

A FAITH-BASED PUBLICATION

# BUT GOD

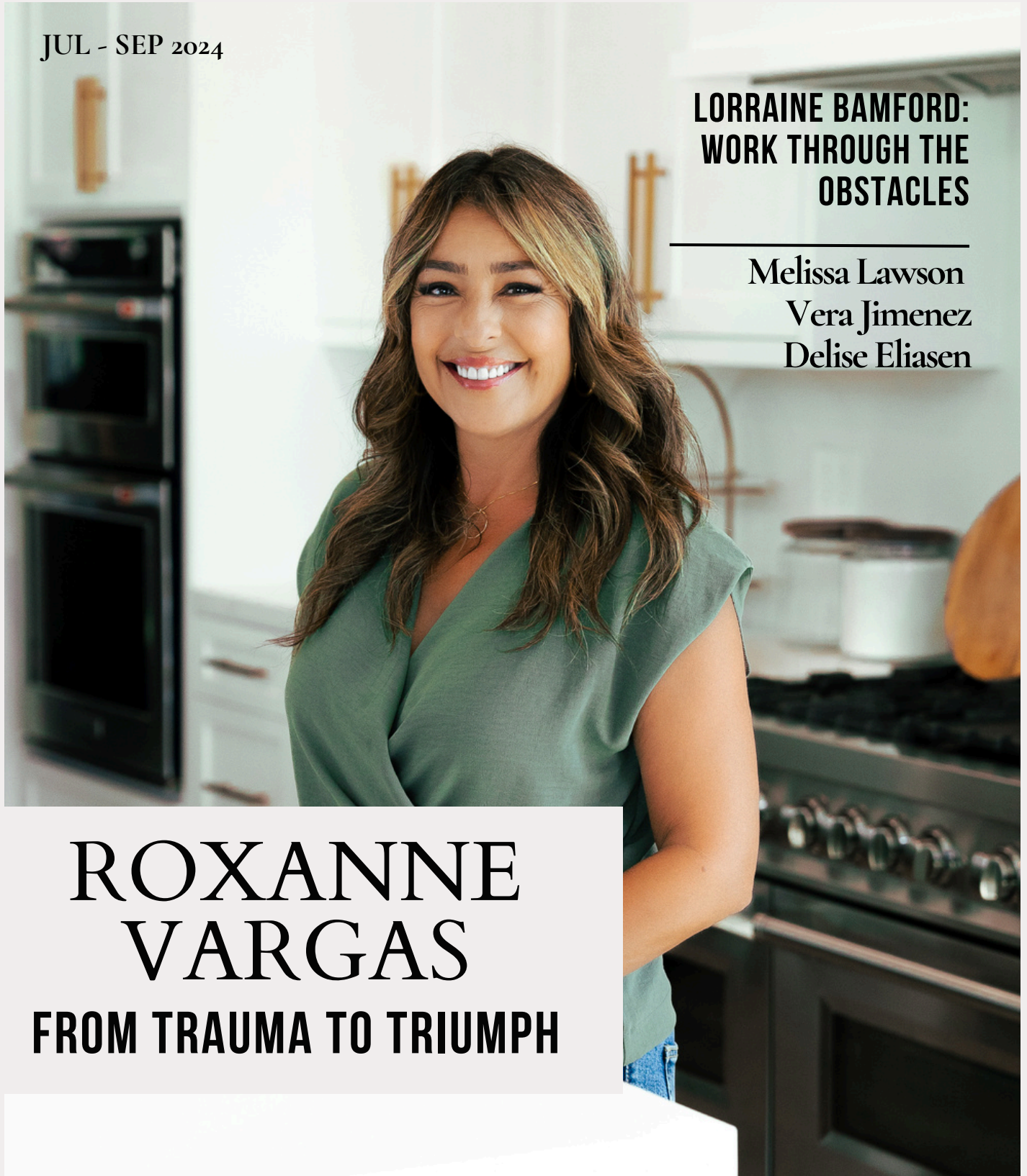
JUL - SEP 2024

**LORRAINE BAMFORD:  
WORK THROUGH THE  
OBSTACLES**

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Melissa Lawson  
Vera Jimenez  
Delise Eliassen

**ROXANNE  
VARGAS  
FROM TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH**



A FAITH-BASED PUBLICATION

# BUT GOD

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2024

07th  
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# Editor's Note

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## BUT GOD MAGAZINE

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God's faithfulness throughout history is something we are constantly in awe of. The Biblical narrative of his provisions is something that sustained the people back then and that sustains us today.

This issue of But God will be based on Genesis 45, the story of the reunion of Joseph and his brothers that had once sold him into slavery has pierced my heart when reading scriptures with my children the other night. An amazing plot twist that teaches us that God is ultimately in control and He is our provider. The highlight of this reunion is marked by Joseph's speech to the brothers in verse 8 "So it was not you who sent me here BUT GOD".

Thank you for being a BUT GOD reader, we pray God's continued blessings upon your life and your family.



*Thais Eliassen*

**Editor-in-Chief**

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From our editorial team

# WORKOUT

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



**Fabi Ford**  
@fabi\_ford

SCAN ME



PHOTO: THALES MENEZES

## 30 MIN HIIT WORKOUT

This is a 30-minute HIIT Workout! It incorporates several rounds alternating between several minutes of high-intensity movements to significantly increase the heart rate, followed by short periods of lower-intensity movements. Complete each exercise for 40 seconds and rest for 20 seconds between each exercise and as needed.

Sumo Squats  
High Knees  
Skaters  
Jumping Jacks  
Mountain Climbers  
Jumping Ropes  
Butt Kicks  
Abdominal Crunches

3 Rounds

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



# Trusting God's Guidance In *Our Journeys*

With Vera Jimenez

***Genesis 45 is a powerful reminder of the mysterious ways in which God works. It teaches us that when things don't go as planned, it's not because there's something wrong with us, but because God has a bigger plan in motion.***

When Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, he had no way of knowing where that painful journey would lead him. During those initial years of hardship and toil, he couldn't foresee the immense responsibility and honor that lay ahead.

While in college, I worked a full-time job and juggled a couple of part-time ones before finally landing my dream job in radio. My goal was to work in radio and write. In this industry, only syndication deals bring in the big bucks. As a sidekick or co-host of a local show, you can still do fairly well, but I wasn't there yet. I was working as a fill-in traffic and news reporter.

Like many starting out in a career, I knew the way up would be long, and slow and would take multiple jobs to cobble together enough money to live on. I was not an actor or looking to become an actor, but I was able to find representation for commercial work. That's a starting route for many actors as they wait for their big break.

I simply needed some of that residual income I'd heard of to fill in the gaps when writing and filling in wasn't enough. The auditioning process was random and chaotic, often requiring me to drop everything at a moment's notice to accommodate the appointment, which I couldn't stand.

The pressure to get an audition and land a callback was heavy. I didn't only want them for me, but also for my agent. I wanted to prove to them that they had made the right choice by choosing to represent me.

One day, I got an audition for Aladdin Bail Bonds. It was a nonunion gig with no residuals, but I desperately wanted to get a callback and book it. The audition was particularly inconvenient because the casting call was from San Diego, a two-and-a-half-hour drive from my house.

I had time to memorize the lines and work on my sad disappointed expression. Then came the joy and gratitude that I had found Aladdin Bails Bonds who had helped me keep my family together.

As I drove to the audition, I had plenty of time to pray for guidance and success. On my way home, sitting in traffic, I replayed the audition over and over in my mind, making sure I had done everything just right.

## Facing Disappointment and Doubt

I prayed when I got home, that night before bed, first thing in the morning, and whenever I thought about the audition. The commercials for the business were already running, but they were looking for fresh faces for their new marketing campaign.

As the days passed without a call from my agent, my confidence dwindled. The disappointment was profound. I struggled to lay it on the altar, to release it and trust in God's will. Despite my best efforts, I couldn't let go. When I think about this experience, I wonder if Joseph felt this way—if he struggled with disappointment and doubt. How long did it take him to forgive his brothers and accept the Lord's will for his life?

When the Aladdin Bail Bonds commercial finally aired, I noticed that the actor selected resembled me in several ways. I couldn't help but think, "Why not me?" I wondered what had been off about my audition and what was wrong with me. I chastised myself for not being the one chosen. There had to be something wrong with me. That commercial ran on television for years, without residual pay, and every time I saw it, I felt a pinch of rejection in my heart. This feeling persisted even after I had booked a couple of big car commercials with residual pay.

## The Lord's Bigger Lesson

Two weeks before I started working as the morning drive traffic reporter on a local station in Los Angeles, I shot one of those car commercials that had residual pay. It was then that the blow of the Aladdin miss finally softened. It had been easier to forgive a friend or a loved one for a grievance than it was to forgive myself for not getting that gig.

The bigger lesson came one day when the Aladdin commercial played right after I finished my latest traffic update on TV. As I walked out from under the studio lights, I saw the bail bonds commercial I had longed to run.

Suddenly, a realization washed over me. God had been protecting me and redirecting my future. What I had wanted didn't coincide with His plans. His vision for me was much greater than mine.

That moment made me understand that my journey had led me exactly where I needed to be, and missing out on that one opportunity didn't define my worth or my future. What God had intended for me was not about a dollar amount; it was about who He wanted me to become. He wanted me to be so much greater than I could ever imagine.

God wanted me to remind people that no matter what craziness was happening in the world, He would still bring us sunshine and moonlight each day. I was His tool to show everyone that He was still in control.

Joseph forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery when he realized it was all part of God's plan. It took me a long time to forgive myself and get over that Aladdin commercial, but I finally understood there was work to be done and no point in wasting energy on it.

The commercial I saw as a rejection was actually protection. It ran on the network where I worked for a long time, and it would have been inappropriate for me to be associated with it while working as a reporter. Even today, standards on commercial work are stringent and considered a conflict of interest.

Joseph's story of fall and redemption reminds me that laying it on the altar may not be easy, but it's always the choice that brings me peace.

Born in Mexico, and raised in California, **Vera Jimenez** has worked in television for over 25 years, she is a four-time Emmy award winner, a five-time Golden Mike award winner, and an inductee of the Santa Ana Community College Hall of Fame. Vera is also a public speaker and first-time book author. She speaks about creating general wealth through health, wealth, and faith. She'll help you lay the foundation for a richer future with confidence.



Testimony of Melissa Lawson

## *THE POWER OF REDEMPTION*

**M**elissa grew up in a loving and privileged Christian family. Her parents Ralph and Cathy Lawson raised her to follow Christ.

She had everything she could ever want – a beautiful home, God fearing loving parents, and a bright future ahead of her. However, as Melissa entered her teenage years, and into college years, she started making choices that would lead her down a dark and dangerous path of destruction.

Despite her parents' warnings, and Christian guidance. Melissa fell in with the wrong crowd. She started experimenting with drinking, skipping college classes and getting involved with toxic relationships. Her once promising future seemed to fade away as she spiraled deeper into a life of rebellion, self-destruction, and sin.

As Melissa's choices continued to lead her astray, she found herself in a downward spiral with seemingly no way out. Into emotionally toxic relationships in her early years in college and after. During that time she was expelled from college. She got involved with a toxic relationship and ended up pregnant which led to having an abortion at 3 months of pregnancy. She felt lost, alone, and trapped in a cycle of bad decisions. In the midst of her struggle, a glimmer of hope appeared.

One day, while at her lowest point, Melissa found herself in a church service at Oasis Church in the heart of Los Angeles. She had never really experienced the tangible presence of God. She loved Jesus but still did not take her walk with God seriously but something drew her to the message being preached that day at Oasis. As she listened to the words of hope and redemption, something stirred within her heart. She experienced the tangible presence of God that changes everything.

Melissa began to seek Jesus in her newfound relationship with Jesus Christ. She prayed for guidance, forgiveness, and a way out of the darkness that had consumed her life. Slowly but surely, she started to make changes and turned her life around.

Through her faith, Melissa met Lamar Smith in 2014 at a job they both worked at in El Segundo, CA. Lamar is a kind, charismatic and compassionate man who would become her rock and support system. Lamar had a similar past filled with struggles and setbacks, but together, they found strength in each other and their shared faith in Jesus Christ.

Lamar and Melissa attended Oasis Church for 5 years and served in ministry together.

Melissa and Lamar's love blossomed, and they soon got married in April 2017. Melissa also gained two stepsons from Lamar's previous relationship, who welcomed her into their lives with open arms. Their blended family became a source of joy and healing for Melissa, a second chance at happiness and redemption.

As Melissa continued to grow in her faith, she felt a calling to the marriage ministry, as her parents were in the marriage ministry for over 30 years. During the pandemic of 2020 Lamar and Melissa faced many challenges in their marriage and struggled during that year. With the help of marriage counseling and their relationship with Jesus Christ, they were able to overcome those trials. She and Lamar found Restoration Life in July 2022, a church dedicated to helping others find hope in Jesus Christ and being restored back to the relationship with Father God. Melissa's past experiences gave her a unique perspective and empathy for those married who are going through similar challenges in marriage.

Together Lamar and Melissa poured their heart and soul into the marriage ministry, reaching out to those in need and spreading the message of the Gospel, redemption, and restoration in marriage. Through serving at Restoration Life, they were able to touch the lives of many couples and bring hope to those who have struggled in marriage. Today, Melissa stands as a shining example of God's grace and the power of redemption. Melissa hopes that couples and married couples see the Gospel through their marriage and expand the kingdom of God. Lamar and Melissa pray to grow their little family. What the devil meant for evil God will turn it around for our good.



*“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”*

*Romans 8:28*

Share your testimony with But God Magazine! Email:  
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COVER

WITH ROXANE VARGAS

FROM TRAUMA TO

*Triumph*



PHOTOS: @TUCANOMEDIACO



C

hildhood memories live in each and every one of us. Some beautiful and some traumatic. I can remember the fun I would have playing outside with my cousins as we gathered at my Grandma Mima and my Grandpa Abu's house.

A Cuban family gathering is full of laughter, music, food and entertainment. I can literally still smell the food cooking and the visual memory of us kids performing for the adults, their cheers and applause ring clear in my ears. Memories can trigger literal sights, smells, and sounds. It's incredible how the mind can hold on to some memories and at the same time block out others. When you experience a traumatic event, your brain's defense mechanisms may kick in to protect you from the overwhelming emotions and memories. This protection can manifest primarily in two ways: trauma blocking and dissociation. When your brain blocks out trauma it is referred to as "trauma blocking".

This is a response to trauma, and it helps the brain cope with the traumatic experience by creating a distance between the person and the event. Dissociation, another protective response triggered by trauma, involves a mental detachment from reality which can result in temporary memory lapses.

I was approximately 9-10 years old when I experienced a life altering trauma that would affect my life into adulthood. It's hard to fathom the ability a traumatic experience can have on a child. It takes root and many times leads to unhealthy decisions or responses as adults. For me, the memory of the trauma of being molested by an uncle was not blocked but quite the opposite. I clearly remember the fear I felt in his presence and the shame of wondering what I did to deserve this. As a young girl I developed a nervous tic as a result of it, eventually, it disappeared.



Follow along Roxanne on social media:  
[@roxanne.vargas](https://www.instagram.com/roxanne.vargas)

You may wonder if there can be true healing from past trauma, and the answer is absolutely! Can you experience joy and freedom even after carrying the pain for so long? I guarantee you that you can, through the healing power of Jesus as I personally have experienced it and am still living in that joy and freedom today.

I encountered Jesus and everything about His love as a young adult when I was hired at a neurology specialist office and the manager began to share the gospel with me. My heart was so drawn to what she shared that I wanted to know more. Why was I drawn to know more? What was it about this "Jesus" that intrigued me, to look forward to work every morning to hear more stories? The Holy Spirit was already working in my heart and so began my journey of Triumph and victory through Christ Jesus.

**"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1**

As I began to read His word, I began to get glimpses of the kind of love I have never experienced in my life. Do I deserve this kind of love? Am I worthy of this kind of love? The truth is none of us are worthy of His love because of our sin, but John 3:16 says, "For God so LOVED the world, that he gave his only Son, that whosoever *believes* in him should not perish but have eternal life."

**"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved." Romans 5:8**

I believed, I surrendered my life and my healing began. My life journey with the Lord did not promise an easy life or a life free of pain, struggles, and disappointments, but it does promise us that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

**"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:27-29**

**"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23**

As I began my journey from trauma to triumph, the Lord began to take me step by step in the process of restoration. I had to fully trust in my Savior, the one who died for my sins and offered me life and life more abundantly.

Was it an easy process? To be completely honest, it wasn't. I had to allow Him to peel away layers of hurt and pain that I kept hidden inside. The beautiful thing about God is that He is faithful to complete the work in me.

## DEAL WITH THE TRAUMA

One of the first steps to healing was to deal with my past so that my past would not affect my future any longer. Ignoring the pain or the memories will not work, but it will only bottle up the emotions and eventually it will seep out into your daily life decisions, responses to conflict, relationship dynamics, and much more. Many times we can take unresolved issues from our past and unconsciously project them onto our spouse, personal relationships, and even friendships. Past emotional pain can be redirected to your loved one and cause damage and even destroy the relationship.

In Philippians chapter 4 it shows Christ's strength in times of suffering. Paul writes to the church in Philippians 4:4-7, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness [a] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I learned that I cannot change the past but I can look with hope to the future. If I cannot change anything that has happened to me in the past, why am I allowing it to hold me in the past? It's like being a prisoner to something I cannot control. I have the key to the prison door but choose to stay paralyzed in fear and pain and trigger memories that resurface from time to time.

I chose to say, "Lord I'm throwing away this key and I refuse to step back into that prison. I cast my cares upon You because I know you care and love me". I am a new creation in Christ Jesus. My past does not define me. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in CHRIST, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

A renewing of the mind daily is necessary:

**"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2**

## SILENCE THE VOICE OF THE ENEMY



The voice of the Holy Spirit needs to be louder than the enemies. If I continually entertain the lies that Satan whispers, the voice of the Spirit of God will be muffled. The word of God is Truth and will always give us the answer we need. If I meditate on what God says, over what Satan says, I will overcome.

"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." [a] 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [b] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:31-39

God's word is life. When we trust His word and as we study His word, we understand the character of God. The more God's character is revealed, the more we realize how much we need a savior and how extravagant His love is for us. I'm in awe of His faithfulness and I'm reminded of the power of the cross daily. Because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross I have found my freedom. Learning to silence every lie the enemy would speak over me with the truth of God's truth found in His word is key.

## FORGIVENESS SETS YOU FREE

How can I forgive the person that violated me? One of the hardest things we can ever

do is forgive the person that caused us pain. Offering forgiveness is one of the hardest

things God calls us to do. It's such a pleasing gift to receive, but a real gut punch to extend. Ultimately, the answer to your freedom is found in forgiveness. Unforgiveness makes us feel like we are in control, when we forgive, we relinquish control and release the person who hurt us to the Lord. The truth is that unforgiveness is a plague in our souls. Forgiveness frees us from the chains of anger, bitterness, and resentment. It frees us from the hold that person has on us.

Ephesians 4:32 displays this perfectly: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

I started to pray for my uncle. Every time I prayed for him, by faith, I spoke out, "I forgive him". In those moments I was reminded of the cross and the forgiveness I received because of His sacrifice. The more I was obedient to what the Holy Spirit was asking of me on this healing journey, the more I experienced His peace and joy.

There is nothing more beautiful than seeing a life healed and restored in the presence of GOD. A life of trauma to a triumphant life in Christ Jesus. A life I am living today, full of gratitude. I could never imagine such a life, but here I am forever grateful.

I pray you embark on your journey to triumph. Be brave, fear not, trust His words and His leading. He will be with you every step as a loving father. YOU WILL FIND FREEDOM.



humbly admit my mistakes and seek forgiveness when necessary. I strive to be patient and understanding, express gratitude whenever possible, and pray for my family. Despite our imperfections, if God entrusted us with the roles of motherhood and wifehood, He also believes in our ability to comprehend the blessings inherent in these callings. Through obedience, He equips us with everything we need to fulfill our duties with love and devotion. Remember, we're not alone in this journey, it is not easy, but it's the most beautiful calling one can have.

## EMBRACING OBEDIENCE

Therefore, I would like to emphasize that by embracing obedience, we create an atmosphere of respect, trust, and unity within our homes. Our obedience serves as a powerful example to our children and spouses, teaching them the importance of humility, accountability, and faithfulness. It fosters a sense of security and stability, providing a solid foundation for the growth and flourishing of our family relationships. We have to keep in mind that the difference we make in our children's lives, will repeat again in their own homes one day; so how would we want that to look like for them? Our example of obedience and faithfulness will bear fruit in the lives of those we hold dear. So, it is my prayer that whenever we feel like the burden is too much to bear, that we may seek God's guidance and strength as we strive to honor Him in our roles as mothers and wives, and may our obedience be a testament to His love and grace in our home.

In conclusion, the discipline of obedience based on the Bible is not merely a duty but a pathway to abundant life and intimacy with God. As we surrender our will to His and faithfully follow His commands, we experience transformation, blessings, and the fullness of His presence in our lives. May we strive to walk in obedience each day, knowing that it is the key to experiencing the richness of God's love and the fulfillment of His purposes for us here on earth.

VARGAS' FAMILY  
PHOTO: PERSONAL ARCHIVE



For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

“So then, it was not you who sent me here, *but God*. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

GENESIS 45:6-8



# BOOK LAUNCH

You're invited to attend the WeBook Author Panel  
to celebrate Brazilian authors &  
National Latina Day in Los Angeles

AUGUST 24 6:00 PM  
Saturday

Barnes & Noble The Grove

RSVP ON B&N EVENTBRITE UNTIL AUGUST 18TH

*But God Magazine is going  
to be Available at Barnes  
& Noble The Grove (CA)!*

*Another huge step for our publication that aims to reach  
hearts and souls around the world with the love of God.  
If want to join us on the launch, scan the code to RSVP.*

*See you soon!*



## By Lorraine Bamford

# But God... Works Through Out Personal Obstacles

*"Speak, for your servant is listening." 1  
Samuel 3:10 (RSV)*

**A** few years ago, my husband and I were called to minister and serve with The Salvation Army in the territory encompassing Chile, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. My Spanish was passable, though my husband's husband's consisted

of a few years of stressful high school instruction.

In spite of our fear and trepidation, through the four years of our tenure in South America, we felt God's hand very palpably guiding us. We grew to deeply love and respect the people of the four countries that comprised our 'territory'. It was certainly a blessed time of stretching and strengthening for us both.

On one occasion, early in our stay, we were scheduled to travel to Bolivia to participate in an indigenous event called the Junta Aymarista. Aymara describes both the language and culture of the South American people who inhabit the high plateau region of Bolivia and Peru near Lake Titicaca.

There, in Yaurichambi, we gathered with over 1,000 of our new 'closest friends' in a very rural area in the foothills of the Andes Mountains. What a beauty! What a challenge! All of the meetings were conducted in both Spanish and Aymara. The people were warm, humble, and welcoming...and very patient with us as we navigated the communication barriers. On Sunday morning, my husband was scheduled to bring the message – under a huge, precarious tent – filled with Andean worship music (replete with qina Quechua flutes.) Unforgettable!

Bill felt more comfortable preaching in English at that early stage in our journey. I translated his English into Spanish, followed by a gentleman who translated my Spanish into Aymara. This trifecta inhibited the desired undulating flow between the languages. If you have ever experienced the blessing (and challenge) of having your words translated into another language, you will know that there can be a sense of losing total control of your prepared message. Adding a third level of conversion was daunting. Not to be irreverent...but I did have a sense of the old 'Telephone' game in which the ending rendition usually had little to do with the original whispered message.

We both prayed our way through the experience, trusting the Lord to sift His Word clearly to those present. By the end of the sermon, my husband leaned over to me and said, "I'm not sure anyone really 'got' anything out of that." He felt drained and defeated.

Fast forward 2 ½ years: We were sitting in the The Salvation Army ordination and commissioning service in South America. One of the seminary graduates gave her testimony expressing the account of her personal spiritual journey. The young woman related, "I had struggled with my calling for a number of years, in essence postponing God's voice in my life. But when I listened to Colonel Bill speak on young Samuel's call in 1 Samuel 3 at the Junta Aymarista two years ago, I knew that I could not turn away from God's plan for my life any longer."

But God...the great Sifter and Refiner, uses us each – in His time.



LORRAINE BAMFORD

Lorraine Bamford is a Commissioner at The Salvation Army, who alongside her husband William A. Bamford have served in corps and leadership appointments in Eastern Pennsylvania & Delaware, Western Pennsylvania, Southern New England and Northeast Ohio. They served as the Chief Secretary and Territorial Secretary for Women's Ministries in the South America West Territory before returning to the USA East Territory in those roles. In 2016, Commissioners Bamford took up the mantle of leadership as the Territorial Commander and Territorial President of Women's Ministries in the USA Eastern Territory. The Commissioners are blessed with three children, Michelle, Nicole, and Bill, and six wonderful grandchildren.

By Deise Eliassen

# GOD'S DETAILED *Provision*

***"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."***  
**Philippians 4:19**

When I met my husband-to-be 40 years ago, he had composed a song in Portuguese where the words in English are something like:

*When life is hard, and things aren't working well  
When the bills are coming and there is no money  
When things go from bad to worse  
Tell God what your problem is  
He is more than an expert in this kind of dilemma  
He knows what is best*

*Count on Him! God will grant comfort and salvation!*

*When in high sea the storm arrives,  
When there is no end to the winter cold  
When things go from bad to worse  
Tell God what your problem is  
He is more than an expert ...*

But when we are facing the hardness of life, at that very moment it is not always easy to see that God is enough for our needs. Then we can be reminded by the writer of Psalm 136 of at least three key examples of God's sovereign provision:

- He protects and shelters during our times in the "wilderness" v.16
- He makes possible victories over great "enemies" v.24
- He gives "food to all flesh" v.25

God's detailed provision and the many examples thereof in the Scriptures are inexhaustible. Yet, in these three areas, we may find hope for any situation: ***"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*** Hebrews 4:16.

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus teaches that living in God's kingdom means looking to God, rather than the human effort, as the ultimate source of the things we need for life, but His provision does not exclude our part to play. Our labor is not optional, but neither is it absolute. Our labor is always a participation in the grace of God's provision.

Jesus demonstrates this in actions before he teaches it in words. In the feeding of the five thousand in Luke 9:10-17, God, in the person of Jesus, takes responsibility for meeting the

crowd's need for food. He does it because they are hungry. Exactly how Jesus works this miracle is not stated. He makes use of ordinary food, the five loaves of bread and two fishes, and by God's power, a little bit of food becomes enough to feed so many people. Jesus incorporates, rather than replaces, the ordinary human means of providing food, and the results are miraculously successful. Human work is capable of doing good or doing harm. When we do as Jesus directs, our work is good.

## BEING A GOOD SAMARITAN

The theme of God's provision through human labor continues in the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10: 25-37. In this parable, God's provision for a crime victim comes through the compassion of a foreign traveler, who evidently has enough wealth to pay for a stranger's medical care.

He risks getting jumped by the same bandits when he stops to see what has happened to the man. He risks being cheated by the Innkeeper. He risks being saddled by the expense and emotional weight of caring for someone who has become chronically ill, but he takes on these risks because he acts as if his own life were the one in question. This is Jesus' best example of what it might mean to be a neighbor to "love your neighbor as yourself."

A feature of the story that would have surprised Jesus' listeners is the ethnicity of the hero, a Samaritan. Jesus' people, the Jews, considered Samaritans ethnically and religiously inferior. Yet, the Samaritan is more attuned to the Law of Moses than the Jewish religious leaders who pass by on the other side of the road. His presence in Jewish territory is not a danger to be feared, but a saving grace to be welcomed.

At work we have many chances to be neighbors with co-workers, customers, and others across ethnic or cultural divides. Being a Good Samaritan in the workplace means cultivating a specific awareness of the needs of the other. Are there people in your workplace who are being robbed in some way? A conscientious Christian should be the one to say, "Are we giving this person a fair shake?" Think about God providing to someone else through you as He does through others to provide for you!

Even though we may be like the younger son in the story of the prodigal registered in Luke 15:11-32, and would waste our "substance in exuberant living," God was still the Provider of the inheritance that was wasted.

God was still waiting for the son to "come to himself" and return home. God still has compassion, and He forgives and restores to fellowship all who come home.

Were it not for the promises of deliverance from our enemies that are so replete throughout the Scriptures, were it not for the hope that we would see deliverance "in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13) and were it not for the confident knowledge that "evildoers shall be cut off" (Psalm 37:9), we would be in constant fear and torment.

God promises to bring us victory! We are told that He will fight for us, and that we are not left to our own devices! Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth....and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" Matthew 28:18-20.

Our God is a God of detailed provision and will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus! Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Count on Him! God will grant comfort and salvation!



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