



# SHE'S STILL THERE

*Rescuing the Girl in You*

**CRYSTAL EVANS HURST**

 **ZONDERVAN®**

ZONDERVAN

*She's Still There*

Copyright © 2017 by Chrystal Evans Hurst

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

ISBN 978-0-310-34781-1 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-35049-1 (audio)

ISBN 978-0-310-34806-1 (ebook)

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version<sup>®</sup>, NIV<sup>®</sup>. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.<sup>®</sup> Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.Zondervan.com](http://www.Zondervan.com). The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.<sup>®</sup>

Scripture quotations marked AMP are from the Amplified<sup>®</sup> Bible. Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)).

Scripture quotations marked CEB are from the Common English Bible. Copyright © 2011 Common English Bible.

Scripture quotations marked CEV are from the Contemporary English Version. Copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from the ESV<sup>®</sup> Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version<sup>®</sup>). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version. Public domain.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from New American Standard Bible<sup>®</sup>. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)).

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are from the New King James Version<sup>®</sup>. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation. © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Any Internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

*Cover illustrations: AlienValley / Creative Market*

*Interior design: Kait Lamphere*

*First printing June 2017 / Printed in the United States of America*

# CONTENTS

<i>Foreword by Priscilla Shirer</i> .....	13
<i>Acknowledgments</i> .....	17
<i>An Open Letter to My Reader</i> .....	19

## PART 1: Fight for Your Life

1. Break a Leg . . . or Two: <i>You Are a Masterpiece</i> .....	23
2. Full-Blown Ugly Cry: <i>You Are Okay</i> .....	32
3. Get out of the Middle of the Road: <i>Own Your Story</i> .....	41
4. Good Girl . . . His Girl: <i>A Chapter from My Story</i> .....	51
5. Hershey and the Highway: <i>The Anatomy of a Drift</i> .....	60

## PART 2: Look at Your Life

6. An Episode from Adolescence: <i>You Are a Soul</i> .....	71
7. Double Blue Lines: <i>Chronicle of a Collision</i> .....	80
8. Precious Cargo: <i>Carry Your Contents Carefully</i> .....	89
9. GAIN Perspective: <i>Look and Listen</i> .....	96
10. Wake Up and Drive: <i>Participate in the Process</i> .....	104
11. Follow the Yellow Crumb Road: <i>You Don't Have to Know It All</i> .....	114

## PART 3: Embrace Your Life

12. Sleeping by the Window: <i>Nurturing Your Soul</i> .....	127
13. A Labor of Love: <i>Finding Purpose in Your Pain</i> .....	139

14. Rockin' Hot Chocolate:	
<i>Do What You Can with What You Have</i> . . . . .	149
15. <i>An Answer, Not the Answer: The Process of Your Progress</i> . . . . .	158

## PART 4: Develop Your Life

16. Dig Deep: <i>Focus on the Finish</i> . . . . .	169
17. Analysis Paralysis: <i>Make a Decision</i> . . . . .	177
18. Forty and Fat: <i>Maintain Your Direction by Paying Attention</i> . . .	186
19. People, Places, and Things: <i>Use Discernment</i> . . . . .	195
20. A Gift You Give Yourself: <i>Exercise Discipline</i> . . . . .	207
21. Five to Seven Yellow Lines: <i>Just Keep Going</i> . . . . .	218

## PART 5: Encourage Your Life

22. Be Your Own Best Friend: <i>Coach Yourself</i> . . . . .	229
23. The Monster in Your Mind: <i>Coach Your Head</i> . . . . .	237
24. Swim against the Current: <i>Coach Your Heart</i> . . . . .	246
25. Put a Little Sugar on It: <i>Coach Your Hands</i> . . . . .	256

## PART 6: Choose Your Life

26. Practice an Attitude of Gratitude: <i>Choose Celebration</i> . . . . .	267
27. Run Your Race: <i>Choose Freedom</i> . . . . .	278
28. The Great Cover-Up: <i>Choose Honesty</i> . . . . .	285
29. The Sister Circle: <i>Choose Community</i> . . . . .	292
30. The Butterfly Effect: <i>Dare to Believe Change Is Possible</i> . . . . .	297

<i>Closing Thoughts for My Reader</i> . . . . .	305
<i>Gain a New Perspective: Personal Assessment</i> . . . . .	307
<i>Notes</i> . . . . .	317

## PART 1

# FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

I can impress you with my achievements, or I share my struggle and pray that it leads to your transformation.

—*Kirk Franklin*

You cannot amputate your history from your destiny, because that is redemption.

—*Beth Moore*

# BREAK A LEG . . . OR TWO

## *You Are a Masterpiece*

**G**od, if you would just break both of my legs, that would make everything better.

I was driving down the tollway in Dallas, headed home from another day at work, where I had spent hours stuffed in a cubicle, checking a million boxes with a red pen. My brain was about to explode.

I hated my job.

The clock crawled from the moment I sat in my chair until the time it was reasonable for me to run out the door at the end of the day. It felt as if I were gasping for fresh air.

And that's why I asked God to break my legs.

I made it clear that I didn't want Him to take my life or allow me to be injured in a way that permanently altered my life. And I certainly didn't want an accident that marred my face or scarred me in any way. I just wanted to hit the reset button, and I figured one or two broken legs would do the trick.

In my stressed-out, overwhelmed, off-track mode of thinking, I wished for the shelter of a hospital room—a justifiable excuse for a

break—to provide an escape and some time to assess where I'd gotten off track and to formulate a plan for making my life more like I'd imagined it would be. I was like a crazy woman, talking to Him in the car out loud, tears streaming down my face and my heart racing at the thought that He might actually allow me to pray my way right into the hospital.

I hadn't intended to end up in a job I didn't love.

I hadn't intended to be a single parent.

I hadn't intended to have a heart still raw and exposed from the hurt imposed on it by other people.

It had never been my dream to fight my way through the academic challenges and personal struggles of my college years—at that point the most difficult season of my life—only to end up on the other side of the so-called victory of graduation feeling deflated. I had filled my balloon of hope with expectations and dreams only to realize that I had not tied it tightly enough.

And the air had escaped.

As a young, twenty-something-year-old girl, it hadn't been that long since I'd felt full of hope, promise, and excitement. So I was taken by surprise to find I now spent most of my waking hours feeling resentful, hopeless, and miserably bored each and every day.

Where had I gone? Where was the girl who once lived in anticipation of the beauty of her life? How did I lose her? And how would I ever get her back?

I'd love to tell you that in those moments driving down the freeway and thinking like a crazy person, I magically gained clarity on how I'd gotten off track. I'd like to say that I never got off track again.

I'd love to tell you that I figured all of it out right then and that I've had it all figured out since.

The truth is I haven't solved everything. But I have gained an understanding over time, and that's what I want to share with you in these pages.

I want to reassure you that the best of the girl in you is still there. She still has the chance to live her life.

In that moment when I was just short of being delusional—or maybe I was delusional and didn't know it—I didn't recognize my life. Whatever I'd thought my life was going to be, this wasn't it, and I thought what I needed was time out of the rat race—a break or two (pun intended)—to figure things out.

I was off track and didn't know how to get back on except for a desperate plea to God: *do something to help me!*

All I knew was that I was not living *my* life—the life I'd hoped for, the life I'd dreamed of, the life I still desperately wanted to have.

It felt like the girl I wanted to be was dying a slow suffocating death, and I was clueless as to how to help her.

It hadn't always been like that, though.

I recalled moments when my girl felt alive and easily able to breathe.

My parents encouraged me to live with wonder, my teachers gave me the courage to explore, my friends allowed me the chance to play, and my world offered me the opportunity to learn and grow. Fall and spring days were full with homework, school activities, and play with neighborhood friends. The summer months held visits to my grandparents, slumber parties with cousins, and long, boring days with an occasional trip to the library. Whatever didn't satisfy me about my girlhood fired up the desires of my heart, desires I figured I would honor when I was old enough.

You know, when I was “grown and free.”

Who knew that escaping childhood meant giving up naps, free room and board, and summers off?

From the vantage point of childhood, I could hope and dream. And I had a picture of what I thought my grown-up life might look like. I imagined my future family, my future career, and the future places I'd live. I still have the paper with the names of my twelve kids written on it. I figured I would either be a teacher or a famous actress and that I'd live close to my family but have a second home near the beach.

Every book I read and every person I met introduced me to more of

the world that I could experience. I thought of the people I might one day meet, the places I might one day travel, and things I might one day do. And while I have yet to meet Julia Roberts, explore Australia, or release my own album, I haven't forgotten the thoughts that went through my head before I shifted into adulthood.

My thoughts, dreams, and expectations had room to run.

Don't get me wrong. The picture wasn't always pristine. I haven't forgotten about the hard parts—the cruelty of other kids, the stinging words of some adults, the torrential trip through my teenage years.

My youth wasn't perfect, but less-than-perfect didn't stop me from growing. I accepted my childhood for what it was, part of the process of my progress through life. I leaned into the living, believing that all the beautiful and unpleasant parts of my current and future picture would someday make sense if I just kept going.

I believed in the idea of a masterpiece.

I've believed that all parts of my life—the good, the bad, and the ugly—could come together in the hands of the person who gave me life. I believed through ups and downs that He knew what He was doing and that He could make something beautiful of my life in His time.

That day in that car, I didn't self-destruct. I chose to keep driving. Even while the tears streamed down my face and I cried out to God for help, I kept going for one reason and one reason alone.

I believed my girl was still there.

Even if she seemed lost, invisible, and forgotten, I decided to hope against hope that God could still make a masterpiece out of her.

Maybe you've felt the same way. Maybe you've been a crazy woman like me and begged God to help you fix your life, get unstuck, and get it together. Maybe you've thought long and hard about what extreme measure you could take to stop the pain and heartache.

Maybe you imagined that by now you'd have a career you loved, finances that kept you content, or a marriage made in heaven. Maybe

you thought you'd have a house that felt like home, a child who brought you joy, or a deep solid faith you could stand on. Maybe you are tired of waiting on a dream that seems way overdue and possibly unattainable.

It can be puzzling to realize that your very present and real life doesn't resemble your past expectations.

It can be bewildering when your life looks nothing like the life you pictured.

It can be confusing, but it's also common.

Every woman I know has had at least one moment of cognitive dissonance in her life. She comes face to face with the girl she is and compares her with the girl she wanted to be and it just doesn't line up. Or maybe she never knew exactly what she wanted in her life but simply knows deep down that who or where she is now isn't it.

She believes there must be more. And so she's faced with a choice.

She can do nothing and continue in disappointment, shame, frustration, inactivity, or regret.

Or she can recalibrate and get to the business of believing that her life is a work of art.

A masterpiece.

She can choose to be brave enough to believe that a uniquely beautiful life is still hers to have. And she can choose to be bold enough to grab hold of the hope she has for the girl inside. The girl who's still there.

The girl who dreamed of—and deserves—her beautiful life.

Notice I didn't say perfect.

Your life is not going to be perfect.

How do I know? Because I have yet to meet someone who claims a hundred percent perfect life a hundred percent of the time. And I know because my own life hasn't been perfect.

---

**Be brave enough  
to believe that a  
uniquely beautiful  
life can be yours.**

---

At times, I've witnessed my own life morph unrecognizably into a life that made me sad, desperate, and numb. I drifted away from being

the girl of my dreams or simply turned my back on her, pretending that her life didn't matter.

But time and time again, I've sensed her calling me, begging me to answer, to acknowledge her existence and honor the life that is still hers to lead. And I believe.

Her life does matter. And her beautiful life is still possible.

I've learned that the living of that beautiful life takes practice. It takes time to cultivate. I've learned that my picture blends and takes shape as I choose to continue journeying through life, even if I make mistakes or hard times come. I've learned to accept that the process of becoming is a part of my progress.

Most important, I've learned that my uniquely beautiful life is an original work of art designed for my good and for the glory of the One

---

**You are allowed to be  
both a masterpiece  
and a work in progress  
simultaneously.**

---

who orchestrated my existence, even if it doesn't look like it at this moment. You are allowed to be both a masterpiece and a work in progress simultaneously.

Your life matters.

The girl of your dreams matters.

No matter how far you think you've drifted away from her, she's still there.



You, my friend, are a work of art. And your life can be beautiful.

As any artist will tell you, the key to creating a wonderful work of art is to be committed to the process. Beautiful creations take time. Sometimes they can be messy. And the artist often wrestles with how to produce a winning representation of what lives in the heart, mind, and soul.

The same is true for you. The key to living your beautiful life is to keep going. You must decide not to get hung up or stuck. Don't

get bogged down in the mess that comes with making a masterpiece. Choose to wrestle for the win.

When I was a girl, I thought the choices would be easy, the decisions would be straightforward, and that life as I desired to live it would simply fall into my lap.

---

**Choose to wrestle  
for the win.**

---

Most of us already know that's not how life works.

Life is a series of experiences—some good, some not so good. Some parts we cruise through. Others we wrestle through as we attempt to get a grip on our stories. And let's be honest, we don't like to wrestle.

But often the winning is in the wrestling, and it's only as we continue to live that we see how all of those experiences fit together to make a complete picture.

You just have to keep going.

And believe in the idea of your masterpiece.



Is this my life?

That was my question as I was driving down the Dallas tollway and asking God to put a hurtin' on me.

And I've asked it over and over again.

Is this really my life?

Is this a question you've asked—or are asking—because your life isn't lining up with the hopes you harbored as girl, teenager, or young woman?

I hope so.

I hope that every now and again you stop to ask that question, and that when you do, you are willing to wrestle for the win if the answer is no.

I hope that you are willing to take note of every part of your story through the various seasons of life. Some parts will look like strokes of genius. Others may seem random, insignificant, or straight-up wrong.

Keep going.

Do the work.

Believe in the idea of a masterpiece. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago” (NLT).

The girl you wanted to be—or the girl you never were sure you could become—is already a divinely inspired masterpiece. Every day that you live, you have the opportunity to do the work of honoring the plan God has for you.

Maybe when you fell off of your track, you didn’t ask God to break your legs. Maybe you’re a little more stable than I was and didn’t invite God to start an apocalypse in your life just because you were facing a difficult season. Or maybe your off-track seasons have been terribly worse.

Either way, I want you to know that you can get back on track.

And I want you to know that you have a friend.

I count it as my mission and privilege to share lessons learned from my journey so that you can know you are not the only girl who’s felt lost in the middle of her life.

Is this your life?

Yes, yes, it is.

But this is me, your new friend, leaning in close with a smile to tell you this:

It’s not too late to make it a life you love.

# Reflections for the Rescue



## REMEMBER

You are allowed to be both a masterpiece and a work in progress simultaneously.

## REFLECT

- Have you ever had a “break my legs, God” moment? What did that moment teach you?
- Do you believe in the idea of a masterpiece for your life? Why or why not?
- What made you pick up this book? What is happening in your life that makes you want to hit the reset button?

## RESPOND

You are a masterpiece. Write down three uniquely beautiful things about the girl in you.

---

*Ephesians 2:10; Psalm 138:8; Psalm 143:5;  
John 10:10; Jeremiah 29:11; Genesis 1:27–31.*

---

# FULL-BLOWN UGLY CRY

*You Are Okay*

Outside, I looked cool, calm, and collected.

Inside, I was experiencing a full-blown panic attack.

My husband and I sat on the same side of the table, facing the financial advisor and his assistant. We'd been married for fifteen years and had decided that now was a good time to get some professional direction in planning for our future.

Between that decision and the date of the appointment, my husband had lost his job. A loyal, hard worker, he had experienced many health challenges over the years and finally found himself no longer able to maintain the workload that had formed the foundation of our financial stability.

That meant it was now up to me.

As I sat there looking at the whiteboard where the financial advisor had carefully laid out a plan, all I saw was a big negative number. A negative number that I felt responsible for.

That moment was not the first time I'd been faced with hard circumstances, an insurmountable challenge, or a seemingly impossible situation.

Hard has an interesting way of finding me.

As a result, I've gotten good at pushing through things in my life. I logically think through what I can do to fix it, make it better, or rise above the storm.

But that doesn't mean I don't still feel the pressure.

The panic attack was controlled, tempered, and stuffed. I felt it threaten to rise up and make itself known in my face, in the tone of my voice, or in the words I used to communicate my thoughts.

And so I sat stoically in the financial advisor's office.

Serious.

Together.

Focused.

As a result of my effort to keep it together, I didn't have much to say. It was all so much to take in. The meeting concluded, and it was a long ride home.

The rest of the evening was normal. I was robotic, almost. Go home. Check. Fix dinner. Check. Read to kids, then pray with kids, then put kids to bed. Check. Quiet time for me. Check. Prepare to shut it down. Thank you, God, and check!

Movement.

Activity.

Routine.

I stayed in motion and kept to my routine so I wouldn't have to think about the problem that had presented itself to me earlier that afternoon.

And then the next morning came.

I went out for my morning run and found myself with no energy to keep the hard thoughts from coming. More than the run, I simply needed room to breathe.

And pray.

Lots and lots of prayer.

Huffing and puffing, I walked vigorously up the hill that begins

where my driveway meets the rural road. My prayer began in those heavy breaths as I asked God what in the world He was doing and how He expected me to handle the hard that He'd so casually tossed my way. My questions quickly digressed into a rant of anger.

Anger at God.

I was angry because my life was hard and I had problems that seemed too heavy to carry with no end in sight.

Why me?

I never actually started running. Instead, I walked and wrestled with God for an hour.

As I returned to the edge of my driveway and prepared to re-enter the real world and get back to home, back to kids, and back to work, my phone rang.

My friend Shuna was on the line.

"Hey, girl! How ya doing?"

That was all it took.

My anger melted into an emotional flood.

I tried to fight it, but the previous day's strength and control had been squashed under the weight of the unknown.

The tears started, and they wouldn't stop. Everything that had been bottled up forced its way to the surface. Like lava flowing from a volcano, I cried uncontrollably—water poured out of my eyes, a wail escaped my lips, and I doubled over, powerless to stand up straight.

I entered a full-blown ugly cry. You know, the "Oprah cry."

Shuna waited, quietly offering a sensitive, "I'm so sorry!" "What's wrong?" or "Oh, no!" as I struggled to explain my plight while attempting to get myself together.

Reluctantly, I told her what had happened and how I felt. I told her I didn't think I could take one more step in this life that felt straight uphill. I huffed and puffed through staccato sentences, trying to explain my state of emotional and mental disarray.

She listened.

More important, she heard me.

And although she had no power to fix my problems, she did offer me something priceless, poignant, and precious.

“You are okay.”

“You are going to be okay.”

“It’s going to be okay.”

Shuna didn’t offer a trite answer or a quick fix. There was no three-step plan or deep theoretical spiritual conversation.

She simply offered me hope.

And somehow, even though her words didn’t magically erase my circumstances, they offered calm as a viable exchange for my crazy emotional rollercoaster ride.

Maybe you’re facing your own kind of hard. Maybe thinking about it overwhelms you mentally or even overpowers you emotionally at times. Maybe you’re a far cry from the you that you envisioned when you were a girl or the circumstances you dreamed would one day be your life. Maybe you didn’t have extraordinary expectations, but even with low expectations, you’re still deeply disappointed.

Your hard may not have anything to do with money. It may have to do with your marriage or your singleness. Your mental or physical health. You might be fighting addiction or paralyzing fear. Maybe you’re worn out from mothering your kids or struggling with infertility.

Your hard might simply be that you can’t figure out what comes next. Maybe you’ve arrived exactly where you aimed for and realized that where you worked so hard to get is not “the place” after all.

I want to offer you hope.

Where you are today is not where you have to be forever. You may not want to embrace where you are, but it is so incredibly important for you to embrace *who* you are. You get to choose. While you can’t control everything in your life, you can do at least one thing: every day you get to choose to honor *you*.

There will never be another person who will grace the face of this earth who is like you.

There are people whom only you can love, places that only you can go, and things that only you can do the way that you would do them.

---

**You may not want to embrace where you are, but it is so incredibly important for you to embrace *who* you are.**

---

You have the opportunity to choose every day to honor the loveliness that you uniquely bring to the world, even if the world doesn't seem to be holding up its end of the bargain to bring the lovely to you.

You are a unique creation. There is no one like you. And that is exactly what makes you so indescribably precious—and totally okay.

My first order of business on our journey together is to remind you that while you cannot control all of your circumstances, every day you can choose beliefs, attitudes, and actions that honor the best of who you are and who you can become.

Your belief will affect the attitudes you embrace and the lens through which you view your life. Your attitudes will steer your actions—what you say and what you do. What you say and do determines how you move from who you are today to who you will be tomorrow.

You get to choose.

If you choose to believe that you are defined only by your disappointments and disasters, you will abdicate your role in this world, the role that only you can play.

But if you choose to embrace your journey—even the parts that disappoint you, challenge you, or make you double over from the emotional weight of it all—you can one day look back and see your hard as a part of your life and not the definition of your life.

Shuna's offer of hope did not erase my hard; however, she did remind me that the way my life looks today is not the way it will look

forever. She asked me to believe, and she reminded me that all I see is not all there is.

And I am asking you to believe.

Believe that your present is not all that is possible.

Believe that all you see is not all there is.

Today, my friend, this very moment, is just that, only a moment.

I want you to hold your head up and believe that where you find yourself right now—whether by mistake, choice, the impact of someone else’s actions, unmet expectations, or even boredom—does not define you.

---

**Believe that your  
present is not all  
that is possible.**

---

The mere fact that you are reading these words, breathing in and out, and therefore are alive indicates that you are worth the work of valuing who you are today and doing the work to discover who you can be tomorrow.



In 1987, my family and I sat captivated like thousands of other people watching the attempt to rescue Jessica McClure. The eighteen-month-old girl had fallen twenty-two feet into a well and gotten lodged in a shaft only eight inches in diameter. We stayed glued to the television late into the night, then began watching CNN again early the next morning as we hoped and prayed with so many others that her life would not end in that well. We willed the equipment to open up a parallel path to her location and prayed for the strength of the workers who had not had any sleep in their effort to deliver the little girl back to her family.

For fifty-eight hours, the news channel kept people everywhere informed. The reporters told everyone watching how hard it would be to get to the little girl whose young and carefree life had been interrupted by this tragedy.

For much of the time that Baby Jessica was stuck underground, she

let those within earshot know that she was alive. She “moaned, wailed and for a while even sang nursery rhymes to pass the time.”<sup>1</sup>

As oxygen was pumped down the shaft to give her air, people kept calling to Baby Jessica, hoping for a response. Even though the situation was grim, her sweet little voice singing songs—along with her cries and moans—let everyone know that she was still there, alive, and worth the hard and diligent work of the rescue.

Years later, Jessica McClure has said she doesn’t even remember that experience apart from what people have shared with her. Except for a scar on her forehead and a missing baby toe, Baby Jessica is just fine. She has gone on to live the life everyone hoped she would live.

Her darkest moment was only a moment in time.

Even though that little girl was once hurt, bruised, scared, and alone, her life is not some sad extension of that one event.

Jessica is still alive, and she is okay.

That memorable experience marked her life but did not define her life.

I’ve learned that is true for me, and I want you to know that is true for you as well.

Your life, my friend, does not have to be a sad sum total of your hard or your heavy.

Your darkest moments are only moments in time.

I would love to offer a simple answer or a quick fix, but here’s the truth. Getting above ground can be hard work, and it can take some time.

Whether it’s because of the dull ache of disappointment or the deep pain of some disaster or deep regret, you might feel as though the energy necessary to excavate yourself from the deep is . . .

Just.

Too.

Much.

But here’s the bottom line, and I believe this with all of my heart:

You are worth the effort.

If you are breathing, you have life, and the life that has been given to you is a life that only you can live. You are the only person who can live your life with the unique combination of your gifts, talents, abilities, history, and design.

Don't give up, girl. You are worth the work of the rescue.

Fight for your life.

Every day. Get up. Keep going.

You are okay.

Come on, say it with me: "I am okay."

You may have to say this over and over again until you believe it, and if that's what it takes, do it.

Saying "I am okay" won't eliminate real problems or pressure, but it will allow you to offer yourself some hope. Your journey is a process, and it might take some time. Still, get up every day, look yourself in the mirror, and tell that girl inside you that she is okay.

You might have to get up with tears in your eyes, cries from your lips, or heaviness in your heart, but I want you to choose to believe your life is worth the effort.

Don't settle for staying stuck.

Decide to fight for your life.

And with God's help, choose attitudes and actions that will remind you of this:

You are okay.

You're still here. You're still alive. So you're still worth the work of the rescue.

---

**Your darkest  
moments are only  
moments in time.**

---

# Reflections for the Rescue



## REMEMBER

Where you are today is not where you have to be forever.

## REFLECT

- When was the last time you let out an ugly cry? What caused it?
- What difficulties are you facing that you feel buried underneath?
- Even if there is some darkness in your life right now, there is always light if you will just look for it. What is one thing in your life that is right?

## RESPOND

Put this book down and look in a mirror. Go to your bathroom or pull a compact mirror out of your purse. Tell yourself you are okay and smile. Force the smile if you have to.

---

*1 Timothy 6:12; Psalm 30:5; 2 Corinthians 4:17;  
Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 1:6–7; Lamentations 3:21–24;  
Psalm 34:17–18; Psalm 40:1–3.*

---

# GET OUT OF THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

## *Own Your Story*

**I**n my midtwenties, I took a business trip to San Francisco. I had been asked to go receive training for a new job (one that didn't make me want to ask God to break my legs). I'd never been to the city before and decided to stay an extra couple of days to see the sights.

During my stay I had the opportunity to bike across the Golden Gate Bridge, and to this day I count that experience as one of my favorite adventures of all time. My ride went exactly according to plan—a few miles along the coastline, a steep uphill climb to enter the path leading to the bridge, a cruise across the bridge overlooking the bay, and a smooth downhill sail to the quaint town of Sausalito, where I ate lunch, rested, and then headed back across the bay by ferry.

Perfect.

Almost a decade later, I decided to relive that San Francisco adventure, this time with my daughter and a girlfriend. I was, of course, excited about taking them to see the city I'd fallen in love with ten years before,

but I was especially interested in introducing them to that fantastically flawless experience of biking across the bridge.

The morning after we arrived, we jumped on a trolley headed toward the waterfront to rent some bikes and begin our adventure. Leisurely riding through Fisherman's Wharf, past the marina, and through Presidio Park, we laughed and talked loud enough to hear each other over the noise of the ocean, seagulls, and nearby traffic. We pedaled toward the Golden Gate Bridge, stopping here and there for a photo before eventually dismounting our bikes to walk them up the steep hill to the mouth of the bridge. Then, with butterflies floating around in our tummies, we mounted the bikes, entered the pedestrians' path, and made our way across the famous landmark and over the San Francisco Bay. The day was beautiful, the views were perfect, and the three of us smiled with satisfaction as we took it all in.

After arriving at the other side and stopping for a few more pictures, we rode toward Sausalito. I was looking forward to the easy ride down that long slope into the quaint town.

About three minutes into the descent, I remember thinking that the bike was going too fast. And I remember thinking that I should probably brake just a bit to slow the bike down.

So I tapped on the brakes.

The bike stopped abruptly.

My body, on the other hand, did not.

I don't remember flying through the air. I don't remember hitting the pavement. I don't remember feeling any pain. I simply remember thinking, *Girl! Get yourself out of the middle of the road!*

As I crawled on my hands and knees to the shoulder of the road, I realized that my daughter had jumped off her bike and was crying and running toward me. My brain felt as if it were ricocheting back and forth inside my skull.

I felt a bit of an ache on my right side and a twinge of pain on my

left, but those were not enough to distract me from my goal of getting to Sausalito. I figured I just needed a second—a chance to get my act together—and then we could be on our merry way.

I thought I would be okay.

My daughter didn't think so.

She asked me to look down at my shirt, and when I did, I realized it was covered with blood. I glanced at my left side to identify the source of the pain that was now radiating up my arm. My pinky finger was throbbing. It also seemed to be oddly shaped. I looked at my right arm and realized that my elbow was busted up.

My friend had called an ambulance, and when it arrived, one of the emergency medical personnel squatted in front of me, looking me over and asking me the types of questions you ask a girl who has just flown head-first off her bike.

“Are you okay?”

“Do you know your name?”

“Who's the president?”

“What year is it?”

I guess the way I looked to the EMT, those questions were necessary. But I only felt irritated by his questions and offer of assistance. He was getting in my way.

All I wanted to do was get back on my bike and on my way to Sausalito. Achiever. Control freak. Doggedly determined to make things work.

I reasoned with myself, figuring I could tolerate my pain long enough to get back on that bike and make it to Sausalito. Then I would put my bike on the ferry, pedal back across the bay to San Fran, and get myself to a hospital.

Insane. Crazy. *Muy estúpido*.

The EMT closed his eyes and leaned his head to one side while taking a deep breath, willing himself to patience with this stubborn woman he had found himself caring for.

“You could, ma’am, but I don’t recommend that. You are hurt, and I think you need to come with me so you can have your pain addressed.”

I didn’t want to admit that I needed help. I didn’t want to acknowledge that my left pinky finger was hurting terribly (because it was broken), my right elbow was pulsing with pain (because it was fractured), and my brain was still ricocheting back and forth in my skull (because I had hit my head on the pavement). And I didn’t want to confess that the sight of blood had totally unnerved me.

Never in a million years did I think I would take a trip designed for relaxation and pleasure only to find myself sitting on the side of the road injured.

All I’d wanted was another perfect day, another great experience, another adventure that lived up to my expectations.

Sometimes, though, our days don’t live up to our expectations.

To find my way out of the mess I’d found my way into, I only had one option: I had to acknowledge my predicament.

I had to own my story in order to fix my story.

It takes one brave chick to admit that her life is not quite shaping up to be the life she envisioned. It takes courage to pause and assess your disappointment, realize where you’ve been disenchanted, and identify the source of your distress.

So many of us press through the pain without paying adequate attention to our brokenness. We disregard the ache in our hearts, as if ignoring the injury will cause the blood to stop flowing. We convince ourselves that somehow we don’t need to deal with the distance between our expectations and our reality. We think that somehow, if we just keep going, the distance will simply close by itself.

It won’t.

You and I must play an active role in closing that gap.

And the first step in closing the gap is to admit that the gap exists.



Step One is the highly familiar statement used in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), an organization that helps people overcome an addiction to alcohol and to live sober. When someone shows up to an AA meeting and stands to speak, they begin by saying, “My name is ‘So and So,’ and I’m an alcoholic.” People all over the world know and recognize that this first step in a series of twelve requires the struggling person to admit that he or she has a problem. In owning their story, they move one step closer to fixing it.

It’s human nature to hide our shortcomings, disappointments, and mistakes. We don’t like to be wrong, admit defeat, or show weakness. We tend to avoid the truth of our vulnerability, of our lack of control, of the pain of our predicament. We don’t like others to know that we’ve messed up, that we don’t feel capable, or that sometimes life just hurts.

But without confession, true restoration and healing cannot begin. If you really want help, you need to be willing to tell the truth to get it.

When you choose to own your story, you are not choosing to *wallow* in your mistakes, your pain, or your disappointments. You are simply choosing to be honest with yourself so that you can begin healing and move forward.

Okay, so here goes.

Step one.

Hello. My name is Chrystal, and I am

an alcoholic.

---

**Without confession,  
true restoration and  
healing cannot begin.**

---

Actually, that’s not true. That’s not my story.

But I *am* a girl who has struggled with insecurity, battled with promiscuity, experienced pregnancy outside of marriage, fought regularly with the #fatdemon, and wrestled with a sense of shame and insignificance because of it all.

You know.

Just to name a *few* things I’ve had to own.

Owning your story can be an uncomfortable first step, but in the words of Brene Brown, “Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it.”<sup>2</sup> It might feel like you’re coming out of hiding and seeing your scars for the first time in the full light of day. But telling yourself the truth is not an admission of powerlessness. It is when your story is in full view that you have the greatest ability to see what healing work needs to be done.

Owning your story is an act of strength.

You might be wondering if self-honesty must come solely from the less than stellar parts of your life. It doesn’t have to. The key is full-out honesty in those areas where denial or half-truths prohibit you from moving forward. And often those areas are made up of less than stellar moments. This statement from Katherine Preston on the *Psychology Today*

---

**Owning your story  
is an act of strength.**

---

blog sums this idea up well: “There is no harm in speaking about the pieces of ourselves that we are proud of, and yet doing so does little more than inflate our own egos. The more powerful part of ‘owning’ our story is speaking about the pieces that make us feel embarrassed or ashamed. Bringing our greatest weaknesses out of the closet and into the spotlight.”<sup>3</sup>

It doesn’t matter how you got where you are as much as it matters that you acknowledge that where you are is not where you want to be.

When I went careening over the handlebars, it could have been because I was careless and tapped on the brakes too hard. Maybe I shouldn’t have been moving that fast. It’s also possible that the bike shop was to blame for sending me out on a bike with brakes pulled too tight. (I should have tried to sue ‘em.) Or maybe it wasn’t anyone’s fault at all. Jacked-up stuff just happens sometimes.

It didn’t really matter how I ended up on the side of the road. I simply needed to admit that sitting there broken and bruised was not where I wanted to be. I only needed to willingly receive the help being offered.

It doesn't really matter how I end up sidelined from the desired experience of my life. I simply need to admit that sitting there with a bleeding heart and a broken spirit is not where I want to stay and allow Someone who is offering aid to help me heal.

As a part of owning my story, I must also own that I'm a girl who has been raised in the church. I'm a preacher's kid. I know the Bible, and I've had a personal relationship with God for most of my life.

I was raised in a home where faith formed the core of our beliefs, gave a framework for our family, and provided a grid through which we interpreted and viewed our world. My siblings and I were all raised to believe that we were designed with a master plan in mind and that, as long as we loved God wholeheartedly, we would be able to tap into those plans and have the lives that He had especially designed for us to lead.

My mother made sure that I knew this verse in particular: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11). I grew up memorizing passages of Scripture that taught me my life could be abundantly full and overflowing (John 10:10 AMP).

You can imagine my surprise when I finally decided to own my story and then felt the impact of how far my life had veered from the plumb line of my expectations. The vision I'd been given for my life didn't match my actual life very much at all.

So I know what I'm talking about when I say that owning your story requires a bit of self-reckoning that isn't always easy.

But it all begins with telling the truth, truth that God already knows but wants us to be honest about for the benefit of our own healing. "For He knows the secrets of the heart" (Ps. 44:21).

Truth is always the best starting point of any journey forward. Psalm 51:6 says, "But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom" (CEV). Wisdom for living the rest of your life begins with being honest about the life you have lived so far.

It takes courage to admit that

- things aren't working,
- parts of your life are disappointing,
- you've wasted time,
- you don't quite love the skin you are in,
- maybe you're a little bit unbalanced or even a little cray-cray.

(Don't worry about that last one. We all are just a tad.)

I know what I'm talking about when I say that it takes Someone outside of ourselves to reset what's broken, put what's been fractured back together, and give rest and restoration to quiet our minds, calm our hearts, and bring peace to our souls.



What about your story?

Maybe you didn't mean to end up on the other side of a broken relationship.

Maybe you've found yourself five, ten, or twenty years into a career that has gradually sucked the life out of you.

Maybe you've picked up a few extra pounds each year and, many years later, are waging a battle with your body that you just can't seem to win.

Maybe you've suddenly collided with the awareness that your dreams have gone unmet, and you're not sure you'll ever find that man, have that baby, or finish that degree.

Maybe you felt your life was beautiful until the unexpected call from the doctor, the unforeseen financial hardship, or the unanticipated emotional or mental crisis.

If I could sit down next to you when you are feeling the aches and pains that so often accompany reality, I'd look at you and tell you the truth.

Is this your life? Yes. Yes, it is.

Are you going to be okay? Yes. Yes, you are.

And as you slowly come to realize that what's bothering you needs more than just a bandaid, I'd encourage you to take the first step and own the narrative of your experience.

When you hurt, admit it.

When you feel pain, acknowledge it.

When you make mistakes, own up to them.

Your life does not have to be defined by the story you've lived thus far.

Be brave enough to believe you were made for more. Be bold enough to believe that healing can take place and that change is possible. And change is *always* possible. Even if your circumstances can't change, your attitude toward them can.

Dare to trust that it's God's desire for you to live out a beautiful story designed with you in mind.

Choose to take Step One.

Choose to own your story.

Be honest.

Tell the truth.

The good, the bad, and the ugly. Whatever happened, you survived. You are still here.

Own your story.

The girl you want to be is depending on you.

---

**Be brave enough  
to believe you were  
made for more.**

---

# Reflections for the Rescue



## REMEMBER

Owning your story is an act of strength.

## REFLECT

- Are you comfortable owning your story? Why or why not?
- Is your life measuring up to your expectations? Why or why not?
- In what ways have you been hurt or disappointed? Have you healed from those hurts and disappointments? Why or why not?

## RESPOND

Take time to heal. As you continue to read, own your story. Over the next seven days, spend a few minutes each day writing down defining moments in your life's story.

---

*2 Corinthians 12:9; Psalm 15:1–2; John 8:32;  
Jeremiah 12:3; Psalm 139:1; Psalm 145:18.*

---

# GOOD GIRL . . . HIS GIRL

*A Chapter from My Story*

People always want to know how a girl who has a great family, a great upbringing, and what seems to be a great future can end up making not so great choices. It always seems to surprise people when the preacher's kid makes a mistake, has a struggle, or misses the mark.

Well, let me tell you. It might surprise the preacher's kid too.

I was smart. A straight-A student and usually the teacher's pet. As a teenager, I was a "good girl" by all standards, and I liked it that way. I was proud to know that I pleased my parents and myself by doing things well. I was also very involved in my church youth group. I participated in most of the opportunities to gather, serve, and hang out. I was a leader. I got things done. So apart from being the pastor's oldest daughter, I also stayed visible because I was always running something.

Focused. In charge. Maybe a bit bossy at times. I knew what was important, and I ran hard after those things.

There is no way I would have believed you if at that time you'd told me what my life would be like just a few years later. I was too sure, too confident, too on top of things. And this is exactly why the unfamiliar

surprises. It creeps up. Change happens gradually. We don't see it coming. One day we simply look up and are surprised that we no longer recognize the person we've become or the life we are living.

How do I know this?

Because it happened to me.

Imagine you are joining me on my front porch to sip hot chocolate or something else warm and soothing. It's late in the evening, maybe even close to midnight, because that's when girls talk and share all their secrets. I want to share a chapter from my story with you.

If I'm telling you to be brave enough to tell the truth, it's only right that I go first.



I remember the first time he held my hand.

We were in a little house that my church had converted into a youth center. We gathered there every Wednesday night with other teenage kids to study God's Word, sing songs, and have fun and fellowship.

I'd heard that he liked me, but I wasn't really that interested. Mainly because I wasn't that interested in boys. I was much more interested in making the most of my life and trying to discern, even at a young age, how I wanted to live it.

But I do remember when he held my hand.

It was time to close our time of Bible study with prayer, and, just so that he could hold my hand, he crossed the room.

I was an embarrassed fifteen-year-old girl who was being forced, in front of a room filled with her peers, to acknowledge that there was a boy who liked her and wanted everyone else in the room to know.

That first time was not the last. He made it his business to cross the room and hold my hand every single time we closed in prayer. It became somewhat of a joke, something that was expected.

Week after week, teenagers around the room laughed and giggled while I bit my bottom lip out of embarrassment. It was obvious that I loathed the unsolicited attention.

But I was the nice girl.

I didn't want to be mean, and I didn't want him to feel rejected. I figured that I would have to hold somebody's hand anyway, so why not his?

This went on for months—actually, the better part of a year. Then one day, he didn't cross the room.

This weekly action had come to be something that I, as well as everyone else, had come to expect, and the absence of his movement was silently deafening.

Over time, something had changed. I'd gotten accustomed to this boy's attention. As he consistently expressed his desire to show me that he cared, I gradually let down my guard. The laser beam focus on my own life, goals, and dreams slowly blurred into the starry-eyed gaze of a teenage girl's what-ifs, maybes, and could-happens.

So the day he chose not to cross the room, I felt a void.

I remember thinking that maybe I ought to give him a chance. I remember thinking that maybe he wasn't as much of an interruption as I'd thought. I remember thinking that he wasn't all that bad and that being good friends probably wouldn't do much to interrupt my life.

But the day he stopped holding my hand was the day I started to drift. It was the beginning of drifting out of my own lane and into another.

I got distracted.

Motivated and preoccupied by a heightened sense of significance and blinded by the excitement of something different and new, the pursued became the pursuer.

Polite chance interactions became more purposeful as I initiated conversation to let him know there was an interest on my part. I lingered a little longer. Asked more questions. Provided fuller answers. I was truly happy to be his friend, the kind of friend who hopes for more than friendship.

As time went on, our friendship grew and I wanted more. More of the feelings, more of the attention, more of him. Where my energy had previously been focused on what mattered to me for my future, it morphed into a focus on what mattered to me right now. And he was what mattered.

The girl I had been faded into the shadows, bit by bit, day by day.

The thing is, the change in my head and in my heart happened slowly. I didn't notice it. My mindset, actions, and attitudes shifted incrementally over time. Little by little, the distraction and excitement of young love threw me off my game, and I lost sight of the girl I'd been committed to becoming.

But I didn't realize it.

I slowly morphed from a self-confident, goal-oriented young woman who had a healthy expectation about her potential into a girl who was desperate for the attention and affection that she'd become accustomed to receiving. Little by little I grew more and more attached to this young man who made me laugh and seemed to hold me in high esteem.

Schoolwork got less of my time. My grades slipped. I cared less about being the good girl and more about being *his* girl. Pleasing my parents became secondary to spending time with him, talking to him, and feeling those butterflies of first love. I was less of a leader and more of a bystander. Taking on responsibility of any kind wasn't as fun because it meant I would spend less time hanging with him. The intentional and direction-oriented choices of a driven, motivated teenage girl were reduced to unintentional and involuntary reactions. I lost control as my visibility decreased and the relationship obscured everything.

Even when my parents, youth leaders, or even friends questioned me about my change in behavior, attitude, and involvement, I failed to notice any cause for concern. Nor did I really care. At that point, I can't say I was really listening to the questions, opinions, or concerns of others. How could I hear them when I couldn't even hear the voice of

the girl inside? I had all but silenced the very one whose life I'd been so focused on before.

And if that girl was trying to get my attention, I'd drifted too far away from her to hear her clearly.



Drifts in life don't last forever. Unintentional living eventually reaches a dead end, and to move in any direction requires a decision or a turn.

As young love often does, something delightful and innocent quickly descended into an emotional and physical rollercoaster ride. I'd become addicted to the young man's approval, overtures, and acceptance. He'd grown accustomed to the reality that I was willing to abdicate my own worth to obtain his affection.

You could say I was drunk in love.

And like anyone desperate for that which they have cultivated a craving, I was willing to do whatever it took to get it.

Right ways of thinking, right choices, and right behaviors, once clear-cut and obvious, now seemed to be relative and optional. Bottom line? I did whatever I felt like doing.

I was no longer drifting. I was making decisions. Poor decisions, to be more specific.

Decisions to disobey my parents and the rules they had set up for my protection.

Choices to ignore the wisdom I'd been taught about protecting and respecting my heart, my mind, and my body.

Actions that did not align with what I believed.

I followed fast the road that led to what I thought I wanted. I remember sensing the need to slow things down, to be more cautious, and to

---

**Drifts in life don't last forever. Unintentional living eventually reaches a dead end.**

---

think more clearly about the direction in which I was headed, but it's hard to stop something moving at breakneck speed. It's a challenge to react appropriately when your senses and sensibilities are impaired.

Fast bikes moving down steep hills often don't have pretty endings.

The farther I went, the more numb I became to the voice of the girl within who was trying to get my attention and tell me I was headed the wrong way. A vicious cycle repeated in my head and in my heart. The more I silenced, ignored, or debated with the girl inside, the smaller she got and the less I noticed her. Guilt, shame, and self-condemnation grew to fill the place she left void.

I learned to function from an insecure place. I learned to pretend that the life I was living was the life I wanted.

It wasn't.

But I was too busy being in love to notice.

Before my senior year in high school started, I was no longer a virgin. The relationship that had started between two young people in a church youth group with the most innocent of intentions had turned into a full-out disaster.

It all happened so fast. I hadn't noticed how much I'd gradually shifted away from the strong, determined girl I'd once been. I'd lowered the high standards I'd fiercely held, released many expectations of my life, and no longer cultivated the faith that had sustained me.

My drift had led me far away from the girl I'd planned on being in this season of my life. My decisions carried me quickly along in a raging current far beyond my control.



Don't worry, I won't leave you hanging. I'll get back to my story in a little while. But first I need you to understand something that will help you in your story.

Sometimes we drift.

Drifts happen when we unintentionally move away from who we believe we can be, what we believe we can accomplish, or where we hope our lives will take us. A drift is “the decision you make by not deciding.”<sup>24</sup>

While the details I’ve shared with you about one of my own drifts (yes, there have been others) is primarily centered around the emotional pull of a girl who craved the attention and affection of a boy, drifts come in all shapes and sizes. Think about your own drifts. The trip through your own narrative is a trip worth making.

Maybe, like me, you’ve lost focus because of the pull of a relationship that derailed your intentions, plans, or purposes. But maybe not. Drifts are not solely romantic ones, nor are all drifts related to morality. Maybe the drift in your life came because you simply got tired of trying.

Maybe you reached a point where you simply got tired of doing the work of living purposely, steering and pushing your way forward. It could be that you only meant to take a break, but by the time you took notice, the break had gone on for years, leaving you far from the person you’d wanted to be or the plans you’d had.

Maybe you took a break from school, but haven’t yet gone back. Maybe you had a financial goal but got tired of the sacrifice, so you relaxed your spending habits, stopped saving, and no longer kept that detailed spending review. Maybe you were doing well on your weight-loss journey, but one special occasion—strung together with just a few more—set you on a long-term path that led you more than a few pounds back up the scale. Those cupcakes will kill ya.

Maybe your drift happened when you were a teenager—young, easily influenced, and unprepared for the determination it takes to stay on course. Or maybe until now, everything in your life has gone as planned,

---

**The trip through  
your own narrative is  
a trip worth making.**

---

but after climbing the career ladder, getting married and having kids, or finishing that advanced degree, you just aren't sure what comes next. So you wander, aimlessly marking time, not exactly sure where to go from here.

Maybe you drifted because you were busy doing the immediate, the urgent, and the unignorable—changing diapers as a stay-at-home mom, keeping the peace between family members, or working two and a half jobs to keep things afloat. Then, somewhere, in the process of doing all that needed to be done, you drifted away from *you*.

When you realize how far you've drifted and how far away you are from the life you hoped for, it certainly can be overwhelming. But there is always an anatomy to our drifts. We didn't meander miles away in a minute. Slowly and gradually we took steps, possibly unconsciously, that took us farther than we intended. However, if we pause to examine our drifts and see them for what they are—small abdications over time—we realize that we do indeed have the power to change. We can know that our drift is not as big, overpowering, or insurmountable as it seems.

Here's the good news. If there is a way in, there is a way out. While you may feel utterly lost, take comfort in this: lost does not equal lifeless.

---

**Lost does not  
equal lifeless.**

---

And as long as there is still life, there is hope.

Hope for getting back on track.

Hope for finding your way.

Hope for the girl who is still there.

# Reflections for the Rescue



## REMEMBER

The trip through your own narrative is a trip worth making.

## REFLECT

- After hearing some of my story, identify at least one drift in your life. What role did your feelings play in your drifting experience?
- When did this drift happen? Why did it occur?
- Are you in a drift? If you aren't sure, ask a friend.

## RESPOND

Take the next step. Be brave enough to be vulnerable. Share a chapter from your story with a trusted friend. If you are not ready for this level of honesty, simply tell a friend that you are working on owning your story—drifts and all. Ask them to pray for you as you do.

---

*James 1:12–16; Hebrews 2:1; Proverbs 4:23;  
1 Peter 2:10–11; 1 John 1:6.*

---

# HERSHEY AND THE HIGHWAY

## *The Anatomy of a Drift*

I was on a long drive—a three-hour drive, to be exact—headed from one Texas town to another.

I'd filled my car full of gas and my purse with a few snacks to make sure that I could complete the trip without stopping to put fuel in my car or my tummy.

The best snack in my purse? Hershey bar with almonds.

That was the one I was saving for just the perfect moment.

When that time came, I reached into my purse and felt around for it, combing every nook and cranny of my bag with the tips of my fingers, expecting at any moment to feel the smooth wrapper underscored by the bumpy goodness held inside.

The bar wasn't in there.

I looked over to the passenger seat and then to the floor below.

There it was.

My Hershey bar was on the floor. Somehow it had fallen out of my purse.

Vexed about the dilemma of the snack being just out of my reach,

I could hardly focus on the road. My brain went into overdrive trying to figure out how to get to my chocolate without having to stop the car.

I felt the etchings of the freeway underneath my tires.

That chocolate bar was distracting me.

And my distraction caused me to drift ever so slightly outside the safety of the yellow lines.

*Drifts happen because we get distracted.* We might be preoccupied by something that isn't good for us, or we might be preoccupied with doing the next thing. For a moment—or in a series of moments—we don't pay close attention to who we are. We cease focusing intently on who we want to be, or maybe we never even started. We lose awareness, or maybe we never knew that living with awareness is important. We acquiesce to whatever comes next, inattentive to the cost of our lack of participation. We're too busy living to notice we're meandering away from a meaningful path, despite our best intentions.

Many of us live distracted because we live busy. Maria Popova, in her weekly literature review, *Brain Pickings*, says, "I frequently worry that . . . busyness [is] the greatest distraction from living, as we coast through our lives day after day, showing up for our obligations but being absent from our selves, mistaking the doing for the being."<sup>5</sup>

Distractions can seem so much more exciting than the rhythm of the everyday, the boredom of the expected, or the ongoing discipline to accomplish something worthwhile. But while distractions might seem to give you life, the reality is that they can steal your life.

Distractions will tempt you to avert your eyes from the path you believe is right or the destination you hope is yours as you gaze at something that is shiny, interesting, different, entertaining, or amusing. That first peek may not be problematic, but as anyone who has stared too long at a billboard can tell you, where your eyes go, your car can easily follow.

How do you stay on track or get back on track in your life? The same way you stay on the road when you are behind the wheel.

The antidote for distraction is focus—the choice to pay attention and live aware.



I drove a little farther, jolted to attention by the reminder from the road to stay in my lane.

It wasn't long, however, before I started thinking about that Hershey bar again.

But now, instead of simply being distracted by it, I tried to convince myself that I could reach over and grab it without consequence.

As much as I knew deep down that this action could be detrimental, I wanted what I wanted and started strategizing how I could get it without incident. I moved quickly from distracted thoughts to deceptive thoughts, the kind of thoughts that happen when we don't want to admit that there are consequences for our actions.

---

**The antidote for distraction is focus—the choice to pay attention and live aware.**

---

*Drifts continue when we deceive ourselves into thinking things aren't that bad.*

We drift when we rationalize away the truth and deceive ourselves. After distraction has carried us a little way, our conscience might try to call us back to being sensible. We might even have friends, family, or acquaintances ask us about the changes they've noticed in our actions or attitudes, but we tell ourselves and others that we're not really that far off course. We are convinced that what others notice isn't really that terrible or isn't that out of character. And so we justify. Defend. Vindicate. Or attempt to explain away.

Deception occurs when we've grown accustomed to the distraction. In order to continue in what was once uncomfortable, we develop a level

of comfort. We learn to justify what was once unreasonable. We choose to ignore the facts of the important for the feeling of the insignificant.

The only way to fight deception is to face the truth head on.

But what happens if you don't?



After a while, I'd rationalized away any thought that opposed reaching for that candy bar. I no longer heard the voice of reason. I no longer felt the fear of taking the chance. I no longer saw the problem with taking a few seconds to grab the goodness sitting on the floor of the passenger seat.

I was consumed with the right now, the immediate.

While my conscience had tried to warn me, I was no longer bothered by thoughts of danger, lack of safety, or even the accidental loss of my life. I worked hard at discrediting the voice of reason. I no longer listened. I chose not to respond.

Distraction and deception had worn down my sensitivities.

*Drifts persist because we become desensitized.* Once we've gone too far, too long, we become less shocked by and less sensitive to the changes that we have allowed. The "every once in a while" becomes our norm. We no longer have an inner argument each time we move farther away from our best self—that girl within us and everything she hopes to be. The change that might at one time have made us uncomfortable, now seems commonplace. We become numb to things we once would have had a strong reaction to. We don't notice the problem anymore, so we don't engage. We've forgotten we were ever on a path at all. Most terrible, we might adopt a cynicism toward all we'd hoped before because we've stopped believing in who we were and the dreams we'd had.

And when that girl calls, when the one we hoped we could be beckons us, we don't listen or respond because we don't think she knows what she's talking about. We don't trust her. Sometimes we've drifted so far that we

don't hear her calling at all. But the only way you can respond to your life is by choosing to listen to your life. Yes, you might feel discomfort, but then you can decide to do something about it.

Let me pause to say that some of you may think I'm blowing all of this out of proportion. You may recognize a small drift of some kind in your life but don't agree that being off course a tad can affect the trajectory of your life. Even small drifts matter. In the words of Mary Kay Ash, "Some people drift through their entire life. They do it one

---

**A small drift left  
unattended will, over  
time, make a huge impact  
on your final destination.**

---

day at a time, one week at a time, one month at a time. It happens so gradually they are unaware of how their lives are slipping away until it's too late." Please consider the "one in sixty" rule of navigation. For every

degree you are off in your direction now, you will be approximately one mile off sixty miles later.

A small drift left unattended will, over time, make a huge impact on your final destination.



I decided to reach for the Hershey bar.

I took my eyes off the road for just a few seconds, leaned way over to the right, and stretched my arm as far as it would go.

For a moment, I felt the victory of holding the chocolate bar in my hands. The victory was short-lived, though, because I almost simultaneously felt the etchings of the freeway underneath my tires again.

But this time the etchings weren't a warning. They were an indication that I was losing control and flying off the freeway. Shortly after, I felt the rumble of uneven ground as the car careened over grass, rocks, and dirt.

*Drifts and decisions play a central role in the direction of our lives. While*

a drift occurs through no clear choice of your own or of someone else's, a decision marks a moment when you participated in picking the route.

Sometimes your decisions are made flippantly. You may choose without truly counting the cost or understanding the impact your choice will have in the next year or ten years.

Maybe your decision to move across country for the promotion was not a bad one, but you didn't account for the loneliness you'd encounter being away from your family and friends. Maybe deciding to go to the college of your dreams seemed perfectly fine when you received your acceptance letter, but years later you are disgusted with the amount of debt you are in. Or maybe you love your children and can't imagine life without them, but you had no clue how much they would cost, how much of yourself you'd have to give, or how much they would break your heart when they became adults.

Just like drifts, decisions can result in lots of justification and have a numbing effect where you disassociate yourself from your choices. You might blame others for the decisions you "had" to make, or take on a victim's mentality—a mindset that says you are not responsible for your actions.

The good news is that if you are in a drift or are dealing with the result of a decision, there is a remedy. No matter how far or how long you've drifted or how many decisions you've made that turned you around and left you clueless as to how to get back, there is an antidote.

You, my dear, have the ability to choose.



I sat in the median, stunned.

Let's be honest, I felt like a total idiot.

I mean, who puts their life at risk for a chocolate bar? Apparently me, that's who.

I gathered my wits and realized that the situation could have been

much worse. The car could have flipped, hit a tree, or gone flying across the median and into the lanes of oncoming traffic.

My car had shut off, so I turned the key in the ignition to see if it would start and breathed a sigh of relief when it did. There was still power. I had another chance.

A chance to drive with care and get to my intended destination.

I drove out of the dip in the median and slowly merged back onto the Texas highway. With my Hershey bar in hand, I vowed that I would never be so careless behind that wheel.

More important, upon arriving in one piece, I thanked God for His protection, and resolved that in the future, I would always secure my snacks safely within my reach.

The drift didn't have to happen. I had a choice.



My friend, you can choose to live aware, to acknowledge the truth, and to listen to the story of the life that is yours and yours alone. You have the power to change your course. You can either take action or you can determine your reaction to the story that has unfolded thus far.

---

**You, my dear, have  
the ability to choose.**

---

If you have a sense of discomfort about your life, that is a gift. Your discomfort is a signal that something needs to change. It is the call of the girl inside asking you not to give up and to fight for her. The mere fact that you have a sense of dis-ease about your life is a testament to the fact that you know deep down you were made for more.

Can I tell you that you were indeed made for more?

And it doesn't matter if you've drifted a little or if you are smack dab in the middle of a ditch. No matter where you are or what you've been through, you still have power. The girl in you still has a chance.

# Reflections for the Rescue



## REMEMBER

You, my dear, have the ability to choose.

## REFLECT

- What are some distractions that are preventing you from living fully aware?
- How have you rationalized staying in a drift?
- Are you desensitized? What used to bother you that you no longer notice?
- What decisions have you made that have resulted in consequences you are living with now?

## RESPOND

Write this affirmation down somewhere where you will see it and see it often:

I'm still here. God's not finished with me yet.

---

*Philippians 3:13–14; 1 Peter 3:10–11; Isaiah 30:15;  
Luke 5:31–32; 2 Corinthians 7:9–10.*

---

