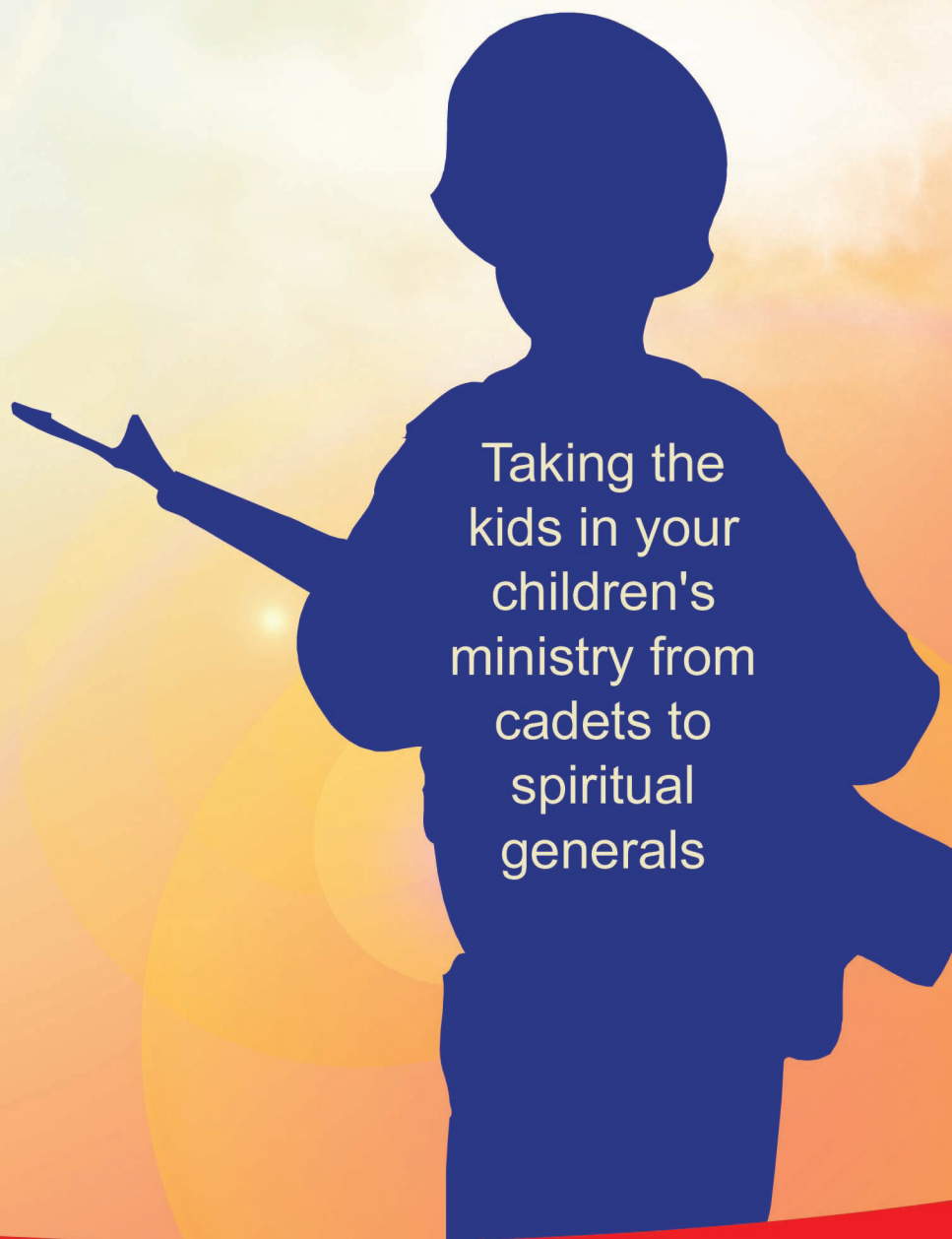


# Rise up Warrior



Taking the  
kids in your  
children's  
ministry from  
cadets to  
spiritual  
generals

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Los Niños Cuentan



# Rise up Warrior!

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# Rise up Warrior!

I would like to thank my parents, Mike and Vickie Kangas, for giving me a solid childhood where I could thrive and make decisions to follow Christ. They pushed me in the right direction, and saved me from wrecking my life on several occasions. Thanks guys. I couldn't have done any of this without you.

I must also thank my husband, Dwight Krauss for pushing me and encouraging me constantly in the right direction, and never letting me wimp out or quit when I wanted to. It's still always going to be your fault for dragging me into missions, but I'm ever so grateful to you for it. Thank you baby. I wouldn't have the ministry I have without you.

# Preface: Why this book?

Years ago, I was sitting on my bed, having a girly visit with my sister Suki, when all-of-a-sudden I knew it was TIME. My little sister Suki was in Jr High, and needed some training on what the real life is all about. It was time for her to open her eyes to the real Christian world around her and see exactly what was going on. It was time she knew about the “double life” epidemic, and the realities of Christianity. It was time for me to tell her all about how girls hope for prince charming, and how they go about picking their husbands and then in many cases, later are terribly sorry about their choices. It was time for her to know how to wait on God for the right husband, and that required a whole lot of motivation.

It was time I was honest with her.

Now, I know that we are not to judge others. But in the privacy of my bedroom, sitting there having a deep conversation with Suki, I started talking real to her about how to choose a husband. I couldn't see any way around it, but to use real names and real examples and talk to her about what really went down. I must have given her 10 different examples of people she knows and people I knew, and then I shared with her my story.

Her eyes just about popped out of her head, because she had never really spoken about other people like that. You know, we usually don't talk about other people and their mistakes. But, I could see no other way to get the real point across. So I talked about REAL people and

*It was time I was  
honest with her.*

REAL mistakes or wins they had made.

Since then, I have had a special relationship with Suki, where in real time, I could point out to her a difficult decision that a friend of ours was facing. If they didn't choose to lay something down to God, what it would look like; and we could watch in real time as someone failed or succeeded.

You see, over the years, my parents gave me permis-

sion to speak into her life and help train her in some of the important matters. They had her when I was 18, we were 3 children raised together; Laura, Jon and I, and then Suki came along just as the three of us were heading off to figure out who we wanted to be. She was our little Suki, as though she had 5 parents to love on her, and we all doted on her very much.

I would take her out to lunch or have her over for a full craft day, beauty day, or whatever; and always be sharing things about God and about my relationship with Him.

Then my husband and I moved to Mexico as missionaries, and I couldn't see her year-round anymore. So we set up a deal with our parents, and every year she would come down and live with us for the summer, and I set in earnest to train her how to become a strong Christian and a missionary someday.

She ended up coming down 6 summers straight while she worked her way through high school and University. Then the miracle happened, and she chose to become a full-time missionary herself! She raised her support, and moved down to live and work with us full-time. Praise God!

So there we were, Suki and I having ourselves a little girly visit, when God opened my eyes to the next step for her; real slavery to God. I didn't hesitate to share it with her, and we separated to pray, each to our own rooms. All the while my husband was hiding out somewhere, letting us have our girl time.

As I started to pray, God spoke to me very clearly, “Is Suki the ONLY one who will get this training?” There was a pause. Then God hit me with a big blow to my gut. “Will you write it all down for others?”

At first I was intimidated, because mostly all I have written is Sunday school and VBS lessons, but I was comforted that it must be similar. Fear, of course, was next, “How will I ever remember all those stories and lessons God took me through?”

God just smiled and said to me, “I'll remind you.”

And so, it is time for the children in your ministry to go

thru the same training that Suki received over the years. It's time to be honest with them about the realities of Christianity.

No more double-lives and no more fakin' it. Life is too important to live that way. Brace yourself, because it is time to make some changes, and it all starts with YOU.

*Brace yourself, because  
it is time to make some  
changes, and it all starts  
with YOU.*

I would like to give you a warning. For this to work for you personally, I must be very blunt, and talk about my real stories. This won't work as a theory book, and besides; we have lots of those already. I fully believe that everyone already has WAY more information than they need. You don't need another study guide on how to live the Christian faith. You need to have your eyes opened to the reality that most Christians are NOT actually living all that stuff that they are studying.

You need the good 'ol truth, plain and simple.

# 1 Are you worth the bother?

God knows each one of us by name and has a perfect plan for each of our lives. But then we go and mess things up. Then God has to switch to plan B for our lives, then plan C and so on. At some point, you can get to where it doesn't really matter what you do.

Imagine God managing a group of Christians in a parking lot, each of us in our own cars. He has several hundreds of cars under his command. He chooses to post one at the entrance of the lot to protect it, one maintains a perimeter to strike if needed to defend the lot, another is out scouting an enemy's location, and another is posted across the city at another parking lot. Then there are some cars that are just parked about in the middle of the lot. He tries to communicate with them to send them on a mission, but they do not move. They listen to the radio and God's commands coming to them. They say "yes sir" but they still do not move.

They get together in circles and talk about what it would look like if they moved their cars. Then they pray about God's protection on their cars, if and when they decide to move them. But they remain parked.

This may go on for a while, but let's be realistic.

Pretty soon God is going to quit giving them orders.

If you are a car that is parked in the middle of the parking lot, and you haven't obeyed the orders you were given over the last couple of years, I have some bad news for you. I don't think you will be used by God any time soon.

Realistically, it seems to me that there are actually thousands of Christians all parked together in a group, studying the Bible together and worshiping God, but not actually moving their 'cars'. Worshiping God and studying His Word is not the same as obeying His orders.

The God of the universe actually wants to talk to YOU personally and have a relationship with YOU. He actually expects you to listen to Him and obey Him. Things are not just cut-and-dried, a list of religious rules to follow. Different people get different orders.

If you are in that parked group I hope that by reading this book you will be motivated to take action on God's instructions. Get moving, and do something. For all of you who are looking to grow and mature in your spiritual walk, this book has the potential to help you. I hope you choose to follow God's orders, and do what God asks.

*The God of the universe  
actually wants to talk  
to YOU personally and  
have a relationship with  
YOU.*

It seems to me that some Christians can get away with whatever they want to, while others of us are stuck on strict orders. Perhaps it is because they are “parked cars.”

I have been a Christian for 35 years, and yet God has me on some very strict orders. I don’t get to do whatever I want with my life, like I see others getting away with. There are times I am tempted to be jealous of their “freedom”.

God set us free “to be free indeed”, right?

*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

**Galatians 5:1**

But that is talking about following the law, including all kinds of religious rules. That is not what I’m talking about. I am talking about when you actually ask God what He wants, and give Him the reins to your life. He is the boss and can ask anything of you.

Verse 13 of the same chapter says:

*“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh...”*

And in verse 16:

*“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”*

So, in the end, we are free; but cannot do whatever we want.

God is offering the best life to all of us, but some people honestly just are not accepting it. I call it the “best life,” but when you are given an order that is hard to follow, sometimes it doesn’t feel like the best life.

Early on in my life, God asked me to sacrifice having

a family. God asked me if I would be willing to allow Him to decide when and IF I would ever get pregnant. God asked me if I would instead serve Him with my whole life, 40 hours a week; just grinding away on an assignment that He would give me. At the time, I didn’t know what the assignment was going to be.

What assignment could be worth sacrificing having a family? I couldn’t think of anything so valuable.

But, I decided then and there that the only way to actually live this Christian life is to go all-in. How could I say “no” to God? Thankfully, I had a husband who understood, and also wanted to serve God with his whole heart and life.

But nothing makes what God asked of me any easier. I have had people treat me like I had no faith, or that I must be in sin to not be able to get pregnant. I have had so many people over the years lay hands on me and pray for me to get pregnant. Each time someone prayed, I also asked God if maybe this time my orders had changed. Every time He would say no. So I quietly let people pray for me; knowing the whole time that God was saying, “NO”. They wouldn’t understand that God had actually asked me to give that up, so I didn’t tell them.

Dwight and I have found many little pairs of baby shoes that were hidden in our home by well-meaning Christians. I have also been treated like I was being unfair to my husband, not allowing him to have a family.

I have been tempted to try medications or adopt children. But every time I was tempted, God asked me the same question again. Are you willing to let me be boss of your life or not?

Was I going to take my life back into my own hands, or let Him run it? For me, this was the most costly thing God has asked: to give up having a family. I have had strict orders to not go to the doctor, not investigate my infertility, not foster children or adopt children. My orders were to just let God have my life. When God decides I can have a family; that is when I will get pregnant: no sooner and no later. It is in God’s hands.

And so, sometimes allowing God to be the boss is difficult.

But, of course, the joys far outweigh the pains, and the fulfillment of actually participating in the army that is making a difference in the WAR is such a great feeling! It would be worth it if it was just for here on earth. But as you know, God also promises us great rewards in heaven!



*“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”*

**1 Corinthians 9:24-27**

I now enjoy a ministry I would never have dreamed of having. It took 25 years of training, but now literally millions of children around the world are using my curriculum in Sunday school. I have a ministry that is making a difference in this world. The way to get here was painful and I broke a sweat. But, in giving up my life to God; I found it.

“I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God’s hands; that I still possess.”

Martin Luther

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Jim Elliot

*“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”*

Jesus Christ (Mathew 16:24-25)

And so I ask you, are you a moving car? Then read on! You are worth it. And if you are a parked car, decide right now to change. Believe me, it’s worth it!

*Are you willing to let me  
be boss of your life or  
not?*

## 2 We are at war

Dust was flying in my face as we drove down the familiar wash-board road towards the villages we had ministered in years ago as missionaries in Sonora. El Diamante, Caborca, San Felipe, El Ultimo Esfuerzo... and the list of towns we had worked in went on and on. I was so excited to greet the people again and see their familiar faces. What will have changed?

The roads looked the same and so did all of the cacti. Of course the children I had ministered to in my Sunday school class will have grown up some, but I hoped to find at least a few of them and catch up on their lives.

We rounded the corner into El Coyote, and my gut felt like spaghetti. It was heavy with excitement, but

all jumbled up with nervousness. I had poured years of my life into the people of this little village. The first home we visited was full of screams of excitement and hugs all around. I asked about a few of my students. My “auntie” Sofia had a solemn face as she tried to not give me all the bad news at once.

At one house we visited, they were quiet as the girl who was in my class bounced the baby on her lap and looked ashamed. She had run off with a boy who wasn’t a Christian, and they were not married, but living together. She wasn’t going to church anywhere.

From what I could piece together from all the stories, and the other homes we visited, the spaghetti in my



stomach turned into cement. The children I had worked with had not stayed with the Lord. Not one.

What had gone wrong?

I'm sure you already know this, but we are currently at war against the powers of darkness. Jesus Christ is our commander, and has a full army of people; one that crosses the globe, speaking every language on the planet.

God has an air force, marines, navy and infantry army. He has everything any earthy military would, and is in the middle of a full-on war with the enemy. Only He is fighting for each life on this planet. And God wants you and I to participate in the area of service we are given, and fight like our lives depend on it.

Because many lives DO depend on it.

The largest battle I believe we are fighting is for the next generation; our children. And sadly, the enemy is winning.

How could I say such a thing? Because, I'm tired of all the pretending. Just look around. The TV is screaming the enemies' values at our children, as well as the video games, and the messages they receive in school. They receive hours and hours of brainwashing every day, compared to the couple of hours we get at church on Sunday. I see many churches where the children are not choosing to follow Christ. They hang around in youth group because it is fun, but then they quit attending church when it becomes their own decision.

Barna Group is a large company that researches many things for the body of Christ, and their studies show that a child has made up his mind on what he believes by the time he is 12! I appreciate that Barna has done this study, but I can confirm it with real life. It is easy to see that if you don't train your child before they reach 12, it becomes very difficult to change their mind.

You and I as the Body of Christ, and especially those of us working in children's ministry, from every denomination and from every country of the world, MUST step up and fight for our children. We are on the front line of a major battle. It's time we admitted it, and did something about it.

It's time we made some generals for God's army. Not to mention first Sergeants, Sergeant majors, corporals, majors, and specialists. There are way too many privates running around following orders from other privates.

I believe that God is looking for more 5-star generals in His army right now, and I would like to be one. I know

it's crazy and arrogant to go for it, but really, why not? Didn't God ask us to strive for the things in heaven?

*"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free."*

**Ephesians 6:7-8**

*"For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done."*

**Mathew 16:27**

To be honest, I have no idea how far I have yet to go to become a General. But I do know there is more beyond where I am, and I will continue to press into God and I will continue to learn and grow. Obviously, I cannot share with you details on what I do not know, but God has asked me to write down the experiences and lessons I have learned.

*God wants you and I to participate in the area of service we are given, and fight like our lives depend on it. Because many lives DO depend on it.*

Children's ministry isn't an easy one and definitely isn't for the weak. Children's ministry needs some serious GENERALS out there, and you could be one of them.

Let me better explain the problem.

I held a huge fish in my hand, and thanked the cute little girl for her gift. I had no idea what to do with the fish, so I tried climbing into the back of the suburban to lay it down back there, but as I was on the way up, I lost my balance and fell back down. All the way to the sand, landing on my back, with one arm stretched as high into the air as I could, with this huge fish dangling on it!

We were having an outreach in a small beach town, and my older sister and I were doing the children's ministry while my dad ran the outreach for the adults. We sang songs with a group of 25 kids, passed out a craft and tried in our broken Spanish to tell them a Bible story. At

the end, one of the girls gave me a fish as a gift.

Years later, I was sharing this story with Pastor Gary Duckworth, the children's pastor at our church, and he shocked me with his comment! He said, "You think you were actually making a difference with that outreach?" I said, "Of course we were!" He continued to argue with me, saying that really all I had done was given those kids something to do for an evening. He said, "You were really ministering to those parents, taking away their children for an hour or two so that they could hear the gospel."

I got angry, and couldn't accept his words to me. After all, I had now been doing children's ministry for 10 years! I knew that I was making a difference in children's lives! On that day, I couldn't hear what Gary was saying to me. It took more time, but one day much, much later, his words finally sunk in.

I was visiting with a children's ministry director over a large section, in a specific denomination in Mexico. She shared with me about an event their denomination had, where she was responsible for the entire children's ministry for the weekend. With glee she described how she organized the whole event in detail, and how it went off without any problems. She had planned a fabulous concert for the closing event with the adults, and had spent the whole weekend practicing with the kids the different parts of the concert.

When the event was finished, she shared how the highest ranking leader there had approached her and congratulated her on a job well done. He had even said that he would keep her in mind for future projects higher up in the denomination!

But all of a sudden, talking with her, I remembered Pastor Gary's words to me from years earlier. I finally understood.

This friend of mine had used an entire weekend with those children to entertain the adults! The students didn't learn anything new, except how to stand in a straight line and sing better. These things they are already learning in public school!

I didn't have the heart to tell her what Gary had told me. I just felt tears stinging my eyes. He was right. Real children's ministry is not entertaining the kids, so that the adults can go to church without interruption. Neither is it putting on a nice concert so that the adults are more entertained. That's adult ministry, using the children as puppets.

If we really are at war, a concert isn't going to cut it. Those kids could have spent the weekend learning how to pray! Or they could have been told the truth about church and Christianity. They could have been ministered to.

If we really are at war, coloring pages and memorizing the right "church" answers are not going to cut it.

We are at war, and we must not forget it.

I'm striving to become a General in God's army. Do you want to join me?

*If we really are at war,  
coloring pages and  
memorizing the right  
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not going to cut it.*

# 3 Two lives

I twisted my hair in my hand with nervous energy, an awkward 12-yr old. There we were, all sitting in a circle in Sunday school, and all behaving our very best. Across from me sat the very girls who had been mean to me again this week at school. But here at church, we all pretended as though everything was fine.

This week was especially difficult. This week at school I was in the bathroom when one of the girls from church approached me at the mirror.

“Your teeth are so yellow!” She exclaimed! “Don’t you ever brush them?” Then with a flick of her gorgeous black hair, she left me alone, pushing open the bathroom door and letting it swing itself shut as she strutted out. As soon as I knew I was safe, I started to cry. I looked at my teeth. They did seem more yellow than hers. Had I forgotten to brush them this morning? I grabbed some toilet paper and tried to clean them off, with tears running down my face.

I recalled the recent memory while looking across our Sunday school room at her perfect teeth and thick, black hair. The teacher’s voice busted through my concentration. She needed an answer to some question. I tried to concentrate and asked her what the question was again. What had healed the man, and made him whole? “Faith” I answered. “Great, Kristi” my teacher said, as she continued to babble on. I drifted into daydreaming again.

Things went like this for years.

I learned to memorize whatever the teacher wanted, but none of it seemed to have anything to do with real life. My parents had been missionaries when I was 7-10 years old, taking our family to England and Ireland. But we were back in the states now, and I was in Jr high. I was treated like a “missionaries’ kid” who had to know all the right answers in church, but no one was the same at school, especially not the pastor’s kids.

They all were different.

And so I learned to be different too. I made friends with others who were not Christians but were kind to me. I couldn’t see any reason to be friends with the “Christians” since they were so cruel. They were just too popular to bother with anyone as unpopular as me, at least not in public. Sure, in church they would pretend to be kind, but I knew how they really treated me.

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And so, as I made friends who were not Christians, I began to listen to their music. Then I began to follow their behaviors, and soon I found myself lying to my dad and jamming to music that made me want to have a boyfriend. And of course that didn’t take long to work its magic, and I had a secret boyfriend at school; one that I didn’t mention at home or at church.

I had learned well to keep the two lives separate.

I believe this is an epidemic that permeates all of Christianity. We are stuck in a cycle where people have two lives, two styles of behavior; where Christians are always trying to pretend that all is well. But that isn’t the way God intended for us to live. God’s plan is for us to live ONE life and to actually LIVE that life for HIM.

I’m sure you know what I am talking about, and that you have seen this epidemic too.

It is everywhere: People in ministry, praising God publicly on Facebook about the miracles that happened at the conference, and then talking the gossip about what happened to someone's marriage recently, all behind their back.

But it doesn't end there; they form groups to force someone out of the ministry. They hide their girlfriend from everyone because she is from a different denomination, and they could get in trouble or lose their standing in the church. I've seen someone walk straight into the home of the denominational leader's wife to tell her all about someone, knowing full-well, that person would get fired for it. And sure enough, a month later that person was fired, and the other had his/her place. I'm not dumb, they found some gossip that they knew would get the person fired, and shared it specifically to take that job away from them!

*God's plan is for us to  
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actually LIVE that life  
for HIM.*

I see Christians all the time working the politics to climb the ladder of success in the church. And sadly, it works. Now, I know you want to tell me it doesn't work, and that God is in control. YES, God is in control, but the playing field isn't going to be leveled until eternity rolls in upon us. And for now, here on this earth, playing the politics game really does work! Even at church.

Or maybe I should say, especially at church!

Thankfully in my life, the year I turned 15, I went on a missions trip all summer long to Hong Kong, where I got to smuggle Bibles into China. I still was living two lives, but I was forced to see some other young people who were NOT. I saw some kids who were ONE person, the same in public as in private, and my eyes were opened to see that maybe I didn't have to live two lives. I started trying to be one person instead of two.

Then my dad got another post as a missionary, this time to Mexico, and our family moved from Oregon to Arizona, to live near the border. It was just the jolt I needed. I fresh start, new friends at school, a new situation; and this time, I tried again to be ONE person. I still made mistakes, but I was no longer stuck on the "double path" route.

I had broken free.

# 4

## Climbing the ladder

There is a ladder that we all climb as we grow in our faith and do more for God's kingdom. Only this isn't the same ladder that everyone climbs in the normal way of Christian living. God has a different ladder!

The ladder of starting in children's ministry, then growing to become the youth pastor, then assistant pastor, then finally becoming the main pastor of a church is a totally different ladder that we climb. That is like a fame ladder in the Christian world. I went from making some coloring pages to writing a VBS, to writing a full Sunday school curriculum. I went from providing material for 30 churches to thousands of churches. That is the Christian fame ladder.

God has asked me to write down some steps to the ladder that He took me thru on my journey thru life. The order of these levels that I am sharing in this book is the order that I lived them. Of course God will change up the order for each person and He will always do things a little different.

Now sometimes these ladders can overlap, please don't get me wrong. But the ladder I want to cover in this book is the one I believe GOD himself is looking for. God told us over and over in Scripture that He is looking at the inside of a man, not the outside. It doesn't matter how many books I have gotten to the world, if I don't have what God wants on the INSIDE, He cannot use me in battle the way He needs to. If I am going to strive to become a general in God's army, I cannot bribe Him with all my fame. God knows exactly who I am, for REAL, on the inside. So THAT is the ladder to climb if you want a great post in God's army. And it is the ladder to climb if you want to make a difference for eternity!

This ladder has tons and tons of steps going up it, as far as the eye can see. The steps on this ladder are ALL regarding our inner selves and our relationship with God.

They have nothing to do with our outward accomplishments, whether those are in the church or not. It has nothing to do with my job, my finances, where I live, or even my awesome ministry.

"The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

*It is the ladder to climb  
if you want to make a  
difference for eternity!*

There are many Christians today climbing up the wrong ladder, just as there was in the time of Jesus. God's instructions are to...

*"Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."*

**Matthew 15:14**

The people had their religious rules, including no eating without first washing your hands, but they were still sinning in their hearts. Jesus said to them:

"But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them." Mathew 15:18-20

This applies to all our rules today, just as it did to their rules from Jesus's time. Today in church, we don't have the religious rule of eating without washing our hands. We know it to be a good rule for health, but it is no longer a church rule. But we do have a LOT of rules in all of our churches. NONE of those rules compare with what comes OUT of our hearts.



God cares A LOT about this inner ladder that I'm talking about, and there are more verses ALL over the Bible to prove it.

"If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames." 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

This is the ladder that we want to teach our children to climb. It is nothing like the political mess that sometimes gets into our churches. It nothing like where we climb from children's worker to youth worker, and finally to senior pastor.

Only there is a catch. Unlike the world's ladder and even the church's ladder, with God's inner ladder, you can't skip anything. There is no trap door from step 1 to step 8. There are no good get-rich-quick schemes that work for climbing God's ladder. Like Gordon Gekko in the Wall Street movies, who used insider trading to climb the world's ladder faster. If you try to skip ahead in the spiritual world, you will always get caught in the end and find yourself with mud on your face. It's a slow process and one that will take years. This is one reason why it's so very important to get started with children while they are young! It's very important to get the ball rolling early. And on the right ladder!

OK, here is some plain truth for you:

Almost everyone is climbing the wrong ladder.

They are either climbing the world's ladder to money, fame and fortune; or the Christian ladder to money, fame and fortune.

I would like to open your eyes to GOD's ladder to money, fame, and fortune! (In eternity of course; the delayed payment plan.)

God's ladder is all about Godly character, obedience, faith, honesty, and learning to serve Him fully. God's ladder is where you give Him the reins to your life, and

don't take them back. This means that GOD actually gets to make ALL the decisions in your life.

To be honest with you, I don't think the Christian life was meant to be lived any other way.

But as I mentioned in chapter 1, Christians all around us do.

I see thousands of Christians all around the globe living for the world's fame, or to climb the denominational ladder, all the while allowing their inner selves to remain as childish as babies. I don't get it. Do they actually think they can fake-out God Himself?

The reality is that we need people in all levels, including all the steps on the ladder. The best way to do that is if we ALL start climbing.

1. You and I need to BE climbing at all times. Be an example to the children in your ministry. Your actions speak louder than your words.
2. Get honest with your students. Show them the two ladders, and help them understand which one is the right one to climb.
3. Train the children in our ministries how to climb. In most cases, they are not going to figure it out on their own. YOU are the teacher, make sure you are not having them memorize things and LIVE nothing.

Let's you and I work together to get children on the RIGHT ladder, starting when they are young, so that we have a bunch of trained soldiers for God when He needs them!

It's very important to climb the ladder, only we need to make sure we are on the right ladder first! Then we can grow from cadets to soldiers or from sergeants to majors. We can be used by God to make a real difference in the lives of children around the world.

*To be honest with you, I  
don't think the Christian  
life was meant to be  
lived any other way.*

# 5 Basic Decisions

Ok, let's dive into the grit of the steps on the ladder. You know, the "inner ladder".

There are a few basic decisions that need to be made first if you are going to go thru these steps and climb the right ladder to becoming a General in God's army.

Here is my list of VERY important initial basic decisions; IF that is, you are going to be a "moving car."

## **Get saved**

To start in God's army, you must first be saved. Just because your parents are pastors, or because you have gone to church for a long time does not make you a Christian. You will never be a part of this war until you first join the army. You must go to God directly yourself, repent of your sins, and invite Him into your heart. Jesus says that ALL who call on Him will be saved.

Teachers, at this first step of the ladder, we should just take a moment and have our students ask God if He knows them personally, or if they have been riding on the shirt-tails of their parents their whole life. It's very important, so take the time to make sure your students are children of God; actual Christians.

## **Obedience**

Just like in any army around the world, the first thing that they train after a cadet signs up is obedience. And what they are looking for, of course, is absolute obedience. Don't ask or complain about your orders, just do them. Just say, "Yes Sir!"

The first decision I made early in life was to NEVER ever, ever, EVER say NO to God. When He asks something of me, there are times I struggle, but it always boils down to a decision I made a long time ago to NEVER say NO to God. It really is just sheer, painful obedience.

*The first decision I made early in life was to NEVER ever, ever, EVER say NO to God.*

I don't need to know why or how. I just need to obey. If you have not made that decision yet, I highly recommend you stop reading and do that right now.

## **Get into the Bible**

I am grateful to my parents for my upbringing, where they had me reading the Bible and memorizing verses. But there are also a few other things I did that caused me to have hundreds of verses memorized.

The first was camp. I wanted to go so badly, but my parents couldn't afford it. My church had a program of only 1 or 2 scholarships to camp, and to win that scholarship, I had to memorize a ton of verses. I remember every week quoting verses, and my teacher listening to make sure I got them correct before she marked it down in her booklet. I made it to camp on a scholarship 5 whole years straight, basically by memorizing the Bible. Thank you "First Congregational Church" of Scappoose, Oregon and my teacher Hazel Grubb for sending me to camp, and for causing me to memorize the Bible!

When I was 14 I went on a mission's trip with Teen Missions International to Hong Kong and China. They had a 2-week boot camp where we had to memorize a verse a day, and we were responsible to quote it by the end of the day. Throughout the whole summer long we had verses to memorize, and this added to my Bible memorization.



When I was 18 years old, my parents decided to enroll our family in ATIA, a Christian school program by Bill Gothard. We were only in it for a few years, but during those years, I had to memorize more Bible. Also, my dad assigned me the job of the “Faith Journal” a part of their program where I had to read the entire Bible and write up insights to each book. I was also assigned to memorize whole chapters of Scripture, as well as verses, which added to my Biblical foundation.

Later at 24 I went to Bible school, but to be honest with you, I learned more theory there than Bible.

Of course I still read my Bible, but the reality is that a foundation was laid in my life by Christian kid’s camp, Teen missions, and ATIA. This foundation gave me verses and verses and verses memorized and is priceless to me. God still uses those same verses to talk to me, give me answers to my questions, and lead me in the direction He wants me to go.

## Marriage

For a select few, they will be asked to give up the joy of marriage. But for most of the rest of us, the decision on who you marry is the second biggest decision you will EVER make; only after the decision to get saved.

When you join yourself together with someone else, you will join them on this spiritual ladder journey, so you end up joining with them on the same level they are on. So if you marry someone who is 4 steps behind you, you will jump backward. If you marry someone who is not interested at all in participating in God’s army, your chances will disappear for this journey. And of course if you join with someone ahead of you, you will jump ahead. And sadly, if you marry a “parked car” you will get parked.

This is why I have chosen to put marriage into the basic decision category. If you want to climb this ladder, you must make the decision to WAIT on God for His marriage choice for you. If you are already married and reading this, please remember that God is full of grace and can do miracles. But also please remember that I am talking about raising up the next generation of soldiers for Christ. We must train our children to wait on God for their life partner.

This is one area where you will see Christians all over the place getting married to whomever they want. They are parked cars getting married to other parked cars.

If God is going to send you off to the far outpost, he will pair you with another who is suited for that same

outpost.

If we want the children in our ministries to be “moving cars”, it is of the utmost importance that they let God choose their life-partner. This is no small task, but I know you are up for the challenge.

## Initiative

I believe God is looking for people with initiative. There is something about a soldier who runs two miles when told to run one, or who studies in his free time, or who chooses to be mentored by someone much farther up than him. I believe that God likes initiative in us too.

Early in life, I made a decision to push and show initiative with God. I wanted to show God that He could not only trust me to do what He asked, but that I would go the extra mile for Him. This at times felt totally crazy. I would find myself feeling comfortable with life, so I would tell God I was ready for Him to give me more, and it would feel like immediately everything would fall apart. I would realize that I was the one who prayed for it and brought the pain on myself! I would wish I had not done it, because the stretching really did hurt very badly. (Have you ever asked God to teach you patience?) I don’t recommend that you stop reading and make this decision right now. Maybe you should read the rest of the book and see if you want to actually be a General in Gods army first. If I can convince you by the end, then go for this one too. I do highly recommend it, just not blindly.

## Let God run your life

This is the part where you tell God you belong to Him, and you want Him to run your life. At this point we need to hand the reins of our life over to God. That means you no longer get to make the decisions. You belong to someone else. You signed on the dotted line. You joined the army, and at this point turning back means deserting.

There actually are many Christians out there who sign up, get saved, but then do nothing further. They are those parked cars that stay baby Christians. How can you tell if someone is a baby Christian? It’s easy, by their actions.

*“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.”*

**Mathew 7:16-17**

If there is no spiritual fruit in someone's life, then they are babies, just sitting there doing nothing, getting fed by others from week to week.

This decision to let God run your life is very important. You would think that when you get saved, you are giving your life to Christ, and that is when you give him control. But, for some reason, Christianity in the world today has separated these two. I don't think they should be separate. From what I can tell in the Bible, when you get saved, you should be giving your life to God for Him to run it, but I just don't see it in reality in our churches.

I see people who get saved, love God, worship Him, and study the Bible, but don't allow Him into their life decisions. I see people who don't let Him into the small decisions, and especially not into the big ones.

So, I will separate it out for our church today. God is a gentleman, and will not force Himself on you. If you want Him to run your life, you have to actually let go of the steering wheel.

When this happens, God is faithful to start your training, and start moving you where He wants you.

*God is a gentleman, and will not force Himself on you. If you want Him to run your life, you have to actually let go of the steering wheel.*

## **Repentance**

One day when I was a teenager I wanted to go over to my boyfriend's house for a visit, and God told me NOT to go. So I sat in my car and argued with God for a while. It seemed to finally boil down to kissing, so I told God not to worry, I wouldn't kiss him. God seemed to give in, so I drove over there. It didn't take long and we started kissing.

The whole time I knew I was disobeying God, and my heart ached, but I wanted to do it anyway. Thankfully, I knew to stop and go home.

Something happened that day. My heart got hard, and I couldn't fix it. Days went by and I still couldn't even

feel sorry for what I had done. I had basically promised God that I would go over there but NOT kiss the guy, but I had kissed him. I had fully disobeyed but I couldn't feel bad about it. My heart was cold. Weeks and weeks went by and Christmas approached, with me and my cold heart.

I think some people have had this happen to their heart, but they just leave it that way. I was not happy about my cold heart, I wanted to fix it, but I just couldn't. I prayed, I sang songs to God, and I apologized for disobeying. But my heart remained cold, and I couldn't make myself care much about it.

Then I read a verse that said that repentance is a gift from God. Ah ha!

*"...In the hope that God will **grant** them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil..."*

### **2 Timothy 2:25 (emphasis mine)**

I need God's help to even start the process of feeling bad for what I had done! So I said a simple cold prayer, (because that was all I could muster.) Something like this, "God, would you give me the gift of repentance? I disobeyed you, and I can't get my heart to even care. I need your help."

Christmas morning we woke up to a blanket of beautiful snow on the ground, and all the fun of a delicious breakfast and presents under the tree. Before all the festivities began, all-of-a-sudden my heart just broke into a million pieces and I dropped to my knees. It was crazy out-of-the-blue! I felt a true repentance, and so I snuck off to a corner of the house, got on my knees, and just cried. When I got up, I felt clean, and my heart felt soft. I was ready to serve God again whole-heartedly.

I have since always remembered this experience as a great lesson in repentance. There are times when you can't actually repent on your own; it is a gift from God. But you can ask Him for it, and He is faithful to respond.

Repentance was my favorite of all the Christmas gifts I received that year.

**So these are basic decisions that I believe are what can get you started climbing the RIGHT ladder.**

You must first be saved and then actually give your life to God. No taking the steering wheel back. You are a soldier now, and God gets to make the decisions on your life; ALL of your decisions. You must be completely

obedient to Him. If you are going to actually stay on this ladder, it's of the utmost importance that you marry right, and that you marry someone who is also on this

ladder. You need to know how to repent of your sins, and a little initiative won't hurt you either.

Welcome to the boot camp of basic decisions.

# 6 Life class 101

My sophomore and junior year of high school, I worked at a fast food restaurant, where I learned some basic skills. When I started, I was a sheepish 15-year old who had no confidence, and spoke with a small voice. When I finished that season of my life two years later, I left as a 17-year-old shift manager who was confident and bold.

I am going to call this class "life 101". It included stuff like how to obey your manager; how to treat someone like they are right, even if they are wrong. I learned other things like how to respond to an angry person or how not to tattle on others. There were lots more basic skills like how to listen to your authority and not act like you know everything, and how to take correction without crying or yelling. And one of my favorites: how to find something to do to help the restaurant when the work was slow, without having to be told.

As a manager I learned how to see people's strong points and place them in the right place during a busy rush, and how to catch sneaky people red handed.

This part of Gods training for me reminds me of the book "Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" but for me, it was "Everything I need to know I learned working in fast food."

Sadly, I see adults all the time that somehow missed these lessons. I see adults who yell at a waitress for something the chef got wrong. There are people trying to help at church, but have no idea how to find a job for

themselves.

One guy that my husband and I know is always out of work. He applies for one job, and then waits a whole month until he receives a rejection letter. Then he starts out to apply for another. It's as though he didn't have a mother who taught him to apply for six jobs to see if one of them will work. He also applies for jobs that are way beyond him. Once he applied for a job at the CIA! (For example, to apply to be a professional spy for your country.) There was no chance at all he would get that job, at least from my point of view. But he waited until he got his rejection letter. Somehow he missed some of the "Life class 101".

So, when my sister, Suki, was 16 and needed a job, I recommended McDonalds. She worked there for 4 years, and I received flack from everyone for encouraging her to stay there. She had skills in computers and in websites and she could be making more money somewhere else.

I stuck to my guns that life isn't about money, and fast food was the best way to learn some very important life lessons that I could see Suki needed to learn.

Learning how to treat people is part of learning how to LOVE them. You really can't skip these lessons if you are going to be a general in Gods army. He doesn't need someone who took 3 courses in faith, but has no idea how to actually drive a car. These are so basic to life, and yet so many people don't bother with them.

If I see you criticizing a waitress, I can guess either one of two things. You asked God for more, and He is putting you thru a test that has you at your wits end. OR, you never went thru “life class 101”, and you don’t know the normal etiquette on how to treat people in public. Usually it is the latter.

If you are reading this and skipped this class, go back and get it. Ask God where to work or what to do. Submit to God and He will make sure you learn these basic skills. Don’t move on without it.

I’m dead serious! Go back. You can’t skip it.

*God doesn’t need  
someone who took 3  
courses in faith, but has  
no idea how to actually  
drive a car.*

# 7 Developing Character

Recently, I read about yet another modern famous Christian who fell into sin. His whole ministry fell down with him.

Developing character in our lives is of the utmost importance. It is what will keep you in ministry once you get there. I like to call this the foundation of who we become. It’s the values we learn to live by, and the way we behave when no one is looking. This step is very important; otherwise we could end up with some huge ministry that is built on a terrible foundation. That could end in disaster.

This is the time where we learn to have integrity, honesty, faithfulness, giving and the list goes on. Without it, you could end up like those other guys who lose it all over some secret sin that went public.

Let’s start with giving. One day we went on a trip with a group of pastors in Caborca, Mexico, and when we arrived back home, we realized that one pastor’s wife had lost her suitcase, with all her clothes in it. Everyone felt bad for her, but dispersed each to their home. My heart was torn and I wanted to help her. So I set a time to pick her up and take her shopping for a new dress. We went to several stores and settled on one, and I paid for it and

then took her home.

One week later I heard that she had taken the dress back to the store and gotten the cash back. Then she had gone to an economic seamstress and had ordered 6 dresses made with the same money. I was embarrassed.

I learned that day to NOT make any fanfare when I give, but just slip someone some cash. It’s not like she was an alcoholic and needed to be walked into the restaurant to buy the hamburger, lest she spend it all on booze. When you give, don’t make a big deal about it!

What about this one on humility: Over the years I started preaching more and more, and I would use various stories from my life as illustrations. One day God said to me, “Hey Kristi. You are using a whole lot of good stories of yourself. What about using some of the bad ones too?” I was a little embarrassed to have been caught bragging about myself, so I apologized and told Him I would make a point to include some bad stories. God responded “good” then He gave me another assignment. My job was to do something LARGE that was good for someone and then NEVER share it with anyone. It was more character development.

Naturally, I can’t tell you what I did, or I’d have to kill

you.

But what I can say was that it was part 2 of God's training on humility for me. Part one; share some bad stories publically, and part 2; don't share ALL the good ones.

How about faithfulness? For those of you who have heard me speak, you may know this story, but it was an important part of my training. My mom taught me to be faithful in going to church and serving God. I call it the vomit lesson.

You see, kids and even adults can always muster up a good cough and make it look like they are really sick and shouldn't go to church on Sunday. The problem comes when you have signed up to teach Sunday school, and those children are waiting for you every week. So my mom would not take a good cough as an excuse to not go to church. In fact there was practically no good excuse that would make it so that I could skip. You know, lots of people can go into the bathroom, make some vomiting noises, flush the toilet, then come out pretending that they had vomited. (Not saying that I did that though...) So with my mom, unless I actually vomited, and had the proof in a bowl, only then could I skip. It sounds disgusting, but it taught me to be faithful every week.

This lesson was called, "Prove you're sick with a bowl of vomit, or go to church."

The list goes on and on. Godly character in our lives is how we behave when no one is looking. Are we honest, not just avoiding lies, but presenting the truth? Can we be kind to those who are less fortunate or dorkier than we are? Can we be transparent when we preach? Are we humble?

How about the time when my husband and I were loading our groceries into our car after a shopping run, when we realized that something had slipped by under the bag of dog food, and we got thru the checkout without paying for it. What then? God just nudged us that our integrity is worth more than gold, and so we went back into the store to pay for the item.

This is your foundation. Without it, you will be climbing up the wrong ladder, and one day it will tip over on you, and you will come crashing down into the mud. These are values: how you choose to live your life. Will you have the godly character it takes to lead a ministry later in life? There is no easy way to pick up each of these values. You pick them up one at a time, with one test at a time.

*Godly character in our  
lives is how we behave  
when no one is looking.*



# 8

## Sacrifice

The summer between my junior and senior year of high school, I decided to take the money I had earned all year and attend summer school at Christ for the Nations College in Texas. The classes were great midweek, and I heard wonderful teaching every Sunday. The only problem was that I was only 16 years old, so everything was a stretch for me. It was my first time to live apart from my parents, so I had to figure out how to eat on my own, walk around like a genuine adult, but with the emotions of a 16-yr-old.

One Sunday Benny Hinn was the special speaker, and I was so moved by his words and the thought of sacrificing for God. Benny Hinn has many gifts, but he was hands-down the best I've ever heard at taking up an offering. And believe me; I have been in many church services over the years. He moved me.

I decided right then and there to put every dime I had into the offering plate. But, I actually had all my money for the summer on me. So it all went into the plate.

Next, he talked about missions and churches across the globe that had building projects. I also decided that fateful Sunday to make a commitment to send them money over the next year to put a roof on a church in India. I knew exactly how much I had made the past year, so that is how much I pledged. I left church that day full of excitement!

But then reality sunk in. How was I going to eat the rest of the summer?

At first I thought God would obviously give back to me double what I had given Him. Isn't that what the preachers say? I had given everything I had to God, so now He would take care of me. That is how it works, right? I had a few groceries in the cupboard, but as those disappeared and no miracle showed up, I didn't know what to do. I made it thru one day without food, when I realized there might not be any miracles. What else

could a 16-year old do, but call her parents.

I remember calling them up, and sheepishly telling them that I had given everything I had to the offering plate, and now I had nothing to eat. I had hoped for a miracle, but so far nothing had happened, and I was hungry. My roommates had no compassion on me, and would not share their food with me.

My parents said to me, "Kristi, you chose to sacrifice to God, and sacrifices usually cost us something. Your summer will be harder because of this sacrifice. We can't have you starving, so we will send you some money, but we also do not have a lot of money to spare. We are going to send you \$50 dollars, and you are going to have to eat on that for the whole remaining 2 months."

I was so grateful for their help, and quickly went to retrieve the \$50 dollars. But then I did the math and realized it would be very hard to eat for 2 months on that.

Basically, it boiled down to ramen noodles every day (Maruchan) by the case, and I could not afford to travel anywhere on the public transportation. I had to catch free rides from other students to the grocery store to stock up on those ramen noodles. And that is how I survived the summer.

What I painfully learned that summer was that God is not a vending machine. Sacrifice is exactly that. If you

*My parents said to me,  
"Kristi, you chose to  
sacrifice to God, and  
sacrifices usually cost  
us something."*

choose to give up something for God, you are going to have pain as you go without it. That is what sacrifice is! Going without something for someone else!

Later in life I gave up sugar for a while and of course that hurt, and then my whopper sacrifice; caffeine. Now that one hurts worse! There is no miracle pill for a caffeine headache.

*“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices*

*as much as in obeying the LORD?*

*To obey is better than sacrifice,*

*and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”*

**1 Samuel 15:22**

God does like obedience first over sacrifice, and this verse makes that clear. But, that doesn't mean that we

shouldn't also sacrifice from time to time. When you are first obeying God, you then have the freedom to sacrifice above and beyond the normal for Him when the opportunity arises.

What can you expect when you choose to sacrifice something for God? Pain. All year long it hurt to earn money and send it all to Christ for the Nations. But in exchange for that pain, I put a roof on a church in India.

In the end, I think it was a good lesson. I learned that it is good to sacrifice, but that God is not a vending machine. You might want to count the cost of the sacrifice before you make it.

# 9 Recognizing God's voice

It is very important that we learn to recognize the voice of God speaking directly to us personally. This is a very important step in everyone's faith journey, and without it, you cannot climb the ladder to a higher rank.

*“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me”*

**John 10:14**

God will constantly be talking to us, and we must learn to separate the difference between HIS voice, our own selfish desires, and the voice of the enemy.

And verse 27 says,

*“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*

I remember one of the earliest times I heard God's voice. It wasn't audible, it was in my heart, but it was so loud and clear, I knew it was Him.

When I was a senior in high school, I decided to offer to God as a sacrifice, all the dances for the year, and not attend any of the social activities. What no one knew is that in my heart, I thought it would cost me nothing because I had not been invited to any of the social activities the year before.

But of course, God was working on my training, so this year would be different. I ended up being the president of the drama club that year, and we were in charge of the first dance. I was responsible for it. Then a friend invited me, just for fun. There I was facing real temptation to not honor what I had promised to God. I thought of a million ways to cheat. Maybe just go to make sure the decorations are secure, after all, it was my responsibility. I asked my parents, and they reminded me of my commitment to God and the fact that I had made Him a promise. Basically, if I had said nothing at all, I would have been able to go. But my big mouth made a promise to God, and I was stuck. I managed to not go, but barely



by the skin of my teeth.

So, the year went on, and you guessed it; God made sure that I was invited to every single function the school had. It was crazy-hard to turn everything down, time after time.

Then that spring I ended up with a boyfriend from my church. We sang on the worship team together. He was one year ahead of me, so he had already graduated High school, or “la prepa” here in Mexico.

When the time approached for the final dance of the year, the big one, the PROM, my boyfriend wanted to go. He had not been able to go to the prom the year before, his senior year, so this was his chance to change history. He pushed me pretty hard to take him to my prom.

Now for those of you in Latin America, who do not have Proms like we do in the USA, you are just going to have to think of another example that would hurt really bad to have missed. My best guess for a similar thing would be the Quinceñera event. Since we do not have those in the states, the prom is the closest thing. We get all dressed up, we take special photos of the day, and all the Christians participate along with the non-Christians, only we don’t have beer at the party, and we are careful not to sin. It’s like a coming out party: a Quinceñera party.

So there I was, once again with the strongest temptation I had ever had in my life (up to date). My own hopes and dreams of the prom weighed on me, as well as that of my boyfriends’. I tried every excuse there was known to mankind. But, I held my ground to stay true to what I had committed to God.

The actual night of the prom, the weight on me was heavy and the temptation overbearing. All I could do was cry. I had a group of friends, good friends, who were renting a limo together, and having dinner together at our favorite teacher’s house before going to the event. I wanted to at least go to the dinner with them, so I came up with some reason why the dinner would be different and ok to attend.

Off I ran to the dinner, and arrived before everyone, and started helping my teacher with the preparations. Then, out of the blue, I got sick with a fever. Of course my teacher noticed right away and sent me home quickly before I got everyone sick. It was God protecting me and helping me succeed, I am going to guess.

So there I was in my bedroom at home, crying and sick with a fever, when I opened my Bible, and this verse

jumps out at me, like it was shouting at me!

From Psalm 15:

*“Blessed is the man who swears to God and keeps his promise, even at his own hurt”.*

God comforted me so strongly, and I absolutely knew it was His voice telling me that I had made it. I had passed the test. Of course by the skin of my teeth for having gone to the dinner for a little while, but still, I made it. I passed, and I could feel God smiling down on me, and telling me specifically that I would be blessed for my actions.

I quickly ran to my parent’s room and showed them the verse! I expected them to know what it stood for, what it meant, and how special it was. They looked at me with blank eyes.

This was the first time I realized that when God gives you a Rhema, it is for YOU, and no one else is going to understand what in the world you are talking about.

I was incredulous... and showed them several times the verse, but they still couldn’t understand. So I had to spell it out for them, how I had made a commitment to

*This was the first time  
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one else is going to  
understand what in the  
world you are talking  
about.*

not participate in social activities my whole senior year, and that very night had finished the years’ worth of activities. I had passed the test! At last they understood. But it still wasn’t very special to them.

So I went back to my room, and felt God’s presence so strong, comforting me in my pain, and encouraging me that it had been worth it.

As the years went by, I got better and better at recognizing God’s voice. If you are a “moving car” Christian

and climbing up this ladder, God will be speaking to you on a constant basis and it is of utmost importance that you learn to recognize His voice.

I came up with a system to confirm if what I thought I was hearing was actually from God or not.

First, I had learned that I could never trust my own heart.

*“The heart is deceitful above all things  
and beyond cure.*

*Who can understand it?”*

#### **Jeremiah 17:9**

So, a positive answer from God was harder to confirm. For a YES (on something that I wanted), I expected a verse from the Bible to confirm it AND my authorities to confirm it.

For a negative answer from God, it was easy to just hear Him in my heart. Since God was telling me something that I really didn't want to hear, I could trust that I wasn't making things up. It was His voice talking to me.

My standard for hearing God's voice became a three-step process that got smoother and smoother to use:

- Check the Bible
- Check with an authority (my parents or pastors)
- Check my Spirit

Years later, as I was working with my sister Suki on her training, it came time for her to make an important decision, and she needed God to speak to her directly. She asked me how I could hear God and actually know that He was the one speaking to me. The beach was nearby, so I took her to the beach, each with our own Bibles. I talked about the three step process, and how we are God's children and can hear his voice.

You see, she had been serving at the church for years in the sound department, helping run the PowerPoint. But people had begun to notice her other skills, and she was invited to participate on the stage with the worship team, as well as on the stage over in kid's church. There were three departments fighting over her, and she had to make a decision where she would serve God at church.

God knows when we have deadlines for decisions and deadlines for Him in His service. I have found that He is very faithful to give me an immediate answer when I need one. So I just gave Suki the hope that she would

hear from God that same day, exactly what team she should serve on. She was surprised, but also relieved. She had her iPod with her, with the full audio Bible on it, with a system where she would listen to the Bible every night.

So I told her to separate off from me, and just listen to the Bible portion for today, the one she would be listening to tonight anyway. So we separated and we both took some time to pray and read or listen to the Bible. I approached her 20 minutes later and asked her if she had received an answer. She was not sure, but there was one verse that stood out to her.

She told me the verse. It said,

*“Blessed are those who stay where God has put them,  
and do no changing.”*

So I said, OH, this will be an easy one, God is telling you NOT to move to another department, but to stay in the sound department! She immediately began to cry.

You see, when God gives us the answer we don't want to hear, it takes practice to see it right away. Our own selfish desires get in the way, and start trying to twist the words. That verse was clear; do not change, but stay where God originally put you.

At once her heart and spirit could confirm that it was God speaking to her, which gave her relief. But at the same time, it hurt, because it wasn't the answer she wanted. She had enjoyed the sound department, but it had been 4 years! She was hoping for a change.

So I shared with her the next step is to answer God; to spend some time with Him alone, thank Him for speaking to you and to answer Him on whether or not you will obey.

So we separated again, and later she told me that after some crying and letting go of self, she was able to thank God and submit to His will over her life.

Of course things were not easy for her when we returned back to normal life. The departments were still pulling on her, and it looked like she was turning down a promotion to a new department; at least that is, from man's point of view.

I reminded her that God is working on her training for things He has prepared for her to do later in life. God's way is always better than man's way. He can see the future!

Don't forget that going up the ladder with God is very different from going up the ladder in church. They can sometimes take the same route, but not always.

You see, God cares much more about our character; that we learn to be faithful, to be honest, and to have integrity, than He does our ability to sing, or climb the ladder of importance in our church. God many times is working on our insides, which is of WAY more importance to Him than the outside. Our hearts are more important than our skills.

Learning to hear God's voice might start out slow. It may take you some time to hear God, but over the years it will get easier and easier. There are times now where I am in the office and talking with a staff member of our creative team, and I need an immediate answer from God. Sometimes I need to separate and take a few minutes, and sometimes I get an immediate response from God within seconds. It helps if you have some verses memorized; then God can pop one into your head for the answer.

It's the same when I speak at an event, and I need to listen to God for direction. I can hear Him within seconds give me an answer, so that I can make changes and follow HIS leading during the event.

Once you have finished this training, and can recognize the voice of God and act on it, then you are ready to continue taking steps up the ladder.

*You see, when God gives  
us the answer we don't  
want to hear, it takes  
practice to see it right  
away.*

# 10 Obedience

One day in church, after Dwight and I were recently married, God spoke to me and told me to intercede for my offspring. He said to me, "The enemy wants to steal your seed. Intercede right now, that you may lose none." Right in the middle of a normal church service! I got on my knees and prayed for maybe 20 minutes, just during worship. Then I got up when everyone else got up, and quit praying. God said to me, "Why did you stop?" He brought to my mind the story of Elisha's death, and his final word for king Jehoshaphat.

Elisha told the king to take the arrows and strike the ground with them. The king only struck the ground three times, and it made Elisha angry. King Jehoshaphat got in trouble for not pounding the ground enough. Elisha said he should have done it 5 or 6 times, and then he would have completely destroyed his enemy.

At that moment, God said to me, "because you didn't keep interceding for your seed, you will lose one." I

admit I was a little bit in shock, and not sure what to believe.

Not long later, I got pregnant; and then 3 weeks after that, I miscarried.

I couldn't help but grieve that I had caused this by my own lack of obedience. Why didn't I step out of the side door of church and go to a small room to at least pray for the whole service? I can't really tell you why I didn't take God very seriously, but I can tell you that the lesson hurt. It did make me want to take Him more seriously in the future. When God speaks to me, He means it. I should obey immediately and not with minimum standards.

There are other phases of the Christian life, times where everything can feel harder. The miracles are not so easy to see anymore. I call them valley times, where you can't see over the next hill up ahead.

This is the time when we need to obey God even when it doesn't feel like fun. Sometimes months or years go by and you hear nothing from God, but you have to still obey what you last heard Him say to you. This can be difficult, but it is an important part of your training. Nobody needs soldiers who cannot follow orders, or who need their hands held all the way to the front line. God trains us to go thru dark times so that we are ready for the war ahead. God needs soldiers who are going to stay faithful for the long haul, whether they feel like it or not.

One time I tried to switch churches in my efforts to chase Dwight Krauss as my husband. (I'll tell you more about my awesome husband up ahead!)

I tried to get involved in his church, sing in the choir or participate in the children's ministry. At every turn, I was blocked, and in the end I wasn't accepted into any of the departments! Of course it seems obvious now that it wasn't time yet for me to get together with Dwight, and God wanted me back at my original church, the 1st Congregational church.

For this example, I didn't even know that I had disobeyed, or forgotten to ask God where He wanted me! It was just so difficult to be blocked from ministry, after having participated at my church for so many years, that I gave up and went back to my church. I continued on the worship team and children's ministry there. It was a time when I didn't feel like God was speaking to me. Doors were just being closed to me. That was how He communicated during this time, by opening and closing doors.

Another one of my valley times happened after Dwight and I got married. God asked me to spend a year to con-

centrate on the marriage and not participate in any ministry. It was a hard year, getting to know Dwight more personally, and not being allowed to serve at all ANYWHERE! It felt weird and boring to not be teaching a class somewhere, but I obeyed and I'm sure it helped the foundation of our marriage. I'm just guessing here, giggle, that God knew what He was doing.

After your different valley times, you come out the other side stronger and wiser. If you kept the faith, and didn't give up, you are ready to continue your training. You took a step up the ladder.

If God has given you a task to obey, and you obey it; you also continue to move up. If you do not pass the test, and you are still committed to obeying His instructions, then thankfully, God comes up with another version of the same test. You just have to take it again till you obey.

As I mentioned earlier, Christians who are "non-moving-cars" seem to get away with a lack of obedience. But honestly I would guess that it is temporary, and that they will be held accountable for their disobedience to the Lord when they get to heaven. So don't be jealous of them or try to copy them.

Stick with obedience. It hurts, but it is the only way.

*I didn't even know that  
I had disobeyed, or  
forgotten to ask God  
where He wanted me!*

# 11

## God doesn't need me

One spring break, a church in Portland approached my dad and asked if there was any way he could send me on their mission's trip with them to Mexico to help translate. But we had already planned a trip that same month for scouting out some events we had planned. Our trip was a pastoral meeting in each city, inviting them to the upcoming children's ministry seminars we would be having that summer.

I was certain that my dad could not handle the pastoral meeting's trip without my help, because I had a gift for seeing all things political and schmoozing the pastors. You see, my dad hasn't ever really cared in the least about all the church politics.

But alas, the ministry could only afford to send me on one trip. I wanted the pastoral meetings trip, and dad thought he should send me with the church to help them. I stood my ground, choosing the political trip, and basically forced my dad to send me to both if he wanted me to go on the other trip.

In the end, my dad bought me both plane tickets.

The pastoral trip was first, we made it to the first meeting great, and I watched in awe as my dad smoothly made the presentations and handled the politics with ease. Then on day 2, I caught the worst flu virus I think I have ever had in my entire life. For the rest of the trip, not only was I of no help, but I was sheer deadweight! For the rest of the trip, my dad had to take care of me, find medicine for me, and basically I slowed us down during the whole trip.

Miraculously, this flu lasted the whole length of the trip, and in the airport on the way home I finally started to

feel better. And of course, my dad flowed smoothly in the strength of God in an area of politics where he was normally weak.

I came home with my tail between my legs, feeling disciplined by God for having pushed to go on that trip.

The following week, the team's trip was up, and off I went with a whole group of people I didn't know very well (or at all) to serve them in their ministry. You guessed it, the trip went fabulously, I made some great new friends, and I could feel God's presence with me, anointing me for each little thing. I honestly had one of the best trips of my life with this group.

When I got home I felt that through God's discipline, He had a very important lesson for me. God is in control of my life, and He sends me where and when He chooses. I am not the Savior of the world, HE is. God actually doesn't need me at all. It was no trouble at all for God to bless my dad and make him strong in weakness. And it was also no trouble at all for God to just take me out of commission with a virus.

I humbled myself and took the rebuke. God would like to use me, but He certainly doesn't NEED me. He is the God of the universe. Just read the book of Job.

*God would like to use  
me, but He certainly  
doesn't NEED me. He is  
the God of the universe.*



*Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said:  
 “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words  
 without knowledge?  
 Brace yourself like a man;  
 I will question you, and you shall answer me.  
 Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?  
 Tell me if you understand.  
 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know?”*  
**Job 38:1-5**

I learned another lesson, and took another step up the ladder. God doesn’t need us, but He honors us when He uses us. It is awesome to be a part of His plan, but I must watch to be humble by remembering that God doesn’t actually need me.

# 12

## Ask God to be used by Him

Now that some basics have been covered, it’s time to ask God to use you for His Kingdom, and to be able to help Him with this war.

This is where you ask Him to become a pastor, a missionary, a pastor’s wife, an evangelist, a Christian counselor, or someone working full-time for Christ in one of many organizations that are available. You could start your own new ministry like my husband and I did.

But, you must ask for it.

God is a gentleman, and will not force His will on anyone. This doesn’t mean that you will start your work. It means GOD will start His work in you, because now you have offered yourself up to Him for further service. Now He will start your training more in earnest. (As if the other lessons weren’t painful enough!)

When I was young, I begged God over and over if He would use me for His kingdom. I read biographies of great Christians, then would get on my knees and beg God to use me like He did those awesome men and women of God.

One day, God answered.

I fell to the ground, and I couldn’t kneel any longer. I was flat on my face, and the presence of God was so strong on me, that I couldn’t even lift a finger. As I lay there before God, He said to me, “Kristi, I will use you. I will use you to reach generations. In fact, because of you, many generations will be blessed.”

At this point I was frightened, and felt like God was giving me too much. So I struggled with Him, saying that I would just like to help out for the time that God has given me here on earth, but that there is no need to get generations involved.

I struggled and fought. I had a hard time believing it. What if it’s my own pride talking to me? So there I lay, on the ground, unable to move.

So God said to me, “I will not let you get up until you accept what I am saying to you. You will be blessed and have an impact on generations.”

It must have taken around an hour, but I finally gave in and said OK. You are God, and I am your servant. At that point, God asked me to keep it quiet for a while. This happened when I was 18 years old. I had asked God to use me in full-time ministry, actually I begged Him over and over, and then one day He responded to me with a great-big resounding YES!

I actually became a real missionary with my husband (not just a missionary’s daughter) on April 16th, 2005, at the age of 31. It took me 13 years to learn the lessons I needed for the work God had called me to do. That was just the day we drove off into the sunset as brand-new missionaries. It was another few years before we learned the real project God wanted us to do; children’s ministry curriculum.

I believe everyone must ask God to be used by Him, if that is what they desire. Ask for a calling, ask for a min-

istry, ask for a country, and ask for the world!

God will not just take you by force. If you want to be involved in ministry, you must ask Him for it.

*I believe everyone must  
ask God to be used by  
Him, if that is what they  
desire.*

# 13

## Learn to ask for God's direction

It's so easy to say with words that we are Christians and that we have given our lives to God. It's a whole different thing to actually live it. You can go up your denominational ladder or up the ladder in Christian fame without this step; but I firmly believe you cannot go up God's real ladder as a soldier until you learn to actually let HIM run your life.

This means actually stopping to ask God's direction for small and large decisions along the road of life.

Living this is much different than talking about it in a prayer meeting or singing it to God in a song.

As I have shared with you already, I wanted a family. But doesn't everybody? I wanted the joy of having kids running around in my home, having an heir to my family, and bringing cousins over to grandma's house for all the fun parties and seasons year after year. I doubt that I had actually planned for the diaper-part of having children though.

So when I married my "Guapo" (or handsome one) as I affectionately call him, of course we started right away trying to get pregnant. I was 26, and ready, and he was 38 and even more ready to be the best dad on the planet.

So we tried to get pregnant, and tried... but every month, nothing happened. So we went to the doctor to see what was the problem. Dwight checked out ok, so there was something wrong with me, and they couldn't find anything the easy way.

But, there is more than one way to start a family, and there are thousands of children in the USA hoping for a family, so we decided to start fostering and then at some point adopt one of our foster children.

We went to the 12-week foster class and got certified. Then one fateful day the call came, they had a baby they wanted us to take. As soon as we hung up the phone with the foster lady, my husband and I were so excited! A baby!!!

But immediately after that, something hit my gut. I felt God say, "Did you guys forget to ask me?" So we stopped and prayed together, and I felt God clearly say to me, "Did you give your life to me?" I said yes. He said, "Then, let me run it. I have you without children for a reason. If you take this baby, you are taking the reins back to your life."

*I felt God say, "Did you  
guys forget to ask me?"*

Dwight agreed. We took a day to confirm, and decided that we could NOT disobey God. We told him that He was boss, and we preferred to let Him run our lives. So, the next day, we called the foster lady back, and told her we would not be taking any children.

Actually letting God have the reins of my life has been much harder than I expected. Maybe because I actually



can see other Christians making decisions all the time without letting God in on the process, let alone allowing Him to have veto power.

This is a hard lesson, to actually ask His permission to do something before you do it; even if you are an adult and used to doing things your own way.

# 14

## Your ministry starts!

While all this training is going on in our hearts, we also need training in ministry. These can happen simultaneously, or it may take some time before you have an opening to serve in a ministry.

Your first ministry will be a small one. And just like in any army, you must prove yourself faithful with the small things, before God will give you bigger things.

I started in ministry when I was 14 years old. They gave me the kindergarten class at church, and that was my big beginning. Not a fabulous start, just a small room with a few little ones in it to watch over.

Small beginnings can happen when you are young, but also when you enter different levels of ministry. My dad, for example, had been doing ministry for years when he got the opportunity to start a new mission in Mexico, and he started doing evangelism on the streets in small towns in Sonora. For his first ever street evangelism outreach in Mexico, he worked hard to prep for it and got everything ready including practicing his Spanish. He chose the first town to go to and chose just the right street corner. He got out all the gear and set everything up. He made announcements with a microphone that a church service and outreach was about to start and hoped for some people to arrive. After waiting a while, only one guy wandered up to him.

He waited a while, but it became apparent that he would just have to start. So he played his guitar and sang to the guy for a while and then started preaching. After a

while, a dog wandered up too. But then in the middle of his sermon, the guy wandered away, and he was left preaching to the dog. He kept going, but then the dog wandered away too! He thought to himself, someone out there could be listening, so I'm going to finish anyway.

I love his story because it is a great example of just how small your first ministry can be. You could end up with a whole sound system set up and only be preaching to a dog!

Don't worry though, my dad kept going and he ended up preaching literally thousands of times to crowds of hundreds of people all over the state of Sonora, Mexico. And you don't have to worry about your ministry either.

Everybody starts small, and that's on the ladder to having a larger ministry! Just be faithful with the small things and let God work on training you and preparing you for the larger things.

*"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"*

**Mathew 25:21**

# 15

## Serving another leader

There I was standing out on the street corner, in front of hundreds of people, translating for Pastor Lon Smith as he preached to a crowd on a street corner in Sonora, Mexico. He turned to me and said, “OK Kristi, give them the altar call.” The air felt hot and stuffy and there were cicada bugs making a whole lot of weird noise. Some kids played on the basketball court behind the crowd, and there was dust in the air that I could feel in my lungs.

I must have been around 18 or 19 years old. I had never done an altar call before, but I had seen my dad, Mike Kangas, do them hundreds of times. In fact so many times, I thought I might be able to quote one from memory, in Spanish, which isn’t my first language. So I dove in, quoting verses and telling them how Jesus could save them that very night. It came time for the hands-up part, you know; the hard part. To stand there alone in front of the whole crowd and lift up my own hand and ask them to do the same. There was a silence and no one moved, and I stood there frozen, waiting, just like my dad does. I continued to copy what I had seen my dad had done, quoting another verse and preaching a minute more. One more time into the breach, I raised my hand and asked them to do the same.

A painful pause followed.

There was a silence, and then all of a sudden, someone raised their hand. Then another person raised their hand. Then hands started going up all over the place. I was actually surprised that it worked! So I just copied everything I remembered my dad doing, inviting the people forward to pray with me to receive Jesus into their hearts. I had them repeat after me, while I tried to remember a good salvation prayer in Spanish. I had only been translating for a year, and I didn’t have quite all the words I needed, but it seemed to work. I hadn’t prepared for that ministry that night, but I was grateful and relieved that I passed.

When God is preparing someone for the ministry, it seems they often serve under someone else’s ministry for a time. There of course can be exceptions to every rule, but I have personally never seen God take someone and immediately give them their own ministry “baby”. He always asks us to serve someone else in **THIER** ministry first. This is an important part of the training, because we need to actually see some things first hand. Successes and failures of the person we are serving will help us develop into who we will become. I served my dad in his ministry for 13 years before God gave me my own ministry. During those same years, I also served in whatever church we were placed; in Mexico, Russia, or the USA. I learned a lot from those I served under.

*He always asks us to serve someone else in **THIER** ministry first.*

I learned how to give an altar call, I learned how to lead a team of Americans into Mexico for a mission’s trip, I learned how to sacrifice my own needs for others, and I learned how to always take the harder road, and let the others have it easy.

One time I was assisting my dad with a team, and we had two vans full of teenagers. The event went great, people had come to the Lord, and we were all loading up to drive the 40 minutes back to the hotel. Just as everyone had climbed into the van, something lit on fire in the front engine of the van! The van where I was riding “shot gun”. I was so startled that I threw my diet coke out the window and jumped out quickly. I was immediately sorry about my fresh beverage gone to waste. The fire went out easily, and the guys went about to see what had happened and if the car would start. Sure enough,

it wouldn't.

So, my dad had everyone squish into the one working van to be able to get back to the hotel, and offered to stay the night there in the van or with our hosts in that village. The plan was for him to take the van to get repaired in the morning, and then back to the hotel in time for the next day's evangelism. In the morning, they could take two trips to the construction site, since it was closer to the hotel.

As a good assistant to my dad, I had learned that I should not leave him there alone, but OH how I did NOT want to stay. I started asking around to find a volunteer to stay with my dad for the night. No one would do it.

Now I had to do this quietly, because my dad would have just stayed by himself, and the trick was to make him think that someone actually wanted to stay with him. So there I was sneaking around the group, frantically trying to find someone to stay with him.

Sadly, no one would sacrifice, and I knew what I had to do. I put on a smile and with my best pretend chipper voice, went up to my dad and said "Hey, I'll stay with you, no problem!" He bought my act, and soon I could see everyone driving into the distance.

The lovely Mexican hostess (of course) would not let us stay the night in the car, but brought us into her home for dinner and put us up to sleep in their beds. The hard part was I couldn't handle the food she gave me, since for some reason North Americans are not accustomed to "Menudo" or any form of intestines in their food. I have tried over the years to learn, but finally gave up and resigned myself to being a "gringa". Then for my sleeping arrangements, I was placed with their daughter in a small bed for us to share. I had to sleep in my dress since we had no change of clothes.

In the morning I woke up wet, and it took me a while to figure out what had happened. The young girl had wet the bed we were in, no doubt from either the fear of the American sleeping with her, or just the change of sleeping with a stranger. The problem was I had to stay in that dress all day!

This is not the only time I have been urinated on in my "ministry clothes". It has happened to me 3 times now, but I won't go into all of those stories.

Suffice it to say, it was a long, hot and miserable day. I had to follow my dad around to mechanic shops and wait for hours in a dress that smelled. God gave us the miracle we needed though; we actually got the van running just in time to make it back to pick up the team for

the next night of evangelism!

They were so worried when we arrived at the last minute that they were all standing outside of the hotel, ready to be picked up. Everyone broke out in a big cheer, and started loading into the van! They actually expected my dad and me to stay in the van as they loaded up, and go dressed as we were! Trying to hide the tears from everyone, I asked for 5 minutes to change and ran up to my room. They wouldn't give me time to fully shower, but at least I could rinse my legs and wear a different dress. Then off we went to the next outreach.

That time I passed my test; I served in the outreaches or as my dad's assistant, however he needed.

I remember one time though, when I really blew it. Years later we had a tour in Mexico with Gary Duckworth as our speaker on Children's ministry, and I was translating and MC'ing the program. I had been married for a couple of years, and was not accustomed to living with my parents anymore. But since my Dwight was unable to make this trip, it was similar to a single lady, and I was easier to place in the same hotel room with my parents. Everyday felt like a sacrifice, living with someone else and following their rules. They are both morning people and I have always been an evening person. They love coffee and visiting in the morning, right there in the hotel. And well, I don't like the smell of coffee, and I like to sleep in until the last minute, especially when I know the day is going to be long and hard.

One day we were driving the 6-hour journey from one city to the next city for an event, and arrived at the hotel late at night. My dad had reserved a room for our speaker Gary all to himself and another room for the two gentlemen on his team, and a third room for the three of us. Right there in front of me, Gary turned down the personal room, and offered to stay with his guys. My heart jumped. I wanted that room. I felt like I really couldn't take any more coffee and visiting every morning when I needed to sleep. I was a married woman, and by this time I had been serving my dad for 10 years, and I felt like a real minister. You guessed it; I couldn't push down my pride, but spoke up right there, asking for the room. Dad explained that we didn't have to pay for it, so it would really help the ministry finances if we just let the room go. I just burst into tears right there at the registration desk.

It wasn't a pretty sight.

So dad gave me the room. I call that NOT passing this test. You see, it doesn't matter how many years God asks you to serve someone, you serve them. I should

have stayed in their room with them to save money.

I call this phase of training “picking up a broom”, but it can extend years. You may get real tired of setting up the sound equipment, or being the MC for a program, when you wish you were the speaker. It’s not your time yet, you are in training.

You must WAIT until God opens the doors for your own ministry. No worries, the day will come soon enough,

and then you just might find yourself wishing for the easy days when all the weight of the ministry was on someone else.

*You must WAIT until  
God opens the doors for  
your own ministry.*

# 16

## Clearing out the dross

There I was, yelling at the lady in the snack shop. “How could you run out of diet coke?” I screamed! “You know I buy one every day for lunch, and you know that we are not allowed off campus!” She was shocked of course, that I was totally losing my cool over my diet coke.

I was a teacher in a Christian school in Monterrey, Mexico. Students were all around me, some to buy from the snack shop, and some because I was creating quite the commotion. I knew that I should be demonstrating good behavior to those students, but instead, I burst into tears.

I had to have my afternoon caffeine.

And so I just starting walking, and breaking the rules; I walked straight out the gate and out of the school. I didn’t know how far the closest corner store was, but I was going to keep walking until I found a store with a diet coke.

Then later that night I found myself in a McDonalds, where the cute girl behind the counter messed up my order something terrible. I yelled at her, as if I wasn’t embarrassed at all to lose my cool over a hamburger. I just couldn’t keep my frustration and anger down.

You see, God had decided to clear out some dross in my life.

This is an analogy that God used many times in the Bible. One example is in Proverbs 25:4 where He says,

*“Remove the dross from the silver, and a silversmith can produce a vessel.”*

In this case, you and I are the vessels, and God is the silversmith, trying to remove the dross, or ugly parts from us.

Silver is mined from the earth, but it has many impurities. So it gets thrown into a crucible, or a container made to heat it to very high temperatures. When the rock melts, the dross will rise to the surface, where it can be removed. It has no value, and its presence in silver, only makes the silver less valuable. The “Dross” is actually a mass of solid impurities floating on the liquid metal. It is waste matter. (You know: the part where I was yelling at people for not serving me like I wanted.)

For you and me to have greater value, or to climb this inner ladder, just like silver, we must have the dross in our lives removed.

This step can happen at any time in our lives, and can

happen more than once. Really pure silver is heated 7 times, each time removing more dross. I don't know if that means we get to go thru this 7 times, but I hope not. It sure hurts!

This is the part where God turns up the heat so hot in your life, that nasty things start spewing out of you. I couldn't even stop things from flying out of my mouth!

In my case, I had already learned to be kind to others, and do without my daily diet coke when I had to. I had already learned to be an example to the children around me. But for some reason, I had forgotten all the things I had already learned, and had resorted back to childish behavior.

This testing period where God was clearing out the dross lasted for 6 months!

Let me back up and tell you what really happened. Before becoming a teacher at this Christian school, and before I had lost my cool... something happened between me and God.

I asked Him for more. Yep, you guessed it, I brought this on myself!

I had been studying at a Bible school in the states, but I felt as though all of the students around me were just playing with it. No one seemed to take God seriously, and it was frustrating me. I told God that I wanted to be used by Him for great things, and that I didn't like this "slow" track that everyone seemed to be on. I told God that I was ready for more. I took some initiative.

Then all-of-a-sudden my dad arrived from Mexico, found me in a relationship with someone he didn't approve of, split us up, and tore me away from that Bible school. He took me back to Mexico, where I found myself accepting a teacher's position at this Christian school.

It all happened rather quickly. Into the fire I went.

I don't know how God made life so difficult for me, but He did. Everything was hard. It even felt hard to breathe. It was hard to get up every morning and hard to go to school. It was hard to prepare my lessons and hard to handle my students.

I was given an autistic student, who I had to keep in my class and teach along with the others in my class. I had no training on working with special-needs children, and the parents of this child refused to admit he was different.

Even while I can share a few specifics with you about this time, I find it difficult to really account for how

hard it actually felt. That is one reason why I believe it was actually GOD himself turning up the heat on me purposefully. I also believe He did it because I had asked Him for more. I guess the next step "for more" was to remove some dross.

I recall going to my dad and asking him what to do. It was frustrating, because by this time, I felt way up the ladder. I had a confidence in who I was as a Christian and minister. But God took the time to clean me up, to get to some things that were buried deep down.

So my dad's response to me was something very difficult. He told me that even though I had been living great over the past years, and not showing these terrible atti-

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tudes, they must have been in my heart. If I am showing them now, it means they were buried deep inside of me. The only way to get rid of them was to slowly treat people kindly once again, just like I had learned how to do it the first time! I had to start working on my anger, one day at a time. Honestly, it felt like I was going back 10 years and starting all over again!

There is no easy way to get rid of the nasty things that pop out of you. It has to be dealt with, one sin at a time. And it felt as if I had returned to the baby stage of Christianity. There I was dealing with things I had already dealt with long ago. But I guess some had gotten buried deep down, and God was taking some time to get it out.

When you go thru the hot furnace of dross-removal, whatever you do, DO NOT push it back down in embarrassment. You must clean that stuff out of your heart, because that is where it came from. If not, you miss that step of the ladder, and will have to go through another furnace! Obviously, it is better to just do it right the first time and not have to return to the furnace multiple times to remove the same dross.

When I go back thru the furnace, I want to be dealing with NEW dross and getting myself even more refined, not working on the same 'ol ugly anger problem!



# 17 The calling

It seems to me, that most everyone who gets to go into full-time service for God receives a specific call from God at some point. I believe this is for our benefit, since the road is long and hard, it helps to be able to remember back to the exact moment you received your “calling”.

For the record, I do not believe this is necessary. I believe the Bible is very clear when Jesus asks us to go into all the nations to preach the gospel. His Word is calling enough. So, if you need a calling, just open THE BOOK.

*“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

**Matthew 28:18-20**

But the Christian community today has a system, and they have included some sort of special day when you

*His Word is calling  
enough. So, if you need  
a calling, just open THE  
BOOK.*

receive a special Word from God, calling you into His service. I don’t mind the invention, because I tell ya what, the road is going to be tough! You are going to need all the help you can get to STAY working for God, exactly where He has put you.

My calling happened when I was 10 years old. I don’t have a specific moment that I can look to when the calling happened, but I do have a special memory. I think I just heard a lot of things from my parents as they were

new missionaries. They received their calling and then became missionaries when I was 7 years old. They went to Capernwray Bible School in England, and took us (my sister, brother, and I) to all the classes, where we sat and played in the back. Something filtered in between my parent’s excitement and talk as missionaries, and those classes; because by the time I was 10, my mind was made up that “when I grew up, I wanted to be a missionary.”

What I do recall is that one day when I was 10 years old, and we were back in the USA, my pastor asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I remember telling him very plainly that I wanted to be a missionary. This surprised him, and he grilled me for maybe 20 minutes, and I would not budge. So that is my “calling” memory. And from that time on, I felt a weight on me, as though God had a purpose for my life. When I went thru my teenage years and ended up having a couple of boyfriends, all the while I knew in my mind that I had to become a missionary, so this or that guy wasn’t going to work out.

As a side note, the day I married Dwight, that weight went away, and for 2 years I thought maybe I could get away with the “normal” Christian life in Oregon. My husband was an aircraft engineer, maybe we could have a gorgeous log cabin on the hill behind Scappoose (nothing huge or anything), and I could serve as the children’s pastor or something like that for God, instead of having to leave the country. I honestly had those two years of a little bit of hope that maybe my life wouldn’t have to be so hard. That seems funny now.

My husband’s calling happened after we were married, at a prayer and fasting retreat. I was on the worship team, and we had some long sessions of worship and prayer, so I could see him from the stage. We were singing along and all of a sudden, Dwight just broke and started to cry. I hadn’t ever seen my husband cry before, since

he was the tough kind of guy. When he couldn't control the sobbing, he slipped out the side door, and was gone for over an hour. I knew that it was a "good cry" and that God was doing something in my husband's heart, so I just left him alone. I stayed worshiping on stage. The session ended, and I headed out to find him.

His calling was different from any I had heard before. He didn't say: "Honey, God just called me to be a missionary." He said: "Honey, I just repented to God for not having done more with my life up to this point."

Now I should mention here that my husband had been the lay-worker poster-child for the past 30 years. Everyone knew of my husband, he helped out every weekend at the church, always gave his Saturdays and served wherever God needed him for his entire life. If you were to ask who painted the outside of the church, it was Dwight. Who put in the pews? Dwight. Who set up the sound booth? Dwight. Who cleaned up whenever he could, who helped with the youth group every weekend? Dwight. You name it, Dwight was involved, and for 30 years straight!

*He didn't say: "Honey,  
God just called me to be  
a missionary."*

But that day, he looked at me with red eyes and said, "Honey, we must do MORE."

The first day back home from the retreat, we started talking about what we could do. Since my parents had been missionaries in Mexico and I had served with them for over 13 years, Mexico came to mind. After all, Dwight had a wife who spoke fluent Spanish. Why wouldn't we go where we could use that skill?

So he just looked at me and said, "Should we move to Mexico? That seems like the most obvious choice." The calling and drive I had felt my whole life returned, and I said, "Sure honey, let's go!"

I'm going to guess that my calling is different than most peoples. I know my own mom's calling was more extreme than mine, where she saw Jesus in the clouds while she was driving. God spoke clearly to her, and she knew she had been called.

Regardless of how you receive your calling, it's hard to shake. I have not been able to shake it since that weekend retreat and the decision my husband and I made together. It feels like a weight deep in my gut that I must DO something. Sometimes that fills me with joy, and sometimes it feels like a burden I wish I could get rid of. Regardless how I feel from one day to the next, I serve God because He called me; and asked me to serve Him with my life.

No going back.



# 18

## Getting married right

I firmly believe that God chose exactly who I should marry based on the ministry He was planning on giving my husband and I for our life-work. He chose two people who were willing to let God run their lives. He put us together, with a plan in mind, and we had no clue what we were getting into.

Currently, I write children's ministry curriculum for Latin America and speak internationally, while my husband runs the ministry including a full print-shop. We live and work as missionaries in Mexico.

Dwight is the kind of man who is content working behind the scenes and is not threatened by the fact that he doesn't go on stage with me. He has the business experience to run our ministry and print shop, and the broad shoulders and the faith and character foundation to make the whole thing work. Without Dwight, there is NO doubt whatsoever; I would not be enjoying the ministry or the personal life I have today.

As I mentioned earlier, who you marry, in my opinion, is the second largest decision of your life, only after the decision to get saved. It will change how and IF you get into ministry.

I believe in NOT dating at all and just remaining single until God puts you together with the man or woman you will marry. I think dating is totally crazy-stupid. It's like playing with fire and throwing your heart around just for the fun of it, all the while sitting at a gambling table with your future ministry on the line. Why do we gamble away so quickly the best things God has for us? Actually, dating and consequently marrying wrong could be similar to selling out your inheritance for a bowl of soup. Do you know anyone who was stupid enough to do that? (Genesis 25:27-34)

However, when I was growing up, I didn't hear the

training about not dating in time to save me from it, or I didn't listen. I have heartbreak memories that go down deep. I remember crying for weeks when my dad had me break-up with a great Christian Mexican guy. We were just way too young. Then I dated a guy on the worship team in the states, but we were not a good match, and in my heart I knew it. He would have had a rough time handling this crazy woman for a wife. Then I dated another guy who stood no chance whatsoever in me actually wanting to marry him. I have no idea why I dated him. I think I just enjoyed feeling loved by

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someone. At the time, my dad was living in Mexico and I was living in the states with my uncle while I went to Bible College. When my dad came home for Christmas and met the guy, I could feel his disapproval.

After a few days, I couldn't handle my dad's disapproval anymore. I just said to him, "Dad, if you don't like this guy, just tell me to break up with him, and I will do it." He said to me, "Really? You would do it?" I said "Of course!" (As if I was the poster-child for obedience. Ha ha ha) So, he just asked me to break up with the guy right there on the spot. Oh man, that hurt.

I broke up with him, but not with a smile.

So, here I had all this experience dating different guys, but every time something in my heart knew that they were not the guy for me. And yet, I played with fire. Twice dad actually moved our family to separate my older sister and I from a relationship with a guy that was wrong for us. We actually changed homes, cities, and even countries! I can tell you now that I am very grateful that my dad took it all so seriously. I'm VERY grateful and I have told him so. But, I wasn't so grateful back when he did it. Of course I thought I had the strictest dad on the planet!

Then God did His miracle. He put me together with the man of my dreams, a man who treats me right every day of my life! He is a man who honors me and loves me, and is the most perfect partner for our ministry together. I have to tell you the whole story, because there are details of how it all went down that can help those who have not yet crossed this path. If you are married already, please think about this whole section as your responsibility to help those children in your ministry get married correctly. You absolutely CANNOT leave these poor adolescents all on their own while they date like crazy in our churches, selling their inheritances for bowls of soup. If you are going to make any soldiers who are higher up in God's army, they must marry right! And that, most likely, isn't going to happen all on their own. They need your help.

### **LOVE at first sight... or um... God's timing!**

There I was playing volleyball at a singles event for our church; an event where everyone is older and ready to get married; and trying hard to find their husband or wife at every gathering. When all-of-a-sudden God grabbed me and started talking to me. Actually it felt like the sky opened up and a bright light shown down into my eyes, but it seemed that no one else saw the same light.

God pointed out to me that I had been waiting and hoping for some preacher or missionary husband, and what I really needed was a man with Godly character and real values that was living from the inside out. I asked if I couldn't have both and God said NO, but that I had to choose a priority. (Were there really no preachers with Godly character at the time? I don't know.)

So right in the middle of this volleyball game, there was only one man who was saying nice things to others like, "good hit," "You'll get it next time," "Don't worry about it," or "Nice one!" The rest of the people were saying mean things like "dang it!" "Why did you do

that?" or "I thought you knew how to play this game!" and things like that. I'm sure God arranged the whole thing since He was making a point to me. Honestly, not a single other person said anything nice for the whole rest of the game, except a man named Dwight Krauss. And God helped me to take notice.

### **Decision #1: God initiated the timing. Let God choose who and when!**

It was clear that God actually wanted me to choose which priority I was going to have! God actually wouldn't leave me alone until I chose if I was going to have a pastor or missionary, or if I was going to have a

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man with godly character who would treat me right. If I had to only choose one, I decided to listen to what I thought God was saying to me. I chose the godly character. At least I thought I had, but then I found myself wrestling with the decision for a month. I had always wanted to be a missionary or a pastor's wife. Why was God making me give that up?

Then another idea hit me. That night as I was trying to go to sleep the question for God was this; "Did you mean that you actually want me to marry Dwight? Or were you just using him as an example of a man with godly character?"

I am so grateful to my wonderful husband, Dwight Krauss. I truly believe I have the best husband on the planet, and He knows it. Our lives are an open book, good or bad, with the hopes of helping the next generation. To that end, I am going to be honest. Dwight wasn't the type of guy I was looking for at the time.

For one, he was the sound man at church, and I had been looking for a preacher all along. (Although I thought I

had chosen godly character over ministry, it was hard to switch gears in my mind.) For another reason, he was 11 years older than me, and one of the “older guys” of our church. He was one of the “Bachelor til the rapture” types. I was one of the younger girls. How could I end up with one of those older guys?

Now one of the things that everyone in the whole world and the whole body of Christ looks for in a mate is LOOKS. Is that person handsome or beautiful? In fact, I think the world has some sort of 1-10 system of labeling people. A person who is a #3 in looks has to aim low, and a #8 can maybe get a #9. If you see a rich man who is a #2 in looks with some hot babe who is a #9 on his arm, everyone automatically assumes that she married him for his money.

I know that you know it is true, and exists in the church to the same degree as the world. I’ve seen it, so I don’t buy the lies anymore that people are looking for godly character. Everyone is looking for good-looks and the cool-factor. Absolutely everyone.

Now that I am 40, and my husband is 51, we fully admit that we are both dorks and not the best-looking people on the planet. It’s rather freeing actually, because who gives a rip? When we get to heaven we will have new bodies and Dwight and I will both be #10s! But here on earth, we don’t mind being dorks. We love each other to pieces, and take care of each other thru all sorts of difficult situations. I feel like Cinderella with the best marriage ever possible.

But back when I was 26, I was trying my best to NOT be dorky and to look as beautiful as I could muster.

It took me that whole month arguing with God over whether Dwight was an example for me, or Dwight was actually the man for me. I had to struggle with the change in my dreams, in turning around what I should be looking for; instead of following everyone else down the wrong path.

Then one day I won the fight and decided that God knows best. I made the decision for REAL to go for godly character and not money, looks, cool factor, awesome ministry, a fabulous stage presence or anything other than what God wants me to look for: godly character.

What does this look like? It’s hard to know when you have been looking for the wrong thing for a very long time. This of course, works for both men and women. You need to be looking for a person who lives from the inside out, all the basic principles of the Bible. A person who is kind to others, can help an old woman cross the

road when they are in a hurry, and no one is around to see them do it. You want a person who treats their mother right. A person who can say hello to a handicapped person at church and take them out to lunch. A person who always says kind things to others. If you were to ask anyone in the church, anyone at all, you want a person who EVERYONE would say nice things about.

In case you are wondering what is wrong with choosing someone based on their awesome ministry, I’ll tell ya. I’ve heard of too many people who fall because of a lack of foundation in godly character. One friend of mine was married to an awesome pastor, and then one day he left the church and ran away with the church secretary! How many stories do you know personally of people who fall into sin despite their awesome ministry? I know that we all know people who fell, because it happens all around the world. And when they fall, they lose it all. You would go down with them too, you know.

But if you choose someone with godly character, they WILL HAVE an awesome ministry, because they will

*It’s hard to know when  
you have been looking  
for the wrong thing for a  
very long time.*

have a foundation to work with. Only, there will be no fear. I know pastor’s wives who pretend everything is ok at church, but after church when they are at home, they are afraid of their husbands.

I chose a man who had godly character but his ministry was just serving, nothing spectacular. But today his ministry is impacting over a million children around the world. AND in addition, I have more fun after work in our awesome home life. There is no fear, EVER. Our love story really is better than the movies.

**Decision #2: Ask God to open your eyes to what really matters in eternity. Decide to choose your life-mate based on their godly character; not their looks, money, fame, or awesome ministry.**

So, I just decided to go for Dwight Krauss. Why not? God pointed him out to me with a bright light coming down from heaven! Poor guy didn’t know what hit him

when I started flirting with him.

Not long later, he asked me out on a date. Then another date and we started hanging out together more and more. Turns out he was a lot of fun to be with and I was thrilled that God had pointed him out to me. Then one Sunday we sat together for church in the morning, then went to lunch together, hung out downtown, and finally went back to church for the evening service together. To our surprise, there was a missionary speaking that night.

There Dwight and I sat together in church, listening to a compelling missions story, and of course at the end; the man gave a fabulous altar call for people interested in missions. God tugged on my heart. Now you see; I was concerned that Dwight wouldn't be interested in becoming a missionary. I had felt ok dating him because God, Himself, was the One who pointed him out to me. But there I was with a major problem.

I told God that this wasn't the best timing for me to go forward at the altar call. Not to mention, I had already gone forward multiple times for missions altar calls, and

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offered myself to His service in missions. God already knew that I was willing and wanted to be a missionary. So there I sat, literally begging God to not *make* me walk forward in front of Dwight.

Do you want to know what God replied? "Choose then, my daughter, him or ME." Cold and straight, just like that.

I immediately knew I had no choice, so I walked forward and knelt at the altar. "God, as you already know, I offer myself to you for missions, *again*. If that means I cannot have Dwight, so be it. I'm all in."

Dwight stayed in his seat. That night we were cordial, but I knew something was wrong. But the proof came

the next day; he quit calling and asking me on dates: cold-turkey. Our relationship was over with no explanation, but it was obvious. He dumped me when I went forward for that mission's altar call.

He was a guy who took these things very seriously. He knew that I had a call on my life, and he became afraid of interfering.

**Decision #3: God will test you. Choose God over your man or woman *every time*.**

Five months went by and I never saw him, and we were going to the same church! You see, there were two services, and with around 1200 people in the crowd, it was pretty easy for him to dodge me.

One day I was at a friend's house, and they asked me why I never dated. I tried to pretend that I do date people, but really it had only been one, Dwight, 5 months ago. They pushed me to find out who I had dated, so I told them it was Dwight Krauss.

At this they started screaming and jumping around. "What had happened? You guys would be great! I have to hear this story! What is going on now?"

I backed up and told them the whole story, and they proceeded to chew me out. "Kristi, you can't leave things like that! You actually never talked with him about missions? Do you even know for sure that he isn't willing to be a missionary?"

Well, I wasn't about to try to chase the man again. He was doing such a great job of avoiding me.

That night in my bed, I felt God nagging me with the same questions. So I said to God, "Look, if you want me to talk to Dwight and clear things up, you are going to have to bring him to me. I'm not chasing that guy down again to be humiliated. He obviously isn't interested in me anymore."

Naturally, God was up to something. The very next day Dwight showed up at my uncle's house at the same time I was there with a gathering of ladies. He walked in the door and saw all those women, and hurried downstairs to find my uncle.

Immediately, God started pushing on me. God said to me, "Ok Kristi, I brought Dwight to you, now you go

*Choose then, my  
daughter, him or ME.*



downstairs and talk to him.”

The force of God’s pressure was so intense; I couldn’t hear a word the ladies were saying. So I went downstairs, scared half out of my mind!

**Decision #4: Trust God blindly, and obey Him when he leads you into something.**

I really didn’t expect to run into Dwight the very next day, so I had no speech planned. We greeted, but then things were dead quiet. What was I going to say?

Now, in my defense, the words that came out of my mouth had some sort of explanation. There had been girls at the church who had dated Dwight in the past, and I was aware that they were just “toying” with him. They enjoyed how he was a gentleman and opened the car door for them. They enjoyed being taken to a nice restaurant, and having the man pay for the meal. But then talking with them later, they were not taking him seriously as someone they would marry. They were just looking for a nice date. At least that is my excuse and thought process for what slipped out of my mouth.

“Dwight, I just wanted to let you know that I wasn’t playing around with you, back when we were dating. *I had intended on being your wife.*”

At this point, Dwight says that he had a complete brain aneurism, and had no clue how to respond. He just nodded his head, but was frozen there and couldn’t say anything.

So, I thought, well, I guess that will chase him off even more. If I hadn’t done the job earlier, I’ve done it now. But, I felt a peace inside that I had obeyed God, so that was all that mattered. I went back upstairs to the ladies event.

Now from my perspective, that was it. Again I didn’t hear from Dwight for another 4 months. So, I had my confirmation that it was over. God must have been saying to me that I should look for a guy *LIKE* Dwight, not actually him, since he won’t have me.

But as Dwight told me later, that is when everything started for him. God would not leave him alone, but nagged him for those 4 months about me.

First, he shared what I had said to his roommate, and Steve set about to push on him. Steve made it a daily habit to actually look Dwight in the eye and say, “Dwight, you are stupid for not going for her.” *Every day*, he said the same words to Dwight.

Then God started bringing “Kristi” up to him every-

where. He would be in the grocery store visiting with a friend when they would mention me. Then he would go to music practice at church, and the base-guitar guy would mention me. God wouldn’t leave him alone. Then one day he went home to visit his parents, and his mom mentioned that she had run into me that day. She said “Hasn’t that Kristi Kangas turned into a sweet girl?”

Dwight finally cracked and said ok to God. With trembling hands he picked up the phone and called me, asking me if “I wouldn’t like to go out for coffee or something?” I said sure.

After we hung up my mom and I danced around the house screaming for joy. Dwight Krauss was not the kind of man who played with a girl’s emotions. After I had offered to be his wife, he would not ask me on a date unless he was interested in the option of marrying me. Mom and I both knew it. We danced and sang, and rejoiced for what seemed like hours.

The day of this first date (for a second time) finally came and Dwight arrived at my home to pick me up. My dad greeted him at the door, shaking his hand, and the tension was palpable.

We made it out to the car, and started the drive into the city. The date ended up being four parts; dinner, a movie, desert, and a walk along the riverfront. Dwight says he didn’t plan on that long of a date, we were just having such a good time, and it was hard to end it.

Near the end of the date, we walked along the river front just visiting, and I noticed that I felt something I had never felt before. God was walking with us! I actually could feel God’s approval *WHILE* I was on a date! I had felt God’s approval tons of times, just never while I was on a date with a guy. That is when Dwight noticed God was with us too. It was as if the three of us were walking along the riverfront.

Probably because Dwight had never experienced God along on a date before either, he felt something should be done to acknowledge God’s presence. Dwight said, “Let’s take a minute to pray,” and we sat on the log railing by the river, and bowed our heads. Who knows what

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Dwight was planning on saying that night, but something like this came out of his mouth:

“God, thank you so much for this time we have had together tonight. Thank you for being with us.” Then there was a pause... and Dwight said to God in front of me, “God, I would be so honored if you would give Kristi to me as my wife.”

I was in complete shock. Dwight told me later he was wondering why I didn’t pray too, because he thought I was a spiritual person. But I was a puddle on the ground at that point, and my mouth couldn’t even form words.

After that prayer, we started for home, but along the way we talked a little about what was ahead of us. Dwight mentioned his parents were on vacation, and he would like them to know about us before the whole world knew. We settled on waiting a week to tell anyone, so he could share with his parents first, and I was grateful for the time to pray and confirm with God that Dwight was to be my husband.

But the reality of the situation was that we had decided that very night, in the presence of God, to get married. I had felt God’s anointing on a date, and it was so *VERY* different from anything I had ever experienced before. Usually I felt God in worship. Now he was going with me on a date with Dwight.

That week I spent some time in prayer and asked God if Dwight was who I should marry. I went down my list of how to confirm if you have heard from God.

- Check the Bible
- Check with my authority (my parents and my pastor)
- Check in my spirit if this is really God.

I opened the Bible, and God sent me to read the book of Ruth. Then God gave me these verses:

*“The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character.”*

#### **Ruth 3:10-11**

I knew that God was telling me that I had chosen well.

I checked with my parents to make sure they liked the idea of me marrying Dwight. I offered to break it off, and did what I could to make sure that they were hap-

py with the arrangement. They were thrilled. In fact, it turned out that the whole church was thrilled. I checked with my pastor, and he was in agreement.

I recognized God’s approval in my own spirit. I knew that from more than a year ago, God had pointed Dwight out to me.

#### **Decision #5: Confirm with your authorities and the Bible before jumping into marriage. Let GOD pick who you will marry.**

I cried with joy when I knew I had my confirmations, and that I was certain that God himself actually wanted me to marry Dwight. I was in the will of God on something that mattered so much, and it was exhilarating. It felt like I was closer to God than I had ever been before, and not because I was praying or reading my Bible more; but because I was obeying God in my choice for marriage. I could feel God was proud of me.

At this point, Dwight and I had not even held hands once.

The rest was a whirlwind. He proposed three months later with a beautiful ring, and we set the date for three months after that.

From that fateful day when Dwight told God “he would be honored if God gave me to him as his wife”, it was only six months later and we were standing at the altar getting married.

He was 38 years old and I was 26. We would have done things even faster, because we were so sure about it. But we let some time pass for the rest of the church and our families to catch up.

Instead of having young people as our bridesmaids and grooms men, we decided to have our parents stand beside us at the wedding.

Several people came up to me at the reception and told me that our wedding was the most anointed one they had ever experienced. You could feel God in that church that day. Everyone could feel Him.

Let’s review the steps God took me through:

1. Let God start. Just WAIT till He starts the process.
2. Open your eyes to what really matters in your spouse.
3. Know that God will test you.
4. Obey God when He asks you to do something.
5. Confirm with the Bible, your authorities, and in your

*Several people came up to me at the reception and told me that our wedding was the most anointed one they had ever experienced.*

own spirit. You are His sheep and you will KNOW.

#### **Why the long story?**

I had to tell you my whole story about how God stepped in and saved me, giving me the perfect marriage because I see so many people failing in this area. It is just

too important to let slide. This will make or break your life; get you into ministry or keep you from it. Your students are dating based on the world's standards, and they need HELP!

In reality, we actually think that who we marry is our own decision. It's not! Did you sign up to serve God in his army or not? Then you don't get to choose your spouse! It's just that simple.

As I shared earlier, I barely made it. I suffered having my dad move me from one country to another so that I wouldn't fall for the wrong guy. I dated people that I knew I wouldn't marry. I didn't do the whole process right, but when it comes down to my ministry today, none of that matters. The only decision that matters is who I *actually* married, and the fact that I managed to save myself for him. And that part, I got right.

My life is forever cemented on the right tract because my awesome husband won't let me swerve off of it.

# 19 **The testing**

There seems to always be some testing between when you sign on the dotted line to serve God in full-time service, and the time when you make it as lead pastor or arrive on the field as a missionary. I call it the time of testing, and for me, it hurt.

When Dwight and I first decided to become missionaries, we went to our pastor to share the good news. He said he wasn't surprised at all, and that the church would back us fully. Next, our pastor asked us to draw up a business plan for our new ministry. That sounded good.

Back at home, Dwight decided to take a few days to work on the plan, and then he passed it to me "for a

few minor changes." He was thinking I would edit the grammar or something, but when I was done with it, we had a completely different plan on our hands!

Yea, you got it. We were not on the same page at all for what we would do once we got on the mission field.

So time passed as we had conversation after conversation talking about what options we had, what city we would live in, what ministry we would do, and what the whole plan would look like. It was hard to come up with the basic plan, let alone a 5-year one.

We ended up with something that maybe looked ok on paper, but basically had us doing a million things. We

were going to support the local pastors in their ministries to the people. Everything from pastor's conferences to ladies retreats, family movie nights to children's ministry. We drew up some plans for a large ministry center that would meet all sorts of needs for pastors, including printing needs, music recording, and more! The thing would have probably taken millions of dollars to build. We didn't work out that part.

Our supporters who knew anything about business thought we were a little crazy with this huge dream. But they decided to support us based on who we were, and the service we had done in the church for the past 30 years.

Basically it took a full year for Dwight and I to come together on what our ministry would look like, all the while we were trying to raise our financial support.

Then one fall day, the bomb hit. All of a sudden I wasn't feeling so good, and it got worse and worse until Dwight took me to the emergency room. They couldn't find anything, but admitted me anyway, because of the amount of pain I was in. Three days later, while I was in the hospital, my appendix burst.

They rushed me immediately into surgery, where they had to take out all my insides, put them on a table to the side of my body, and hose out all the exploded infectious waste. The doctor said I almost died on the table. But of course, God was totally in control, and I believe He was using this to test us to a new level.

They put me into intensive care, then long-term care; because they had to leave me open to let the infection out as I healed slowly from the inside out. My husband was stretched HARD as he saw his wife doped up on morphine and OxyCodone, barely able to do anything but cry as I lay there day after day. I'm so thankful to everyone who helped us through that time. I had visitors every day from church and from my and Dwight's family. I was stuck in that hospital for thanksgiving, and the hospital tried to make something for us to eat that passed as turkey and stuffing. I had flowers and stuffed animals, and people would bring in their laptop and watch a movie with me. Much of this time was very fuzzy for me, since I was on a lot of medication, which the doctors never even asked us permission to put me on!

Eventually they sent me home, still with my wound open, and instructions on daily care of the opening in my stomach. Since my intestines had gotten all moved around, nothing seemed to work. For two whole months, I couldn't eat anything solid without it coming flying

back out my mouth. So we sustained me on "Ensure" liquid protein drink so that I could have at least a little bit of strength. I could eat no solid food.

People from church brought over meals, and family members helped Dwight clean the house, while I sat, stuck in a chair every day. At this point I had to learn how to walk again. I don't know how that works, when you have been a normal walking-human for 28 years, then in a matter of a few months, you can't walk at all, and it feels like you have to start from scratch!

Slowly I got better, but it was a Christmas to remember. Dwight took me to Walmart in a wheelchair and we bought all the presents for both our families in only one hour, because that was all the strength I had.

Then in March it seemed like I was getting stronger, and able to eat solid foods, when we went in to the hospital for a medication refill. They didn't want to refill the medications.

Once again our world came crashing down when we realized that they had put me on some strong meds that would not be easy to drop. They refilled us that day, but had no help for how we would reduce the dosage and finally get off those medications. Dwight was frustrated with the doctor and asked, "What were you planning to do when she got better?" The doctor responded, "To be honest, we usually only use those medications on that dosage for terminal patients." They originally didn't think I would make it, and were just trying to keep me comfortable!

So Dwight started researching the medications and looking up how to get me off of them. He found a drug rehab clinic and made a phone call. The guy on the phone told my husband that it was potentially possible to get me off by himself; but that he should take it very seriously. And if he couldn't get me off on his own, he should bring me into a rehab center. The man

*The doctor responded,  
"To be honest, we  
usually only use those  
medications on that  
dosage for terminal  
patients."*

gave Dwight all the steps for the process. We would be facing one week of major pain and no sleep, followed by a month of weakness and depression, at which point it would be like someone flipped a switch and I would be myself again.

That night Dwight took me out to dinner and said, “Honey, I have some bad news for you. The doctors put you on some major medications that we now have to get you off of, and it isn’t going to be easy. I love you, and will be with you the whole way.”

So we started cutting the pills in half and reducing the dosages and then set the date for when we would go cold-turkey. Dwight planned the whole thing, and scheduled ahead at his work to take the whole week off with me.

The day arrived and the pain started. I was so fidgety, itchy and miserable! I couldn’t sleep, not one wink. For a week, I would be awake all night long, so we rented a million movies. I just plowed thru them as I paced all around the living room. Dwight would try to take some cat-naps, but if ever I found myself crying too much, he gave me permission to wake him at any time of the night. We got some activities for me to do, but my attention span was so small I couldn’t finish anything I started. And that was how the whole week went.

I remember thinking, this would be crazy difficult for someone to do alone. What about those poor people who got lied to, and started taking drugs not knowing what it would do to their system? They would feel just like me. I was lied to by doctors, and trusted them with what medications I should be taking. I was battling withdrawal!

Dwight hid the medications, but there was no need. I was determined to get free, and so we finished the hard week, then the hard month of depression. Then just like the doctor at the clinic said, at the end of 30 days, someone just flipped a switch and I was back!

Two weeks later I was on a mission’s trip to Mexico, weak but able to translate. All seemed well, except that now we were stuck with a huge hospital bill of \$70,000! Now how do we get to Mexico as missionaries?

We talked about maybe going bankrupt, and went to our pastor to ask his advice. Our pastor said, “Guys, I don’t think bankruptcy is the thing for you. I think God wants to do something special for you.”

This was no easy thing to swallow. No one wants to send money to a missionary who is taking that money to pay off \$70,000 to a hospital bill. This was just a death of

a vision. With this debt around our necks, we couldn’t be missionaries. We told the hospital that we wanted to be missionaries, but of course they just wanted their money. We were stuck waiting on God for a miracle.

Then about a month later I received a call from the hospital one day while Dwight was at work. The lady on the other line said, “You know, I was driving to work

*No one wants to send  
money to a missionary  
who is taking that money  
to pay off \$70,000 to a  
hospital bill.*

today, and I saw a billboard that said, “Help us send our missionaries to Mexico” and I thought to myself... I can’t help those people, but I do know of some missionaries I can help.”

She got to the office, found our paperwork and gave me a call. She offered that if I would go in there today to sign some papers, they would write off the whole thing! We wouldn’t have to pay any of it!

I think God chose to test us in every way before He sent us out. We went through the fire of my appendix bursting, the finances, the drugs, the business plan, my physical pain, and the waiting.

Our marriage got stronger, our resolve to become missionaries got stronger, and our faith was built up as we saw God move.

Not everyone will need to approach death’s door before they get their placement in ministry, but I can guarantee that everyone will go through some testing and trials before they are released.

We set the move date, put our little home on the market and prepared the final fundraising. Then the packing started and the date got closer. Only we didn’t have all our fundraising together and our home had not sold. It had been appraised at \$10,000, so we were hoping for \$5-6000.

We prayed about what to do, but we felt that God wanted us to take a leap of faith. So we did our best to follow through on everything, but decided that we were leaving on that date, regardless of what happened. I remember the packing parties and the loading party. I remember my life getting turned upside down. We were driving

a huge trailer all the way down California and across the border ourselves, and making two trips to move our things.

The morning arrived and we woke up in excitement. After breakfast and final loading, we were ready to pull out. Then out of the blue, the owner of the park came up to us and offered us \$1000 for our little home, just to get rid of us. We decided to accept his small offer, and we were free from the burden.

Family and friends hugged us, and away we went... driving off into the sunset!

If I look back, it was almost exactly 3 full years from the time we signed up with God to use us as missionaries to the time we left for Mexico.

But we had been through a lot in those three years and we were stronger for it. The testing was over. We were official missionaries!

What testing has God put you through? How long did it take?

You can be sure that when you sign up to serve God MORE, He will bring you MORE. But at first, it will always feel like more hardship, NOT more blessings. But I honestly believe that hardships are what actually lead to the blessings. Hardships are what make you grow

*She said, “I thought  
to myself... I can’t  
help those people, but  
I do know of some  
missionaries I can  
help.”*

and mature. They are what make you who you are. As I mentioned earlier, of course you are not going to have the same exact trials we had. Your appendix isn’t going to burst, followed by the trial of medication withdrawal and the huge hospital bill.

I think I can safely say that you are going to go through something difficult, a testing of sorts. I can also safely say that it isn’t going to be fun. Trials and testings never are. I am confident that it will all be worth it when you can look back and see God’s hand on your life, preparing you for the ministry ahead. So when the trials hit, embrace them. Know that God only tests those who plan on continuing up the ladder.



# 20

## **NOW, your ministry starts!**

We finally made it to Mexico; Huatabampo, Sonora to be exact. We had purchased a piece of land, and were living in a loaned motorhome on the land, while we built a more permanent home. When asked how long we were staying there, we would say there were no plans to leave, and we might just end up getting buried on the “back forty”. We were there to stay.

Even though life was hard with dust and heat (to the tune of 120F/48C!) we still had some ministry “honeymoon”. We could serve wherever we saw a need. If we saw an opportunity to bless a pastor, we could just do it. We helped pastors move, we brought over food, we helped with their events, and we brought teams to bless them with construction. We had pastor’s conferences and marriage retreats. We were trying to bless the pastors with whatever we could, and also on the side, we did children’s ministry for them. I could do a special event for their children, but then I got to thinking, I might as well print them up something, since we had brought down our riso-graph. (A type of photocopier that can run different colors at a time, and is more economical than copies.)

My first curriculum was a simple VBS, with 5 coloring pages and some fun activities. The theme was “Going deeper with God” with a submarine under the water. (This continues to be a hot-seller!) We set a date to pass it out, and invited the local churches. Around 25 churches showed on that first curriculum pass-out, and we gave them whatever they needed. After covering the theme and fun ideas, we would ask them how many children they expected, and we would give them that many copies. If they expected 100 children, we gave them 100 copies for each day. We had a blast.

That first summer I got to go and visit 10 of those churches to see their VBS in action, and it was exhilarating to think I had made a program and they were putting it to good use, to reach the children of their towns

and villages.

It didn’t take long for the word to spread, and we decided to include a few more surrounding cities in the invite for curriculum. By the end of that first year, we were now giving curriculum to 100 churches.

That got a little more complicated with the printing, and so my husband had to get more involved in the planning and printing of the kid’s books and the organizing of giving them all away.

We had some work parties where we invited people over and hand-collated the main teacher’s book outside and ran them thru a stapler machine Dwight had purchased.

All the while we continued with blessing the churches with other areas of ministry, including running print jobs for their evangelistic campaigns or other events. Since we had this small set-up for printing, it seemed like a nice addition to bless the pastors. We made them business cards, tracts for passing out, invites for their churches, and posters for campaigns.

Then I got excited about doing a kids camp! I had been so blessed personally by attending a kid’s camp every year, it seemed natural to provide that same blessing to the churches around us. I could help the children take the next step in a deeper walk with God! So I went about making plans to have 100 kids actually sleeping on our little ministry site, and spending an entire week with us for camp. We passed out flyers and invited the kids for the upcoming summer camp.

Life was good. We had tons to do. It seemed as though there was lots of grace for us, and lots of freedom in what we could do. I would imagine this would be similar to many who start into ministry.

This is your “honeymoon” time; this first phase of ministry that is full of grace and freedom.

# 21

## Growing pains

I have been sharing with you some levels that I went through in my growth and training as a Christian. Some of the levels are the same topic, only a higher course level.

I think I will switch to the analogy of school for this one. At first you take math 101, and you are learning basic math. The next year maybe you study algebra, then trigonometry, and then calculus, etc. There are many levels to math that a person can learn. So it is the same with God and His schooling. I first had to learn sacrifice 101. But later God asked me to learn MORE sacrifice, and more and more, so it just felt like sacrifice 101, sacrifice 202, sacrifice 303 and so on. The same is true about obedience or faith; there are many levels to faith. It feels great to be given a test and pass it, and go up to a new level of faith, but I can always know that there will be another harder faith test coming along some day. Faith 404 is coming, and there will be no way for me to understand it or pass it if I have not already passed the previous 3 faith courses. Some courses are prerequisites, and there is no jumping ahead.

### Obedience 202

One time God tested me again in obedience. I was struggling with allergies in the Sonoran desert, and I was sent to a lab for some tests. The doctor found out that I had not been able to get pregnant, and wanted me to take another test to see if he could find why. I immediately felt God tell me that He already knew why I wasn't getting pregnant. But I was tempted to slip in the lab test anyway. Who would know? It would be just two tests instead of one, so I didn't stop the doctor when he wrote down both tests on the prescription. The date for the test was weeks away.

The day came and I went into the lab; and as it would turn out, that week we were so low on funds that I

couldn't afford both tests. I knew right away God was giving me an out, so that I would not be caught disobeying Him. There was one way I could have twisted around the funds, ran some errands, and somehow made both tests happen. But I chose to obey God instead, and not get the other test. Only one test for me that day. But it was a close call, I almost failed.

God had already told me multiple times that HE was in charge of my life, and He wasn't in the dark as to why I wasn't getting pregnant. There was no need for us to take the test. Dwight and I had given our lives to God, and He had asked us to trust Him for HIS timing on when or IF he would give us a family.

### The calling 202

My first calling was to become a missionary, to serve God in full-time ministry. But later, I received a more specific calling, one that got me into the ministry where I currently find myself.

As I mentioned earlier, one day I found myself typing away while cramped on a little table in the motorhome, creating some children's ministry materials. I had never considered myself a writer, but this wasn't writing. I was just grabbing some verses to put with coloring pages for a quick gift for the local churches. Then one thing led to another, and I decided to make them a simple VBS. It would just be a small lesson with a memory verse, a coloring page and a craft for each of 5 days. No problem. This turned into "Going deeper with God" a submarine themed VBS, and my very first curriculum that we printed and passed out to 30 churches in our local area in Huatabampo, Mexico. Soon those 30 churches turned into 100 churches.

Dwight and I remember fondly looking at the size of what I wanted to give the churches and Dwight saying, "But Kristi, that is going to take a whole box of

paper!”

Now we buy paper by the pallet!

But back then, for that first material, it seemed to be a huge task, but the churches loved it. I had a blast going to each church to see them put on the different programs. One church out in Yavaros (a beach village) had made an awesome ship’s wheel, and all the leaders

## *But Kristi, that is going to take a whole box of paper!*

wore fishermen’s clothing. When the captain turned the wheel, all the children would lean in their wooden pews to the left or to the right. Then all of a sudden, some teachers would squirt water into the windows (using 2-liter coke bottles filled with water), getting the children wet! Those were large waves, of course. The whole church was having a blast, and I could hardly believe I had written this little program for them.

I just had to do another.

I had no formal training on how to write curriculum, but I did have a lot of experience doing children’s ministry. I didn’t realize it at the time, but I had actually taught children in one form or another for 18 years straight! From Sunday school to VBS, from kids clubs to camps, from pioneer girls to awana and “chapel on wheels” (a program that allowed us into public schools.) Without meaning to, I had accidentally taught every age group, from nursery and kindergarten to Jr. High and youth.

God had been training me all along for this work of writing curriculum, but I hadn’t noticed. I actually was doing children’s ministry “in the meantime” since it was the only place I could minister, as I prepared to become a pastor’s wife or missionary’s wife. But God had a plan, and as long as I followed Him, I had remained on that ladder of training for the calling He was about to give me.

I dove into writing another material, but this time I wanted something deeper, something for Sunday school. I wanted to get the students reading the bible. So I wrote on the parables of Jesus, and did a 13-week program with a detectives theme called, “Detectives, finding the kingdom of God.” Each kid would receive a special decoder, and they would be able to study each parable to see what Jesus meant, and what the real kingdom of

God was! It was exciting, and I worked away on the computer in our little motor home. It took me about 1 month to finish. (Incidentally, I have not been able to do a 13-week program in only a month since! Now everything has to have a website and a CD with music, crafts, and more! The work always seems to go on and on!)

As I was inserting the last little bit of Spanish into my little design for this detectives book, I felt God’s presence fill the room. I spent some time combing thru it for mistakes, found a few and fixed them. When I could find no more mistakes, I decided the project was finished. I felt an urge to dedicate the material to God. And so, I actually audibly said to God, “Here you go”, as though I was lifting up the material and physically handing it to Him. I felt Him take it and then thank me. Then His presence became so strong I could hardly breathe.

God said to me, “Kristi, this is what you are going to do for the rest of your life.” I was in shock! I wasn’t a writer, and especially not qualified for writing curriculum!!! I struggled for a while to accept it, but in the end I said, “OK Lord, you are the boss. I’ll do whatever you want me to do.” Even though I was willing, the job was still very difficult for me. I didn’t have any training as an author. But I did have lots of experience as a teacher.

That night I excitedly shared my new calling with my husband who was thrilled for me. The very next day, I sat down and wrote a Christmas program in 1 day, from start to finish called “Alabale” or “Worship Him” with 4 lessons. A couple of weeks later we added coloring pages and a nativity scene the children could color and make. I had a new calling, and it was easy to do. I could ask God for an insight, or something special from His Word, and He would just give one to me. After all, it wasn’t for me, it was for the children!

I had already received my calling as a missionary, but now I knew what I was supposed to be doing with my time on the mission field. God had asked me to write children’s ministry curriculum. It was a challenge, but I was excited and willing to learn something new.

### **Sacrifice 303**

*Then His presence became so strong I could hardly breathe.*

As a young girl, I had always imagined myself getting married and starting a family right away, and having a dozen children! I thought a whole soccer team would do the trick. As I have shared with you earlier, when God asked me to give up having a family, it was very difficult. Dwight and I decided we must obey.

But then out of the blue one day years later, I realized that if I never got pregnant, I will never be a grandmother either! This was a whole new level of sacrifice for me. I just had not thought it through earlier. No big family, no grandkids to spoil, no large family Christmas dinners, or any of the other traditions I had learned from my own grandparents. I started to cry. Then God asked me point blank, “Are you willing to give up the traditional family life to serve me? Will you still serve Me, writing curriculum your whole life, even if you never get a family?”

I struggled for a while. Then I reminded myself of a promise I had made. I choose to never say no to God. So, I surrendered my family and even my plans for grandchildren.

### **Our choice**

Then one year God gave Dwight and me a specific word. He said to us, “Well done. You have done great. You are allowed to stop here and keep doing what you are doing. OR, you may grow to the next level if you want. But, it will hurt. It’s time to decide.”

*Then God asked me point blank, “Are you willing to give up the traditional family life to serve me?”*

Dwight and I felt like God was giving us a genuine option. At that point, our ministry had tripled over each year. I wrote the curriculum and Dwight printed it; then we traveled to various cities in Sonora and Sinaloa Mexico where we gave the material away. The first year we had 30 churches using our curriculum. The following year there was 100, then 300 churches and then the next year 1000. We could continue to minister where we were, or we could accept the new growth offered to us. It’s important to note that we didn’t feel like we had to keep growing. This was a real choice God was giving

us. Dwight and I talked and decided, “Why say, ‘NO’ to God”? Whatever for? And so we said, “Yes” to God.

Several months went by and we saw no change, and didn’t know what God had been talking about. Then when the New Year hit, all of a sudden the market

*Why say, “NO” to God?  
Whatever for?*

crashed in the United States, and we lost almost half of our funding. We had already set the “tour” with the different cities and dates where we would take the children’s ministry curriculum. Now what should we do? There was no way we could afford to do what we had done the year before, giving the material away to a thousand churches.

You see, up to this point, we were not charging anyone any money at all. If a teacher came to our event, and hoped to have a VBS for 100 children, we would give her 100 student books! We had little forms that each church filled out, and we would give them the amount of books they asked for.

Now we were faced with either cutting some cities, or reducing what we gave away. We both knew right away that it was better to go to all the same cities, and NOT drop a city. And so, we had no choice but to drop some of what we gave away.

And so we started a new system. At each event we would give a “free pack” which would include 1 of each book so that they had what they needed to make photocopies and teach Sunday school. For the VBS, we gave each church a copy of each book as well as the CD of the new music. Everything was given with permission to photocopy. We also started putting everything online, free and available to download and photocopy.

But we also decided to continue to print the student books in mass, and offer them to the churches “at cost”. We didn’t charge for the rent of the building or for the electric bill. Just the cost of the paper and ink, so that there would be no end to the material we could print. When the word spread in Mexico about our material, we wouldn’t have to turn churches away. Each church could buy the exact amount they needed, and our prices were half the cost of photocopies. It worked. The churches were happy and we didn’t have to cut back any cities from the tour.

However, the transition was painful. First, it was dif-



difficult for us as Americans to tour in Mexico, charging people for products. It was no fun for me to take people's money. We had always been a ministry, and now people started treating us like a normal business. Then we had to register our ministry as a business in Mexico to explain and account for the money. It was months and months of paperwork to get us fully registered in Mexico.

It took us a while to get back up to 1000 churches BUYING the material, but then it just kept growing. Now between the downloads and the printed materials, it looks like somewhere around 20,000 churches are using our material! And there is no need to cut back. The churches in Latin America can find our material free online, download it and make photocopies for each kid. The material available continues to be priced "at cost" and remains more economical than photocopies. Of course there are challenges to running a business in a foreign country, but we know in our hearts it is a ministry.

### **Growth = Pain**

To close this chapter on growing pains, I would like to mention that growth always involves pain. It doesn't come easy, and it always seems to hurt. When I find myself crying, it is because I'm being stretched again. When I find myself challenged, I have to push through and do what God is asking of me. But if I make it, I have taken a step up God's ladder!

Now I am so used to it, that it comes natural to congratulate someone when they are going through a painful circumstance. I still don't enjoy it, so I have to encourage myself as well. But I know that the pain is always for my good.

Whatever you are going through, be it persecution from others, being kicked out of ministry, being laughed at, being sick, or being given a difficult challenge: it is always for your good. That is the blessing you get when you sign up to be a "moving car" obeying orders from your boss, God Himself. It may hurt, but it is always for your good. Just trust Him and walk through the muck till you reach the other side.

# 22

## **Marching orders received**

One day Dwight and I were on a long road trip and were having a great car visit, when God all-of-a-sudden opened our eyes to the importance of Children's ministry. We were talking out some ministry plans and praying together. As we were praying, God gave me a vision that I shared with Dwight.

I saw a huge crowd of people running down a wide street. It was similar to a large marathon with thousands and thousands of runners. Everyone was running together down the length of the street. No one seemed to notice that up ahead was a drop-off where the street disappeared and there was a long fall. The people just continued to run until they reached the drop-off where

they plummeted to the bottom. At the ground there was a pile of hurt people.

There were a bunch of people running around at the bottom helping all the hurt people. I saw tents set up as make-shift hospitals and medical clinics. The doctors and nurses brought the people to these various tents where they helped them. Some had a broken leg, some needed more bandages, and some didn't make it.

God showed me that the different tents represented denominations. The doctors were pastors, and all those helping the hurt people were those in ministry. There were times where there were 3 people trying to help 1 hurt person, and so the different denominations were



fighting over who would take them to their tent.

The people who were running up top in the street represented children. God pointed out to me that very few people were helping the children and warning them of the upcoming cliff that everyone was falling down. All the ministry was going on down at the bottom of the cliff, helping those who had been hurt. But many actually died, and those deaths could have been prevented, not to mention preventing all of the pain.

The broken bones and bandages represented pain that people had gotten into before they knew Christ and changed their life. There was the pain of divorce, the pain of robbing a store and going to prison, the pain of marrying wrong, and the pain of getting caught in various sins. There were many people in ministry helping these people with their problems, but very few people helping the children before they fell into it all.

The ministry down below was exciting because you might find someone who was on the brink of death, and you could administer CPR. In a matter of minutes, you saved someone's life! The ambulance would arrive

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with the sirens blazing and everyone would see what you were doing as you loaded them up and headed to your denomination's tent. But up above, working with children, when you stopped someone from falling off the cliff, there was no fanfare. There was no noise and no one saw anything amazing. There was just a person who quit running along with the crowd and stopped before they fell.

And so Dwight and I felt as though our eyes were opened to children's ministry. It wasn't ministry to children. It was ministry to humans, whole spirits and souls. Children's ministry is actually stopping people from running along with the crowds into inevitable disaster. The only thing small about children is their bodies and their wallets. They do not tithe to the church, and they look pretty short. But they are like sponges, taking in lots of information, and learning how to "run" in this life.

And so Dwight and I decided to leave the tents below and climb up top, and start working to STOP people from running off the cliff. Since there are so few people working in children's ministry, it seemed important to us to focus on helping those who do. Our job was to encourage and help those up top, and work to keep them up there.

You see, over the last 9 years that I have been a missionary in Mexico, I have found that somewhere around 90% of the workers are not planning on staying in children's ministry. They are there until they are given a better position at their church. I totally understand because I did it myself. I ended up serving in children's ministry for 18 years, but I actually wasn't planning on staying there! I started there because it was a place to serve in the church. I always assumed that I would move on to the women's ministry, and then become a pastor's wife. I was thrilled when we became missionaries, because I was higher up the Christian community ladder. But I never imagined returning to children's ministry.

So that fateful day in the car, while we were on a road trip, Dwight and I felt God's calling to children's ministry. It wasn't just a calling, but we felt as though God showed us His reasoning. Someone had to get up on top of the cliff and warn people about the fall. It was better to stop people from falling than to repair the damage down below.

And so I hope that with this vision, God has opened your eyes to the calling of children's ministry. It has nothing to do with actual "teaching". It has to do with working with real souls BEFORE they fall into sins that will wreck their lives.

In children's ministry, we need pastors, evangelists, teachers, cooks, organizers, Facebook campaign managers, sound techs, musicians, artists and MORE. Everything the body of Christ has, children's ministry needs. We are not only looking for teachers. We need everyone's help. We need people to open their eyes, and serve in the children's ministry department for life. We will take the help from temporary workers because we are desperate for help. But we WANT adults that are committed to children's ministry, and are committed to helping real souls, real humans, real people BEFORE they fall off the cliff!

# 23 Faith

The excitement was in the air as I packed each plate. Piles of dishes were all over the place as well as piles of newspaper for packing. The week had finally arrived, and we were moving to Mexico City. During a tour down south a few years back with the teachers training conference, we had felt God leading us to leave Sonora and move down to the capital of Mexico, to better serve this country, and be more accessible to the rest of the world. We set our move day for Saturday, January 1st, and here it was the Wednesday before.

I had done a lot of packing over the past month, but now it was time to get 'er done. Today's task: the kitchen. Pack the whole thing completely up, leaving absolutely nothing unpacked. We were to eat sandwiches or go to restaurants from here until Saturday. There were some ladies from church, helping me pack, and we were chatting away as we worked.

Dwight was off on a trip to Guaymas to finish up the last paperwork for the business and our personal visas at the immigration office. Oh yea, and I had one errand to run. Go sign the papers on the sale of the house.

The whole last few months had been a trial of faith. Sure, we had been ready to leave our home in Oregon without it selling, but that was us maybe walking away from \$5 - \$8 grand. This was different. We had spent \$17 grand on the land and another \$25 on the house and ministry center. Our place had been evaluated this time at \$100,000, and we didn't want to walk away from that. But over the year and a half we had it on the market, we had no buyers.

Then in October, we were approached with an idea: break apart the land into small lots and sell those with payments, separate from the home. Then lower the price on the home. It seemed like a good idea, and we set out to investigate all the legal matters.

It had worked, and with much sweat we had the whole thing set up and rolling with all the lots spoken for and people paying weekly payments. Then we set the house

all the way down to \$35,000, and we finally found a taker. This morning was the final signing, only 3 days before we were to drive away. The semi-truck had been ordered for picking us up at 8am on Saturday. Our house hadn't grown over the years, but all the ministry machines had multiplied, since the print-shop had really taken off. We needed a large truck to move us this time.

As I got into the car to head down to sign the papers, I thought to myself, "Boy, God sure cut this one close. He probably is always working on our faith." I wished Dwight was with me, but I figured it would go just fine. God and I could handle this one.

When I arrived at the lawyer's office, they had me waiting for a while. Then the lawyer came out and just shook his head sadly. The buyer had called this morning to back out. I was in shock, and now I wanted Dwight badly. I walked out of that office sort-of numb, trying to think of what I was going to do. Everything in me wanted to quit packing up my kitchen and have the ladies go home and leave me alone. What would my husband decide to do? I really couldn't imagine us walking away from this size of a home. If we just left it empty, it would be ripped apart within a week. It seemed that the most likely scenario had me needing my dishes for

*"Boy, God sure cut this one close. He probably is always working on our faith."*

a while longer. What a pain it would be if I finished my task for the day and actually packed it all away. How it would hurt to be digging out kitchen items one at a time as we needed them. It would be a reminder that God had not given us the miracle sale in the end.

I cried as I drove home, and struggled with what to do. Then I felt God telling me to press on and pack it up.

I struggled all the way home with the decision, but as I pulled up, I decided to just obey God and let Him figure it all out. I decided before I climbed out of the car that I would not tell the ladies that the sale had fallen through, and that I would put on some worship music and finish packing my kitchen all the way to the end, just like I had planned for the day.

Nothing got easier as the day wore on. I was determined to press on, but it felt like walking to school uphill in the snow in my bare feet (both ways of course.) I recall thinking that this was actually my toughest faith assignment I had ever had. Every minute was hard. My husband was gone, the sale fell-through, and Dwight doesn't yet know. God is asking me to go ahead and

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pack my whole kitchen up so eating will be difficult. I was pretty sure we would not be walking away from this home, so we would want to eat. Thankfully at some point the ladies went home, and I was alone.

Dwight arrived and I filled him in. Then began one of Dwight's largest faith tests. Should he call and cancel the moving truck, or stay the course, and walk away from this home. He went into the bedroom to pray and make his decision. I decided to leave him alone to struggle it out.

He came out and said we were staying the course. The move was still on for Saturday. We would just have to try to find someone to live in our home until it sold, so that it didn't get torn down. I breathed a sigh of relief that I had managed to finish packing the kitchen.

The next afternoon, as we were trying to call people to find someone to live in our home for free, along came a man on a horse. He was the guy who had bought the most lots, right next to the house. He informed us that he was interested in buying the house! Two hours later, another lady showed who wanted the house, and she wanted it badly! Then two hours later, while the lady was still there, a couple arrived who were acting like they wanted the house. (Turns out they were not that interested, but God had sent them along to put pressure on the other two buyers.) The horse guy came back, and without our planning it, two days before our move date, there were three buyers all at the house at the same time!

They started fighting over who would get the house, and one at a time, they started offering us more money. The horse guy and the lady both begged us to not let the price go up, but to honor an earlier offer with them.

I stood in front of this group of people and said, "I understand this is not normal, but this is God's property. God is the one who is moving us down to Mexico City where the land will cost us more than this land with all the buildings on it. I have no choice but to accept the highest bidder. We need all the money we can get to purchase another place down near Mexico City where everything is more expensive."

They all sighed in grief and then started bidding (including the third couple that wasn't as interested). That morning we had been willing to accept \$30,000 and they knew it. By the time the bidding was done, the horse guy won at \$45,000!

We set a time the next day to go sign papers. The papers were all ready; it was just a matter of changing the buyer's name, and the total amount he would be paying.

Dwight and I walked back into our home in complete shock. What a test of faith God had just put us through! Now it was 2 days before leaving, and we had another buyer for half again as much! We continued the final packing, and prepped the car for the trip. The next day Dwight and I went down together and signed the papers, receiving the horse guy's down-payment in cash. It was done.

The next morning the truck arrived at 6am instead of 8am, and the whirlwind began of loading everything into the truck. The horse guy came over and we talked final details, showing him how the pump worked, and giving him a few extra furnishings.

Then we climbed into our van and trailer, loaded our two cats into their cage that would be their home away from home, and drove off the land that had been our

home for 6 years. God had decided to sell our home 1 day before our departure date, and had asked us to plan on leaving whether it had sold or not.

We moved south without having a place to land. We lived in a hotel while we searched for a place to rent, trying to calm my cats the whole time as my own stomach was in turmoil. It was no easy thing for me to drive

off into the sunset with no idea where we would land, all in a foreign country. God was stretching me to the max the whole time.

It seems to me that it matters to God how much faith his Generals have. So my guess is that there will be several more levels ahead of me of MORE such faith testing.

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# 24 **Politics**

We live in a world of politics and games. Life is never as easy as it should be. Humanity gets in the way.

There is good news though. These politics don't get involved with God's ladder and the climb to becoming a 5-star General. Do you know why? It is because there is nothing anyone can do to take away what you have earned on God's ladder.

However going up the world's ladder and the Christian community ladder are not as secure.

This doesn't mean that you cannot wreck your own chances. You could marry wrong and go down God's ladder and of course you can commit one of the larger sins that have long-term consequences. You can also get stuck on the same step of God's ladder by refusing to say YES to God when he brings you new challenges. I've seen many people just sitting on the same step of the ladder as if they have no care in the world. But that would be YOU getting stuck or losing what you have earned, not someone taking it away from you.

Since Dwight and I moved to Mexico City, we have been robbed quite a few times. I guess this area is known for theft, and so we are slowly getting used to it. My cell phone was taken on the street once. The print shop and office was broken into and we lost a lot of equipment. That time the thieves almost took the server with all of my past curriculums on it! We had a back-up, but I still would have lost a lot of work. I'm pretty sure God put a couple of angels on His curriculum. I've lost more than 4 laptops. Now we buy cheaper ones, since they don't last very long anyway. :-) But this year, our house was broken into while Dwight and I were in it. When we woke up and went downstairs one morning, it was a strange feeling to look around and see things missing. It was crazy to know that someone actually came into my home and took my things while I was upstairs sleeping. I felt defenseless and exposed. I felt weak and vulnerable.

I have seen that same look on people's faces. When someone tells a lie about you to someone in authority at your church, and next thing you know, everyone believes it! Soon, you are several steps down the Christian community ladder. How about when someone steals your ideas at work, and they take the promotion, when it should have been yours. People can steal, cheat and lie to get up the world's ladder or the Christian community ladder. People will step on you to move up. That's just humanity.

I'm not trying to bash the church. I love the Body of Christ, and I have been serving it for years. I just have noticed that many people confuse the church's ladder with God's ladder, and they are just not the same. The church is full of humans who make mistakes. We try not to, but inevitably, politics plays a game in church. God's ladder is the real ladder, and there is no pushing or pulling to take steps up or pull another person down.

This doesn't mean that every step you take on God's ladder is secure. You can go down God's ladder, but only when you do it to yourself. This should be comforting. It means that you never have to have that awful feeling of being robbed. When you climb God's ladder, you never have to feel defenseless and exposed, or weak and vulnerable. God is in control and will bring everyone to justice in the end.

The other side of the coin is the importance of recognizing the difference between God's ladder and the Christian community ladder in others around you.

I know personally of two stories of very charismatic pastors who fell into sin. One was in the United States and one was in Mexico. One of the pastors was winning the hearts of the people while his church grew in size, all the while he was sleeping with his own daughter, making her pregnant. When the church leaders found out, they didn't want anyone to know, and they hid the



facts from the people. But when the government found out, they put the man in prison. I know people who left the church, and basically left God over the confusion and disappointment.

The other pastor I know was looking at pornography on the computer in the church office for years while the church grew in size. It took years for the church to see his problem. After he was finally stepped down as pastor, it came to light that there were allegations of sexual impropriety from his last church. In the end, the question was, why was this pastor recommended to us? One day he was on his knees praying and he passed away suddenly. It seemed that God decided to take him home early.

In both of these circumstances the church leadership either wanted to hide the problem or they were not high enough on God's ladder to be able to see it clearly. In the end, God brought both of these men to justice.

I would like to go public saying that just because someone is high up in the Christian community, it does not mean that they are high on God's ladder. God sees the heart and sees all our sins. We can hide things from people, but we cannot hide anything from God.

One pastor I know was choosing from various pastors in the community to participate in a new leadership training program. One of the pastors he chose had an affair with another woman and left his wife. Why was he chosen for this special opportunity? Probably because he was cool, and it made the program look cool. "Cool factor" will get you up the Christian community ladder much quicker. But God isn't wowed by how cool you are.

Also, denominational barriers can slow your progress up the Christian community ladder. If you are a part of one denomination, but switch to another, you often have to start over at the bottom of the new Christian commu-

nity ladder. But if you change churches, you won't be starting over with God (Unless, of course, you make the change in disobedience to God.) I have seen people change churches for good reasons, but still be punished for it. I have also seen musicians change churches because they were in sin, and never get punished. Because they were a good musician, the other church accepted them completely and let them start high up the ladder, jumping straight into leadership and ministry.

Therefore it is important that you and I always keep separate the church's ladder and God's ladder. They are very different. I propose that we all grow in maturity, taking one step after another up God's ladder. If we see others fall over the church's mistake, we should offer a hand to help them up. Humans are the ones who make the mistakes. In the end they need to be forgiven because God still loves them just as He still loves us.

Sometimes God will ask you to do something that is identical to the church's ladder, and sometimes God will ask you to do something that is completely against all earthly wisdom. The key is to always obey God, when it makes sense to you and when it doesn't.

Politics can seem bad, but in reality, this is good news. It means nothing that actually matters can be taken from you. If something is taken, it didn't really matter.

*Just because someone is high up in the Christian community, it does not mean that they are high on God's ladder.*

# 25

## Slavery to God

I have been writing children's ministry curriculum now for almost 9 years. Somewhere in the early years I started the habit of giving my work to God at the end of the year. We follow the calendar year, so I am always wrapping up the new curriculum in December and finishing details in January. Then somewhere in February or March, I get to start all over again and begin writing for the following year. As I handed my work to God officially, He started to give me gifts. So, over the years, we have developed a gift-exchange in December. I give God my brand-new Sunday school and VBS curriculums, and He gives me a special word.

One year God said to me, "Well done my faithful servant. You have been faithful with a little, I will give you more." But then the following year at our gift-exchange, I was startled when God said, "Kristi. I would like to hire you." I said, "But God, I'm already a full-time missionary for you. How could I work more for you than I already am?" So He began to show me His new plan to hire me. Basically, God wanted to be in charge of my schedule, and actually be my direct boss.

You see, I had been treating my husband as if he was my boss. So as opportunities would come up, I would go to Dwight and ask his permission to do this-or-that project. Dwight ended up having to be the "bad-guy" to say NO to me from time to time. Of course, sometimes he also said YES. So as part of this new set-up, God wanted to give me the YES or NO to these projects. God asked me to think about what other jobs are like with other employers. So I started to think through other jobs I'd had over the years. "Well, you work 9-6 Monday through Friday." I answered. "You do what is asked of you, and you never miss a day of work. You take initiative from time to time, doing what is needed without being asked." That was what God wanted.

It felt like a holy moment, when God actually came to me personally and hired me for a position in His king-

dom. I was excited and thrilled! The God of the universe wants me! I was honored.

The new rules were easy. I was to "clock-in" every day at 9am and work till 6pm. I had my evenings off, as well as the weekends. I should no longer ask Dwight for permission without first asking God. I had a new boss, God himself, and He was more hands-on than I ever thought He would be. He directly approved each project, and I was only allowed to work on approved projects during my work hours. I felt a new freedom however, to have other projects as hobbies. Everyone has hobbies and I felt God honestly gave me permission to have them too. Only they had to be done on the weekends or weeknights in my free-time.

It was fun at first. But it didn't take long for reality to set in. God started to say No to projects. I had a fun ministry to pastor's wives, where I planned different activities for them. I would have a women's retreat, or a "spa day," or a ladies luncheon with a special speaker. That was the first one to go. I could hardly believe I wasn't allowed that ministry. Our supporters from the United States asked where the women's ministry went. Then the pastor's wives came up to me, asking me why I wasn't having events for them anymore! I didn't have a great answer. I couldn't really say, "Because God won't let me continue with them." But that was the truth.

The moment the new system really hurt was my kid's camp. I loved having the annual kid's camp. The time came to start planning camp for the year, and I felt the twinge. "What? Kid's camp isn't going to get approved?"

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ministry.*

I don't understand!" God was gentle with me, but firm. Sure enough, no kid's camp during work hours. I could do it as a hobby if I wanted. Because it was so painful to let go of, and because we already had a team from the United States planning to come, I decided to keep it as a hobby. I talked to Dwight, who understood God's side immediately. "What? You don't want the kid's camp either???" My husband gently pointed out how much time, effort and money went into camp every year. Dwight thought it cost too much for the return-value. Yes, kids were receiving ministry. Yes, we were changing lives. But the VBS material I was writing was going to over 1000 churches that year. The camp had children from only 5 different churches. Dwight thought maybe I should write a kid's camp and give it to the 1000 churches instead. God seemed to like Dwight's idea best.

I went ahead with camp, even though it didn't get organized real well (Since I had to do it in my free time.) I did have a great time at camp that year, but I knew in my heart it was my last.

And so began the end of my freedom. I shared with you earlier on how ministry started for me because I have seen others go through a similar progression. At first, Dwight and I had lots of freedom to try all sorts of ministry projects. Soon God's assignment became more real and tight. There wasn't the same freedom anymore.

Two years into being God's employee, at our annual gift-exchange, God told me that it was time for me to receive a promotion! I fell to my knees and my excitement grew as I waited. Again God said it was time for my raise and promotion. I was going to take a step up the ladder. I felt humbled and honored!

Then God's gift hit like a freight train. I was to be promoted to a slave! Again I didn't understand, and so I asked God what He meant. What is slavery? For me at that time, it meant that I no longer was to work from 9-6 for God. My whole week belonged to God. Bottom line: no more hobby projects for me. If God didn't approve a project for me, it wasn't allowed at all.

And so life changed a little, and we continued on. One weekend, I was gearing up for some fun hobby activities, and God reminded me that I was a slave. He didn't want me OVER-playing on the weekend. You see, during the 2 years that I was an employee, there were times that I actually seemed to have 2 bosses. God was the boss during work hours, and I was the boss over the weekend. I got to choose how I played or worked on the weekend, and so it seemed at times to pull me in two

directions. I was getting more and more tired. During those two years, I lost some sleep.

Now that God was the boss ALL THE TIME, He was actually ordering me to rest on the weekend. I had never experienced before being ordered to rest. But we obeyed, and just laid around all day Sunday. I didn't go shopping, I didn't cook meals for the week, and I didn't dream up any new projects. After church I just napped, then watched a movie with my husband, then read a book, and then nibbled whatever food we found easy. We just laid around like logs in a forest or vegetables without brains. We "vegged".

And so I entered a new season of my life: slavery to God. He was my boss at work and at home. I didn't accept an invitation to speak without His permission and I didn't start writing a new curriculum without His permission. I didn't take on any new hobbies and I had to "VEG" all day on Sundays. This lasted for several years. No longer did Dwight have to play the role of the "bad guy". God took on the role.

But with time, I got real good at recognizing the difference between asking God's permission and having the freedom to do what you want. I started to see it in others. All-of-a-sudden I could see the freedom others had to choose what they did without stopping to ask God's permission. I have to admit to you, I had a twinge of jealousy. It hurt to see others flaunt their decisions, when I wasn't allowed any at all. I had to remind myself over and over that slavery was a real promotion. I had taken a step up God's ladder, even if it feels like a step down. Believe me, it did feel like a step down. When I saw others with "pet-projects" I had to remind myself that it wasn't best. Slavery to God was better.

And so this slavery lasted for 3 years. I had a strict boss, God himself, who watched over my schedule. Whenever I was invited to participate in someone's children's ministry, God told me NO. Whenever I was invited to speak to teachers, God told me YES. And so in time, I got used to what He wanted.

With hindsight, I can see now that the employment years were just prepping me for the slavery years. God was being gentle with me, allowing me to grow slowly. And so the slavery process for me took 5 years to learn. And it wasn't easy.

When you first start a ministry, there is a honeymoon time, where you actually have a lot of freedom, and God is showing you many miracles. But you can't stay in that zone where you get to have any ministry project that you want, not if you want to reap a great harvest.

For that, you need God's help and direction. You need to follow His leading, and give up on "pet-projects." God actually wants our best, so we can trust Him fully.

After those 5 years, during our annual gift-exchange, God set me free. He said, Kristi you are now my friend. You understand the life assignment that I have given you. I can now trust you to work or rest on your own. You are still responsible to finish the Sunday school and VBS curriculums by the end of each year, but you may do it however you want.

And so, now I am free again. But oddly enough, I'm making the decisions rather similar to how God taught me over those 5 years. I still don't accept any invitations for ministry directly to children, but only to encourage and inspire teachers. I still rest on Sundays and make

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grow slowly.*

sure not to play too hard. We don't go hiking or boating or anything else on the weekend that would exhaust us. On Sunday we rest, so that on Monday, I can hit the work-week with everything I have for God. I have dedicated myself to this project because God asked me to and He taught me how. I am not this strict with myself because I have to be. I'm this strict because it makes life so much easier. God has given me an assignment to do, and that is what I'm doing.

# 26

## In sickness and in health

My life has been interesting in the health department, to say the least. I'll have you know that I fully believe in God's healing and that it is for us today. When Jesus died on the cross, he broke Satan's hold over sickness and death.

I also believe that God cares more about our godly character and obedience than He does our health. That may sound weird, but what do you do with this verse?

"If your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out..."

Jesus was trying to open up our eyes to the fact that IF your body is going to cause you to sin in a way that could devastate your chances for eternity, then you are better off actually taking out your eye! Eternity is what matters, and this body of ours is NOT going to heaven.

I don't think God wants us all taking out our eyes, but I do believe that God would let Satan attack me in sickness IF God knew it was for my best, and would further

God's kingdom with my personal character training.

I also believe that if you have fully submitted to God, your health is in God's hands too. Welcome to the roller coaster of life!

All throughout my childhood I had great health, never broke a bone, and never had any real issues. I got scratched by a cat on my face once, but that was the extent of my health problems.

Until my appendix exploded. Now I have shared that whole story with you, but I left out one little thing. God warned me ahead of time.

One of those days I was feeling sick like I had the flu and I was vomiting too much for my taste. I climbed in the shower, and right there in the hot steam God started speaking to me. He said, "Kristi, I am NOT going to heal you from this, but I will be with you through the whole thing."



I am going to be honest with you. It startled me. For one, I had not asked for His healing, because I assumed that all I had was a normal flu virus! So I started thinking, “Why would God promise to be with me through this? Through all of what?”

The only answer I could come up with was that it was going to be a hard trial, and He was warning me ahead of time.

I hope you don’t close your ears to what I am saying here. I know that God can heal us, and does heal us all the time. On this particular occasion, God told me before I even knew that I was really sick, that He was NOT going to heal me.

The only explanation I have is that God allows the enemy to do things against us from time to time, when He knows that it will be in our best interest in the long run. God needed to strengthen Dwight and me for the work He had planned in our future for us to do. I believe he used the appendix bursting and consequent drug fiasco and financial burden to do just that.

But that was not the end of my health problems. Having my intestines all jumbled made for a weak stomach, so I ended up getting sick often when we would eat out at restaurants.

But that was not the end of my health problems.

Then came living in the Sonoran desert. I lived there for 6 full years with my parents, as well as an additional 7 years of multiple trips a year. This was followed by living in the same desert with my husband for 6 more years. The area is primarily agricultural, and apparently there are chemicals they use in the fields that are not so healthy. In time, I burnt my lungs to the point that I can hardly visit the area without hacking till I’m blue in the face. We tried all kinds of doctors, but I was basically on multiple allergy medications a day.

Then the migraines started. They started slowly, but then built up to a minimum of at least 2 a month. We don’t know yet why I have them, although I suspect it was my daily diet coke habit. I gave up my diet coke, but we haven’t yet been able to kick the migraines yet.

Then one day this fall, God says to me, “Are you ready for some more?” I immediately wanted to say Nooooooooooooooooooooo!

But then I remembered that sticky commitment to never say no to God. I struggled all day. God wanted me to submit to Him for another challenge. Oh, and I had learned that HIS challenges were not easy at all! More pain ahead. I recall that I actually assumed there would

be pain ahead, but to be honest I didn’t expect as much pain as it was. This hurt real bad.

But back when God asked, I had no choice. I said YES.

To be honest, I didn’t know He was going to give me another health issue. I thought it would be work-related.

But then I caught something that seemed like the flu, only it hung on longer than normal. I had some other weird symptoms like shaking hands, weak legs, and I was losing weight.

I lost a whole month of work, hoping to get better before we went to the doctor to figure out what I had. It took another week for the tests to come back; I had hyperthyroidism. A random urinary tract infection had triggered my thyroid into over-drive, and it was causing too many symptoms to ignore, like tackicardia, and things that could really do damage to me.

And so, we got all set up on the medication and started in on month-one of what the doctors’ said will be a multi-year process of getting my thyroid back to normal. After just one month, my tests showed that the doctors first guess was right on track and I just needed to stay taking the pills at this level for a while, and then slowly back them off.

The only problem was that I was left with some neuro-muscular weakness. This had me barely able to walk, and lasted for about 6 weeks. I used the motorized carts at Wal-Mart and a cane for getting from the car to the store. It was like “dejavue”, learning to walk again, and being very limited in what I could do each day. My mind wasn’t clear enough to do anything with it, so I was stuck with a fuzzy mind and a weak body.

There I was stuck at home, watching movies or taking up new hobbies that don’t require much energy. I started painting like a regular artist.

After too many weeks had gone by, we decided something had to be done at the shop if the curriculum was going to get done. Now we had this great new staff in the creative team, and we needed to make some changes. They couldn’t continue to wait on me while I lay around sick at home.

So we placed my brother Jon Kangas as the interim head of my team, and gave him the assignment of getting the new materials done in time for the new release. Unfortunately for him, by this time our ministry had grown to the point that there are thousands of churches waiting for the new material, and anxious for its release. Also unfortunately for Jon, he was left the hard part of



the year, the last 2 ½ month sprint to the finish line.

Thankfully, the nuero-muscular weakness drifted away, just like all the studies said it would, and I was just left with just some miscellaneous symptoms and the juggle of medications that wreaked havoc with each day.

I had an alarm system set on an ipad with 5 different alarms during the day, each labeled with what I should take. One of the pills was very sensitive to the timing, and if I missed it, I have a day full of crying! Another pill kept me from over-activity, so if I miss that one, I'd be like the energizer bunny on a red-bull, who also ate some Starbucks coffee-bean chocolates. And sometimes, even though I would take my pills regularly, I'd have strange days of mood-swings or too-much energy or anxiety.

One Sunday I was talking with Dwight, and I said, "You know, it is kind-of weird that God didn't prep me for this illness. He would usually say something, and sometimes He asks my permission." (Of course He doesn't have to.)

Half an hour later, during worship, God said to me loud and clear, "I DID ask your permission and you gave it to me!" Ahhh, all of a sudden, I remembered. A while back I recalled God asking me if I was ready for more, and if I was willing! Apparently He was referring to this new sickness! I assumed He meant more work or something.

Of course the enemy is the one who gives these things, but God allowed it on purpose and had a plan in place for our benefit. Who only knows why God wanted to take me out of commission for several important months, but just looking around I can take a wild guess.

I have been writing curriculum basically by myself for 9 years straight. My sister Suki has come down in the summer and has helped me for two months of every year with design elements and websites, but the rest of the year, I alone was the "creative team." Then this year Suki moved down full-time, Mike and Vickie moved down full-time (my parents), and then Jon and Angie Kangas moved down full time, all of whom wanted to be a part of the creative team. I went from a team of 1 to a team of 6, and everyone excited about participating. I honestly tried my best at delegation, but something wasn't working smoothly, and I believe that God decided for the sake of the team, it was best to take me out of commission for a few months. It seemed that God was forcing everyone else to step up and cover for me.

Then out-of-the-blue 3 months later, God started talking to me again one Sunday. "Kristi, I'm going to heal your body now. I want you to believe and trust me for healing." I talked it over with Dwight and we prayed together. I felt that God was asking me to stop taking the medications for my thyroid.

Now, I cannot recommend to anyone that they just stop taking their medications. Of course you could get into real health troubles. What I would like to recommend to you is that you trust God. It takes practice to be able to hear His voice, and it takes practice to be able to obey hard orders. And this one has hurt pretty badly. I chose to obey God, and it has been painful.

There were some symptoms and problems related to stopping those medications. Nothing I haven't been through before (from the time my appendix exploded!) But still, very painful, and time-consuming. Some of the symptoms are the same as what I might have for the hyperthyroidism. And so here I am writing about a healing that I do not yet see. But I believe this time, God healed me. Last time, He warned me that there would be no healing.

On two occasions, I had to do a children's ministry conference with a migraine. I could tell that God was testing me to see if I would quit. As I lay in the hotel bed, asking God if there was any way out of this, the answer was NO. "Will you be faithful to me and my church, even when you are in pain?"

There was no choice for me. I will answer God with a YES.

So at the end of the year, at my gift-exchange with God, I was given the book of Job. God had in fact allowed this sickness for His glory. My job was to endure and then write it down in this book. God was pleased with me.

And so, this has been my story of illnesses. God uses them for training purposes and to stretch me. He also

*Remember that this  
body is just a tool while  
here on earth. Eternity  
is what matters.*

uses them for other people's good. Sometimes God chooses to heal me and sometimes He doesn't.

So next time you are sick; don't assume that God is going to heal you. Also, don't assume that everything the doctor says is true. Maybe you should actually ASK

God. He will give you a heads-up if you are going to have to hang in there for the long haul, or if you will be healed. Remember that this body is just a tool while here on earth. Eternity is what matters.

# 27 Which ladder?

Do you recall the story where my friend was chosen to do the children's ministry for a large event for her denomination? She chose to spend the weekend teaching the kids songs and she had them perform on the last day of the event. Then the leader of the denomination went up to her and thanked her for her work and told her he would keep her in mind for future projects in the denomination. That last sentence shows that she climbed the Christian community ladder with her actions. I think she would have chosen better to climb God's ladder by focusing on actually ministering to the children. She could have taught them something like prayer or Bible memory with games. Most likely, she didn't climb the world's ladder with that event. To have climbed the world's ladder, she would have had to spend the weekend covering "Values" and taken some pictures. Then she could have put the pictures and the fact that she was responsible for the event on her resume, and then it would have helped her with the world's ladder.

**0 Worlds ladder**

**+1 Christian community ladder**

**-1 God's ladder**

I mentioned to you that my dad chose to actually move my family from Mexico to the United States, and once from the United States to Mexico to keep my older sister and me from marrying wrong. Yes, twice I might have married the wrong person. What a sad thought! The decision my dad made was to hurt his chances in

climbing the Christian community ladder or the world's ladder to save my sister and I from wrecking our lives. He paid a heavy price that most fathers are not willing to pay. Others would have looked at his life and questioned his stability. Why was he moving back and forth? In my dad's case, he never really liked the politics in our churches anyway. But regardless, he took some steps down on the Christian community ladder in order to help my sister and I stay on the right ladder: God's ladder. In moving around, I can imagine he also took some steps down on the world's ladder. His job resume wouldn't look as good since he wasn't staying put in one place for very long over those years. But he took some steps up on God's ladder, because obviously God would have seen his sacrifice, and seen his priorities. I'm sure God was pleased with him for his choices.

**-1 Worlds ladder**

**-1 Christian community ladder**

**+1 God's ladder**

Part of my life story is the fact that my husband and I became missionaries. It took years to raise the support and to be able to leave our country and move to another country to serve God full-time. We had testing in every way before we left. We left money behind, and we miss our family terribly, and we miss our culture. I miss the food my grandmothers made, food that I can't make in Mexico because they don't carry the same food supplies. Nothing about being a missionary is easy. But it

did give us several steps up the ladder. We made it up Gods ladder because He was the one who asked us to move to Mexico in the first place. And so in obedience to Him, and through all the sacrifice, we took more than one step up God's ladder. But Dwight and I also both took steps up the world ladder. Dwight had been working as an aircraft engineer at a specific airline company. Since he left his job and we moved to another country, they have asked him to "consult". Now they feel like they are bringing in an important "consultant" from another country to help on their project from time to time. So in the world's view, Dwight went up a couple of steps.

My first job was in a fast-food restaurant. Then I worked as a waitress, and then I worked in a small office. Then one year I was hired by the church as the assistant to the children's pastor, and then finally I was promoted to the children's pastor. (Only they called me the "director" since I was a woman.) And so when Dwight and I were sent out as missionaries, I too went up a couple of steps in the world's ladder. At first I was a missionary, whom the world doesn't recognize too much, but soon I started speaking and writing curriculum. Now all of a sudden I was a writer and a speaker, which was higher yet up the world's ladder.

Of course both Dwight and I went up the Christian community ladder too when we became missionaries. We were now on a pastoral level, and our church gave us the opportunity to speak when we went home on vacation. And so you can see with this one move we went up all three ladders. It also shows that God's ladder isn't always opposite from the world's ladder. Sometimes they overlap.

**+2 Worlds ladder**

**+2 Christian community ladder**

**+2 God's ladder**

Do you remember the pastor I told you who had an affair? Well, the truth is that he had an affair, but repented and the church restored him to ministry. Years later all-of-a-sudden he quit pastoring the church, and decided to divorce his wife. He left the church completely. I do not know what happened after that first affair, but it would seem that he took more steps down Gods ladder than he did the church's. Obviously there was still a problem since he ended up in the same place again years later. Only the second time, he didn't want to play the church politics game anymore. I don't know where he was on God's ladder, but of course he took some steps down it too. God isn't going to laugh at a second affair and then divorcing your wife. But when it comes to someone getting a divorce, it seems that both sides fight to keep their standing in the community; so much that it is hard to really see where anyone's hearts are. Thankfully, we are not responsible for justice. We can trust that God knows where their hearts are, and will bring each person to justice someday.

As I mentioned earlier, there are multiple ladders to climb. There is the world's ladder, the Christian community ladder, and then God's ladder. If you are going to become a 5-star general in God's army, you must not be on the wrong ladder. And so, we all must push ourselves to see God's ladder and focus on climbing it over the other two ladders. This takes practice and training. There is no other way to see what is normally invisible.

*We all must push  
ourselves to see God's  
ladder and focus on  
climbing it over the  
other two ladders.*

# 28

## In conclusion

Well, here we are at the end of the book. What do you think? Do my various stories make you want to join the battlefield and work to become a 5-star General with me? As I mentioned in the beginning of this book, it all starts with you. The students in your children's ministry will learn more from your actions than your words. You cannot teach these ideas unless you first LIVE them. If you are interested, below are a steps to get on the right ladder and start climbing!

### Steps to **LIVING** these ideas

#### Step 1

Are you interested in becoming a part of God's army? The first step is to decide and sign up. God is a gentleman and will not force you. There are thousands of Christians around the world that attend church, worship God, but do not obey what He asks of them. First, tell God you are willing. Second, sign on the dotted line.

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#### Step 2

Are you worth the bother? Remember that God will not continue to give orders to a "parked car." If you have not obeyed God recently, probably it is a good start to first apologize and ask His forgiveness for disobedience. Then ask God to remind you of the last thing He asked of you. Press into God until you receive an order from Him. Write it down below. Then make sure you do it in the next 3 days. If you were a moving car earlier, but quit when God gave you a larger assignment, then your task is to figure out what assignment caused you to quit. Then purpose to do that assignment. God isn't going to let you just quit because you didn't like the most

recent assignment. Write down your assignment below. (Then make sure to do it! Did God ask you to write a book? You are not going to get another assignment until you write that book!)

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#### Step 3

Purpose to stay humble and be willing to do anything God asks. Part of joining the army, air force or marines is humbling yourself and taking orders. It doesn't matter how small they are. Remember that when you are faithful to God with the little things, He will promote you and give you more. There are two ideas from this book to stay humble. 1: Don't share with everyone all the great things you do, and 2: Share with others your mistakes as well. If you are willing to start sharing your mistakes with your students in children's ministry, sign on the dotted line below. Then ask God to give you an assignment to do for someone else, something that you will keep as a secret between you and God. Once you have the assignment, write it down on the lines provided below.

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The principles in this book can apply to any ministry in the church, but God has put on my heart to ask people to really consider treating children's ministry as an important part of the church. Please join me in this war effort for the next generation!

#### Step 4

Are you willing to take Children's ministry seriously? Remember that coloring pages are not going to make life changes. Ask God to be in charge of your ministry and ask Him to help you with it each week. This is a decision to take your class seriously, and work at preparing spiritual content each week. Start by repenting to God for the times you didn't take it seriously, and left the kids to play or do nothing during your class. Next, make the decision to change. Sign on the dotted line if you are willing to 1: let God be in charge of your class and 2: work at preparing each week ahead of time.

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#### Step 5

Purpose to live only one life instead of the normal double-life. This means that if the students in your children's ministry class find you at the local grocery store, they will see and hear you exactly the way you behave at church. Ask God to open your eyes to where you have double standards. When He shows them to you, change them! Help your students learn more about who you really are by inviting them to your home for a pizza party. If you are willing, sign on the dotted line.

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Take out your calendar and choose a date for your pizza party! :-) Write the date down below.

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#### Step 6

Think of the last larger decision you made. Now think about the world's ladder, the Christian community ladder and God's ladder. Which ladder did you choose on your last decision?

- o The world's ladder
- o The Christian community ladder
- o God's ladder

Now think about an upcoming decision you are facing. Write down below what action you should take for each of the ladders. It helps a lot to think thru a specific situation and define what action you would take for each ladder. The reason it's good to write down action for all 3 ladders is because it helps you see where you might accidentally be choosing the world's ladder. Once you label the actions for each ladder, choose which one you want to take!

#### The world's ladder:

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#### The Christian community ladder:

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#### God's ladder:

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#### Step 7

Go through and review your basic decisions.

1. Are you saved?
2. Are you willing to make the commitment to ALWAYS say "yes" to God?  
Yes / NO
3. Get into the Bible! What plan for reading/memorizing the Bible do you have for this year?

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4. Marriage. If you are not already married, are you willing to wait for God's selection for you?

Yes / NO

If you are already married, what actions are you taking to keep your marriage healthy? Write them down below.

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5. Are you willing to take initiative and do things for God that you know he wants without Him having to ask? (This one I recommend you think about and come back in a couple of days to finish filling this out.) When you decide yes, sign on the dotted line.

Yes / NO

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Are you willing to let God run your life? This means you let go of the steering wheel, and let God have it. No back-seat driving! :-)

Yes / NO

6. Are you caught up-to-date in repentance? I believe that repentance is an on-going practice for Christians. God doesn't dump on us all our faults the minute we get saved. He turns up the heat from time to time and removes the dross. (ouch!)

### Step 8: Life class 101.

Have you learned yet the basic skills from having a fast-food job? Check off the skills you already have, and then take a look at ones you might be missing.

- o I know how to obey my boss at work.
- o I know customer service; how to treat someone who is wrong as though they are right.
- o I know how to respond to an angry person (without getting angry back or lashing out at them.)
- o I know how to NOT be a "tattle tale". I don't sneak around for information on others and then use it against them.
- o I know how to listen to others when they are talking.
- o I do NOT act like a "know-it-all", but I listen when someone is trying to teach me something. I have a "teachable" attitude.
- o I can be corrected without reacting with tears or anger.
- o I know how to find work to do, even when no one assigns me something.
- o I know how to see different skills in other people.

- o I see problem areas and know how to catch someone in that problem "red-handed." (Almost no one takes correction without proof of some-sort.)
- o I can see how to place different members of a team in the right jobs, based on their skill-set.

Sign on the dotted line if you are willing to go back and get the skills you are missing! (God knows if you sign here and will soon find a way to help you get these basic

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life skills.)

### Step 9

How are you doing in the area of basic character qualities or "values"? Rate yourself on each value, quickly judging if you have 0 or none, or you are a perfect 10. Remember that this is the foundation for your future successes and it VERY important. If you build a ministry without a foundation, there is a high likelihood of falling and failing later.

- o Integrity – I never steal, flirt with others sexually, or scam others for their love or money.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- o Honesty – I never lie, or miss-represent the truth.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- o Faithfulness- I never quit projects, but always finish what I start. When I sign up for a weekly commitment, I don't miss a week unless there is a REAL emergency.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- o Giving – I am generous with others financially, and tithe to my local church. I don't give in front of others to be seen, or make a big deal about it when I give.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- o Humility- I do not brag about my accomplishments to others, and I share my mistakes openly. (It's difficult to judge one's own humility, but it's an important value to have, so it's worth the effort of evaluating.)

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- o Kindness- I am kind to those less fortunate than me, even when no one is looking.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- o Patience- I do not have to yell or complain to others when things do not go my way. I can wait for those who are slower than me.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

### Step 10

Are you willing to sacrifice for God? It's nice to let Him know. Then sign on the dotted line.

Yes / NO

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### Step 11

How good are you at recognizing God's voice?

If you are not in the habit of receiving specific direction from God for your choices, start now with these steps.

Choose an upcoming decision and ask God to inform you what He wants you to do. Then open your Bible and read. Wait until a verse pops out as though it is on fire. Ask God what He means by that verse and what He wants you to do. Then obey! Repeat.

Sign when you have received 3 specific words from God.

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### Step 12

Ask God to use you for His kingdom (If you haven't already.) Take some time, go somewhere special to pray, get on your knees, and officially offer yourself to God in service. Be willing to do whatever He wants you to do. Then just wait. Sign on the dotted line when you have done it.

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### Step 13

Start serving! Make sure you are actively involved "picking up a broom" at your local church. You can offer to clean, greet people, cook food, or any other ministry "behind the scenes". It's not about people seeing you; it's about God seeing you. Then just keep serving for years. Don't worry about moving up the Christian community ladder. God is watching and will move you up in His timing. Be faithful in the little things. Write down below what area you have been serving in the

church, and for how many years. (If you have served in multiple areas in the church, write each one down.)

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Number of years: \_\_\_\_\_

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Number of years: \_\_\_\_\_

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Number of years: \_\_\_\_\_

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Number of years: \_\_\_\_\_

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Number of years: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 14: A good marriage!

**MARRIED:** If you are married, take a moment to recognize that the enemy will try to divide you from your spouse in order to take you out of ministry. Recognize the importance of working on your marriage to keep it healthy. It doesn't even matter if your spouse is saved or not. You made the decision to marry that person, and God wants you to stay married. **DON'T** allow the enemy to divide you! Take a moment to dedicate your marriage to God and re-commit yourself to your spouse. Once you have done so, sign on the dotted line.

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**NOT MARRIED:** If you are not yet married, make (or renew) the decision to let God choose who your life-partner will be. Take a moment to give your future marriage to God. Make the decisions below, and then sign on the dotted line.

Are you willing to let God initiate the timing for your marriage?

Yes / NO

Ask God to open your eyes MORE to what really matters in choosing your spouse. Are you willing to choose your life-mate based on their godly character and NOT their looks, fame, money, or fabulous ministry skills?

Yes / NO

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Choose to WAIT. Are you willing to wait on God's timing, not rushing into relationships ahead of time? Purpose right now how far you are willing to go sexually, and decide if you want to make it to your wedding day as a virgin.

Are you willing to wait to have sex, and make it to your wedding day pure?

Yes / NO

Are you willing to let God choose who you date?

Yes / NO

These are the most important decisions for your future ministry. It's of the utmost importance that you let God be the boss of your life when it comes to who you marry, because there is no turning back later. Ask God to impress on your heart the extreme importance of your behavior in this area. It will help you make it! Once you

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finish praying, sign on the dotted line to give God this area of your life.

These are the 14 steps that are important for you to make as you grow and mature in God. There are more steps up the ladder, but after this point, God initiates. As I have mentioned before, God is a gentleman and will not force these things on you. You must take some initiative in these areas first. Second, God will not give you MORE until you are first faithful in the small things.

I receive emails from children's ministry workers from all across Latin America. People ask me how to become a missionary or what to do in a difficult political situation at their church. They ask me how to increase their ministry. The answer to all those questions is this book. God wants us to be mature Christians, no longer babies who are tossed about by the wind. He wants us to NOT trust ourselves, but renew our minds with HIS will. God wants us to think eternal, not caring about what others think of us, but only caring about what GOD thinks! God wants us to grow up.

## Ephesians 4

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:*

*"When he ascended on high,*

*he took many captives*

*and gave gifts to his people."*

*(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

*So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.*

*That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put*

*off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.*

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others*

*up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

**What do you think? Are you willing?**

**Will you treat children’s ministry like a serious calling?**

**Will you join me in the pursuit of becoming a 5-star general in God’s army?**

# **“Rise up, Warrior!”**





Craft day with Suki in Oregon



Writing the first Sunday School curriculum



Church in Yaváros using my first VBS "Deeper with God" in 2005



My handsome hubby printing the first curriculum on the risograph



Home sweet home, our first year in Mexico

The building we sold in Sonora, picture here hours before our move south to Mexico City





My parents Mike & Vickie Kangas, missionaries



My husband Dwight and I recently named missionaries in 2004



Directors of the international ministry "Los Niños Cuentan" 2013



Happy sending out curriculum to thousands of churches :)



Our print shop today



With my sister Suki, ready for the 2014 tour

