

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

volume 2

# WOMEN



Surviving Today's Culture as a Woman of God





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# INTRODUCTION

We are so excited to offer to you this resource for women. It's our prayer that it will help you and the women of the local church as they navigate life! The Church Ministries Department works hard to have our "ear to the ground" by having conversations with leaders and women in the local church to understand what the needs, questions and challenges they are being faced in our current season. It's our heart to craft specific resources to answers those questions, help overcome those challenges and assist in meeting the needs.

We have partnered with key leaders of women all across Colorado and Utah in this collaborative resource. Leaders ministering to women just like you are walking with other women facing the same challenges you are or even walking those challenges themselves.

This resource is all about WOMEN! We are striving to help you with:

- Trusting God!
- Mental Health
- Seasons of Life
- A Word of Encouragement

We hope you enjoy this collaborative resource and if there is a question, topic or challenge you are facing that we can help with, please reach out to our team at [cmd@rmdc.org](mailto:cmd@rmdc.org).



Linda Bottoms  
Asst. Church Ministries Director





# “WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE”

by Donna Tallman

Observations from 1 Kings, chapters 18 and 19

“What are you doing here, Elijah?” God asked, “What are you doing here?” God wasn’t asking because He didn’t know; He was asking to give Elijah an invitation to connect.

God often uses questions to draw people into conversations with Himself. When Adam was hiding in the Garden of Eden, God asked, “Where are you?” To Hagar God asked, “What is the matter with you, Hagar?” And to Job God asked, “Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind?”

“What are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here?”

After Elijah hosted one of the greatest confrontations of all time in 1 Kings 18, we find him fleeing for his life from those God had just conquered. Elijah runs into the wilderness of Mt. Sinai to die under a tree because he sees zero value in his life or ministry. Not only does Elijah bolt in fear, he is also fed up, burned out, disappointed, depressed, and without hope.

“How did you get here, Elijah?”

He got there the same way we all get there; Elijah served the Lord faithfully. He sacrificed, endured hardship, went without food, water, shelter, and sleep all for the sake of his calling. He called people to holiness. He called them back to their first love. He called them to obedience, to devotion, and repentance. When he had done absolutely everything God asked of him, people continued to reject his message. They continued to worship their false gods.

So, how on earth did he end up under a tree in the wilderness asking God to take his life?



A sad reason, but understandable and oh so familiar...

Elijah lost his connection to God’s truth, which skewed his perspective on the events happening around him, which caused him to believe lies, which affected his decision-making ability, which caused him to isolate and withdraw, which stranded him in darkness which eventually corroded his hope.



This is the process. This is the progression. This is how the descent into an unsound mind happens. It begins by disconnecting to God's truth and ends up without hope.

The same thing can happen to any one of us who love and follow Jesus. Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, encourages Timothy to caretake his own mental health. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (NKJV)

In my 45 years of ministry, I've never seen people so anxious, depressed, and troubled as they are today. As shepherds, we must learn to step into their crises and restore their hope so that they can have the "sound mind" God wants us all to have. So, how do we do that? What can the church do to help people struggling emotionally and/or psychologically?

### **Create Safe Environments:**

The first thing we must do is to create non-condemning environments for people to express their need for help. The stigma associated with mental and emotional challenge is real. Often when a person exhibits unusual behavior or exaggerated emotions, others may shun them in ignorance and/or fear. The person may feel pushed away, left out, or dismissed as, "too difficult to handle." Even in the church – especially in the church! Like all of us, people in distress desperately need community. It is up to leadership to ensure that their congregations are ready and equipped to come alongside and extend grace and express truth to those in crisis.

### **Remove the Stigma of Mental Illness:**

Including illustrations from scripture of those who struggled emotionally and/or mentally in our teaching or sermons will help people feel seen and heard. We have much to learn from those who struggled mentally and emotionally in scripture. Some that might be instructive are: Elijah, Saul, David, Nebuchadnezzar, Naomi, and Martha.

Another way to remove the stigma of mental illness is to avoid making jokes, remarks, or asides that are derogatory in any way. Some examples are: "You're acting psycho," "Someone forgot to take their meds this morning," and "You're retarded," are just some of the cultural clichés people have used that solidify the stigma of mental and emotional illness. Don't use them; they are not edifying.





### **Start a Conversation:**

We can do this by learning to ask good questions just like God does. Our goal should be to safely draw people into a relationship or connection with us so that they are not alone in their struggle. When you sense someone in your congregation might be withdrawing or isolating, starting a conversation with them might just be the lifeline they need to be pulled to safety.

### **Know Our Purpose:**

Our job as shepherds is not to “fix” people in a crisis; it is to travel with them through the darkness holding a flashlight so they don’t stumble or fall.

We need to remain focused on letting the person know they are not alone in their crisis. God is with them, and we are with them. We aren’t there to excommunicate them from the congregation, “fix” them with our Google-search knowledge of mental illness, or to condemn them for their crisis. We’re there to share their burden and to walk with them in their darkness.

### **Know Our Limits:**

When I am ministering to someone and see their need is beyond my ability to reach, it’s vital to their recovery that I recognize my own limitations. I have been so grateful that God has equipped trained counselors to our congregation that I can use as a resource for myself, and to refer anyone to who might benefit from their years of pastoral counseling.

### **Speaking to the Spirit:**

Years ago, one of the elders in our congregation was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease. This precious, godly man, gifted with a deep knowledge of the Scriptures and a passion for prayer, had entered the final season of his life. The unknown loomed before him. How would he travel through? Would he continue to minister? How would the church respond?

One Sunday morning, as the elder was struggling to find words to communicate, our pastor suddenly said, “Ted, your spirit’s not sick. Your spirit is healthy, alive, and still connected to Jesus!” It was true, and Ted lit up with the realization that his eternal spirit was not trapped by the ravages of Alzheimer’s but was alive and could continue to contribute to the life of the congregation. Ted became my go-to guy for prayer. Despite not being able to understand Ted’s words, I sensed his spirit, God heard his spirit, and God answered abundantly. Because Ted prayed, people were healed and the congregation was blessed immensely by his faithfulness. Ted became a marvelous demonstration of “God’s power being perfected in our weakness!”

As leaders, should we encounter someone struggling with physical challenges, we can always speak to their spirits. We can engage their spirits through prayer and encourage them. We can still reach them regardless of what their minds or bodies might try to hinder.





### Recognize the Impact of Fatigue:

Many people in an emotional or mental crisis might be suffering from fatigue. Elijah certainly was. Just look at the dynamics of what he went through in 1 Kings, chapters 18 and 19.

1. **Physical Fatigue:** When we do the math from 1 Kings 18 and 19 we can see that Elijah ran almost 100 miles in a very short period of time. Physically, Elijah was exhausted. Plus, he hadn't eaten. When caring for others, listen between the lines of what they might be saying to hear if the anguish they are suffering might be coming from physical fatigue.
2. **Emotional Fatigue:** One of the saddest things about Elijah's story is that in spite of his faithfulness to God (or because of it), he believed things that were not true. Never are we in more danger of emotional fatigue than when we are giving and investing ourselves in the lives of others. It's important when ministering to others to be watchful of those who may be depleted emotionally because of their obligations. Some may become so focused on others that they overlook their own needs.
3. **Spiritual Fatigue:** Elijah made some significant mistakes that left him vulnerable to spiritual fatigue. Yes, he was a prophet of great faith and saw God do some stunning miracles, but he was also human and he omitted some simple things that could have kept him from spinning out spiritually.

The first thing Elijah did was that he battled the prophets of Baal alone on Mount Carmel. None of the other prophets was with Elijah, but they should have been. In fact, he didn't even know there were 7,000 other prophets of God in Israel. He had become so isolated that he was ripe for a spiritual attack in the midst of his obedience to God.

Secondly, without praying, Elijah simply bolted from Jezreel after receiving a death threat from Queen Jezebel. Because he didn't even talk with God about it, Elijah lost all hope that Ahab and Jezebel would repent. In spite of all Elijah's faithfulness, the nation of Israel was lost. And now, Elijah was lost too.

The loss of hope is one of the greatest threats  
there is to the faith of God's people.

I have a lot of compassion for Elijah. He's a lot like me. Elijah loved God. Elijah was, however, prone to losing focus, losing his connection to the truth, and losing touch with God's bigger picture. We will never know all the amazing things that God had intended for Elijah to accomplish, because Elijah quit. Elijah reached the end of his ability to serve and was d-o-n-e, done. Even God agreed with him. So, God appointed Elisha to take his place.

“Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind?”

God has. In order for us to caretake and protect our own minds, as well as, the minds of those in our congregations, we must focus on truth, companionship, and hope. It is our obligation and our incredible privilege to come alongside others in their darkest hours and shine the light of God's hope into their despair. True, our job is not to fix others, but we can give them hope.







# EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

by Tonya Jewel Blessing

God created our emotions. They are not to be shoved down, snuffed out, or side-tracked. There are numerous self-help books available for Christian women who struggle with denial of emotions, or possible unhealthy emotions incurred by traumatic experiences. There are also learned counselors and amazing support groups for assistance with self-care. This article is not a replacement for professional services but rather insightful information about Moses and his struggle to overcome emotional difficulties.

Moses' background is both interesting and upsetting. The Bible tells us that Moses was a beautiful baby. As an infant, his parents hid him. The Israelites were in bondage to the Egyptians, and Pharaoh was determined to kill all Jewish male babies. Think about hiding a baby: hushing the child, fussing at the baby when he becomes fussy, limited or no outdoor activities, restricted interaction with others, quiet voices only, and other survival techniques for not being found.

When Moses' parents realized that they could no longer keep him a secret, his mother made a reed basket and had his older sister place him in the Nile where the Egyptian Princess was known to bath. The New Living Translation uses the word abandoned to describe Moses being left in the water. Moses was found and adopted by the princess, and his mother was divinely engaged as his wet nurse. Acts 7:22 (NKJV) says, "Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in both speech and action." The word "taught" in this passage includes the idea that Moses was molded or transformed into an Egyptian. He had a broad range of knowledge based on Egyptian perspective. He was also powerful or gifted with communication and leadership skills.

At the age of 40, Moses decides to visit his relatives, the people of Israel. The Bible is not clear if this is the first time Moses had been inclined to venture past his duties as an Egyptian. We can only assume that Moses felt torn in some way between the two cultures. When Moses witnesses an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite, he intervenes, and the Egyptian is killed.

The following day, when he tries to be a peacemaker between two Israelites, he is taunted and rejected. Moses flees to Midian and spends the next 40 years working as a shepherd in a foreign land. Up to this point, Moses has experienced grave hardship, rejection in abundance, a loss of identity, instability in his relationships, and the list could continue.

When Moses encounters God in an unusual and extremely significant manner, his life is renewed, regenerated, and redirected. God appears to Moses as a burning bush. Burning bushes are common in the desert, but in this instance the bush is not consumed. On this holy ground, Moses encounters the presence and power of the great I AM. He is commissioned to confront Pharaoh and to conduct or lead the Israelites to freedom.

Moses experienced an internal battle.

1. I'm not good enough.
2. I don't have all the answers.
3. People won't believe me.
4. I'm a terrible public speaker.
5. I'm not qualified. \*

Moses' answers are some of the very answers that we have given to the Lord. With each of Moses' doubts, God responds with affirmation. Moses still wasn't convinced. The turning point came when God told His name and explained His nature. In Exodus 3:14 God told Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." (NLT)



The phrase "I AM" is the ultimate statement of self-sufficiency, self-existence, and immediate presence. God's existence is not contingent upon anyone else. His plans are not contingent upon any circumstance. He promises that He will be what He will be; that is, He will be the eternally constant God. He stands, ever-present and unchangeable, completely sufficient in Himself to do what He wills to do and to accomplish what He wills to accomplish. When God identified Himself as I AM WHO I AM, He stated that, no matter when or where, He is there. It is similar to the New Testament expression in Revelation 1:8, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." \*\*

Moses found emotional freedom through understanding the name and nature of God. The Lord always provides and is always present. Moses could count on God's plans not being contingent on circumstances or other people. The Lord is unchangeable.

During difficult seasons our lives, we can find comfort, peace, and freedom from shackling emotions by remembering the name and nature of God.





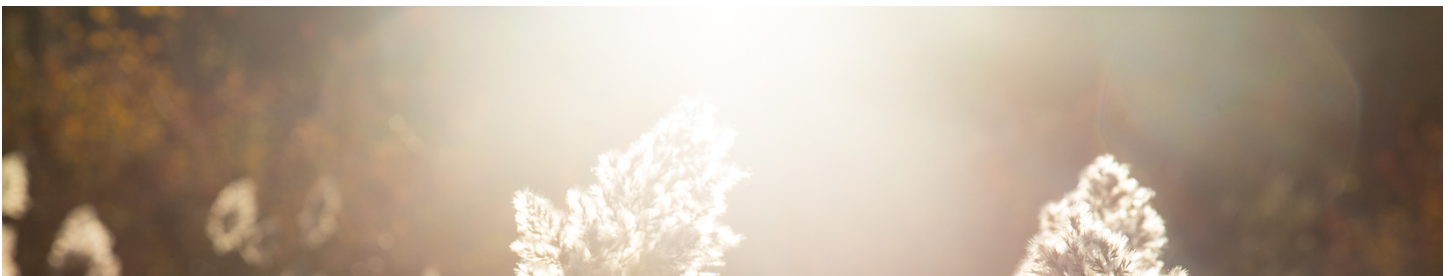
Psalm 34:17 says, “The Lord hears his people when they cry to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles.” (NLT)

Some Bible translations include the word “righteous” in this verse. It is always important when we turn to God for help that we approach Him in right standing with our sins confessed and forgiveness expected through Jesus. It is hard to experience healing and hope if sin plagues our souls.

God heard Moses’ concerns. He listened and provided answers. When we cry out to God, He hears us. In South Africa, the residents in the rural areas carry whistles. When they are in trouble and blow their whistles, others hear the shrill call and run to help. The word “cry” has numerous meanings. It can involve the shedding of tears, the gathering of people together, or even yelling shrilly and loudly. The Lord pays attention to us. He considers His children. He understand and provides certainty. Our troubles can be vast and varied, yet the Lord is intimately acquainted with each of us.

Psalm 34:18 continues in the same vein as verse 17, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” When our emotions are raging. When we feel out of control and need a safety net. The Lord provides security. He rescues. He does not break a bruised reed or blow out a smoldering candle. He is near to us when we feel broken, crushed, bruised, and smoldering.

In our times of upset, God is present. The emotions in life that turn us upside down are put in proper place and perspective when we remember the name and nature of God.



\* <https://www.voiceofprophecy.com/articles/blog/moses-five-excuses>

\*\* <https://www.gotquestions.org/I-AM-WHO-I-AM-Exodus-3-14.html>

# HOW TO TRUST GOD THROUGH EVERYTHING

by Shellie Wooten

“Do you trust me?” Trust is such a funny thing. I struggle with trusting the grocery bagger with my bread because I fear that they will put the bread in the bag with the onions or even worse, under them, but on the way to the store, I completely trusted a line in the road to keep me safe from oncoming traffic. I don't trust that the faucet water is safe enough to drink, but I'll swim in a public pool where I will inevitably end up choking down a bit of pool water. I trust my husband to be a good father to our children but I struggle with trusting his driving skills without my constant help to see the red light or the car merging into our lane. I am sure if you thought about it, you would find some ironic comparisons of trust in your own life.

Years ago, my husband and I were involved in a discipleship program where we had college age students for nine months of intense Bible training. During the first weeks of our time together, we took the students to a low ropes course where we spent the day learning team building and how to trust each other. Trust falls were part of the training where each student had to trust their fellow students to catch them as they fell backwards. The day was going great and everyone was beginning to trust and work together beautifully until one of the girls jumped up on the back of a truck and turned around backwards in the trust fall position as she yelled, “Catch me!” Unfortunately, everyone was caught up in chatter and no one heard her or saw her begin to fall. She trust-fell her way down, hitting the ground beneath her. As we all ran over to check on her, she stood up dazed, thankfully, unhurt. A quick trust training followed for the group reminding everyone to know who to trust and when to trust.

This brings up a great question. If you knew God was behind you, would you trust fall into his arms? I am one hundred percent sure you will say yes. It's God, of course. He would never let us fall to the ground. The irony here is that we often say we trust God but when circumstances fall into chaos, we yank back the control of our lives and fight the peace that God freely offers through trusting him.



This past year I was brought face to face with having to answer that question for myself in a real way. If I fall, God, do I trust you will catch me? Through a series of events, I found out cancer would be part of my story. During those early days after this discovery, I had moments where I questioned if I truly trusted God. It took time and many conversations with God and through this journey, here are some ways I have learned to trust God with everything.

## 1. Make a purposeful decision to trust God daily

First and foremost, I must share and declare that God is worthy of our trust. I know in my own life it is God alone who sustains me. The hope and trust I have in Jesus brings peace and assurance whatever circumstance I find myself in. Proverbs states, “With all your heart you must trust the Lord and not your own judgment. Always let him lead you, and he will clear the road for you to follow.” Proverbs 3:5-6 CEV

Each day is new and you must decide if you are going to trust God with today. The trust from yesterday will not sustain you through today or tomorrow. Speak out that you trust him with this day in your prayer life, during the drive to work, over your lunch, and through your bedtime routine with your children. Share your trust in him with those around you. You may sound crazy to some, but everyone is looking for something or someone to trust in. You never know, your complete trust in what God is doing in your life may save the life of someone you are sharing trust with.



## 2. Surround yourself with people who know how to trust God

It never fails that when going through difficulty, there are those cliché statements that we have all been told by meaningful individuals to encourage us forward.

“God never gives you more than you can handle.”

“When God closes a door, he opens a window.”

“You must be doing something right.”

“Everything happens for a reason.”

Sometimes people don't know what to say so they repeat the overstated, empty words. When I say surround yourself with people who know how to trust God, I mean those who have been in the trenches and have come through with stronger faith and resilience for all that life has thrown at them. I have a lady in my life who has walked through tremendous difficulty: a broken marriage due to alcoholism and infidelity, and then the death of her second husband.

I have watched her endure with complete trust in God and an amazing resolve that God is who he says he is, no doubt in sight. Her spoken words and her unspoken words through her faith-life lived out, has been a great encouragement to me in my faith. Find someone like her! “If you fall, your friend can help you up. But if you fall without having a friend nearby, you are really in trouble.” Ecclesiastes 4:10 CEV

### 3. Trust God with the little things

When was the first time you trusted God? Everything in life has a point of origin and most start out small. I remember as a little girl going to my mom because I had a headache. She prayed that I would be healed and my headache went away. This is the first time I remember trusting God. My faith started small and grew as I grew. Trusting God would have been a struggle in the big decisions of life if I had not first practiced in the small areas of life.

Trust God with the everyday, the potentially mundane decisions in life, so that we build our faith to be practiced when bigger decisions, disappointments, or the unexpected lands in our path. When our faith is well-established, trust becomes part of our everyday and doubt has no hold in our life. Psalms reminds us of the goodness of God. “Your loyal followers trust in you, for you, Lord, do not abandon those who seek your help.” Psalms 9:10 NET

### 4. Your story is God's story

We all have unique life stories with placeholders that point to defining moments. Our lives and our stories are given purpose when we can share the love of Jesus to those around us. As we walk through good times or difficulties, we can attest to his goodness in our lives in real time. It's really his story anyway. Without God in our lives, we would walk without hope. When we have the privilege to tell God's story in our own lives, nothing is wasted: no pain, no sorrow, no heartache. It all becomes part of how God moves in and through those moments of time to bring transformation or our lives and those we come in contact with everyday.

When I was first diagnosed with cancer, it definitely blind-sided me. At first, I felt it was pointless and a waste. As I began going to the cancer clinic for treatment, the Lord opened my eyes to a world that I was previously not welcomed into, because I didn't have cancer. Everywhere I looked, people were searching for hope; the doctors, the nurses, and most of all the cancer patients. It was a world of hurting people. God had put me in the middle. It became part of the preparation on my way to the appointments to pray over the time I was in the clinic. If God had someone he wanted me to share my faith with, he would give me the words to say. This gave purpose to the journey as I was able to share my story and trust in him. “I trust you to save me, Lord God, and I won't be afraid. My power and my strength come from you, and you have saved me.” Isaiah 12:2 CEV







Regardless if you are falling in love, falling into a new career, falling into health challenges, or just falling short in areas of your life, trust God in your fall. He is worthy of this trust and can guide you through the big and little circumstances of life. God desires for us to trust him in our everything. If you daily choose to trust, surround yourself with those who are strong in faith, trust him with your everything, and allow your story to be God's story, your trust will grow and that growth will impact the world around you.





# SEASONS OF LIFE AS A WOMAN

by Chris Griffin

Remember as a little girl what you dreamed your life would be in the future? Even the day-to-day routine – how relaxed and easy it would be? I don't know about you, but mine did not turn out that way! Don't get me wrong: my life is good! God is good! We are blessed! But life brought challenges I never would have expected in my little girl dreams. In my teen and college years, I had the luxury of being in control of my own time and was able to devote blocks of it to hanging out with God and getting to know Him, hearing His voice and being challenged to change. How sweet that was! And what a solid foundation was laid for the future.

When I started my career as a teacher, my life was more regimented. That work schedule demanded on-time, every day, game face on, head in the game, meet the expectations, pouring into others, hanging on for the next holiday. That was definitely a challenge to my “relaxed and easy” dream. But I was proud of myself: I met the challenge and eventually found balance in my time with God, career, and church. Large blocks of time with God got whittled down to hours here and there, but it seemed to work.





When I got married, the focus necessarily shifted. My husband was now my point of devoted service, so it took time to find a new equilibrium – God time, husband time, career time, church time. Plates are spinning. But, hey, thousands of women have mastered this before me; I can do it too!

But wait, now there's mommy life. Kids add a whole new dimension. And they are high maintenance! All the other pieces of your life have to take a cut because the kids are your primary ministry. Now God time is a few tired minutes in the dark. I struggled with feeling I was slighting Him after the long hours we had invested in our relationship in the past.

It was a long time before I gave myself permission to be OK with giving Him tired minutes. God is not surprised and not wringing His hands wondering how He's going to make it without me. He's a Father too, so He knows how time-intensive children can be. He rewards every effort we make toward keeping our connection with Him.

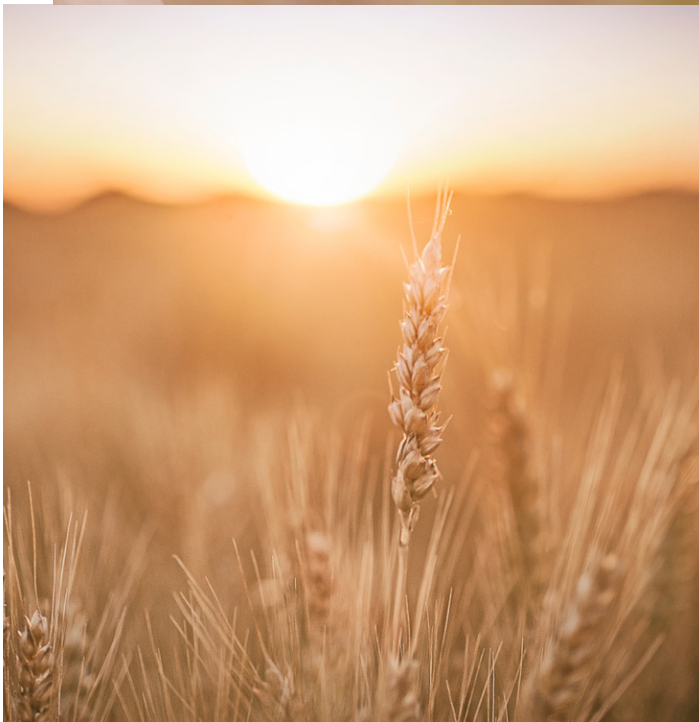


What I have learned through the seasons of my life is that God gets me. That's not an excuse for me to become lazy and self-focused. It's a grace to know He takes me just as I am. He will always call me closer, He will confront the practices that are out of line with the growth path He has carved for me and He will always lavish His love and grace onto each day.

Now I'm semi-retired. Empty-nester. Just the two of us with an occasional grandkid spending the night. Ah, this is a little more like the "relaxed and easy" dream. Maybe maturity and miles of road walked with God has taught me to be relaxed and easy in the midst of life's craziness.

It's good to be back to a season where I can take blocks of time with Him. It's a season where it's time to share with younger women what I have learned – moms, career gals, wives, lovers of God.

No matter the season, we are called first to walk with God. Marriage, career, children, grandchildren shift the focus and the time commitment. But He is our first love.



As I observe my godly mentors who are years ahead in this race, I see that, though responsibilities and abilities have changed, they are still running. I see my mom in her 80's who writes letters every week to encourage folks who just need to know God still sees them – though they are shut in or though they are going through their own difficult season.

I think of a cousin who is retired and traveling many months of the year. Though she can't be in her home church every week, she prays for divine appointments on the road and connects with her church's prayer ministry – because God can hear us wherever we are.

As women, we want to know that we are purposeful and useful in every season of our life, that we can draw close to God and find He doesn't condemn us just because this phase is not like the last. Break out of the box and don't be afraid to engage your creativity. Make connections with God in new ways and keep doing the work of the Kingdom.

Wherever you find yourself, seek God and love Him with all you are. He sees you. He knows you. And He loves you – in every season.



**Fresh mercy every day: Lamentations 3:21-24**

**Reward for diligent seekers: Hebrews 11:6**

**No condemnation for those in Christ: Romans 8:1-11**





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

We thank the following individuals for taking the time and energy to contribute to this resource



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# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:





ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
**MINISTRY  
NETWORK**



ROCKY MOUNTAIN  
CHURCH MINISTRIES DEPT