

Merry Christmas!

Today's message is not traditional, but deeply personal. In fact, it's about a struggle only a handful of people know about.

I was surprised at this message God had for me to share, but it may be His answer to my recent prayers that I would not just run a ministry for women, but instead minister to women.

I pray that God will use this very non-traditional Christmas message to minister to you today. I also hope you find the joy and peace of the Lord during this special season of Christmas. Just writing this to share with you has given me peace.

Joy to the world, the Lord has come!
Jennifer

A Savior is Born

It's December and I should be bringing you a message of peace, joy and happiness. I keep trying to write that message, but I just can't. My heart is as dark as Good Friday. I feel as I imagine Jesus' friends did the day after His crucifixion; hopeless, dark, bleak, lonely and devastated. I put on my smiles in public and do my best to lean on the Lord to overcome it as I manage my family. But once I get alone the tears and despair come.

I struggle with depression. It's the craziest thing because I am naturally one of the happiest and most energetic people you could know. I don't try to be that way, I just am. Then out of no where come dark thunder clouds. It takes me a few days of wondering why my life is full of dark days, bleak rain, thunder and lightning before I realize I'm in the middle of a storm. Then, just like a summer thunderstorm, all I can do is sit back and watch through the windows of my mind, helpless to make it go away.

As the days pass and the "real" me watches this "other" me act so strangely, fear sets in. The "real" me starts to wonder if I'm only one step away from losing my mind completely and if I might also lose my family and be sent to live in a mental ward.

Just when I think I can't take it any more, the storm passes. Within just a few days the branches have been picked up, the ground has dried and I'm so normal (a relative term in my case!) I can't even remember going through the storm. It's simply gone. Then about six to nine months later, out of the blue, I notice the skies are getting a little gray and before I know it I'm living in a storm again.

I've learned to be thankful for the storms. I still pray that God takes them away, but even more, I pray for His will to be done because I know His promise to always work for my good, even if it's by blessing me through the darkness of depression.

And it is a blessing because it's times like these I find myself brought low; not going to my knees by choice, but by necessity. I'm not praying because it's the right thing to do, I'm praying because it's the only thing that will save me. When I live in this dark despair I only have the light of Jesus. There is no way for me to shine my own light and the world doesn't have a light bright enough. Only Jesus has the power to shine light on my dark depression and sustain me.

The storms make my trust in God real, not just something I read about or profess. Even when the "real" me is locked behind the window of my mind, I know God is there. He is pouring His grace out on me and carrying me through. I trust that He will not forsake me or leave me. The road He chooses for me may not

be the easiest one or the one I would choose, but I praise Him for it because it is His road and it leads to His son.

And because of that, my message of despair and darkness might be the truest Christmas message of all. Before the light of Jesus Christ came to earth to be born in a manger in Bethlehem, we were all in darkness and despair. We were weathering storms we had no ability to stop. Then Jesus broke the clouds with a light so bright it can overcome all our storms.

Won't you get down on your knees right now and praise the Lord? Go to Him because only He saves you. Go to Him because every other gift we receive is meaningless and useless if not for His gift. Go to Him because He gave His light to you. Thank Him like you have never thanked anyone for any gift before.

Adore Him. Praise Him. Worship Him.

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given . . . and He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. (John 3:16-17)

... an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save people from their sins. (Matthew 1:20-21)

This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

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Hope in Tragedy

Most of you who receive this newsletter live in Colorado or the Omaha area, both of which have been hit with acts of devastating, deadly violence in the past week. My heart and prayers go out to everyone who has been affected by these tragedies.

We'll never make sense of it or be able to answer the questions so many of us are asking, but we do know the Lord was there and He was in control. He is still there now, offering comfort, peace and refuge to all those who hurt and are starting the long process of healing. He is weeping alongside those who mourn and carrying those who can't bear the burden.

Though He is in control, these acts were not His doing. That is such a hard thing for us to understand.

The killings are the work of Satan who the Bible tells us roams back and forth in the earth ([Job 1:7](#)) looking for someone to devour ([1 Peter 5:8](#)). Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy ([John 10:10](#)).

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying the killers were satanic. I don't know anything about them other than they were created by God, in His image, and somewhere along the way they lost (or never had) their hope in Him.

Satan's work in these tragedies has just begun. We've only seen the opening act. His plan is to use these acts to turn people away from God. He wants to breed hate, judgment, and fear, leaving no room for love or forgiveness.

How I pray that we can all respond by opening our hearts the Lord instead, asking Him to heal us and give us His peace, even if we won't have understanding.

May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, be with you and guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus ([Philippians 4:6-7](#)).

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Thank you for your time today!

I'm so thankful for you and the opportunity to share with you. I pray your Christmas preparations are blessed and that you experience Christ in a new way this year.

Thankful for a Savior who holds us close,
Jennifer

Jennifer Brown
Hope in the Lord Women's Ministries

The mission of Hope in the Lord Women's Ministries is to give glory to God and encourage women to hope in the Lord to renew their strength in marriage, parenting, vocations and fellowship. *"...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31*