

A PUBLICATION FOR CHRISTIAN WOMEN

BUT GOD

The Joy of the Lord
SUMMER EDITION

LAUIE ALLEN: THE
UNEXPECTED GIFT

HAIR TIPS FROM
CELEBRITY
HAIRSTYLIST!

Deise Eliassen
Vera Jimenez
& MORE!

ADRIANA
SUYAMA

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL



A PUBLICATION FOR CHRISTIAN WOMEN

BUT GOD

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Editor's Note

BUT GOD MAGAZINE

Often when we hear “The Joy of the Lord is my strength” during a tragedy, a difficult time or when the unimaginable happens, we find it very difficult to believe the one who is speaking truly means what they say. Except if we in our own journey have at any point been stripped off stability, if we’ve been at our weakest point, or gone through any heartbreak that all we had left was the option to trust God fully. And then when we made such a choice we experienced His strength, His comfort, His peace, and His joy even though by human eyes such a state is hard to explain and comprehend.

God’s presence transforms everything. When God is on the throne of our lives, He becomes the source in which our own existence flows. We can live with joy that is not circumstantial, that dictates that “with Jesus in our boat everything is gonna be all right even in midst of the wildest storm” as the disciples experienced at the Sea of Galilee, a story told in Mark 4:35-41.

I often share with my husband who became a believer as an adult that I live in a state of joy, and sometimes I’m happy sometimes I’m sad, however, my joy, nothing, no circumstance, no person, no hardship can strip away from me. Why? Because it comes from God, I believe this is my “power”, this is my strength, it is unfailing, and it isn’t finite. What about you, sister? What’s the source of your strength? Do you find yourself constantly empty of joy? I want to encourage you to lean into God’s presence and His Word which is alive and so powerful. Remember that there is no circumstance too big for God’s reach and truly it is in our weakness (when we surround to Him) that we are strong.



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In this issue, let's follow how women that were called by the Lord has faced the challenges that provided growth and grew their faith. God's purpose is not to make things easy, but to teach us how to trust Him even in the bareness.



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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA & DESTINATION WEDDING AND EVENT DESIGN

SAY I DO | TO *details*
EVENT PLANNING AND DESIGN

BY VERA JIMENEZ



PHOTOS: ALBERT ALAAN

The Joy Lifestyle

I love my career. I get great satisfaction giving what I call actionable news. As a certified Meteorologist, I deliver news you can use. Let's face it, in the news, being a weather woman doesn't stink. I'm not going to fib; the science part was brutal. If I had collected all the tears I spilled over the three-year period it took to get my certification, it would have been at least a couple of fifty-five-gallon drums worth of crying. I know I have one of the most coveted jobs across the country, so it was worth every tear.

As a meteorologist, I tap into the emotions of the day as I prepare the forecast. If there's a tragic incident like a school shooting, it's my job to deliver the weather in a serious but optimistic tone. I don't make jokes or try to be funny, but I do let people know that the sun will be out the next day and that we will be okay.

"We're starting the day cloudy and gray but by the afternoon, the sun will break through, and the temperatures will feel soothing."

This is a skill I've developed over the years.

If on the other hand, there's a celebration happening like a championship game and it's going to be cool, I would say, "It's going to be below average tomorrow, but with all the festivities around town for the game, who needs more heat, right?" I implement these simple comments to connect with the folks at home.

All of this brings me immense joy. Being helpful, of service, and optimistic are attributes God combined when he made me. These aren't characteristics I can take credit for. I just do my best with what he gave me, which also includes being stubborn, impatient, short-fused, and, yes, even angry (ask anyone in my family). I wish I didn't have the latter, but you must embrace the good and the bad to keep yourself in check.

Finding the silver-lining

Monday through Friday, we make it a rule to keep the television turned off at our house while I'm there. We get the Wall Street Journal and that's our only source of news at home. Each night I work three and a half hours of live news, five days a week. I sit in the studio and listen for all three and a half hours. I do my best not to listen, but it's hard not to. Robberies, shootings, fights, kids overdosing on Fentanyl, government misconduct, more taxes, homelessness, corrupt politicians, the list goes on and on. Let me ask you, when was the last time you watched a newscast from beginning to end and how did you feel, not so optimistic, right? I understand that part of my job is to help viewers forget all that negativity even if it's only for a few minutes. So, here's what I would say. "June gloom continues, but this is good because it's slowing down the snow melt and allowing the ground to gradually saturate instead of having all that precious water just run off," a silver lining.

I've always been optimistic and cheerful. Although lately, I find it more challenging to pull myself out of the doldrums as I drive home from work. I remind myself that God is my source and my joy. He knows what's going on and will make it better. "Do not grieve for the joy of the Lord is your strength." That's what Nehemiah says, right? Trusting that God is with me and helping me through the frustrating, ugly moments gives me great comfort. There are so many times I see things on TV while at work that infuriate me and make me feel bitter, that I have nowhere or no one to turn to but God.

I know I'm supposed to love, forgive, turn the other cheek, and hand over my cloak, but honestly, it's difficult to feel that way sometimes. When I see hordes of teenagers flash mobbing and destroying businesses, it makes me angry at them and sad for the business owners.

"Where are their parents, who raised these kids, what's wrong with them?" I scream in my head. No wonder businesses leave these neighborhoods. I watch in confusion, not understanding how this happens. This is their neighborhood, why are they destroying it? When I see that, I don't feel like handing over my cloak, only a good spanking.

This is when I dig deep and give thanks for all I have, for the beauty around me and the joy in the world. On rough nights, I turn on my App and recite the Rosary all the way home. Meditating on the Lord's prayer and on the Hail Mary pulls me out of the dark place and takes me back into the light of the Lord and to a place of tranquility.

Distinguishing joy vs. Happiness

As I meditated on the words in Nehemiah 8, I wondered about the difference between happy and joy. When I think about how I feel when I experience joy, it's profound and intense, like light shining from within my heart out to the world. It feels soothing and transcendent like a deep state of bliss. It makes me think of a life's journey.

Happy on the other hand feels like a fleeting moment, like birthday candles being blown out, or scoring 100% on a spelling test, knowing next week another will come, or how I feel after achieving a goal, then realizing there's another one behind it. Happy feels like a destination, a place you arrive at but eventually must leave.

Experiencing joy amidst the chaos isn't easy when you're bombarded with it daily, but rejoicing in the teachings of the Lord gives me hope. It reminds me that God is good, that life is good, and that there is beauty and goodness in everything, even in destruction if you look long enough. I remember that at any instant, each of us can be changed by the love of God. I remember that we're all sinners, that it is not for me to judge. As I watch the throng of teens destroying a McDonald's for no apparent reason, the rage fills me, then I say a silent prayer for them.

"Forgive them father for they know not what they do."

Still in my fury, I remember that in the same way I judge others, I will be judged. God is forgiving, merciful, and just and it is not for me to sentence anyone. Then I pray, "Forgive me Father, for I know what I do."

Only love can defeat hate, and God loved us so much that he sacrificed his only son for us. The joy of the Lord is my strength.

Vera Jimenez is a Journalist and Meteorologist, going live on the screens of KTLA5. Vera has earned two Emmys, three Golden Mikes, and three Golden Pylons. Originally from Mexico but was raised in Southern California, the place she chose to make her home.

Aside from her journalism career, Vera is a motivational speaker and writer leading people in entrepreneurship, by speaking at organizations and events, and sharing her journey online.

*The joy of the Lord is
our strength.*



By Celebrity Hairstylist Cristina Smallwood

SUMMER HAIR REVIVAL TIPS

① UV Protection

Make sure you're using a product that has a UV ABSORBER in it before you step out of the house! This will not only protect your hair from the sun, it will also preserve the color & keep it from looking full & lifeless! This will also be a barrier if you decide to dip.

② Avoid extra wear

Use a wet brush or wide tooth comb. The extra wear and tear on your hair is unnecessary! Start from the bottom and work your way up as you gently brush or comb your hair!

③ Say NO to Coconut Oil

Whatever you do, do not put coconut oil in your hair. Years ago this fad went around and a lot of women were misled into believing this was a great idea. Instead, use a vitamin-infused hair masque! You don't need to sleep with your hair in a treatment either, a great quality one will work in minutes and can be rinsed out in the shower before you apply a conditioner to seal the cuticle.

④ Deep Cleanse

Deep cleanses to rid the hair of environmental & product build-up need to be part of your weekly regimen. Apple Cider Vinegar Rinses or hair piling are two great methods to achieve a deeper & gentler cleanse of your scalp!



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Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-24 and we are working to decrease this heart-breaking statistic.

Studies show that by the age of 5, a child has already developed their self-esteem. Moreover, studies continue to show that low self-esteem is linked to mental illnesses and suicide. This is why Hope Gatekeepers has created an inspirational program for children with a mission to support their growing minds. Our Little Seeds of Hope program is tailored for children ages 5-9 and focuses on 8 pillars of skill building. These 8 pillars consist of; Affirmations, Contribution, Environment, Wisdom, Moral Compass, Emotions, Friendship, and Hope. With our work we are taking action against mental illnesses—and holding open the gates of hope for their families.

As we continue to support families in our community, our hope is that you would consider partnering with a nonprofit organization like Hope Gatekeepers that serves to make a positive + faithful impact.

Misty E. Rivera
Founder

NEHEMIAH SAID: GO AND ENJOY
CHOICE FOOD AND SWEET
DRINKS, AND SEND SOME TO
THOSE WHO HAVE NOTHING
PREPARED. THIS DAY IS HOLY TO
OUR LORD. DO NOT GRIEVE, FOR
THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR
STRENGTH.

NEHEMIAH 8:10

COVER

PHOTOS: ALBERT ALAAN

"DON'T WORRY MOM...WE ARE GOING TO BE OK."

"It's been 5 months since my precious husband went to be with Jesus. We were married for 13 years, and this summer would have marked 24 years that I'd known him. My daughter was right, and God has indeed allowed us to be ok."



WITH ADRIANA SUYAMA

Following Jesus

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

In life, unexpected events can shape our paths in profound ways. When my husband and I decided to uproot our family from California to Texas in 2021, we had no idea the turn our lives would take.

In just a year and a half our outlook went from unencumbered joy to devastating loss. However, through faith and God's guidance, I am slowly finding solace and encouragement in turning this tragedy into a life filled with purpose and hope. God continues to bring my family through this time as we navigate the depths of grief and embark on a mission to share a message of resilience and love in honor of the man who we were blessed to call husband and father. A man who God used to leave a legacy of changing the hearts and lives of those he encountered.

My journey to today and being featured in But God magazine began with a simple story idea. I had always wanted to write a children's picture book. Raising 4 children in today's world is hard, and I had a fierce desire to participate in providing uplifting and Godly wisdom and insight for the next generation. I met Thais Eliassen when she reached out to me and offered to help me with my endeavor, which had already begun to feel too big for me to handle alone. At the start of the pandemic, my husband, Chris,

and I agreed to team up with Thais to make this book a reality. As a team, we put our trust in God to bring about success for His glory, and we set out to self-publish my book. God is so good, and we had more success than we had even known we would.

THE UNIMAGINABLE

In October 2021, Chris and I decided as a family to move from Southern California to McKinney, Texas. Our family of 6, plus my mom and dad, caravanned from California to Texas over 4 days. We were so excited, and the thought of new experiences and opportunities had us ready for what God had in store for us. However, about a week after we moved, Chris was experiencing tremendous stomach pain that sent him to the ER. A couple of short hours and a CT scan later, we were receiving the devastating news that Chris had cancer, and it had already spread throughout his abdomen. So, instead of starting off our new adventure together as a family, we were frantically figuring out how to set Chris up for the next 6 months to receive immediate treatment in California. Chris had not yet started working in Texas and had no insurance here. Since we had friends and family and insurance in California, treatment was set up and planned there. This was the most devastating news. Chris and I had never spent more than a few nights apart.



Follow along Adriana on social media:
[@suyamaadriana](#) and
www.adrianasuyama.com

And now we were facing months at a time apart. This diagnosis was mind-shattering. We were told that if we did nothing, at best Chris had 6 months to live. We were also told that if we did everything right, the average life expectancy was anywhere from 1-7 years. And 10 years was almost unheard of. The official diagnosis was metastatic colon cancer with peritoneal carcinomatosis. This was the easiest way to communicate the diagnosis, but in reality, his cancer was completely unusual and rare, and all the doctors were constantly at a loss for the best course of treatment. This was unbearable to process. On top of all this our plans for our children needed to change ASAP. We had planned to continue to homeschool, but instead, the kids were thrown into school at a moment's notice, and I went to work full-time. Suffice it to say, we were put through the wringer.

We had incredibly high hopes when his treatment ended, and we could feel hope that life would return to some kind of normalcy. The doctors said the cancer had reduced by 70%! During that time, we had put high importance on overall health and wellness, using whatever diet and wellness plans we could to support Chris' treatment. When Chris came back to Texas, we started several holistic and natural methods, Chris' dad, in particular, provided so much of what we needed in order to do that and started transferring all medical care out here. He was doing so well! We had planned to take 2 months off treatment and took a family trip and spent as much time together as a family as we could. A hiccup in insurance coverage delayed some doctor appointments, but a CT scan at the end of June showed that everything still looked good, and the cancer did not appear to be spreading. However, our hope was short-lived, when the cancer returned with astonishing speed. It had never fully gone away, but Chris could have been living with this cancer for potentially many years before it had been discovered. We could never have imagined this devastating turn of events in such a swift manner. In the span of a month, Chris went from seemingly healthy and vibrant, to constant agonizing pain. We had been waiting on an appointment with a surgeon to remove as much of the remaining cancer as possible, but it seemed as if in an instant that opportunity was lost. After many appointments, a second opinion at the top cancer hospital in the country, and a hospital stay with an extremely caring and persistent nurse, we made the choice to restart chemo. However, the effectiveness of chemotherapy diminished, and we found ourselves enduring a series of ever-increasing hospital stays.

Christmas day marked the beginning of Chris' last hospital stay. This was one of the most trying moments for me. Instead of enjoying what would be his last holiday with his

family. Chris was in and out of consciousness due to pain and nausea meds because of the uncontrolled pain he was in. We took him to the hospital that day, and he was not released again until he came to hospice on January 20, 2023.

Chris' last few days were spent with his children and me, snuggling with him and expressing assurances for their future. He was also visited by friends and family, praying for him and loving him with words and embraces. He died at around 3 pm on January 31st, 2023, just one year and three months after his diagnosis. He is survived by me, and his 4 children. The first thing my oldest daughter said to me in a moment of rest after he passed was, "Don't worry Mom...we are going to be ok."

FINDING JOY AMID HARDSHIP

Choosing to find joy amid hardship is no easy task, but we always made a conscious decision to embrace positivity. We cherished moments of laughter with each other, with our kids, and with our friends. We thanked God for blessings and small victories. And we looked to the darkest corners of our lives and asked God to take control. In the midst of hospital stays and medical procedures, Chris became an embodiment of God's love. His unwavering faith and constant choice to find joy in each moment touched the lives of nurses, hospital staff, and friends alike. His resilience and kindness inspired those around him, serving as a testament to the power of love and faith in the most challenging circumstances. And in the face of life's greatest challenges, the power of support from friends and family cannot be underestimated. Chris' diagnosis brought forth an intense need for assistance on various fronts. The financial, practical, and emotional support we received from our close-knit circle allowed us to embrace each day with joy, finding strength and solace amidst the trials. In particular, our close friends, as well as Chris' mom and sister, played a pivotal role in our journey by providing a place to stay as well as transportation and care during weekly doctor appts and treatments.

And in Texas, my parents, sister-in-law, and childhood friends stepped in to help care for the kids and me, allowing us the space to navigate this incredibly complex part of life. We have been blessed with such an incredible network of caring and compassionate individuals who surrounded us during our time of need. Support like this from every single friend and family member we have played such a vital role in the whole family's well-being. It allowed us to focus on our family and on Chris' health, instead of having to worry about how we would pay for food, clothes, school supplies, normalcy and activities for the kids, and so much more.

People made and sent meals, care packages, gift cards, and referrals, and it was such an incredible help. One of the most important ways the financial assistance helped us was that it allowed us to go visit Chris once a month for the first several months, and then he was able to come to see us about every two weeks for the remainder. In total, Chris was in California for 7 months. God used this support to help Chris and me and the kids find strength. Despite so many challenges and uncertainties, the compassion of our friends and family infused our lives with a sense of hope and gratitude. The acts of love we encountered reaffirmed our faith and our determination to find joy, even in the midst of adversity.

THESE DAYS..

It's been 5 months since my precious husband went to be with Jesus. We were married for 13 years, and this summer would have marked 24 years that I'd known him. My daughter was right, and God has indeed allowed us to be ok. During this time our bonds with friends and family have grown even stronger as they have embraced us with open hearts. In a testament to the impact of Chris' life, we held an extraordinary memorial service that drew nearly 500 people, reflecting the profound impact Chris had on others. The overwhelming attendance was a poignant reminder of Chris' dedication to witnessing the power of Jesus in his life, and his commitment to serving his community in the ways God called him to. Aside from his incredible artistic talent, my favorite thing about my husband was that no matter what, he would pour his energy into helping kids and families with special needs.

It was the talent that God gave him and called him to. His patience was never-ending, and his knowledge and intuition were unmatched. While there are many things Chris

struggled with, the one thing he excelled at was being there for others when they needed him. No matter the circumstances, Chris would consistently answer a phone call from a friend in need or offer practical advice to a family seeking help. His unwavering commitment to being present for those around him spoke volumes about his character and the depth of his compassion. When you became part of his life, especially one of his families with special needs, he always had them close to his heart. Because of this, I am overflowing with excitement and gratitude that God has inspired a remarkable way to honor

"A divine opportunity, bestowed upon us by God, to transform this tragedy into something profoundly beautiful..."

this legacy that Chris left. God has given me the opportunity and means to start a nonprofit organization in Chris' honor. It is a testament to Chris' steadfast faithfulness and dedication that we have been showered with an outpouring of love and support from those around us. Just as Chris held them close to his heart during their times of need, they reciprocated by extending their love and care to us. It is now my deep honor to establish an organization that will embody this same spirit of compassion and support. This organization will not only provide a comprehensive directory of all available resources nationwide but will prioritize building personal connections with the families seeking assistance. Our dedicated staff will know these families by heart, offering them unwavering love and support, and assisting them with even the smallest details to ease their journey and access the resources they need to navigate life more easily. The creation of this organization is a divine opportunity, bestowed upon us by God, to transform this tragedy into something profoundly beautiful and an endeavor that will undoubtedly honor Chris' memory and reflect his deepest desires.



“

We cherished moments of laughter with each other, with our kids, and with our friends. We thanked God for blessings and small victories. And we looked to the darkest corners of our lives and asked God to take control.





Cantinho da Leitura USA, um projeto iniciado pela Hi Brazil Market, inaugurou sua “Pequena Livraria” no sábado, 1º de julho, em Redondo Beach, na Califórnia, nos EUA.

O objetivo fortalecer as raízes culturais brasileiras entre as famílias que residem longe do Brasil e incentivar o amor pela leitura em língua portuguesa.

Durante o mês de julho, autores brasileiros residentes na Califórnia estarão visitando o espaço, autografando livros e compartilhando sua jornada literária, acompanhados de caminhões de comida brasileira. Os eventos estão abertos a comunidade.

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JOY AND FAITH IN TURBULENT TIMES

Living in the modern world is scary, but when we look for the FAITH factor, we can live a lifestyle of joy.

By Michelle Schaffer



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PHOTO: THALES MENEZES

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4 ESV

Consider it joy when you meet trials? That sounds counterintuitive at best. Like every other human on the Earth, my life has been filled with adversity, obstacles, trials, and things I had to overcome. None of us are given a life of ease in that way. Even Jesus himself told us:

“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 ESV

It is part of the human experience that we will encounter troubles and tribulations of many kinds, many times, and in every phase of our lives. We live in chaotic times. There are wars, climate issues, natural disasters, political unrest, civil disputes, economic worries, uncertainties, and all the worries of just making ends meet to support our families. All of these things exist and are amplified by the media outlets. Our brains were not designed to withstand the overload of information we receive daily.

When I was growing up, we learned of international disasters and issues only days or weeks after they happened. We did not have instant access to all of the events around the world at a moment's notice. I am sure there were the same amount of issues as today, but we were not being constantly bombarded with them.

The Media Issue

News media is a multi-billion dollar profession and they keep us all in a state of worry and fear for their best interest. If we are being truthful, the vast majority of the information we consume is negative. People's moral failures are front page news. Tragedies get a lot of airtime and any transgressions that can be seen or found, become a hot topic all around the globe with just one social media post.

How in the world are we supposed to consider it all joy when it feels like the world has gone crazy? We are living in a time when suicide is at an all-time high for all ages and all over the world. People are not living a joy-filled life. My own sister committed suicide 2 years ago. Her mental health issues consumed her and she had no hope left. How can we help others or even ourselves living in this age? This is a question I have pondered often.

The age of emptiness

Just recently I learned of a friend who passed away. I will call her Janna. I watched her journey of decline over the last 4 years. When I met her she was happy, energetic and filled with the hope of building a great life for her and her children. She was actively engaged in getting healthier physically, nutritionally, and growing as a person. She was seeking, meaning she knew there was something missing in her life and she was actively trying to find it. Many people set off on a journey of self-development to fill the void they feel. Oftentimes they pursue money and success, surely that will make them feel whole and content. All too often we hear stories of very successful people telling you, no amount of success or money could fill that void. The pursuit of physical perfection won't do it, fame, and fortune won't do it, and even having a happy healthy family isn't the remedy to fill the hole.

I watched Janna seek and pursue many things as she was working to find herself and fill up the hole inside her soul. She followed "gurus" and people who called themselves leaders and mentors. She sought out eastern practices that eventually led her to new age ideologies. Slowly she fell deeper and deeper into the hole until she no longer could see any light.

What was she missing? The answer has never been more clear to me. The answer is always Jesus. I take for granted that I have always known him. I take for granted that I grew up with parents who taught me about Jesus and took me to church. I have taken for granted the fact that no matter how tragic a situation, and no matter how defeated I felt, I always knew that God was with me. I always had someone to turn to, to call upon and pray too. As I look back at my journals over the years, I see the evidence of him all over my life. There were times when my faith was small, smaller than a mustard seed, but it was never erased. [callout]

This is the power of faith. And by having faith we are equipped to not just walk through the hard circumstances we endure, but to walk through them knowing that God is with us and uses every adversity for something. We don't usually

know what that is at the time. If I am being honest... never at the time of the heartbreak. But always when looking back, you can see how God used the most difficult times to give you something, a unique treasure that would be used at a later point in your life. Or, for that treasure to be used for someone else. God never wastes. Everything serves a purpose.

Finding the WHAT Instead of the WHY

Because of this assurance, because of this knowledge, the hard times begin to take on different meanings. I have learned that those times come and then they go. They are seasons in our lives and seasons always change. I have also learned that I have something powerful coming to me as a result of the trial.

This helps me to make a little more sense of life's calamities. I have begun to see them as my training. I have stopped asking "WHY GOD", and I have started to ask, "WHAT". What do you want me to learn, or what do you want me to do as a result of this?

Joy, to me, is not an emotion. Joy is a lifestyle of faith, it is the result of faith. Joy is a deep knowing that God knows exactly what I need and will provide it all. Joy is a feeling of peace, in times that are not peaceful. Joy is the result of walking with Jesus and allowing him to take the lead. So then I have a much better understanding of what James wrote in James chapter 1. He counts all of his trials as joy knowing what comes as a result of them. Not that the trial itself is enjoyable, of course it is NOT. But what intends to do with it, and the belief that he WILL DO something with it, that, for me, is where the joy comes from.

And that ONLY comes from the knowledge of and relationship with Jesus.

XO,
Michelle Schaffer

By Deise Eliassen

THE JOY OF THE LORD IN MY LIFE

Everything begins with 2 children from 2 dissolved families that by the grace of God were rescued by Jesus and gave their hearts to Jesus when teenagers.

They are my parents. My father grew up in a home for children and was introduced to Jesus as a boy, having his own experience as a teenager. My mother was the last born of a big family with a dozen kids and lost her parents by the age of 11. The Lord rescued her from her loneliness and placed her in the family of Christ where she learned about forgiveness, hope, salvation, future and serving Jesus by serving others. Both felt compelled by this amazing love to give their lives to full time ministry and became pastors (Salvation Army officers).

A contagious and invasive love

The joy of the Lord surely does not pass through DNA or blood, but it is "contagious" and invites others through example. Then my life begins under grace, as a fruit of this love to each other and for Jesus, wrapped by the joy of the Lord in their lives that has always been visible, tangible, and shared to others. Being born to this side of grace and experiencing the promise of God to bless generation after generation, until thousands of the ones who love Him follow His guidance. The first time I recall overflowing the joy of the Lord in my own life happened when I was not even 6 years of age. We were around the dinner

able reading the Bible as a family, and I understood that I was the prodigal daughter like the one from the Bible, in need of acceptance, forgiveness and transformation in my heart. I asked my mother to go to the mercy seat, the altar inside the church, that very same moment, kneeling to pray with and for me as I accepted Jesus in my heart and surrendered my life to Him. His joy invaded my heart. Oh yes! I could not even sleep. I wanted to tell everybody about this joy and how they could also experience that same hug and love from God.

The next day at school I was jumping and smiling at everyone that crossed my path. Hugging is something very natural for me, but at that time, I did not even care if I knew the children, teachers, and janitors. I just hugged every person near me, to express and share what the Lord has given and done for me.

Answering Gods' calls

A remarkable moment also happened when I was 8 years old during a music camp, and I heard someone calling my name in the middle of the night. That voice called so many times and at the time my friend Sara was trying to sleep. God told me to answer just like Samuel from the Bible. Just answer: "I am here, talk to me". And God spoke and invited me to serve Him in full time ministry. Without hesitation I just answered **YES**. The following day I was sharing with everybody that I had answered YES. I was

asking the few children and youth and even the adults, if they have been called by God and if they were going to say yes to Him as I had done. I could not contain myself. I felt like levitating or gliding (well, now that I do practice paragliding and parachuting it better describes how I felt in those days!!!).

Being sent to serve in Mozambique was the most humbling, adventurous, joyous and energizing experience I have ever had. Being sent out of my native country, culture and family made me deeply rely on God's provision, trust undoubtedly in His power and allow my whole life to be held by His endless love and guidance.

Most times, I feel His joy constantly. It always amazes me how He knows me so well, God provides big and little things to please my heart and usually I just rejoice in Him and am grateful for the way He takes such good care of me. One of the big things He has provided for me was the opportunity to go to the Holy Land in a guided tour that helped me to revisit the Bible passages in a deeper way and it was such a renewing experience. My heart was full!

Spreading His love to the youth

Every time a child comes to me giving the arms to come to my lap, it feeds my tank of love (unnecessary to mention that my own children and grandchildren give the most pleasant feeling, but also any child or teenager that receives me with an open

heart makes me feel the joy of the Lord).

Today, when I am ministering to children and youth, it seems to be the purpose of my life in helping them to know more about Jesus and instilling in them the faith to keep going in His direction.

But there are many small things that make me rejoice in the Lord, to put a smile in my face and naturally drive me to praise Him: flowers, crabs, unexpected little cards or messages, a prayer that is said on my behalf, a hug, things that the Lord inspires others to give to me and my heart is swarmed/overflowed by His joy.

As everyone else, I do have moments of struggles and trials, and in these moments the presence of God makes a huge difference. I remember when my nephew, who was 8 years old, was kidnapped. My sister called my parents asking for prayers, I felt my heart leaving my chest. I was already a pastor for many years, I had prayed with so many people in very difficult and delicate situations, but now it was my turn. I could not say anything to God. For a couple of minutes, I was paralyzed in my heart, in my mind and I was speechless. The only thing I could say was Jesus! Only one time. Only one word. Jesus! It is indescribable the peace, the assurance of His intervention, and the joy that came to my heart assuring me that everything was going to be alright. So it was! Few hours later he was safe back home.

Another special moment happened when I had an open-heart surgery and an agnostic surgeon said that he was not really doing the procedure in my heart, because he felt someone holding his hands as the surgery was in process. And guaranteed me:

“As you asked me before the surgery to make sure that Jesus and your husband would not be left out of your heart, keep calm, they are still there!”

These are some of my special moments of joy with the Lord in my life, what about you? Have you already experienced His joy? It is available to you now.



Deise Eliassen is a commissioner of The Salvation Army, serving now in Johannesburg. She is originally from Brazil and has lived in many countries out there, such as Mozambique, England and Chile. After graduating in Journalism, she was called to serve as a full-time pastor. Deise is married to Torben Eliassen, with whom she shares the blessing of two beautiful daughters and six very naughty grandchildren who are their source of endless love and inspiration. To follow Jesus Christ and share His abundant life is the Eliassen's ultimate goal which they embrace wholeheartedly.



Fabi Ford
@fabi_ford

Brazilian Fitness Coach, Fabi Ford, shared the perfect workout for you to do in the comfort of your home!

LOWER + CORE

This is a Lower body and core workout separated into 3 sections. Take your time, breathe, and move your body consciously, feeling your muscles contracting. Repeat 10x each exercise, and rest for 45 seconds after each circuit, and each round. If you don't have the equipment, you can replace it with anything from your house, such as a rice package or a water gallon. Exercises with bands can be done only using your body weight.

WARM-UP

2 minutes of jumping jacks

CIRCUIT 1

Sumo squats + pulse (10x)
Cross lunges (alternating legs) (10x)
Kettlebell swing (10x)
3 Rounds

CIRCUIT 2

Side lunges (10x)
Standing hip abduction with a band (10x)
Clamshell (10x)
3 Rounds

CIRCUIT 3

Plank rolls (10x)
Climber taps (10x)
Dead bug (10x)
3 Rounds

Need help with the exercise? Scan the code and watch selected video tutorials!

SCAN ME



WORKOUT



FOLLOW LAUREN ALONG ON
INSTAGRAM
@LAWEALTHMANAGEMENT

UNEX PECTED

BY LAURIE
ALLEN

God has been present in my life from the very beginning. As a Korean adoptee in the early 80s, coming to the US, I always felt different in ways I couldn't fully process at the time. My brown hair and eyes amidst a sea of blond hair and blue eyes, I struggled at times. I vividly remember my mom telling me she wished she had beautiful long hair and tan skin like mine. It took years, but today, I believe her.

Throughout my childhood, teenage years, and early adulthood, I found it difficult to envision myself as a mother. In hindsight, it's not surprising given that I witnessed my own mom's battle with multiple sclerosis and eventually losing her life to ovarian cancer. She passed away when I was just 12 years old, and the idea of becoming a mom seemed like the most terrifying thing anyone could wish for. Unconsciously, I carried that fear with me for years, and if someone asked me in my 20s if I wanted to have kids, I would say "No, I'm not sure I'm cut out to be a parent". Instead, I focused on my education and career. I feel incredibly blessed to have stumbled upon a career path that brings me joy and meaning — a business where I am able to work with women like myself and help them build a meaningful financial legacy.

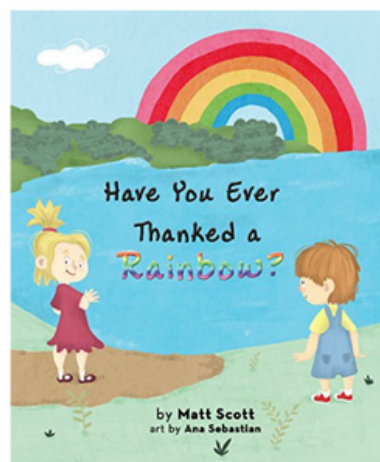
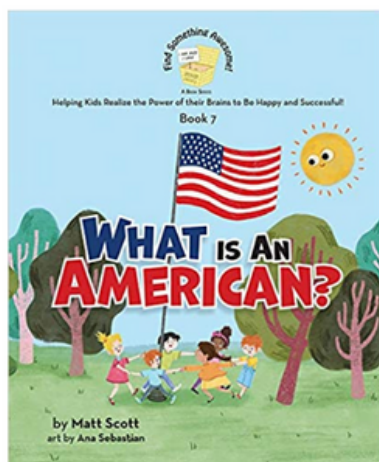
The joy that the Lord has given me is in the beautiful tapestry that my family has become. Despite my lingering fears (of which there are still many), God took an unplanned pregnancy and the challenging journey of a foster care adoption and blessed me with the opportunity to be the mother of two amazing kids. Some days, I still look around in amazement, wondering how it all happened. But in those moments, I remember that my family is a precious gift, and thank God for my unique journey and his presence in my life.

BOOK SERIES

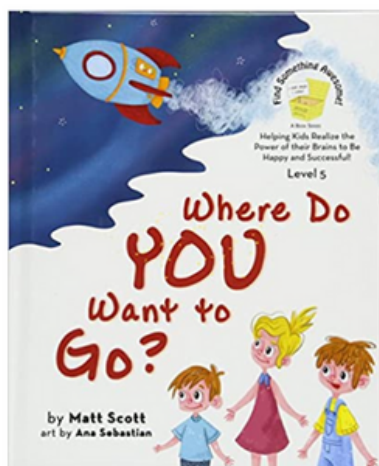
FIND SOMETHING AWESOME!

HELPING KIDS REALIZE THE POWER OF THEIR BRAINS TO BE
HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL!

The **FIND SOMETHING AWESOME!** book series teaches kids how to train their brains to think positively and focus their imagination to help them create positive outcomes in life!



MATT SCOTT author



Each title in the series is fun, lighthearted, easy-to-read, and beautifully illustrated. The series introduces kids to the concepts of positive thinking and focused imagination early in life. That way, kids can start mastering important and powerful skills to build a strong, capable, and self-confident inner-foundation.

findsomethingawesome.com





EVENTS

GRACE AND GUTS: Strategies for Living a Knock-out Life

August 12th
Graford, TX
Details: shannonperry.com/

ENTREPRENEUR HEART

September 15th
Redondo Beach, CA
Details: entrepreneurheart.org

ULTIMATE LANDOWNER SERIES

Septembet TBD
Virtual programming
Details: www.landandladies.com

ACTIVATE 2023: REVIVAL

October 5-7th
San Diego, CA
Details: activatewomen.live/

IN HER SHOES

Mother/Teen Daugther Event
October 7th
Mexia, TX
Details: shannonperry.com/

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