MADE
TO
shine

A Girls-Only Devotional
by
THE SONFLOWERZ
Becca Leander Nicholson & Elissa Leander Tipps

Discovery House.
from Our Daily Bread Ministries
To our parents, Don and Thea Leander.

*Mum and Dad, you have given us a lifetime of support in our calling to write and encourage others—even traveling with us for more than ten years as we ministered in music! You raised us in a home filled with biblical truth, real grace, and the love of Father God. You are our greatest blessing and now our dearest friends. We thank you for making this devotional what it is.*
Contents

This Is for You .................. 4
1. Your Canvas .............. 7
2. Up Close and Personal .... 13
3. Promise Keeper .......... 19
4. Love Letters ............. 25
5. I Heard God Speak ....... 29
6. Flip the Switch .......... 35
7. Borrowed ................. 41
8. President’s Daughter ..... 47
9. Who He Says I Am ...... 53
10. 2508 .................. 59
11. Irreplaceable ............. 65
12. Beauty Lessons .......... 69
13. Miss Understood ......... 75
14. At the Center ............ 81
15. The Ring ................ 87
16. Made New ............... 93
17. 1,000 Bouquets .......... 99
18. Dream Life .............. 105
19. Drama Queen ............ 111
20. Fight Like a Girl ......... 117
21. Sister vs. Sister ........ 123
22. 70 x 7 ................ 129
23. Defeating Depression .... 135
24. Battlegrounds ........... 141
25. The Incline .............. 147
26. First Response .......... 153
27. Courageous Beauty ...... 159
28. Between the Songs ...... 165
29. Cooking Up Compassion .. 171
30. Let’s Get Together ...... 177
31. Made to Shine ........... 183
This Is for You

So you want to be noticed? Don’t we all. We want to be the girl strut­ting her stuff down the halls of the school, the girl everyone turns to see. We want to be the one with the contagious smile and perfectly timed joke—that girl. We resonate with the idea of shining so brightly. Even if you say you like to stay back in the crowd, unnoticed, I bet there’s a hint of curiosity inside. Who has never wondered, “What would it be like to stand out?”

Who could you be if you really did shine?

The qual­ifica­tions for being a standout chick aren’t entirely clear. Do we have to be popular or the prom queen? Do we need natural charm or a line of boyfriends at our door? Not exactly.

Everything hinges on what you shine for. Is it for popularity and personal fame?

I shine for God. He’s the One who created us to shine. “You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world,” Jesus said. “God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this,
as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14–16 MSG).

There’s a boldness about light, a defiance against the dark. So it is with those who shine.

When I was fourteen, I wrote my first song, and woven throughout were the themes of shining, purpose, ambition, and Jesus. “Use Me” was rough, and even though I never sing this song anymore, I suddenly remembered the lyrics as Becca and I wrote this book. You’ll see why:

**To shine on this earth is to be noticed for what you live by.**

*I cry to shine forth, for my Savior, who gives me life.*

**Lord, shine me in the dark.**

Since that time, I’ve had a boundless love of songwriting, playing guitar, and singing. Although I wasn’t a great musician then (I didn’t sound like I belonged on The Voice), “Use Me” and other songs like it spurred me to start a band. They were the reason I went on the road, too. It was all because of a message: We shine because of God’s light within us. It has nothing to do with our outside appearance or the stuff we have!
Without a connection to Jesus, shining is impossible. Shining starts with a real relationship with Him. And then He sends His Spirit to guide us through this life as His light-bearers. Without the Holy Spirit we are helplessly stumbling in the dark, trying to find the light switch. We can’t actively shine without God’s help.

And so begins the challenge to welcome the Source of light—Jesus Christ and His Spirit—to flow through you each day. Come on a journey with Becca and me. Take each chapter, each page of this book as an invitation to find out what the best life can look like.

It’s not easy, but completely worth it. As your sisters in Christ, we dare you to go for it! We’re with you.

Elissa
The Sonflowerz

P.S. We’ve created a unique playlist for each day in Made to Shine! From our own music libraries, we’ve chosen our favorite songs that will make a perfect soundtrack as you read. You can find this awesome music list on our website, sonflowerz.com/madetoshine. You might decide to download these songs and take a listen at the end of each day’s reading. Or, if you are like Becca, you’ll probably turn up the tunes as you read the devo. You can purchase songs on iTunes or choose to stream them. Either way, by the end of the book you’ll have the most amazing music library ever!
I literally gasped when I saw this story on the news.

The alarm was raised in room 17 of London’s National Gallery after an assistant spotted a man spraying two paintings with an aerosol can. Brilliant works from the 17th century, now completely covered in red spray paint! Though Nicolas Poussin’s paintings had survived centuries, a trigger-happy fool destroyed them in a moment.

Now imagine that God—the essence of who He is—could be captured in a portrait. All of us carry a canvas of God in our mind’s eye, a painting of His character. But like those paintings in the museum, our portrait of God can be marred by our life experiences.

For Hailey, it was her parents’ divorce that altered the canvas. The day her dad walked out, never to return, put a deep smear across her understanding of who God really is. Margaret lost her
house in a fire when she was eight and her big sister ran away from home when she was ten. These experiences created smudges that disfigured Margaret’s view of God. Both girls thought, “Will God leave me too?”

What words would you use to describe God?
If He were painted on a canvas,
what would His eyes say to you?

**DESCRIBE:**

We all desperately need to find the true picture of God.
Humans keep adding to the canvas, spraying over God’s image with lies and letdowns. By a stroke, a spray, a mark with their own cans of aerosol, they hide the one-of-a-kind masterpiece. Then it’s hung in a public gallery and the masses make a verdict: God is angry, disappointed, or uninterested. All the while, God’s true face is hidden beneath.

But God is real, and He should have the final say on who He actually is.
Here’s the truth: We see God when we see Jesus. He is the un-tarnished picture of God, on display! Jesus revealed to the world how infinitely God loves us.

Jesus answered . . .

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

JOHN 14:9

The paintings in the museum were swiftly cleaned by hand under a microscope. Then they were proudly put back for public display. Aren’t we overdue for some restoration work on our damaged portraits of God?

Friends, it’s time to allow the steady hand of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, to chip away the drips and wipe away the stains. You may very well find that the true picture of God is more beautiful than you would ever have imagined.

As a middle-school kid, I handed over the brush as Jesus painted the picture of God in my heart. I experienced God’s love for the first time at youth camp. As I watched my friends worship and connect with God, the atmosphere stirred me and something powerful took place. I was captured.

When my sister and I began the journey of becoming The Sonflowerz, writing songs and singing together, it became our mission to share this truth with other girls: “We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God’s original purpose in everything created” (Colossians 1:15 MSG).
1. What experience in your life has helped to define your view of God?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. Read Ephesians 3:16–19. Ask Jesus to reveal to you the true character of God.

PER·SPEC·TIVE [per-spek-tiv] the proper or accurate point of view or the ability to see it; objectivity
For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.
Colossians 2:9

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.
John 1:1–2

“Edge of My Seat”
by The Sonflowerz

The Daily Song is each day’s special soundtrack. These are songs written and recorded by us, The Sonflowerz! You can download them on iTunes and find lyrics to sing along with us at Sonflowerz.com.
Ever seen storytelling from a felt board? These are my earliest, most classic memories of Sunday school. My teacher, Mrs. Bowling, used little felt characters to act out Bible stories. Somehow this (literally!) fuzzy interpretation of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, angels, and donkeys made the stories come alive.

From those stories, I realized that people walked for miles to hear Jesus teach. Imagine that! Whatever their background or lifestyle, they were sincerely drawn to Him. Jesus made God more real—not only to the people He encountered, but to me and my friends right there in Sunday school. In the words He spoke and the way He loved some downright messed-up people, we saw that God truly cares about us.

Today, my understanding of Jesus goes far beyond a felt board cutout. He isn’t just someone I read about, He is—through the Holy Spirit—living in my heart.
It’s truly amazing. How did this change happen within me?

It goes back to when I first picked up a guitar. Attempting to play those first songs was so frustrating. I couldn’t get anything down for months. But then I began to disconnect from the struggle and simply sang out my thoughts to God as I played a simple chord. While I was playing, God’s Holy Spirit—His presence that we can’t see with our eyes but can feel with our heart—brought me comfort, peace, and joy. It was as if a soft breeze swept over me. And right then I experienced what it is to know God personally.

Because He loves us, Jesus gave His life when He died on the cross. When I think of a love that big, I can hardly grasp it! He knew that our sin, the way we miss the mark God sets for us, separates us from God. Jesus could have prevented His own death, but instead He chose to die in our place to pay the price for our wrongs. He was willing to do everything it took to draw us close to the Father.

Jesus was willing to do everything it took to draw us close to the Father.

Everything!
The Bible is like a love letter that God wrote to us. And here’s a line from that letter that reveals something amazing: “Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4–5). Think of that!

As I got to know Him better, the way I know my family and friends, I fell in love with Jesus. It didn’t feel like work—I wanted to know Him! I discovered and developed a personal relationship with Jesus by spending time with Him in simple prayer and by digging into the New Testament. And I always loved singing my songs to Him.

You can’t have a true relationship with someone by knowing him or her from a distance—you have to connect in a real way. That’s the kind of relationship God wants with you. He longs to make himself known to you each day, whether you find Him through music or Scripture or a prayer while you’re riding your bike. The key is taking time to connect with Him.

I’ve heard it said...

Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God.
—Billy Graham
1. Is Jesus more to you than stories you’ve heard? List all the things Jesus is to you:


2. Talk to God about your desire to connect with Him in a real way, and to experience the love He has for you.

CON-NEC-TION [kuh-nek-shuhn]  
part, link, bond, relationship, 
circle of friends
“For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish
but have eternal life.”
John 3:16

Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD,
for he is good; his love endures forever.
Psalm 106:1

“My Heart Is Alive”
by The Sonflowerz

“My Heart Is Alive” Song Story by Becca

This song started with a text message from Holland! In the midst of a routine radio interview, the DJ asked if we’d be up for a “fun challenge.” He used the word fun, but all I could think was crazy: Would we write a song in 20 minutes, then play it on the air—live?

Every week this station challenges a band to write a song based on text messages listeners send in. Why not, right? We had only a few minutes to come up with lyrical genius, inspired by
the phrase “start of a bright day”, sent in from a European smart phone. Elissa grabbed her guitar, while I dug in my purse for a pen and notebook.

My competitive nature kicked into gear, and before the commercial break ended we had the start of a bright song! Nailing it on the air was another story...