
∞ INTRODUCTION ∞

It occurs to me that often when I have something on my mind, some pressing matter or concern that won't be brushed aside or hushed away, I will invariably run across something in written form on the same subject again and again and again. Finally, I get the message. It isn't always the message I want; rather, the one I need.

During the writing of this book, I encountered the same scenario. Time after time, or more accurately, page after page, I would read about women facing an insurmountable obstacle. Some were primarily emotional in scope, such as enduring long stretches of waiting or feeling hopeless, discouraged, or depressed about broken dreams or failed endeavors. Other women were fighting against the temptation to give up as exhaustion and uncertainty dogged their steps.

Then there were the other stories, those that were more experiential in nature. There are countless women who are simultaneously parenting their own children while transitioning into the dicey role of parenting their elderly moms and dads. Some are adjusting to a job relocation or job loss. Financial stresses, physical illness, and relational struggles with family, friends, and colleagues are common refrains as well. Toss aging

Burdens Do a Body Good

and retirement planning into the mix, and just about everyone is contending with circumstances that are hard and appear to multiply in occurrence and intensity as time edges forward.

These stories always intrigue me, not that my situations are always so harrowing, but, comparatively so, I feel like all these other women who are facing down their private mountains. In that, I believe all women are the same . . . on the inside. We wrestle with ongoing internal dialogue, and then we wrestle over what action to take to quiet and calm those same inner voices. Most of the women I know want to make things right or at least better and spend the bulk of their lives making the attempt.

The road frequently seems so steep, so unconquerable. Oftentimes, I wonder how I'll have the strength to keep going, how I'll manage to continue facing a particularly difficult situation that doesn't appear to be going away anytime soon. Then I think about other women and how they manage to overcome whatever it is they're up against. As I pay closer attention, a certain theme emerges from these women and how they face down whatever obstacle is confronting them. There is a sure and certain need for courage and strength and a sense of fearlessness. As author Carolyn Custis James writes, "In this broken world being a woman often means doing hard things, straining your muscles, and tackling messy problems that aren't listed in books about true femininity and may actually be repudiated by them." I like this. I agree with this. Most of the women I know are living out this reality.

For this reason alone, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to offer women some resources of both the inspirational and practical sort throughout the pages of this book. I appreciate being encouraged and uplifted, but good words don't get me very far or mean very much if I don't match them with purpose-

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ful action steps. This is why women not only will be encouraged to look at many of life's weightier issues from a fresh emotional perspective but also will get powerfully effective recommendations from my co-author, Dr. Christopher A. Foetisch, an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in sports medicine.

At the close of every chapter, Dr. Foetisch offers valuable information and insights on staying strong, living at your healthiest best, and making sure you stay that way no matter what your age. You will be delighted and surprised at the recommendations, choices, and options available to you. It is our hope that you, our readers, can discover new ways of dealing with old problems, that every woman will be better fitted to embrace courageous perspectives, gain renewed strength, and exhibit a good measure of fearlessness for all of life's challenges, be they emotional or situational or both.