

warrior chicks

rising strong
when life
wants to take
you down

holly wagner



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Holly Wagner, *Warrior Chicks*

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*dedicated to Leslie,
one of the bravest warrior chicks I know*

I loved *Warrior Chicks*! Holly did a great job in communicating the picture of women being strong and standing up to fight.

LTC Beth Garrity Marchman
U.S. Army (Retired)

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thanks

I am thankful for so many things . . .

Thank you to my God, for showing me the path of life.

Thank you to my husband, for the encouragement and the never-ending love.

Thank you to Jordan and Paris, for letting me tell your stories.

Thank you to my Oasis family, for your support as I continue to work out the way of the warrior.

To Ashley, for the thoughts.

To Lisa, for the help.

To my friends, for the endorsements.

To my fellow warriors, for your stories.

introduction

I have always been told, “You have to choose your battles.” This is probably good advice in marriage and parenting—however, some battles I’ve had to fight, I did not choose.

They chose me.

I did not choose to battle cancer.

But I knew that in order to survive it, I had to fight.

There is a verse in Proverbs 31 that used to annoy me.

It said that I had to rise “while it is yet night.” *What?*

I do my best sleeping while it is “yet night,” don’t you?

But I found out that verse has more to say than just the time of day you get up. It has everything to do with being a woman who “rises” in the midst of hard times. When darkness and chaos abound, the woman, the warrior—*you*—rise.

I think our world is looking and waiting for a company of people who will rise in the midst of hard times. It would be so much easier to sit, to give in, to give up.

I know.

We have all felt like that.

We can’t make the mistake of thinking that we are living in peacetime.
We are not civilians.

We are either a casualty or a warrior.

Choose.

But how about if together, we decide to be those women who rise?
I will if you will.

As a nation, we may not have wanted to enter the fight against terrorism, and whether or not you agree with the methods our country is using, we can probably all agree that it is a battle worth fighting.

You and I may or may not face actual invaders into our homeland, but we will all face battles. Whether we ever wear camouflage or not, being warriors is in our DNA. And the better we are at being warriors, the more equipped we will be at winning the battles we have been destined to win from all eternity.

Did you enlist in this battle . . . or were you drafted?

“Soldier” is a position.

“Warrior” is an attitude . . .

Benjamin Martin, in the movie *The Patriot*, wanted nothing more to do with battles.

He had seen enough bloodshed in his life.

He just wanted a simple life.

He wanted to live in peace with his family. (Don't we all?)

He changed his mind and entered the American Revolution when his son was killed and his home burned down.

The cause, which had been big and impersonal, now became personal. So he entered the war. He realized that some things are worth fighting for.

He enlisted.

My friend knew that there were thousands of unwanted babies dying of AIDS. It broke her heart.

She kept waiting for someone to do something.

She waited.

The need was so great.

Who would help?

She waited.

She heard a voice from heaven: "You help."

So she did.

She started orphanages to take them in.

She enlisted.

I know the tragedy cancer brings.

It knows no age restrictions.

It makes no distinctions based on ethnicity.

I knew it had killed millions and fighting it was certainly a worthy cause to financially support. I had just never entered the battle, not until it touched my life.

Only then did I walk to raise money.

Only then did I begin educating myself on health and nutrition.

Only then did I directly start influencing the people in my world to make lifestyle and health changes.

Only then did I consume massive quantities of wheatgrass and kombucha. (Don't ask.)

The war had touched me personally, so I became a warrior.

I was drafted.

Are you facing a disintegrating marriage?

Are you worried about the decisions your teenager is making?

Are you losing the battle of faith?

Does the plight of the orphaned children in Africa touch you?

Are you wondering if you will ever get married?

Are you angered over the plight of young girls who are kidnapped into the sex trade?

Are you uncertain about your career direction?

Does the unwed, pregnant teenager move you with compassion?

Is your health in crisis?

Has your heart been broken?

Hello, soldier.

Welcome to life as a warrior.

chapter 1

bellisima!

You are so beautiful, my beloved, so perfect in every part.

SONG OF SOLOMON 4:7, NLT

Screams are heard all over the community.

A young woman is awakened from sleep.

Wave after wave of fear spreads through homes as a vicious band of terrorizing outlaws invades her homeland.

Her aging father receives orders to rejoin the army and go fight the invaders.

Her heart breaks as she sees him accept the orders.

He limps into the house in order to prepare to join the battle in the morning.

Later that night she quietly sneaks into her father's closet and takes his armor.

He is too old for this battle, so she will fight on his behalf.

She uses his sword to cut her beautiful long black hair. She wraps a cloth around her chest, concealing her breasts. She puts on her father's armor, picks up his sword, mounts her horse and stealthily leaves her home in the middle of the night.

Knowing that her deception could cost her life, still she directs her horse to the camp of soldiers who are training for war.

When she arrives, the soldiers do not see a woman. They see a young boy. She maintains the disguise as she prepares for battle.

She becomes a fierce warrior and is part of some great victories. Yet only when her disguise comes off and her fellow soldiers see her as the woman she is does she achieve her greatest triumph: saving the emperor.

Thank you, Mulan.

The Nazgul, a servant of the enemy, races to destroy the king of Rohan.

The flying beast's ugly face is fierce and determined.

Princess Eowyn knows that in order for this battle to be won, everyone must do his or her part.

She puts on her armor and heads to the battlefield. She knows the Nazgul is going after her uncle, the king, so she races into the battle.

The Nazgul taunts her, saying, "You don't get between me and my enemy."

As the princess waves her sword, he continues the taunt. "No man can kill me!"

She boldly proclaims, "I am no man!" (I love that part.)

Then she stabs him. (That part's not bad either!)

He falls to the ground, never to rise again.

You rule, Eowyn!

Her people have been oppressed for years.

They are tired and afraid.

Now a new enemy threatens them.

While the armies battle it out, the enemy leader escapes.

He comes to her tent.

She is probably terrified.

Despite what she fears, she offers him refreshment and a place to rest.

While he is sleeping, she looks around for a weapon.

She can't find her husband's armor.

And his sword is nowhere to be seen.

She looks for something she can use.

She spies a tent peg and a hammer.

A tent peg.

Could it be that easy?

She approaches the enemy and hammers the tent peg through his temple.

Using what she had, she defeated the enemy.

Way to go, Jael.

I am not sure why we always think that someone else's armor would be better.

Someone else always looks more qualified.

If I could just look like her, then I would be beautiful.

If I just had what he had, then I would be successful.

We question whether we can really win this battle simply with what we have—ourselves.

Why is it that we feel the need to be someone else? Why don't we see ourselves as good enough?

Well, I don't have all the answers.

But I do have a few thoughts . . . (shocking, I know!).

If I were the enemy, devising a strategy to defeat humankind, the first thing I would do is make people question their ability. I would lie to them so that they would doubt their purpose. I would keep them focused on their weaknesses so that they would never harness their strength.

I remember hearing about POWs in Vietnam who were tortured to extract classified information. One of the tools that the enemy used was deception. The torturer would say, “Your country has forgotten all about you. You don’t matter to them.” If the enemy could get the captured soldier to believe that, then they could probably get the information they needed. And it all started with a lie.

We do have an enemy. His greatest weapons are lies and deceptions. In fact, his only weapons are lies and deceptions.

He looks for our weaknesses and then attacks. Don’t become his prisoner. He can make you think . . .

That man would be better for me than my husband.

I deserve this sickness.

There are so many problems in the world. Nothing I do will make a difference.

I can cheat on my taxes; everyone does.

I don’t deserve to be loved.

I am not enough.

I don’t have what it takes.

All lies.

If the enemy can get us to believe his lies, he can win a battle or two.

If he can get you to question God’s love for you . . .

If he can cause you to look in the mirror and see failure . . .

If he can get you to doubt who you are . . .
 . . . he might be able to stop you from fulfilling your purpose.

Don't believe the lies.

A recent issue of *People* magazine featured a list of the "World's Most Beautiful People." When interviewed on television, one of the editors said that beauty was "obvious."

Obvious to whom?

Who determines what makes someone beautiful?

The editors of a magazine?

I don't think so.

Most of us look at fashion magazines and feel depressed shortly afterward. Why? Because we feel as if we can never measure up. When we look in the mirror, our imperfections shout loudly at us.

"Big pimple in middle of forehead!"

"Serious baggage under eyes!"

"Very large nose!"

"Lots of crow's feet!"

"Disappearing lips!"

Those women in the magazines look perfect. But I would like to let you in on a little secret—shhhh—the women in those photos aren't perfect, either. I know.

Because I was once one of them.

I showed up on modeling assignments looking anything but perfect. It took hours of hair and makeup geniuses, hemorrhoid cream on

puffy eyes, tape to hold everything together, Photoshop to get rid of the pimples—all to create an illusion. Honestly, there were times when the image was so fictitious it might as well have been a cartoon!¹

If we are to become effective warriors, the first war we must win is the war to believe that we are beautiful. And these battles are fought on the inside. We can certainly change our outer appearance and use weapons to wage a war against aging, but unless we conquer the battle to see ourselves as beautiful, external changes won't help.

I recently interviewed Jennifer Strickland, who at one time was a model for the designer Armani. She told stories of the price she, and other young women, paid to look “perfect.” Every single young model she encountered was either using drugs or dealing with a serious eating disorder.

She told of one model who was known for her smile.

In fact, her smile graced many billboards advertising toothpaste.

She looked “perfect” and happy.

In reality, she threw up nine or ten times a day and was desperately unhappy.

She looked in the mirror and saw flaws.

She saw what she wasn't.

I have read articles and heard various news stories of women around the world who are desperately trying to change themselves into some elusive image of beauty. There are young girls in Japan who are putting steel rods in their legs because they think that taller is beautiful.

Who said?

There are women in India who are paying to have their skin lightened because they think lighter is beautiful.

Who said?

There are some Asian women having surgery to have their eyes made rounder.

Who said that round eyes were more beautiful?

Why is it that we always see someone else as more beautiful?

The only way to defeat this way of thinking is to look in the mirror and shout (go ahead, shout it out loud!):

*I praise you [God] because of the wonderful way you created me.
Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt!²*

In fact, why don't you just whistle at yourself right after you shout! We were created in the image of our Creator, and He calls us beautiful . . . marvelous. Every curve, freckle and strand of hair is beautiful.

I get this picture of God right after He created us. He looks at us and does the Italian thing with his fingers against his lips, shouting, "*Bellisima . . . perfetto!*"

God has declared that we are marvelous . . . beautiful.

Yet we don't really believe it, so we look and wait for someone else to tell us. Some of us dress in such a way to show every curve and all our cleavage (if we are lucky enough to have some ☺), hoping that someone will say we are beautiful. But our Creator has already said it! You *are* beautiful. No matter the shape of your eyes, the size of your nose, the color of your skin, the texture of your hair or the smoothness of your skin—you are beautiful!

Most of us have probably seen the movie *Shrek*. At the end of the movie, after a "true love's" kiss, Fiona is disappointed to find out that she has not turned back into a woman, but instead remained an ogre. She looks at Shrek and says, "I was supposed to be beautiful." He replies, "But you *are* beautiful."

You and I have been given “true love’s” kiss by our Creator. And He says we are beautiful.

Jesus told us that one of the most important things we can do is love other people. In fact He said that we are to love them as we love ourselves.

We probably do.

That may be why we are not that great at loving others—because we are not that great at loving ourselves.

I wonder if it isn’t a slap in God’s face when we don’t like who He made us to be and want something else. Yes, we are supposed to learn from those around us, but we are not to try to become them! We each have a role to play on the planet, and we will only be effective at doing it if we are comfortable in our own skin.

Being inspired by other people is good.

Comparing ourselves to others is not.

We can never be anyone else.

We can only be who God made us to be!

A water-bearer carries two large pots on a yoke across his shoulders up the hill from the river to his master’s house each day. One has a crack and leaks half its water out each day before arriving at the house. The other pot is perfect and always delivers a full portion of water after the long walk from the river.

Finally, after years of arriving half-empty and feeling guilty, the cracked pot apologized to the water-bearer. It was miserable. “I’m sorry that I couldn’t accomplish what the perfect pot did.”

The water-bearer said, “What do you have to apologize for?”

“After all this time, I still only deliver half my load of water. I make more work for you because of my flaw.”

The man smiled and told the pot. “Take note of all the lovely flowers growing on the side of the path where I carried you. The flowers grew so lovely because of the water you leaked. There are no flowers on the perfect pot’s side.”³

I would first like to say that there is no “perfect” pot. All of us have a past or hurts or issues we are dealing with.

The point is that our past—or what we might see as flaws—can create beauty. You and I must understand, really understand, all the way to our core, that we are beautiful. Just the way we are.

Only when we realize this will we be able to extend our hand to help—which is one of the reasons we are still breathing. We were created to join God in doing the work He does, the good work we had better be doing.⁴ Believe it or not, God is counting on you and me to co-labor with Him to bring His love and goodness to the planet. We are not just spectators; we are participants. And being a participant in His army makes us soldiers. And if we choose, we can become a warrior—and since we are beautiful, that makes us beautiful warriors!

I think there is a difference between a soldier and a warrior. Being a soldier is perhaps a good place to start. Every army is made up of soldiers. As soldiers, we are positioning ourselves for battle. That’s good. It is certainly better than the position of spectator.

A soldier is a person who serves in an army, a person engaged in military service. This word comes from the Old French word *soudoior* and is derived from the French coin named *sou*. A *soudoior* was a man who fought for pay.

There is nothing wrong with being paid to fight. Our soldiers currently engaged in battle around the world are drawing a salary. But if we are going to win the war, soldiers must become warriors.

A warrior is one who is engaged aggressively in or experienced in battle. A warrior possesses the dedication that money can’t buy. A warrior is someone who fights, not because of what she is getting out of it, but because of what she can give. A warrior is a soldier

with a “die for the cause” attitude. A warrior will do whatever it takes to ensure victory. A soldier signs up to join the fight; a warrior stays until it is finished.

I heard a Marine recently say that during wartime the number of people volunteering or signing up to join the armed services drops significantly. Most are just interested in the GI Bill. They don’t mind joining the army; they just don’t want to go to war. It seems that not as many want to participate while the battles are raging. Sometimes I wonder if this isn’t like lots of Christians (not us, of course!) who want the benefits of serving God but don’t really want to pay the price. People who want the results of victory without ever lifting their sword. Not sure that will happen.

We won the American Revolution, not because our soldiers were better trained, but because our soldiers became warriors. The British were not fighting for their homeland—we were. As a rag-tag group of warriors, we defeated highly trained soldiers. We did whatever it took to gain freedom.

Soldiers became warriors as they walked miles with no shoes.

Soldiers became warriors as they suffered a winter in Valley Forge with no blankets and very little food.

Soldiers became warriors as they trained day after day in the snow.

I am asking you to begin the journey toward becoming a warrior. It is the only way we can win the battles that life throws our way. And you’re not becoming just any warrior—but a beautiful one.

It is in your DNA.

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself, but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

Sun Tzu⁵