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Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. **Isaiah 41:10**



*Inspiration for Her*

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THE OFFICIAL INSPIRATION MINISTRIES WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER

**FEAR NOT**  
*for I am with you*  
**BE NOT DISMAYED**  
*for I am your God*

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*Inspiration Ministries is unifying the body of Christ in order to most glorify God and inspire others to accept the saving and satisfying love of Jesus Christ.*

# Letter from the Editor



This is my ~~third~~ ~~fourth~~ fifth start at writing this letter. So much for “third time’s the charm!” I reread the first two articles I’ve written this year, and I’m baffled at what was on those pages. I remember writing them, but I don’t remember writing them. I wonder what was different in my life then compared to now. What made it so easy for me to write about the hope we have in Christ; God’s faithfulness to His children; the unending love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness we find in a relationship with God; the extraordinary move of the Holy Spirit in and through us as daughters of God? More realistically, what is making it so difficult to write about those things now? The truth is that I’m probably not where I should/could be. I’m not doing the things God wants me to be doing – praying, reading the Bible, fellowshiping with other believers. I have become complacent – somewhere I often found myself while growing up, just going through the religious motions. But it’s not where I want to be. And it’s not where God wants me to be. He wants me to be chasing after Him. To be pursuing His heart and His will. He wants me to love and honor and serve Him. He wants me. He wants me for who I am, the good and bad. He wants me, with all my sin and baggage and lack of motivation. He wants me to take a step of faith. He wants me to act on the love He has bestowed on me, and the grace He has bestowed on my life. Just as He wants all the same for you.

When I first sat down to put this all together, I had no idea what I was going to write. I didn’t necessarily feel like I was in the right “place” to be encouraging or inspiring or hopeful or anything else. That’s why it has taken as many tries as it has. God has interesting ways of calling me out of denial. This is one way.

And if all that wasn’t real, I don’t know what is! One thing you can always expect from me is real. Real honesty. Real brokenness. Real struggles. Real salvation by the blood of Jesus. Real emotion. Real everything. Real. I don’t want to seem like a hot mess of a person, because that’s really not the case. However, know that I’m not sitting on my high-horse of judgement thinking I’ve “arrived,” either. I’m not perfect. Even as a woman living for Christ for the past several years, I still struggle and live moment to moment sometimes. I still need the reminder that I am called to be different, a peculiar person. I am called to love God first, and to also love others. I am called to be intentional with my talents, gifts, and life.

One of the things that is consistent in my life is music. If you come into my office at any given moment, I will have music playing. It makes it easier for me to block out the unnecessary noises, thoughts, and lies in my life, and to funnel in positive, truth-filled words to encourage my spirit. So as I was sitting at my computer trying to figure out what the Holy Spirit wants me to write this month, this song came on called “Keeping Score” by Francesca Battistelli. Here are some

of the lyrics: lyrics: “I know you’re thinking that you’ve finally gone too far / And you’re certain He’ll be closing the door / But you’ve gotta believe the things you’ve done aren’t beyond His love / **He’s not keeping score** / If His love is big enough to move any mountain / His love is big enough for you, **just accept it.**”

I’m so glad God doesn’t keep score. He doesn’t keep a record of my wrongs. He doesn’t remind me of my life before I chose to live a life that glorifies Him, that exemplifies Christ, or even times when I did something not so Christ-like since then. God is not a God of malice or guilt or shame, but a God of love and forgiveness and transformation. We have the opportunity, through the blood of Jesus Christ, to be new creatures! We have the opportunity to move past our previous lives, forgetting who we were and what we did and said, and move forward to the life God has for us as His beloved daughters, focusing on our future.

God has blessed Andy and me with a friend who reminds us that we are NOT who we used to be. He sent this to us recently in an email: “We are who God says we are and nothing else. We are not the sum of our mistakes, we’re not recovering addicts, we are not murderers, liars, cheaters, etc. We are BRAND NEW. We do not bear any label, good or bad, anyone would try to put on us. We are brand new creations who are more precious to our Father than we will ever know. So precious that Jesus would rather die for us than live without us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” We need to be intentional about acknowledging, believing, and putting our confidence in who God says we are. We have value only because He gives us value.”

This value described above is for anyone who is willing to submit themselves to the Lord; to take a hold of salvation through Christ; to live a life of devotion to the One True King. This value isn’t something we lose or gain based on our “relationship status” (which is probably labeled “Complicated” for many of us) with God throughout our life. Once a child of God, always a child of God. But I imagine you will **feel**, as I do, less “valuable” when your life is just “fine.” Not bad, not good. It just is. So I encourage you to be intentional with your life – Be hot or cold; not lukewarm. Say “yes!” to Jesus and mean it. Don’t let your circumstances keep you out of the race. You are not disqualified! You are valued.

Side note: Check out “One Day at a Time” and “God Mail,” written by ladies behind the walls! That’s an answer to prayer for me! Also, you will find sections labeled “I Truth” Verses. These verses were given to me as part of a study of the book of Hosea in the Bible. They are verses that we can use to speak truth into our lives when Satan tries to tell us lies, when we face uncertain times or poor circumstances. I encourage you to memorize these so the Word of God may be written on your heart for later.

Feeling valued and wanting the same for you,

*Kirsten Foster*

Inspiration Ministries

# Fighting the Battle of Fear

by CJ Eaton

*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* **Romans 8:15**

I don't read newspapers or watch TV news. I am probably pretty clueless about what is being reported these days. There is enough information going around on social media and in "water cooler" conversations that I figure I know just enough to be afraid. Considering all the reports of violence against police officers, political candidates, veterans, Christians, Jews, women, children and the homeless, it's a wonder anyone feels safe.

I never did have very much courage of my own – only what was sufficient to get myself into situations that always proved highly embarrassing or distinctly uncomfortable. All of these created a need in me to protect myself (and my dignity) from ridicule and shame. I avoid crowds, gyms, shopping malls, and dating. I've even been known to avoid family and friends.

Over the course of my life I had become that person who was afraid to stand up to a bully, afraid to risk humiliation, afraid to confront anyone who was doing something wrong, and on and on. I have experienced episodes of abuse and incidents of degradation that I tolerated because I was too afraid of saying or doing anything that would make someone angry. Angry people retaliate in very hurtful and damaging ways and I never really had the wherewithal to handle it.

Does any of this sound familiar? Can you identify with even one of these situations? Are you stuck in a place of fear and withdrawal because you just don't have the courage, energy, or strength to battle back?

One reason I refuse to become immersed in the news reports about what's happening in the world is because I can easily allow myself to become worried, even paranoid about events that are completely out of my control. I start to wonder how long before our enemies will start marching down our neighborhood streets, breaking down doors of innocent citizens and demanding our total submission with their agendas. I speculate about just how far from our constitution the current administration has strayed and the potential devastation this invites. I ponder on the ramifications of decisions that have been made for the purpose of benefiting the few in power and ignoring the remaining "huddled masses."

Can you relate? Do you live with the fear of what the consequences will be for our children, grandchildren, and subsequent generations? Are you wondering how we can overcome all the stuff that has us overwhelmed? What would it take to give you the peace, the confidence, and the security to trust that your current fears will not be an accurate prediction of your future?

If you could make one spiritual goal for this year, one focused effort to radically change and elevate your perspective, what would it be? What about to stop dragging around the weight of all your fears, to abandon the shackles of anxiety, distress? Would you make that your choice? Does it even sound realistic?

Can you imagine the freedom of living your life without the constraints of fear strangling you, without the limitations that come with it? What would it look like if you had no barriers blocking the path to living with your heart wide open?

The truth is, God has given us all the tools, all the knowledge, and all the weapons we need to live without fear of our enemies or our future. The apostle Paul explains some of this in Ephesians, where he describes the "Armor of God." This is the collection of God's own armor pieces and weaponry that He has given us to protect us from the devastation that the enemy brings. Chapter 6 in the Book of Ephesians explains each piece represents one part of the protection we have in God. The Belt of Truth, the Breastplate of Righteousness, the Shoes of Peace, the Shield of Faith, and the Helmet of Salvation, along with the Sword of the Spirit, all have a part in working together to keep us connected to and protected by the only Hope we have for defeating our enemy and living without fear.

We will feel defeated because, whether we like it or not, Satan is a powerful enemy and he's been working on us for a long time. He preys on our weaknesses and uses every chance to attack our vulnerability. Whenever a crisis arises he seizes the opening to take our focus away from our source of truth and security. And too often we allow it. We give in to the temptation to feel ambushed, destroyed, or alone, which only adds to the enemy's hold on us.

But he is not now and never will be anywhere even close to as powerful as our God. We are in a spiritual battle, fighting against opponents which aren't flesh and blood but we have divine, heavenly, and specialized resources with which we can hold our ground and fight back. We belong to God and He takes this relationship very seriously. He is the center of our identity, the source from which all that we are, all that we know, and all that we have arises.

We aren't wandering this sin-cursed world lost and alone, in fear and without hope. Remember what God has given us, what incredible strength we have when we rest in His power, when we raise up the weapons and strap on the armor of His provision. We cannot be defeated when God is fighting for us. This is hope. This is security. This is victory. *For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* **2 Timothy 1:7**

## Write to Inspiration Ministries

We are committed to corresponding with anyone who writes us! We have several women waiting for letters to respond to. We would like to get to know you better and to encourage your spiritual growth via personal letters. Also, if you would like to have the newsletter sent directly to you, please send us your name, DC#, and institution name, and we will add you to the mailing list free of charge!

We would love to include MORE articles written by our readers, because who better to connect with incarcerated women, than other incarcerated women? We have found testimonies to be the most powerful tool in bringing others to Christ, and we love to share the work of the Lord with other women around the country! We look forward to hearing what God is doing in and through you!

# Fully Known

by Laura Gauthier

Surrounded by people, noise, and the business of life, head down, nose to the grind, and one foot in front of the other, surviving....

I lay my head on my pillow at night, the tunnel vision of the day loses itself bit by bit as my mind recounts the surviving moments of the day. Typically, these thoughts lend themselves to thoughts of past regrets, sorrows, and shame. Very quickly I find myself keenly aware of how alone I actually am.

Most of my memories as a teenager and young adult have a common thread in that the motive for most of my actions and choices revolved around a deep desire to be heard, understood, and loved; essentially to not be alone.

I did not always have a good relationship with my mom; it was a broken relationship for a good portion of my life. However, for almost ten years, I did feel loved, accepted, heard, and mostly understood by her. I consider myself blessed to have experienced healing in my relationship with her, and to have had the good times with her that I did. This period of time in my life when I didn't feel alone came to a crashing halt when my mother was diagnosed with stage four cancer and died two months later. During the fight for her life she was unable to be all that she had been for me in the previous ten years, through no fault of her own of course, as she was literally fighting for her life.

There I was in the most difficult time of my life, facing possibly the biggest loss in my life, and the one person that I wanted to talk to, to cry with, and to lean on had nothing to offer me, nothing at all.

My relationship with God had been growing and evolving over the previous ten years but this battle, this isolating, terrifying trial in my life put my faith to the test. Out of sheer desperation I leaned harder into Him than I ever had. I studied the Bible, prayed, listened to sermons, breathed praise and worship songs, and cried; oh did I cry, and cry, and cry. I begged the God I knew, who is called the Healer, to heal my mom and to spare me a loss I didn't know I could live through.

Through it all God showed up for me. He spoke to me through His Word, recounting His faithfulness to generations before me. He reminded me of who He was, and who I am as a result, through the songs I listened to. He showed me His love for me through our family and friends. Once in a while, when my spirit was completely still and quiet before Him, He spoke to me, telling me I didn't need to know how I would survive. All I needed was to survive today, rely on Him today, seek His face today, and He would provide what I needed for each coming day.

My momma died May 27, 2013. It turned out that my mom's death was one of many losses for me over the next two years.

As I walked through this intense time in my life I learned that when I turn to Him, seek Him, and let Him lead me, He gives me peace in uncertain and terrifying circumstances. He meets me right where I am, and He never leaves me.

I am not alone.

I miss Mom daily, still. I also continue to have crushing moments of the excruciating pain of feeling completely alone.

The truth is, outside of a relationship with Jesus, we are all alone.

In relationship with Jesus Christ, the one true God, we are seen, heard, understood, loved, and never alone. In 1 Corinthians 13:12 Paul tells us that our view of God is like a poor reflection in a mirror, but for those that choose to follow Him, in Heaven we will finally see Him fully, as we are fully seen by Him now.

That is what we all want isn't it? To be fully seen?

God's Word tells us that we are fully seen, now. Not by our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, or friends, but by Him alone. The One who was with us before we were born. The One that knows every thought, sees every secret, catches every tear. The One we face when we die alone. Jesus is the One that fully knows us, now. Through His gift of relationship with Him, and eternal life, we will see Him fully and what doesn't make sense now, will then.

Today is the day my friend; you don't have to be alone. If you don't know Jesus, now is the time. Ask Him to meet you where you are, to show Himself to you. Seek Him, and experience the peace of knowing you are never alone.

## One Day at a Time

by Kei Burks

*And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"* **Revelation 22:17**

Jesus, I praise You for the cross  
You saved me from being lost  
You offered my soul with the love of Your crown  
From side to side and up and down  
You were nailed and tied after all the abuse to rid my sin  
And gave me the choice for my sins to end  
How merciful and gracious You are to me  
To be given a life with You, my Savior, in eternity  
My love for You will never cease  
Take me, my Soulmate, Jesus, I want Your peace  
One day at a time, is what Your truth says  
Until then, Lord, You will have my praise  
Whatever Your will is for me to be and do  
God, I want to spiritually serve You  
I need Your courage, boldness, and strength  
To conquer evil and burn its length  
I pray for wings, pure and white, like a dove  
To fly away, to be with my true love  
Then, a long white gown I will wear  
And every soul may draw near  
Jesus, will they want to be a part of our Church?  
Only time will tell to end all hell on earth.

## *How Love Endures Part 2*

by Rebecca Congleton

*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:32*

When Joe, a guy I had attended high school with, first came to our church, I was sinking in the quicksand of hopelessness, abuse, and trauma. I was faking happiness and joy on Sundays and Wednesdays, with my daughter, Olivia, and my husband by my side, but by 2 a.m. Monday morning I was often hiding, crying, inside my locked car in the driveway, trying to figure out how I would get my daughter out of the house if her dad's anger once again erupted into the explosion of violence and hate I had experienced so many times, and we needed to run away.

In a tremendously different spiritual place than me, Joe was like a thirsty camel who had finally returned to the well for a drink of living water. He had served Christ as a teen but turned away and experienced some very dark and lonely days. Now at 27, he had surrendered completely and couldn't get enough of God's Word and God's presence. It was peculiar to me to watch a young man, who had been an alcoholic and a womanizer, truly crucify his flesh and walk out his faith. If I'm honest, it probably made me a little mad. Why was it that God could change him, do a regenerative work in his heart, make him a new creation, but the man I was bound to for my entire life, through the vows of marriage, refused to yield himself to that miraculous transformation?

My initial jealousy was soon replaced with sincere affection. Joe and I became an odd pair of friends. He played guitar and wrote self-loathing grunge songs about how unworthy he was of Christ's love. I was learning guitar and wrote candy-coated worship songs that masked the real questions I had about why God was allowing me to suffer in my abusive marriage. When we started writing songs together, they met somewhere in the middle and weren't completely terrible.

Over the next six months, Joe saw it. He saw the angry looks I was given by my spouse when he thought nobody was watching. He saw my husband's temper and manipulative threats when he looked at me and broke a set of drum sticks in half, staring me down like he was snapping my neck. He heard the story of how my husband had nearly killed me, leaving our house in shambles, as I ran terrified to the neighbors' house and called my pastor instead of 911. He heard it all, and he was a friend to both of us, but I knew he saw right through my fake smile.

My desperation and depression were swallowing me up. I was months, maybe weeks, away from giving up and letting the ugliness kill me. However that played out, I didn't care anymore. I was never going to escape. God's Word didn't allow me to divorce my husband. He hadn't had an affair; he was just choking and raping me, standing over me screaming, and punching holes in walls next to my face.

I still remember the day he sent me a text message that said, "Did you write some stuff about me in the paper?" I should explain that I was a small town newspaper reporter. I covered things like school board meetings and petty crime, but I had no idea what he was talking about, so I went and got that day's copy of *The Neighbor* to see for myself. It took me a few minutes to find it, but with my

heart racing and my eyes struggling to focus on the tiny black text, I finally read the words. It was under the heading "Felonies," where all the felony charges for the previous week were listed. His name appeared followed by three charges: Voyeurism, Stalking, and Residential Entry. There was a warrant for his arrest.

I knew immediately what it was about. Almost two years prior, our next door neighbor had moved away because my husband had been bothering her. At the time I was in denial about what had actually taken place, but now the reality of it, the truth of it, hit me like changing a movie from black and white to color.

I text messaged him back and told him not to come home. "Turn yourself in," I said, "I don't want the police coming here and arresting you in front of Olivia."

Knowing I could go to the courthouse and request the affidavit for probable cause on the charges and read it for myself, because it was public record, I hopped in my car and made the thirty-minute drive in about twenty. With my hands on the paperwork, fresh from the Clerk's office printer, I casually but quickly walked back to my car, closed the door behind me, and began to read.

There it all was. Every disgusting, violent, perverted secret he had been hiding in his heart, laid out in the form of eye-witness statements, neighbors who had watched him peep in her windows while he choked our dog, and a copy of a creepy stalker letter he had left on her car. The weight of the reality of what kind of person I had been sharing my life and my bed with flooded over me and I felt sick to my stomach. I managed to hold it together and my breakfast down, but I let the tears roll. Freedom. I could see it, I could feel it, I could taste it, sweet freedom. I didn't have to pretend anymore. I couldn't possibly try now. Everyone would know. I could get out. I could get out and not feel like a bad person, a bad wife. Freedom.

That is the story of how God saved my life. I was divorced a few months later. I was set free from a marriage I willingly chose, even though there were plenty of little "spirit check" moments where God tried to warn me not to enter into that covenant relationship. It's the story of how God gave me a beautiful, smart, joyful daughter (now 12), in the midst of heartbreak and sadness. And it is the first chapter of the story of how God brought me a loving, kind, patient, and God honoring man, named Joe, who gave me his last name and his first marriage vows, even though I had given mine to someone else. It's the beginning of the story of how love endures. Not weak, human love that fails and wanes and dies. But God's love, that is love that endures and lasts and never wears out or runs dry, and I was about to find out what that kind of love looks like and where it could take me.

### **"I Truth" Verses**

**I am valuable to God:** *For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:20*

**I am God's treasure:** *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10*

## the right tools to mend

by Amy Slone

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. Isaiah 43:2*



We can fix things. We can oil creaky hinges; glue broken plates back together; and repair flat tires. We're able to replace a broken light bulb and sew on buttons that have been tugged at one too many times. We can tighten all the bolts that make the useful ready to be used again. These are the things we can work on; the things we can repair. These are the easy places that need us... and so we show up with tools in hand.

I've been in tight spaces with two different friends lately who needed more than a needle and thread to mend the broken places they've been called into. They have deep things in dark corners. They hurt in places where tool boxes don't fit.

One friend came to sit on my porch while he ached over losing his best friend and child. He wanted to be a parent, she did not. He had no voice so now he sits with grief and refuses to talk about hope. Another friend sits in her house with doors locked and the curtains drawn. Six months ago she had a clean bill of health. Today she wants to be graceful towards the end but her fears scream so loudly that panic in her brokenness is all she can muster.

These are the unimaginable places that have required my friends to show up. These are the spaces that can't be fixed with hammer or nail. It's here that words often cannot be spoken for fear of disrupting the respect that brokenness demands.

There's something tricky about being in these broken spots... we no longer fit into our days the way we used to. We don't quite know how to breathe deeply enough and the awkward limp of our soul ache seems to draw the attention of every person with good intentions. They mean well; honestly they do. They just don't have the right tools. As I sat with each of these friends I was reminded of the One who has everything we need.

He has the tools to mend, the right words to heal, and the explanations that bring back order. We can bury our faces in him until the day he comes charging in to make all things new; until the moment He straightens all things out. We can hide behind His form and stand firm on the promise that we will not be overwhelmed by our grief. We will not be destroyed by our despair. We will not be overcome by circumstance and we will not be left alone in it all.

I don't have all the words that my friends need to fill up these empty spaces; but I can point them to the One who does. And so I will.

### "I Truth" Verse

**I am a new creation:** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17*

## God Mail

by Farrah Becker

As we wait each day, for another mail call  
Hearing last names, for a few but not all.  
Discouragement sets in, like no one seems to care.  
Like *Why not me, God? This isn't fair.*  
All my faith is gone, mail still never comes.  
I write all the time, why can't I get some?  
That's okay... I give up, it's obvious to me that I'm not loved.  
Another night passes, am I hearing things?  
My last name was called, I shot up and I screamed.  
People look around like *What is that about?*  
"I finally got mail!" I said with a shout.  
Anticipation arose as I was handed my piece.  
My face turned down and my happiness turned weak.  
"That's not what I wanted," I said ungratefully.  
As I walked to my room, tears streamed out of me.  
*What is wrong?* I say to myself.  
*At least you got mail like everyone else.*  
I didn't even peak to see what it was.  
With all of my prayers, this is how He does.  
With a bitter face and an angry look,  
I popped the seal on this miniature book.  
*Inspiration Ministries*, that's what it said.  
And every little page I stayed up and read.  
My anger turned soft, my heart turned glad.  
I've got the best mail I've ever really had.  
Mail from God, how can this be?  
That in the worst of times He remembered me.  
I lost my way, He wanted me back.  
So He dropped me a letter to get me back on track.  
The devil was the one who tried to defeat my faith.  
But this little pamphlet was the shield God used to keep me safe.  
Mail from God, I'll take this any day.  
I can't wait to hear what He has to say.

### "I Truth" Verses

**I am gifted with power, love & a sound mind:** *For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7*

**I am spiritually alive:** *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:4-5*