

COMING OUT OF THE VALLEY



DEVOTIONS FOR THRIVING

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As always, I would like to give honor and praise to God for allowing me to serve him in the writing and teaching ministry. I also want to invite each one of you into a life of thriving. God has so many wonderful things in store for us, when we allow ourselves to let go and let him reign in our hearts and guide us as we navigate our emotions. For those of you who are coming out of the valley, and embracing life, like myself, hold on to your seats, and enjoy the adventure. May God richly bless you.

Scripture Reading

Ephesians 2

Heavenly Places

Years ago, when my kids were little, I worked in the corporate world of the IT department. I absolutely loved my job as a computer technician. As a matter of fact, there were several things that I liked about my job in general: flexibility in your schedule, the ability to talk to people as you worked on repairing their issues, whether it be computer, networking, or printer. Last, but not least, I liked the whole idea of getting to listen to the problems that the end users were having, and then the challenge of recreating the problems in order to come up with a solution.

While working at this corporation, I decided that I would get my Master's Degree in Information Technology. The degree was a 14-month intensive online program. Although I had two small children, I was up for the challenge. I also had the idea in the back of my mind that this degree would increase my value and my salary.

After obtaining the degree, I spoke to my supervisor, who in turn stated that she had to talk to her boss. I was told that the raise wouldn't happen, and that they were on a hiring and salary freeze for the entire company. What made matters worse, is that I found out that what was said was not the entire truth. They were giving raising. Specifically, significant salary increases to non-minority employees without degrees. I was disheartened and discouraged because I felt that I had done all this hard work for nothing.

What I didn't realize then, as opposed to now, is that this incident of rejection lowered my self-worth. In their eyes, I didn't qualify to sit at the same table as other individuals with my qualifications. I was beneath them, so to speak.

One thing that I now see is that when it comes to God, even in all our brokenness, because of Jesus' death on the cross, we will always receive the stamp of approval.

There is always room at God's table of executives: But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7, NKJV)

Dear God,

Thank you that we always qualify for a seat at your table. Please help us to remember this when we look for self-worth through other people.

In your name,

Amen

Scripture Reading Ephesians 6

Belt of Truth

Have you ever been in such a rush to leave out the door that you left your belt at home? I have done it before, and it's not a pleasant thing. Nine times out of ten, you are constantly pulling up and tucking in for fear of your bottom layer falling down, or your top layer coming out. Wearing a belt helps to prevent this from happening. Let's say that we decide to put the belt on, but the buckle is broken. Well, then it makes no sense to even wear the belt at all.

And so it is with our Christian lives. When we leave out the door in the morning, and we leave off our belt of truth, we make ourselves vulnerable to the lies of the enemy. We are all out of sorts, pulling up and tucking in trying to hide from Satan's lies that he's playing in our heads about our brokenness, insecurities, and identity.

He likes nothing more than to have us to feed off them. Ephesians 6:14 tells us: **Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness."**
(NLT)

There have been times when I've been invited somewhere. I was so excited getting ready for "women fellowship" time. Then, upon arrival, the devil started me up with the comparison trap. I started worrying about whether I was over-dressed or under-dressed, or if my life was such a mess that I shouldn't even make myself vulnerable enough to talk about it. After having the tape playing in my head like crazy, I had to talk myself down, and then tell myself, "My identity is in Christ. I am free to be who God created me to be." Sometimes I calm down quickly. Other times, not so much.

We are all broken, and in our brokenness, we need to build each other up in love, and remember to not leave ourselves exposed leaving out the door. God's belt of truth is a buckler. It shields and protects. It keeps us together.

**Dear God,
Thank you for keeping us tucked in place and protected from harm. Help us to "not let it all hang out" when it comes to this protection.
In your name we pray,
Amen**