

You're Going to Be Okay

*Encouraging Truth Your Heart Needs to Hear,
Especially on the Hard Days*

Holley Gerth



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14 15 16 17 18 19 20 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Poppi,
Hollie Brookshire,
who has lived well for almost a century.
Thank you for showing me what it means
to choose resilience, joy, and love.



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Introduction



If your life isn't perfect, this is for you.

If you've ever been disappointed, this is for you.

If you sometimes have bad hair days, this is for you.

If you've dreamed a big dream and then watched it fall apart, this is for you.

If you are human and live in a fallen world, this is for you.

She tucks her head in her hands for just a moment, then looks up with a sigh. "It's been a tough day," she whispers with a half smile. I nod in agreement and touch her hand with mine. "I just need to know . . ." she continues. "I just need to know I'm going to be okay."

Don't we all?

I remember being a newlywed with a husband who was trying to figure out how to help me. He would offer advice and solutions with such good intentions. Finally, I stopped him and said, "This is what I need to hear: just tell me I'm going to be okay."

I hear the same from women all across the world. I've heard it in conversations, in emails, as a life coach, when I've been a speaker, and when I worked as a counselor. We don't want more

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II

Holley Gerth, *You're Going to Be Okay*

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“how-to” or to be told what to do. When life surprises us, smacks us on the behind, and runs away with our dreams, it’s our hearts that are left standing there hurting. Our heads know the truth. We understand what’s supposed to make it right in that moment. But somehow even the truth can ring hollow sometimes.

So what do we do then? Is it even possible to live with joy, resilience, and strength in this broken world? After connecting with thousands of women about this topic, searching Scripture, and living my own journey, I can say without reservation: *yes!*

And it’s not just possible; *it’s what God desires for you.*

Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Take heart.

What does that even mean?

That’s what we’ll explore in these pages. How our hearts can deal with the dog messing up the rug and the devil messing up our lives. How we can face little irritations and life’s big tragedies and still thrive. How we can bounce back faster and fall down less. How we can spend more of our time living and less of our time regretting.

Is this easy? Nope. Nothing worthwhile ever is. Research shows that almost half of your happiness can be attributed to one factor: you.¹ How you react to life turns out to be far more important than what life throws at you. When you decide to take charge of your heart, everything changes because *you* change.

This book isn’t for victims.

It’s not for whiners.

It’s not for pessimists or perfectionists.

(And, yes, we’ve all been all of those, and we can learn to be different.)

It’s for people.

Women like you.

Women like me.
You are stronger than you know.
You are loved more than you realize.
You are part of a greater plan, and nothing can stop God's
purposes for you.
You're going to be okay.
I promise.
And what's even more important: God promises too.
Take heart, friend. Good things are ahead.



1

Who You Are Is Still the Same



Stressed.

Tired.

Depressed.

Anxious.

Frustrated.

Broken.

The labels stick to our hearts, covering our identities until we can't see who we are anymore. We come to believe that our struggles and circumstances define us. But those are just descriptions, not determinations. Who you are doesn't change based on the kind of day, week, or year you have. You are a daughter of God, a holy princess, a woman loved beyond all you can imagine. *No matter what.*

A friend going through a difficult time called me. As we talked, she kept repeating the same phrase: "I guess I'm just the girl who

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has this struggle.” I finally stopped her and said as gently as I could, “That’s *where* you’re at right now. It’s not *who* you are.”

You see, life’s obstacles are temporary. Who you are is eternal.

My husband and I recently visited Canada for a few days. Imagine if we stepped into a coffee shop, the baristas asked, “Who are you?” and I answered, “I’m a Canadian, y’all.” They would take one look at my touristy tennis shoes and listen to my Southern accent, then shake their heads in bemused disagreement. I imagine you would do the same. Because you understand this: there’s a difference between a visitor and a citizen. And “our citizenship is in heaven,” declares the apostle Paul (Phil. 3:20).

When we look at what’s happening in our lives and say, “This is who I am,” it’s much like me declaring myself a Canadian just because I crossed the border. As my friend and fellow writer Jennifer Dukes Lee recently wrote me in an email, “We don’t have to be a ‘citizen’ of the ‘place’ we’re standing in right now. I’m not a citizen of Sad City, a resident of Rejectionville, or a townspeople of Trouble Town. I have a citizenship in heaven.”¹ Your circumstances may change, but who you truly are remains forever the same. Your identity is eternally secure in Christ.

What are the words you have been using to describe who you are based on where you are in life right now? Write three here (for example, stressed, divorced, sick, lonely):

Whatever you wrote is where you’re at, not who you are. It’s your current location. To help shift your perspective, rewrite those words as phrases that show they aren’t part of your identity. For

example, “I’m going through a stressful time right now” or “I have experienced a divorce” or “I’m battling an illness.”

Once you know who you’re not, it’s time to ask God one of the most important questions of all: “Who am I?” Perhaps there’s no more important time for seeking these answers than when we’re in the middle of a bad day or hard season. We lean into God’s heart and ask, “Who am I *in spite of this*? Tell me what’s true about me no matter what happens.”

I love how Hebrews reassures us, “It is impossible for God to lie” (6:18). Your circumstances will lie to you. Your emotions will lie to you. Even other people will lie to you. But not God. And because of this, “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (6:19). Your identity is secure. Nothing going on in your life can change it.

So how does God answer that question? What does he say to us about who we truly are? Let’s look at what he says is true of you, no matter what you are going through today.

You Are Loved

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Worrying that our circumstances can separate us from love isn’t a new idea. The apostle Paul reassured some of the earliest Christians:

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor

anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39)

What the enemy tries to whisper to us whenever we struggle is this: “If God really loved you, this wouldn’t be happening.” In other words, something is *wrong* with you or everything in your life would be *right*. But we live in a fallen world. We are broken people. All of us face hardships and have obstacles to overcome.

Have you believed this lie?

I am not really loved.

If so, then it’s time to trade it for the truth.

I am infinitely loved.

God’s love is so extraordinary that the psalmist declared it to be “as high as the heavens are above the earth” (Ps. 103:11). If you need a reminder, step outside and try to find the end of the sky. That’s how much you’re loved.

We all hear this lie at different times in our lives. Pause and consider when it impacts you most. For me it’s when I have so much on my plate that it feels more like a platter! A few months ago I found myself in an especially busy season. I spoke with my fabulous life coach, Denise Martin, about it. I said, “I feel overwhelmed, and so I must be a failure. And if I’m a failure, then I can’t really be loved.”

She quickly responded with a question. “Holley, what does being overwhelmed have to do with being a failure or being loved? It just means you’re really busy!”

Because I tend to believe that I have to earn love by being productive, when my to-do list doesn’t get done, I assume I can’t be loved. I hope you’re reading this and shaking your head at how silly this sounds. But that’s exactly what happens—the moment we call out those inner lies, we can see them for what they really

are. As soon as Denise spoke, I knew she was right. I let out a big sigh of relief as I realized God's love for me doesn't change based on what I accomplish. Instead, it's a free gift.

Think about your life. I shared that I often believe love is earned through what I do. What is it for you? Here are some common beliefs about love being conditional:

If I am perfect, I am loved. So if I'm not perfect or my life isn't, then I must not be loved.

If people approve of me, I am loved. So if someone is upset with me or I let someone down, I must not be loved.

If I am happy all the time, I am loved. So if I have a bad day or go through a difficulty, then I must not be loved.

Your turn—fill in the blank: *If I am _____, then I am loved. So if _____, then I must not be loved.*

These false beliefs trap us in a vicious cycle. We try harder and harder to meet the standards so that we're loved. But doing so only leads to exhaustion, which makes it more difficult to try harder, which makes us feel more unloved, and on we go. This is especially true in challenging times because we're desperately looking for a way to make things better. We think if we can fix ourselves, then we can fix our lives. But trouble comes to us all. God doesn't promise a problem-free existence. Instead, he offers unconditional love as a shelter for us even on the most difficult of days. Taking refuge in him requires *receiving* and not striving.

God reduces all of the false phrases above to one simple truth: *If you are mine, you are loved.*

You don't have to earn, prove, or strive for anything. And no matter what comes your way, God's love for you doesn't change. Being loved is not just a circumstance in your life; it is who you are.

Yes, it's true.

You are loved.

You Have a Purpose

Stress makes us shortsighted. Our bodies are wired in such a way that when our fight-or-flight system is triggered, we react. We're not thinking noble thoughts about the meaning of life or world peace. We're just trying to save ourselves. That works well in temporary situations; for example, when a bear comes charging out of the woods at us. The trouble is, many of us live in *chronic stress*. That means the stress reaction becomes a lifestyle, which carries a high cost. It takes a toll on our health as well as our relationships. And it makes us forget that we are on this earth for a purpose. We're here not merely to survive but to accomplish what no one else can.

Before you ever came into being, God had a purpose in mind for you. As he alone watched your body being formed in your mother's womb, he already knew what was ahead. "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).

When life comes along and slaps us silly, it can feel as if God's purpose for us has now been cancelled. But nothing can stop his purposes for us. Scripture is full of stories in which people found themselves in difficult circumstances that turned out to be part of God's mysterious plan.

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery because of their jealousy. Then his master's wife falsely accused him of rape, so he landed in prison. But God acted on his behalf, and he ended up second in command of the whole country, which enabled him to save the lives of God's people during a famine.

Esther got drafted into the royal harem along with hundreds of other women. Taken away from everything she knew, she had one shot to win the king's favor. She did so and became the next queen, which eventually gave her the opportunity to rescue the Jewish people from the plot of a wicked man.

Jesus himself faced death on a cross and what seemed like the ultimate defeat. Instead of being welcomed as Savior, he experienced betrayal, mistreatment, and abandonment. Yet three days later he victoriously and joyfully rose again to rescue us all from death.

Just because your circumstances are hard doesn't mean God's purpose for you has changed. Joseph, Esther, and even Jesus could have said, "I must have done something wrong. Look at what's happening to me! I'm going to give up and just hang on until heaven." Instead, each one looked past the present and held on to an eternal perspective.

You have not been sidelined.

You have not been disqualified.

You have not been placed on the bench to wait out the rest of the game.

God's purpose for you *will* prevail. In all of history, no person has ever been able to thwart God's ultimate plan. He isn't shocked by the brokenness of this world or even our personal failures. He can redeem and reroute as much as is needed to get us to the destination he has in mind.

Don't let the enemy lie to you, sister. You have a purpose. Right here, right now. In the middle of all of this. You don't have to wait for things to get better. You don't have to wait until you get your act together. You don't have to wait until heaven to experience "life to the full" (see John 10:10).

At this point, some of you may want to throw this book across the room. If so, that's totally fine. Just try not to hit anything breakable.

Those emotions come because life's hard times make us tired. And when we're tired, having a big ol' purpose can feel more like a burden than an opportunity. If you feel that way, tell God. Tell him you're tired. Tell him you're mad. Tell him you don't even really want to do anything worthwhile right now. Then ask him to accomplish his purpose through you anyway.

That's the secret: we don't have to carry the load of living with purpose. We can embrace it, celebrate it, cling to it—but we don't have to make it happen. Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails." Our role is simply to be willing, to open our hands and hearts and say, "God, I'm a mess. My life's a mess. I don't even have a clue what I'm doing. But I'm yours. Thank you for creating me with a purpose. Thank you that nothing and no one can destroy that purpose. Use me."

You are valuable, my friend. Of great worth. God is going to use you in unexpected, powerful ways.

You have a purpose.

You Are Irreplaceable

A popular commercial shows a woman approaching a display of the Crown Jewels in a museum. She asks the museum worker to tell her how much they cost because she'd like to buy them. He insists, "They're not for sale, ma'am," to which she replies, "I'm not trying to haggle with you. Just shoot me a number." What she doesn't understand is that the Crown Jewels are priceless because they are irreplaceable. They're not mass-produced. They're one of a kind. So are you.

As I write this, over seven billion people inhabit our planet. But there is only one you. And for as long as the world continues to exist, that will remain true. God doesn't have a plan B for your life. He doesn't have a backup plan for the gifts he's placed within you. You're our one-shot wonder at getting you.

When we're stressed or going through a difficult time, we can quickly lose sight of our worth. We feel small, unseen, incapable, and of little value. It seems everyone else is doing better, has

more, or is really making a difference. But not us. We withdraw and start believing we don't have anything to contribute—at least not until things are better in our lives.

But there is only one answer to the question, “When and where does God want to use me?” and it's always, “Right now, right here.”

You may think you have nothing to offer. You may want to run and hide. You may tell yourself, “I'll only be in the way.” But still God asks, quietly and persistently, “Will you let me use you, right here and right now?”

Your weaknesses and struggles are not reasons for him to give up on you. Instead, they're opportunities for you to show his strength in ways you simply can't on your best days. The apostle Paul wrestled with a “thorn in his flesh” (see 2 Cor. 12:7). We don't know what it was exactly, only that it was an ongoing source of difficulty for him. He begged God to take it away, and many of us are familiar with the divine response. God said, “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9 NKJV).

In other words, the very places and times when you feel God can use you least are when he may actually shine through you most.

For those of us (like me) who thrive on feeling capable and as if we have something to contribute, this can be hard to take. For much of our lives we may have lived with a feeling of pride over what we could do, what we could offer. Or at least those things provided us with a sense of security. Then we find ourselves stripped bare. When God uses us in those moments, it's humbling because we realize *it never really has been about us*. At first we're offended. Maybe even a little ticked off. All this time we've worked so hard, and God can use us when we feel as if we have nothing to offer at all? Yep. And hopefully, that initial shock leads to a new sense of freedom. We can stop our striving. We can give up working so crazy hard to change the world. We can release our expectations and instead open our hands as well as our plans to God.

Here is why you are irreplaceable: because you are made in the image of the God who created the universe, and there is a part of who he is that gets shown only through who you are. Sometimes that happens through our strengths. But sometimes it's through our cracks that his light shines the brightest. On your hardest days and in your best moments, it's still all about him.

Breathe out a big sigh of relief and surrender. Offer yourself to God and say, "Lord, I don't know what I have to give right now. I feel empty. I feel broken. I feel weak. But you are in me now just as you are in the times when I feel the strongest and most capable. I want the world to receive what you have designed me to share. I yield myself to you. Use what little I have to make much of you."

You are irreplaceable.

You Are an Overcomer

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Her shoulders slump as she slides into a chair in my counseling office. Her eyes and face speak volumes before she ever says a word. "I feel defeated," she whispers. I nod. It's understandable. The battles she's faced. The way she's fought. The war waging in her world.

I dare to smile just a bit and say, "You may have lost some skirmishes, but that's not who you are. You're still an overcomer." She leans forward, smiles back, shakes a little of the tension off her shoulders. She looks stronger already.

When we have a weak moment, a bad day, a tough year, the enemy of our souls taunts us. "You've lost," he hisses. But that isn't true. The reality is, *we can't lose*.

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one

who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Rom. 8:33–37)

Oh, we get knocked around in this life. We have bumps and bruises. Even our Savior left this world with scars. But that doesn’t mean we’re defeated. This matters because it changes how we fight. Imagine being a soldier who’s going into battle. Your commander tells you, “We have already won. All you have to do today is go in there and obey my commands. Victory is sure.” You would fight with less fear and more faith, less hesitancy and more certainty, less regret and more intensity. This is what’s true of us.

Even when the disease returns.

Even when our spouse decides not to stay.

Even when we relapse after promising we won’t ever again.

I don’t say that lightly—oh, how those blows hurt. We ache. We feel the pain. We are human, and that is inescapable. Yet we don’t have to let our wounds define us. Like we talked about before, *what happens to us is not who we are*. Even in those moments and circumstances, our identity remains secure.

What has happened to you that has made you feel defeated?

Now add God's perspective to what you listed above.

*In all these things, even in _____
(write what you shared above here), I am more than a conqueror
through him who loved me.*

Defeat is not your destiny. You belong to the One who overcame even death, and that means there is nothing too difficult for him. It also means you can't make him lose. Read those words again slowly: *you can't make him lose*. That matters because the danger of feeling defeated is the shame that comes with it. Have you ever heard these thoughts slip through your mind?

You've let God down.

You should be ashamed of yourself.

How can you not be doing better by now?

Those are the sinister whispers of defeat. And they are lies. God's victory in this world does not depend on you. It depends on one thing alone: Christ's death on the cross and resurrection three days later. You can't lose the war for God or for yourself. It's not about you or me at all. We simply get to partake in the victory. That means there is no shame in losing a battle now and then. It simply means we are imperfect people in a broken world.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.* Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate

of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:10-17, emphasis added)

You may have skimmed the passage above (confession: I sometimes do that), but I want you to at least go back and read the words in italics. What we are called to do is simply this: to stand. Not to conquer the world. Not to be the greatest warrior ever. Not to never feel weak or afraid. *Just stand.*

Stand on God's promises.

Stand on faith.

Stand on the hope that victory is sure.

You have already won. You can't be defeated by anything in this life or the next.

You are an overcomer.

You Are Enough

I oversleep again. And a voice whispers, "What's wrong with you?"

I snap at my innocent husband as he pours his cereal. And a voice whispers, "What's wrong with you?"

I let down a friend. I don't finish a project. I forget to feed the dog on time. And I hear again and again, "What's wrong with you?"

I slip into bed that night with a sigh, pull the covers over my head, and close the day with this question: "What's wrong with me?"

When we fail, struggle, or face obstacles, it can make us feel we are not enough. Surely we must somehow be inadequate or this

wouldn't be happening. If only we could be stronger, do more, get better, then things would be okay. *We* would be okay. We become the judge and find ourselves lacking.

Are we enough?

There are two answers to this question.

The first is, of course not. We're frail. We're human. We fail. None of us is perfect.

But because of what God has done for us, because of Christ who died for us, because of the Spirit within us, that's not the final answer.

The second and truest answer is, yes, we are enough and so much more.

I shared this story in my first book, *You're Already Amazing*:

"Lord," I asked, "why do women feel as if we're not enough?"

It seemed I heard a whisper in response: "*Because they're not.*"

For a moment I thought I had some holy static happening.

"Excuse me, God, it sounded like you said we're not enough. Could you repeat that, pretty please?"

Again, gently and firmly, "You are not enough."

By then I started thinking perhaps my heart had dialed the wrong number and the devil was on the line. But in that pause it seemed God finished the sentence: "You are not enough . . . *in me you are so much more.*"

- We are *much more* than pretty . . . we are wonderfully made.
- We are *much more* than likeable . . . we are deeply loved.
- We are *much more* than okay . . . we are daughters of the King.

I think the enemy tricks us into believing we are not enough because he knows if we discover the truth, we'll be unstoppable.²

More than anything else, the lie that we're not enough is what trips women up when we struggle. I've seen it happen again and again as a life coach and counselor as well as in my own life. The reason is that *as long as we believe we're not enough, we also believe we have to make up for it*. So instead of running to Jesus, we flee to self-improvement, trying harder, exhausting ourselves. But there is a better way. *Receiving*. Letting God fill up our "not enough" with his infinite love, grace, and strength until we're overflowing. "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

In Christ, we have everything we need. We are all we need to be. We are rescued from ourselves and from that question that haunts us, "What's wrong with me?" Instead, we can ask, "Who's within me?" The answer is an infinite God who knows no limits, who hung the stars in place, who hears our every prayer and directs our every step. He offers a fullness that can't be taken away by bad days, weak moments, or even life's greatest tragedies. Yes, we grieve. Yes, we face loss. Yes, we let people down and let people go. But in all of this, who we are is not diminished because the One within us can't be diminished. That never changes, no matter what.

You are enough.

Hold Tight to Who You Are

When we face hard times, bad days, and stress, we see the immediate dangers like lost time and sleep. But the greatest risk can

be harder to recognize: losing our identities. Who we are can be covered by our circumstances until the challenges we're facing are all we can focus on when we look in the mirror.

You are not what happens to you.

You are not where you are right now.

You are not your weakest moments or biggest struggles.

Can I lean in and whisper that to you? Oh, friend, I'm praying with all my heart right now as I type these words that you believe it.

You are loved.

You have a purpose.

You are irreplaceable.

You are an overcomer.

You are enough.

This is what's true of you—no matter what your day holds. Don't let your circumstances define you. Instead, hold on to who you really are. To what God whispers to you. To the identity he's given you that's eternally unchanging.

You are who he says you are.

And you are *his*—forever.