

*Hands  
Free*  
MAMA

*Guide to  
Increasing  
Gratitude This  
Holiday Season*

**BY RACHEL MACY STAFFORD**

New York Times Bestselling Author of *Hands Free Mama*

Dear friend, I am so delighted you accepted this guide on increasing gratitude that I've prepared just for you.

*“We hold the key to lasting happiness in our own hands. For it is not joy that makes us grateful; it is gratitude that makes us joyful.”*

– Brené Brown

This is one of my favorite quotes by Brené Brown. It makes joy tangible ... it makes joy possible ... it gives us a plan of action. I know this because I experienced gratitude as a pathway to joy firsthand, and it transformed my life.

After the unexpected loss of my father-in-law this past spring, I'm feeling particularly inspired to make this my most present and gratitude-filled holiday. I hope the stories and gratitude challenges in this guide reveal a positive pathway to joy and personal transformation for you.

I hope the collection of revelations I share in this book will help make a positive impact on your upcoming holidays as well as the new year ahead.

**Gratefully,**

**Rachel**





## *The Low-Hanging Fruit You Can't Afford to Miss*

Even if the checkout line is a little longer, I always choose the one where a particular bagger is stationed.

This conscientious young man reminds me of a former special education student who brightened my first year of teaching. If I needed to move a chair, Dan was there, refusing to let me lift a finger. If I was about to open a window, Dan was quick to say, “Let me do that for you, Miss Macy.” If he heard I was having car troubles, he’d offer to take a look during his lunch hour. Amazingly, Dan offered the same kindness to all his teachers and fellow classmates. Dan struggled with academics, but in altruism, he excelled.

This particular grocery store bagger resembled Dan in looks, but especially in mannerisms. The first time he bagged my groceries, I could see he was cut from the same cloth

as my former student – he was a helper too.

“Hello,” said the young man as I pulled up my cart.

“How are you today?” I asked.

“Doing pretty good,” he said with a slight slur and a big smile.

As the man carefully bagged my items, he leaned against the end of the checkout stand to support his uneven posture.

While he filled my cart with bags, we chatted about our mutual love of cats. When he got to the two last grocery bags, I watched curiously as he gently hung them in an unsuspecting place. A few inches below the cart handle were two tiny metal rungs just big enough to hold one bag.

“Wow,” I said. “That’s a clever idea. I’ve never seen anyone do that before,” I commended.

My teenage daughter’s head quickly turned from the fashion magazines to see what all the fuss was about. Her face showed equal surprise. “That is a good idea.” Natalie smiled and complimented the man.

The customer behind us peered around his loaded cart and nodded. “Hmmm ... that’s new to me,” he agreed.

Even the unsmiling cashier stopped ringing up items to look up. “That Steve,” she said flatly, “He comes up with some good ones.”

And that’s when I turned and looked at Steve.

It was his moment ... and he was shining in in the spotlight of it.

“Can I borrow your idea sometime?” I asked the beaming young man.

Steve nodded enthusiastically, “Sure. Just be sure to get the bag right on the hook—and nothing too heavy,” he advised.

As my daughter and I pushed our cart away, I glanced back at Steve. He was still shining. He was still feeling his moment. *Please let me never be too hurried, too distracted, or too impatient not to notice these things*, I prayed in my head. I decided the best reminder would be a picture; I could make it my screensaver.

When I got to my car, I snapped a photo of the bags on the little hooks. Suddenly, three words came to mind: *low-hanging fruit*.

In the business world, the term typically means a quick fix that produces ripe, delectable results or a target that's easy to achieve.

Yet, there is low-hanging fruit in everyday life too.

It's in welcoming faces, accepting voices, and loving touches.

It's in quiet acts of generosity that seek no recognition.

It's in heartfelt conversations, sustained eye contact, and lingering hugs.

It's in the sky and the clouds and the birds and the wind.

It's in the songs on the radio, it's in our loved one's laughter.

It's in handwritten notes and freshly baked bread.

It's in the words, "Have a nice day," as you leave the building.

When you notice and acknowledge the low-hanging fruits of everyday life, gratitude washes over you and has the potential to spread to those around you, creating positive results.

But when you neglect to see the low-hanging fruit – perhaps due to hurry, impatience, over-commitment, need for control, perfection, distraction, exhaustion, or stress – you're more likely to focus on what is wrong. This focus often results in complaining, criticizing, self-absorption, and despair, which also have an impact on those around you, but it is negative rather than positive.

But awareness is a game-changer.

Awareness is a life-changer.

Once your eyes have noticed ripe fruits, you can't help but look for more.

Since spying those bags and witnessing Steve's reaction, I've been on a mission to look for the low-hanging fruit in everyday life. Poet Glenis Redmond has name for this life-changing practice. She calls it "cataloging beauty." Let her powerful, poetic truths soak in for a moment:

"I am not against critique, but the world's need to nitpick everything is a dis-ease. What I crave is holiness. We are so far away from the heart, when only the head leads with only what is wrong. How about the million beauties you walked by today and did not see? Name them. The world needs/ I need your catalog of beauty. What is your catalog of beauty?"

Thank you, Glenis. I have begun my catalog of beauty:

I found it in my six-year-old nephew's thank you card.

I found it in my father's birthday candles, seventy-seven blessed years.

I found it in the homemade cherry pie my husband made for my dad.

I found it in a flour-dusted countertop with apron-clad girls being supervised by a kitten in a fruit basket.

I found it in a new friendship, clearly orchestrated by something far bigger than either of us.

I found it in two rescue cats, one big, one little, that decorate our window sills.

I found in the singing voice of my daughter, accompanied by her three best friends.

I refuse to waste any more time cataloging my gripes and grievances. Instead, I want to catalog what is good and holy and helpful and kind.

Because the truth is this:

The world needs

The community needs

The man who bags my groceries needs

My family needs

I need

my catalog of beauty.

And I know exactly where to find it.

Life's divine beauties are right under my nose, ripe and ready, just waiting to be noticed.

I shall notice. I shall bring attention to them. And I shall watch them shine.

## *Gratitude Challenge #1:* BE A SILVER LINING SPOTTER

Considering the daily stresses and responsibilities of life, experiencing a full day of gratitude is quite difficult, perhaps impossible. But finding momentary *Glimmers of Goodness* within a day is possible—even when you are irritated, annoyed, hopeless, or frustrated. In fact, it is in times of overwhelm that I find these bright spots most easily. It may sound odd, but as your homework assignment for this week, I want you to take each not-so-pleasant experience or feeling and thank it (as illustrated in the article). I call this practice being a *Silver Lining Spotter*. From that place of gratitude, you are more likely to find momentary *Glimmers of Goodness*, reminding you that the whiny, messy, unpredictable moments of life are not all bad. In fact, they are what make home a home and a life a life. Doing this practice out loud also teaches the people around you how to be *Silver Lining Spotters* too. Not only will this practice improve the temperature of your heart and home, it can also provide your family members with beneficial coping skills for life.



## *Cultivating Love & Gratitude Using a Glass Jar*

“Is there a chance something could happen?” she asked. “You know ... with the surgery.”

I knew what my daughter Avery was asking. Although it had just dawned on her that something could go terribly wrong, the thought had plagued me for weeks.

“Well, it’s possible, but not likely. People have surgery all the time and they come out just fine—actually, they come out better than before. I think that is how it will be with me. But we can pray.”

And so we bowed our heads and my child let her fears and hopes be known.

I decided to keep my greatest fear to myself—the one where surgery sabotaged my plan of



doling out daily bits of love, wisdom, and guidance as my children grow.

*If I could bottle up my love I would.* I thought to myself.

And then I remembered—there was a way to bottle up my love. I'd shown a group of 31 fifth graders how to do just that a few months prior.

It was a writing gift for someone special in the students' lives. I'd written several sentence starters to help the children divulge the Important Things—words that need to be said but are often difficult to mutter. The children were instructed to complete three sentences on pretty paper, roll it up, tie it with a ribbon, and place it in a Mason jar. The sentence starters were as follows:

- I'll never forget when you ...
- I appreciate how you ...
- I'm sorry that sometimes I ...
- What I love most about you is ...
- I have you to thank for ...
- Five words to describe you are:
- Our family wouldn't be the same without your ...

As I read the writing prompts out loud, a sea of eager hands filled the room. The students couldn't wait to share their responses—they wanted to say them right then and there. So we set aside the writing exercise for a moment and just listened to each other.

I was surprised that all the children in the classroom wanted to participate in the sharing session. I was stunned by their heartfelt responses that touched on difficult topics such as divorce, moving, illness, scary events, and poor choices the children had made. It appeared that these particular writing prompts didn't require deep thinking or eloquent expression; the answers came easily. It also appeared that these sentence starters were not intimidating. Anyone could complete them. In fact, there wasn't a single child in the room who wasn't motivated to finish one of these sentences and bottle it up with love.

The exercise was such a success in my daughter's classroom that we did it in our home for Father's Day. Just like the fifth graders, my children found this exercise to be much easier than writing an entire letter. My daughters actually thought of multiple responses for each sentence starter and seemed to genuinely enjoy the activity. My older daughter thought to cut her responses into strips and tape them into curled circles. My younger daughter followed suit. It was quite brilliant because it made the gift last longer. I'll never forget watching my husband's large hands peel back the dainty pieces of tape to reveal something tender or sweet written by his children. I loved how he read the responses out loud. Some of the humorous reflections from my younger daughter made our family fall over with laughter. The jars created a special memory for our family that day.

As I faced the first of two surgeries in July, I knew that making the jars for my family members would give me great peace. Just imagining my husband, children, and sister sitting around the kitchen table reading the contents of their jars while I was in the hospital gave me great comfort. And in the unfortunate event that I didn't return, my family would have these little notes of affirmation to read over and over until they became worn from excessive handling. Because of their potential importance, I tried to make my responses a little funny ... a little serious ... and very truthful. I did my best to tell my loved ones things I'd never told them before.

It only took me thirty minutes to type out the responses, cut them into strips, staple them, and place them in jars labeled with each person's name, finished off with chocolate kisses and a flower. For someone very un-crafty, I thought they turned out quite adorable.

The jars came to mind as I laid in the recovery room after surgery. I'd woken up from the anesthesia quite disoriented and scared. I remember asking for my husband. The nurse said he would not be able to join me just yet. So I blindly reached for a hand, any hand. I found the hand of the student nurse in training who I'd grown quite fond of in our short time together. As she squeezed my hand gently, I thought of my daughters' little hands opening their notes. I could see their smiles and hear their giggles. It gave me great comfort in my time of fear.

When I came home from the hospital I asked my sister what she thought of her jar of notes. Between taking care of the children and providing health updates to my parents, neighbors, and friends, she admitted that she'd only had time to read one note. But what she said next was quite powerful: "I loved the first note so much that I've decided to spread them out and read one slip a week. I am going to use them to brighten my days—in case I need a lift," she explained.

And that is when I knew this exercise in gratitude should not be reserved for holidays or surgeries. It should be done right now, today, for every living being we love and adore.

Because the truth is, sometimes it's hard to articulate the words we need our loved ones to hear.

And sometimes our days are so packed that we barely have time to say hello and goodbye.

And sometimes frustration, stress, and fatigue cause us to hold back loving words to each other.

But we cannot let these everyday obstacles prevent us from saying the most Important Things—those affirming words that bind us together, carry us through, and brighten our days.

Thirty minutes, my friends. Thirty minutes.

How about we forgo the tv sitcom? Let's allow the emails to sit in the inbox. We'll save the dishes for later.

Right now we have the chance to spread gratitude and leave a lasting imprint on a precious soul.

I cannot think of a more important use of our time.

I cannot think of anything more precious in our beloved's hands than our written expressions of Love and Gratitude bottled up just for them.

## *Gratitude Challenge #2:* SPREAD GRATITUDE

I'll never forget what happened the day I led those fifth graders in that writing exercise. As child after child shared the *Important Things* they were going to write to their loved ones, I felt the atmosphere of the room change. I saw smiles exchanged. I saw a pencil on the floor returned to its owner. I saw nodding heads of understanding. I felt tensions ease. I felt kindness prevail. Just hearing about someone's gratitude for a loved one caused others to be more kind and helpful. That's when I realized the following phrases were not sentence starters; they were *Gratitude Starters* with the power to create goodness far beyond the person gifted with the words.

Take a look at the list below. As your challenge for this week, commit one of these *Gratitude Starters* to memory and then find someone to say it to—but consider saying it loud enough for someone else to hear because compassion spreads ... gratitude is contagious ... kindness ripples and has no end. Let it start with you ...

Take a look at the list below. As your challenge for this week, commit one of these *Gratitude Starters* to memory and then find someone to say it to—but consider saying it loud enough for someone else to hear because compassion spreads ... gratitude is contagious ... kindness ripples and has no end. Let it start with you ...

Gratitude Starters:

- I'll never forget when you ...
- I appreciate how you ...
- I'm sorry that sometimes I ...
- What I love most about you is ...
- I have you to thank for ...
- Five words to describe you are:
- Our family wouldn't be the same without your ...





## *How to Capture Gratitude*

While growing up, I periodically told my sister something I never told anyone else.

“I think I’m going to die young,” I’d tell her matter-of-factly long before the popular song made such a dismal fate sound glamorous.

“Don’t say that, Rachel!” she protested the first time I said it. But after that initial disclosure, my sister seemed to get used to me saying it, especially around my birthday each year. By my twenties, my sister’s reaction to my depressing prediction was always compassionate and often inquisitive.

“Why? Why do you think that, Rachel?” she asked me as we drove to the mall on a bitter cold January day to shop for my 22nd birthday gift.

I didn’t know why. All I knew is that I could envision my demise like an intense movie

trailer. In my 30-second preview, I could see I was around 33 or 34 years old and it happened on an Interstate.

Much to my dismay, my husband and I moved from Indiana's slow country roads to Florida's six-lane super-highways right before I turned thirty. Naturally, that time in my life held a subtle sense of foreboding. To add to my worries, it was necessary to travel on I-75 to get to many places I needed to go.

I'd driven on plenty of interstates in the Midwest, but this particular thoroughfare was different. It was faster. It was bumper-to-bumper. There was no shortage of intimidating eighteen-wheelers barreling past. And no matter what time of day it was, I could always count on seeing numerous roadside accidents. By age thirty-two, I had a precious baby in the backseat of the car as I drove that 12-mile stretch. I remember my hands becoming so sweaty that I could barely grip the steering wheel. I remember praying the entire way, hoping that particular trip would not be my last.

But here is where the goodness came in ...

When I got to my destination, I promptly removed Natalie from her car seat and held her for a moment—a moment longer than necessary—and let gratitude wash over me. No matter how stressful it had been to get out the door ... no matter how loud she screamed in that car seat ... no matter how homesick I felt to see my family and friends three thousand miles away ... no matter how uncomfortable I felt in my post-baby body ... no matter how late we already were, the only thing I could feel in that moment was gratitude.

Gratitude undivided

Gratitude wholehearted

Gratitude all encompassing

I am now in my forties. I don't speak dismal predictions about my life anymore, but I still try to capture that perspective-altering type of gratitude every chance I get. Notice I use the word "capture" because I believe gratitude doesn't find us; I believe we find it.

As odd as it may sound, I find gratitude each morning while making beds. When I come around to my husband's side of the bed and pull up the covers ... when I go into Natalie's room and peel back her fluffy blanket in sea foam green ... when I go into Avery's room and move her beloved collection of stuffed animals, I always place my hand beneath the covers until I feel the warm spot. And when do, this is what comes to mind:

Sometimes when I am making the bed after you've gone,  
I can still feel your warmth.

And if I hold my hand there for just a moment  
This action has the power to  
Change my attitude,  
Alter my perspective,  
Soften my heart,  
About bed making  
Bath giving  
Lego dodging  
Food prepping  
Stain removing  
Car shuttling  
Homework checking  
Peacekeeping  
And other monotonous tasks  
That consume the minutes of my one precious life.

That warm spot where you peacefully slept  
Is my reminder  
That gratitude won't find me.  
But I can find it  
Even among tangled sheets and strewn pajama pants  
If I rest my hand there long enough to feel it.

And for one brief moment, I forget I am making a bed  
And I remember instead that it is me  
Who gets to feel your warmth  
Each and every day,  
Even when you are away.

That's when I find gratitude  
Changing my perspective  
About my one precious life and what makes it so precious.

That's when I find gratitude  
Stripping away the bad  
So all I feel is the good.

That's when I find gratitude  
Reminding me that I can feel thankful simply because I'm alive  
If I hold on a moment longer than necessary.

It's amazing what one tiny glimpse of goodness can do in the midst of challenge, hopelessness, and uncertainty. It's amazing what one tiny connection to what really matters can do to fuel us forward. Perhaps the goal today should not be how much we accomplish, but how we spotted the goodness within it. And if we take a moment to feel that goodness ... well, that could be a day changer.

## *Gratitude Challenge #3:* CAPTURE GRATITUDE

Your homework assignment this week is to purchase a palm-sized notebook and start an "*I Captured Gratitude*" list. Keep the notepad handy in your purse, pocket, or bedside table so you can jot down places or experiences that make you feel grateful. By tracking your moments of **gratitude** like a detective, you will be more apt to notice the positives in your life. This newfound awareness will inspire a perpetual feeling



of optimism and hope which will increase your level of fulfillment. Increase your accountability by inviting a partner, child, friend, or parent to join you in this life-changing process. Getting the chance to hear about the places others are capturing gratitude would be incredibly inspiring to you, as well.

\*Don't forget to mark the date beside each entry. This little notebook could serve as a time machine in your later years or a way of leaving a legacy of gratitude after you are gone.



## *12 Daily Vows to Increase Gratitude this Holiday Season*

My holiday goal has changed over the years. My former goal for December 25th involved boxes—checking off boxes, wrapping up boxes, and stuffing emotions in a box until they came out in some negative form or another. My former holiday goal focused on how things looked rather than on how they felt. From the outside, it looked like picture-perfect happiness but underneath was exhaustion ... comparison ... irritation ... stress ... and frustration. I would collapse after Christmas with not one significant memory to cherish because I'd been too busy, too annoyed, too distracted, and too overwhelmed.

But at the close of 2010, I received a powerful wake-up call that changed my holiday goal indefinitely.

In the days following our family's Christmas, my mom had a transient ischemic attack (or mini-stroke) and was unable to remember the holiday we'd just shared together. It had been a very special holiday because it was my first Hands Free holiday. I'd let go of distraction and perfection in ways I didn't think I ever could. One of my fondest memories of that season was sitting at the kitchen table with my family painting glasses to use at our Christmas Eve dinner. It was ten o'clock a.m. and we were still in our pajamas. We'd eaten cookies for breakfast. My younger daughter wore evidence of this delightful indulgence on her face but I didn't dare wipe it off. The way she smiled to herself as she painted was a moment I refused to obliterate with a napkin. For the first time in a long time I saw joy, and it looked just like paint-smudged fingers and lips covered in chocolate.

There was much to be done in the way of cooking and gift preparation that morning, but it could wait. For the first time in a long time, it could wait. Instead I sat there painting next to my children who were free to paint their glasses any way they wanted. I'd made it clear to my inner drill sergeant that she was not welcome here. My mom sat with us too. Her vein-lined hand was steady as she painted a flower on her glass. She talked of the small Christmas candies she got as a girl. There was holiday music playing. I felt peaceful, not frenzied. I felt beautiful, not too soft or unkempt. I felt present, not scattered in one hundred million different directions. For the first time in a long time, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. There was nothing else I wanted or needed. It was enough. It was more than enough.

Looking back on that particular season, there'd been more laughter, more connections, and more memories made that Christmas than ever before. And my mom couldn't remember them, but I could. I knew that the holidays must be Hands Free from then on. I vowed to stop worrying so much about the minor details and think about the big picture. What will my loved ones remember about today? That became my daily question over our holiday breaks. I knew it would not be the roasted potatoes being seasoned with fresh rosemary or the twinkle lights that decorated the staircase. It would be the way I got down and peered into the new dollhouse and said, "Can I play too?" It would be the walk I took with my mom and sister, going slowly because my mom needed a gentle pace. It would be how I asked my dad to tell me again about his darkest period of depression and how he saw the light again. It would be how I

watched my husband's favorite football team because there was an open spot next him. And although I didn't love football, I loved him.

I knew I didn't want to be so busy flittering from point A to point Z that I missed the opportunity to hear the stories, take the walks, or get down on my knees and play. I wanted to decorate glasses in my pajamas instead of dusting crystal in my finest attire. What will my loved ones remember today? I hoped it would be my love, my presence, my patience, and my laugh. I wanted more than anything for them to remember my laugh.

I now have four Hands Free holidays under my belt and although I am still a work-in-progress, I think I've finally nailed down my goal for the holidays. It is this: **To gather together with our messy, imperfect hearts and create memories that outlast us all.**

Because when we do this, we have enough. We have more than enough.

But here's the thing: goals are not reached without intention, mindfulness, and action steps. So I have written some daily vows that I believe will help me get as close as I can to a meaningful and memorable holiday goal. Feel free to use these daily intentions to cultivate gratitude, a beautiful sense of *enough*, in your heart and home:

## **12 DAILY VOWS TO INCREASE GRATITUDE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

1. Today I will look for the blessings among the chaos, the challenge, and the clutter. If I don't see them right away, I will keep looking.
2. Today I will say, "Take your time," and "How would you do it?" even if it feels funny and awkward coming from my lips. I will seek to find my loved ones' soul-building words and speak them often.
3. Today I will view holiday experiences through the eyes of my child so my eyes can see the puffiness of the marshmallows not the spilled cocoa ... so my eyes can see the handmade ornaments not the crooked tree ... so my eyes can see the way her face lights up at the sight of the gift not the wrapping paper on the floor.



4. Today I will be a Lingerer, a Take Your Timer, and a Last to Let Go Embracer even if I have to fake it. Love will keep me coming back until I can be the real deal.
5. Today I will take off the manager nameplate and dismiss the inner bully so my home can be a loving environment where we are all learning from our mistakes and embracing our imperfections.
6. Today I will resist the pressure to fill the sacred spaces of my day with unnecessary stuff.
7. Today I will say no to the outside world so I can say yes to the people who are my world.
8. Today I will savor every bite of my family's favorite recipes instead of obsessing over table decor, fat grams, or how soon the mess can be cleaned up.
9. Today I will absorb the memories of my relatives shared across the dinner table instead of consuming myself with status updates of those I barely know on a screen.
10. Today I will acknowledge that a beautifully imperfect memory is at my fingertips if I pause long enough to let it unfold.
11. Today I will remember my loved ones are constantly growing and changing and things may be different next year. In fact, things may be different tomorrow. So today I shall savor my loved ones as they are right now.
12. Today I will practice my new holiday goal: **To gather together with our messy, imperfect hearts and create memories that outlast us all.**

I know that every second of this holiday will not be blanketed in gratitude. I know. But there will be moments when joy comes to the table. It might be wearing pajamas or a cookie crumb smile, but I will recognize it immediately. With open hands, open eyes, and an open heart, I've learned joy doesn't come in a box and feels like enough.

## *Gratitude Challenge #4:* ACKNOWLEDGE "GIVENS" AS "GIFTS."

I gave my younger daughter a set of thank you notes the other night and encouraged her to thank anyone at school that came to mind. As expected, there was a note to her teacher and the principal. But what really got me was the notes to her art teacher, computer teacher, music teacher, and custodian. I loved that she did not see their offerings as "givens" but as gifts. It is easy to forget the perspective-altering power of gratitude so I felt especially thankful for her reminder during a busy season. This is the power of gratitude ...

It can turn a floor littered with dirty clothes into a comforting reminder that your beloveds are home.

It can turn a grumpy face into a celebration of a child's lively spirit and spunk.

It can turn a string of bad luck into compassion for someone who has it worse off.

It can turn a long wait into a chance to think without interruption.

It can turn a state of overwhelm into an opportunity to ask for help and lean on a friend.

It can turn a long, hard road into strength you didn't know you had.

Today might be filled with long waits, grouchy people, unanswered questions, and the feeling overwhelm, but there's an embrace, a song, or a face that can bring temporary peace to your frenzied soul. Grasp it and say a simple, "Thank you."

When we begin to see the blessings in our lives as "gifts" instead of "givens," it changes our view; it changes the world. Compassion spreads ... gratitude is contagious ... kindness ripples and has no end. Let it start with you.



### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CREATING A LESS BUSY/MORE GRATITUDE-FILLED LIFE:**

As a long-time perfectionistic, Type-A, manager, it required a step-by-step process to become more present, patient, peaceful, and grateful. I explain that step-by-step process in my first book, *HANDS FREE MAMA*, by addressing the outer distractions of my life that contributed to my perpetual feeling of overwhelm and criticalness. In my second book, *HANDS FREE LIFE*, I delve deeper into how I overcame internal pressure and changed my entire outlook on life. My first book is broken into 12 steps you can take each week and is great for small groups or reading with a spouse. The second book is broken into 9 habits and can be read in small doses. In my newly released third book, *ONLY LOVE TODAY*, the entries are formatted for short, daily reads that help you stay on a positive path no matter what life challenges you are experiencing. Many readers have mentioned how reading *ONLY LOVE TODAY* in the morning or right before bed helps them set their intentions to be more grateful, let go of past regrets, find hope, and see each day as a new opportunity.





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