

TAKE HEART

and live your life!

devotional reflections encouraging you
to live God's best for your life



By: Kathy Butryn

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TAKE HEART

Hi there!
It is such a delight to meet you!

I pray that the devotional reflections on the pages of this book will encourage, inspire, motivate, and ignite your heart with desire to live God's best for your life!

Have courage!
TAKE HEART...and live your life!



meet kathy



My name is Kathy.

I am an everyday, ordinary gal, who has a heart's desire to know God more and more each day, and live each of those days with Jesus Christ right in the center! It's definitely a transformational process!!

I've been married for 25 years to my sweetheart, and greatest fan, Alan. Together we have 3 kids...Jennifer (23), Megan (20), and Cameron (14).

Like you, life is busy. I am a life coach, a writer, a speaker, and ministry wife. And I just love it! I love helping women learn how to slow down in order to really grab onto the life that God intended for them. What a joy! I also home school Cameron—my young entrepreneur!

Come and visit me at my website, and at my bog. That's a great way for us to get to know each other better! Drop me a line, I'd love to hear from you. God bless!

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TAKE HEART



Take heart. There is just something about those two words. Maybe it is the sense of hope that comes from them. Without a doubt, they are two words we all need to hear more these days. It so easy to lose heart. You know what I am talking about. In the little things...like when you have spent all day cleaning your house, and before you know it, one would never guess you expended such efforts. Or maybe there are unpaid bills hiding in a drawer. Their gnawing presence can't quite be erased from the corner of your mind, but the very thought of dealing with them seems overwhelming.

Then there's the bigger more serious things. The countless number of things that can hit us hard - sometimes completely unawares - as we travel along on the hot pavement of life. Sickness; a child's wayward ways; employment uncertainties; consequences from poor choices; strained relationships; caring for an elderly parent or a disabled child; the death of a loved one. It's not much wonder we lose heart, become weary, burned out, and discouraged.

King David knew what is was like to lose heart, to become weary, burned out, and discouraged. But he also knew the solution: to take heart! In Psalm 27:14 he tells us to "wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart." In other words, be brave, courageous, and let your heart be stout, and enduring. How did he do it?

1. He expressed his complete dependence on God.
2. He waited on God in prayer and surrender.
3. He trusted in God, and let none of the external circumstances move him in any way.

David made a choice...each day...with each difficult situation that crossed his path. It's the same choice we need to make each day. How about it? Lose heart or take heart?

“wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart.”

~Psalm 27:14



TAKE HEART

UNPLUGGED...AND RE-ALIGNED



Several Friday nights ago, while leaving a restaurant in downtown Toronto during a "date night" with my hubby, I was overcome with, and acutely aware of, a sudden case of "overload". Giant TV screens hung high over the street, flashing images of advertisements, TV bits, and upcoming movie trailers. A Caribbean Band did its best to drown out the buskers and the kilt-adorning bagpipe player on the opposite street corner. Literally hundreds of people from all ethnic groups and ages, populated Dundas Square that night, either alone, with friends, or on an obvious mission to get to their next destination. At a closer glance, I realized that most of them were connected—that is—to ipods, blackberrys, cell phones. Listening to the latest downloaded tune, checking emails, text messaging. Amidst the images flashing, the music blaring, and the people moving, it dawned on me just how much we "plug in" to do life. Even when we are wireless...we are "plugged in"!!

As we stepped into our own home later that evening, music from the basement, and sounds from a second floor TV merged to greet us. Within minutes, my daughter, husband, and I were relaxing in our family room—each of us with our notebooks on our laps—instant messaging—to each other! We live in a constant state of "plugged-in-overload" as a society, as families, and as individuals. We hate to be out of the loop. It would be tragic if we missed the latest face book posting from someone we knew in grade 5...and had lost contact with since. Surfing, emailing, downloading, upgrading—all call for our attention.

We sigh, and go through life feeling like there is an elephant sitting on our chest. Why is there such discontentment brewing within us? Why do we lack so in character formation? Why can't we think straight? Why don't we have courage, and strength in the face of a crisis? Why are we so tired? Why is it hard just to get through a normal day? Where is God?

***Could it be
we need to
"unplug?"***

There are umpteen more questions we ask. Could it be that we need to "unplug"?

Don't get me wrong here. I am not suggesting that you quit your job, throw out your computer, or toss your cell phone, blackberry, and mp3 player into the nearest lake. But what I am suggesting is that we view "unplugging" at some point as an essential part of our day...everyday.

In his bestseller "The Maker's Diet", Dr. Jordan Rubin says "The alignment of Life Purpose to start each day will spell the difference between success and failure. This simple but profound exercise of two to five minutes before the day gets too crazy will

produce sustained passion, motivation, and purpose that will illuminate even the most mundane situations and events." Later he goes on to state, "...this exercise is a time of alignment and reflection on what is most important to an individual's life....Realignment oscillation cycles should take place every ninety minutes to realign for a quick two to five-minute splash of energy and focus." In other words, "unplug"...frequently...daily.

Daniel was another cool dude who made a daily habit of "unplugging". Three times a day he "got down on his knees, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he had done previously." What difference did this act of consistently realigning his heart to the heart of God make in Daniel's life? Well, you can check out the whole story in Daniel chapter 6, but let me summarize:

- Daniel was exemplary and trustworthy
- Daniel was able to face a challenge with strength, grace and courage (being thrown challenge!)
- Daniel lived daily believing in, relying on, and trusting in his God with a thankful heart
- Daniel was able to surrender to God's will for his life

Our lives are not much different than Daniel's. He was a busy CEO of an entire nation, overseeing even the presidents. He faced daily challenges and choices, as well as temptations to compromise his character or beliefs. We too carry the daily burden of responsibilities and tight schedules. We face our own daily challenges, and choices, and have temptations to compromise our character or beliefs. There are even times in our lives we are faced with situations that seem as impossible to survive as Daniel's lion's den.

So here's our challenge today. Want to display exemplary and trustworthy character? Want to be able to ride the storms of life with strength, grace, and courage? Want to live each day believing in, relying on, and trusting in your God—with a thankful heart? Want to be able to surrender to God's will for your life?

Take time to be still. Take time to listen to what God is saying to you. Whether it's three times a day, or every 90 minutes, **unplug, and realign your heart.**



TAKE HEART

CALL ME, I'LL BE THERE



During a phone conversation with my husband, who was attending a conference several hours away, we had both commented that we had not yet received "the call". Shortly after finishing our conversation, the phone rang again. It was a Wednesday night at 10:45 pm.

Three days earlier on Sunday afternoon, we had dropped my then 6 year old son off for his first week-long overnight church camp experience. I was quite expecting to receive what our family dubbed as "the call" on that Sunday evening, given his nervousness to stay, and the fact that at that time we believed he struggled with separation anxiety. (Since then, we've discovered his hearing loss.) But Sunday, Monday, and even Tuesday went by without hearing a word from him.

When I picked up "the call" that Wednesday evening, I was fairly certain who it would be. Confirmation of the caller's identity came with the whispered words, "Come and get me NOW." Knowing better than to question the reason, or dissuade my young son, I gathered my purse and keys, and headed out to the car to begin my 40 minute trip along the dark lonely country roads.

What normally is a reasonable and pleasant drive to the camp, seemed unbearably long that night. My son needed me. I couldn't get there fast enough. Quick glances at the odometer confirmed that my right foot was responding to the anxious feelings stirring in my heart.

As I turned off the highway, and onto the side road the camp was located on, I could feel the tires slip and slide on the gravel road beneath me. Gravel roads, plus speed, does not equal a clean and quick stop at the best of times! I whispered a quick prayer that God would keep the wandering deer—and all their relatives—deep in the trees lining both sides of the road...away from this determined mother trying to get to her child. With what seemed like forever, I finally spotted a lonely light in the darkness ahead, and as I pulled into the camp driveway, a small young face peered out the lit window, waiting with expectancy for my arrival. Putting my car in "park," with the engine still running, I jumped out of the car, and began to run toward the building, while at the same time, Cameron flung the screen door open and ran down the stairs to me. Instant relief was felt by both parties!

Within a few moments, after reassuring the camp director that Cameron was safely with me, I asked him why he called tonight—what it was that had made tonight different

from Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights. He replied, "Oh Mommy, tonight wasn't different from the other nights. I really wanted to call you on the other nights, but instead I buried my face in my pillow, and cried myself to sleep." My "mother heart" broke, thinking about my son feeling such loneliness over the past few days when I was just a phone call away. "Honey," I whispered. "All you had to do was call, and I would have been there".

As his little exhausted body relaxed beside me, it didn't take long for sleep to claim him. It was a slower drive back home. The country roads didn't seem quite as lonely. God's presence was evidenced in the clear sky, bright stars, and shining, full moon over the hay fields...not to mention the unexplainable peace that filled our Buick. I reflected on what Cam had said. And then I wondered...I wondered just how many times I, in my own pain or loneliness, bearing my own heavy burdens, had buried my face into my pillow, and cried myself to sleep. And all along, my Heavenly Father was looking down on me, His "Father heart" breaking for me to call on Him. He says...

"...cast all your care on me, for I will sustain you" - Psalm 55:22
"...my presence will go with you, and I will give your rest" - Exodus 33:14
"...my presence will go with you, and I will give your rest" - Exodus 33:14
"...never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." - Hebrews 13:5
"...never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." - Hebrews 13:5
..."cast ALL your care on me, because I care for you" - I Peter 5:7

These are only a few of the reminders from God's word about His faithfulness and care for me...for you.

My sweet friend, if there is any encouragement I can give you, it is this: don't bury your head in your pillow and cry yourself to sleep (figuratively as much as literally) while holding onto your pain and burdens. Resolutely say, "In the day of my trouble, I will call to You, for You will answer me." (Psm 86:7)

Call on Him. He will be there. He promised.



TAKE HEART

IT'S NOT MY BUSINESS



We all have them. They drive us koo-koo. They come in all shapes and sizes. They can be co-workers, family members, employers, ministry team members, neighbours...and even strangers. They are known as...(drum roll please!)...**Control Freaks!** They mess in everyone's affairs. With something to say about...well...everything, they share their strongly-held, and most often, unsolicited opinions at any opportunity. They eventually suck the energy out of a room. Their modus operandi can be "in-your-face" dominance, or a quiet, "behind-the-scenes" manipulation. They stir up within us emotions ranging from mild agitation to angry responses of "Who do you think you are?" Ahh, I think you know what I am talking about...in fact, if I was the gambling type (incidentally, I'm not), I'd wager to say that right now you not only picture the "Control Freak" in your life—but you can actually feel the emotions that person stirs up within you!

Now, forget about them. This isn't about them. This is about you...about me.

"Never miss an opportunity to keep your mouth shut!"

During 2007, I have traveled well over 7500 miles between Toronto, California, and Florida, for extensive training under the instruction and leadership of Dr. Katie Brazelton, founder of LPCCI. Those hours of classroom instruction were an amazing experience, however, I learned the biggest lesson for this season in my life within 20 minutes of meeting Katie for the first time. It happened while enjoying our first "meet and greet" with Katie, and other colleagues from America, Australia, and Canada at Greeters, a quaint and well-known eating establishment overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and in the heart of charming Laguna Beach. Our party soon had more bodies than chairs, so we moved to another area of the restaurant in order to accommodate the growing group. Within moments of "staking out" our new territory, a party of 4 sat down at the end of one of "our" tables. I think for a split second we were all thinking, "Hmm, they just took some of our spots, what to do?" And that's when I heard the words...words I would hear on several other occasions during the time I spent training under Katie. Quietly she said to no one in particular, in fact, probably more to herself as if making a conscious decision, "Don't try to control, Katie. It's not your business."

Although enjoying a conversation with my new friends, for the duration of that breakfast, those words..."It's not my business, It's not my business" ran through my mind like a ticker running across the bottom of CNN's Headline News. I asked myself just how many times I had made a situation, big or small, my business...maybe even that

day. How many times had I tried to control people or situations...both by dominate or manipulative means?

Remember back when I said this would be about you...about me? That's because, chances are, **we** are the "Control Freak" in someone else's life.

"It's not my business." Oh how easily I forget. To serve as a constant reminder, sitting on my desk is a small, and unassuming frame embracing those four words.

When I do remember, I have become aware that two things happen.

1. **The constant chatter in my head ceases.** To be honest, I have told many a person off...in my head; offered chilling and unsolicited advice...in my head; criticized someone's choices...in my head; When I consciously decide "it's not my business," an amazing thing happens. The chatter ceases.

2. **My need for power is replaced by peace.** My need to take over, dominate, manipulate, fix, or control...all which ultimately are to display power over someone or a situation, diminishes. As I claim **Proverbs 3:4-5 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths..."** there is an unexplainable peace. It's not my business...it's His! I can hold Him to His word on that one.

So today, I challenge you to embrace those four small, but very significant words. They'll make a difference...in your life...and in everyone else's!! Oh, and one more bit of wisdom for us all...

"Never miss an opportunity to keep your mouth shut!" (unknown)



TAKE HEART

WE ALL HAVE A STORY



It was 5:30 pm on Thursday afternoon. It always amazes me where everyone comes from—all of a sudden—or so it seems. As the southbound subway train pulled up to the platform at Union Station, I could see the platform was full of people. I mean hundreds of people standing shoulder to shoulder. "Well, this should be fun," I thought to myself. I stood up from my seat, joining the group of passengers waiting to exit the train. Somehow, like a single line of moles, we burrowed a path through the seemingly impatient mass of people, to the welcome escalator that promised higher ground. Once ground level, I gathered my bearings and proceeded to the pre-determined location where I was to meet my client. Like most Torontonians who work downtown, I am accustomed to, and quite skilled at maneuvering through the dense rush-hour commuter crowds.

To avoid being swept along with the crowd while I waited, I tucked myself unobtrusively into a corner by a Bell Internet Station. I was looking forward to spending the 15 minutes I had before my appointment watching all the people around me. Toronto boasts of its ethnic diversity, and one only needs to be in Union Station for a few moments to see that is true. I watched men and women in business suits, groups of tourists, Blue Jay fans, university students, media personnel, transit workers, homeless people, shoppers, lovers, young people, old people—people from all walks of life hustle by me, totally unaware of my presence as I observed them. I wondered what their story was.

Like the young woman in her 30's. Looking at the GO train monitor. Her body language betrayed that she was upset about the train cancellation that flashed across the screen. Could she be trying to figure out who was going to pick up her young children from daycare because she couldn't get home in time? Maybe she was a single mom.

Or the business man. Boy, he looked cranky. Kind of thankful I don't work for him!

My attention then turned to the young couple standing by the phone. He clearly was apologizing for something—and she was just as clearly not receiving it. Body language speaks volumes in telling our story.

***"For I know the plans
I have for you,"
says the Lord,
"plans for well-being
and not for trouble,
to give you a future and a hope."***

It's interesting that when we know a part of someone's story, we are much more compassionate. Like my friend Collette. She was at McDonald's this past week, standing at the counter, minding her own business while waiting for her order. She was halfway aware of a man beside her. He was fumbling with his coins. His order had to be changed to

accommodate his lack of money. She was aware that there was something different about him. That life probably wasn't easy for him. Without really giving it a second thought, she got her order and headed to her car and drove away.

A few moments later, a man, pedaling hard on his bicycle, took up more than his share of the road. Her instant feeling of irritability soon changed to compassion—she recognized him. He was the man standing beside her at the McDonald's counter. She had gotten a glimpse of his story. Of his struggle. Her heart softened with response, not reaction, as she gave him the space he needed while driving past him.

Here's what I want to encourage you with today:

- **Embrace YOUR story.** It doesn't matter where you have been, what you have done, the regrets that you feel, the shame that you may carry. God does not operate in the past!! Did you hear that? God does not operate in the past. Accept His forgiveness—and forgive yourself.
- **Share your story.** God may not operate in the past, however he uses our story to empathize with others, and to encourage others.
- **Allow God to shape your story.** Surrender your "today" to Him. Discover all that He has for you.
- **Take time to find out about someone else's story.** What an eye opener! We will learn to respond with compassion, rather than react with judgment.

And remember, our stories are a part of God's bigger story that began at the time of creation. He is still in the business of revealing our stories!



TAKE HEART

CELEBRATE THE DIFFERENCES



We were driving along the Danforth, (a major street in Toronto), enjoying a leisurely trip to church early last Sunday morning. Having just pulled out of the McDonald's drive-thru, and lost in our own thoughts, the only slight noise in the van was the sound of both of us munching on our nutritious breakfast...an Egg McMuffin.

Then, all of a sudden, with the greatest of enthusiasm, Alan broke the silence. It was like he just remembered something, and was bursting at the seams to tell me about it. "Hey Hon", he said. "I met this guy down at Starbucks this morning, and he does the coolest thing." "Oh yeh?" I absently replied. I wondered if my voice betrayed my reluctance to jar my wandering thoughts to be present to Alan's conversation. I'm thinking it didn't; he continued on without missing a beat. "Yeh, he leads these cool tours through Europe." Now, that's the way to get a girl's full attention! In a split second, I was putting all the pieces together. Next year was our 25th wedding anniversary. I welled up with love for this man sitting beside me. How romantic that he was thinking about taking me away on a special trip to celebrate. I could just picture it. My faux silk scarf floating in the wind behind me as we explored the picturesque Italian countryside in our little rented convertible. I was getting excited. "I think it would be cool to go sometime", he continued on. "You're talking my language, baby", I thought to myself. "Yeh, he leads these really cool bike tours."

"Bike tours???" I blurted out, halfway annoyed that my thoughts had been jolted to an abrupt stop. "What kind of bike?" I was hoping against hope that he would say "bikes with motors." "Bikes you have to pedal." Alan cheerfully continued explaining what he had learned that morning...and I was again lost in my thoughts. "Clearly", I thought to myself, "this man does not understand that, although this bicycle thing may sound good to him, it would be a vacation from...well, you know where...for me." The first time I visit Europe, I have absolutely no intention of being all sweaty, and smelly, and sporting permanent "helmet-head" hair. Then I felt sudden horror, as the sight of me in cycling shorts flashed through my imagination. Two words described it all..."utterly unattractive"! Let's face it, this Mama was not made for cycling. No. This would definitely not work.

I zoned in again to Alan's excited chatter. This time, instead of thinking about me...I thought about him. I became increasingly aware of the passion in his voice; the excitement about the possibility of such an adventure! I remembered how he has loved to cycle over the years. I began to understand how touring Europe on a bike would really jazz him.

Two days later, I was chatting on the phone with my girlfriend, Karen. Being an education professional, she was looking forward to the summer vacation starting in a few weeks. I asked her what her plans were for the summer. She explained that she had signed up for a 10K run at the Toronto Zoo in the fall...and as a result, she would be spending her time training for it. Running. Yet again, another unattractive activity for me. But once again, I was intrigued by her enthusiasm, her desire to train, and her love to run.

Yet again, this past Friday night, my sweet friend Sarah was at my home for a "Girls Night Out". Her eyes sparkled as she told me about a mentoring training program she had just completed, and how, in the fall, she would be spending time with a group of young girls in their early teens from her local high school, mentoring them in life skills. She couldn't wait. It was very evident this was her deepest heart's desire at this season in her life.

Thinking about these conversations I have had over the past few days makes me I feel rich. Rich because I am surrounded, not only by Alan, Karen, and Sarah, but by many other dear friends who are ignited by their passions. Who talk about them. Who pursue them. Rich, because, although they are not my passions, I can have a part in celebrating them. Rich, because we have a God who created us all different, different desires, different abilities, different passions, different talents. Rich, because when others embrace their God-given desires, their world changes. And I get to be a part of it. Rich, because, by their examples, I am motivated to keep pursuing my passions.

How about you? What's your passion? What jazzes you? Have you buried it deep over the years? Or are you willing to rediscover it...to share it...to make a difference in someone else's life with it?

“What’s your passion?”

Choose today to celebrate...your passions...your abilities...your desires...your talents... all God-given...all waiting to be used by Him!

Oh, and incidentally, Alan and I came to a compromise. For my bike...I get a Vespa!



TAKE HEART

OH FOR GRACE, TO TRUST HIM MORE



Tucked in the middle of our usually contemporary worship service this morning at church, was an old hymn that I have been familiar with since I was a little girl. I sat and listened as the congregation sang, and allowed the words to wash over me.

'Tis so sweet, to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His word.
Just to rest upon His promise,
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

O how sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to trust His cleansing blood.
Just in simple faith to plunge me,
'Neath the healing, cleansing flood.

Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease.
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.

I'm so glad I learned to trust Him,
Precious Jesus, Saviour, Friend.
And I know that He is with me,
Will be with me to the end.

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him,
How I've proved Him over and over
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus.

O for grace, to trust Him more.

Trust. Websters defines it as "**1 a** : assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something **b** : one in which confidence is placed." I think, if we

are all honest, we all have some kind of "trust issue" at some level or another. Perhaps we have experienced hurt or betrayal. Maybe promises or vows have been broken. And who knows, maybe we began to believe at a very young age that the only person we could trust was ourselves.

The fact is, life has no guarantees. It is full of uncertainties. Every day. Little uncertainties. Sometime, life-altering uncertainties.

As I allowed the words of that old hymn seep into the depths of my soul this morning, they ministered to my heart. I knew intimately the meaning of those words; just that very week I had experienced an unexpected uncertainty. As I laid on a stretcher in the hallway of an overcrowded emergency room, waiting to have tests and the subsequent results, I had yet another opportunity to learn to trust Him more.

I don't know what you are facing today...this week. Perhaps you are waiting for test results from your doctor. Or you are facing a "difficult to manage" situation within your workplace. Maybe you are looking for employment...or wondering how you will pay the bills. Perhaps a key relationship in your life is "on the rocks".

But I do know this. I know that you can trust Jesus. I know that you can have assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, and truth of God; that you can place your full confidence in Him. Allow the fear to be replaced with His peace.

Oh for grace, to trust Him more.



TAKE HEART

FALLING ON DEAF EARS



I'll never forget sitting in the audiologist's office after Cameron's first hearing test two years ago. Being as intuitive as I am, I watched Janet closely while she conducted the test, looking for any signs of concern. The fact that she seemed to repeat the testing patterns more than once sent an alarm bell off in my head. Before allowing Cam out of the sound proof booth, she turned to me and said, "Kathy, I think we've got a problem." Within minutes, Janet was explaining the nature, and the extent of this new discovery of Cam's hearing loss. To pass the time waiting for a consultation with a hearing aid specialist, Cam and I went across the street to Canadian Tire and wandered the aisles aimlessly while we tried to grasp the breadth of this news. As we stopped in the back corner of the store to call my husband on my cell phone, tears flowed down both of our faces. Perhaps tears of relief that we finally knew what the problem was. For me, tears of regret that I didn't figure this out sooner, and then tears of fear because of lots of unanswered questions. Is the hearing loss progressive? How will Cam cope?

Now, two years later, the Butryn family has come a long way in our learning about deafness. We understand the auditory fatigue that Cam regularly experiences. The frustration he often feels asking people to repeat—more than once—what they just said. We've learned that hearing aids have not been the answer for him—they just make the "mumble jumble" he hears louder "mumble jumble." We understand the feelings he has of being left out of a conversation, because he can't hear what is being said. We've learned that we need to go upstairs and get him for dinner, not stand at the bottom of the stairs and yell for him. We've learned that to communicate with Cam, we need to be directly in front of him, otherwise, our words fall on deaf ears—literally. Cameron is learning each day how to live within his hearing limitations.

We may not experience physical hearing loss, but what about spiritual hearing loss. When God speaks to you, does it fall on deaf ears? Are you too hurried with your own agenda to sit still before Him so you can truly hear what He is saying? The children of Israel did not enter the Promised Land when they could have because they did not listen or believe. God's words of assurance and promise for their safety were ignored...the words fell on deaf ears. He has words of promise and assurance for you. Get directly "in front of" God this week to sit quiet enough to hear Him...listen and believe!



TAKE HEART...

LIVE SLOW



"Turn around, you really have to get a look at the back of this guy's t-shirt." Alan nonchalantly nodded in the direction of the construction worker that had just sauntered by our table at Harvey's. "I bet you'll want to make t-shirts just like it for your coaching clients". I had seen the construction worker walk by, but I couldn't imagine what he might be wearing that my clients or women at a conference would want. But when I turned around, I saw it...and I loved it! Alan was right. Big, bold letters formed two words that said it all. **LIVE SLOW**. I'm not at all sure what the shirt was advertising, if anything. I not sure if these words on his shirt meant anything at all to him. For all I knew, he picked it up at the local thrift shop as an extra work shirt. But I did know this. Those words were incredibly meaningful to me. Those words describe part of my passion for doing what I do. Those words are slowly becoming an authentic reality in my life.

I have spent the majority of my life living in the fast lane. Don't get me wrong. I don't mean "Hollywood style" partying. But I do mean activity. Particularly church activity. It took me many years to realize I suffered from CFS - Christian Fatigue Syndrome. I was busy "doing it all"... with perfection ... (oops, did I say that out loud?)...I really meant to say "excellence". And I was hurried. Especially hurried.

Maybe you can relate to this too. Hurry sickness is simply the consequence of people trying to jam more activity into 24 hours than is humanly possible, and becoming hyper-stressed in the process. For some reason, we are completely delusional that hurrying will buy us more time. We drive faster, talk faster, nod faster hoping the person talking to us will speed it up. We look for the shortest line at the grocery store, out of the parking lot, or when buying popcorn at the movies. We chaff when we miscalculate. We allow others to define what is important to us...what is of value to us. The strangest thing is, we complain about our stress, about our busyness, and about our hurried life style, and yet, we wear it proudly like a badge of honour, especially when we are comparing our scheduling acrobats with someone else's.

I am learning though. Learning that life is really about choices, and it takes ruthless determination to LIVE SLOW. It takes time to develop a personal mission statement that keeps our activity aligned with our values, our calling. Will you let me share a few things I am learning to implement into my own life to help me LIVE SLOW...or at least, slower.

1. Re-invent your day. What is the first thought you concentrate on when you wake up in the morning? Did you know that thought may just shape the rest of your day? How about starting your day the night before. Include bedtime rituals such as

asking yourself, "For what moment today am I most grateful?" Before falling asleep, engage in reflective prayer, prayer that releases your frustrations and stresses of that day to God. Review your calendar frequently. Are you trying to jam in far more activity than is humanly possible? Pace yourself. Do you have a personal mission statement. If so, do you review it daily?

2. Reduce your complexity. How much "stuff" is cluttering up your life? How much "extra" do you have in your closets, garage, basement, stacked in the corners of your living spaces. How much energy do you spend trying to figure out where everything is. How full is your calendar? Can you say "no" to activities? How about your heart? What emotional clutter do you carry around with you each day...and how does that effect your health, your relationships, and your ability to fulfill your God-given purpose? Reducing the complexity in our lives allows us to live our lives with simplicity, focus, and purpose.

3. Restore your soul. Did you take some breaks today? We live in a world where the line between the office and home is getting thinner by the minute. We are always "on-line". I remember vividly as a pre-teen, taking a family trip across Canada in our little Toyota and pop up trailer. My brother and I would watch vigilantly for the signs that indicated a "rest area" was just ahead. Upon arrival, we would get out of the car, stretch our legs, have a drink of "Tang" from the thermos, and take a bio-break. Our "rest stop" wasn't long, but it did refresh us enough that we were able to continue on in our journey.

Same with life. We need to take frequent "off-ramps" throughout the day. Take a lunch break. Read an inspirational devotional, breath, take a walk...and notice the flowers, listen to uplifting music, think positive thoughts. Make some sacred space in your life to sit in God's presence, to listen, to pray, to read His Word. Be still, and know that He is God. (Psalm. 46:10)

I know that some of you are saying "Yeh, great ideas Kath, but...I have small kids; but...I work shifts; but...I take care of elderly parents;...but...but...but.

I hear you. And I also invite you to lay the defenses and the excuses aside as best you can for an honest and truthful look at how you can LIVE SLOW—maybe just for today. It takes ruthless determination, in fact, it takes courage, but it is worth all the effort! May God bless you as you put on your "LIVE SLOW" t shirt today!



TAKE HEART...

THAT WAS EASY!



Fall is just around the corner! But I wasn't reminded by the hint of red and orange showing in the leaves of the tree across the street from me...or the Shopper's Drug Mart flyer sitting in my mailbox on Saturday morning advertising three-ring refill binder paper, bic pens, and other back-to-school specials. No, it was the "Easy Button" that reminded me. Walking past the door of my family room on my way to the linen closet, I heard it coming from my TV for the first time this year—the words to "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year". I stood at the door and watched a father, standing by a BBQ, hit the "Easy Button" he just happened to have with him...and voila, just like magic, the kids are sitting on the side of the pool, their laps overflowing with school supplies from Staples. It was that easy!

Ahh, to some, fall is "the most wonderful time of the year". We've enjoyed the lazy, hazy days of summer, relaxed bedtime schedules, no homework, family vacation or get-away days, BBQ's, and times with friends and family. As fall beckons us, and as the darkness of night falls upon us just a little sooner with each passing week, we sense that very subtle change in the August evening air, and if we are really honest, we begin to prepare for—and look forward to the change of a new routine.

Personally, I like the fall, in fact, it is my favourite time of year. Not because of the great back-to-school sales. But because something occurs inside of me causing a great sense of anticipation of upcoming personal change and spiritual growth. It is more significant to me than January 1st. I re-evaluate, re-prioritize, and re-align my goals, feeling refreshed and motivated to move on. To make personal change, and to grow spiritually takes determination and perseverance...not an "Easy Button".

Often, our best decisions and intentions to make, and carry out changes in our lives, soon become clouded with—well, let's call it what it is—excuses. We "don't have time," someone "gets us off track so we lose focus," we can't do it because "everyone wants a piece of us," we are "too tired," "too overwhelmed"...the list goes on. I must admit, I have been the "chief of excuse-makers" over the years, sabotaging my own best "fall season" intentions, and falling short of my goals.

I am reminded that I need help in order to make those changes in my life. Tom Landry, the highly respected and successful head coach of the Dallas Cowboys was once asked to describe what he did as a coach. He replied, **"My job is to get men to do what they don't want to do in order to achieve what they've always wanted to**

achieve." The fact is, we all need help...from each other...and perhaps from a coach. Someone who helps us to "do what we don't want to do in order to achieve what we've always wanted to achieve." All we have to do is ask. It is that easy.

Most importantly, we can do NOTHING without God. I am so glad that **"I can be confident of this, he who began a good work in me will continue to perform it until it's perfectly complete" (Philippians 1:6).**

No matter how we feel, how many times we fail, or how many excuses we make, we can know that God, who is the Author and the Finisher of our faith, is working behind the scenes on our behalf. he begins, any dream he puts in our heart, he is well-able to finish. Stand strong on this promise with a surrendered heart. Let's not complicate it...it's really that easy.

***"he who began a good work in you
will continue to perform it
until it's perfectly complete
BE CONFIDENT!"***



TAKE HEART

THE "SMALL STUFF" MATTERS



It was about 5:00 a.m. when my oldest daughter came to our room, doubled over in excruciating pain. Stumbling out of bed, we dressed and made the trip to Toronto East General Hospital. The pain intensified while we waited our turn in the emergency's waiting room. Once we were escorted to an examining room, and after a few probing questions, Jenn was diagnosed with kidney stones. In my mind's eye, and after watching the extreme pain my daughter experienced, I pictured these stones to be the size of, well, stones. They had to be big to give that much pain. Several days after our entrance to the hospital that morning, Jenn finally underwent a procedure to remove the "stones". The doctor came out of the Operating Room to speak to me, specimen bottle containing kidney stones in hand. I couldn't believe my eyes—actually, more truthfully, I was straining my eyes to see them. Not realizing I might be insulting his intelligence, I blurted out, "Are you sure they are in there?" The pain that hospitalized my daughter for almost a week was caused by two little "stones" barely the size of the head of a straight pin. Does the "small stuff" matter? Ask anyone who has had kidney stones!

That experience got me to thinking. Do we really pay attention to, and are aware of, the "small stuff" in life that really matters?

I remember observing a quiet and kind ambulance attendant get a blanket from the utility room, walk across the over-flowing, busy, and noisy emergency waiting room, and cover an elderly woman who was lying on a stretcher pushed against the wall. Did this "small stuff" action matter to that woman? I'm guessing it did. I know it did for me. I doubt I'll ever forget watching this small "scattering of kindness," and how it inspired me to wake up to "small stuff" opportunities that cross my path.

"small stuff" matters to God!

Everyday we are gifted with "small stuff" opportunities, chances to make someone else's life a little easier—a little brighter. It really does matter.

Sometimes it is hard for us to believe that the "small stuff" in our life matters to God. After all, isn't he busy doing "important" things somewhere else in the world? Well, it really does matter! Did you know that "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered?" (Luke 12:7) When strands of your hair washed away with the shampoo this morning, God knew...and He adjusted His count. That's really keeping track of the "small stuff!"

May you be encouraged today by Lamentations 3:22-23.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never changes. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness."

Just think of it. Every morning, because of his faithfulness, and steadfast love for us, God scatters new blessings upon us..."small stuff and big stuff."

Let's determine to use every opportunity to scatter "small stuff" kindness today! Let's also determine to keep our eyes wide open to the new blessings, and mercies being "scattered" on us from our faithful Father - TODAY!



TAKE HEART

LET GO AND LET GOD...BE GOD



Part One: "My soul, wait thou only upon God!"

I will always treasure a lengthy visit I had with my Grandma Pearl last summer. I sat in the chair directly beside her in her nursing-home room. We chatted. About days on the farm, the old Knox one-room school house, the neighbours. About my aunts and uncles, cousins and their children. About Alan and my kids. About Poppy, my grandfather who had passed away several years earlier. And, because of Grandma's memory, we talked about it all over again. And every once in a while, her eyes would close and I would watch her sleep until her snoring got loud enough to jar her awake again.

I must admit, I had an agenda for this visit. I wanted to ask her one question. When the opportunity finally arrived, I asked, "Grandma, you have over 90 years of experience on this earth. What is the one, most important thing you have learned?" Looking straight ahead, she began to think. After about a minute, she turned to me, breaking the silence with these words. "Let go, and let God." With a few more simple sentences, she explained why this was most important to her. We both sat in silence, and after she had drifted off again, I remember letting this familiar "saying" sink deep within me, as if I had heard it for the very first time. Since that day, those words continue to influence my relationship with God, confirm the direction of my ministry, and affect the way I live my daily life.

"Let go and let God." Nice life concept. But the reality is, instead of letting go, and letting God, we continue to tighten our grip on the people, possessions, and circumstances in our life by means of control, maneuvering, and manipulation. Could it be we do this because not only do we not **know what it means to wait on God**, we do not **practice waiting on God**?

Each and every one of us have a very deep need to wait on God, whether or not we acknowledge it and practice it in our lives. It's the way He created us ... it is why He created us. Even though we try to pretend differently, and try to act independently, we are acutely aware of our inadequacies, and our need for waiting on God—on His power, strength, goodness, provision, instruction, courage, and so much more.

Let go...and let God!

Psalm 62:5 says, "God, the one and only—I'll wait as long as He says. Everything I hope for comes from Him. He's solid rock under my feet, breathing room for my soul, my fortress. I am set for life."

Hmm, actually sounds like some blessed results come from "waiting on him," from "letting go, and letting God." But how?

I invite you to journey with me in the discovery of how we can know what it means to wait on God, and put it to practice on the hot pavement of our everyday lives. Waiting on God changes our lives!

Thanks Grandma Pearl for your wise words. I've add two more words to them. I leave them with you this week.

"Let go, and let God ... be God."



TAKE HEART

MY WAY ... OR THE BEST WAY?



Part Two: "My soul, wait thou only upon God."

Several years ago, our family made a move two hours away from Toronto to a small farming community. Two days after the move, I was getting ready to leave our new home, and drive one hour to my hometown of Barrie for a speaking engagement. Now, the first thing you need to know, is that I am directionally-challenged. In fact, I'd probably be a good candidate to have a GPS chip implanted in my forehead—not so I can find the way, but so my family can find me!

I couldn't help but notice the skeptical look on my husband's face during our goodbyes as I assured him I knew what I was doing, and where I was going. After all, within a half hour, I would be in very familiar territory. I was "born and bred" in Barrie. During my uneventful trip to Barrie, I was careful to make mental notes of the roads, landmarks, and the turns as I went. "Yes, I will be just fine," I thought to myself, with the greatest of confidence!

Several hours later, that confidence was slowly waning. What once was so familiar to me, looked very different in the dark. I could not make out the landmarks I had so carefully noted earlier, or remember if I was to turn left or right at stop signs. By this time at night, the only lights for miles were my van's headlights, and pockets of dimly lit farmhouses and barns in the distance. Confusion prevailed. An hour soon turned into two hours—which turned into three hours. It was getting very late. Then a panicked thought occurred to me. I didn't know my "address," and in the stress of the situation, couldn't even remember my new, two-day-old phone number. "Man," I thought, "I can't even stop someone and ask for help. They'll think I'm some looney-toon woman who's lost her mind." (My oh my, how accurate they would have been!!!) What I thought (rather arrogantly I might add) I could handle quite nicely on my own, turned into a big "ole" mess.

***"Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth, and teach me.
For you are the God of my salvation,
And on you do I wait all the day long."
Psalm25:4-5***

How often do I go along life's highway, quite certain that I know the direction I am to take, being careful to make note of any twists and turns, maneuvering them with the greatest of confidence, and sprinkled with a touch of arrogance in the bright sunshine.

But then darkness falls.

A difficult circumstance, a broken relationship, a decision to be made, an old hurt or wound opened, fatigue, the results of hurry-sickness, a misunderstanding, a word mis-spoken. What seemed so clear by myself in the sunshine, is so impossible to "manage" by myself in the darkness. How quickly I forget my way, how quickly I lose my way. How quickly it can turn into a big "ole" mess.

Today, I want to encourage all of us all to meditate on Psalm. 25:4-5, and acknowledge two things:

1. We need guidance and direction.
2. Our guidance and direction comes from God...and God alone.

How do we receive this guidance and direction? By **waiting** on Him all the day long. With our hearts habitually looking upward in prayer all the day long. With the knowledge that God is the only source of wisdom and goodness, and is ever-ready and longing to be to us all that we could possibly require—all we could possibly need.

I did make it home that night—yet another story for another time. But for now, let's learn together today to make **waiting** on God for our direction and instruction the spontaneous response of our hearts to his great love, grace, and glory!



TAKE HEART

THE PAUSE BUTTON: WAITING PATIENTLY ON HIM



Part Three: "My soul, wait thou only upon God."

"You'll just have to wait."

I remember saying those words to my then rambunctious three year old son, while standing in a grocery store check-out line. I was trying to manage a cart full of groceries, maintain my place in the line, and keep him contained in one small area—which happened to be right in front of the chocolate bar rack so conveniently situated near the cashier tills. He was ready to delve into his promised treat that was quickly melting in his tightly clenched little hands. Waiting for our turn in line to pay seemed like an eternity to the rapidly growing impatience of my little guy. I didn't blame him. I never liked hearing those words either when I was a little girl.

And quite honestly, not much has changed in that department now that I am an adult woman. I hate waiting. I think its one of the most difficult things we are called to do. And on top of that, guess what. God tells us how we are to wait.

"Rest in the Lord...and wait patiently for Him..."
Psalm 37:7

It's one thing to wait. It's another thing to wait patiently. Patience is the ability to endure waiting, delay, or provocation without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties. Waiting patiently is difficult to do, especially when we are facing a pressing situation that requires direction and clarity. Sometimes it feels like God pressed the "pause button" of our lives. Once that pause button is pushed, it feels like we are just wasting time. This can be viewed by us as counterproductive, and grinds against our natural bend towards constant activity.

Charles Stanley encourages us best with these words. "One of the biggest mistakes Christians can make is to think that waiting is the same thing as doing nothing at all." So then, if this is true, what is the exercise of waiting actually doing in our lives?

Some of the key things are:

1. Waiting increases our faith and focus.
2. Waiting teaches us absolute dependence upon God's mighty working.
3. Waiting builds our patience and endurance.
4. Waiting gives us time to clear our minds, or understand an issue more clearly

My oh my, it's hard when God pushes that pause button in our lives. Our family is "on pause" right now. It's not the first time, and I am sure it won't be the last, but what I do hope is that I learn some deeper lessons through this particular "season of pause."

Lessons like not just seeking relief and help from Him so I feel better, but to really seek HIM. Like giving Him the glory by resting in Him, by trusting Him fully. This kind of patient waiting allows us to yield completely and wholly into His hands. It allows God...to be God.

Are you in a "season of pause?" Rest in the Lord...and wait patiently for Him. It truly is a precious season.



TAKE HEART

WAITING...ALL DAY LONG.



**"...for you I wait, all the day long."
Psalm 25:5**

Late last week, Alan received a desperate phone call from a friend who is an Assistant Director on a movie set shooting a film in downtown Toronto. "Would you and Kathy be available to come and help us out for a day? We are short-staffed." It sounded like "fun" at the time, but when we were dragging ourselves out of bed at 3:45 a.m. on a weekend morning, it was hard to remember what was so "fun" about it. At 4:45 a.m., we were standing on the sidewalk of a then deserted University Avenue, waiting for the trailers to arrive. "Ahh," I thought to myself. "So **this** is the glamorous life of show biz!"

At about 6:00 a.m. the place was abuzz with people. The "extras" of 192 men, women and children—and their "stage parents"—arrived at wardrobe, makeup and hair, and were systematically matched with attire and hairstyles from the 1930's. Clad in winter coats, boots, hats, and mittens, they went to a "holding room"...and waited. The horses that would be pulling "Santa's sleigh" were unloaded by their owner, tied to the side of their trailer in front of a pile of hay, and stood there...waiting. Their owners sat in folding lawn chairs beside them...waiting. Megan Follows and the other lead "stars" sat in their trailers...waiting. Props worked their Christmas magic on the set, and now were...waiting. Cameras, monitors, grips, lighting, sound, and every other piece of technology was set up, and the crew sat...waiting. The marching band, clowns, and princesses all sat in groups...waiting. Curious onlookers stood on the lawn of Osgoode Hall...waiting. And, with my job done, I sat on a bench to the side...waiting. The call sheet indicated they were shooting a Santa Claus parade. How long could that possibly

***On you, oh God,
I wait!***

take? A couple hours? Three tops? When would we hear those magical words? "Quiet on the set!" "Rolling!" "Action!" "Cut!" It didn't take long for my naive thinking to quickly swing into a reality check. There is a lot of preparation—mainly waiting—that happens long before the "excitement" of filming. Fourteen hours after our arrival on set, we finally heard "that's a wrap."

I was fascinated by the organization of every little detail. Everything—absolutely everything—had been thought out long before anyone had arrived on set that morning. Nothing had been left to chance. I was also fascinated by the director. In my curiosity, I watched him intensely. It was obvious he knew **exactly** what he was going for, what his vision for each shot was. From my vantage point, I wondered why he was taking so long to re-do a shot that seemed so insignificant or looked "good enough." But he saw the big picture, what the whole finished movie would look like. I needed to remind myself that I was seeing only one scene. I was also impressed by the cast and crew. They took on his vision, they waited patiently and quietly between takes (sometimes over 200 people) for his next set of instructions, uncomfortable in their full winter garb on a warm fall Toronto day. Everyone who was on that movie set that day, waited. Waited for the director's instructions all day long.

Near the end of the day, Alan sat down beside me. "There's got to be a "devotional" in

on his vision, they waited patiently and quietly between takes (sometimes over 200 people) for his next set of instructions, uncomfortable in their full winter garb on a warm fall Toronto day. Everyone who was on that movie set that day, waited. Waited for the director's instructions all day long.

Near the end of the day, Alan sat down beside me. "There's got to be a "devotional" in what we've experienced today, hon. You writing about it for Monday?" And that's when it hit me.

***"Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths,
Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long."
Psm. 25:4-5***

Our life is a story—written by God. He has organized every single detail, and has left absolutely nothing to chance. He prepares us for our role by teaching us, by leading us, by showing us His way. He is a loving director who has a vision for our life, who sees the big picture—the "whole movie". He wants us to trust Him when all we see is one scene of our life, and it seems to be taking far too long before we get to the next scene. He wants us to wait for His instructions all the day long, even when we are uncomfortable - every day of our lives.

Alan was right. We received the gift of a life lesson while working together on this movie set. I'm pretty confident I'm not going to be a "movie star" anytime soon - or more correctly, ever, but I do know that I am the star in God's script...and so are you! How willing are we to wait on our Director?



TAKE HEART

RELAX



I love words. One whole bookshelf near my desk holds journals I have filled over the past 15 years. Pretty picture frames contain my favourite verses or quotes on my desk and other strategic places in my home. I especially love signs. I'll take a meaningful sign over a piece of art any day. Signs that look as weathered and wise as the words they hold. Signs like "There's no place like home," or "Scatter kindness," or "A mother holds her children's hands for a time, and their hearts forever." My favourite was an anniversary present from my husband this past June—a beautifully framed sign that hangs by our bed and reads "Come grow old with me, the best is yet to be." Words speak to the heart. I believe its important to surround ourselves with words that call our hearts back to what is important, that help us to refocus on the core values of our lives.

I was in a charming store just over a year ago and saw another sign. It was about 3 feet long and 1 foot high, a beautiful pine board that had been distressed, and painted the softest sage green colour. It had a distinctive "country cottage" style, and the moment I saw it, I knew it would match perfectly in our bedroom. Better than that, there was an empty wall that would welcome it. The only problem—was the word on it. Would I want that constant reminder hanging on my wall? The word was "RELAX."

relax

Ok, I'll admit it, I find it hard to relax. I always tend to be doing something. I hate to feel like I am wasting time. On Saturday afternoon, still trying to recover from jet lag and a busy week, I laid down on my bed, and my eyes were drawn to that beautiful reminder "RELAX." I could feel my breathing slow as I thought about the importance of the word. The sore muscles in my back from leaning over my computer for long lengths of time, began to relax. My thoughts turned into prayers. It was a delicious feeling to lay there in the quiet of the afternoon and unwind. "When was the last time you just relaxed?", I asked myself. Actually, here's a question for you. When was the last time you relaxed. Really relaxed.

We live in such a busy and hurried world. And we easily succumb to the pressure to do more and more in less and less time. The truth is, quiet, solitude, and times of relaxation actually scare us. Ruth Haley Barton's words say it best.

"Solitude and silence challenge us on every level of our being. They challenge us culturally because nothing in our culture supports quietness and non-activity. Technology now intrudes on every aspect of our lives, and the idea of not being continually available by cell phone, beeper, and palm pilot is now almost unheard of. Solitude and silence challenges us on the level of our relationships, because it means that for this period of time we are not available to the people in our lives, and those we care about may resist our lack of availability. Solitude and silence challenges us psychologically because the psyche knows that if we become quiet, we will have to face that inner activity. Solitude and silence challenges us spiritually because all the forces of evil seek to prevent us from entering in. When we become truly still we experience and know God in ways that will unseat Satan's power and dominion in our lives."

What is keeping you from relaxing, from spending some time in quiet and solitude? Maybe this is the week to take a personal inventory of your schedule...and your heart...and intentionally choose to stop and relax.

"Be still and know the I am God"
Psalm 46:10

If you need a sign to remind you...I know of a charming store...



TAKE HEART

UNSWERVING HOPE



**Let us hold unswervingly to the *hope* we profess,
for he who promised is faithful.
Hebrews 10:23**

Last week I spoke with someone who had lost hope. Yes, she has been a follower of Christ for almost 30 years, has been in vocational ministry for half of her adult life, has raised 3 beautiful children who are desirous to live a life that honours the Lord, and has a supportive and loving husband. Sounds pretty good doesn't it? How could she ever lose hope? But as a result of a few poor choices, she needed to step away from ministry for a time. "How can God ever use me again?" is the question that haunts her. "I've really blown it. I'd do anything for a fresh start."

My heart ached as I listened to her. How well I understood her despair. I too have asked the same questions. And I think you have too. Oh sure, we believe He has a purpose for us—in theory. But when we are in the depths of pain, or when we no longer have control over anything in our lives, when we've hit the bottom, we really wonder. Perhaps for you it's in the "ordinariness" of life, in the daily grind of everyday life that you lose hope. Either way, we can't help but ask, "Does God really have a plan for me, one to prosper me, and not to harm me?"

There is hope. Let me say this again. There is hope. Let Pastor Rick Warren's words encourage your heart:

**"We are products of our past, but we don't have to be prisoners of it.
God's purpose is not limited by your past. He turned a murderer named Moses
into a leader and a coward named Gideon into a courageous hero, and he can do
amazing things with the rest of your life, too.
God specializes in giving people a fresh start."**

Are you the very person who needs to hear this today? Have you lost sight of God's purpose for your life? Do you need a fresh start?

Know this: God is in the restoration business. Open your heart and let His touch bring restoration to those areas of your life that need repair. He does have a purpose for you. Hold unswervingly to the hope - for He who promised is faithful.



TAKE HEART

SOW A HABIT...REAP A CHARACTER



**"we reap what we sow"
-Gal. 6:7**

I made a mistake this week. Well actually, I probably made more than one...but that's for another time.

I was feeling quite good, seeing the last load of laundry hit the washing machine before going to bed that night. But I wasn't feeling quite as good when Alan delivered them to our bedroom to fold and put away. Smears on every piece of clothing was a colour that suspiciously matched my newest lipstick. A quick trip to the laundry room confirmed my suspicions when I found an empty lipstick tube lying innocently in the dryer.

I bristled internally, knowing that my first priority the next day would have to be the "stain removal" of 4 pairs of jeans and several tops, one of them brand new. I really had better things to do. However, armed with a full bottle of "Shout," and in the company of Regis and Kelly, I sat for just over an hour, rubbing and scrubbing, finally succeeding in removing "MAC #AA6" out of our clothes.

Man, if I would just get into the habit of consistently checking pockets before putting the clothes in the washer, I would have saved myself all of this pain, time, and aggravation," I thought to myself.

Hmm, habits. They come in all shapes and sizes...good and bad. Think about it. They can be our friend or our enemy. They can help us or hurt us. They can serve us or enslave us. They can work for us or work against us.

What exactly is a habit? In his book "Dare to Discipline Yourself", Dale Galloway defines a habit as "a wonderful invention that God has placed within each of us. You might say it is like a built-in automatic pilot. A habit is a thought or action that we have repeated until it has become automatic, and we do it without stopping to decide."

What is a habit?

Sometimes the word "habit" has gotten a bad rap. We read about "drinking habits," "drug habits," "swearing habits," "over-eating habits," and the list goes on. But here's the good news. We can choose and develop habits that, instead of working against us, work for us.

Galatians 6:7 reminds us of a truth that many of us know, and perhaps have learned the hard way through the choices we have made, or are currently living in our lives. That truth is that "we will reap what we sow."

***Sow an act and you reap a habit.
Sow a habit and you reap a character.
Sow a character and you reap a destiny.***

Sowing bad habits will reap bad results. If we are really honest, we will not need to look beyond our own lives to recognize that. Constantly over-eating or indulging in the wrong foods reaps weight gain, and an unhealthy body. Going to bed late every night reaps exhaustion (and crankiness). Not leaving enough time to get to an appointment reaps frustration and stress.

And just the opposite is true. Thankfully.

I determined this week to "sow the habit of checking pockets before doing the laundry." Fortunately, the lack of this habit did not cost me much...just a little time, frustration, and three quarters of a bottle of "Shout". But it led me to ask myself some questions. And I will ask you too.

What habits have you developed in your life? What thoughts do you think automatically? What actions do you repeat without thinking or stopping to decide? Are they good habits? Are they habits that will harm you?

Take time to honestly answer these questions. And remember...sowing good habits reaps good character.



TAKE HEART

THINK ON THESE THINGS



I remember a time a few years back, while working at the head office of Starbucks Canada, we were in the process of an office move. At that time, there only about 80 employees, and everyone rolled up their sleeves and did what was required to implement the move in a timely fashion. I remember working on the setting up of new training-classroom desks that had a cool little feature allowing them to be folded flat for the purpose of "storage" or "moving through doorways for use in another area." Fabulous concept—if we could just figure out how to get them from their "folded, flat" state to an actual table. We would open the table top, make the connection (so we thought) to the legs of the table, step back...and kurplunk, it fell flat again. Repeating this same action at least half a dozen times, Colin, my partner in crime, stepped back and said, "Kathy, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results." How true. I've thought of that day many times since then. Collin was right.

We Are What We Repeatedly Do

The same principle can be applied to our everyday lives. We want to change the results in our life, but we continually do the same actions over and over. Therefore, we get the same results. Aristotle said "we are what we repeatedly do." Take a minute to think about that. What results are you looking for? Could it be you are not getting those results because you haven't changed your actions?

Thoughtful Habits

Over the past month or so, I have become increasingly aware of some bad habits I have developed over the years in my thought life. Thought patterns that I have repeated over and over again. Thoughts about others' actions that lead to critical and judgmental attitudes, defeating thoughts about myself that I have come to believe—but are not true, negative assumptions that result in thinking the worse—not the best about a situation. This inward and consistent habit often has external and far-reaching results. Harsh words. Unjustified mistrust. Fear of failure. Anger. Loss of potential friendship. Strained relationships. Self pity.

I am thinking I am not the only one that struggles with this. And if you can say "amen sista", I hear ya", then lets discover some ways to change our thought patterns.

1. Be a Quitter: You heard me right...so to speak. Determine, and make up your mind that you are going to quit entertaining the wrong thoughts. Don't be fooled, they will not vanish on their own. Talk to God until you believe with His help you can do it.

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."
Philippians 4:13 ESV

2. Replace the Harmful Thinking: We can determine to consistently push out the harmful thoughts as they come to our mind, but we also need to be just as diligent in replacing them with healthy thought patterns.

"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
Philippians 4:8 ESV

3. Never Give Up: Whatever you do, don't give up. With Christ's help, victory over replacing "stinkin' thinkin' " with healthy, kind, and loving attitudes and thoughts will be yours and mine!

Wise words from Aristotle. "We are what we repeatedly do." They are not new words. The Bible puts it this way. "We reap what we sow." What thoughts will you "sow" today?

"First we **form habits**, then they **form**
us.

Conquer your **bad habits**,
or they'll eventually **conquer you.**"

Dr. Rob Gilbert



TAKE HEART

CULTIVATE GOOD HABITS



**"we reap what we sow"
-Galatians 6:7**

Sometimes, we are far more aware of our bad habits, that we forget to celebrate the many good habits we have developed over the years. What good habits are you able to check off?

- you offer a smile to those who cross your path each day (especially the people who live in your home!)
- you exercise regularly
- you practice moderation - with eating, TV viewing, Internet use, cell phones etc.
- you maintain good time management
- you put things back where they belong after using them
- you are on time for appointments, meetings, and events
- you remember birthdays
- you say thank you —often, throughout the day
- you send thank you cards
- you service your car regularly
- you brush your teeth
- you prioritize personal growth by reading books, attending seminars and workshops etc.
- you regularly tell the people you cherish that you love them

The list of good habits that we can "sow" into our lives is inexhaustible.

Results of Cultivating Good Habits

I am always inspired by people who exhibit good habits...including my favorite Bible character, Daniel. In Daniel 6, we read about his exemplary leadership ability.

***"Then Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps
because an excellent spirit was in him,
and the kind thought to set him over the whole realm."
Daniel 6:3***

What set Daniel apart from all the other leaders in the land? I believe it was because he regularly "sowed" good habits in his life. For example, three times a day, on good days, and on challenging days, Daniel faithfully "got down on his knees and prayed, and gave thanks before God." (v 10) Now, that's a great habit to add to our checklist! Take time to read Daniel 6 today, and be inspired by this young man's example.

Remember, sow good habits, and reap good character.



TAKE HEART

I WILL NOT FEAR, BECAUSE YOU ARE WITH ME



Fear is a very damaging force that can have far-reaching ramifications in our life. For instance, take the children of Israel. Deuteronomy 1 opens with the "little chat" Moses had with them. Among other things, he reminded them of the reason for their 40-year wilderness experience. What normally would have been an 11-day journey to the promised land, took Israel 40 years to arrive. Instead of obeying God and trusting Him when they were told to "go up and possess the land," they came up with a "compromise" plan to send in 12 spies to see for themselves what they were up against. Ten of the 12 spies came back and told everyone that, although this promised land was a good land, there was no way they could conquer it. "The people are bigger and taller than we are; the cities are great and fortified to the heavens. And moreover, we have seen the giant-like sons of the Anakim there." (v28) After getting that gloomy report, they all sat around in their tents "peevish (obstinate, ill-tempered), discontented, and complaining." (v 27) Feeling sorry for themselves, they began to say—and to believe—that God hated them. They forgot how He had fought for them, how He had led them by a cloud by day and a fire by night. As a result of their rebellious hearts, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Why? Bottom line: because they did not believe God when He told them to "go up and possess the land, and do not fear, for I am with you." (v21) Fear won out over trust in God, leading to serious consequences.

1. Fear is only one step behind courage.

We need always to declare the truth into our lives; that we need not fear anything, for our God, who never changes, will be with us always. We must be diligent to never let fear overtake our courage.

2. Compromise delays God's best for us.

When we try to come up with brilliant contingency plans, and excuses as a way to deal with our fear of doing what God has already lead us to do, there is always a consequence, therefore, delaying God's best for our life.

3. Complaining, discontentment and "peevishness" leads to loss of perspective.

Allowing these attitudes to become a part of the very fabric of our hearts leads to rebellion, mistrust, and a loss of perspective. How quickly we forget what God has done for us in the past, how He has proven Himself true over and over again in the big, and small miracles in our lives.

4. Doing it our way is the long way.

Allowing fear to reign supreme in our lives will take us down the long road. Eleven days turned into an unnecessary 40 years, all because of fear.

5. Questions to ask myself!

1. Do I regularly declare God's truth into my life?
2. Am I afraid to find out what God's purpose is for my life?
3. Do I come up with "compromises" in order to defer doing what God clearly has asked me to do?
4. Do I make excuses why I can't do what God has asked me to do? (not smart enough, old enough, young enough, strong enough, what will people say, etc)
5. Do I have a complaining and discontented spirit, therefore making it easy to forget the many blessings that have been poured into my life?
6. Do I feel sorry for myself, thinking God does so many things for everyone else, but not for me?
7. Am I willing to live my life God's way?



TAKE HEART

I AM PRECIOUS IN GOD'S SIGHT



I remember as a young girl playing "jumpsies" with several of my girlfriends during afternoon recess. Near the end of the recess period, there was a dispute about whether or not I had "cleared" the jump. I was certain I had. Joanne, on the other hand, was certain I had not. Anyone who knows me well, will know that 9.5 times out of ten, I will take the role of "peacemaker" in a confrontational situation, and graciously bow out—regardless if I felt I was right about the situation. But not this time! Before I knew it, I was involved in an exchange of words that quickly diverted from the real issue at hand.

Now, keep in mind, I am not a "debater" - not then, and not now. I need time to think. Because of that, I usually come up with brilliant things to say in response to a situation—at 3:00 a.m. the next morning! But this time, I came up with something to "one-up"

***"YEAH??
Well MY Dad is a policeman,
and HE'LL put YOUR dad in JAIL!"***

her every time. The bell rang, and Joanne was determined to get the last word in. I can't remember anything she said, but she when she finished, she triumphantly turn towards the school with her pony tail bouncing in victory behind her. I can see it to this day. And did that ever make me mad. I was going to finish it off. I yelled at the top of my voice, "YEAH?? Well MY Dad is a

policeman, and HE'LL put YOUR dad in JAIL!" I had won! There's no way she could beat that. Her dad worked in an office. There was something so satisfying about having the last word. About matching her—and then some!

School playground games are now over, but there's still something in me that gets pulled to "one-up-man-ship." I was acutely aware of two situations this week where I did just that. (Don't worry Dad if you are reading this, I didn't tell them you'd put them in jail!) It was much more subtle; like returning an email with no other motive except to ensure that the original sender knew how "accomplished" and busy I was, or, a phone conversation filled with overtones of name-dropping, achievements, and opportunities. What I found was this: having the last word was not as satisfying as it was that day I was yelling threats of arrest in the school yard. In fact, it left me feeling rather empty.

As I wrestled with this over the past few days, I learned a few lessons about myself, and about living God's best for my life. But I have a funny feeling they are universal lessons we've all learned at one time or another, and just need a reminder—especially when we are faced with the temptation to "up-one-man-ship."

1. Often, when we try to be better, perform better, or seem more important than someone else, it's because **there is a self-sabotaging message continually being displayed on the "ticker tape" of our mind that says, "you're not good enough" or "you don't quite measure up."** These are painful messages that leave deep wounds on our heart. When someone comes along that does something a bit better, or reminds us of our shortcomings, we react defensively out of the pain of our own inadequacies; real or imagined.

2. When we react to people with the insatiable need to have the last word, **it can often be because of unhealthy pride in our lives.** We think things like "hey, do you know who you are talking to?", or "do you have any idea how capable I am in that area?", or, "you don't have to tell me, I've been there, done that, and have the t-shirt to prove it!" Humility is one of the most important character qualities that we can cultivate in our hearts and lives.

"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his or her own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Phil. 2:3-4

3. **We need to be reminded often just how precious God's thought about us are.** The sum of them is too great for us to count...greater than all the little granules of sand on the face of the earth. (Psalm. 139: 18,19) Be still for a moment —breathe that truth in deeply. We are loved. We are precious in his sight. We are **enough**. We do not need to compare, defend, or explain ourselves to prove our worth to others.

How can I apply this to my life?

1. Be aware. Count how many times this week you subtly or overtly are involved with "one-up-man-ship" with your spouse, kids, parents, in-laws, extended family, work colleagues, neighbours, etc.

2. Connect. Ask yourself why it happened. Is there some unhealthy, hidden pride? Did it hit an open wound, reminding you of your inadequacies (imagined or perceived)? Are there some addictions (such as performance approval or people approval) that you need to break free of?

3. Remember. You are so precious in God's sight. Declare that truth. Hold on to the truth - it will set you free.



TAKE HEART

LAST DAY ON EARTH



**Every day of my life has been ordained by God
before even one of them came to be.**

Psalm. 139:16

Alan and I often have our best chats in our van. I have come to enjoy those times alone with him, and we often tag along with each other on errands in order to capture some of those moments.

This past week, on one of those "van excursions," Alan told me about a TV show he had watched earlier in the week. Although the show itself did not hold any significance, there was one line in it that made him sit up and take notice. "If today was your last day on earth, how would you live it?" Alan went on to explain the premise; you were allowed no added resources, and you had to live out your last day as if it was an ordinary, regular day in your life. We pondered on that for a while, coming up with our own scenarios.

Got me to thinking though. Thinking about the days from the previous week. From Monday to Thursday, I had spent almost 5 hours in total straightening out an issue with our telephone provider. First of all, just having the issue with our services was frustrating. But that could not top the extreme frustration I felt from their automated answering system!! The cheerful, computerized "voice" that greeted me at every prompt became more irritating with each call, which sadly, was reflected in my own tone of voice when I answered "it!"

I let my frustration grow. (Yes, it is a choice!) Dealing with this issue was taking up my valuable and precious time, resulting in both the cancellation of some tele-conferences I was committed to, and the re-scheduling of some clients.

Why? All because of one employee's data input error. Something so minor had become a major inconvenience.

How would I like to spend my last day on earth?

Here's what happened. I let my frustration with this situation infiltrate the atmosphere of

our home. (Yes, it is a choice!) The "great violation" of my rights as a customer to receive the hassle-free service I "spend good money on", soon became my family's burden to bear. I was upset...and when "momma ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." Alan

often says "happy wife, happy life."



During our "van chat," when I reflected how I would like to spend my last day on earth, I KNEW for sure I did not want to spend it all frustrated, impatient and angry. And I KNEW for sure that I would not want to leave my family with negative overtures lingering in air.

1. Live life carefully. We don't know when our last day on earth will be. But we do know that our days are numbered. Cultivate a heart of wisdom, and reflect that wisdom carefully in your everyday choices. **Choose** not to "major in the minors."

**"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
Psalm 90:12**

2. Live life without regret. Tell your loved ones and friends how you feel. Write a note or an email. Send a card. Spread some encouragement. And show them how you feel. Give a hug. Invest your time with them. As Mark Twain says..."in 25 years, we will experience more disappointment over the things we didn't do."

Be courageous my friend. Live today like it will be your last! One day, it will be.

Let's take an inventory...

- **What am I expending my precious time, energy and days on?** Am I holding a grudge against someone, am I bound by fear or anger—or maybe both? Is there someone in my life I need to forgive (perhaps it's yourself)? Do I need to ask forgiveness to start the process of healing in my relationships?

- **How would I spend my day if I knew it was my last on earth?**

Do the people in my life who are nearest and dearest really know how I feel about them? Do they consistently feel my love and unconditional acceptance, or is it more likely that they ride the roller-coaster of my frustrations, impatience and anger?



TAKE HEART

GOD HAS A GRIP ON YOUR HAND



**"...if she stumbles, she is not down for long; God has a grip on her hand."
Psalm 37:23 (MSG)**

I fell last Tuesday. It wasn't pretty. Even with my outstanding athletic ability (that's a joke, by the way), I was not able to keep my footing, and before I knew it, I hit the ground. My left wrist, hip, and shoulder vibrated with currents of pain. A range of emotions flooded through me—should I yell, cry, or, be more concerned about who actually saw my acrobatic performance? I took a second to catch my breath, and then rolled over on my stomach. Lifting my head, I could now clearly see the sheet of shimmering ice that had camouflaged itself unsuspectingly over our front walkway just seconds earlier.

"Well, you can't lie here forever Kathy," I thought to myself. I cautiously (or should I say, awkwardly) got back to my feet, all the while, deciding if I would continue on with my regular 6 a.m. morning walk. Looking down my street, I could now see the ice patches sparkling innocently under the street lights in the early morning darkness. Based on that awareness, I opted to change my regular route, and to walk along the busier main street that had less inclines—and hopefully, less ice.

I was cautious with each step I took, aware of the patches of unsure footing below me. I decided to slow it down a bit; to use this walk as "soul exercise" instead of "physical exercise." "What do you want me to learn from this today, Lord?" I prayed. I thought about other times in my life when I have fallen. Not physically. You know. In life. Failure. Poor choices. Strongholds. Giving in to temptation.

The reality of life is, we will fall. We can come up with a lot of reasons—and even excuses, about why we fall. But here's the bottom line. **We fall when we do not live our lives consistently in**

"We fall when we do not live our lives consistently in the transforming presence of God."

the transforming presence of God. Think about it. **Before every fall, there is some element of pride.** An "I can do life by myself, thank you very much" type of attitude.

There's **only one person who can completely restore us** again after a fall, and that is God (Psalm 37:23). There is **only one person who can keep us from falling**, and that is God (Jude 24).

Something to think about...

Take a few moments, slow down, and sit with God in the silence of your heart. Ask yourself these questions:

- Is there pride in my life? Where is it? Name it for what it is.
- Am I willing to take God's hand, and accept his gift of grace and healing to restore past falls; failures that are keeping me "on the ground" feeling defeated day after day.
- Am I willing to arrange my daily life in such a way that there is room for God's transforming presence?

Thank you Father, for keeping us from falling...and picking us up again when we do!



TAKE HEART

REDEEMING THE TIME!



My favorite gift this Christmas was a set of homemade CD's given to my husband and me from my parents. On those CD's, my Dad burned videos from years of diligently carrying that big camera (back in the days before "compact" cameras) to family events. There were times during those years that we teased him about carrying that camera with him where ever he went; and other times we were annoyed that we had to "re-enact" a Kodak moment again...because he missed it the first time. But as I sat this past week watching my kids "grow up" again before my eyes, those petty inconveniences were replaced with a resounding "way to go Dad!!!"

As I watched those videos, I recalled all the times I wondered if "these kids would ever grow up," or "would I ever sleep through the night again?" Those questions seemed superficial to the one I was asking now; "my goodness, where in the world did the time go?" Through this gift so lovingly created by my Dad, I learned a very big object lesson: time goes by quickly, and often we are not even aware of it. I must admit, I felt a few twinges of regret for not paying more attention during those years.

A very sobering thought. How can we "redeem" the time, making the most of every opportunity - with no regrets?

Discover Your Life Purpose

Do you know what your life purpose is? Here's what happens when we connect with the deep burning desire that God places in our hearts; we develop greater clarity and a "single-eyed" focus about what it is we are to "spend our time" on. **The result:** we make the most of every opportunity with no regrets.

Re-Discover How to Live in the Present

We need to live in the present, neither dragged down by the past nor distracted by the future's problems or promises. The past cannot be recovered, even though we can learn from it; the future is not yet ours, even though we prepare for it. So how do we live in the present? By accepting our present circumstances, by doing today the assigned tasks that have been given us, and by responding moment by moment to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. **The result:** we make the most of every opportunity with no regrets.

No Reserves - No Retreat - No Regrets

What an amazing way to "redeem the time" if each day we choose to live with **no reserves**; we confessed without reservation that Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives. If we

live with **no retreat**; that once we "put our hand to the plow," whether that is in the discovery or knowing of his purpose for us, we never look back. And if we live with **no regrets**; then we have no disappointment or distress over our decision to follow Christ's call on our lives...his purpose for us. **The result:** we make the most of every opportunity with no regrets.

Proverbs 3:4-5 (Msg) sums it all up for us:

***"Trust God from the bottom of your heart;
don't try to figure out everything on your own.
Listen for God's voice in everything you do,
everywhere you go."***

The result?

We make the most of every opportunity with no regrets!



TAKE HEART

DON'T DESPAIR



**"don't despair...your God is present...he'll calm you with his love,
and delight you with his songs".**

Zephaniah 3:17

The signs of January are everywhere. The tree is down, decorations are safely packed away in rubber maid containers and stored in the basement, and resolutions are fresh memories in our minds--if not on paper.

In speaking to several people over the past few weeks, I have observed another sign of January. **A despair.** Not a "in-your-face" kind of despair. More like a "low-grade-fever" kind of despair. I was trying to figure out why this happens. Perhaps its the result of being overwhelmed by the realities of everyday life setting in after December's full schedule of friends, family, and merriment.

Can you relate? I know I can. But hey, if you can't relate **TODAY**, I do know that **SOMEDAY** you will be able to. So listen up today, so when **THAT DAY** arrives, you will be armed with the encouragement you need to face your "low-grade fever" despair head on.

God showed me this verse in Zephaniah this week that really encouraged me. Yep, Zephaniah. I know what you are thinking. Who goes to Zephaniah for a verse of encouragement? Well believe me, **this one's a gem!**

***"Dear Zion, don't despair.
Your God is present among you,
a strong Warrior there to save you.
Happy to have you back,
he'll calm you with his love, and delight you with his songs."***

Zephaniah 3:17

- **Name it!** Are you feeling "low-grade" despair today? Perhaps a child that is going through a difficult season, your are facing health issues, the family is starting the New Year without a loved one, overwhelming job situations, debt, infertility, disappointing

marriage situations, broken relationships...to name a few. **Call it what it is.**

- **Personalize it!** Take another look again at this verse of hope. Make it personal. Switch the "Dear Zion" for "Dear _____(your name)". Now complete the sentence by naming the despairs you listed above. Something very amazing will begin to happen as **you sit quietly and listen** for God to "calm you with his love and delight you with his songs."
- **Choose it!** Now we have a choice. We can **believe God's power-filled words**, or we can continue on carrying the burden of our own despair. To help us remember the choice we have made, copy these words onto a 3x5 card, blackberry, or on a post-it note. Read them often.

God doesn't want us to live in despair. In fact, just the opposite is true. It is my prayer that if you are experiencing this "sign of January," that you will find **hope, strength, and encouragement** to "take heart" today, and live out of God's best for you.



CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME



**"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
Philippians 4:13**

Late last night, after arriving home from a friend's birthday party, my twenty year old daughter came into my bedroom and plopped down on the bed beside me. What followed was a long, impromptu, heart to heart conversation—you know, the kind where time just stands still. She shared some of her dreams for her future, the university she wanted to apply to, her vision for her ministry, her understanding of God's plan for her right now. On one hand, she was excited about the burning desires God had placed in her heart. On the other hand, she was overwhelmed by the "bigness," the seeming "impossibilities," and the "insurmountable challenges" if she were to accept God's assignments for her life. My encouraging words of "keep on keeping on" felt like a weak cliché after she had so powerfully, and articulately communicated the rhythms of her heart.

But I understood how she felt. So many times, I feel the same way. "Father, what would you have said to encourage her?" I found myself asking that question in the quiet darkness later that night. And almost in the same moment, I sensed a small, still voice remind me of that familiar verse in Philippians: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Wow! What a great reminder! Any divine assignment that God gives us is always accompanied by the divine enablement to triumphantly complete it. Could we get wrapped up in the "bigness" of our assignment, and perhaps in some cases, lost in our own enthusiasm for it, that we forget that it is "in Christ that we can do all things?"

Whatever our assignment is, we must learn to tackle it with Christ's strength. In doing so, we continue to fulfill our determined purpose - which is to know Him. Are you lacking strength, wisdom, courage, humility, encouragement, or any other thing to complete your life purpose? As Lehman Strauss once said, **"The ability of Christ knows no inability; why not trust Him?"** You **can** do all things through Christ who strengthens you!



TAKE HEART

I trust you have been blessed!

Are you interested in other books I have written?
Then I invite you to come and visit me at

www.KathyButryn.com
www.KathyButryn.typepad.com/blog
Kathy@KathyButryn.com



Have courage!
TAKE HEART...and live your life!

kathy

A New Beginning

Would you like to begin life over again?
Would you like to experience the “rest for your soul” that we have been talking about for the past 4 weeks?

Perhaps things have not gone the way you planned. You are discouraged.
You want to give up, because no one seems to care or understand.
But Someone does care. Someone who loves you very much!

No matter what has happened, no matter what you have done, no matter how you have lived your life,
God is personally interested in you, and he cares what happens to you.
He loves you!

He understands your frustration, your loneliness, your heartaches.

He wants you to come to Him so He can take care of your greatest need and enable you to cope with life.
He wants to bring rest to your soul.

God says,
“...I have loved you with an everlasting love.”
~Jeremiah 31:3

You have lived to please yourself. But it has only brought unhappiness. You have left God out of your life,
and it has left you empty. God says living to please yourself is a sin. Sin separates us from God.

God loves you and has provided the only way to be forgiven.

“But God has shown us how much He loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!”
~Romans 5:8

Jesus Christ, God’s Son, not only died to pay the penalty for your sin, but He conquered death when He rose from
the grave.

He is alive today, and will come to live in you by His Spirit.
He will give you a new beginning if you surrender the control of your life to Him.

When you ask Him to forgive your sin and enter your life, He will enable you to live in a way that is fulfilling to you
and pleasing to God. He has a purpose for your life!
He will give you a new life that will last forever.

**“For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him, may
not die but have eternal life.”**
~John 3:16

My Prayer

Now that I understand who Jesus Christ is, and what he did for me, I want to receive him as my Saviour and Lord.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I do believe you are the Son of God, and that you died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sin. Please come into my life, forgive my sin, and make me a member of your family. I now turn from going my own way.

I want you to be the center of my life.

Thank you for your gift of eternal life, and for your Holy Spirit, who has now come to live in me.

I ask this in your name, Amen.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Wow, I'm so excited for you. You prayed, confessing your sin of living to please yourself instead of living to please God.

You put your faith in what Jesus Christ did for you when he died on the cross, rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven. He is alive today!

You received Jesus Christ, who said if you would open the door of your life to him, he would come in. You invited him in, **and he came in!**

I would love to meet you and chat with you.
Will you email me at Kathy@kathybutryn.com and let me know of your decision to put your faith in Jesus Christ?

I am praying for you!
May you know the **rest for your soul** that Jesus longs to give you!