many of the yokes we place on ourselves are self-protective measures that we think will give us life. But they won’t. Jesus invites us to lay all that down in order to find real life. If we are honest, we have to admit that the other sources we have depended on to give us peace and rest have not worked. The other ways we have tried in life have left us worn-out, weary, tired.

Jesus Is the Only Answer

Jesus uses another animal parable to explain that he is the only source for real love, life, and rest.

“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.” (John 10:9–13)

So what is the source for perfect, pure love and real life? There is only one: God. This world offers stuff (wealth, honor, popularity, fun, relationships), but it’s always temporary gain. Jesus promises a life that goes way beyond the blessings of this world. Real life. Everlasting and abundant life. We never have to doubt his love for us. He proved his love by laying down his own life. No other love we may experience on earth can compare with this love because Jesus’ love is pure and perfect (1 John 4:18). His love is unconditional. An undeserved gift. The Bible tells us not only that God loves us but also that he *is* love and life (1 John 4:8; John 14:6).

Other characters in this story interact with the sheep, but only one of them is worthy for us to tie our souls to: the Good Shepherd. We have other relationships, some good and some maybe not so good, but we should yoke ourselves with only one: Jesus.

There is a thief who comes to kill, steal, and destroy. The enemy of our souls, Satan, is behind all evil in this imperfect world. He seeks to take our hearts captive to other yokes that prevent us from becoming the people God designed us to be.

There are also wolves that attack. I am sure you can remember a time when someone intentionally attacked you verbally, physically, or emotionally. But when Jesus tells us that even the hired man charged with caring for the sheep ended up letting the sheep down, he is letting us know that even though the people charged with taking care of us may be wonderful people, they don’t have the ability to give us life.

Only Jesus laid down his life to fight for our hearts, releasing us to live fearlessly for his glory as we look to him as our sole source for life.

People Are Here for Us to Love

Don’t get me wrong. We are called to be in community with one another. *But people are not here to give us life—they are here for us to love.* If we look to them for the kind of happiness, peace, and joy that only God can give, we place a burden on them that they simply cannot bear.

What are the ways we might look to people for life instead of loving them? For years, I lived as a people pleaser, seeking my value and worth in what others said about me. Perfectionism was another way I tried to convince the world I had it all together. Other examples of seeking life from those around us:

- Parents who try to live vicariously through the lives of their kids
- Husbands or wives who expect their spouses to make them happy and provide for every aspect of their satisfaction in life
- Pastors who rule with an iron hand because they see the failures of their congregation as an insult

Ultimately, placing our unrealistic demands on people will lead to bitterness and unforgiveness. Why? Because people are imperfect and simply cannot give us what only God can give. Indeed, this points us to a great reality: We cannot love others unconditionally until we see God as our ultimate source for life. We cannot give out what we don't have. God is love, and as we look to him, we can receive his love and give it out to others.

One Name Above Every Name

Just as Joshua was called to lead the Israelites out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land, the Holy Spirit is there to lead you into the life you were created and redeemed to live.

Many scholars believe Joshua illustrates Jesus Christ. Like Joshua, Jesus guides us out of the wilderness and into our Promised Land. Like Joshua, Jesus leads us victoriously through the battles we face in the Promised Land. Like Joshua, Jesus rescues us and identifies us as children of God.

Only Jesus can give us our spiritual inheritance. Moses represents the old covenant—the law. And just as Moses could not take the Israelites into the Promised Land, we cannot earn our way into the Promised Land by keeping the law. It is solely through Jesus Christ that we can receive our spiritual inheritance. “Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:16–17).

In this study, my goal is not to give you a formula or a list of how-tos but simply to reveal Jesus Christ through the book of Joshua. Formulas will only frustrate you. Jesus is the only one who can take you into the Promised Land.

Just like the strong ox takes care of the weaker one, Jesus will take care of you and lead you, taking you to beautiful places of freedom and peace and rest for your soul as you follow him. There, in the loving arms of Jesus, you can become the woman God created and redeemed you to be.

DAY 4

Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.
For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
—*John 1:16–17*

If you and I grabbed a cup of coffee and talked long enough, I'm sure we could each share stories about times when, like Fifty Pence abandoned on the roadside, we found ourselves alone, afraid, unsure. We could tell about times when other people's choices—or our own—hurt us. Ours is an imperfect world with imperfect circumstances and imperfect people—and life happens. We would like to control everything and everyone so we won't get hurt. But we can't.

In the past, I tried to fix my broken heart with inner vows, which I viewed as formulas to fix and control my world so I could find freedom, redemption, happiness, and peace. Sadly, all such formulas eventually fail us. Mine did. But in the failing, I found this truth that would ultimately set me free: healing my broken heart could never come from inner vows or rules I keep but from a Redeemer I follow.

False Formulas Cannot Fix a Broken World

In ministering to women over the years, I have found that every woman has a story. Every one has at some point felt abandoned, lonely, afraid, and insecure. Some say, "My mother was so involved in her own emotional trauma, she couldn't begin to nurture me." I've also heard the heartache and tears of women facing a husband's adultery, and of single moms trying to cope because their husbands left the family. Even husbands who provide for their family may be controlling, or abusive, or addicted to pornography or alcohol.

Some women remember a stern and distant father who didn't know how to love a daughter. Others were wounded in the heart by a trusted friend, a bully at school, a teacher or coach, a boss, or even someone in church leadership.

Like Fifty Pence—we're left wondering where we belong. Whether or not we talk about it, the pain inflicted by those relationships is very real. And even years later, the wound may still be raw.

Life Happens

Even with wonderful people around us, life happens. A friend of mine is struggling with the reality that her eighty-year-old mother, who was the loving, steady rock in her life, faces death. My friend is grieving over that imminent loss. Another friend, a young woman from my Bible study class two years ago, feels devastated because after trying for three years to get pregnant, she miscarried. Through tears she pleaded, "Please pray. I

am really struggling with my faith.” Breast cancer invaded the body of another close friend. Her long journey, while triumphant, was laced with difficult trials.

Life happens in our imperfect world. We bump up against disease and disaster beyond our control, and we ask, “Why, God? Where are you? Have you abandoned me?”

It’s natural, as we move into new seasons, to experience changes we may or may not have planned or expected. It’s unfamiliar territory. Maybe you’ve experienced a change recently. You’ve moved. You lost a job and took a new one—or maybe you’re still job hunting and are unsure what to do. Or you may be stepping into the challenges of a new career.

Perhaps you’re a newlywed, or you just had your first baby. Or your child recently graduated from high school or got married, and you find yourself with an empty nest. Or you were recently diagnosed with an illness, and now the way you spend your days is changing; you find yourself unable to do simple things you always took for granted. Or a dream you clung to recently died, and you wonder what your purpose in life really is.

Seasons. Some happy, some challenging, some painful.

Trying to Fix It

When life happens, how do we handle it?

Sometimes we create false formulas to handle the hurt. We design our own way to fix things. We build formulas for freedom, happiness, and peace. They vary from person to person, shaped by things like our background, traumatic experiences, family and friends, and the world’s influences.

Sometimes we attach ourselves to unhealthy sources for the answers and are wounded as a result. Hurt and needy, we recommence the never-ending cycle of searching for something or someone to satisfy the ache in our soul. But whether unhealthy or healthy, the things or people we depend on for our happiness just don’t satisfy—because they are not God.

Our formulas fail us. They create cycles of behavior that become second nature and seep into our subconsciousness. Old hurts create habits that hinder us from giving our hearts fully to God and becoming the women God created us to be.

I know because it happened to me.

My Formula, My Freedom

When I was growing up, like Fifty Pence, I felt abandoned. And although I never articulated it, I designed a formula to live by—inner vows to fix my broken heart and help me find happiness, worth, identity, and ultimately, life. *I will work hard to succeed and thus prove*

I am valuable. If I am weak, I'll get hurt again. I have to be the best. I can never fail. I must please others. If I am not perfect, I am not good.

I became a self-reliant and driven perfectionist. I needed people's affirmation, and when I succeeded, I got it. The world applauds success, and success became my drug of choice, almost a weapon. I was an approval addict who could not say no. I developed codependent relationships. Outside I looked like a confident teenager with titles and accolades, but inside I was terrified. I was alone in my heart, striving to be perfect. I saw failure as unacceptable. At one point the weight of my brokenness became so unbearable that, desperate, I tried to take my own life. That is a scary place to be.

Success is certainly not bad, nor is the encouragement of others. But when these things become our source of life, we are on shaky ground because we place them before God. It's an easy distinction to miss. The source of my affirmation wasn't something bad; it was something good. But good works, when they are not *God* works, can become a yoke of slavery because we have to keep producing them in our own power. Proving myself to solve the shame I felt inside produced pride. My efforts to get my needs met, though well intentioned, were misdirected.

Although I never attempted suicide again, that need to prove myself remained even after I became a Christian at the age of twenty-two. For years, I carried this need into my career, my marriage, my parenting, my ministry, my relationships with others, and even my relationship with God. For a while, on the outside, it appeared that formula was working. However, pride comes before we fall, and my need to prove myself led to a *great* fall. A storm of huge proportions washed away my house built on a false foundation. God in his amazing love allowed me to fall so I could find a far greater antidote than success.

Have you ever had a "sifting season"—a time that reorders your life and changes your perspectives and values? God led me into just such a season to change my source of strength to the only one who could heal my broken heart and redeem the effects of our broken world.

The change did not happen overnight. I had to get out of God's way, and doing so didn't come easily. At first I tried to break free of my habits through sheer willpower rather than leaning on Christ. My shelves were crammed with Christian self-help books; I thought that after reading just one more, and then another, I could reach the freedom we sang about in church. On days when I was "good," I was full of pride and self-righteousness. On days when I blew it, I was filled with condemnation and guilt.

But I lacked the ability to break free from my old formulas, and Jesus never expected me to. All he wanted was for me to take his hand and trust him. Jesus is the only one who can take our broken hearts and make them brave through his perfect love.

I had a decision to make: I could live life on my own terms, fighting my own battles using my formula. Or I could surrender and find my true purpose and identity as a child of God.

I am beyond thankful for that sifting season—a most difficult but beautiful time that shifted me from my formulas to my freedom through the Holy Spirit. When I discovered the difference between following Jesus and following my inner vows, everything changed. Part of this journey was a change in my perspective on God’s Word, from approaching it solely for information to seeking Holy Spirit revelation instead. Also, as I looked to God’s Word to define me, I no longer needed success to do so. God’s Word changed me and continues to change me as I look to the Holy Spirit to lead me.

And that is why I do what I do with Treasured Ministries. I cannot change a woman’s circumstances, but I can encourage her to change the direction she looks to find healing. Value. Life. Freedom. How? By inspiring her to look to Jesus as her sole source.

Broken Hearts Are Healed Through Surrender

Brave heart, did you know that when you became a child of God at the moment of salvation, that was just the beginning of your journey? As you follow Jesus, he’ll unravel those false formulas that provided no rest for your soul, and lead you to experience the abundant life you were created to live. I myself am still on this beautiful, lifelong journey today, no longer committed to perfection but rather committed to following Jesus.

Complete surrender is the doorway to this life, which comes only from Jesus (Galatians 5:1). Surrender will require the bravest of hearts because you have to walk in ways unfamiliar to your soul. It is impossible to do on your own. But remember from yesterday that you have the Stronger Ox to lead you. All he wants you to do is come to him like a child, depending on him every step of the way. He never expects perfection. He uses your mistakes as stepping-stones as you surrender to him. Through complete surrender, you can do more than *know* about your spiritual inheritance in Christ—you can *experience* it. And in that beautiful place of abundance in your Promised Land, you have the ability to truly give to others.

Freedom is not a destination; rather, it’s a journey of living as we are led by the Holy Spirit to become all God created us to be. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there are liberty and love (2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 John 4:8). In Jesus we live and move and have our being and eternal life (Acts 17:28; John 14:6; 1 John 5:11–12).

We were not created and redeemed to stay in the wilderness. Like the Israelites, we are called to keep in step with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25). We are called to be brave hearts and to walk courageously in love.

Just as it was time for the Israelites to leave the wilderness, it’s time for us to understand in greater measure what is holding us back from becoming all God created and redeemed us to be. Our past wilderness seasons should not be allowed to become permanent walls that eclipse the liberty and love that flow from obeying the Holy Spirit.

Ready to move forward into your Promised Land? Don’t look back. Take hold of your Joshua—Jesus! Live with impact by letting the Holy Spirit lead you to the liberty and love your heart was designed to experience—and to pass along to others.

DAY 5

You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.
—*Psalm 30:11*

Put yourself in Joshua’s shoes. You were commissioned with this promise from God: “‘Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you’” (Deuteronomy 31:23). Hoshea, your birth name, means “salvation.” Moses changed your name to Joshua, which means “God saves” (Numbers 13:16). Forty years ago, Moses sent you and eleven other spies to survey the Promised Land in Canaan. You saw the enemies to be conquered. Now you gaze across the Jordan River, knowing that it is time for you to lead your people to claim your nation’s inheritance.

Sitting in the plains of Moab, you watch your fellow Israelites mourn the death of their first leader, Moses. God used Moses to free the Israelites from four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. You yourself were born into that life of slavery and liberated by the hand of God. You experienced the glory of God as you walked through the parted waters of the Red Sea, escaping the hand of your enemies. Moses was a great leader, and you have had the privilege of being his aide since youth.

Your personal sadness is mixed with fear as you look ahead and take hold of your calling. God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt, and now you must lead them out of the wilderness to possess Canaan, the land promised to your forefather Abraham over six hundred years ago.

Read Deuteronomy 34. Moses was a faithful shepherd to the Israelites during those years of wandering in the wilderness, but he would not be the one to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. Under God’s divine direction, Moses commissioned Joshua, his aide, for that task. But before the Israelites could follow Joshua into the Promised Land, there was something very important that God commanded them to do.

What did the Israelites do for thirty days before they started their conquest into the Promised Land? Why do you think this was an important step before they entered the Promised Land?

The Bible tells us that when Moses died, “the people of Israel mourned for Moses on the plains of Moab for thirty days, until the customary period of mourning was over” (Deuteronomy 34:8 NLT).

The mourning period allowed the Israelites to let go of their past relationship with Moses and take hold of the present work God was doing with Joshua. They had a designated season for mourning—with a defined ending. This gave them permission to mourn and yet accountability to move on.

Throughout the Bible, God’s people mourned. Much as God designed the Sabbath to give rest to our bodies, he provides mourning as a time of restoration for our souls after a loss. Mourning allows space for our hearts to let go of the hurt and look to Jesus for healing and comfort.

The bravest of hearts give themselves permission to grieve, knowing that this is a part of God’s healing process. There’s no shame in mourning. It doesn’t mean a lack of faith. Mourning is a time set aside to allow God to heal and comfort you. To help you let go and move on to a new season.

Sometimes, for some people, mourning may seem too painful. Instead of using a time of grieving to allow God to heal us, we simply survive. We blame. We bury. We analyze. We deny. We get bitter. We stay busy. We pretend we don’t care. I have been there. How about you?

We may have been wounded a long time ago and determined to survive—alone. That may have triggered an inner vow something like this: *I must be strong to protect myself from pain.* We may be so busy trying to be strong and shielding ourselves from grief that we don’t give to God what he desires: Our pain. Our burdens. Our weakness. Our needs.

What does mourning mean to you? To me, it requires three essential steps:

- *Acknowledging the hurt*—being honest about my pain and bringing it out into the open where God can begin to heal it.
- *Accepting the loss*—identifying what was lost and taking inventory of the needs the loss created.
- *Accessing the Lord as my source*—taking my needs to the Lord in prayer and trusting *him* to provide. If I don’t, I might look to others to fill my needs—people imperfect and limited in their resources—instead of looking to God. He is the only one who can bring true and perfect restoration according to his plan.

It takes the bravest of hearts to grieve. But she who is mighty knows that sometimes we must mourn before we can let go and move on.

What is a loss you've experienced in life that was hard to let go of?

How did you grieve this loss, if at all? If you don't feel that your grieving is done, how can you, over the course of this study, begin or complete that process?

Mourning Will Not Last Forever

Your mourning will not last forever. There will be a time to dance again. After thirty days, grieving was over and it was time for the Israelites to move on.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: ... a time to mourn and a time to dance. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4)

You will dance again, brave heart. One day, God will let you know that it's time for dancing. And one big, brave, beautiful, bold dance step at a time, you will move on by trusting God to make everything beautiful for his glory, in his perfect time (Ecclesiastes 3:11; Psalm 30:11–12).

God promises us that one day in heaven, the mourning will end forever.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

But for now, while we live in this fallen world, being that tough, self-reliant girl will not bring redemption. Only when we stop trying to survive, and instead run like a weak child into the arms of our mighty God, will we find his resurrection strength, ordained provision, and new, divine guidance.

Go ahead and grieve, brave heart. Acknowledge the hurt, accept the loss, and access *the Lord as your source*. Your heavenly Father, the source from whom *all* blessings flow, delights in seeing you dance again.

DAY 6

As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.
—*Joshua 24:15*

Often our past experiences prepare our hearts for our Promised Land purpose. Life can be our greatest classroom, as it was for Joshua.

The Lord had been preparing Moses' successor for his calling for many years. Although we cannot pinpoint his age exactly, Joshua was likely at least eighty when he led the Israelites into the Promised Land. In the years prior, he had been a slave in Egypt, a servant to Moses, a spy in Canaan, and an appointed leader of the Israelite army. Delivered from the Egyptians, walking through the parted Red Sea, and defeating the Amalekites, Joshua experienced the power of the living God and saw that he could trust God. Joshua's faith, without any reservations, resulted in many victories for the Israelites in the Promised Land.

However, I believe it was the forty years Joshua spent serving Moses as his aide that prepared his heart the most for his new role. Brave hearts know that in order to be a good leader, they must first learn to follow.

What lessons have you learned serving others? How has a past experience prepared you for your future? How can serving prepare you to lead others?

Servanthood

Serving under Moses for forty years prepared Joshua to become a great leader. Read Mark 10:43 and John 13:12–17. According to Jesus Christ, what must we do to become leaders in the kingdom of God?

Servanthood gives us an opportunity to grow spiritually. It redefines success by measuring it in faithfulness. God calls us to be without pride, and serving others under the direction of Christ (after all, Jesus humbled himself even to death on a cross) moves us toward this goal. When you and I grasp that we are blessed by giving, we come to a place of freedom and surrender (Matthew 20:28).

Trusting God to meet your needs through his amazing love and grace releases you to take your eyes off self and focus on the needs of others. When we stop worrying about who gets the credit and just roll up our sleeves and serve him, we are free to follow him.

Serving in little ways does not require an assigned, official position in Christian ministry but, rather, a position of “Yes, Lord.” There is a huge difference. Just because we don’t have an official title doesn’t mean we are not serving him. When we take the posture of “Yes, Lord,” we have passion and purpose in all that we do, no matter the size of the task.

When we accept our role as a servant, we allow God to use us as a channel for his blessing in others’ lives. That in turn brings healing to our own lives (Isaiah 58:6–11). Knowing God through his Word is absolutely vital for Christians, but putting God’s Word into action is vital to our inner transformation. Thinking that life is all about us and getting our needs met blocks the flow of God in our lives. By serving, we become an open door through which the grace of God can flow. You cannot outgive God. Remember, Jesus said that not until we lose our lives will we find them (Mark 8:35).

Joshua never forgot the meaning of servanthood, even after he became a leader. He continued to speak of himself as a servant of the Lord (Joshua 5:14). Serving God will require you to go outside your comfort zone, which will teach you to depend on him.

Serve Him Anyway

Where is God calling you to serve, brave heart? Are you dealing with challenges, doubts, perhaps fear? Will you be brave enough to serve him anyway?

Serving requires sacrifice. Sweat. Tears. Risk. It requires making ourselves vulnerable. The enemy of our souls resists God’s will for our lives; he may cause us to fail and fall, which could result in bruises and bumps along the way. The results our sovereign God desires are not always what we think.

If we’re following God, we need to hold on tight to him but only loosely to anything he asks us to build.

Brave hearts find freedom to pursue God’s purpose with bold faith by letting go of worldly goals and seeking only heaven’s reward.

Courageous faith comes from looking up. A gaze fixed on eternity does not give up.

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, *we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.* (2 Corinthians 4:16–18 NLT, *emphases mine*)

Paul's heavenly gaze was on eternal goals, building God's kingdom by sharing the gospel. That eternal mindset kept him going even when he faced persecution, shipwreck, hunger, sleepless nights, dark and damp prisons—and death.

When fear has a tight hold on us, it can eclipse our faith in God. Fear and faith play tug-of-war with our hearts. But when we let go of the ropes of such things as worldly success, fear loses its grip, and the force of faith wins. To let go and run with unwavering endurance, look up and seek only heaven's reward.

Redefine success by measuring it in faithfulness. You will find not only freedom but also bravery deep inside you, courage you didn't know existed.

So Today, Wise One ...

For that family you are nurturing
That ministry you are birthing
Those seeds you are planting
That promise you are praying
The friend you are helping ...

For that small group you are shepherding
That dream you are starting
That marriage you are growing
That business in which you are investing
That career you are creating
That blog you are writing ...

Whatever obstacle you are facing ... serve him anyway, brave heart. Look up, let go, and serve him. Because as Mother Teresa concluded:

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;
It was never between you and them anyway.²

Today when you walk out your door, keep your eyes wide open and look around you. There is a lost world out there that needs Jesus. So take the yoke of the Stronger Ox, walk with confidence into the Promised Land, and make a difference in the lives of others. You were created and redeemed to live in the promises of your spiritual inheritance. Get ready for a beautiful journey of letting go and learning to live in a new direction: the direction of your God-given purpose.

Now is the time for women everywhere to surrender to God and become who he created us to be. Not super-spiritual. Not religious. Rather, women whose hearts are fully surrendered. They are the women God can work with.

Give your heart fully to God and live for his glory, brave heart. Experience a life beyond the dry spiritual wilderness.

Your Promised Land is just around the corner.



Key Treasure

Brave hearts find freedom to pursue God's purpose with bold faith by letting go of worldly goals and seeking only heaven's reward.