

# The Night She Escaped Twice

*My web site has been quiet for a while, because I am plowing through a crucial revision of my novel.*

*In the meantime, I thought I would share something special with you.*

*One of my dear writer friends just finished her manuscript. Way to go!*

*It is an extremely compelling memoir in which the young girl pursues love, belonging, and family while guided by a sovereign hand through almost seemingly insurmountable obstacles.*

## Excerpt from Sisters of Moirai by Elise Crawford

*Unsure of when my next meal would be, I gorged on the party food. While they were away for the night on their honeymoon, assuring Maggie was fast asleep, I crept into the living room and gathered my coat and backpack from behind the couch.*

*All ready to go, I opened the front door and stepped out onto the porch. It was as dark as a wolf's mouth and raining. I hesitated, but told myself it was now or never, how it would only get worse, and Mommy needed to learn a lesson.*

*I pulled the hood of my jacket over my head, tied it underneath my chin, and slipped my arms into my backpack. As I stepped off the last stair, I tripped over a tiny black kitten who appeared from out of nowhere. I scooped it up. It meowed at me plaintively and purred.*

*Great, now what do I do? I thought, and I tucked him into my*

*coat. Then, we were off to find my dad. I walked fast the half block to the bus stop just in time to catch the last one for the night. I avoided eye contact with the driver and cruised with purpose to the back of the bus and got off at the last stop in Burien. The wind and rain bit at my cheeks as I roamed in search of a pay phone. I saw a light for a grocery store in the distance and made my way towards it. The kitten didn't stir, he seemed content within the confines of my warm and dry coat."*

**You can read more [here](#), and if you like it, let her know by following her on [Goodreads](#) or visiting her web page [here](#).**

## **About the Author – Elise Crawford**



Although not formally educated as a writer, Elise has been writing creative fiction since she was eight years old. She also holds several Associate of Arts degrees: one in Liberal Arts, two in Social Sciences, and one Technical. Throughout her college education, she maintained a membership with the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and taught college level English to fellow ESL students. All as a single mother of two children.

Her first book, [A Promise Kept](#), was a partial memoir about becoming a young widow. On June 10, 2018, she finished her complete autobiography, *Sisters of Moirai*. Elise and her husband, Roberto, reside in western Washington with their cats Lucky and Foxy.

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# Stain-Free While Managing the Mess of Life

Isn't it amazing how quickly life can become a mess?

I mean sure, if your life is like mine, most of the time it's messy. But toss in a severe cold that takes out each family member a week at a time. Sprinkle in some unexpected choices your children make that throw you for a loop, and you've got quite the chaos!



I was contemplating our cluttered life the other day while trying to summit a mountain of dirty dishes that had formed overnight.

For the longest time, I have been extremely appreciative of our dishwasher. We fill it to the brim every day and hardly come close to finishing them all. And then, the next day it starts all over again.

Some of us (not all) are old enough to remember life without a dishwasher. My parents waited until all four of us graduated high school before buying both a dishwasher and microwave. My mother would say, "Why do I need a dishwasher? I have two-

legged ones that work just fine!”

You never knew struggle as a child until you had to wash the dishes by hand. Traumatic memories came from standing at the kitchen sink, peering over a heap of bubbles. Not only did my brother and I severely suffer from sibling rivalry. But then we had to work together to get every used dish in the house washed, rinsed, dried and put away. My mother (bless her heart!) was determined to train us in this. Miraculously, we came out on the other side well disciplined in how to keep the kitchen clean.

## **Dirtier Than These Dishes**

As I scrape up the dried-on cereal and soak the coffee mug in my own kitchen sink, I think about how messy my heart gets when my life is all mucked up. The gunk of frustration rubs off on me when I am overtaxed. The sticky goo of impatience smears on to my mind when my boys decide not to listen. Pretty soon, my complicated life has spread it's filth on to my heart.

And the mess in my heart is much dirtier than these dishes.



Wouldn't it be nice if we could place our hearts through an automatic wash cycle?

Toying with the idea, I snickered to myself, the echo of dishes rattling in the rack of my dishwasher. In the next

instant (\*DING!\*), a thought came to mind.

We **do** have a spiritual spin cycle for our heart. We **do** have supernatural suds that wash the deepest stain away.

As I paused to contemplate the spiritual meaning of my daily duties, a couple verses popped into mind.

*But if we walk in the light, as (God) is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7*

A few lines later, John adds...

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

## ***What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.***

Now many of you out there are nodding your heads, "Yes, yes... We know." The biggest deal of becoming a Christian is how Jesus' blood washes you "white as snow".

Yet, what we often tend to neglect in our regular, consistent, daily journey with God is the ritual of repentance. Each day, we trudge through this life, collecting smears of sin and the gunk of offense. As stinking layer upon layer loads up on us, we stumble. It interferes with the closeness God desires to have with us. It harms our relationships, as we fling it upon others.

Lately, I have found a freedom in beginning each morning with a Daily Prayer. I have no idea what this day will hold. I have no confidence that I will make it through in my own strength. So, before setting my feet on the ground, I surrender to God in prayer all that I am and have authority over. I return to

Him, recognizing where I have failed. Remembering how I am wholly dependent on Him to be of any good today.



John Eldredge taught me the value of the Daily Prayer in my favorite book [Walking with God](#). There are a few different versions of the prayer you can find on his website [here](#).

The only way we can keep our hearts and lives stain-free is regularly returning to a place of renewal we find in repentant prayer.

Daily Prayer cleanses us and aligns us with God's plan and purposes for us.

Pressing the buttons on the dishwasher, beeps echo through my home. I smile in realizing I don't have to wait a while for the "wash cycle" of repentance to work on me. God's repentance is ready, instant and available any time I need it.

Suddenly, my youngest son rushes in the room. "Mom! I forgot that I need a costume for school tomorrow. And why cant I play video games? All my friends get to play as long as they want!"

Here comes another sticky mess!

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# Mr. Franklin's Advice 288 Years Later

As I mentioned in an [earlier post](#), our family enjoyed visiting the East Coast during the holidays. One of the highlights of the trip was when John and I toured the city of **Philadelphia** for a day.

**What a beautiful and historic city!**



Wandering around for a while, we found ourselves heading down an alley to the Ben Franklin Museum. The collection of items and stories about him was so impressive that I forgot to take pictures! (But you can see some photos of the museum [here](#).)

Just before our trip, I happened upon an interesting [article](#) on Mr. Franklin's writing schedule. At the museum, I found the very same quote that inspired me.



## “What Good Have I Done Today?”



At the end of each day, he would take some time for self-reflection and ask himself this question.

This thought has been a personal challenge for me recently. Many an evening would strike fear in my heart as my husband would come home and ask innocently, “What did you do today, honey?” Spending most of my time writing, reading and studying, I had nothing practical to show for the hours he had been gone.

My struggle with being disabled has revealed a flaw in my thinking. For many years now, I searched for my identity in being productive, in what I could accomplish each day. It feels good to prove that you have spent every last bit of

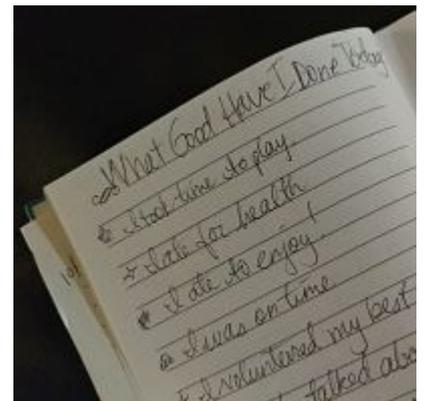
strength achieving something.

But I do not think this is what Mr. Franklin is asking here.

When I read this sentence, I hear the stress being placed on the word **“good”**. When read that way, the question is not asking what you have accomplished, but what good has been done.

Any person can be productive. (And yes, even accomplishing something each day can be significant, right, my dear disabled friends?) But the significance is not in the accomplishing. The significance is in the good that comes from what is accomplished.

## What do you see in your reflection?



Impressed with the many inventions and contributions Mr. Franklin brought to our world, I took to the task of reflecting each night as well. When I stop and think of my day, I don't think of the things I did (or didn't) do.

I think of the good that came through me. This brings a smile to my face and ideas flow easily as I write.

Doing this opens my eyes to many things that go beyond what you can put on a To-Do List. The many things more valuable than my own strength.

How about you? What would be on your list? I would love to hear your thoughts and questions. Feel free to use the comment section below to join the conversation.

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## Fears of the New Year

Anybody else feeling anxious about the new year?



Before the Christmas decorations come down, the stores are inundated with calendars and planners to buy before January 1st. Traditionally, the question is “What are your new year resolutions?” My knee-jerk reaction is to *cringe* when I hear this.

You see, I have deep-rooted struggles with **expectations**.

Most often, I err on the side of my expectations being WAY too high. I am hard on myself. And so to peer over the ledge of December 31st to the free fall people call 2018 makes my stomach drop.

### Not Ready

For the first few days of January, I did not replace my

calendars at home. Early Tuesday morning, I saw the boys off to school and settled myself to pray and consider my goals for the new year.

I heard a really great podcast by John Eldredge about "[Giving God Your Year](#)". He shared how it was helpful to ask yourself how you are feeling about the coming year. As I prayed, I found my heart slipping back like a skittish foal, hiding behind its mother.

I knew this feeling.

"The Future" has become a scary place to me. A place where you may suddenly find loss, disappointment, or the unexpected. As I identified this struggle once again, my heart just didn't seem ready.

"It's okay." I told my heart. "We don't have to do this now."

One area I have been growing in lately is allowing myself the room to figure things out when something in my heart isn't right. So, I took my old planner and set it open on the table. I would come back to it when I was ready.

## **Help to Hope Again**

As a few days passed, I would notice my planner and turn to my heart to see how I was feeling. Gradually the anxiety settled. By Friday night, I had an idea that nudged at my heart like a filly looking for a carrot.

We were out for dinner, and I had noticed weeks earlier these [glittery new planners](#) they had at Target.



“Could we stop by Target on the way home so I can look at their new planners?”

“Of course!” my husband replied.

Fingering through them later, I found a pretty, gold-rimmed one with a trendy pattern on the front. I don't know if it's me or the fact that I'm a writer, but there's just something enticing about a fresh notebook with clean lines or a planner with new calendars. It's just waiting to be filled with all sorts of things.

As I held this fresh new planner in my arms and took a deep \*sigh\*, I allowed my heart to hope again and wonder if this new year was going to be a good one.

## **Not So Scared**

I could hardly wait until the next morning to sit down with the new planner. In prayer, I brought my heart out to meet the One who made this new year. My anxiety dissolved into appreciation. I was comforted and encouraged. I realized I didn't have to figure it all out. I just had to reach out for the hand of my Father who would lead me through. Just like He has every year before.

Okay, 2018. Let's do this.

**What do you think? Have you found this transition into a new year difficult? Have advice to help others?**

**We love to hear your ideas! Just add a comment in the box below.**

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## **It's a Wonderfully Disrupted Life**

There I was, standing in the "Holiday Market" section at Fred Meyer. Glittering ornaments and lights all around, music commanding a happy holidays from every aisle, and people rushing about me to gather up the ugliest sweaters. The nauseated look I had on my face did not match the atmosphere.

**"I need a vacation from this vacation."**



This year, our Thanksgiving vacation extended into the end of the month while we were across the country. The trip was somewhat of a miniature tour of the east coast: Philadelphia, New Jersey, Times Square, Maryland, Washington DC. It was full of great memories with John's family, but by the 11th day, I was ready to sleep in my own bed.

Before the wheels of the plane touched down on the tarmac from our 12-day trip through 8 states, Jackson had already asked when we were going to put up the Christmas tree. "I don't know," I muttered as my head spun with all we had to go through just to get back to my own bed.

Arriving to lights glittering throughout our neighborhood, we found the Christmas season had already started. Flopping suitcases onto the living room floor late in the evening Wednesday night, we quickly sent the kids to bed and off to school the next morning.

## **Welcome Home!**

When you get back from a long trip, you need a few days to recover, work on laundry, get your life and world started up again. Returning home was a comfort, because we could return to our belongings where we placed them. We could manage our schedule how we want to arrange it. We can resume the familiar practices we have adopted there. It's predictable, it's comfortable and it's our world as we have established it.

Driving home from dismissal that day, I heard the dreaded sound every parent flinches at: \*cough\* \*cough\*. Rubbing his runny nose on his sleeve, Jackson answered the interview questions. I discovered he had developed a cold. Thankfully that was the only affliction we brought back with us.

Ushering him to bed early and finishing off the grocery list for an enormously empty fridge, I sent up a prayer for him and thanked God we could get back to our comfortable life again.

## Except...

Waking in my own bed the next morning, I felt confident that things would finally get back to normal.

...Except for the fuzziness I felt in my throat,

...which developed into a scratchy feeling, the more I swallowed,

...which came with a lot of mucus (a LOT of mucus). Jackson had shared his cold with me.

Now, instead of resuming my life as usual, it was once again disrupted. After sending the boys off, I downed some medicine and headed off with grocery list in hand.

But, as I stood at the grocery store, willing myself to be in the Christmas spirit, all I wanted to do was go back to bed.



I love Christmas, I really do. What other time of the year do you hear songs praising God as you shop for rutabaga? What other time of the year can you find a lit up baby Jesus in random front yards around town? This time of year is PRIME TIME for drawing near to God and gaining a better understanding how richly He has blessed us.

But I just was not feeling it.

In my inner wrestling these past few weeks, I felt like I had to catch up with the rest of the world or just hang on with the tips of my fingers to the season spinning out of control before me. I became frustrated with how Christmas wasn't going the way I wanted it. That frustration boiled into how my life hadn't turned out like I wanted it. I became so frustrated with being disrupted. I just wanted, for a moment, to forget that it was Christmas. I wanted my life to be normal, to get

back to the usual way I had expected it to be.

But, you see, the instant this thought flashed through my mind, I caught a whisper, way in the back of my head, that said, "Disrupted, just like the first Christmas".

## **Disrupting the Universe**

A LOT of things were disrupted when God became flesh and lived among us.



A merely teenage woman would conceive a child (she claimed was God) before her wedding.

A priest would meet an angel, and his elderly barren wife would give birth to a son. His life would be spent in preparation to announce Christ's coming.

An entire nation would have to return to their city of origin to be counted for a census.

Shepherds would awake to a divine choir announcing the arrival of Emmanuel, a tiny baby sleeping in a feeding trough.

Mary's plans for her child's birth... wealthy noblemen from the East looking for an adult king... an entire village of infants and toddlers slain before their mothers.

Disrupted, disrupted, disrupted.

None of these events occurred the way anyone expected them to. God broke through the flesh that so firmly kept us from him and immersed himself fully into the skin of a babe. And this

story continues to disrupt our lives to this day.

## Do We Need Disrupting?

In pondering such a tumultuous entry into our world, I realized that maybe our lives need some disrupting. Yes, that's right. We need to be disrupted.

Left to ourselves, we carry on, day after day, stumbling step after step deeper into our selves and our worlds shrink smaller and smaller.

When Christ was born, light burst forth from the heavens and cracked into our world. The star shone on the Light of the World that would illuminate our darkness, our inability to see that we need rescuing.

And we do need rescuing, from our lives being all about what we want, from our worlds being all about how we want it and from our Christmases being all about the way that we want them.



What we hear more than happy greetings each year is “What do you want for Christmas?”

Is it about what I want? If it is, then I will get a delicious meal, some fun with family, practical gifts and a pretty tree.

If it's not about what I want, but about what God wants, then it is a lot more than that. It is about God breaking through life as I expect it and doing something miraculous. Today.

Our lives will be disrupted. You can count on that. What you have to ask yourself is, are you going to open your heart to God in the messiness and see what He has in mind?

**I always love hearing your thoughts. If you have something to share or ask, please feel free to enter a comment in the form below.**

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# The Discipline of Forced Perspective

## “Perspective is Everything.”

When I first heard this statement, it surprised me.

*No, it's not!* I rebelled. *Reality is everything.*

But as I let the statement sink in deeper to my understanding, I realized the truth it was pointing to. No matter what the reality is, perspective controls a person's understanding of it.

I found a wonderful story in the Old Testament that demonstrates this concept.

## Elisha's in Trouble



The nation of Israel battled often with the countries around

them for the land which was promised to them from God. In 2 Kings 6:8, the king of Syria decided he wanted to conquer Israel and take them as slaves. But, each time he told his army to advance, they found the Israelite army prepared and quick to avoid the attack. They already knew the next move he was going to make.

The Syrian king thought there was a spy, and asked his servants to reveal who it was.

*“It’s not us, my lord the king,” one of the officers replied. “Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!”*

*“Go and find out where he is,” the king commanded, “so I can send troops to seize him.” ...So the king sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. 2 Kings 6:12-14*

## God Talks About You

One thing I wonder is: Didn’t he think Elisha would know they were coming to get him? God was speaking to the prophet regularly about what the king of Syria was doing. “...even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!”



Have you ever considered that God speaks to others about you? Sometimes He may cause someone to pray for you or wonder how you are doing. Or maybe, out of the blue, you start to wonder about someone else? Maybe it was God who put it on your heart.

It may not be as complex as military battle plans, but I know

it can be encouraging to hear that someone is praying for me.

## Obviously Trapped

The next morning, one of Elisha's servants headed outside, possibly to do chores, bring in water from a well or gather eggs for breakfast. What he discovers is that as far as the eye can see they were surrounded by the Syrian army. I wonder what they were doing, because nobody came to knock on Elisha's door. Were they waiting for their orders? Was the king trying to figure out how to capture Elisha without him knowing?

The servant scampers back in to get Elisha and asks him what they could possibly do. Cornered with no way out, they were trapped. That is what was obvious.

But Elisha could see beyond what was **obvious**.

## The Bigness of Our Circumstances



Circumstances in our lives can be dauntingly obvious. Losing your job, or trouble finding one. A difficult diagnosis or an ongoing illness. A strained relationship or hurt that never seem to heal.

These circumstances seem overwhelming. . . in your face, and extremely obvious.

Let's look back to what Elisha said in response to his servant.

*"Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on*

*our side than on theirs!" Then Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!" The LORD opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire. 2 Kings 6:15b-17*

And what reason does Elisha give for not being afraid? **"For there are more on our side than on theirs!"** The exclamation point there shows the emphasis. I can just see Elisha boldly declaring how they had the upper hand in this battle and his servant scratching his head like, 'Wha?'

Now, notice here Elisha doesn't pray that the Syrian army would be destroyed or to escape from this dangerous situation. His prayer is simple... He just asks God to open the eyes of his servant.

## God is Bigger

The Hebrew translation of this verse (2 Kings 6:17) describes the ability to see things which are hidden from the eyes of mortals. Elisha prayed for his servant to see the reality of the situation. He asked God to show him what was going on in the spiritual world.



Do you know what is going on in the spiritual world? From the beginning of time, angels have been directed by God to work in and around the lives of people here on earth. For the most part, we are unable to see what they are doing, but all throughout the Bible there are examples of God allowing people to see them. Even today, there are people able to see or have awareness of what angels are up to.

Oftentimes, we get so dragged down by the things in our life which appear so obvious.

Yes, they are real, and yes, they are there right in front of you.

But this story is a reminder that God is bigger. There is a real battle going on with angel armies engaged for the amazing work God is doing in your life, and He has the power to overcome the work of the enemy. The obvious can feel overwhelming, but if you ask God to help you see Him and His work, you may discover His victory is at hand.

## Eyes to See

So, how do we open our eyes to reality?



### 1. Prayer

Do exactly what Elisha did: Pray. Turn to God and invite Him to show you what you can't see.

### 2. Focus on the Truth

You can gain a greater understanding of the Truth by reading the Bible. Pick a theme that resonates with your situation (Fear, Trust, Finances, etc.) and search for scriptures about them. I can assure you that God will meet you there, every time, with renewed perspective or a promise to hang on to.

### 3. Speak What You Don't See

Your words have power. Just as many in the Bible used their words in powerful ways, you can find great strength in speaking out (to yourself and others) the Truth God is showing you. Announce what you believe and live it!

#### 4. Praise God for the Truth

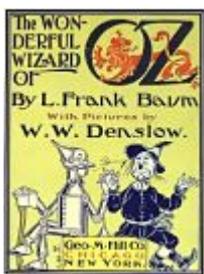
Last, but very much not the least, I have recently discovered the power of worship to defeat the lies of a skewed perspective. When you focus on God's greatness and the things he has done for you or blessed you with, you are unable to feel fearful or defeated.

*Is there something I left out? Do you have another idea?*

*I'd love to hear how God is demonstrating His bigness in your life. Please share any stories or questions in the comments below.*

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## Guest Post: "Learning From 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz'" by Myriah Marsh



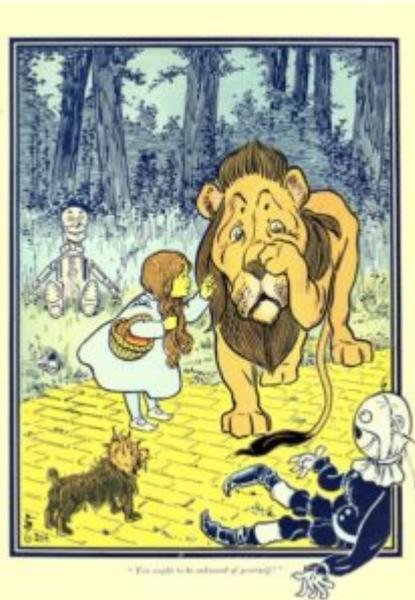
Most of us are familiar with the story "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz". Did you also know that author L. Frank Baum wrote **13** additional books in this series? It was instantly popular and quickly sold out of its first 10,000 copies. The book would not be republished, however, until the play "The Wizard of Oz" was commissioned by the Chicago Grand Opera House in 1902. By the time it entered public domain in 1956, publishers had sold over 3 million copies. This book is an entertaining way to demonstrates life lessons of how God helps us succeed through the challenges of life.

# Gifts to Guard Us Along the Way



At the beginning of the book, Dorothy's house is lifted by a cyclone and dropped into a fairytale land. Upon her arrival, she is greeted by munchkins and the Good Witch of the North. For her journey, the Good Witch gives Dorothy a kiss on the forehead and a pair of unique shoes. These special slippers have powers that she was not aware of when they were given. Our Heavenly Father also gives us items to cover our head and feet. In Ephesians 6, the Bible talks about the "Helmet of Salvation" for the top of our heads, protecting us from doubt, fear, and anxiety. When we accept Christ into our hearts as Lord and Savior, we have opportunity to access a vast amount of resources. Being mindful of our thoughts and presenting them to God in prayer is like putting on a helmet that guards us. This chapter also tells us that our feet are "fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (NIV). Having spiritual shoes covers us with the power of God's peace. When we pray and spend time reading the Bible, we tap into God's special peace in our lives. By taking time to seek God and think on His principals each day, the access to peace enables us to stand firm in what we believe.

## Friends to Help Us Through the



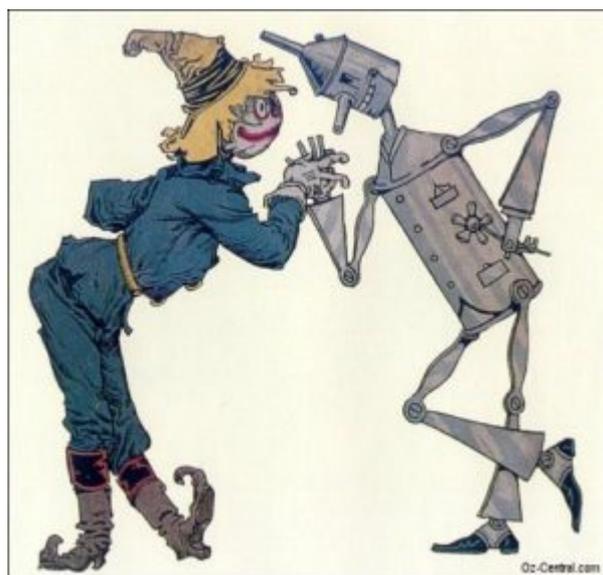
When Dorothy stumbles on challenges throughout the book, she is given just what she needs. Along the way, she meets three friends that need help: the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion. The Tin Woodman is great at building items, but he needs Dorothy to help him by loosening his rusted joints with oil. The Scarecrow doesn't sleep, which makes him a perfect guard, but Dorothy must help him down off a pole in the garden. The Cowardly Lion has an amazing roar, but he struggles with being brave. These four friends help each other through crossing rivers, poppy fields, and fighting witches. Without realizing it, each time Dorothy encounters a difficult task, the perfect helper is put before her and comes right when she needs it. Often, we are prepared by past experiences, relationships and seemingly "random" tools that help us just when we need them. In the past, when I was a mentor, I noticed that God gave me the specific skills I needed to work with each person. And I wasn't even looking for those skills. What a blessing!!

### **"Many Hands Make Light Work."**

Finally, this book is a great example of the importance of helping each other out. After the Queen of all the Field Mice is saved, she asks how to repay the kindness of the Tin Woodman. The Scarecrow suggests they help move the lion out of

the poppy field. The Tin Woodman builds a structure to put him in. Then, the Queen has all her field mice help. The tiny rodents are able to carry the lion, because there were thousands of them. It created light work and was a blessing to all. While recently visiting Israel, I reflected on how the Israelites freely gave their materials and talents to build a place of worship (Exodus 36). I realized that when we serve together, it brings about prosperity and unity.

## The Value of Lessons Learned



Each day God gives us what we need to maneuver the challenges of life. Dorothy learned many lessons throughout her time in Oz. At the end of their journey, Dorothy learns she can go back home. Although the special kiss gave her distinct authority in the land, she had all she needed to go home from the start. She could have returned much faster if she had known to just click her heels.

In life, God equips us with tools and armor we may not fully understand or use to reach our full potential. ***Had you been in Dorothy's shoes, would you trade going home right away for the priceless life lessons she learned?***

## About the Author – Myriah Marsh



Myriah Marsh has her own business, [In Home Fitness](#), which specializes in working with older adults in their homes. She grew up in Montana where she received a Bachelor's Degree from Montana State University in Business. After starting a family she decided to go back to school and get a degree in Exercise Science, finding her passion in assisting others with

fitness.

Myriah and her son live in Montana, where she enjoys hiking, creating and dreaming of her next adventure.

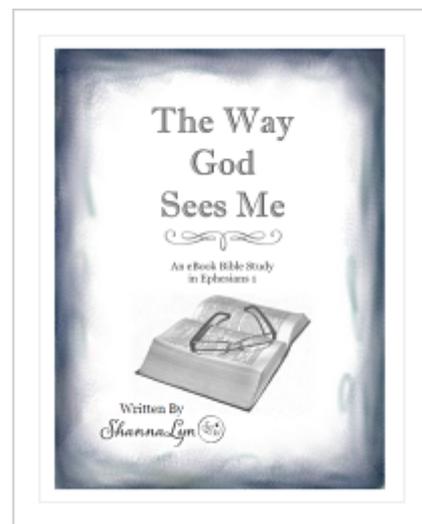
The best way to reach her is at 406-581-1646.

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## The Way God Sees Me: Free eBook Bible Study

After weeks of writing, editing, and formatting,  
I'm pleased to share with you my first  
eBook: ***The Way God Sees Me.***

# About the Study



The first chapter of Ephesians is rich with words describing who God sees when He looks at us. Each day of the study, we will focus on one of ten descriptors, learning how it was used in the Bible. We will also see the descriptors in the lives of Bible characters and study how we can apply it to our relationship with God.

This book grew out of my desire to understand what God thinks of me and adjust my perspective to one that is more clearly understood by the lens of scripture.

*The nearsightedness of focusing on our marred sin nature can cause regret and frustration. It steals our confidence in who we were made to be and can leave us wondering how we belong to Him. This skewed perspective can keep us from seeing how dearly we are loved."*

## How to Get a Copy

You can get a free copy of this study by sharing your email below. This allows you to join my subscriber's list and automatically receive my latest posts. You will also be the first to know about additional freebies and goodies and be informed of other books and offers. **I always respect your privacy and never share email information.** You can opt out

at any time. After you share your information, you will be redirected to a page where you can download the study.

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## Just One Small Request

This study was a labor of love. I am honored that you would take the time to read it. Would you please take a minute when you finish to share what you think?

What was the most compelling part? What questions do you have? Please share your thoughts and feedback in the comments below. Or you can use the social media buttons at the top of the page to help spread the news. If you enjoyed it, feel free to email or print a copy for someone you know.

## My Hope For You

So many things challenge our idea of what God thinks of us: feelings, circumstances, relationships, etc.. We all need some fresh perspective on who we are. As I created this study, I prayed you would experience a fresh view of God's love for you and delight in the way He watches over you.

**You Are Dearly Loved!**



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## Free eBook Coming Soon!



It's been quiet on my website for a while because I have been working on a book for you.

In the next couple weeks, I will be offering a free eBook on my website. It is a 10-day Bible study on Ephesians 1.

Here's a taste of what it's like...

*There is an underlying reason why bullying prevails in schools across the country. Teams of principals have driven campaigns against the relational abuse, but it continues to slip out of extinction for one small but very powerful reason: acceptance. We read about it every day in the headlines: college student dies during hazing, young boy takes his life after being bullied, girl attacked on school bus while driver watches. Everyone longs to be noticed, included and invited. Our "rose colored glasses" tint a little bit darker with each rejection, and we are less able to see how important we are to the Lord of All...*

*Even the word "accepted" is very lame in the English language. We understand it to be much like someone who is begging to be included and another finally gives in to their pleas for acceptance. We also associate the word with some*

*form of having to get used to the fact that things are not going to work out the way that you wanted them to. That is not the word we are studying today. To correct the lenses of how we view ourselves, we must look at the original meaning of the word Paul used. This is not a “yeah, I guess you can play”. The action this word conveys is completely on God’s part...*

## **You Are Everything to Him**

*Paul wanted to teach us here that God considers you a very important person. Wait a minute. Isn’t there a term for that? Oh, yes. V.I.P. So put on your expensive sunglasses and watch them roll out the red carpet. You are stepping out and God wants to be sure that you arrive in style.*

*To express how dearly received you are by God, Paul used the word twice in the verse above: “He has made (charitoō) us accepted (charitoō)”. Maybe he placed it there so we wouldn’t dismiss it or lightly pass over it. Repetition in the Bible is often God’s way of saying, “Listen up! I have something important to say!” As if anything God says isn’t important. The repetition we find here conveys a sense of expressing something of significance, which speaks into the depths of our hearts. And instead of us having to beg God to accept us, He is the One pursuing us, compassing us, honoring us, naming us, showing us that there is no higher favor from God. We will be filled to the brim with grace when He is done with us. God is doing everything to show you that you are everything to Him.*

Keep an eye out for it coming soon. In the meantime, it would be great to hear from you. What do you like most about your own Bible studies? Do you have a favorite? Feel free to share a comment below.

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# Guest Post: “Ponder” by Dr. Mark Goodman

*While attending a recent writer’s conference, I met Pastor Mark and asked if he would like to be a guest on my site. I enjoy his writing, which invites us to return to the solid foundations of a simple faith in God.*



[“The Thinker” by Auguste Rodin, 1902, Paris, France](#)

You live, therefore you think.

Do you ponder?

There is a difference.

Moms and Dads, perhaps the little people in your home make pondering a challenge, or the gusts of your work demands blow off your thinking caps. Perhaps the demands you allow in your life apply too much brain pain. If so, you are in a prime time to hear and receive God’s invitation to think as He intends so that pondering is a blessing rather than a burden.

Come away now and ponder a while.

King David leads the way.

### **Psalms 8:1-4 (The Message)**

*God, brilliant Lord, yours is a household name.*

*Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you;  
toddlers shout the songs  
That drown out enemy talk,  
and silence atheist babble.*

*I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,  
your handmade sky-jewelry,  
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.  
Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,  
Why do you bother with us?  
Why take a second look our way?*

For the seeker and/or uncertain, pondering begins with the question, "Is there a God?" For the person of faith, pondering starts with awe and wonder. David invites us into his experience by revealing where his sense of awe and wonder originate. He tells us in a mere two words repeated: "I look."

David dedicated time for "taking in". On a moonlit night, for he does not mention the sun, the shepherd-turned-king delights in the joy of creation. While on his rooftop or in a lush field of green, David opens the eyes of his mind to God-signs stored in his thoughts and his physical eyes to the beauty of the earth and heavens. He hears and/or sees . . .

- Gurgling infants' choruses.
- Toddlers' shouts. (Yes, even these can bring joy.)
- The silence of the faithless.
- Endless expanse of the heavens decorated with beautiful diamonds.

- The magnificent lights of night (long before numbing neon).

As the bookends to his song (Psalm 8), David addresses his Creator as “YHWH Adonai”, here translated “God, brilliant Lord.” Pondering as God intends always comes full-circle. In your thinking, you begin with a focus on God’s glory and there you arrive at the end.

Take time to ponder today, tomorrow and in each day to come.

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