

What People Are Saying about Danette Joy Crawford and *Don't Quit in the Pit...*

What an encouragement! No matter what the circumstances, God is able to reach down and pull us out of the pit and gloriously transform our lives. Danette has shared her story of a life that could have ended in defeat, had she given in to the negatives around her. Instead, God had a greater plan of a life of victory and triumph. Read *Don't Quit in the Pit*, as it will give you hope for your future.

—Ann Robertson LeBlanc
Associate Vice President, Christian Broadcasting Network
Virginia Beach, Virginia

I've known Danette for over twenty years, and she is a woman after God's own heart. One thing that has never changed is her heart to minister to hurting people. Every day, we all face the temptation of falling into many "pits"—pits of rejection, depression, fear, addiction, doubt, and unbelief—and the list goes on and on. *Don't Quit in the Pit* is an excellent book in which Danette shares keys to helping anyone get out and stay out of the pits of life. Read this book—it will transform your life!

—Nancy Alcorn
Founder and President, Mercy Ministries International

Danette Crawford's book is a pleasure to read. It is written in a simple and clear style that communicates the lessons from her life in an engaging and memorable way.

—Dr. Paul Conn
President, Lee University

In her autobiographical book *Don't Quit in the Pit*, Danette Crawford testifies that the same God who long ago rescued Joseph from family rejections and the hardships of an uncaring world to fulfill God's destiny for his life also rescued and blessed a young farm girl today. Through the transparency of her life story, Danette reassures us that Jesus is ever faithful to provide for us through trials, to teach us to overcome life's difficulties, and to enable us to fulfill the plan and purpose He has for each of our lives.

—*Michael Carter*

Chief Financial Officer, Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc.

Great leaders come from great followers. Danette Crawford has been promoted by God to a national platform because she has served others so well in her local and regional church networks over the years. As an overseer of churches and a professor of ministry for twenty-four years, I can attest to the highest reputation, integrity, and ministry impact of this author in my own backyard. This book is substantive because she is a woman of God for her generation!

—*Dr. Joseph Umidi*

Professor of Practical Theology, Regent University School of Divinity
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Every person who has ever found himself in a pit of unforgiving circumstances will owe a debt of gratitude to Rev. Crawford for this practical field guide to living a victorious life. Her rich personal experience, combined with deep insight into scriptural principles, makes this a "must-read" book for all who want to be successful in life.

—*Richard Nicholson*

Latin American and Caribbean Regional Director,
Assemblies of God World Missions

Reading Danette Crawford's book *Don't Quit in the Pit* is like reading a modern-day account of spiritual giants like George Müller and Queen Esther. She masterfully combines solid biblical teachings, practical recommendations, and faith-filled testimonies to lead the reader to high levels of expectation in the Lord. Engaging to read, Danette's book inspires and empowers readers to live victoriously over the "pits." This is a must-read!

—Dr. William F. Cox Jr.

Professor and Director, Christian Education Programs
Regent University School of Education
Virginia Beach, Virginia

With the heavenly zip and zest that define her character, Danette Crawford has poured out her heart with passion and purpose. It takes real courage to expose your pits so that others may benefit. Danette has shown us that we don't have to be "pitiful" people who never make it out of life's many pitfalls. Of course, the devil wants everyone to join him in the pit forever. All of us have been pitiful at one time or another, but *Don't Quit in the Pit* reveals that the Lord is willing to lift us up and out of the pit. Thank you, Danette, for providing us with fresh inspiration to move from the pit to the peak. As a leader who is making disciples of Jesus Christ, I will use this resource personally and with those whom I am influencing in their spiritual ascents to the peaks.

—Rev. David Dillon

Pastor, Rock Church of Franklin • Franklin, Virginia

The greatest champions over adversity are our faith in the Lord, determination, and the will to win and defeat doubt. *Don't Quit in the Pit* gives readers the weapons to overcome many of today's challenges. There is no reason to continue living a miserable life when a book like this is available with many ways to climb out of your pit of circumstances. In this book, Danette gives you the inspiration to grab the rope of hope and climb to the peak of freedom. I have known Danette for over twenty years and have seen this woman of God climb out of many deep pits, as described in her book. Please take my advice and read this book. You will soon find yourself living a hope-filled life with plenty of reasons to stay out of the pits and to live on the peaks!

—Rev. H. Wade Trump

Pastor, Jamestown Christian Fellowship • Williamsburg, Virginia

Danette's story, inspiring and filled with hope, is a great reminder of what the Lord can do as we give ourselves to Him. Her book is a "life primer" on how to work through the gut-level issues of life by faith rather than fear or doubt. As I read her words, I found myself saying time and again, "That's right." Thanks, Danette, for sharing your whole story with us, that we might learn the benefits, the joys, and the how-tos of walking in faith.

—Nate Atwood

Senior Pastor, Kempsville Presbyterian Church
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Moderator, Evangelical Presbyterian Church's 29th General Assembly

My friend, Pastor Danette Crawford, invites you on an ever-winding personal journey that captivates the very essence of El Roi, "The God Who Sees." *Don't Quit in the Pit* demonstrates reliance on the One who knows our circumstances—past, present, and future. From points of despair to pinnacles of victories, she encourages us to praise God for knowing the whole story!

—William L. Davis Jr.

Pastor, Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church
Norfolk, Virginia

I have known Danette since she was in high school and have been privileged to witness the transformation that she so humbly and powerfully describes in her book. Danette has written an encouraging and inspiring book full of the life lessons she has learned from her own experience and from taking God at His word. Her personal testimony to God's faithfulness—not only in providing help and healing, but also His formation of our faith and Christian character—is a powerful reminder of God's commitment to bring to completion the good work that God begins in us when we surrender ourselves to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

—Rev. Mark A. Derby

Senior Pastor, Grace United Methodist Church
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Seeds of hope and faith can even be planted in the pit, and the light of God's Word can cause the seeds to grow and bear fruit as we learn to flourish wherever we are planted.

—*Pastor Glenn Reynolds*
Bethel Temple Assembly of God
Hampton, Virginia

DANETTE J. CRAWFORD

DON'T
QUIT
IN THE PIT

POWER TO TURN
ANY SITUATION AROUND!

REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION


WHITAKER
HOUSE

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Unless otherwise indicated, all word definitions are taken from *Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary*.

**DON'T QUIT IN THE PIT:
Power to Turn Any Situation Around!
(Revised and Expanded Edition)**

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my mother, Deborah. Thank you for always believing in me and for being a great source of unconditional love and encouragement!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank the Lord for His unfailing, unconditional love for me. Without God, I would have quit in the pit a long time ago. Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul and filling me with Your precious Holy Spirit.

To my daughter, Destiny—thank you for filling my life with joy and laughter, and thank you for your patience and understanding during the many months that I have spent writing this book. I am so proud of you and your heart for God, and I know He is going to do great things through your life.

To my family and friends—thank you for believing in me and encouraging me along the way, and for your help during the writing process of this book.

To my spiritual mentors—thank you for being godly examples and leading the way for me to come into my full potential.

To the most awesome staff and intercessors anyone could ever have—the Joy Ministries Team. Thank you for standing with me through prayer, long hours of work, and your mountain-moving faith. Thank you for your passion for the Lord, your desire to see souls saved, and your heart to see lives changed. We truly are a team, and without you, Joy Ministries would not be what it is today.

To my most precious partners—without your giving of time, prayer, and financial support, Joy Ministries could not do everything it is doing today. Thank you! Together, we are transforming lives, healing hearts, and saving souls.

Finally, to Bob Whitaker and the entire staff at Whitaker House—thank you for your heart to minister to people through the printed word. Thank you for believing in me and for being such a great team to work with. It has been an honor to work with you.

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FOREWORD

All of us face storms that test our character and our faith. Danette Joy Crawford's book *Don't Quit in the Pit* is an inspiring story of the faithfulness of God. Filled with hope, encouragement, and healing to those with broken lives and shattered dreams, her book provides important keys to successfully getting to the other side of whatever storm you may be facing in your life.

Danette Joy Crawford is a bold woman of faith who will inspire you to keep the fire for Jesus burning strong. She reaches out to people to meet not only their spiritual needs, but also their physical and emotional needs. She can bring hope to others because she has experienced being in the pit and has learned how not to stay there. The pit is only temporary—so, don't quit in the pit. Danette's story will inspire you, build your faith, and bring you to a new level of trust in God! I highly recommend *Don't Quit in the Pit* to every Christian.

—Marilyn Hickey
Founder and President, Marilyn Hickey Ministries
Author, *The Names of God*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

While I was writing *Don't Quit in the Pit*, the Lord worked in my own life tremendously. I wrote and cried, cried and wrote, over the course of a year, and God used the writing process to take me to a deeper level of healing than I had reached before. In this revised and expanded edition, I've included this Author's Note and a new conclusion to help others reach deeper levels of healing and transformation. I've also written a companion devotional entitled *Break Free: A 45-Day Encounter with God that Changes Everything*. In writing this devotional, the intention of my heart was to bring believers to a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit like they have never experienced before. One healing, Holy-Ghost encounter can change everything!

Anyone who knows me will tell you I'm a very transparent person. What you see is what you get. And this fact comes across in the content of *Don't Quit in the Pit*. I was my usual, candid self. Over the years, many people from various walks of life—stay-at-home moms, patients at rehabilitation centers, prison inmates, and others—have commented on how my transparency in this book set them free to be transparent themselves. When we are open, it encourages other people to be open as well. Our candor invites them to emerge from their self-made shells of fear and shame. On the other hand, if we walk around with protective walls, hiding behind facades and pretensions, nobody becomes free—not us and not anyone else because of us.

In my transparency, I never wanted any of my loved ones, family members, or friends to feel dishonored. Again, my goal was to be transparent so that my readers would feel more comfortable opening up—to themselves, to others, and especially to God. My ultimate goal was to lead people to a place where they would be empowered to get real and deal with their own issues. When we live a life that honors God and others, it brings us honor in the eyes of the Lord. Therefore, I have always sought to honor the Lord, my loved ones, and even people I don't know. That was true when I wrote the first edition of *Don't Quit in the Pit* and it is especially true of this

expanded and updated edition, in which I have made some edits in an effort to give honor to those who may have felt dishonored by certain details I shared.

Honor is important to the Lord; therefore, it should also be important for us, His children. *Webster's New World College Dictionary* provides this definition of *honor*: "high regard or great respect given, received, or enjoyed;...good reputation; credit; a keen sense of right and wrong; adherence to action or principles considered right; integrity." The apostle Paul included the following exhortation in his letter to the Romans: "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Romans 13:7). We need to give honor where honor is due, and our honor is first due to the Lord. Does your life honor God? In every area?

Our lives must be honorable to the Lord for the world to see. To honor God means to live a holy life. To honor God means to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, as we're instructed to do in Matthew 6:33. To honor God means to desire to do what is righteous on a daily basis. We should honor God in our hearts and with our attitudes, words, and actions. We should also honor Him with our gifts. Proverbs 3:9–10 says, "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

When we show true honor to the Lord, we desire to honor others, just as He instructs us to. There are some people who will take issue with your treatment of them, no matter how honorable you try to make it. While you shouldn't make their issue your issue, you should do all that you can to honor those people and to make them *feel* honored.

After the Lord, the first two people we must honor are our parents. There is great power in giving honor to others. The apostle Paul exhorted us in Ephesians 6:2–3, "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Honoring our parents is a mandate, not merely a suggestion! It was the fifth commandment the Lord gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai (see Exodus 20:1–17), and it is a commandment with a promise attached—the promise of a long, enjoyable life. (Note that we aren't told

to honor our parents only if they are perfect, only if we agree with them, or only according to any other condition.)

In addition to our parents, we must honor those in authority over us—especially our spiritual leaders. First Timothy 5:17 says, “*The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*” Don’t dishonor your spiritual leaders by gossiping about them, rebelling against them, or otherwise undermining their authority. The Word tells us they deserve “*double honor.*”

We desire that other people honor us and treat us with respect, but we will reap only what we sow. As we sow honor, God will promote us to places of honor; yet if we act, speak, or think in a way that is dishonoring, we will only hurt ourselves. In Matthew 15:8, Jesus spoke of a people who “*honor [God] with their lips, but their hearts are far from [Him].*” When our hearts are close to the Lord, we desire to honor Him not only with our lips, but also with our heart attitudes and our actions.

Referring to Jesus, Isaiah 49:5 says, “*I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength.*” Honor is a major key to releasing God’s blessings! May you be honored in the eyes of the Lord as you seek to lead an honorable life before Him.

In Christ,
Danette Joy Crawford

INTRODUCTION

On any given day, we find ourselves on a peak, in a pit, or somewhere in between. We'd love to remain on the peaks of life—those times of extreme joy and gladness. Unfortunately, though, a lot of people spend too much of their time in a pit, whether it's a pit of emotional despair, financial hardship, mental anguish, physical pain, or something else. What's even more unfortunate is that many people park in the pit and never get out. Discouraged and defeated, they decide to remain where they are instead of determining to escape their pit and climb the next peak. Don't allow this to be your fate! You can't afford to park in the pit. Your life—and your ultimate destiny—depend on your determining to trust God and get out.

Don't Park in the Pit

In my years of ministry, I have met many people who have been in the midst of seemingly hopeless situations. Tragically, I have seen people park in their pits, never to escape. But I have had the sheer joy of seeing others decide to get out of the pit and overcome difficult circumstances. Dee¹ is just one of them.

Dee felt trapped. For generations, her family had lived in subsidized housing, and it looked doubtful that she'd break the trend. The single mother of three lived with the father of her children—and suffered his emotional, mental, and verbal abuse day after day. Dee lived her life in a pit of pain and lack, with no escape in sight. All that began to change, however, due to a seemingly simple decision that would turn her life around.

1. Name has been changed to protect identity.

We were holding an outreach in Dee's housing development, and Dee came out of her home to a temporary meeting area we had set up to receive one of the bags of groceries we were giving away. In addition to the groceries, she received something far more important: salvation. She gave her life to the Lord during the altar call, a decision that started her climb out of the pit. The following day, my daughter and I knocked on her door to give her a Bible and invite her to church. Immediately, Dee joined our ministry's Single Moms' LIFE Group, where she developed relationships with supportive Christian women. She brought her children to our weekly kids club, where they, too, gave their lives to the Lord. Later, she enrolled them in our summer reading camp, where they learned to read. As Dee became more involved in our outreaches and matured in her faith, she made the decision to get out of her abusive relationship.

And she didn't stop there. She made another decision to get a job and, with the assistance of our Back to Work program, found employment and got off welfare. With the help of our ministry, she moved out of subsidized housing and into her own home. Determined to get an education, Dee enrolled at a college and earned a degree in medical assisting. Today, more than ten years after her life-altering decision, Dee has a great career, and she and her children love the Lord. What an amazing turnaround!

Are you looking up from a dark pit with high walls and no ladder in sight, like Dee had been? If so, I want to extend a rope of hope to you! Your

THE LORD IS WITH
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PIT MAY BE.

situation may seem hopeless. Your pain may be overwhelming. Yet there is Someone who knows your sorrows even better than you do, and He will bring you out of your pit, just as He did for Dee. Even in your pit, you're not alone; the Lord is with you, no matter how deep and dark your pit may be.

God's Proven Track Record of Rescues from the Pit

If you feel like you're in a pit, relax. You're not the first person to find yourself looking up from within what feels like a deep, dark hole. In the Old Testament of the Bible, we read about a guy named Joseph who found himself in his own pit—literally! For Joseph, that pit looked like a dark

dead end, but it was truly a pathway to the palace—a direct route, at that. (See Genesis 37:5–36; 39; 41:14–44.)

In the New Testament, we read about the apostle Paul, a respected Jewish leader who became a Christian, won souls for Jesus, and consequently found himself in his own pit. Paul’s pit was in the form of a ship tossed in a raging storm. Everybody wanted to jump off the boat, but God told Paul, “Don’t abandon ship—you’ll come through this!” (See Acts 27.)

You see, being in a pit is a situation common to all people—male and female, rich and poor, young and old. I want to encourage you today—don’t abandon ship! Yes, your pit may seem overwhelming. Yes, you may be in the midst of the biggest storm of your life. But I can promise you that it’s temporary. When you trust your Father God and obey Him, He will guide you out of the pit. This, too, shall pass.

Grab Hold of the Word—Your Rope of Hope

Both Joseph and Paul needed a rope of hope to climb out of the pit. Their rope of hope was the same one that’s available for you—God’s Word. The Bible provides a map to guide us out of any and every pit that we find ourselves in. Psalm 34:19 says, “*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all*” (NKJV). In other words, we all will experience “pits” in our lives—they’re inevitable—but we can escape when we grab hold of the rope of hope and determine to climb out.

Read It, ’Cause You’ll Need It!

I travel a lot by car, but I don’t like to use a GPS. So, I always study a map before I leave to go somewhere. If I don’t study the map beforehand or refer to it during my trip, I’m almost guaranteed to get lost. Arriving at my planned destination is as easy as reading the map, but I have to *read* it—I can’t automatically absorb knowledge of the route. And the same rule is true regarding our map out of the pit. We have to *read* the Word of truth—the Bible, which is our map! John 8:32 says, “*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” The truth on its own doesn’t set you free; it’s the truth that you *know* that sets you free.

The good news is that every pit has the potential to be temporary because the Word promises that God will deliver us from every affliction. The rope of hope—God's Word—will never disappoint us. *"Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed"* (Isaiah 49:23). Isn't that a precious promise? We have a Friend, our wonderful Father, who never lets us down. When our hope is in Him, we are never disappointed. When our hope is in another person, a paycheck, or a situation, the day will come when we are disappointed. But when our hope is in the Lord, we will never be disappointed.

I think of the Bible story of Abraham and Sarah. This couple had waited years and years to have a baby. Abraham knew that his body was now too old, and he'd never met one woman who had conceived a child at Sarah's age. Besides, even when Sarah had been younger, she'd been barren.

But Abraham didn't hold on to the facts in front of him. He held on to a rope of hope that God had thrown him, and, at one hundred years of age, he was still hanging on!

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.
(Romans 4:18–21)

Wow! Against all hope in the natural realm, Abraham clung to the rope of hope by believing the Word of God. God had given him a promise, and he believed it! He didn't deny the facts; he faced them and dealt with them in a powerful, fruitful way. The facts exist in the natural realm, but the truth—God's Word—exists in the spirit realm. The truth always outweighs the facts. And when we place our hope in the truth, as Abraham did, our faith can change the facts!

I am living proof of this truth, but it was a hard lesson to learn—one that brought me through many personal "pit stops." Or, maybe I should say "pit pauses," because I had to be determined not to remain stuck in the pits.

My prayer is that this book will encourage you to make your times in the pit temporary seasons. Maybe you are in a financial pit, an emotional pit, a health pit, a relational pit, or even a spiritual pit today. I want you to be determined never to quit in the pit, but always to grab hold of the rope of hope—God’s Word—and make your way to the palace.

A PERSONAL PIT

I grew up on a farm in Maryland, where my brothers and I regularly helped out with chores—baling hay, feeding cows, and so forth. Doing farm work was a good way to spend time with our dad, who always worked hard, whether on the farm or in the family business of well-water drilling. I've always credited my dad with teaching me my strong work ethic and keen wisdom in finances.

After we'd worked in the fields all day, our reward was working the crank on the ice cream maker. Our extended family members, along with friends and neighbors, would gather in the evenings at our little home in the country. They always managed to schedule their arrival just right—late enough to avoid working in the fields, but early enough to join us for ice cream!

Those family members and friends, who served vital roles in our lives, did not know about the turmoil that was beginning to stir within our home. Although they were right around us, it took them years to find out about what had been happening behind closed doors. From the outside, our redbrick farmhouse on the hill appeared to be a dream home—but on the inside, we were a family in chaos. At an early age, I started to master the art of suppressing feelings, emotional wounds, and, perhaps most devastating, a strong sense of rejection.

A Badge of Shame

One day, I was about to enter the kitchen when I stopped in the doorway and cringed. My parents were having another argument, and this one was getting violent. The yelling and screaming somehow didn't match the cheery, red-checked tablecloth and plaid vinyl chairs at the kitchen table.

Part of my daily existence in a dysfunctional home was covering up the signs that my life was upside-down. The sense of shame about what was going on at home was horrible, and I felt that I had to hide it. I felt guilty for lying, but, even more, I felt ashamed.

I wore shame like a badge. I was embarrassed because everyone around me seemed to have an ideal family unit, while I didn't.

Eating in Fear

I'm not sure when it began, but, at some point along the way, I picked up a number of nervous habits—compulsive quirks that were essentially attempts to stuff down the wounds and fears that I experienced inside my farmhouse on the hill.

One evening, the five of us were sitting around the kitchen table with the red-checked tablecloth, our plates filled with steaming food. As usual, I was required to eat every bite. My stomach churned; I didn't want to do anything that might upset either of my parents. My father was seated across from me. Nervous, I blinked my eyes profusely, and he instructed me to stop. Fear tingled down my spine.

I can't stop! I thought.

In an attempt to control my blinking, I stretched my mouth once, then stretched it again, pulling my lips, perhaps willing them to widen enough to inhale all the food in front of me. Most of the time when I did this, Dad ignored me. But I could tell that this night would be different.

"Stop doing that!" he demanded.

I did it again. I couldn't stop. I blinked and stretched my mouth, trying to hold back the tears, grasping for some mechanism that would help me stop my nervous habits.

“Stop!” This time, a yardstick helped get the point across. “Eat all your food—now.”

Crying, I choked down my food as best I could, then asked to be dismissed from the dinner table. In just one meal, my sense of self-worth had fallen as fast as my tears, and my self-esteem had plummeted.

As the shame and pain increased with each incident, so did my nervous habits and my attempts to suppress the emotional wounds and the overwhelming sense of rejection. Yet many years would pass before I would understand that my efforts to deal on my own with everything going on around me were not completely successful. The practice of suppressing my feelings was devastating to my emotions. I suppressed things for so long, I became numb—which was actually the desired result, even though it wasn’t healthy.

As I said before, there were many fights at home. My parents’ anger and rage would come out both verbally and physically, often with objects thrown through the air. And I, like many children whose parents fight constantly or get divorced, blamed myself.

Mom and I were alone in the house the day she overdosed on pills. Today, I realize that she felt hopeless, and her suicide attempt was an outward symptom of a deep, internal cry for help. I don’t believe she really wanted to die; she just couldn’t live the way she was living anymore.

I found out about her overdose because I was right there when she picked up the phone and called Dr. Meadows, a man she’d once worked for. He treated her like one of his own daughters, and she knew that he cared about her.

“I’ve taken an overdose,” she told him. “I’m going to die.”

I stayed at Mom’s side. Dr. Meadows must have called for an ambulance, for suddenly, sirens surrounded our country house, and medics came into our kitchen, questioning my mom. When they left to take her to the hospital, I wanted to go with them, but they wouldn’t let me.

So much of this incident is a blur to me now—a blur of pain that I tried to stuff down for years. What I remember most now is the loneliness and fear I felt when the ambulance left me standing there in my neighbors’ yard

across the street, watching the ambulance take my mom away and wondering if she'd ever come back. I was an emotional wreck.

A Child's Spiritual Hunger

When I was a child, I couldn't go to sleep at night unless I'd prayed first. I didn't know about being born again, but I always prayed.

As a young child, I had a passion for attending church. Ironically, we lived on Brown Church Road! On Sundays, my parents would drop me off at a little country church with stained-glass windows.

However, as I grew older, and the difficulties and drama in my home escalated, I began to feel as though I was inferior to the other kids at church. Children get a sense of security and self-worth when there is stability at home; my sense of security and my self-worth were plummeting at this point. Little by little, my passion for church attendance waned because, as I looked around me at all the other kids my age, I saw myself in comparison and came to the following conclusions:

- ✦ *They have more money.*
- ✦ *Their parents are together.*
- ✦ *They have perfect little families.*
- ✦ *I don't feel connected.*
- ✦ *I don't fit in.*

Finally, after my parents divorced and we moved to another town, I decided I didn't want to go to Sunday school anymore. I had that attitude until I got saved at the age of seventeen.

Suicidal Thoughts

The hurts and wounds that I had tried to suppress had begun to surface during my early teenage years. I began to get depressed and even contemplated suicide myself. One night, when I was on the verge of a total breakdown, my mom took me to the emergency room at the local hospital, where they recommended I receive outpatient counseling with a psychiatrist. Oddly enough, they referred me to the same psychiatrist who had

worked with my mom when she'd been hospitalized years earlier. I realized that God had sent this doctor into my life because I'd been ready to end it all.

To this day, I know that God had His hand on me, gently leading and guiding me to His plan for my life. He was preparing me to meet the great I AM, and I was about to change counselors! Although this secular psychiatrist gave me some ungodly advice, God was overseeing the big picture. He was working in my heart to prepare me for what was to come—to receive Him as Lord and Savior.

An Unlikely Invitation to Church

My grandparents lived near us, as well as near a little country church, and from their house, we could hear the music coming from the church during its services. We would get together at Grandma's and laugh at the "Holy Rollers" who attended the church and make comments, such as "Boy, those Holy Rollers were really rolling last night!" I can remember picturing what I thought was happening inside at the services.

When I was seventeen, out of the blue, my dad asked if he could take me somewhere. It was hard for me to believe he was asking me to come with him, and it was even harder for me to believe where he wanted to take me—to that Holy Roller church! I quickly responded, "I don't think so!"

I found out that Dad had started dating a woman who attended that church, and she'd been a positive influence in his life. He, in turn, wanted to have a positive impact on me by taking me to church.

I successfully dodged his invitation for months. But one night in late summer, my luck ran out—or did it? I was sitting at home with nothing to do when my dad paid me an unexpected and unforgettable visit. I couldn't use my normal excuse because I didn't have any plans with my friends or boyfriend, so I reluctantly gave in to his request to attend a church service. It was a Sunday evening, and my first thought was, *I can't believe these people go to church on both Sunday morning and Sunday night!* When I asked my dad about this, he told me that some weeks, he even went to church on Thursday nights, too! I thought to myself, *Well, that's just another confirmation to me that these "Jesus Freaks" really are crazy!*

The previous summer, my former boyfriend had returned from a summer trip to Texas to inform me that he had been born again. I'd dumped him immediately because I hadn't wanted anything to do with those Jesus Freaks.

Now, here I was, about to do what I'd said I would never do. As soon as I entered that little country church at the bottom of Brown Church Road, my thoughts were validated. These folks were definitely different! They kept shouting "Hallelujah!" and "Praise the Lord!" They were singing, all right, as well as clapping their hands or raising them in the air and mumbling weird-sounding words. I decided to sit in the back. *This way, I thought, I can sneak out as soon as the service ends—just in case the Holy Rollers roll really late tonight!*

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Everyone except me had his or her eyes closed. I was actually in a state of shock. First and foremost, I couldn't believe that I was actually there; second, I kept waiting for them to roll around on the floor. After all, that was why everyone called them "Holy Rollers," right?

I was surprised when no one rolled on the floor, and I was even more surprised when the pastor started preaching. Not only was his message interesting, but it was also as if he was preaching directly to me. I began to look around the room to see if there was anybody there whom I knew, thinking, *Surely, someone must have told him about my life and let him know that I was coming tonight.* I saw a young girl named Hope who lived in my neighborhood and immediately concluded that she must have told Pastor White all about me. Later, though, I realized that I had never told Hope about any of that stuff.

As the service came to a close, the pastor asked for all those who wanted to accept Jesus into their hearts as their Lord and Savior to come to the front of the church. I immediately thought, *That's what the difference is—I need what he's talking about. That's me!* But the thought of going forward in front of what seemed to be a massive crowd was overwhelming to me. All my insecurities, all my inferiorities, and all my fears had reached a level

that made me feel inhibited in front of people, especially people I didn't know.

Coming to Salvation over the Phone

As much as I wanted to respond to the tugging in my heart, I was held back by my emotional baggage. Yet I quickly came up with a plan, and, when Dad dropped me off at my house, I thanked him for inviting me before running excitedly to my room to call Hope. Over the phone, I asked her if she had ever told Pastor White anything about me or my life. I was amazed to find out that she had not. She explained to me that the Holy Spirit knew everything about me, and that it had been He who had instructed Pastor White. I opened up and told Hope about the desire I'd had to go forward at the service, and she informed me that I could pray and ask Jesus into my heart on the telephone with her.

"On the telephone?" I questioned. "Don't you have to be at a church to do that?"

Just moments later, God used this young girl to lead me in a prayer that would change my life forever. Looking back, I'm in awe that God would use my dad and a girl named Hope to bring such desperately needed *hope* into my life.

After praying, I told her, "I don't feel any different. Maybe I have just done too many bad things for God to really forgive me."

Hope instructed me to ask the Lord to show me that He was real in my life, and that He had, indeed, forgiven me. Before I went to sleep that night, I prayed and asked the Lord those very things. I had been having trouble sleeping for many months, but that night, I quickly drifted off into a deep, peaceful sleep. Sometime in the early-morning hours, for no apparent reason, my eyes opened. Lying in bed, I noticed that my desk lamp was on. Puzzled, I pulled back the covers and went to turn it off. As my feet hit the floor, it felt as though I was walking on clouds. I proceeded to my desk and gently turned the knob to the off position.

As I walked back to my bed, I again felt as though clouds were beneath my feet. When my head hit the pillow, the Lord said with such clarity, "I'm the light of your life. From this day forward, follow Me."

Wow! God had heard my prayer, and He'd answered me immediately. He really had forgiven me. He really had saved me. He really had spoken to me. I drifted off into a deep sleep, the best night's sleep that I could remember having. The next morning, I asked my mom if she had turned on my lamp in the middle of the night. After she responded, "No," I explained everything to her and began to rejoice in the new peace and joy that I had found.

By this time, I had been in counseling for one year. At my next session, I announced to my psychiatrist that I had been saved. It was a short while later that I realized I had found the answer to my many needs in my new relationship with the Lord. I, too, was now officially one of those Jesus Freaks who attended the Holy Roller church, and I couldn't be happier!

Is God Calling You, Too?

Maybe, today, you feel like I did years ago. Have you experienced so much emotional brokenness that you don't exactly know which end is up? Maybe you have thought about God but have never taken that step to accept Him into your life as your personal Savior. As a child, I prayed every night, but I didn't pray a prayer of salvation and accept Christ as my Savior until I was seventeen years old.

I can tell you confidently that it was Jesus Christ alone who got me out of my pit—a pit of sin and emotional brokenness. The Bible tells us that we have *all* sinned and fall short of God's glory. (See Romans 3:23.) Yet, God loved us so much that He gave His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us, so that we could be forgiven of our sins. "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16).

For us to accept this awesome gift of salvation, we simply have to follow the steps outlined for us in Romans 10:9–10:

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

1. We must confess with our mouths that we are sinners and that Jesus is Lord.
2. We must believe in our hearts that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God raised Him from the dead.

I want to invite you to accept Christ into your life as your Savior by saying this simple prayer:

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, and that You died on the cross for me and rose again so that I can be forgiven of my sins. I confess to You this day that I am a sinner. Please forgive me of my sins and come into my heart right now as my Lord and Savior. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, I want to congratulate you for making the most important decision you will ever make—and for grabbing the strongest rope of hope available to get you out of the pit! I also want to welcome you to the family of God. Make sure you tell as many people as you can that you are now a Christian!

GOD HAD HEARD
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Chapter One: A Personal Pit

Points to Ponder

1. We all have personal stories of the pits we've been in. The storms of life come to us all. Psalm 34:19 says that we will have many afflictions (things that cause us pain, suffering, and distress), but that the Lord will deliver us from them all. Think about the afflictions you've experienced in life. List a few of them in the space below, then reflect on and write about how the Lord delivered you out of them.
2. Think about a difficult situation in your past to which you might have reacted differently, had you known then what you know today about the hope you have in Jesus Christ.
3. If you have already accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, what do you remember most about your salvation experience?
4. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior, you can do so today. Just pray the prayer that is printed at the end of Chapter 1. Be sure to share your happy news with as many people as you can!

**Meditate on these Scriptures, speak them aloud, and
commit them to memory.**

*A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him
from them all.* (Psalm 34:19)

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
(Romans 10:13)

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.
(Psalm 30:5 NKJV)

*I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress, my God; on
Him I lean and rely, and in Him I [confidently] trust!*
(Psalm 91:2 AMPC)

