

Faithful & *Feminine*

The Hannah Issue

For the women who feel the weight of waiting and long for a deeper relationship with God.

Apr. - Jun., 2026

An issue inspired by 1 Samuel 1-2

The perfect
magazine for
Christian women
doesn't exi—

Oh yes it does.



FAITHFUL. FEMININE. FEARLESS.

GET YOUR STORY OUT THERE!

I truly believe that every woman's testimony carries power. Yours might be exactly what someone else needs to read. If God has moved in your life in a personal, unexpected, or powerful way, I would be honored to feature your testimony in *Faithful & Feminine*.

Please prayerfully consider reaching out and sharing your journey with the F&F community. Whether you're walking through healing, motherhood, entrepreneurship, or simply learning to trust God more deeply, your story matters!

To submit or inquire, email me at contact@withinthetemple.com

Let's glorify God together, one miraculous story at a time.

**“BE STILL BEFORE THE LORD
AND WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HIM;
DO NOT FRET WHEN PEOPLE
SUCCEED IN THEIR WAYS.”**

Psalm 37:7

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MORE ABOUT THIS ISSUE



Welcome to the second issue of Faithful & Feminine! It is with much excitement that I tell you that this quarter, we're diving into a story that has inspired countless women across generations—and one you might relate to. It's the heart-tugging story of Hannah (1 Samuel 1–2).

Hannah's life was one of quiet devotion. She knew what it meant to wait, and how painful it could be. She knew what it meant to wrestle with not only disappointment, but *longing* and moments when her prayers felt unheard. On top of it all, I'm sure the mockery and insults of the people around her didn't help.

And yet, through the pain, she remained rooted in faith and trusted God, refined by the trials she faced, and unwavering in her hope! Her story is *so* powerful—I love her faith. It's powerful because it reminds us that faith is not always loud. It doesn't need to be flashy or performative. True faith often grows in the hidden moments, in the silent prayers, in the seasons where no one is watching. Hannah shows us how a woman's heart fully surrendered to God can produce a quiet and unshakeable strength.

This issue is for the women who feel the weight of waiting, who long for deeper connection with God, and who desire faith that stands firm—even in moments of confusion, and even when life feels uncertain.

If you're unfamiliar with Hannah's story, I encourage you to check it out before continuing with this issue. May her story remind you that your quiet faith is *powerful*, your prayers *are* seen, and your growth—though sometimes hidden—is shaping you into the woman God created you to be!

— Carly Lee, Editor-in-Chief

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"Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him."
— Jeremiah 17:7

CARLY LEE

FOUNDER AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hey there, friend! I wanted to pop in here for a moment and share a little about who I am and what I'm all about.

My journey with God hasn't always been perfect (is it ever?)—or easy—but it's been real. Like many women, I've faced seasons of doubt, disappointment, and burnout. I've wrestled with unanswered prayers, healed from heartbreak, and learned that true strength doesn't come from perfection or success—it comes from surrendering to God, day after day.

Faithful & Feminine was born out of a desire to create a space where Christian women can grow spiritually without pressure, comparison, or guilt—a safe space to heal and discover who you are in Christ. This magazine is for the quiet warriors, the women who pray in hidden corners or alone at night, who long for spiritual depth, and who want to live out their faith fully for God.

I'm not here to offer quick fixes or trendy advice. I'm here to share truth, grace, and encouragement—to remind you that your prayers matter, your growth matters, and your story matters.

Thank you for letting me walk with you on this journey. May Faithful & Feminine inspire you to live fully, pray boldly, and grow deeply in Christ.

Your Sister in Christ,

Carly



LESSONS FROM FOUR LEPERS

God's blessings can come in the most unexpected ways. When all feels hopeless or impossible, God comes along and pulls something wonderful together. What we may think is impossible God can do with ease.

In 2 Kings 7 the Bible talks about four men with leprosy who are sitting at the gate of Samaria when Samaria was under siege of the Syrians. The leprous men talked amongst one another and said, *“Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, ‘Let us enter the city,’ the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. So now come, let us go over to the camp of the Syrians. If they spare our lives we shall live, and if they kill us we shall but die (2 Kings 7:3-4).”*

So the four lepers decided to surrender themselves to the besieging Aramean camp. They reasoned that remaining where they were would only lead to death, and that taking action—even with an uncertain outcome—was a risk worth taking.

When we think about our own lives, we can see that sometimes we have to weigh the odds and make decisions even when we aren't sure what the outcome will be, just like the four lepers did. It's during these uncertain moments that our faith is stretched and strengthened. Without uncertainty, faith would have no room to grow. So even when the path feels confusing or frightening, we can choose gratitude for the moments that invite us to trust God more deeply and rely on Him fully.

It's Okay to Have Jesus *and* Therapy



WRITTEN BY KAREN LANXON,
M.ED., LPC

something that many of us as Christians wrestle with:

Sometimes we reject God's resources out of ignorance.

We may say, "I don't need therapy. I have Jesus." But is that really the full truth?

What I've learned is this: as long as we remember that Jesus is The Source and everything else is a resource, we're on solid ground.

Jesus came to save us from our sins—but not from our humanity.

Because of that, He is a compassionate Savior who chose to experience humanity as part of the salvation plan. Scripture tells us that we do not have a High Priest who is unable to be touched by our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). He understands weakness. He understands emotion. He understands distress.

And He did not leave us here without help.

He gave us the Holy Spirit. He gave us the Church. He gave us wisdom. And yes—He gave us resources to help us steward our humanity well.

One of those resources is therapy.

I have walked with the Lord for over two decades. And what I've learned, deeply and personally, is this: Jesus loves me. He sees me. He understands me.

It took me a while to truly grasp that. Honestly, my revelation of this truth deepened even more after becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor. Through both my personal walk with Christ and my professional training, I've come to understand

Emotions Are Not the Enemy

Jesus never taught us to be led by our emotions. But He also never taught us to be ashamed of them, suppress them, or pretend they don't exist. Instead, Scripture is filled with examples of God meeting people in the middle of their emotional realities.

Hannah, The Barren Woman

Hannah experienced the emotional turmoil of infertility—worry, grief, bitterness of soul. Her anguish was so deep she could not even articulate it fully. Her lips moved, but no sound came out. To the priest, it looked strange.

Once she was given the opportunity to express what was happening in her heart—once she was asked what she was feeling—something shifted. She was able to process her pain. And Scripture tells us her countenance changed, the depression lifted, and she began to eat again.

God used another human being to help Hannah process what was entangled in her soul.

We were never meant to carry our burdens alone (Galatians 6:2).

We were never meant to suppress our emotions and keep them hidden inside. That is not spiritual maturity—that is emotional isolation.

God has given us pastors and ministry leaders to guide us spiritually. But He has also given us trained mental health professionals—including Christian counselors—who help us navigate our humanity in practical, balanced ways.

Spiritual healing and emotional healing are not enemies. They can work together.

Elijah: Even the Anointed Get Overwhelmed

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah boldly confronted the prophets of Baal. He stood firm. He called down fire from heaven. He witnessed God prove Himself as the one true God. And then in the very next chapter, Elijah ran in fear for his life.

The same man.

The same calling.

The same anointing.

No matter how gifted, called, or bold we are, we will face moments that overwhelm us. We will experience fear. Exhaustion. Emotional depletion.

What did God do for Elijah?
He met him right where he was.

God sent an angel to minister to him, but first, Elijah was given space to speak. He expressed his fear and discouragement. The angel did not rebuke him. He did not shame him. He did not call him weak. Instead, Elijah was given food and rest.

God ministered to his humanity. Elijah was receptive to the practical help: nourishment and rest. And through that care, he regained strength for the journey ahead.

Sometimes healing looks spiritual.

Sometimes healing looks practical.

Often—it looks like both.

Jesus: Our Ultimate Example

And then there is Jesus.

Jesus wept when Lazarus died—even though He knew resurrection was coming. He allowed Himself to experience grief. He did not bypass it simply because He knew the outcome.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus experienced such intense distress that He sweat blood—a medical condition known today as hematomidrosis, caused by severe emotional stress and anxiety.

How could the sinless Son of God experience that level of anguish? Because He is not only the Son of God—He is also the Son of Man. He chose to experience humanity so that we would know we are not alone in ours.

And notice something powerful: Jesus talked about it.

He asked the Father, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” He expressed His anguish honestly. Yet He also surrendered:

“Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

There it is—the balance of faith and honesty.

Healing is not pretending we don't struggle. Healing is bringing our struggle before God in faith.

“Be Anxious for Nothing”... But How?

Philippians tells us to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6-7). And the promise is that His peace will guard our hearts and minds.

But what does that look like practically?

How do we recognize anxiety?

How do we identify distorted thinking?

How do we untangle trauma, grief, or chronic stress?

This is where professional help can be a gift. A Christian counselor is icing on the cake. A Christian counselor does not replace your faith. They help apply it.

A therapist walks alongside you and helps you understand how life experiences shape your emotions, your nervous system, and your thought patterns. They help you recognize when anxiety is present. They help you process grief. They help you challenge lies that feel like truth.

Session by session, Scripture becomes a lived experience.

Therapy is not about putting your faith to the side. It is about putting your faith to work—allowing God to transform your mind with support, wisdom, and accountability.

Jesus Is the Source. Therapy Is a Resource.

We do not worship therapy.

We do not place our trust in human wisdom above God.

We do not elevate psychology above Scripture.

But we also do not reject the tools God has made available to us. Just as we see a physician for a broken bone, we can seek support for emotional wounds.

Jesus saves us. The Holy Spirit guides us. And sometimes, therapy helps us steward our humanity along the way.

Faith and therapy are not in competition.

They can walk hand in hand.

Because it is okay to have Jesus and therapy.

Karen Lanxon is a Christian therapist in the state of Texas, wife, and mom of three with a heart for helping moms and families thrive. With over 20 years of experience serving youth and families through education, foster care, ministry, and now more than two years in private practice, Karen brings both wisdom and warmth to her counseling work. Known by her colleagues and clients as “the laughing therapist”, she creates a welcoming space rooted in compassion, authenticity and acceptance. Her mission is to help moms rediscover purpose, embrace grace, and walk confidently in every season of life without the stronghold of guilt. You can connect with Karen on social media, her practice website, and subscribe to her weekly newsletter.

See website for more details: www.gacounselingservices.org

Devotional

Scripture:

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” - Romans 8:28 (ESV)

I get stressed when things aren't done by the deadline I've scheduled for myself. If I tell myself I'll have something done by a specific day, and for whatever reason, I don't, it's like a tick that eats at me until I find the one place it's located to get rid of it. Weird analogy, but hopefully you understand my point.

I'm a bit high strung, I guess. Maybe even a slight perfectionist.

But it's something I've been noticing more, and the Lord has been opening my eyes to the unrealistic expectations I sometimes hold for myself. I've been realizing that, no, I won't complete my website in three days (and I didn't); I won't make perfect grades in all of my classes (and I haven't); and I won't always get things right on the first try. That doesn't make me a failure, though.

I remember when I got my first B in college; I cried. I felt like I was a horrible student, and when my professor wouldn't accept a resubmission, I felt rejected.

There's an amazing thing I've started realizing though—my feelings aren't final, and just because I feel something doesn't make it true.

While I felt like a failure and I felt rejected, neither was the case. We are allowed to make mistakes, and a “no” isn't always rejection, but redirection. We need to remember that when we look into our spiritual journey, because when God says no, we may sometimes feel the same way.

You might think: “He didn't give me that job I dreamed of so that means He rejects me.” Or, “He didn't answer my prayer; He's rejecting me.” But again, just because you think something, doesn't make it true. And, are those thoughts even yours, or has the enemy planted them there?

Reflection:

How can you learn to see yourself through a different lens? Practice swapping “I should've had that done by now” with “I'm doing what I can with what I have”, and learn to accept that you can't do everything, all the time. How can you learn to receive the grace God has already given you (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)?

She didn't give up—and that
changed everything.



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Staying Faithful in the Pain

In 1 Samuel 1, we are introduced to Elkanah, an Ephraimite man from Ramathaim. We are told he has two wives—Hannah and Peninnah. While Peninnah had children, Hannah was unable to conceive. 1 Samuel 1:3-5 (NIV) reads, *“Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb.”* Because Hannah was unable to conceive, Peninnah would provoke her “year after year”, even to the point she “wept and would not eat” (v. 7).

One year, after worshipping and giving sacrifices to the Lord in Shiloh, Hannah—in deep anguish—prayed to the Lord and wept “bitterly” (v. 10). 1 Samuel 1:11 continues, *“And she made a vow, saying, ‘Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.’”*

As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli the priest observed her. Her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard, and he mistook her silent anguish for drunkenness. *“How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine,”* he said to her (v. 14). But Hannah responded with humility and honesty, *“Not so, my lord... I am a woman who is deeply troubled... I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief”* (vv. 15–16).

Moved by her sincerity, Eli replied, *“Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him”* (v. 17). In that moment, something shifted. Though nothing in her circumstances had yet changed, Hannah rose, ate, and her face “was no longer downcast” (v. 18). Her posture had changed because she had placed her burden fully into the hands of the Lord.

At the perfect time, the Lord remembered her. Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son, and she named him Samuel, saying, *“Because I asked the Lord for him”* (v. 20). True to her vow, after Samuel was weaned, she brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh and presented him to Eli. *“For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord”* (vv. 27–28).

Hannah's story is not simply about longing fulfilled—it is about surrender. It is about trusting God in seasons of silence, misunderstanding, uncertainty, and *deep* personal pain. Year after year, she endured ridicule and heartache, yet she continued to return to the presence of the Lord. And when she finally poured out her soul before Him, she didn't hold anything back—not even the very blessing she was asking for.

I think what makes Hannah's faith remarkable is not just that she prayed, but *how* she prayed. She came honestly. She came broken. **And she came willing to release control.** In a culture where her worth may have been tied to motherhood, she entrusted even that identity to God.

Her story invites us to examine our own prayers. Do we come before God with guarded words, or with open hearts? Are we willing to trust Him not only with our requests, but with the outcomes? Hannah teaches us that faith is not found in having immediate answers, but in believing that God sees, hears, and remembers—even when the waiting feels unbearable.

And perhaps most powerfully, Hannah reminds us that God often works through the very places of our deepest pain. The child born from her sorrow would go on to become one of Israel's greatest prophets—a bridge between seasons, a voice for God in a changing nation. What began as a private grief became part of a much larger story.

In the end, Hannah's life is a testimony that no prayer poured out in sincerity is ever wasted. Even in the quiet, even in the waiting, God is at work—shaping hearts, writing stories, and preparing answers that reach far beyond what we can see.



*What would it look like for
you to lay your deepest
longing at the feet of the Lord
and leave it there?*

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FAITHFUL & FEMININE

The podcast

Most people don't enjoy reading blog posts or devotionals. Maybe they don't have time to sit still that long, or maybe they're so tired at the end of the day that reading simply isn't an option—I get it. Whatever the reason, I'm not judging. But I have noticed.

Life is busy. Sometimes the last thing you want to do after a long day is stare at more words on a screen.

That's actually one of the reasons I'm so excited to share something new with you.

I've just launched a podcast called *Faithful and Feminine*, and I truly cannot wait to have you listen! This podcast will be a space where we can talk about faith, healing, womanhood, spiritual growth, and navigating life as Christian women in a real and honest way.

My heart behind it is simple: sometimes it's easier to listen than to read. You can press play while you're driving, getting ready in the morning, cleaning the house, or going for a walk. My hope is that these conversations will encourage you, strengthen your faith, and remind you that you're not alone in what you're walking through.

LISTEN ON SPOTIFY



Finding Joy in Suffering

I was born into a deeply religious family, raised in a small town where people hurried to the Church at the sound of the church bells. Faith was woven into meals, into chores, and into the sighs of my mother and grandmother, who would often whisper, *kaarwan mo kami, Katawan* (Lord, have mercy on us).

It was only natural that I learned to pray when I was a toddler. And growing up, I prayed for many things. At first, I felt as though if I wanted something, all I had to do was pray and God would answer yes.

After I entered my twenties, I allowed some negative influences into my life. My all too romantic heart made me do things I never expected I would do, I became too ashamed to talk to God because I knew I disappointed Him. I got married at the age of 23, thinking it was the solution to my problem but now I know you don't fix a problematic relationship by entering the sacrament of marriage.

By this time, I could talk to God again in prayer, but things had become difficult. It felt like I was no longer the favored daughter. For years, I lived my life believing what I've always believed but behaving contrary to most of them. In my pursuit of love and romance, I allowed myself to become a walking contradiction, making rationalizations and justifications in defense of my actions.

After my marriage ended in separation and finally in Church and state annulment, I remarried at the age of 38, still young enough to have one more baby. I wanted to feel a baby kicking in my womb again. I wanted to be a hands-on mom, something I was not for my first child. Most of all, I wanted my son to have a sibling so that he would not be alone when the time comes. My husband and I desperately prayed for a baby.

I became pregnant with twins, but I miscarried them in the second month. A few months after that, I got pregnant again. But on the day of my baby's gender ultrasound, we found out she was sick and probably would not make it.

The conditions in my womb were not normal so the sonologist could not even tell us if the baby was male or female. It seemed I caught an infection at the school where I was teaching, and the consequences for the baby were fatal.

My doctor said that all we could do was to wait for her to lose her heartbeat. I refused to believe her. I was sure God would be able to heal her if He wanted to. Fortunately, the students were on their summer break so I could spend every waking moment praying to God to heal my baby. Jesus said, *“Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and the door shall be opened to you.”* I held on to that.

At 25 weeks of gestation, I had to undergo an emergency cesarean section. My husband was right there and told me that we had a baby girl. I’ve always longed for a baby girl, and I was so happy I forgot she was sick. After seeing her and after kissing her cheek, I allowed myself to fall asleep, believing that God was going to give me the miracle I had been praying for.

I was wrong. I should not have gone to sleep. Because when I woke up, my baby girl was no longer there. I could not understand why God gave me a daughter only to take her away from me so soon. I felt as if He gave me a beautifully wrapped present which I was not supposed to ever open. It was so difficult to pray because I could not understand why I was not given the miracle I asked for.

I cried every day and every night. I thought I would never smile or hum a tune again. But

one day, while I was in the shower, I caught myself humming a tune and realized it was the start of healing. Grief stays forever, but it does not stay in one form forever.

And when it changed to another form, and my mind could think clearer, I realized why everything happened the way it did. There was something God wanted to show me, to let me feel, and something started in my heart. Today, I am no longer praying for a child. Time has made that clear to me. It was not an easy acceptance, but it came slowly with no bitterness. I did not stop believing in God. I simply stopped asking Him for that particular gift.

I also prayed for a house. We were able to buy a piece of land, and just when we had already paid for almost 80% of the price, my husband lost his job. We could no longer keep up with the payments and had to give up the land. I am still praying for a permanent home. I am starting a business now, and it is hard. I pray for stability. I pray for a comfortable life. Not a grand one—just a life where we can breathe a little easier. But it is taking longer than I expected.

Last year, my husband was jobless for five months, my dad was diagnosed with lymphoma in May, my beloved uncle passed away on the first of June, my dad passed away ten days after, and my mom followed forty-five days after. One of my mom’s caregivers stole my mom’s jewelry box, along with all her jewelry pieces, heirlooms from my grand—



MEET CLAIRE

My prayers have not always been answered the way I hoped. But God has always given me the blessings and graces I didn't ask for, yet I truly needed.

I am still praying, hoping, and trusting.

I've always believed in God's providence, and that's enough for me.

mother, my baby tooth, and my son's, and other small sentimental trinkets. Our car broke down and required costly repairs, and so many smaller problems popped up here and there.

But it was also the year I felt the most love, the most appreciation for our Faith, and the most grace.

I literally experienced the multiplication of loaves and fish.

I have not stopped praying. What changed is not my faith, but my expectations.

I no longer come to God with a list of demands or requests. I come to Him with what I have—my fears, my disappointments, my sufferings, my unanswered prayers. I offer them to Him and ask Him to take them, to animate them with His divine love and to do with them what He wills.

Whatever suffering I am going through now, I have come to call my blessing. And it is not because it does

not hurt. It's not because I enjoy it. But because it has drawn me closer to God in a way comfort never did. I trust that it is doing something good for my soul and for others. *"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church."*—Colossians 1:24

My cross is my blessing, and I now carry it with trust, hope, and a quiet joy. I have learned that God does not always give us what we ask for. But He always gives us what we need. Whatever He gives, and whatever He withholds, is all part of a grand plan I do not fully understand now, but trust that one day, I will.

When I look back at my life, I also see how generous God has been to me in ways I never asked for. Strength when I thought I had none. People who stayed. Grace that arrived unannounced. A faith that endured even when everything else felt uncertain.

A PRAYER FOR PEACE IN THE PAIN

Heavenly Father,

In the midst of my pain, I come to You seeking peace that only You can give. When my heart feels heavy and my spirit is weary, remind me that I am not alone. You are with me in every tear, every ache, and every moment of uncertainty.

Lord, calm the storm within me. Where there is anxiety, bring stillness. Where there is hurt, bring healing. Where there is confusion, bring clarity. Teach me how to rest in You, even when my circumstances have not yet changed.

Help me to trust that this pain is not without purpose. Shape me through it, strengthen me in it, and walk with me through it. Let Your presence be my comfort and Your promises be my refuge.

Fill my heart with Your peace—a peace that steadies me, sustains me, and carries me forward day by day.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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PEACE IN THE MIDDLE OF PAIN

Pain is an inevitable part of life, but peace in the midst of it is a gift that comes from God. Many people believe peace only comes when the struggle ends—but true, lasting peace is often found right in the middle of the storm.

When life feels overwhelming, it's easy to focus on what's broken, delayed, or uncertain. Yet God invites us to shift our focus—not to deny the pain, but to trust Him within it. His peace does not always remove the situation immediately, but it strengthens us to endure and grow through it.

In painful seasons, prayer becomes more than words—it becomes a lifeline. It is in these honest, sometimes wordless conversations with God that we find comfort, clarity, and reassurance that we are not alone. Even when answers don't come right away, His presence is constant.

Peace in pain doesn't mean the absence of tears. It means having a quiet confidence that God is still in control, still working, and still faithful. It means believing that healing, restoration, and purpose can emerge from even the hardest moments.

If you are walking through pain today, know this: God sees you, He hears you, and He is with you. And in Him, you can find peace—even here.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

— John 14:27 (NIV)

BIBLE STUDY

Letting Go & Trusting God

Read:

- Proverbs 3:5–6
- Psalm 55:22
- Matthew 6:27

We often hold onto control because we're afraid of what will happen if we let go. But control is an illusion—peace comes from surrender. When we try to control the outcome of things ourselves, it only leads to larger problems, more stress, and longer periods of missed peace.

God is not asking you to figure everything out on your own. He's asking you to trust Him even when you don't understand, and to surrender, and let Him help you through whatever it is that you're facing.

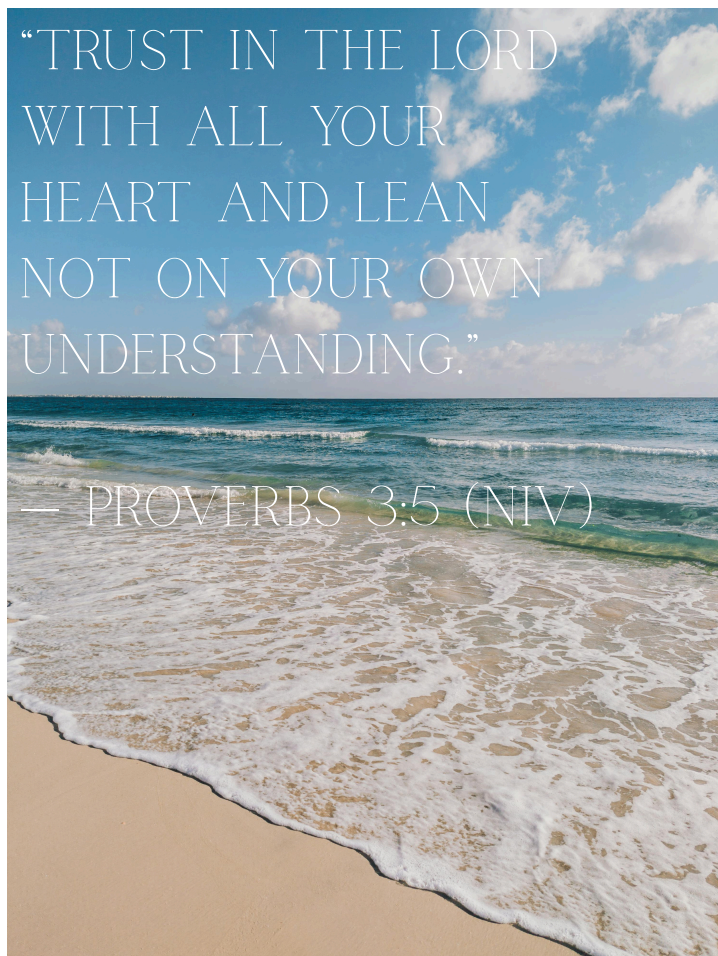
Letting go doesn't mean you don't care—it means you trust that God cares more than you ever could, and that you believe God can bring you out or through whatever gets thrown your way.

REFLECTION:

What situation am I trying to control right now?


TAKING ACTION:

Write down one thing you're struggling to release. Then, physically open your hands and pray: *"God, I give this to You."*



“TRUST IN THE LORD
WITH ALL YOUR
HEART AND LEAN
NOT ON YOUR OWN
UNDERSTANDING.”

— PROVERBS 3:5 (NIV)

A person with long brown hair is shown from the side, sitting and reading an open book. They are wearing blue denim jeans with a tear on the knee. To their right, a stack of four books is visible. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Between the Lines

We all need a good escape every now and then, whether it's a fictional story or a refresh from someone sharing their wisdom. I'm dove into some new titles this quarter to see which ones live up to the hype and which ones fall flat. Pull up a chair and let's see if your next favorite book is waiting on the next page.

Toxic relationships leave us drained, and we all experience them. If you're wondering what to do next, Gary Thomas has written this practical and helpful book for you.

—Jennie Allen, author of *Nothing to Prove*, founder of IF:Gathering

GARY THOMAS

WHEN

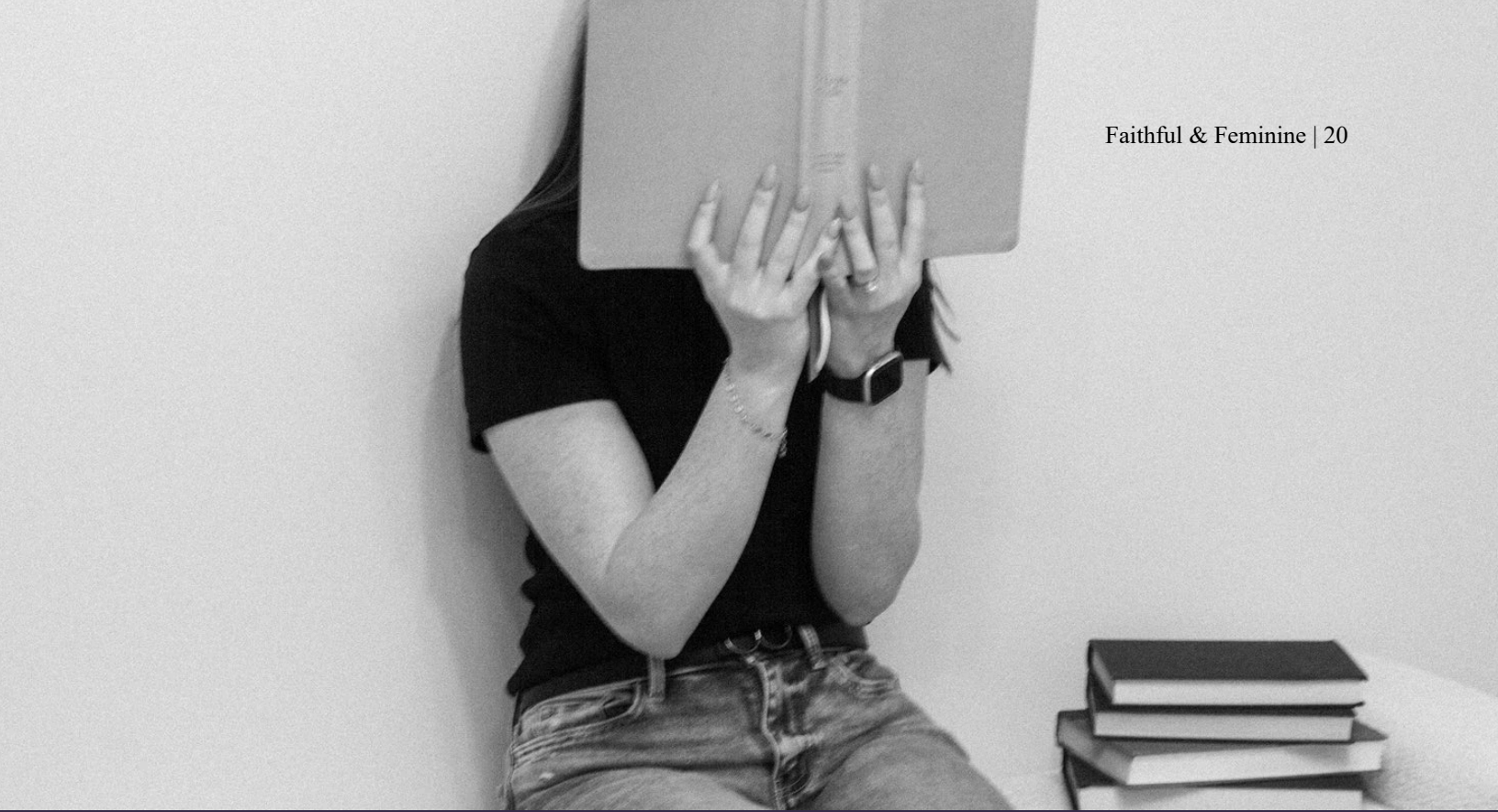
TO

WALK

AWAY

**FINDING FREEDOM
FROM TOXIC PEOPLE**





When to Walk Away: Finding Freedom from Toxic People

By Gary Thomas

For many Christians, the instinct to endure toxic behavior stems from a desire to be patient, loving, and Christlike. However, in *When to Walk Away*, bestselling author Gary Thomas offers a healthy, biblically-based idea shift: **sometimes, the most spiritual thing you can do is walk away!**

1 *The "Nehemiah Strategy":* Thomas teaches you to protect your God-given purpose from malicious distractions, showing how to prioritize your divine assignment over the endless demands of toxic people.

2 *Jesus Walked Away, Too:* In a powerful biblical reframing, this book highlights how Christ routinely walked away from manipulative critics and abusers, setting a clear precedent for believers to do the same.

3 *Difficult" vs. "Toxic":* Thomas provides some much needed clarity on relationship dynamics, distinguishing between difficult people who just need extra grace and toxic people who actively seek to destroy your peace.



What I love about this book is how Thomas uses the Gospels to give us a clear blueprint for realizing when a relationship is no longer a mission field, but a minefield. It completely changed how I look at boundaries, reminding us that **“walking away isn't just about self-protection; it's about purpose-protection.”** It's a must-read if you're tired of letting toxic people drain your spirit.

Beyond just giving us permission to walk away, Thomas offers incredibly practical wisdom on how to actually do it without guilt. He shifts our focus from the exhausting work of trying to change a toxic person to the life-giving work of investing in reliable people who truly want to grow. By the end of the book, you don't feel angry or bitter toward the toxic people in your life; instead, you feel a deep sense of clarity and a renewed energy to pour your time into the relationships and ministries God has actually called you to! It's not about shutting your heart out to the world—it's about opening your life to the people who are ready to build something meaningful alongside you.

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Jesus didn't run after people who walked away from Him, and He often walked away from people who tried to control or oppose Him.

So yeah, I recommend this book. 10/10

This book was such a refreshing read. I highlighted throughout the book some main ideas I wanted to come back to and review. It's a wonderful resource for Christians who might feel like they can't stand up for themselves, or who believe saying "yes" all the time is what's required of them.



"When we let toxic people drain our energy, we are letting them steal what belongs to God and others. Walking away isn't just about self-protection; it's about purpose-protection."

Don't Let Church Hurt Stop You

We've all been there—or we know someone who has. You walk into a place that is *supposed* to be a sanctuary, a place of healing and truth, only to leave with a wound that goes bone-deep and leaves you confused.

Church hurt is a heavy, messy reality, I know. Whether it was a pastor who let you down, a mentor who manipulated you, or a congregation that judged you or lied about you when you were at your lowest, the pain is real. But here is the hard truth I've come to learn: **Validation of your pain is not permission to stay stuck in it.** When we walk away from the House of God because of the people in the House, we aren't just leaving a building; we are often walking away from the very thing we need to heal. We're walking away from God.

To understand this, we have to look at 1 Samuel and the story of Hannah. If anyone had a “valid” reason to stop showing

up to the place of worship, it was her.

Every year, Hannah went to the Tabernacle at Shiloh. And every year, it was a place of torment. Her rival, Peninnah, would ruthlessly mock her for being childless. But the “church hurt” didn't stop with her family; it extended to the leadership.

In her deepest moment of soul-crushing prayer, the High Priest, Eli—the man who was supposed to represent God's compassion—looked at her and accused her of being a drunk! He didn't offer a hand; he offered a judgment. He misread her heart and publicly shamed her. **What if Hannah would have turned her back on God right then?**

What if she had said, “If this is how God's people act—if the High Priest is this blind and my community is this cruel—then I'm done”?

Hannah understood something we often forget: Eli was not God. Eli was a flawed, tired, and from what I read, sometimes a “spiritually dull man.” If Hannah had confused the Priest for the Provider, she would have died in her bitterness... something I almost did. Instead, she looked past the flawed leadership and the toxic atmosphere and fixed her eyes on the Almighty. She realized that the Tabernacle didn't belong to Eli; it belonged to the Lord. Praise God!

When we leave the church because of “the people,” we are essentially giving those people power over our eternity! We are letting a “fake” representative of God rob us of the real relationship with the Father!

I'm not saying you should stay in a toxic, abusive environment. There are times to leave a specific building, but **there is never a time to leave the Body of Christ.**

Finding God's Peace When Anxiety Feels Too Heavy

By Carly Lee

I used to struggle a lot with anxiety. It made me feel weak, unworthy, and honestly—pathetic. Those words might sound harsh, but they're the most truthful way I can describe how it felt at the time. Every day felt like a personal attack, and in my mind, I was constantly bracing for something to go wrong. "Life has been too good, too calm, for too long. Any day now... something will happen to ruin everything."

Some days, it became so overwhelming that I'd have to pull my car over just to let the panic pass on the side of the road, heart racing, hands shaking, crying while trying to breathe through the fear. Anxiety has a way of making you feel isolated, even when you're surrounded by people. It whispers lies that you're alone in this, that something is wrong with you, that your faith must be weak if you're feeling this way. I believed those lies for a long time. I thought strong Christians weren't supposed to feel anxious, and if I did, it meant I was failing God somehow. But Scripture tells a very different story.

In Philippians 4:6–7, we're reminded: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This is an invitation, my friends.

An invitation to bring everything, even the messy, irrational, exhausting fears, directly to God. Not once we've calmed down. Not once we've figured it out. But right in the middle of the panic. What changed my relationship with anxiety wasn't the sudden absence of fear—it was realizing I didn't have to face it alone or pretend it wasn't there. God was not disappointed by my anxiety. He wasn't standing back, waiting for me to "get it together." He was inviting me closer, asking me to hand Him what I was never meant to carry by myself.

The Bible is full of people who battled fear, worry, and distress—David, Elijah, Paul, even the disciples who walked with Jesus daily. Their anxiety didn't disqualify them. Their fear didn't make them weak. It made them human—and deeply dependent on God.

If you're struggling with anxiety today, hear this clearly: your faith is not broken. You are not failing God. You are not "too much" or "not enough." You are a beloved child learning how to trust God in the middle of something hard.



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“Come to me, all you who
are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.”

— Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

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