

DANETTE J. CRAWFORD

*A 45-Day Encounter with God
that Changes Everything*

BREAK
Free

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my brother, Denny. I love you so very much! You have a sensitive, caring heart for others, and I'm blessed to have you as a brother. John 8:36 says, "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*" As you have personally experienced in your life, Jesus is the only one who can heal, deliver, and enable us to *Break Free* from everything that the enemy tries to entangle us with. I love you and I'm proud of you!

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INTRODUCTION: THE ONLY WAY OUT OF ANY PIT

*Everyone who calls on the name of
the Lord will be saved.*

—Romans 10:13

Maybe, today, you feel like I felt years ago—suffering so much emotional brokenness that I didn't know which end was up. Maybe you've dealt with betrayal, defeat, physical illness, emotional anguish, or any number of pits in which you've felt trapped, without hope of rescue. If that's the case, I want to tell you that there is a way out of every pit—in fact, the *only* Way. His name is Jesus Christ, and He is the only One capable of rescuing anyone out of every possible pit. 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 fallen 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 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 in Romans 10:9–10:

If you declare 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 profess your faith 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 for 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!

Are you looking up from a dark pit with high walls and no ladder in sight? If so, I want to extend a rope of hope to you! Your 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. Even in your pit, you're not alone; the Lord is with you, no matter how deep and dark it may be.

Day 1

PITS ARE PROBABLE BUT NOT NECESSARILY PERMANENT

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

—Psalm 34:19 NKJV

If you feel as if you're in a pit, remember that you're not the first person to find yourself looking up from within what feels like a deep, dark hole. And you're in good company, too. Proverbial *pits* are situations common to all people—male and female, rich and poor, young and old. They were also a common complaint of just about every biblical character... at least the ones we strive to be like. From Adam and Eve to Joseph to the apostle Paul, our Christian brothers and sisters became famous *because of* the pits from which the Lord delivered them!

In the Old Testament, we read about Joseph, who found himself in a literal pit that turned into a decades-long slump during which his name, his reputation, and his integrity were dragged in the dirt. (See Genesis 37:5–36; 39; 41:14–44.)

For Joseph, that pit looked like a dark dead end, but it was truly a pathway to the palace—a direct route at that, so much so that in the end, he could say to the people who had put him in a pit in the first place, “*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*” (Genesis 50:20).

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.)

If you’re feeling trapped today, I want to encourage you—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, it’s temporary. When you trust your Father God and obey Him, He will guide you out of the pit. This, too, shall pass.

Both Joseph and Paul needed a rope of hope to climb out of the pit. That rope 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. Our memory verse for today is Psalm 34:19, “*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.

REFLECTION

1. Thinking about the pits you've experienced, how would you classify them? Check all that apply.

___ Physical (health-related)

___ Emotional

___ Mental

___ Financial

___ Relational

___ Spiritual

___ Other: _____

2. What encouragement can you take from Psalm 34:19?

3. In seeking escape from your pit(s), where have you looked for rescue? List all the resources you've called upon, paying attention to whether you've looked to God and His Word, and to what degree.

Declaration

God has promised to deliver me from my pits if I'll only trust in Him.

Day 2

SOME PITS ARE SELF-IMPOSED

*Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.*

—Proverbs 4:23

Many times, words are what put us in a pit—words spoken to us, about us, or even by us. The Bible rightly says that the power of life and death is in our tongues. (See Proverbs 18:21.) When words that don't align with the Word of truth are spoken, we can quickly find ourselves in a pit dug by the power of those words. It is important not to allow anyone to speak negative words over you, and not to speak negative words over yourself.

I'm in no way blaming you for any pits you might find yourself stuck in today. I'd only like to ask you to consider closely what you say, what you listen to, and what you believe. Some pits can be avoided if we only guard our hearts and minds against falsehood by renewing them in the truth of God's Word, as Romans 12:2 teaches us. When we live surrendered to God's Holy Spirit and allow Him to guide our

paths, we end up sidestepping so many pits that we otherwise would have fallen into.

For the first seventeen years of my life, I lived according to the dictates of my soul—my will, emotions, natural mind, and fleshly desires. In other words, what I wanted, what I thought, and how I felt. After I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit began teaching me to yield to my renewed spirit, which needed to be under the Spirit's control. I like to call this surrender *soul control*. And mastering soul control takes a lifetime. Even when we feel that we generally cede to the Holy Spirit's leading, we find ourselves facing situations in which our souls are not under the control of our renewed spirits. In these cases, it becomes all about what we want, what we think, and how we feel.

Our spirits desire to act righteously and do the will of the Father; they long for fellowship with the Lord. But getting our souls and our flesh in agreement with our spirits takes some effort. Our spirits want to forgive and walk in love, but our natural minds interrupt and say, *Forgive her? You must be crazy. Don't you remember what she did to you? You have a right to be angry.* Then, our emotions jump in and remind us just how we felt. Rejected. Unloved. Left out. In the soul realm, it's all about self. But when we die to self and follow Christ, it's no longer about self; it's about Christ.

When we get our minds, wills, and emotions in line with our spirits that are led by the Holy Spirit, nothing can stop us from experiencing the Lord's blessings in abundance. When

we practice soul control, we find ourselves falling into fewer pits of our own making. The things that would have tripped us up when we were governed by our soul no longer have power over us. The petty problems and pride-based offenses that might have harmed us beyond recovery are now easily brushed off by our understanding of who we are in Christ.

As we maintain soul control, we can be led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will fill us and guide us into all truth—truth about how to handle every situation and truth about our own hearts' conditions. And that's a sure way to stay out of a lot of life's pits.

REFLECTION

1. Describe the concept of “soul control” in your own words.

2. The following are a set of possible scenarios you might encounter. For each one, first jot down what your response would be if you were controlled by your soul, and then write out a different response if you were using soul control. I've included an example to help get you started.

Someone cuts you off in traffic.

Soul response: Anger; gesturing rudely or shouting obscenities; tailgating

Soul control response: Taking a deep breath and praying for the safety of the driver; telling yourself that he or she probably needed to be somewhere in a hurry and choosing to release him or her to God

Your spouse forgets your birthday.

Soul response: _____

Soul control response: _____

You are passed over for a promotion that's given instead to someone who doesn't work as hard or demonstrate as much integrity as you.

Soul response: _____

Soul control response: _____

At a restaurant, your server brings you a meal that is undercooked and unappealing.

Soul response: _____

Soul control response: _____

Declaration

*I will live according to the leading of the Holy Spirit,
giving Him control of my spirit and soul.*

Day 3

ESCAPE THE PIT OF REJECTION

*Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.*

—Psalm 27:10

Growing up, one of my greatest unmet needs was to feel accepted. We had a tumultuous home environment, and even my parents' divorce did not settle matters much. My brothers and I handled our home situation in different ways, my strategy being to strive for irreproachability and overall perfection. As a result, I placed unrealistic expectations on myself in every area.

My low self-esteem and thoughts of worthlessness were hidden successfully behind my many accomplishments. I earned numerous academic awards, graduated with high honors, and held a job as a teenager to assist my mom with mounting financial needs. All of these pursuits masked my emotional pain, blinding me to the fact that I was desperate to feel loved and accepted.

The loss of a parent through divorce or death is just one of many ways by which a spirit of rejection can build a stronghold

in our lives. The spirit of rejection was the greatest stronghold the enemy strategically built in my life as a child. *Strongholds* are arguments and pretensions Satan presents to us that contradict the Word of God. Satan pretends they are truth, and he can put forth some very convincing arguments. However, the Word of God is the ultimate source of truth about everything, including our identity in Christ. And Christ has given us the weapons with which to wage a successful fight against the devil and demolish his every stronghold.

The Word of God, also called the “*sword of the Spirit*” (Ephesians 6:17), and the fruit of the Spirit—“*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*” (Galatians 5:22–23)—have divine power to demolish Satan’s strongholds.

When the devil was establishing a stronghold of rejection in my young life, I lived in that pit of rejection. It was not until a few years after I gave my life to the Lord that I began to practice saying out loud, “I’m not rejected—I’m accepted! I am accepted by Christ.” As we speak the Word of truth, we renew our minds. Out with the old lies and in with the truth!

The devil wants us to be susceptible to rejection, but the Lord wants us to be rejection proof. Society may reject us if we don’t look a certain way, act a certain way, or earn a certain income. Society tries to teach our children at an early age to reject those who don’t wear brand-name clothes or who don’t have the same color skin or who don’t speak with the same accent. We need to be rejection proof more than ever so that

we can walk boldly with the Lord before an increasingly godless society.

Although other people may really reject us for various reasons throughout our lives, God never rejects us. Again, He tells us, “*I have chosen you and have not rejected you*” (Isaiah 41:9).

Keeping this in mind, we can have a clear perspective when faced with rejection. If others reject us, we can know that their negative words or actions don’t define who we are. Most of the time, those words and actions actually define who *they* are.

Is there someone who always speaks negatively to you and about you? Most likely, that person’s words actually reflect his or her own hurt. Rejection is a tactic people often use in an effort to control and manipulate others’ actions, choices, and behaviors. Those who reject you may not even be aware that their underlying motive is to control you; yet it’s only when you do what they want, when and how they want it, that they withdraw their rejection and give you their stamp of approval. Whatever the case, it’s highly probable that those who reject you have experienced a great deal of rejection themselves, and have never learned healthy ways of relating to others. Keeping this perspective in mind may lessen the sting of rejection when you feel it and enable you to invoke the healing balm of empathy.

It’s also important to remember that nothing anyone else may think or say can undermine your worth to God. When you know who you are in Christ, receive the unconditional love

God has for you, and acknowledge God's acceptance, you'll become rejection proof. You have to know it in your heart and in your spirit, not just in your mind. This knowledge comes only when you regularly study and meditate on God's Word and spend time in His presence through prayer and worship.

REFLECTION

1. Do you have any idea just how much God loves you? How precious you are to Him? Read through the following passages and summarize the implications of what they say about the way God views you.

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29–31)

2. Have you struggled with feelings of rejection from a person or a group or people? Or maybe even from God? If so, list the person or group of people here:

3. What kinds of emotions crop up when you think about this person or group of people? What have they led you to believe, or tried to lead you to believe, about yourself?

4. I would like to lead you in a prayer of release from the sense of rejection you have been experiencing.

Heavenly Father, You know how I struggle with feeling rejected by _____. I acknowledge that Your view of me is the only one that really matters, and I ask You to help me to prize Your opinion of me above all others. Help me to understand just how

special and valuable I am to You as Your son/daughter, and enable me to walk in freedom from the spirit of rejection as I dwell in the glorious joy of Your love. In Jesus's name, amen.

Declaration

*No matter how others view me, God loves me immensely
and treasures me immeasurably.*