

The background of the entire image is a white surface scattered with numerous yellow daisy-like flowers and their green stems. Some flowers are fully open, while others are buds or partially open. The stems are long and thin, with small green leaves. The overall aesthetic is bright, clean, and natural.

Katie Orr

# SECRETS OF THE HAPPY SOUL

Experience the Deep Delight  
You Were Made For

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You Were Made For

Katie Orr



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*To Chris.*

My she-shed builder, kid wrangler,  
dinner cooker, and sanity keeper.

I could not have completed  
this book without you.

*Thank you.*

I love you.

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# The Happy Introduction

## **From Stagnant to Flourishing**

I love to work in my flower garden. I have no idea what to do with cucumbers and tomatoes, but give me a potted plant or a bed of bushes and I'm a happy girl. I love digging things up and moving them around until it all looks just as I think it ought. My favorites lately have been succulents. Thanks to the wonder of YouTube, I've learned how to care for and propagate them (make succulent babies) and keep them thriving.

This wasn't always the case. My first go-around with succulents was an epic failure. I purchased a variety of plants in a super-cool-looking pot, and I set the stunning collection in my living room. For several weeks I enjoyed their beauty. But after a while, the leaves of many of the succulents started falling off at the slightest touch. Some of the stems turned to mush. Other plants were growing really tall, really fast, making them look like a lanky inflatable tube man in front of a car dealership. My once-beautiful succulents quickly became a pot of rotting misfits.

After a bit of research, I gathered that I was overwatering the succulents *and* they were suffering from lack of sunlight. So I moved them all outside to a sunny window box, stopped watering them so much, and waited. The plants started growing again! Even little baby succulents began to show up.

My succulents were *finally* happy.

I'm assuming that you picked up this book because you want to be happy. Perhaps, like my poor succulents, you find yourself in a space that feels less than optimal. The words *thriving* and *flourishing* feel far from your reality. The idea of someone picking you up from your current state of stagnation and moving you to a space where you will thrive sounds simply fabulous.

This book is designed to do just that. Over time, trial and error, and lots of study through the Scriptures, I've discovered the secrets to becoming a Happy Soul, and I'm excited to share them with you.

Now, these secrets may not be what you expect. They are certainly not what I thought they would be. For a long time I figured happiness had to do with a combination of disposition, circumstances, and hard work.

I had heard messages of trying harder to chase down my dreams: Make your ideal a reality.

I had received advice to simply shift my mindset: Make the mental choice to be happy.

I had observed women who exuded a carefree attitude and a continually smiling face. I figured I just needed to be more like these happiness superstars.

But each of these "solutions" I tried (alongside many more) never lasted, if they even worked in the first place. In hindsight, I can see that each attempt tried to fix a sad situation with a temporary and ineffective solution. They weren't getting to the real

problem. It was like trying to put makeup on a dirty, ugly pig to make it look like a stunning, graceful swan. A pig is never going to look like a swan, no matter how much you try to dress it up. No amount of cover-up will work to change an identity.

Okay, so I'm not calling anyone here a pig (here's where if we were chatting on our phones, I would add a laughing-with-tears emoji), but I am trying to make the point that these "solutions" for my unhappiness were spiritual makeup at best. They were counterfeits of the real solution.

*Secrets of the Happy Soul* is not meant to be yet another tube of spiritual makeup used to hide your blemishes. I don't want to provide a way for you to simply strive to become a better, happier person. I want to help you uncover the real and lasting way to happiness.

The secrets I'm going to share with you are indeed actionable and transformational, but they all assume that a massive change—a spiritual rebirth—has already occurred. These secrets are not steps to take to become a Happy Soul. These secrets are the natural movements that come over time from a soul who is Happy—the soul who has been saved from their sin and given great grace from God. A Happy Soul is who they already are. This journey is about working out the incredible, life-changing, happy realities that are true of us because of Christ. So this book is not going to give you a checklist to follow in order to reach a happy status. The truths ahead of us are about understanding the implications of and responses to the soul-level eternal life change provided and proposed to us in Scripture.

Perhaps you've heard the Bible referred to as an instruction manual for life with God. In some ways this is true. However, I think a more appropriate analogy is to see God's Word as the spiritual oxygen we need to stay alive spiritually. Without God and

His Word to us, we suffocate our Happy Soul. When we try to live life without God, we may still have a pulse, but we lack the ability to move forward—spiritually speaking—because we haven't the energy to do much but exist. The deep delight we were created for is right under our nose . . . we simply don't have the sight to recognize it or the strength to pick it up.

This is not the life God designed for us. He came to give us *abundant* life (John 10:10), a *successful* existence (Joshua 1:8), a *Happy Soul*. If this abundant, successful, and happy living is what you crave, I invite you to dive in to the Word of God with me as we search for what He has to say about being a Happy Soul.

I want to show you where your soul should be situated in order to thrive.

**PART  
1**

**ABOUT  
THE  
HAPPY  
SOUL**

# 1

## The Pursuit of Happiness

*I have come so that they may have life  
and have it in abundance.*

*John 10:10*

A few years ago an email popped up in my inbox. It was a request from a ladies' group looking for a speaker for their ministry kick-off event. If an event fits my schedule, I typically call the organizer to gather more information about it and to ensure that I can deliver what they want from me. When we got to the topic of my talk, I was a bit taken aback. Typically, I teach through a passage from the Bible that fits the theme of the event and the spiritual needs of the attendees. But this event was different. They wanted me to speak on how I've become the woman I am today.

I had to stifle a laugh.

Not because it was a funny request. People get paid to speak all the time about their amazing success stories—how they made

their fortunes, climbed their ladders, slayed their giants. I laughed because I didn't understand why they wanted to hear a happy success story from me. I'm nothing special. I don't have a flashy rags-to-riches story or incredible tale of flight from obscurity to fame. There is no deliverance from addiction or abuse in my story. I have no major rebellions or recklessness I've had to rebound from. I've lived a fairly normal, level life. I have two loving parents who provided for and protected me. I have an amazing godly husband and three healthy, beautiful kids. In other words, my story is pretty simple. My life is not overly remarkable. I am grateful for the life I've lived, but it's not an adventurous one worthy of getting paid to tell the tale.

Right now, I'm very much feeling those same feelings I did a few years ago. This time, it is over you and me and this book. The fact that I'm writing a book about being happy is laughable.

You see, certain people just seem to be born with a cheery disposition. They are satisfied with the small things in life, continually see the bright side, and always smile when they talk.

I'm not one of those people.

Honestly, I tend toward pessimism, dissatisfaction, and discouragement. Depression runs in my family. I'm a pastor's wife who wakes up some days and doesn't want to go to church. I've been on medication for depression. Twice. There are days I loathe my body. And there are plenty of days I don't want to get out of bed. I yell at my kids, and then I hate myself for it. I lost my twenty-nine-year-old brother to a drug overdose, and the waves of grief from that loss still slam me to the ground. I've cried myself to sleep. My default is to see every glass as half-empty. I also notice the smudges on cups and the teeny specks in the water.

These (and more) are reasons why I shouldn't be able to write this book.

This is me in all my glory: Unhappy Katie.

However, there is good news—and it’s glorious. Unhappy Katie is Old Katie. And Old Katie is dead. The Bible tells me that as a Christian, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). So, yep. Old Katie is dead and now there is a New Katie! “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

New Katie is content.

New Katie loves people.

New Katie isn’t shaken when her world falls apart.

New Katie is patient and kind.

New Katie has an insatiable desire for God and His Word.

New Katie is a Happy Soul.

This talk of my “old self” and “new self” might be confusing. It was to me at first. But the more I spent time reading my Bible, the more I saw what it taught about my spiritual rebirth. And the more I understand what the Bible teaches about being born again, the more I see these realities play out in my own life. One of these new-birth realities is this: God has made me a Happy Soul.

I’ve been a Happy Soul now for almost three decades, and I’ve learned a thing or two on my Happy journey. After searching the Scriptures, I see what God has to offer the soul that *feels* less than happy. I’ve experienced a soul-level satisfaction and joy as I’ve chosen to take God at His Word and follow in His Way. Not perfectly. Not consistently. But over time I have experienced the fullness of being a Happy Soul.

Though I will share my story with you, I want to provide you with more than just what has worked for me. I want to give you timeless, proven biblical principles and promises. I want to point you to the Author of those principles and the Guarantor of those promises. Because if all I give you is my story and my

thoughts and my opinions, then all I can offer you is a laughable example to follow. But if I can somehow lead you closer to the God who has declared me a Happy Soul and led me to live that declaration out, then perhaps these words can be more than just ink and paper. Perhaps they can be the beginning of your own breakthrough.

### **A Deeply Delighted Creation**

Do you have any recurring dreams? I've had one particular nightmare for as long as I can remember. The environment sometimes differs, but the core of the dream is that I'm unprepared and panicked. Typically, I scurry to study for an exam, yet each time I sit down to study, some upheaval occurs. My book disappears, my notes are unreadable, or (the worst-case scenario) I realize I've been enrolled in a class I didn't know about and I'm super behind. But when I try to go and catch up on the course, I never can find the classroom.

Panicked, I run myself ragged. I repeatedly attempt to study and make it to the test in time, but I am unsuccessful, again and again and again. Then (here's the kicker), somewhere along the way, I realize I've been studying and searching all over town in my birthday suit! It is here when this dream of mine delivers the double-whammy of shame. I am stripped of my dignity. I fail at my pursuit of perfection. I wallow in a puddle of pity . . . until my iPhone alarm mercifully jingles me awake.

Ages ago, mankind experienced a real-life nightmare that shattered perfection and introduced incompleteness. Genesis 1 and 2 tell us that God created the world and saw that it was good; man and woman, land and sea, plants and animals were all present, complete, and perfect. They were perfectly holy and utterly happy.

He planted a paradise, with the perfect temperature, the sweetest fruit, and the very presence of God to delight in.

Did you catch that? The Creator of *everything* walked the earth and enjoyed His creation. And all of creation enjoyed Him. God was satisfied with the earth and everything in it, and they were satisfied in Him. Sin was nonexistent; shame was not an issue. Adam and Eve walked around naked! It is impossible for me to imagine any scenario in which being unclothed and unashamed could be true. Even within a safe and healthy marriage, I prefer to be covered up. There is a visceral vulnerability that comes with nakedness, even when there is no good reason to feel that way.

Yet here we have Adam and Eve, who felt nothing wrong with their situation. In their state of flawlessness they had no need for concealment—and this perfection was not solely a physical one. There was nothing but excellence and fullness, satisfaction and celebration, harmony and bliss for these two human beings. They had no unfulfilled longings or unmet needs. Disorder, deterioration, and discord were not in their vocabulary. Adam and Eve were wholly happy . . . for a while.

You've probably heard what happened. Through the first act of sin—a decision which at its root doubted the plan and character of their Creator—Adam and Eve fell from flawlessness. Their independence and disobedience immediately swept them away from the bliss that was all they had known: endless delight, personal perfection, and a comprehensive satisfaction in God and His good plan. Through this fall from flawlessness came far-reaching physical, emotional, and spiritual ramifications that extended to the rest of mankind. That includes you and me. And so our spiritual DNA has been forever altered, and now death, disease, and discontentment are our default.

Though we've lost the perfection of paradise, the longing for this Golden Age remains. God created mankind to be absolutely happy. Our cravings were completely satisfied in Him and our feelings perfectly directed by Him. Pleasure was abundant. Peace and contentment ruled. Though the benefits of Eden were lost, a desire for perfection, a longing for satisfaction, and a craving for contentment and pleasure lingers. These are all leftover cravings for a perfect garden relationship with our magnificent God, and they are existent within every soul. Yet because we are stained with sin, we can no longer enjoy the unhindered presence of God, and our yearnings are trapped within us. These dissatisfied longings point us to all that was shattered through the fall. And now, we are each, in our own unique ways, attempting to fill the void that was once filled with the presence of God who walked in the perfect garden with His people. Yet we also each have the consuming stain of Adam within us, a propensity to forget the goodness of our Creator and His excellent plan, and so we try to satisfy these innate longings through things other than the companionship and comfort of our Maker. We have a tendency to ignore our lack of ability to get things right, and downplay our need for a much better way than what we are currently experiencing.

We are all seeking out the original state of perfect human Happiness.

### **The Need for Transformation**

If you were to pull up into our home's driveway, to your right are huge split-leaf philodendrons. These resilient plants cover a lot of ground, and their large leaves make dramatic, long-lasting fillers for my vases indoors. However, much to our frustration, they keep growing out and into our driveway. Behind them is a good six to

seven feet of potential ground for them to take over, yet they keep leaning in toward the driveway. With their four-foot stalks, they impede our ability to drive up and down our driveway without running into the plants. We've pruned them time and time again, but they just keep coming back.

When you take a step back and look at our house from across the street, you can see that old oak trees cover much of our yard, especially on the side of the driveway where the philodendrons are. From that perspective, we can easily see why they keep moving into our driveway: The plants are slowly yet continually inching out of the shade. They reach and reach and reach, trying to grab all the goodness of the sun they can get. Why? Because they are happiest in the sun. If you have certain houseplants, you can see this in action as well. Oftentimes, the plants will twist and turn to lay out their leaves in the space where they can catch the most sunshine—because the sunshine makes them happy.

Just like these eager residents of Kingdom Plantae, you and I are constantly searching for what will help us flourish—so much so that we will turn and bend to expose ourselves to find what will make us happy. The problem is, we don't always recognize exactly what will bring us true and lasting growth. Our sense of direction is often off and we chase after the promise of pleasures that never truly satisfy.

If you and I could get honest—really honest—with one another, I think we would both admit that deep down we hold an innate dissatisfaction with life as we know it. Yet so often our Facebook feeds tell a different story. I get it, who wants to update their status with “I really hate my life right now”? Sunday mornings at church are not much different. There have been so many times where the last place I wanted to be was in a room full of smiling faces asking me, “How are you?” Because I know that most of

them don't *really* care to know how I am in that moment. Or if they did, in the middle of the right aisle, two pews from the back, doesn't feel like the best place for me to break down in tears. It just becomes easier to pretend everything is simply great, while a deep dissatisfaction looms.

This longing manifests itself in so many ways. But if we take a long, hard look at what it is we really want, we'll see that what we really want is to be back in the perfect garden with our Creator. Because it is only in His presence that we are completely delighted, perfectly peaceful, and absolutely satisfied. My soul longs for happiness. Your soul longs for happiness. Every soul on this earth longs for happiness. But on our own, we will never find it. Nothing and no one will bring lasting, soul-level satisfaction. So we keep leaning and longing until we find the paradise we are looking for. There is a massive something that keeps us from experiencing the fullness and delight of Eden; this barrier keeps us from the deep delight we were created for.

My alma mater is Auburn University. Known for its Southern charm, deep traditions, and over-the-top hospitality, Auburn, Alabama, has been dubbed the Loveliest Village on the Plains, and it holds a very special place in my heart. The traditions of Auburn are sacred to the Auburn family. Undoubtedly, the most unique tradition of Auburn University is that of "rolling" Toomer's Corner. This is where, after an athletic victory, thousands of crazy fans descend to the intersection of Magnolia and College—where the corner of campus meets downtown Auburn—and we throw rolls of toilet paper into the large oak trees until it looks like a winter wonderland. As those old oak trees are rolled, fans chant cheers, sing the alma mater song, and celebrate until they're too tired to stand. As crazy as it sounds, it is a staple in an Auburn fan's life. We win, we roll!

Sadly, in November of 2010, the eighty-five-year-old Toomer's Corner trees were dealt a mortal blow when a disgruntled University of Alabama (Auburn's biggest rival) fan quietly poisoned the Toomer's Corner oak trees. Using a strong herbicide, the Alabama fan sealed the fate of those lovely live oak trees. The man, known as "Al from Dadeville," called in to a radio show to brag about what he had done, saying, "They're not dead yet, but they definitely will die."<sup>1</sup>

No one knew the trees were in trouble until the crazy radio rantings were confirmed by soil testing. Every effort was made to save the trees, and though the trees looked fine, they were indeed doomed. The trees had been killed the instant the poison entered the soil. The beloved Toomer's Corner trees were eventually removed, the soil wholly replaced, and new trees planted in their place. No amount of physical work could save those trees. This was devastating news to the Auburn community.

Unfortunately, you and I are in a similar situation. Because of the fall of Adam, we each find ourselves in polluted soil. And as long as we exist in this sin-stained soil, we are spiritually dead. I know this isn't good news. Nor is it fun coffee shop conversation. But it is biblical. It is our reality. I doubt that sin has ever been a fun topic to address, but it is certainly super hard to talk about today. The moment any mention of "right" and "wrong" is detected, red flags are raised by the world around us, and the condemning labels of "exclusive" and "closed-minded" are slapped on our backs. Yet the Bible is clear that there are rights and there are wrongs. Sin is a reality, not a social construct. Therefore, we all need an intervention. Without rescue, any pursuits toward "flourishing" are worthless. We may seek to clean ourselves up, and make ourselves better. But no amount of bending toward the light or cleaning up our leaves will work. As long as we are planted in polluted soil, any

efforts made toward becoming a Happy Soul are worthless. This all sounds stark and hopeless, but through the rescue of Christ, *good news abounds!* There is a way out of our polluted soil.

Through Christ, we are transplanted. Through Christ, we receive rebirth.

### **What It Takes to Become a Happy Soul**

During His earthly ministry, Jesus often taught hard-to-understand spiritual realities through parables—stories of spiritual truths through physical examples. In the book of John, chapter 10, Jesus uses the analogy of a door to explain how He provides a flourishing life for those who would seek it. “So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:7, 9–10 ESV). Here we learn that Jesus came to bring us (we’re the sheep in this object lesson) three things: salvation, pasture, and life abundant. These first two, salvation and pasture, lead to the latter: life abundant.

Through Jesus Christ, the sheep receive salvation: protection from what seeks to destroy them. The sheep also enjoy the provision of the pasture, where they will find ample food and water, continual safety, and rest. It is through both the shelter and the bounty of Jesus that the sheep obtain the life He came to give them. The word *abundantly* here means a life “beyond the norm.”<sup>2</sup> This is not referring to the physical life that everyone has. It is an exceptional, extraordinary life. This “beyond the norm” abundant life, green pasture, and eternal salvation Jesus promises is obtained through Him: the door of the sheep. And here we arrive to the first reality about becoming a Happy Soul: It starts with the work of God.

***Becoming a Happy Soul takes a work of God***

Throughout the Old and New Testament there is an important thread of teaching about a covenant relationship between God and His people. Covenants were an important part of life in that day and age, and God used their familiarity of the formality of covenant agreements to communicate His commitment to them. From Genesis to Revelation, we are taught that God is a faithful, merciful, righteous God who desires to be in a relationship with mankind and also to bless His people with His presence. Throughout the Bible we see that God offers us an abundant, beyond the norm, full life through entering into a covenant—an eternally binding—relationship with Him. The Happy Soul life starts with entering the “door of the sheep.” It is through this door—a recognition of our need for Christ—where we find the place in which we were created to flourish. Jesus is the gateway to paradise. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:27–28).

The Bible also makes it clear that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). He is not *a* way, *a* truth, *a* life. He is *the* only way to know God. He is *the* only ultimate truth. He is *the* only way to abundant life. Therefore, our Happy Soul journey must start with Jesus. He is the door to the Happy life we seek.

This life is beautifully portrayed in Psalm 23. You’ve probably heard this promise-filled poem before. Read it again today, slowly, looking specifically for all we gain through a covenant relationship with our Good Shepherd.

The Lord is my shepherd;  
I have what I need.  
He lets me lie down in green pastures;

About the Happy Soul

he leads me beside quiet waters.  
He renews my life;  
he leads me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even when I go through the darkest valley,  
I fear no danger,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
as long as I live.

Psalm 23:1-6

No wants.

Still waters.

Restoration.

Nothing to fear.

Comfort.

Food on the table.

Overflowing provision.

Unshakable goodness and immovable mercy.

The very presence of God.

Now, don't you think that sounds like the makings of a Happy Soul? Doesn't this look like the good life we're searching for? Once again, we see a description of life beyond the norm for the sheep who enter into the protection of the Shepherd. These promises are primarily spiritual, not physical. Spiritually speaking, when we enter through the door of Christ, we find protection, provision,

and the extraordinary life. We are not to read these verses and assume that we are promised protection from cancer, car accidents, or other calamity. Nor are we promised a healthy bank account, a full belly, or all our dreams fulfilled. However, *eternally* speaking, we can be free from fear, perfectly provided for, and enjoy life everlasting.

Here's the bottom line: We can never be happy without God in our life. And by "in our life," I'm not talking about simply changing the music we listen to, attending church, and adding a few Christian titles to our bookshelf. I'm talking about a life change. A rebirth. A soul-revolution. Through Christ, the status of our soul moves from dead to alive, condemned to forgiven, orphaned to adopted, chosen, beloved, and blessed. Through Christ alone we can become a Happy Soul.

As you read these words, you may be nodding your head, saying, "Yes!" and "Amen!" You have experienced this new birth and there is no doubt in your mind that you too have been declared righteous by our Holy Judge. You know where you will be for eternity, and you look forward to that day when you will see your Savior face-to-face. If this is you, rejoice! Though the excitement and joy and fulfillment you may see in other Christians seems to elude you, regardless of how you *feel* in this moment, if you are in a relationship with Jesus, you are already on the Happy path. The Happy Soul life is not reserved for the super-spiritual. There are no classes of Christianity. All of God's promises are for all of God's people.

Now, perhaps you're scratching your head, not quite sure if all of this is actually what you've experienced. Maybe you walked forward at a church service long ago and repeated a prayer someone dictated to you, but you're not quite sure if it "took." Perhaps you've grown up in church most of your life and have always

considered yourself a Christian, but you don't feel very close to God. Or maybe you've just recently begun attending religious services or exploring Christianity through books, and you're hoping that your actions might demonstrate to God that you're interested in Him. These are all great actions to take! However, these actions do not and will never save you. The Bible clearly teaches that we are not saved by our works—we do not earn eternal salvation through good actions. This is actually a comforting truth—because I get it wrong all the time! One day I may have a “good works” day, but the very next day I choose poorly. Salvation is not based on what we do. Salvation is based on what Jesus Christ has done for us. This is indeed extraordinarily good news.

Salvation is a gift of grace from God. Grace is unearned and freely given. In this case, the gift of grace is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, which paid the penalty our sin deserved. Every sin deserves a punishment and separates us from a holy God. Jesus' gift of grace has the ability to restore the garden-relationship with God. We can now hold on to the promise of one day experiencing His presence as Adam and Eve once did.

The Bible calls this gift of grace the Gospel—the good news about what Jesus has done for us. Since Jesus has already lived a perfect life and has already paid the penalty of our sins, we don't need to wait until we have the entire Bible read and figured out to receive this gift. We don't have to clean ourselves up before we come to God. Through the Gospel, we can receive both forgiveness and cleansing from our sins, and therefore a renewed eternal relationship with God.

It's important that we get this straight, because knowing we have eternal security affects our every moment. If we live uncertain of our destiny, it will rob us of our joy, our peace, and a sense of purpose. If you want to be a Happy Soul, it starts with the eternal

security we receive through entering a relationship with Jesus. It begins when we know Christ personally—not just know *about* who Jesus is, but really know Him. This eternal security doesn't rest on anything we have done. It all depends on what Christ has done for us—His great work of grace. Our only part is faith.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

Romans 3:23–24 NLT

### ***Being a Happy Soul takes a work of faith***

I was born a Christian . . . or so I thought. I grew up in Christian school and have always been around God's Word and God's people. I have early memories of summer Vacation Bible School puppet shows and my Precious Moments Bible. I attended Wednesday night kids' programs at church and got all A's in Bible class. I caught on to the do's and don'ts of Christianity and followed them faithfully. I knew "the prayer" of salvation—I'd heard it a bazillion times and prayed it several times myself. I thought I comprehended what it took to become a Christian. But I was not a Christian. I went to Christian school, I did Christian activities, and I said Christian things. But what I didn't get was that doing all the Christian things and knowing all the right answers wasn't enough. Knowledge didn't make me a Christian. Going to a Christian school didn't make me a Christian. Being a good girl didn't make me a Christian. Deep down, I knew I was missing something . . . but didn't quite know what it was.

I knew *about* Jesus but I didn't *know* Jesus. I knew *about* His death on the cross, but I wasn't trusting in Christ to take care of

my sin problem. I had been trusting in the knowledge and goodness of Katie. I had been trying to take care of my sin problem through being good and doing right. Gratefully, one day I realized that it is not enough simply to know intellectually that Jesus came to save me from my sins and give me the “life beyond the norm” He promised. I had to do something about it. I had to respond. And one afternoon, sitting in my bedroom, that reality hit me: I didn’t really know God personally. So then and there, sitting on my forest-green-and-maroon paisley bedspread, I recognized my need for rescue and that Jesus was the only one who could save me. Through this first act of repentance and surrender, I went from death to life, from sinner to saint, from hopeless to Happy.

Looking back, I can see that before my salvation moment, I didn’t really think I needed saving from anything. I was a pretty good girl who often thought, *Are my sins really bad enough that Jesus needed to die for them?* I knew all about Jesus and the cross, but I didn’t depend on it because I didn’t really believe I needed it.

My first action of faith started with a recognition of my sin problem. We all have a sin problem. We all need rescue. And all we need in order to be rescued is to place our faith in our only hope: Jesus.

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8–9

### ***Being a Happy Soul takes a “working out”***

Sears, Roebuck and Company used to sell a product called the Modern Home. Between 1908 and 1940, over seventy thousand of these fully sized houses were purchased and delivered.<sup>3</sup> Yep, you heard me correctly: Customers could browse the catalog, pick out

their perfect floor plan, and a build-your-own-home kit would be delivered to the customer via train. Once the home arrived, the new homeowner had all the materials needed to create their dream home. Their house had arrived, but there was still much effort put forth to make their dream home a reality.

Through faith in the work of Christ, our Happy Soul “dream-home kit” has arrived, but there is still work to be done in order to bring it to full realization. It took me a very long time to realize this. I thought that because I had salvation, I would no longer struggle. I believed that the Christian life was supposed to be easy and that my soul should be *automagically* filled with happiness and joy, fulfillment and success. However, I missed all the Bible verses that state that this life on earth is hard, experiencing and enjoying God takes cultivating, and this world is not my permanent home. One day, when I am in the unhindered presence of God, I will be content and fulfilled 100 percent of the time. But now, as I wait to see Him face-to-face, I get to join God in the work He is doing in and around me to build me up into the Happy Soul He’s created me to be.

This is what Paul meant in his letter to the church at Philippi when he told them to “work out your own salvation” (Philippians 2:12). Just like some members of the builder generation put together their mail-order Modern Homes, we have work to do to build the Happy Soul life God has gifted us. All the materials we need have been paid for in full, and we are officially “happy homeowners.” With the grace of God as our foundation, the work of Christ as the doorway, and the Word of God as our blueprint, we can move forward in the construction of our Happy life.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10