

Godmothers

Why You Need One.
How to Be One.

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One

Why You Need One

We are family!

—*Sister Sledge*

The cover of this book may be the first time you've seen me, but know that I carried you in my heart with every word that was typed. Why? We share the same Father. No, I didn't hijack your DNA results. We are *all* God's daughters. This simple relational statement means far more than we can possibly understand, but to start, it means we're family, and I am thrilled about it. I believe we have an intimate connection whether we ever meet in this life or the next. As daughters of God the Father, it is not a stretch to call ourselves goddaughters. And daughters need mothers who help them find their way.

Relationships matter because we are all woven together into a story. I hope you heard that. Woven means knit together, and yet a quick glance at what surrounds us reveals far too many frayed edges and torn fragments. Not only has our tapestry been

compromised, it would appear that our stories are disjointed and contradictory. I believe we can be part of changing this. We can no longer afford to neglect the things that hold us together. This tale reaches beyond those who are alive in this moment to encompass all who will or ever have drawn breath. Every son and every daughter from every race and every period of time will have a part in the telling. It is not a matter of *then* and *now* or *them* and *us*; it is an eternal tale. We are the many threads that become one glorious tapestry. Let's weave something not unlike Joseph's ancient coat of many colors that declares the royalty inherent in each and every one of us.

Did you notice the wand on the cover?

No, I'm not endorsing magic; I'm advocating something deeper. I wanted to visually capture an invisible force that supersedes divination and the magic of fairy tales. The wand is but a focal point for the concept of one generation extending its blessing to the next. This blessing is the very reason godmothers should exist. They live to bless their godchildren.

*Abundant life has
always been far more
than the abundance
of things.*

The godparent blessing confers fullness of life. This fullness empowers you to enjoy your life and relationships rather than imagine life is found in the collection of things. The blessing kisses our "little" and transforms it into "much." Much joy. Much hope. Much faith and much love. It is more than an edit, it is an enrichment. Abundant life has always been far more than the abundance of things (Eccles. 5:19–20).

Blessings are holy and cannot be corrupted because they come to us from our Father. The blessing of God transforms all that is visible and tangible in our lives. Blessings are meant

to be shared intergenerationally. When we withhold what one generation was meant to impart to the other, there is loss on both sides. We are blessed to be a blessing to one another. And here is a beautiful truth: you can never lose what you have truly given. Like seeds, blessings multiply, and even though the seed leaves our hand, it never leaves our life. The blessing of God turns houses into homes, marriages into power unions, and children into legacy. Blessings have the power to flip crises into a catalyst for growth and transformation. The blessing can transform the very waters that the enemy meant to drown you with into a well of life for others. The blessing is when God favors your life in ways that change the enemy's narrative to work on your behalf toward your growth and benefit.

Don't imagine that I am promising that all this will make your life easy; it won't. The blessing means that all things will work together for your good (Rom. 8:28). The blessing brings rest rather than striving knowing that God is at work behind the scenes moving the right pieces into place. God's blessing expands our lives, first through our relationship with him, then in our relationships with one another, and then in resources. Connections need to be made, the blessing needs to be conferred, questions need to be answered, bridges need to be built, and some hard conversations need to be had. The wand is but the representative of what could be if all this did happen.



Even though I never birthed a daughter, I have been blessed with daughters-in-love, granddaughters, and hundreds if not thousands of daughters who call me their godmother. Perhaps,

for the duration of this book, you will allow me the honor of adopting you?

I understand that I won't be your only godmother. But I am happy to be one of your many. For I do believe it will take more than one of us to bless and champion the different areas of entrustment and gifting that God has put on and in your life. Perhaps you'll consider me for the role of your scrappy, fierce Sicilian one. I'd love to point you in the direction of a more intimate connection to God the Father. It's my hope that as you turn the pages, something special happens between us and that you know you are loved, seen, celebrated, and welcome.

And if this book finds you in a later season of life, perhaps you will join me in becoming all things godmother to a generation of goddaughters.



Have you ever had a moment that is embarrassing, awful, and wonderful all at the same time? If so, you have my sympathy because I have had more than my fair share of them. Here is an example of just one of my many.

A few years ago our executive ministry staff decided to take on the challenge of transforming our approach to leadership. Each of us was invited to give ruthless, anonymous feedback on the different leaders at the ministry. The input was gathered electronically and sent to the facilitator, who compiled all the data to determine our *challenges*. Okay—that's putting it nicely. The facilitator used a different word: *constraints*.

At a later date, the group of us gathered with the facilitator. I'm going to go on record that I would have preferred a private interpretation of the results! But I've learned that

leaders who want to grow have to be willing to embrace the pain of exposure and the aching nakedness of vulnerability. Here is how it went.

The facilitator began to place us in a line, situating us from the far left (least intense or aggressive) to the far right (most intense or aggressive). I was placed to the right early on. I was disheartened to watch as everyone lined up to the left of me. When it came time for my husband, John, to join the line, I breathed a sigh of relief. Finally, I'd no longer be at the end of the line. Surely, he would displace my pole position. I was shocked when the leader placed John to the left of me. Were we tied? John just smiled. Was this a joke? How could I have possibly tested higher in aggression than my alpha-male husband? Enough was enough. I protested, "There is no way I'm more aggressive than John!"

John laughed and nodded knowingly as everyone in the line turned my way. It was then I realized that even in the dead of a Colorado winter, my turtleneck sweater was a poor wardrobe choice for this type of meeting. I pulled on it. I was not just hot flashing, I was flash blushing.

The facilitator assured me there'd been no mistake. Numbers don't lie. I was the uncontested winner of the most-intense/most-aggressive spot, which immediately felt like a supreme loss.

When it was time to move on to the next result. I bolted out of my place in line, but I was too quick in breaking rank. I was told to stay where I'd been. I watched in shame as once again the entire line formed to the left of me. This time John was not placed next to me but at the opposite end of whatever spectrum this line was about to reveal.

The facilitator spoke. “This lineup represents empathy and nurture. These actions are considered the opposite of aggression—and Lisa has scored the highest in this one as well.” He shook his head. “I honestly have never seen this before.”

He turned toward me, seeking an explanation. My heart beat faster, but this time it was not in shame; it was in hope. I answered back, “I fight for.”

Though the facilitator might not have seen this result before, I believe God has. He has a name for women who mix intense passion with empathy and nurture; they are called godmothers. And in case you are wondering if this combination is biblical, read how God describes himself in Hosea 13:8:

Like a bear robbed of her cubs,
I will attack them and rip them open. (NIV)

If this description of a mama bear doesn’t capture an image of feminine fierce protection of the young, I don’t know what does. It is godly for mothers to fight for their children. Now let’s move on to this concept of a godmother.



What comes to mind when you think of a godmother?

A fairy godmother? (Sadly, they are not a real thing.)

A mafia godmother? (Hopefully not a real thing.)

Or maybe you thought of a spiritual godmother—which desperately needs to become a *very* real thing.

Though I love to tease about it because I am half Sicilian, the godmothers I am talking about are in no way tied to the mafia. Nor can they change pumpkins into carriages or mice into horses. They are not fairies, yet they have a divine benevolent connection to the heavenly realm. Rather than a magic wand,

they possess gritty grace that can be catalytic when you come in contact with it.

Godmothers are not a new idea; the concept of godparents originated in the first-century church. In those days, believers were under heavy persecution, and godparents acted as spiritual gatekeepers and guides. Godparents personally vouched for the sincerity of those who sought fellowship and sanctuary among the fledgling body of believers. One of the many ways they did this was through relational discipleship. It wasn't unusual for new converts to Christianity to be disowned by their families when they found Christ. Godparents played the role of the lost parents and were present at major life intersections such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. It was very different than it is today when godparents simply send greeting cards on birthdays, because their communities were far more intimate. Godmothers were engaged as they walked alongside their godchildren. Each was committed to helping their daughters give expression to this glorious mystery of Christ in us. Their relationship was based on covenant rather than competition. Godmothers wanted their goddaughters to go further in their life and faith than they had traveled themselves. To this end, they lifted their daughters with what they had learned.

Though it will look different in our day, there is a desperate need for women who are more concerned with their goddaughters' destiny than their history. Godmothers believe in who their goddaughters are becoming. We need brave women who are willing to pause from their own pursuits long enough to invite some daughters along. Spiritual mamas who believe the best of their daughters while knowing they will need help to get there. Godmothers are women who are committed to

growing others. This translates to speaking life, strength, and course correction to see that happen. You don't have to be old to be a godmother; you just have to be more spiritually mature.

I've been privileged to be this in one capacity or another. Whether it is online, in meetings, or through my books, there is no greater joy or honor than when a young woman calls me Mama Lisa. I remember the day my perspective shifted. I was in a meeting with our team, and they brought up my social media demographics. They asked if I knew the age of the women who follow me. I shrugged my shoulders and volunteered the age range of women close to my age. My team shared that my analytics said the largest group who followed me were women aged twenty-five to thirty-four.

*Godmothers help
us fill in the gaps.*

I burst into tears.

It was not lost on me that my youngest son was twenty-five and my oldest was thirty-three. My team was surprised by my reaction, so I explained, "Don't you see? They don't need another speaker. They are looking for a mother." They were looking for someone to help them fill in their gaps. And we live in a time when there are quite a few gaps in desperate need of tending.

Godmothers help us fill in the gaps.



Let's talk about those gaps. When I first explored the concept of a gap or gaps, I had no idea how many words and circumstances were captured by this simple three-letter word. I found the first tier of definition from our friends at Merriam-Webster of particular interest. They define the noun *gap* as "a break in

a barrier (such as a wall, hedge, or line of military defense); an assailable position.”¹

When we merge these ideas, we discover that a gap can be an area or space that renders us vulnerable to attack due to a lack of protection. The enemy of our souls loves to capitalize on and attack these assailable positions. For example, a gap in understanding becomes a misunderstanding. These breaches can quickly mire into dynamics that put relationships at risk. An information gap describes missing data that compromises our ability to make good decisions. You could call the space between the way your marriage is now and the way you hope it will be a marriage gap. The difference between the way your health is and what is optimal for you could be called a health gap. The concept of the generation gap is the breach that exists between the opinions, actions, and beliefs of the older generation and those of the younger one. I know you get the picture.

Generally speaking, a gap describes the difference or distance between the way things are and the way they should be, which is why we are so important to each other. The gaps we have in our faith, relationships, careers, marriages, and even parenting were designed to be filled by each other.

A generation of young women seems unaware that they are surrounded by mature women who'd love to open their lives and share with them what they learned the hard way. I fear they think these mothers are disinterested or oblivious. On the other hand, older women are under the mistaken impression that no one wants what they have to offer so they withdraw, become distant or combative. It's not wrong to have different viewpoints. It is so important that women in different seasons gather so we don't risk losing the richness that happens when the generations connect and share their hopes and challenges.

If the gap remains, it will leave women of all ages in an assailable position. I hear a lot of people my age and older complain about millennials and Gen Zs. Personally, I've learned a lot from my four sons, who all fall into the millennial bracket. They ask the kinds of questions that need to be answered. They push to the point of disruption and won't settle for trite answers. They want to know the *why* more than they want to know the *what*. They don't want to be told what to think; they want to learn how to think.

I believe godmothers help you discover answers to why and how. Godmothers foster a sense of purpose and community. In our day of large lives, we need intimate connections. In addition to being supportive and sharing life experiences a godmother helps you avoid future gaps and pitfalls. Openly sharing our challenges yields greater growth and

a dynamic where there are more answers than questions.

In our day of large lives, we need intimate connections.

I remember when I first sensed a profound gap in my life as a young wife and mother. As a child of twice-

divorced parents, I had built in some faulty protection mechanisms. I realized too late that I didn't have what I needed to build a marriage and family, and this left me vulnerable. There was a glaring gap between the way I was raised and the way I wanted to raise my children. And another gap—the size of the Grand Canyon—that represented the way my parents did marriage and the way John and I wanted to do life together. It wasn't long before I discovered that knowing what you *don't want* isn't enough to build what you *do want*. I had to be honest with myself.

I didn't know how to be a wife.

I didn't know how to be a mother.

I barely knew how to be a woman, let alone a godly one.

I felt alone because I didn't know how to find or be a true friend.

I felt frightened and isolated in my search for more than what I'd seen in ministry, marriage, motherhood, and friendship. My desperate longing for something above and beyond what I'd known or experienced only seemed to widen the gap that already existed between me and those around me. I had more questions than answers. I wondered if all the breaches in my life had made others afraid that if they got too close to me they'd fall in.

I went to church, where I was supplied with a short list of rules, most of which focused on women submitting. (Something else at which I consistently failed.) I was desperate to see a living, breathing animation of what this godly woman might look like. I certainly wasn't seeing her in the mirror. Without her in my life, all the rules only served to chain me more tightly to guilt and failure. I tried hard to be good and look more like the other pastors' wives, but I couldn't escape feeling like an outlier.

I cried out for a mentor. At the time, I didn't realize I was looking for a godmother, someone who'd notice my struggle, transform my trials, and send me along my way. I may have not known where to look, but it seemed there were none to be found. I was surrounded by young women who wrestled with the same struggles that challenged me. We all knew we were supposed to build, but no one had taken the time to show us how to use the tools or to tell us what we were building. We had saws, hammers, and lumber, but no one had a blueprint. Directionless, we settled on not causing any problems. And when problems did arise in my marriage, I hid them for fear of hearing once again that I needed to submit more. I kept cautiously moving forward, unsure of every step.

Eight years into my marriage, I found myself pregnant with our third son. John traveled full time, and as much as possible, our young family journeyed with him. On one of these trips, we'd spent over ten hours in the car traveling from our home in Apopka, Florida, to a small city in North Carolina. We arrived just in time to check into the motel that had been arranged for us. We all piled into the small room as John quickly showered and headed out the door for the service. Once he was gone, I bathed the two boys only to realize that the carpet was so dirty the bottoms of their feet were black from walking barefoot. I deposited both boys back into the tub to wash their feet. Their laughter filled the bleak room while I stripped the bedspreeds off our double beds and placed them in a corner. (I am not sure that these had ever been washed!)

I lifted the boys from the tub to their bed and gave them strict instructions that there was to be no more walking on the floor. They could jump from our bed to theirs as much as they liked, but their feet could not touch the floor. They were thrilled and pretended the beds were boats and the floor was an ocean infested with alligators and sharks. It became a game. If they needed a trip to the bathroom, I was their transport.

I can still see them bouncing gleefully from bed to bed, so thrilled to be out of the confines of our car. When it was bedtime, I told them a story and sang the songs that were part of our nighttime ritual. When the time was right, I turned out the lights and sat silently in the dark, listening for the deep breaths that confirmed my boys were asleep.

John had a key to our room, but he had asked me to bolt the door behind him because the motel was in a sketchy area. Exhausted and very pregnant, I fell into a deep sleep. Hours later, John knocked softly, and I jumped out of bed, afraid he'd

wake the children. As quietly as possible, John got ready, and when he climbed into bed, I asked him how the service had gone. There was a heavy sigh.

“Good. But, Lisa, it’s super legalistic.”

Knowing the denomination he was speaking for, I wasn’t surprised. I was just getting ready to ask what he’d spoken on when John added, “The women in this church need you, so I volunteered you to do a women’s meeting in the morning.”

To say that my reaction was extreme would be putting it mildly. I sat up, wide awake, in bed. “Absolutely not! You can’t do that to me!” I protested.

“It’s done,” said John with an unswerving sense of finality. “The pastor agreed, and it’s already been announced.”

I felt violated and utterly powerless. I told John, “Well, then you can do the meeting! I’m not doing it. I have nothing to say to those women. They’ll probably stop me at the door if they notice I have double-pierced ears!”

“Don’t wake the boys,” John warned as he tried to make himself comfortable in the bowed double bed. “It’s late. Go to sleep. I’ll take the boys out to breakfast in the morning, and you can prepare your message then.”

I had a sense of foreboding. “What did you preach on tonight?”

John answered. He’d preached his version of the only message I knew to preach at that time.

“How could you?” I protested. “Now I have nothing to speak on!”

I was furious. I felt robbed, dismissed, inadequate, and more than a little bit frightened by the prospect.

As a sign of protest, I abruptly turned my back to John and moved to the extreme other side of the bed. But sleep evaded

me. I looked at the digital clock; it was after midnight. Soon the rhythmic breathing of my sons was punctuated by John's snoring. Everything about the small room felt unfamiliar: the smells, the lumpy pillow, the scratchy sheets, and the harsh fluorescent light peeping through the breach in the blackout curtains. I wished for home and my own bed.

My mind raced. What could I possibly say to a gathering of church women who couldn't even wear pants? I wasn't a minister. I was a mother. I cradled the baby in my womb, comforted by his gentle movements. I watched as the hours passed on the digital clock—1:00 a.m., 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m.—and still sleep evaded me.

At some point I must have drifted off because the next thing I knew was John standing over me with his hand on my arm. I was disoriented by the unfamiliar surroundings and the harsh realization that the night before had not been a nightmare. In the morning light, it was a looming reality.

"I wanted to let you sleep as late as possible," John volunteered.

I looked at the clock and flew into a panic. The meeting I was tricked into speaking at would begin in a few short hours, and I still had to shower and prepare some sort of message.

All I wanted was coffee . . . and ice cream for breakfast.

I'm not sure I ate that morning.

I kissed and hugged my sleepy boys, then the three of them were gone and I was alone—if very pregnant counts as alone. I showered and dressed in record time, desperate to hear from God.

First on my agenda was a massive change in attitude. I didn't want to go into the meeting mad at my husband and a pastor I hadn't met. I hate having my choices taken away, but I knew my

frustration went deeper. I was angry older women hadn't prepared me for this. I was sure someone had seen my gaps but refused to help close them. I imagined them happy that I had gaps. But if I was honest, my angst reached even further than them.

I was angry and frustrated with God!

Getting up in front of strangers was no small thing. But even worse, how could I possibly be expected to give what I didn't have? How could I possibly help them with what they needed when I didn't have what I needed? I felt overwhelmed and turned all the protests swirling in my head into a prayer. Kneeling atop the bed, I closed my eyes and lifted my voice:

Father,

Before I was married, you asked me to minister to women. I said I would if you sent me a mentor. Well, it's been more than eight years and you haven't sent anyone. My life is surrounded by males, not females. God, I don't like women! They don't say what they mean or mean what they say. I like guys better because I always know where I stand with them. This isn't fair. I've been tricked into doing this meeting by John. I didn't ask to do this service.

I rambled on until I ran out of protests. Finally, I was quiet. What I heard next surprised me with its simple directness.

"Lisa, I like women."

Fair enough.

I should have already known this, but for some reason this revelation reverberated through my entire being, bringing my scattered thoughts to full attention. I was silenced and my complaints arrested. For the first time, I realized my anti-female

sentiments were insulting to all his daughters and my sisters. In that moment, I knew the mandate that he had whispered into my heart nearly a decade earlier was about to begin. I dreaded it. I felt completely ill-equipped for it, but I could no longer avoid it. Inwardly, I surrendered, and I nodded a yes as I whispered, “But . . . you never sent me a mentor.”

I don’t know what I expected to hear, perhaps “Sorry”? But what I heard was, “Lisa, for you there will be no mentor.”

This answer felt so sad, so final. Wasn’t I worthy of a mentor? I felt a profound sense of loss. I could not imagine I’d be able to do anything but fail. I buried my face in the pillow and cried. I felt doomed to loneliness. But before I went too far down that path, the Holy Spirit redirected my focus.

In my mind’s eye, I saw a massive chain descending from the sky. This chain was strong, but it wasn’t a chain that imprisoned; its links adorned. Each link was perfectly formed and glittered with the warmth and brilliance of gold. I looked up but couldn’t perceive where the chain began. I did notice where it ended. It stopped abruptly and was followed by an empty space, where a link appeared to be missing. After this gap, another length of chain began. This chain hung in midair, suspended but isolated from the last link in the first long chain. This void became my focus. As I wondered why there was a disconnect, in my spirit I heard, “There has been a break from one generation of women to the next.”

I sensed I was seeing in my spirit the very thing I so keenly sensed the loss of in my life. I heard, “I don’t want a mentoring of pride. I want a mentoring of brokenness. I want mothers. Be that woman.”

The idea of me ever being that woman was laughable.

“I don’t know how to be that woman,” I protested.

“Yes, you do,” he countered. “Everything you wish another woman would have been to you these last eight years, you begin to be.”

As though to comfort me, the Holy Spirit whispered, “Lisa, write it backward. Then be what you needed.”

Maybe that would work.

My heavenly Father asked me to be the woman I’d looked for.

I took up pen and paper and began to imagine her. As I caught glimpses, I wrote. What did I hope she’d see when she looked at me? How would she treat me? What did I need from her?

I hoped she’d see promise and potential in me yet help me to grow beyond my fearful weaknesses. She would protect, nourish, and nurture what was on my life. She would open the pages of her own stories so I could learn from her struggles. She’d teach me to laugh at my future even as I cried in the moment. She would be there for me, but rather than being *on my side* (for, surely, I can be wrong), she would be *by my side*. She’d be caring rather than controlling. She’d tell me truth in ways I could hear it. She’d open the treasury of her life and teach me the wisdom of God’s seasons and the rhythm of his timing.

I was thirty at the time, half the age I am now. I remember I was afraid those openings would allow the wind to blow into places I wasn’t ready to explore. The breaches exposed portions of my life I didn’t feel equipped to address. As time passed, I learned it is better to acknowledge our gaps than to excuse, deny, or avoid them. I’ve learned to embrace the light of revelation they bring into my life.

*She’d teach me to
laugh at my future
even as I cried in
the moment.*



For three decades now, I've ministered to women. I've spoken at conferences around the globe and read countless letters, emails, and social media posts. I've had the honor of discipling women up close and from afar. It matters not whether I am in America, Egypt, Iraq, or Europe, women are hungry for more. They realize there is an aching need for deeper multi-generational connections. Both the young and the not-so-young mourn the gap but don't always know viable ways to bridge or fill it.

For far too many spiritual mothers and daughters, there is a yawning gap that has left both ends of the age spectrum at risk. Not long ago, I was speaking at a conference with a younger woman who is a powerful minister. I invited her up to my room for coffee. At first, she declined. Then she decided to accept and she joined me. She apologized for avoiding me earlier and explained that she'd already been betrayed and hurt by some older women. I empathized and explained that was not who I wanted to be in her life.

Navigating these disconnects requires courage because the loss of connection threatens all. I haven't always done this well, but I am committed to building differently in the future. How about we let go of the past patterns and change this? As God-related women, it's time to push aside the hurt and move forward, arm in arm with one another.

Recently, a young woman reached out to me and shared that she wanted to step away from the safe and settled places in her life, but she was afraid. I've been in that place of fear and have journeyed the road she is planning to tread. As a godmother, I assured her, "Scary is God's new fun." Lovely one, if you were meant for safety and ease, you would have been born in another

time period. If you are hoping to live small, put this book down now for there is no reason to engage a godmother. But if you are looking to grow, by all means, grab one!

Sometimes the scariest thing is admitting that there is a gap that you don't know how to fill. Is it a challenge in your marriage? The season of life you're in? Raising your children? Finding your purpose? Where do you need to grow?

No matter what it is, guess what? You were not made to fill all these gaps yourself. You were made for a relationship with a godmother: a woman who worships the one true God and positions others both spiritually and practically to navigate their crucial and catastrophic seasons in life. She will help you find meaning and humor in the mundane. A godmother mourns the losses and celebrates the victories of her goddaughters. She lives with the understanding that being a mother in *any* capacity is the greatest challenge and honor life can bestow. She is there when you need her, yet she has limits and understands God is the ultimate source of life. More than just watching you, she watches over you. She leans in when others have left and loves when others aren't looking. It is my prayer that you will recognize the seeds of an extraordinary life within the ordinary. That what you have now will reveal itself as all that you need to simply begin. By simply opening this book, you've invited growth, and growth always involves a good dose of risk. There will be danger—not to who God created you to be but to the old ways and patterns you've lived.

Sometimes the scariest thing is admitting that there is a gap that you don't know how to fill.

It is my earnest prayer that as you move through this book and not only ponder but do the very things these words awaken

in you, you will find the courage to step into your story. As you look for that godmother to do life with, let my words accompany you and be assured that God the Father is for you. He is ultimately the One who fills every gap.

Godmother Conversation Starters

Do any gaps come to mind? Don't be afraid to answer this because these are the areas of your potential *growth*.

Have you been asking the right questions of the right people to discover the *answers* you need? Or have you simply been speaking to people in your same season of life who have the same challenges?

Are you willing to remove some of your current limits and dream about future *possibilities*?