

Consider the Lilies

GET ROOTED
IN YOUR
DESTINY BY
DISCOVERING
GOD'S PLAN

SHARI RIGBY





Consider the Lilies

by

Shari Rigby



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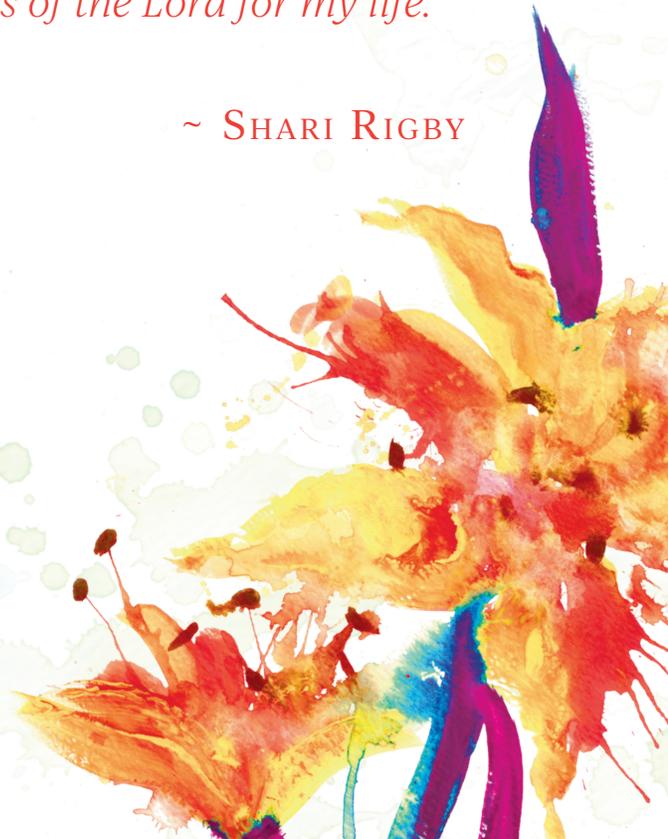
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*“Thank you to all the men and women in
my world that have walked alongside me to
carry out the plans of the Lord for my life.”*

~ SHARI RIGBY





Acknowledgments

Thank you, Lord God, for providing a great plan for my life. Thank you for using this ordinary, sinful girl to do extraordinary things for your kingdom and your women!!

“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.” ~ Acts 20:24 NASB

~ Matt ~

You are my rock, my love, and my biggest cheerleader. You have taught me that the Lord truly has a plan for our lives, and it's much better than the ones we try to arrange on our own. I'm so grateful that you are part of my plan ~ my life!

~ Donnie and Levi ~

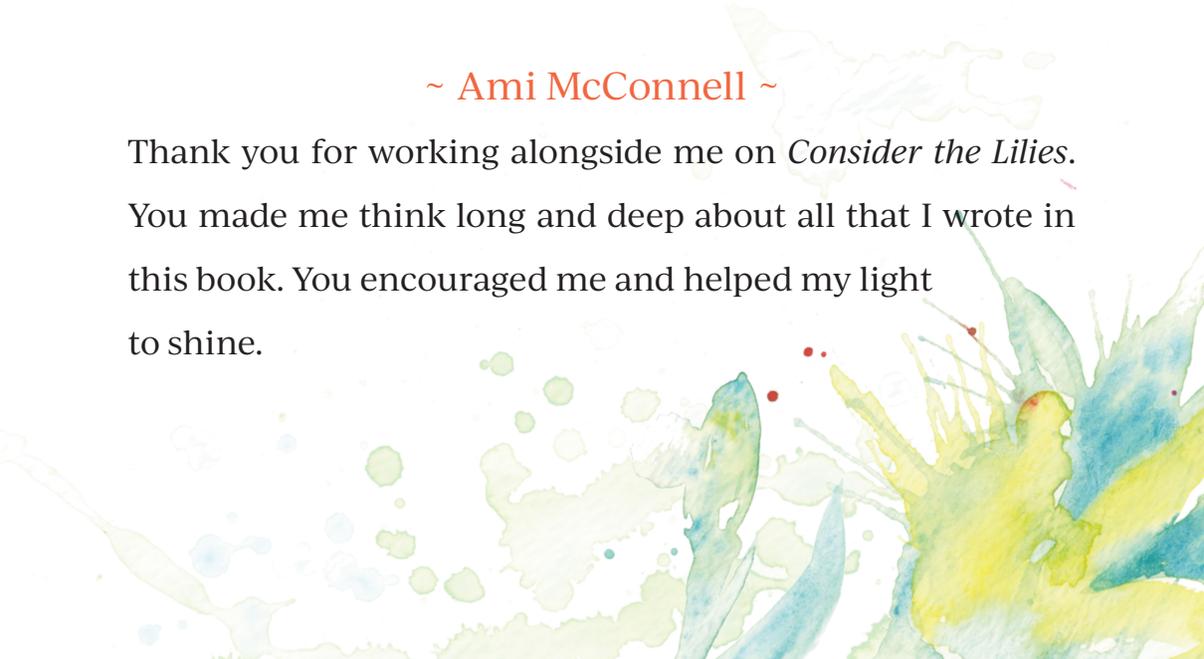
I'm so thankful for you both! I'm thrilled beyond belief that I am a boy mom. You both inspire me and keep me pushing to be the best mom I can be.

~ The Women in My World ~

You have my heart! Every one of you has helped to shape my life, helping me to be a better person, to love deeper, and reach for my dreams with my eyes focused on Jesus. Thank you for being diamonds in my life and helping me to shine bright!

~ Ami McConnell ~

Thank you for working alongside me on *Consider the Lilies*. You made me think long and deep about all that I wrote in this book. You encouraged me and helped my light to shine.





~ Brian Mitchell ~

You have walked this journey with me for such a long time. I'm grateful for your friendship, your encouragement, your love for my family and me, and never giving up on helping me to make my dreams come true and to see my prayers answered. Thank you to my entire Working Title Agency family for standing by me for all these years!

~ Joe Battaglia ~

Thank you for your friendship! Your words of encouragement and your belief in me is beyond words! You are a gift from God!

~ Erwin Brothers ~

Looking back over the years of work, God gave me a clear connection to the two of you, your families, and your team. I couldn't have done what I have accomplished without you two taking a chance on me and believing that I could win! Thank you!!





~ Kendrick Brothers ~

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a part of OVER-COMER. It was another great moment in my life to work for the Lord! I'm grateful for your continued support for me and my family. It is an honor to work alongside the Kendrick brothers!!

~ Brenda Harris ~

Thank you for your continued prayers and support! You are a woman warrior for God!

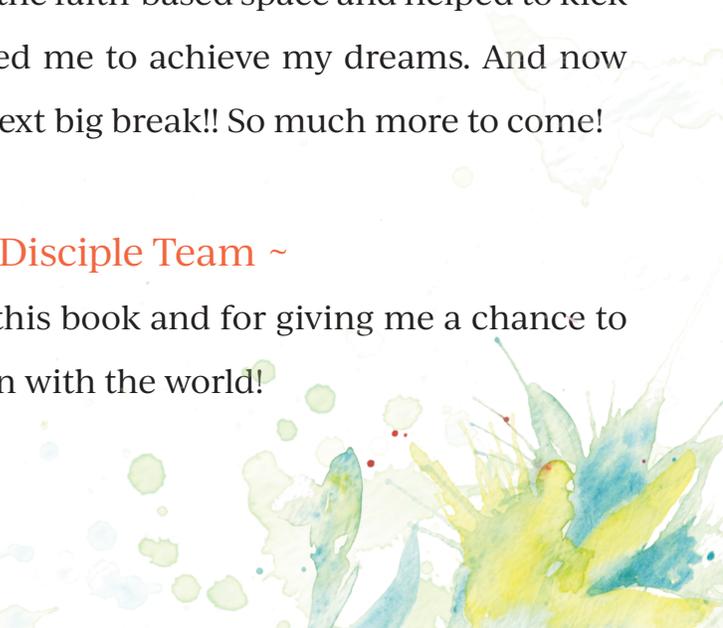
~ Chaz Corzine ~

You gave me my start in the faith-based space and helped to kick off my career. You helped me to achieve my dreams. And now you have given me my next big break!! So much more to come!

~ iDisciple Team ~

Thank you for creating this book and for giving me a chance to share this incredible plan with the world!

To God be the Glory!!





Contents



Introduction

1. We Are the Lilies	1
2. Prayer Warriors	23
3. Purpose	59
4. Passion	87
5. Preparation	107
6. Mapping	137
7. Battle Plan	165
8. The Tools	189
9. Territory	213
10. The Women In My World	225
11. Watching for God	247
12. Distractions	261
13. Impossible Dreams	277





Introduction

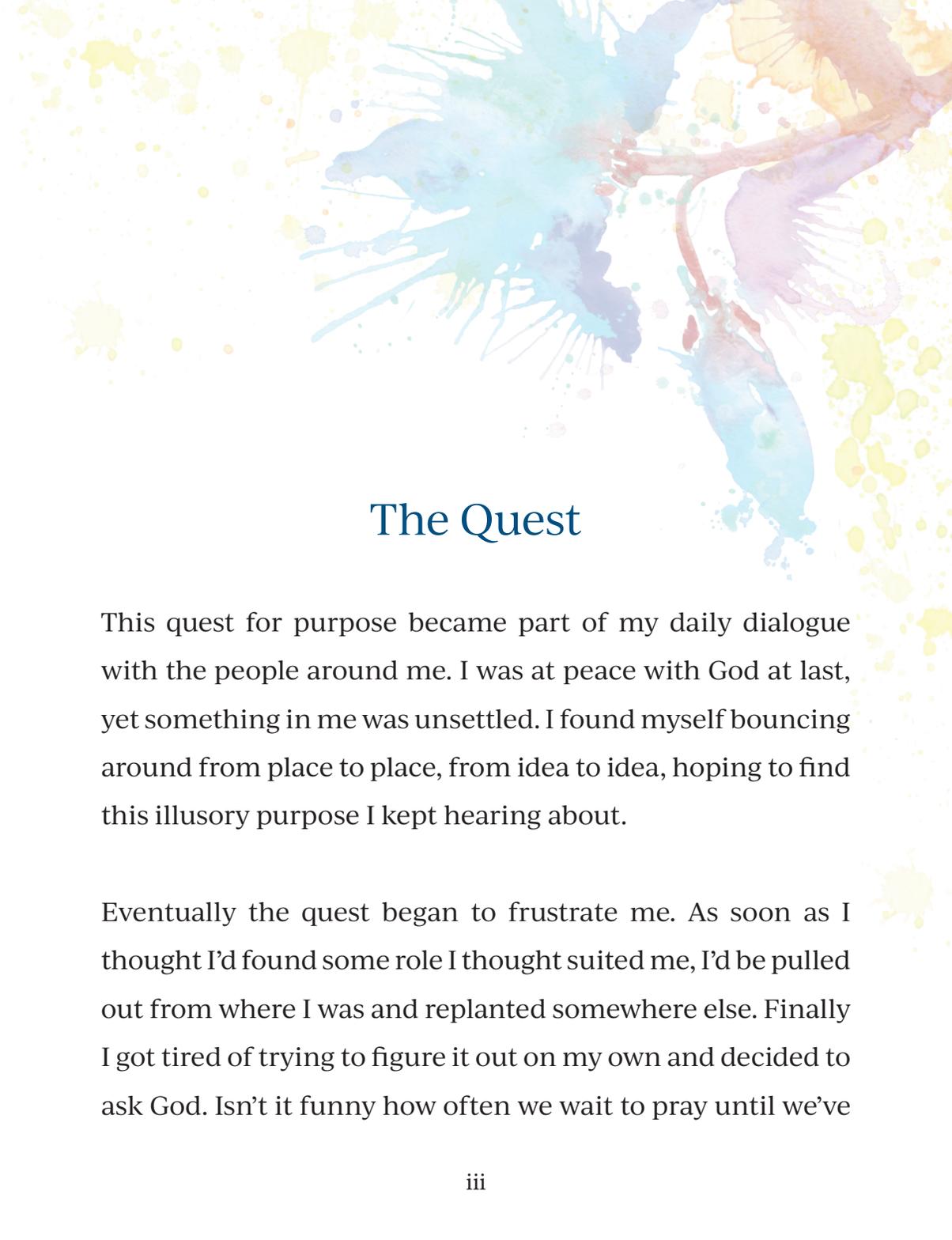
*A*s an actress, my job is to take my place on set and fulfill the role I'm assigned to play. I find tremendous satisfaction in this, for many reasons.

For a long time, I struggled to find my place in the world. I was just a teenager when I had my first child. Then I suffered through an abusive marriage, infidelity, and divorce. I survived them all. But these difficult things took a toll as I began to associate who I was with the titles that described me. Teenage mom. Abuse survivor. Single mom. These were roles I had been assigned, and I played them well, but I felt like I would be stuck with them forever.

Then, when I was 25 years old, the Lord gave me another chance at life and love. He brought a wonderful man into my life who saw me as beautiful and worthy. Shortly after Matt and I started dating, he asked me to go to church with him.

There I heard the astounding message of God's saving grace and was forever changed. I entered into a real and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. This was a love like no other. I discovered what millions before me had discovered: when you die to yourself to become more like Christ, you enjoy love and fulfillment in ways that living for yourself can never bring. This was a whole new way of thinking. It was contrary to everything I'd heard previously. Turns out it's not "about" me. I felt happier and more at peace than ever before.

Now, I was saved during an era when Christian *self-help* books were all the rage. As I was falling more and more in love with Jesus, I wanted desperately to please Him. The popular Christian books I read told me I needed to find my purpose in order to work out my calling with Jesus. But what was my purpose? And how could I find it? I wasn't sure, but if finding it meant I'd be closer to Jesus, I was all in!



The Quest

This quest for purpose became part of my daily dialogue with the people around me. I was at peace with God at last, yet something in me was unsettled. I found myself bouncing around from place to place, from idea to idea, hoping to find this illusory purpose I kept hearing about.

Eventually the quest began to frustrate me. As soon as I thought I'd found some role I thought suited me, I'd be pulled out from where I was and replanted somewhere else. Finally I got tired of trying to figure it out on my own and decided to ask God. Isn't it funny how often we wait to pray until we've

exhausted every other option? How we treat prayer as a last resort? God must just sit back and chuckle. Anyway, I finally said, “Lord, you know me. You made me. Tell me, what is my purpose and my calling? Who and where do you want me to serve?”

Well, when you ask, as the Scriptures remind us, you shall receive! The Lord couldn’t have been clearer.

“*Women,*” I heard Him say. “*You will serve My women.*”

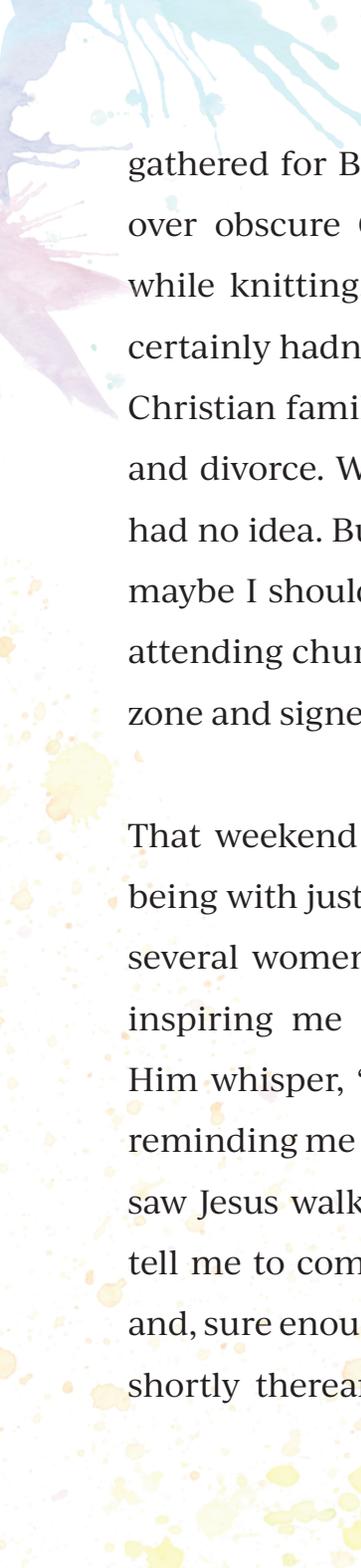


“Serve My Women”

Wait. What? “I don’t want to serve women!” That was my gut-level honest response. At the time, Matt and I were serving at Hebrews, our church’s coffee shop. That experience had taught me a little about Christian women. All I could say for sure was that:

- They seemed to like a good cup coffee.
- They like to talk. A lot.

Other than that, I didn’t have a strong sense of who “His women” were. I suspected they were the women who



gathered for Bible study in the middle of the week, poring over obscure Greek translations of Scripture, sometimes while knitting. How could I serve these women? My past certainly hadn't prepared me for it. I was no poster child for Christian family values. I was a survivor of abuse, infidelity, and divorce. What could I offer to women in the church? I had no idea. But if my Father was calling me to His women, maybe I should start spending time with the women I was attending church with. I decided to step out of my comfort zone and signed up for a Christian women's conference.

That weekend I faced the highs and lows of two full days being with just Christian women. Throughout the weekend, several women speakers spoke to the packed house, truly inspiring me in my walk with the Lord. I kept hearing Him whisper, "Get out of the boat." I sensed the Lord was reminding me of the passage in Matthew where the disciples saw Jesus walking on the lake. Peter said, "Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus called for him, and, sure enough, Peter was able to walk on water! Of course, shortly thereafter he started to sink when he got scared.

But the point is, when Jesus tells you to do something, rest assured you can do it, by His power.

That weekend I decided I was ready to walk with Jesus on unknown waters.

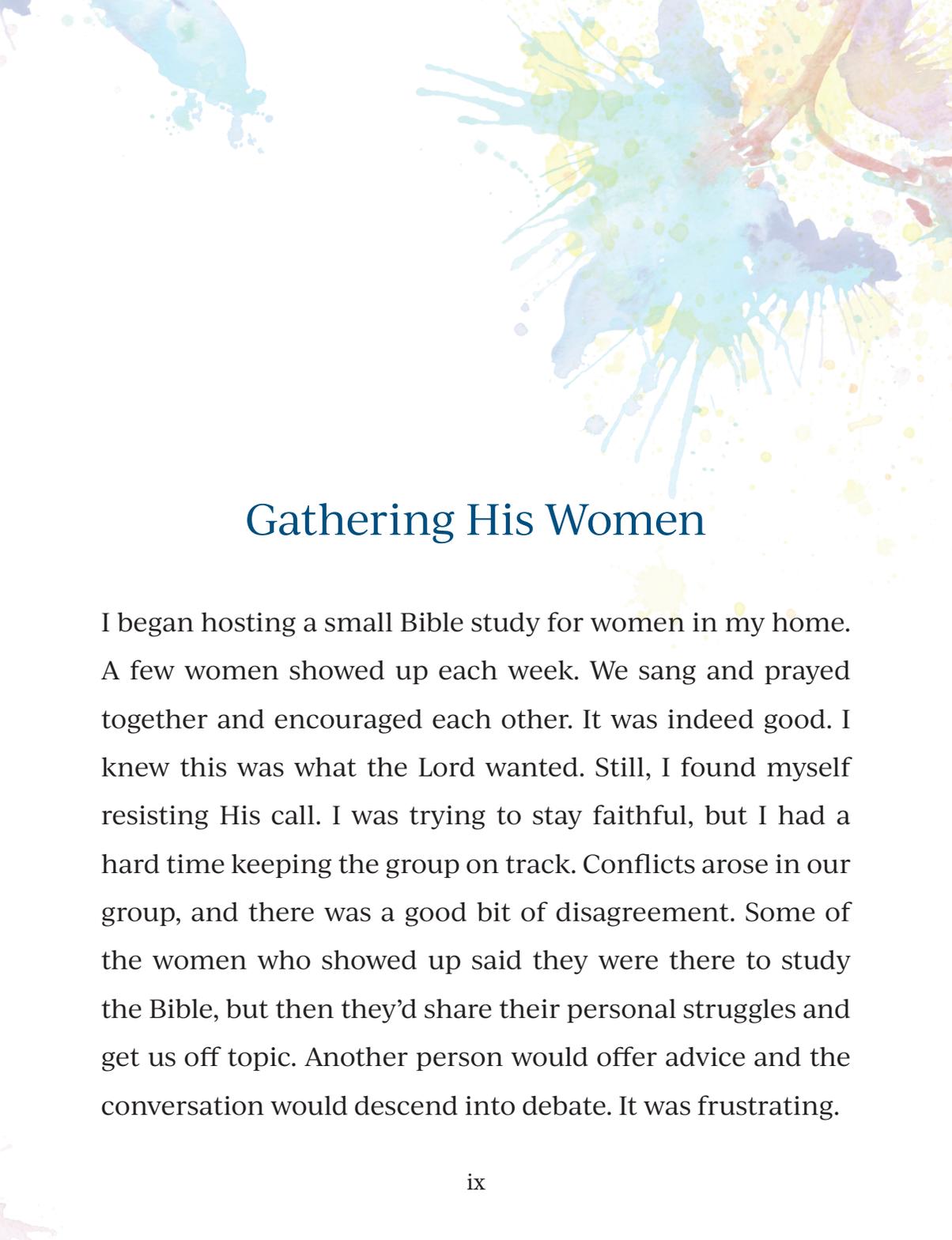
As the conference wrapped up, I was on a high from all I'd learned about God's Word. I told the Lord I was ready to get out of the boat and serve His women as He'd been telling me all along. On my way back to my hotel room that night, I met another woman who was attending the conference. As we



talked, she shared with me about her ministry to women and some troubles they were having. It was a discouraging story. I felt my spirit deflating. I was saddened but, if I'm honest, a little validated for originally responding with a "no!" to serving women. I prayed, "God, don't you see? This is why I don't want to serve women! They're the worst. I am one—I ought to know!"

Do you know what I heard back? His loving response was, "Shari, serve My women."

The gentle and firm way God responded to my emotional outburst was so kind. It reminded me that becoming more like Jesus means taking the good with the bad, loving those He loves and calls His own. After all, we're talking about His other daughters! He was about to turn the encounters I had with women into life-changing experiences and give me a new vision—a Kingdom view.

The page features a decorative background of watercolor splashes in shades of blue, yellow, and purple, primarily concentrated in the upper right and top left corners. The central text is set against a plain white background.

Gathering His Women

I began hosting a small Bible study for women in my home. A few women showed up each week. We sang and prayed together and encouraged each other. It was indeed good. I knew this was what the Lord wanted. Still, I found myself resisting His call. I was trying to stay faithful, but I had a hard time keeping the group on track. Conflicts arose in our group, and there was a good bit of disagreement. Some of the women who showed up said they were there to study the Bible, but then they'd share their personal struggles and get us off topic. Another person would offer advice and the conversation would descend into debate. It was frustrating.

Had the Lord and I miscommunicated regarding my purpose? I wondered. Maybe I hadn't heard correctly. Maybe I'd misunderstood. It happens sometimes in relationships, right? At the time, I had begun working as an actress on commercials and had started getting small parts in films. Since God was opening the doors for me there, maybe He had plans to make me a star. Maybe that was my true calling. Serving women might just be a temporary assignment until my real job.

Soon the Lord called me and my family to Hollywood, California. I decided to pursue an acting career in earnest. Given my age, many people thought I was crazy. I knew better. Listen, sister, our age has nothing to do with God's timing. His timing is perfect. He shows us that over and over again in the Bible. I figured if Sarah could have a baby at ninety-nine, I could pursue an acting career at thirty-nine.

In Hollywood, the Lord spoke to me and said again, more specifically this time: "You are here for My broken women." So I started a women's praise and prayer group in my home. I

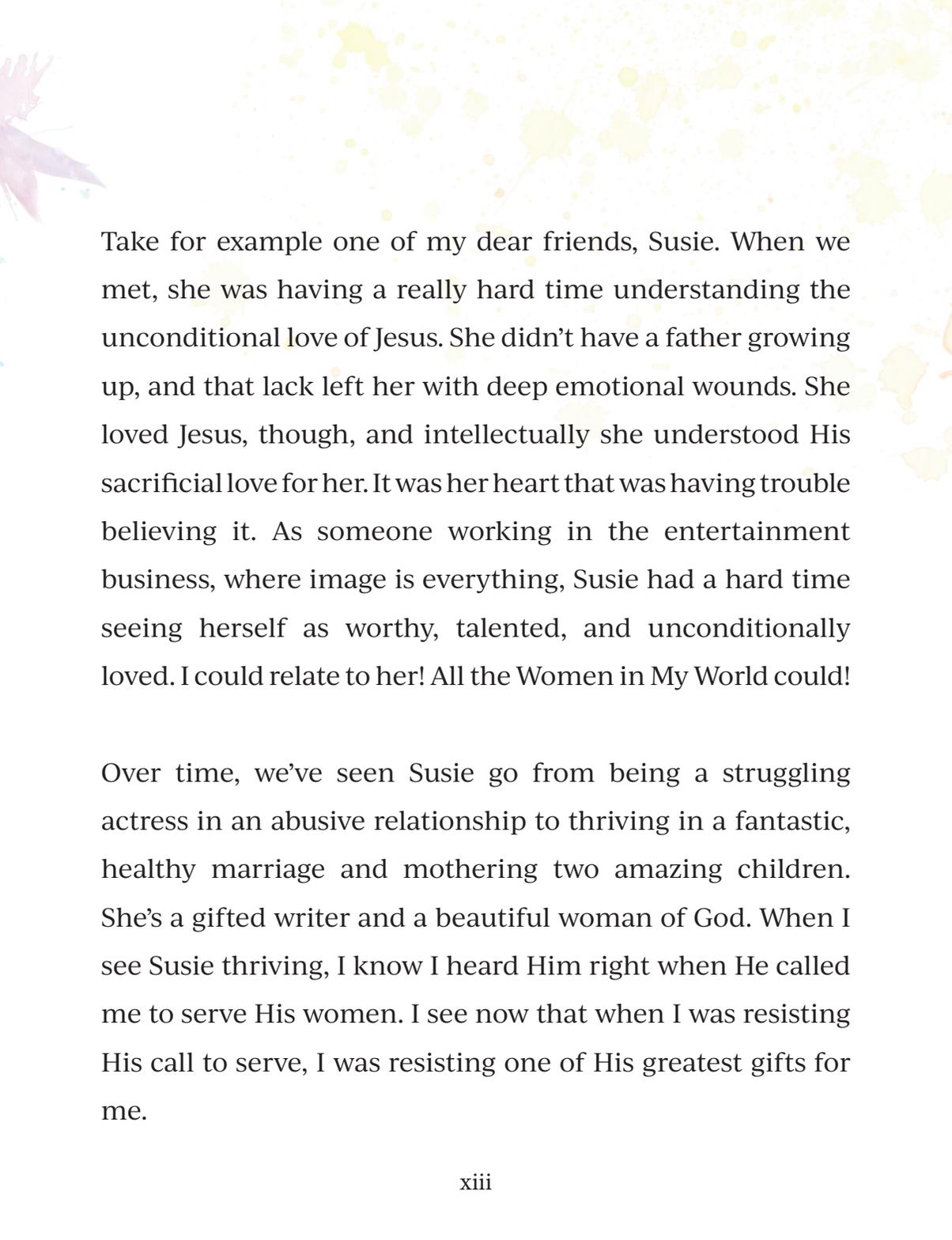
called it The Women in My World. My goal was to help women keep their eyes focused on God. By serving these women, I was serving the Lord. This turned out to be such a blessing because the Lord helped me to plant roots deep in His word as I prepared to lead the group each week. He helped me to focus on Him when everyone else was telling me to focus on myself, and my career, and how I looked. He was reminding me that HE IS LORD.

During my time studying with and guiding these beautiful women, I grew so much in my own identity, talents, gifts, and clarity. I began to see the dreams that the Lord had for me as I helped these women to see the dreams the Lord had for them. He was showing me how to seek Him first and pursue the calling He had for my life too. He was always reminding me to keep my eyes on Him, not to turn to the right or the left. He guides my path, and He is the lamp unto my feet. He ordains my footsteps.



Growing Career, Growing in the Faith

As I continued to grow in my career, all the while doing life with the Women in My World, I encountered many of His other daughters—women serving alongside me in the movie business. Women faithfully raising their families. Women struggling to keep it all together. With each encounter, my desire to be faithful to God’s call to serve His women grew. It is not about advancing women’s agendas. Instead, it’s about loving each of His daughters exactly where they are and refusing to let them stay there.



Take for example one of my dear friends, Susie. When we met, she was having a really hard time understanding the unconditional love of Jesus. She didn't have a father growing up, and that lack left her with deep emotional wounds. She loved Jesus, though, and intellectually she understood His sacrificial love for her. It was her heart that was having trouble believing it. As someone working in the entertainment business, where image is everything, Susie had a hard time seeing herself as worthy, talented, and unconditionally loved. I could relate to her! All the Women in My World could!

Over time, we've seen Susie go from being a struggling actress in an abusive relationship to thriving in a fantastic, healthy marriage and mothering two amazing children. She's a gifted writer and a beautiful woman of God. When I see Susie thriving, I know I heard Him right when He called me to serve His women. I see now that when I was resisting His call to serve, I was resisting one of His greatest gifts for me.



Next Step

That's why I'm so passionate about this book. The Lord has been so generous, blessing me with relationships, lessons, life principles, and tools that have been life-giving and life-changing. I've written this book to share my journey and the principles and tools He's given me to move me forward in His plan for my life. As we explore these together, diving in deep to His Word, we'll get a glimpse of the riches and depths of the Father's love. These tools have helped so many of the Women of My World along in their journey, and I'm confident that you, too, will be able to use them to realize the Lord's plan for your life.

Sharing this is my way of helping free up more and more of His daughters to be all God has designed them to be. Let's reflect His glory and take territory for the Kingdom of God.



CHAPTER 1

We Are the Lilies

“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you?”

— LUKE 12:27-28

I recently sat down with my good friend Anna at a sweet little coffee shop south of Nashville. Anna and I ordered our usual lavender lattes. Now, Anna is pregnant. Very pregnant, actually. I even wondered for a moment if our meeting might be interrupted by her labor. As we caught up on all the news since we'd last met on the set of a movie we'd worked on together, the talk turned to her anticipation of the little

girl about to join their family. We both grew animated and excited, thinking of what the future might hold for that little one. It kind of blew our minds, to be honest. The truth is, the future has never been brighter for girls.

Girl Power

It's an incredible time to be a woman. Opportunities are greater for us than ever before in history. We're in positions and in places to make decisions of incredible significance. Women run some of the biggest companies in the world and are recognized as brilliant leaders. We're artists and creatives, casting a vision for the future. Female politicians lead governments. Women teach the Bible and are leading

ministries and organizations around the world, sharing the message of Christ. Women in the entertainment business create multi-million-dollar movies and television shows while employing thousands of people, entertaining the world. And recent data reveals that the tide has shifted quickly in favor of women shaping our economic future. In January 2019, *Forbes* reported that in 2010 there were 91 women billionaires. As of 2019, there are 243 women billionaires. That's an increase of over 150 percent in less than a decade. In fact, the top three youngest billionaires are all females. Women seem to be taking over the world!

Women shine brightly in the workforce, in churches, in academia, raising families, creating and innovating, and changing the culture. Wherever we are, we're using our gifts and talents to do great things.



Timing Is Everything

Has there ever been a better time to be a woman? I had the privilege, growing up, of assuming all kinds of rights that women before me didn't have. I've never lived in a time or place when my rights were curtailed because of my gender. I've always had the right to vote and to live independently. These were things I've been able to take for granted. What I never could have expected, though, is how much information I'd have access to. Now, with the click of a button, I have nearly unlimited information at my fingertips. Talk about empowering! I can find information on appliance repair as easily as I can access medical research or recipes by the top chefs in the world. I can choose a popular new hair cut or learn how to navigate a start-up business. Within seconds, I can find professional advice on working out, eating right,



and raising children. I can download a new book and listen to it on Bluetooth headphones while flying in an airplane 36,000 feet in the air. We are living in a time where we, as women, have easy access to so many things!

Spiritual Timing

By far the most significant advancement for women in history was the life and death of Jesus Christ. He overturned social norms, deliberately encountering and including women—even though women at the time were deemed culturally less significant than men. I believe with all my heart that this was God’s way of saying, “I love women! They are important to Me. They are essential to culture, and they will be crucial in sharing the Good News.” His desire is for each one of us, no matter where He has placed us, to walk



into a room and fill it with the pleasing aroma of His favor, being humble and kind while exhibiting strength.

I believe God has elevated women to higher places of recognition in this particular moment in history “for such a time as this.” That phrase was issued as a challenge to a young woman plucked from obscurity and placed into a position of influence with the highest power in the land. Esther was faced with an opportunity to stand up for what was right and perhaps save her entire race of people from annihilation. The possible cost, however, was not just her position, but her life. That courageous woman became a hero of our faith.

Though thousands of years have transpired since then, and we've gained tremendous ground, that phrase is a challenge for us as well. I believe each of us is also at a critical moment.

In Such a Place as This

I feel blessed to be a woman “for such a time as this,” and also in my particular part of the world. Over the years, I've traveled to several developing countries where women don't receive the dignity and respect they deserve. Many of them struggle to maintain hope and faith, even sacrificing their lives for freedom. In some countries, women cannot even wear a tank top in a local market without being jailed—or worse.

I'm grateful to live in America, where big dreams are par for the course. Certainly, I've faced my fair share of trials, but I know without question that if I'm willing to put in the work, just about anything is possible.

Along the way, I've known with certainty that the Lord views me as His great "masterpiece," as Scripture teaches, even when I was a scared and lonely pregnant teenager, struggling to stay afloat. Now that I've been happily married for twenty-three years and have raised two boys, I look back in awe and gratitude. I've realized many of my goals, dreams, and prayers have been answered including playing the lead in movies, just as I dreamed of as a little girl. Seeing my dreams come to life is a powerful reminder that when the Lord plants something in our hearts, He accomplishes it according to His will or purpose.

It's Not All Rosy

While women continue to make strides like never seen before, we're still struggling to find our way. There is a deep discontentment in our collective spirits. Even with women in leadership and making more money than ever before,

many of us are deeply unsatisfied. Why are rates of suicide and depression at all-time highs? Why are we experiencing such high rates of anxiety and drug addiction? Why are so many of us, women, spinning out of control, trying to find ourselves, and worrying endlessly about tomorrow? What is the cause of this? How can we find peace?

Many of us find ourselves viewing picture-perfect images of famous people we see in the news and of “influencers” in social media. We often see the life of another woman and ask the question, “Why not me? I work hard, and I still don’t have the life she does or anywhere near the number of followers.” It’s an endless, pointless comparison game.

I have to take a deep breath here because I know these thoughts all too well. It's so easy to feel "less than" and unworthy after looking at someone's social media follower numbers. I see someone else's beautifully framed and filtered life and start to fret, wondering, *am I doing it all wrong?* But I refuse to stay in that place. My Father loves me too much.

Getting My Head on Straight

When the Lord called me and my family to Hollywood, California, in 2009 to pursue an acting career at the age of thirty-nine, He planted me in an acting class with the great John Kirby, acting coach to the stars. Week after week, I was blown away witnessing the stellar talent of actors and

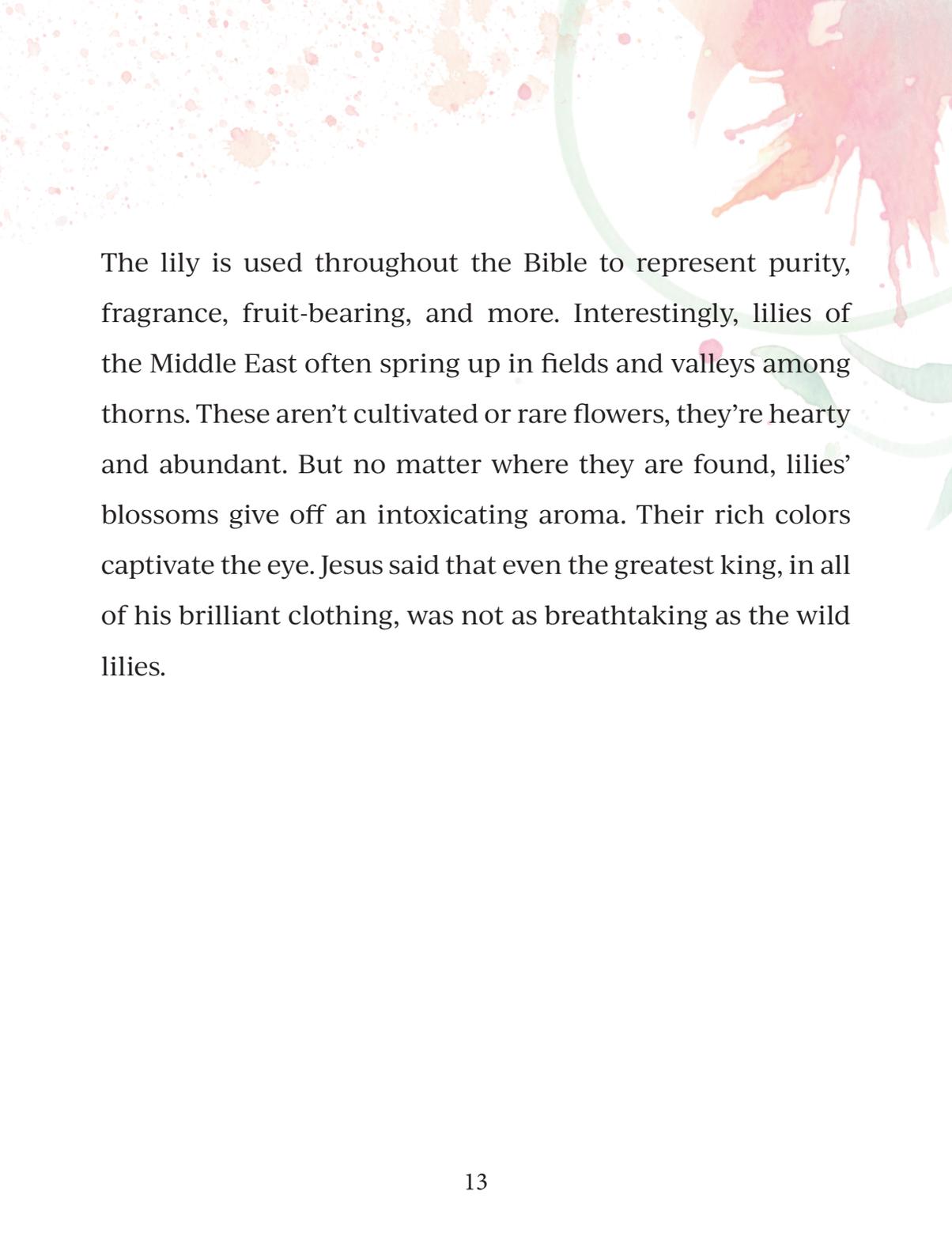
actresses in His class. I felt confident this meant something—we were all going to be stars! As I sat in class one night, I looked around the room and saw the anxiety, insecurity, and sadness on the faces of the talented women seated around me. That’s when the Lord spoke to me and said, “You are here for My broken women.” He called me to start a women’s praise and prayer group in my home. I started with one woman, and soon it had grown to about twenty women, ages 18 to 60. This was the real gift—not fame and stardom, but this gift of serving the other daughters of My heavenly Father.

That’s why I want to encourage women everywhere with some good news. It’s a life-changing shift. We have to move our focus from ourselves to Jesus and His plan for our lives. If not, we will continue to find ourselves desiring to be what we were never created to be or do in the first place. That can only lead to discontentment and brokenness.

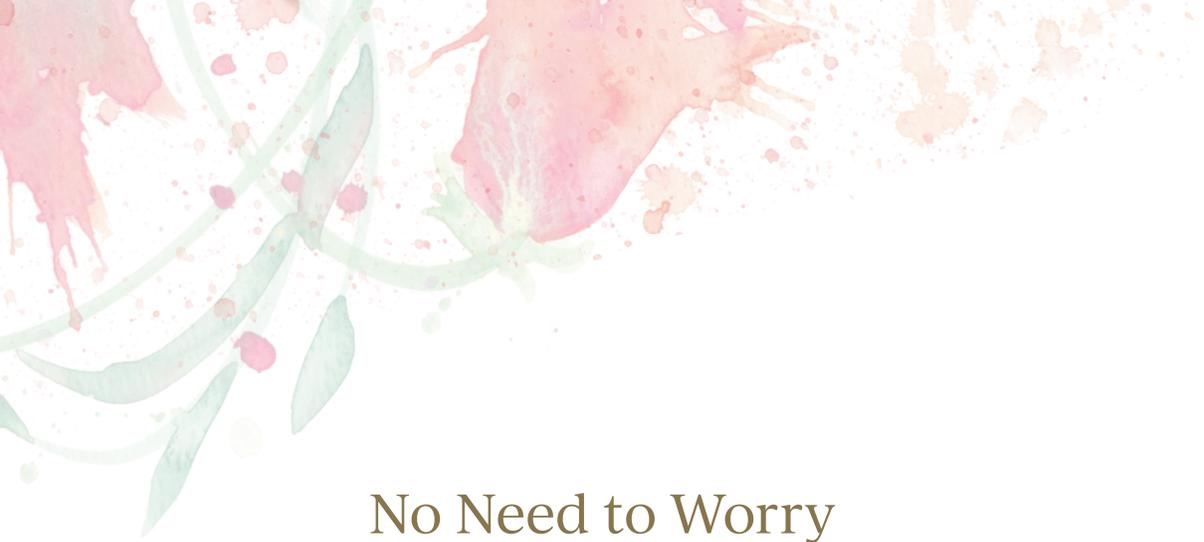
We Are Lilies

As I got to thinking about the beautiful Women in My World and how so many of us experience anxiety, I remembered Jesus's words: "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these" (Luke 12:27). The idea of women as beautiful, fragrant, and fruitful resonated with me in a big way. So I began to consider them, as Jesus taught.





The lily is used throughout the Bible to represent purity, fragrance, fruit-bearing, and more. Interestingly, lilies of the Middle East often spring up in fields and valleys among thorns. These aren't cultivated or rare flowers, they're hearty and abundant. But no matter where they are found, lilies' blossoms give off an intoxicating aroma. Their rich colors captivate the eye. Jesus said that even the greatest king, in all of his brilliant clothing, was not as breathtaking as the wild lilies.



No Need to Worry

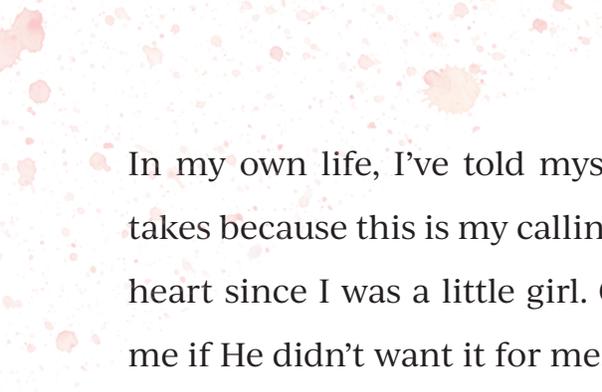
If we're not paying attention, we can miss the meaning in Jesus' words. He wasn't just praising the lily's beauty and reminding us of God's goodness. He is gently reminding us that the lily doesn't worry. Flowers rely on and thrive in the care of God. That is what He desires for us, too. Scripture often reminds us that the Father deeply cares for us. He already knows what we need and longs to give it to us.

The lily takes root where it's placed. In fact, its roots go deep into the ground and begin to connect to other shoots, ultimately forming extensive colonies. I love the visual of this—one beautiful lily multiplying to become a whole field

of flowers! As I've come to understand that the Lord is a God of relationships, I see how the people He connects us to also form extensive colonies. These are the people that the Lord has given us to do life with. They come alongside us, helping us to navigate family, friends, careers, and more. They are the other lilies in the field growing near us, connected to us.

The Women in My World

As I began to lead this group of women I'd met in Hollywood, I saw that while most of us loved Jesus, we were at risk of losing our identities. It's a hazard of working as an actress that we get a lot of discouraging feedback. A lot. We work hard, only to hear, "You're just not what we are looking for. You're not tall enough. You don't have enough credits. We're looking for A-list talent. You're too old or too young. Too heavy or too thin." Bottom line: you are not enough. It's rejection, pure and simple. The barrage of negative feedback can have us spinning, conforming to the world.



In my own life, I've told myself, "I have to do whatever it takes because this is my calling. I have had this desire in my heart since I was a little girl. God wouldn't have given it to me if He didn't want it for me." I get it. I've said these words many times. I've spent lots of time trying to find my place. I think Jesus would call this "toiling and spinning." It's a losing battle trying to find a level of success that will give me peace. But peace doesn't come from success. In fact, success often provokes more anxiety. Because after climbing to the top of the proverbial mountain, we invariably find another mountain range ahead. When much is given, much is expected.

The Lord was rooting me deeply in His Word, helping me to focus on identity, talents, and gifts. He had a plan. He was encouraging me to mentor and raise up women. I began to see that being an actress is NOT my calling. My calling is to share the Good News. Hollywood or the entertainment industry is simply my territory. I had it backward, so I had to lay it all down in order for Him to pick it up and give it back to me. The talents and gifts God has given me aren't the ends in themselves. He gave them to me so that I can uniquely glorify His name. Hard work and success are good, but knowing who I am and whose I am is most important. I must turn my eyes to Jesus and pursue His Word.

I had to be obedient to move to Hollywood and trust that the Lord was calling me there, not to follow my plan but to fulfill His plan. He was planting me so I could get rooted in my destiny. He was showing me the difference between my human desires versus His path and His design. My plan had been to work on soap operas, which I did, but that wasn't

where He wanted me to stay. He led me into the world of faith and family entertainment.

Surrender

Our desires can get in the way of the Lord's will for our lives. How often we pursue and toil, only to come up unsatisfied, then look to the world to help us find our next place or thing instead of seeking out and spending time with the One who created us? Reminding ourselves that we are the lilies is one way we can surrender to our divine design, trusting in God's provision and plan.

As I have grown in my relationship with Christ, identifying myself as His, I want to celebrate my design with women all over the world. The Lord has truly taken me from confusion to clarity. For so long I thought I was running towards the Hollywood lights, when in fact He was lighting my feet to run toward Him on the path that He has set before me.

Let's seek the life the Lord has planned for us. That's the only way to stop the chaos that is confusing us and distracting us from His plan and the impact we are here to make. If we trust Him with our salvation, shouldn't we trust that He has a plan for our lives? That He wants to prosper and not hinder us? Let's dig deep into His Word and find clarity and direction. Let's begin to seek the Lord and His will for our lives as He begins to refine our understanding of our calling versus our passion. Let's get rooted! We'll start by opening God's Word and looking at the master plan.



Consider This

- 1) Let's take some time to consider the lilies. Take a few minutes to sketch out a flower. It doesn't need to be professional—just draw what comes to mind. Then write out the words from Luke 12:27-28. What is the Lord speaking to you as you read these timeless words?
- 2) In what ways do you find yourself “toiling and spinning”? When that happens, what do you usually do to cope?
- 3) In what ways is it a good thing to be a woman in “such a time as this”? What are some of the unique challenges you are facing right now?









Shari Rigby is an actress, director, producer, author, and inspirational speaker. She is best known as one of the leading actresses in faith and family inspirational entertainment for her roles in the *Overcomer*, *October Baby*, *Not Today*, *Wildflower*, and *The Least of These*. Outspoken and passionate about her faith and family, Shari continues to thrive in the entertainment industry as a role model and mentor to women of all ages through her ministry, *The Women In My World*. Shari and her husband, Matt, have been married for twenty-three years and have been blessed to raise two boys together.

“Consider the lilies how they grow they neither toil nor spin but I tell you not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.”

~ LUKE 12:27, NASB

Women in the world today occupy critical places in history, yet many of us “toil and spin,” anxious and overwhelmed by the pressure to find purpose in this ever-changing culture. In *Consider the Lilies*, actress, author, and speaker Shari Rigby shares how to go from confusion to clarity by aligning with God’s *plan*. Her methods provide reassurance and a way forward to the readers to discover and live out their dreams.

“The Bible gives us some of the most powerful, nail-biting, sitting-on-the-edge-of-our-seat stories that captivate us and remind us that we have a God of the impossible, so how can our stories or our lives be ordinary? They are not supposed to be!”

~ Shari Rigby

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