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ALL THINGS *New!*



Discovering
God's Peace and
Protection during
Challenging Times

TRACY HESTER

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After about a year of writing, I got the revelation that my devotionals were not just about my healing; but I needed to publish them to encourage others who are walking through a similar healing journey. *If I showed my scars, others would heal too.*

All Things New! is a chronological journey of my thoughts, prayers and conversations with God for 2 years. You might notice that the progression of my writing changes over time; this is reflective of my healing process. I'm not telling a story of my journey, but instead I'm communicating my heart and thoughts and then intentionally applying a God perspective.

My prayer as you read is that you are inspired in the following ways:

Healing: You will be drawn into God's presence and find the peace, protection, and healing that is available to you.

A deeper level of intimacy: A fresh desire to discover God in His entirety. To really encounter Him and experience how much He is in love with you.

A changed heart: The Holy Spirit prepares our heart to receive God's Word (Bible).

Our healing journeys have everything to do with the condition of our heart. A healed heart can hear and be changed by God's Word. God wants to heal us and turn our pain into a beautiful redemptive story that He can use for His glory!

DAY

Do you have to be perfect?

The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

—Psalm 138:8 NKJV

January is the time of the year for renewal, hope, and change. I've decided to not make any resolutions this year; instead, I'm going to make progress, and that will lead to perfection.

The goal is to be consistent for at least twenty-one days because that's how long it takes to make something stick. Fifty percent of resolutions last about forty-five days and then they vanish into thin air. Why? Could it be that our goals are unattainable, which means we are setting ourselves up for failure?

Our perfectionist ways are not always obvious. We can easily identify Ms. Perfect because she makes sure everything looks pretty with a fancy bow. There is also Ms. Petty. She nitpicks and can't move forward until things are just right. And then there is Ms. Procrastinator, who starts out strong but never finishes.

Being a perfectionist can prevent us from completing even the smallest tasks, but, more importantly, it can distract us from fulfilling our God-created purposes. After God told me to start writing devotionals, I immediately came up with fifty titles and got excited about my new purpose. After about a month, someone started popping my devotional balloons, and my purpose started losing some air. That someone was me. I was trying to be Ms. Perfect. I was researching the perfect blog site, giving myself an unreachable



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goal of having one hundred devotionals written in advance, and I was trying to find my writer's voice—whatever that is.

My assignment from God was becoming a work project. I got overwhelmed and I told God, "I'm not equipped to do this, and I'm not even a writer. Obviously, I misunderstood You."

Zechariah 4:10 (NIV) says that we should not despise small beginnings because the Lord rejoices to see us just start. After reading this scripture, I knew I had to finish what God had told me to do. I decided that I was going to move forward with what I had right now, which was small faith to write a weekly devotional, and I would have to depend upon the Holy Spirit to inspire me each week regarding what to write.

Let's do a lot of small stuff for God and watch Him build something beautiful in us as we lay one brick at a time. Strive to make progress and not to be perfect.

Additional Reading

Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel. (Zechariah 4:10 NIV)

DAY

How thin is the line between love and hate?

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

—Ephesians 4:18 KJV

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. As a result, people are eating heart-healthy diets and exercising to stay healthy. Having a healthy spiritual heart is important to God because the condition of our heart can determine our level of trust and love for Him.

The Old Testament kings were appointed by God. God considered the condition of a king's heart as a qualification for the job. King Saul and King David were both kings over Israel during different times. One had brains and brawn, and the other had a beautiful heart.

David was only fifteen years old, but Saul was impressed with his résumé. He had killed Goliath and slaughtered thousands of Philistines. He was brave and popular, and all the ladies liked him. David became Saul's protégé and head of his army. However, King Saul's admiration for David soon turned into jealousy, hate, and bitterness. When King Saul found out that David would be the next king and he was going to be demoted, his new mission became to kill David. King Saul never had a good reason to kill David. He was just a hater with a hard heart.

David had an impressive résumé, but he was far from being a perfect man. He committed adultery and he was a murderer and a liar. Despite his three strikes, God still called David a man after His own heart! God saw

something beautiful about David's heart that made him fit to be a future king. Here is what impressed God about David's heart:

1. He made wise decisions, except 1 or 2
2. He was faithful.
3. He was quick to repent.
4. He was a worshipper.

David models for us how his heart was still turned toward God, even when he was afraid and feared for his life. David consistently cried out to God to forgive, deliver, and preserve him, and then he offered up praises to Him.

David was running from Saul for about six years until finally Saul just gave up. Saul realized that David was anointed by God, destined to be the next king, and his hating wasn't going to stop God from fulfilling David's future destiny. Saul wasted a lot of energy hating on David, and his fearful heart caused a lot of people to suffer. God desires that our hearts remain soft toward Him.

God, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. I don't want to waste any more time letting unwholesome talk come out of my mouth. Help me only speak about what is helpful for building others up according to their needs so that it may benefit them. And because I don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit, I want to put away lying and only speak truth. Help me not be angry, show wrath, or give place to the devil. I don't want to take others' gifts, talents, or purposes. I want to get my own vision so that I can give something to others. (Prayer rephrased from Psalm 51:10 NIV and Ephesians 4:25–30 NIV.)

Additional Reading

So, give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. (1 Kings 3:9 NIV)

Ahimelek answered the king, who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? (1 Samuel 22:14 NIV)

DAY 3

What's your secret weapon?

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

—2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NKJV

A secret weapon is someone or something that gives you a special advantage over an opponent. Three people in the Bible all had powerful secret weapons that helped them accomplish the impossible.

- David had a slingshot and five stones that killed a 9.75-foot giant.
- Moses had a staff that produced water from a rock, parted the Red Sea, and transformed into a snake.
- Samson had long dreads that gave him unbelievable strength to defeat the Philistines.

We all have tried to use weapons of our flesh to gain an advantage in a fight. The weapons we used were probably negotiation, temper tantrums, manipulation, and probably some other stuff that we don't want to mention.

We fought a good fight, but we probably didn't win the war because we are not fighting against an opponent made of flesh and blood but an enemy that is wicked, strong and can hold us down. The strategy we need to use to defeat this enemy requires us to use our spiritual weapons to get the advantage and win!

What are our spiritual weapons?

- praise
- Word of God
- blood of Jesus
- prayer
- fasting

These powerful spiritual weapons are mighty in pulling down strongholds. The next time you are in a fight, don't lean on your own firepower to defeat your Goliath. Use your spiritual weapons, and watch your Goliath fall.

Additional Reading

As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. (2 Chronicles 20:22 NIV)

And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (Revelation 12:11 KJV)

So, we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer. (Ezra 8:23 NIV)

DAY 4

Have you been lying to yourself?

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

—John 8:32 NIV

There is a difference between what is true and the truth. What is true can change because it can be subjective, but the truth never changes. Often, we believe that our experiences, people's opinions, a diagnosis, or what we feel is the truth. God taught me a lesson that what I thought was true was really a lie.

I was diagnosed with sciatica, which is pain in the lower back caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve. I went to physical therapy, but after three months, I wasn't getting better; it seemed like my condition got worse. I decided that my lack of progress was because I wasn't following my home-care exercises, so I picked up the pace, but after six months, I still wasn't getting better. I decided to stop physical therapy. I didn't see any results, so why continue?

I didn't want to go back to my doctor, because I was convinced that something else might be wrong. I was afraid to find out the truth. Instead, I learned to manage my pain. Sciatica became my new best friend. I talked about her all the time; I made allowances for her; I even stopped wearing high heels because it might irritate her. It was her fault that I couldn't run, stand for a long period of time, bend, or exercise. Sciatica was getting on my *nerves* and making my life miserable.

One day, I ran into a friend who is a personal trainer. She talked me into doing some sessions with her. Of course, I had to tell her about sciatica to

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DAY 5

Who's your "ride or die"?

But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

—Isaiah 52:12 NIV

"My ride or die" is a slang phrase used to describe a relationship. You earn this positive distinction as a friend when commitment, loyalty, and trust are demonstrated over a period of time. A ride-or-die has your front, back, and sides no matter what. You can trust your ride-or-die because his or her character is solid, and trust is the glue that keeps the relationship together.

Job and God were ride-or-dies. Job was blameless in God's eyes. In other words, he had a close relationship with God, and Job did no wrong. When Satan began to question Job's character and accuse him of only being faithful to God because of his wealth and health, God defended Job. God had Job's back. He was confident in Job's righteous character and trusted that Job would not deny Him in the face of adversity.

God allowed Satan to tempt Job and take everything from him, which He later restored twofold. During Job's suffering, he never cursed God or abandoned his faith. Job had God's back too.

God wants to be our ride-or-die. He desired to have a relationship with us so deeply that He sent his son, Jesus, to repair the separation that sin caused between Him and humankind. God demonstrated His love for us by sending His son, Jesus, who laid down His life for His friends.

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Even a ride-or-die friendship can come to an end—but not our relationship with God. God's love for us has nothing to do with our good or bad behaviors. He loves us unconditionally. He will never leave us or forsake us, so we are stuck with Him.

Here are some thoughts on how we can show God that we want a trusting relationship with *Him*:

- Wait on Him: be patient with Him.
- Be thankful: praise Him.
- Lean not on our own understanding: consult Him.
- Let go of control: trust Him.
- Acknowledge *Him*: "I need You."
- Believe/speak God's Word: communicate with Him.

What's God saying to you about your character? Is it solid? Can He trust you even on your terrible, not-so-good, and very bad days? When we trust God, He promises us that our strength will be renewed, our plans will come to pass, and He will take care of us. Take God's hand today and trust that He has your back.

Additional Reading

After Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:10 NIV)

One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24 NIV)

Commit your ways to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this. (Psalm 37:5 NIV)