

Chapter 9

BE BRAVE

*Be brave. Be strong. Don't give up.
Expect GOD to get here soon.*

—PSALM 31:24, THE MESSAGE

WHEN YOU WAKE up and look in the mirror, do you see a mighty warrior dressed for battle? Do you feel brave? What is *brave* anyway? That is what this chapter is about: redefining our ideas about being brave and proving that we *can be* brave!

There are so many words I could use to describe the seasons and journey of my life. One word that I have never used in this regard is the word *brave*. Often I describe my Christian walk as constant, steady, passionate, and even desperate—but not brave. I had to take a closer look at that. Now it's time for us to look at it together and find out what bravery really is.

When you face physical or spiritual dehydration, you find strength and courage you never thought you had. My hope is that you will see that and realize that you have been much braver than you think. The truth is that you are a mighty warrior for God and He has equipped you for battle. So step up! Take heart. God is about to use you! You are a child of the King—the King who has planned your every breath and has walked you through every struggle and triumph!

It might surprise you to hear this, but bravery is not necessarily the absence of fear. It is the realization that fear cannot rule you because you reside in the presence

of God. I am extremely grateful and blessed to live in a land of freedom. I am also very grateful for our nation's first responders who face grave dangers and even violence on a daily basis, just to keep us safe. The freedom we possess comes with a price. Many have lost their lives for us. Our family honors those who fight and risk it all for our freedom. Those men and women are brave indeed. They are heroes in my eyes!

While such sacrifices are obvious examples of bravery, I have learned that bravery comes in other forms. It is not only running into a burning building or standing on a foreign battlefield fighting the enemy. Sometimes bravery means standing up for truth and for what is right and just and holy. Sometimes it is the ability to look adversity and even tragedy in the eye say, "I'm not quitting—period!"

Satan uses many tactics to try and cripple us, but one of his greatest tools is fear. He wants to keep us in bondage to fear in order to prevent us from reaching the purpose and plans God has laid out before us.

Have you sensed his attempts? Fear dehydrates your spirit when it drives you into isolation. When you hide, you stop seeking the life-giving water you so desperately need. Your fear not only dehydrates you; it also affects your family. They need a brave and courageous warrior who will risk it all to protect and preserve the spiritual wells in your home.

Whether it's the fear of failure, fear of your past, fear of man, or just fear of the unknown, God wants you to know that you don't have to fear anything or anyone if you are with Him. Walking with God brings the ultimate security, confidence, and boldness. This is particularly true when you thoroughly grasp his power, authority, and might.

God is the Almighty One. None can compare with Him. Walk with God and you will be brave. Let the Holy Spirit

encourage you with these words: “I’m sure now I’ll see God’s goodness in the exuberant earth. Stay with GOD! Take heart. Don’t quit. I’ll say it again: Stay with GOD” (Ps. 27:13–14, THE MESSAGE).

Freedom comes when you catch hold of the fact that God is stronger and more powerful than anything or anyone that could ever come against you. Scripture says it plainly: “The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Start believing it! It’s real! The enemy knows how real it is, so his goal is to keep you from buying in. Why? Because the minute you believe, you will be unstoppable!

How do I know? I know by experience. I am living it! For most of my early life, fear was my constant companion. At every crossroads and from around every corner, fear taunted me. I shared with you how shy I was in my youth. It was *debilitating*. That fear and shyness followed me into my adult life so that, in the early years of marriage and parenthood I learned to hide and mask my fear.

But it was always there. I was afraid of failure, so I would avoid trying new things or reaching beyond my comfort zone. I was afraid of crowds because I feared looking stupid or being embarrassed. I hid it well, but it caused great anxiety for me.

I’ll never forget when Pat and I were youth pastors. We planned a retreat for our youth group and Pat decided that we needed a session just for the girls. I completely agreed. Pat had scheduled Roosevelt Hunter to speak to our students. I assumed that we would find a powerful female speaker who would speak life, purity, and purpose into the lives of the girls.

A couple of weeks passed without any further discussion, so I asked Pat whether he had thought about a speaker for the girls’ session. He smiled and said, “Yes, I have already

scheduled it.” He handed me the retreat flyer, which he had so conveniently printed off ahead of time. I remember wondering why he had not consulted me or asked my opinion beforehand. As I read through the flyer, it became clear why he had kept it from me: *I was the speaker.*

My heart pounded and immediately, I felt nauseated. I quickly pointed out that there had been a misprint and he needed to correct it before he distributed the flyers. He said, “There was no mistake, Karen. I believe in you. God has called you and given you a voice and a word for the girls of this generation.”

I had never spoken publicly. I saw myself as more of a one-on-one person. Honestly, I simply did not feel qualified. With all my fear and insecurities, what would I have to impart to these girls? I tried to back out of the assignment, but it was no use. It had been announced and that was that.

I wish I could say that I rose to the challenge and embraced the new adventure, but I was scared to death. I am a stubborn person, so I may or may not have carried a grudge against Pat during the two weeks leading up to the retreat. I am so blessed to have a husband who saw God’s call on my life despite my fear and insecurities. He saw in me those things that I could not yet see. He believed in me when I didn’t believe in myself.

As the retreat approached, I was sick to my stomach, I broke out in hives, and I was a nervous wreck—a mess! I look back and laugh at that girl now since I hardly recognize her. I’m sure my family sometimes wishes that I wasn’t as bold and outspoken as I am now. But something happened during that retreat: I found my strength, my courage, and my voice. I found them because of the One who revealed them to me, my Father God, who has walked with me since I was thirteen years old—the One who said

He would never leave nor forsake me. He awakened me to my purpose and destiny. As a result, I stopped seeing myself as that little, shy, insecure, weak, thirteen-year-old girl. Instead I saw a bold, courageous, and empowered woman who was a victorious overcomer.

The enemy didn't win; God won! With help from my husband and God, I pushed past the trap that the enemy had set for me. He discovered that he could not hold me there any longer. I had not only survived, but God had led me to victory, which was precisely the message a generation of girls needed to hear. Like me, they were not weak, insecure little girls. They were mighty warriors for God!

I discovered that week that if all I am living for is me, then I will always walk in fear; but when I live for God's purposes, *nothing* can hold me back. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9).

CONFRONT THE PHANTOM OF YOUR OPERA

All of us have contended with our share of messes. In the opera called life, phantoms can linger in the shadows, taunting and intimidating us. But I say, "Stop!" Stop chasing the ghosts of past failures and the family demons that have haunted you for years. Step forward with courage into the story God is writing for your life. It is a story of victory, destiny, and legacy for you and your family.

What is keeping you from approaching the well of refreshing and freedom from fear? Don't be ashamed to face it. I have seen fear in the eyes of people all across this nation. Not only that, but have I experienced it! It shows up in the eyes of a hurting child, a wounded wife, a lonely man who has lost everything. Fear can debilitate you. I

know this firsthand! But it doesn't have to rule your life. If you will fix your eyes on things that are eternal, you can push past your fears.

Fear can mute the voice of God and amplify the snarl of the enemy. It keeps you backed into a corner and hidden in the looming shadows of night. God is calling you into the light to shine brightly and guide others to Him. You are called to arise and stand firm! When others quit, you don't have a right to quit! The enemy wants to convince you that the fight is too hard or too dangerous. He's hoping you will back down. He used this tactic on Job, and Job said, "I try to make the best of it, try to brave it out, but you're too much for me, relentless, like a lion on the prowl" (Job 10:16, THE MESSAGE).

The enemy attacks and pursues you in your weakness. He is bold and brazen and knows just when to shove you into a corner. He knows your insecurities and how to cripple your emotions. But he is a liar! The Bible says so in John 8:44. There is no truth in him—*none*. He is a terrorist whose goal is to immobilize you with fear! But God goes before you and watches behind you. "So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Heb. 13:6).

Can I tell you something? *You are still here*. That means you have survived battles, pushed through pain, and clung to the cross for hope. That is what I call brave! Keep at it and see what happens:

You'll take delight in God, the Mighty One, and look to him joyfully, boldly. You'll pray to him and he'll listen; he'll help you do what you've promised. You'll decide what you want and it will happen; your life will be bathed in light. To those who feel low you'll say, "Chin up! Be brave!" and God will save them.

—JOB 22:26–29, THE MESSAGE

Bravery comes in many shapes and sizes. Some extraordinary people in my life are very brave. I have watched them take down all kinds of phantoms. Chief among them is my husband. He is the bravest man I know. I am amazed at the stand he takes for integrity and truth. He is brave in all that he does out of love for our family. He is brave in his pursuit of God in a culture that waters down the truth of the gospel.

My daughter Abby is brave beyond comprehension. She has overcome so much in her life and continues to praise God for all that He has done for her. Her love and passion for life amaze me. My son Nate is also very brave and continues to overcome. He is a walking miracle and an example of God's power to defeat the enemy's plans. Even as Nate dealt with daily pain and spinal discomfort caused by Scheuermann's kyphosis,¹ he continually pressed through, never complaining or letting it affect what he had to do each and every day. Doctors were stunned by his ability to function so well despite his pain. Until his physical issue progressed to the point of affecting his posture, most people didn't know Nate was dealing with physical challenges.

I shared in Chapter 6 about how Nate had to give up his dream of playing college football, due to spinal disease and injury. That event could have sucked the life out of him, but it did not. It propelled him into his destiny! What the enemy wanted to use to kill him instead brought him to a new level of understanding God's purpose and power in his life.

After Nate gave up football and wholeheartedly pursued God's call on his life, his back pain let up a bit. The relief would be short-lived. The fact that he was not taking the constant hits to his spine made a huge difference, but the battle was not over. Scheuermann's kyphosis can cause

the spine to bend forward over time, potentially with crippling effects. We had hoped that it would not progress and Nate would be able to continue without surgery. This did not prove to be the case. His spinal curvature did progress. It became increasingly painful and significantly affected his daily life.

We did our research to find the best doctor and facility and were referred to a doctor in Houston—the top doctor in his field for this particular condition. We headed to Houston to meet with him and find out what could be done for Nate. After a series of exams, tests, and x-rays, we were told that surgery was the only possible way to correct the condition.

Surgery is always a last resort; it is invasive and can lead to complications. This particular procedure is complex. It was not exactly the solution we wanted to hear. We talked it over as a family and prayed and prayed and prayed. Finally Nate said he wanted to have the surgery. He was tired of having to deal with the issue and wanted to move on with his life. He and Adrienne were expecting their first child and he wanted nothing to prevent him from holding his baby and playing and participating in the child's life. Left unchecked, Nate's spinal condition would eventually hinder all of that. So his mind was made up; he would have the surgery.

I have to admit that during the months leading up to the surgery, I struggled with fear and anxiety over the intensity of what Nate was facing. I did not feel very brave and I could not imagine what he was feeling. Part of me wanted him to cancel the procedure, but the other part didn't want to stand in the way of his freedom from pain. No parent wants to see his or her child in pain; but no parent wants a child to undergo a potentially life-altering procedure, either. Nevertheless, I knew Nate's decision was

based on his desire for a better quality of life; I respected his decision and supported him in it.

As the date of the surgery approached, we went to Houston and settled into our hotel rooms. The night before the procedure, we went out to eat and had a wonderful time of prayer, laughter, and more prayer. Someone at the table popped the question: “Do you still want to do this?”

Nate’s answer was definite: “Yes!” He and Adrienne were both very brave.

After dinner we returned to our rooms in hopes of getting some rest. We knew the coming days would be long and difficult, and Nate would remain in the hospital for at least a week. We wanted to be ready.

The morning of surgery followed a long, sleepless night. There was little conversation during the walk to the hospital, but there was a lot of intercession. Not only were we praying that day, but hundreds of people across the nation were lifting our son and family in prayer. I am still overwhelmed at the army of prayer warriors that joined in the fight, not only that day but through the weeks and even months that followed.

As the saying goes, “you just gotta love” the brutal honesty of physicians in the moments before they wheel you into surgery. Nate’s doctor looked at us and wanted to make sure we fully understood the risks. (I can assure you I had done more research than I should have and was fully aware of *every* risk involved.) The doctor looked at us and proceeded to say that Nate could lose his life during surgery or bleed out and need a blood transfusion or be paralyzed or crippled. Furthermore, the surgery might not succeed at all.

Although I already knew all that, hearing the doctor say it aloud was like having a bomb drop in the room. I think

Pat considered snatching Nate out of the bed and saying, “Forget it!” I would have gladly helped him do it.

However, one of the most memorable moments came when the hospital chaplain came to pray with both patient and family. Keep in mind that when the chaplain entered the room, he was in no way prepared to face four Spirit-filled preachers. But he walked in with a prepared speech and his soft-spoken, intentionally soothing voice and said, “Let’s take hands and pray.”

That is as far as the chaplain got with his speech, because in that moment, power, authority, and faith rose up in Pat! Faith and a holy anger toward the enemy rose up in all of us. There would be no preplanned cozy little rehearsed prayers prayed over our son that day. Nor would there be any prayers from someone who knew neither our son nor the call on his life.

Pat looked over at the chaplain and with authority in his voice, declared, “I got this! Thank you, but I will lead this prayer over my son today!”

Pat prayed the prayer of faith *powerfully*. He prayed that God’s presence would fill that operating room and that God would guide the surgeon’s hands. He prayed that there would be no complications and no transfusion. He prayed for the surgery to be a complete success and for Nate to make a full recovery, in Jesus’s name.

We called down heaven in that tiny, little room. Needless to say, the chaplain could not wait to get away from us crazy people. We did not see him again for the duration of Nate’s hospitalization. There is a time for sweet prayers and there is a time for warring prayers. We were ready for war. The enemy would be defeated. The message of Psalm 46:1 became so real to us: “God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.”

As they wheeled Nate into surgery, Pat headed to a

secluded area to pray. Adrienne went to another area to pray, notify family members, and provide updates. I found somewhere to get alone with God. There was a six-to seven-hour wait ahead and I needed to find my peace in Him. I remember crying out to God to be with my boy throughout the surgery and not leave him. I found out later that Pat and Adrienne both prayed the same thing. How awesome it was that we were all in different places but the God of the universe met each of us where we were. And still, He remained by Nate's side. We serve a mighty God!

When I cried out God spoke to me once again, as He has done throughout my life. He reminded me of when Nate was two years old and safe in his car seat behind me as I drove. Whenever we were in the car, we gave each other air hugs and kisses so he would feel like he was with me. Once, when we were out running errands, I took advantage of a quiet moment to pray. You moms know how hard it is to find quiet time when caring for a toddler

I had just prayed that God would make Himself known to Nate. I asked that, even at his early age, Nate would know how much God loved him. Then all of a sudden Nate gave a great big air hug and kiss from the back seat. I asked him, "What are you doing, sweetheart?"

He replied, "Jesus just gave me a big hug and kiss!"

Tears flowed down my cheeks as I realized that Jesus had answered my prayer! Nate really did get a hug and kiss from Jesus and knew, at his young age, how much God loved him.

Now, with a grown-up Nate in surgery, God reminded me of that moment. He did it to show me that I was not in control, but He was. He was with Nate just as He had been in the back seat of our car many years ago. Nate was in the safest place he could be—in the arms of Jesus!

The same God who met me in the school courtyard when I was thirteen met me once again. The same God who met my husband in the basement of his home when he was sixteen—saving him and transforming him—was with us that day. The same God who met me in my deep despair as I sat parked in my garage, and opened my eyes to see my beautiful daughter from a distant land, was there with us that day!

Bravery is choosing to open your eyes and see what God wants you to see in the midst of the chaos all around you. As my eyes opened, peace flooded the room and the warmth of God's presence was all that was needed. We spent the next several hours waiting and praying and speaking life to one another as people came by to show their support and stand with us. Every update we received was good news.

After five hours in surgery, the doctor came out and shared his report. He said that Nate had done wonderfully, much better than expected. There had been no complications and he did not lose nearly as much blood as they feared he might. No transfusion would be needed and Nate was expected to make a full recovery. Praise God!

The good news may have surprised the doctors, but not us. God had already given each of us a sense of peace and confidence that the outcome would be great. During the next few days in the hospital, Nate faced many obstacles, however. He found it difficult to stand, sit, and walk; but he pushed past every obstacle with determination and courage. He insisted on exceeding the minimum required physical therapy. Doing so meant he had to fight to overcome the pain, stiffness, and all the drugs he had to take. My boy became an even more powerful man in my eyes that week.

The road to recovery was not easy. One night Nate was in excruciating pain, even while on morphine, Oxycontin,

and Lortab. He said it felt like a chainsaw was cutting through his back. Pat and I had gone to our room to get a few hours of sleep. Our precious daughter-in-love, Adrienne, would not leave Nate's side and was sleeping in a chair by his bed. Nate said the pain was so intense and unbearable that he did not know whether he would make it through the night.

Then Nate cried out to God, expressing how much he needed God's presence and help to get through this. In that moment, he opened his eyes and saw at the foot of his bed a beautiful, glowing being with His arms outstretched toward him. He knew it was Jesus, and he was not afraid.

Jesus said to him, "I'm right here with you, Nate. You're not alone and I won't leave you."

Nate said the pain was still there, yet he was able to close his eyes and fall asleep in peace. *We serve a mighty God who is also a loving Father!* He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5).

Nate said that although his surgery is the most painful thing he has ever gone through, and despite the fact that his recovery has been long and difficult, it was worth it, for more than just the physical reasons. It was worth it because any doubts or second thoughts Nate might have had about who God is disappeared in that single moment in his hospital room. How could he ever doubt or turn his back on the One who showed up that night? Nate can never, ever walk away. God is all he needs, and he will spend the rest of his life showing people the only Way to find Him. Nate's testimony has already ministered life and hope to so many people!

To add to our beautiful family testimony, Nate and Adrienne blessed us with our first grandson on December 21, 2014. Nate was able to pick up his son, hold him, and

carry him with no pain or limitations. Praise God! Nate, Adrienne, and Jackson will change the world for God.

Even as you rejoice in our testimony, you may be thinking that you have walked through too many ordeals or experienced too much pain to ever have a testimony of your own. You feel as though the issues you face have drained your life away. You have become dry, weary, and dehydrated, and cannot seem to find the well of refreshing.

I want you to know that walking through trials and fires and taking hits on the battlefield don't make you weak or wounded. They make you brave! The enemy's arrows have grazed you. You carry the scars of a warrior who has outlasted the battle. You are called to go and rescue others and lead them to the same freedom you gain. Because you have survived, you are prepared to fight and lead them to the One who can save, heal, and set them free.

I am so dismayed at the distorted view of bravery that is embraced across the nation right now. Some have declared that *bravery* means publicly declaring a perverse lifestyle and calling it *normal*. Others think it is brave for evil people to blow up themselves and others in the name of a false religion. Causing mayhem and bloodshed in the marketplace is not brave. The fact that anyone would think so proves how desperately we need to understand what true bravery is! Culture has tried to redefine it. The distortion eats away at truth like dripping water eats away at stone. The attack is often subtle, but it is effective.

We must stand strong! The brave declare that God is the Lord of all! Bravery means saying that He has called us to live lives of purpose, passion, and destiny. He has called us to overcome and conquer and set the captives free! When God becomes the Lord of our hearts, we see the world through His eyes and not the eyes of fear.

WHAT BRAVERY IS

Remember that bravery comes in many forms. Here are some everyday examples:

- Bravery is a beautiful young lady with Down syndrome showing up at prom and hoping someone will dance with her because she understands that she is fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14).
- Bravery is a single mom juggling two jobs to make ends meet and still finding time to read bedtime stories to her babies because she understands that they are what really matters.
- Bravery is a widow who delays going to bed until the last possible moment then slides her foot over to the cold, empty side of her bed where her husband had lain beside her for fifty years—still knowing that God will never forsake her.
- Bravery is a missionary who travels for days to a remote village armed only with a message of hope and freedom, knowing God loves every soul.
- Bravery is smiling through fear and anguish as a needle pierces a worn-out vein to stop the cancer that is destroying your child's body, because you know that your child's strength depends on seeing your own faith arise.

- Bravery is worshipping through the storm when your heart is broken, knowing that God is all you need.
- Bravery is realizing that your bank account is empty days before payday, but knowing that God shall supply all your needs according to His riches and glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).
- Bravery is clinging to one last hope that your spouse will someday find the way back home.
- Bravery is standing up alone for biblical truth while the culture declares that you are out of touch.
- Bravery is calling and encouraging your child who is in a distant land defending freedom, while you are weeping on the inside, realizing it was for freedom that we have been set free.
- Bravery is standing firm on your convictions when you know it will cost you your friends.
- Bravery is declaring that you will not bow to what did not die for you.
- Bravery is believing without seeing, and saying, “I will not quit, back down, or abandon the truth.”
- Bravery is declaring that Jesus is Lord as you lose your life for the gospel’s sake.

Bravery—your bravery—has many faces. Quit letting the enemy back you into a corner. Don’t let him steal



your ability to stand. Many fears may tempt you, but you need only one: the holy fear of God! It is a fear that says, “I’m in awe of Your greatness, God, and I give myself wholly to You.”

Are you living under constant attack from the enemy? Do you want to know why? It is because the enemy sees in your eyes the reflection of the holy, just, and fearsome God! You are the apple of God’s eye (Ps. 17:8, NKJV). The enemy has to see you through that lens. He recognizes the anger of God that arises when Satan attacks you, His child. Satan sees that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. He knows that God is a fiercely protective Father. He knows that God has invested a great deal in you and will never leave nor forsake you—*ever*.

Cry out to God! Not man, not positions, not culture, but God!



Take my side, God—I’m getting kicked around, stomped on every day. Not a day goes by but somebody beats me up; they make it their duty to beat me up. When I get really afraid I come to you in trust. I’m proud to praise God; fearless now, I trust in God. What can mere mortals do?

—PSALM 56:1–4, THE MESSAGE



Our bravery comes from knowing and understanding that our strength comes from God alone. That is *enough*. It is all we need.

I hope you are getting this. You are brave when you walk past your doubters, your mockers, and those who have given up on you. In your bravery, you bring power down from Jesus! Your bravery stops Him in His tracks. He does not let it go unnoticed! He takes you by the hand and lifts you out of your pit. He sets your feet on stable ground and puts you back on track to a life of freedom



from the very things the enemy used in hopes of killing you. God is watching. He is looking for the brave ones. He calls you out beyond where you have been.

When you realize that God's arms are open and He wants to heal, restore, and rescue you, bravery becomes second nature. As your awe of Him increases, your fear of man is diminished. When your eyes are fixed on God, everything else shrinks in the light of His power.

BEAUTIFUL SCARS

We started this journey together talking about the encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well. (See John 4.) She didn't deserve Jesus's kindness or generosity, but God saw past her reputation and shame. He *wanted* to give her new life. He wants to do the same for you and me. He has the power to completely set us free *with one encounter*, one drink from the well.

It is so empowering when you awaken to the reality that God loves you, you're not alone, and you can be brave and overcome every obstacle. That is what happened to the Samaritan woman. At the well she learned to live again. Suddenly, she discovered her purpose in life. She encountered a Savior who loved her despite her history, and beyond it. Then He introduced her His-story!

God wants us to experience the joy of freedom. It is a freedom that transforms. The Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus was so transformational that she and her entire city were changed! Her story brought life to others.

Our stories can bring life to others, too! God has called us to get up and live a life worth living. The woman at the well didn't waste her moment. She became an evangelist. She was so overwhelmed with the love of God that she ran

right back to those who had rejected her and shared the God who would never reject them.

It is amazing to me that God would use such a broken, bruised, and rejected woman to tell a city about Jesus. It shows that God can use you no matter what you have been through, no matter what your past holds. The woman at the well was deeply scarred by rejection and pain, but her scars became her testimony.

We all have scars whether they are physical, mental, or emotional. But can I tell you something? Your scars are proof that you have survived. Never be ashamed of them. A scar means the hurt is over and the wound is closed. God healed you and you are still here. You're no longer a victim of your past. Instead, you are a victor and a survivor! Quit looking back at the "what ifs," the "could've beens," and the "should've beens." Just realize that you survived! Stop complaining and start rejoicing that you have overcome.

What you survive should make you stronger, just like the caterpillar-turned-butterfly. Without the struggle your strength could never take flight. Because the Samaritan woman had been such a mess, people wanted to see the One who could heal their messes! What you walk through is a good indication of whom you are called to reach. Jesus knew that the woman at the well would get past herself and see the masses. He knows you will, too.

God knows exactly where you are and is preparing some time alone with you. He wants to tell you about the huge plan He has for your life. Sometimes you have to get to a place of brokenness before you can have a transforming encounter with Him. Then, at the well of refreshing, you find our purpose: to go into all the world, tell them about Jesus, train them in all His ways, and let them know that He will be with them until the very end! (See Matthew 28:16–20.)

When the city folks saw the Samaritan woman running back from the well without her water pot, they probably thought she was crazy. “What in the world is the town pariah about to say?” they wondered.

Their opinions no longer intimidated her. She did not care about her reputation anymore. She was so overwhelmed by the love encounter she’d just had with Jesus that she bravely threw away her fears. That is what His love does! “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18).

The Samaritan woman’s changed demeanor made people come and listen to what she had to say. When people see your transformation, they will be curious. When they see you go from being bent over, dehydrated, and weary to vibrant and full of life, they will want to hear about what has happened to you. God will be so strong in you that they will do a double take. Your transformation will make them realize that they are just as lost as you used to be.

Know what your role is: you’re not in sales; you’re in advertising. Your life screams, “Freedom!”

Are you getting this? Bravery takes you past who you used to be, so others can see who changed you. You will be known by your fruit, and it will be good fruit. The goodness of God in you will lead others to repentance. (See Matthew 7:16; Romans 2:4.)

When we become willing to lay down the clay pot by the well, God can fill it with whatever is missing in our lives. The clay pot represents an empty vessel. The Samaritan woman laid down the old vessel behind which she had hidden herself for years. It had been her security blanket—until she found her security in a loving Savior!

God puts treasures in jars of clay (2 Cor. 4:7). Even though the woman at the well had been such a mess, Jesus

recognized the treasure and orchestrated an encounter that would spark a fire and transform a city. Will you be that encounter for your life, the lives of your loved ones, and the life of your city?

HE MADE ME BRAVE

A certain song has touched me deeply. It is called “You Make Me Brave.”² It talks about how God’s love makes us brave and calls away from the shoreline and into deeper waters. He longs for us to touch heaven and the hem of His garment, knowing that all things are possible in Him, not just the easy, comfortable things. That is bravery! It means understanding that Satan was meant to be under our feet and we have authority in God to defeat him. Bravery means we finally understand that when the Book ends, God wins—and because He lives in us, *we win*.

Despite the fact that my life began in shyness, fear, and feelings of worthlessness, I met a man at a well named Jesus! That amazing and loving Man invaded my life, set me free, and sent me on a journey and great adventure. No matter how dry and weary life is at times, I know where the well is and I choose to never stop drinking from it. It is the well of living water that my Savior gives me.

In my freedom, I realized that I could not remain the same. I had to tell everyone about the freedom I found in Him. When His love and freedom invade your life, it is impossible to keep it to yourself. You have to share it with everyone you meet. You cannot walk away from the dehydrated masses. You realize that God wants to invade our world—and He wants to use you and me to do it. He wants our lives to impact others so they can be free.

It is time to run to the lost and tell them about the Man at the well. Today, I stand on stages around the world proclaiming the hope, truth, and freedom that Jesus brings. If God can use me, He can use anyone. It took many years for me to realize that the courtyard bench or “well” encounters I had with Jesus were never really about me. He invited me to have them so others could experience the courtyard-bench Savior for themselves.

I have realized that success in life is not determined by popularity, positions, titles, or bank accounts. Success in life is determined by the impact we leave on those who are left behind when we are gone. Did we make them thirsty for God? Did we lead them to the well so they could have their own encounters with Jesus? Did we point them toward the well that would sustain them for a lifetime and for eternity?

We must go and tell the world. If we don't, who will?

A MOMENT AT THE WELL

Declare today that you will meet Jesus at the well of your life and you will become undone and untangled from the enemy's snares. If you do not know Jesus, but you want to meet Him, become new, and commit your life to the only life-giver, then this is your moment. Lift your voice to heaven and accept the free gift of salvation from God the Father. Simply accept the love and forgiveness He is offering you right now. He loves you and meets you where you are. Pray according to Romans 10:9, which says: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is LORD,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Declare that you will not grow weary but will continually return to the well of truth and freedom. Declare that you will keep a shovel in your hand so you can continually clear the well and keep it

flowing freely. Declare that God is not done with you or your family; tell Him that you will protect His presence and leave a legacy.

Let hope arise today and be *brave*. God is standing right in front of you, right now. His arms are outstretched, ready to embrace you. The God of the universe is waiting to walk this journey with you. Embrace it!

Life is a great adventure with God, and He wants us to embrace the journey!