

# SEND

A COLLECTION OF ARTICLES  
FOR THE GLORY OF GOD  
AND FOR THE GOOD OF HIS PEOPLE

MAY 2022


ISSUE #3

# SEND

MAY 2022

**03**

Adsum Try Ravenhill / Wendy Willard / Andrea Sanborn  
Kelly Ottaway / Benjamin Vrbicek / Mitch Everingham  
Chris Thomas / Laura A. Pyne



*Editors Note I Can't Swim - Adsum Try Ravenhill*

*The Battle Cry of Tharseo - Wendy Willard*

*Sometimes I Think I Hear Singing - Andrea Sanborn*

*Held By Tender Hands - Chris Thomas*


*Learning to “Un-Plan” - Laura A. Pyne*

*Finding Jesus at the Nub End of Jared C. Wilson’s Fraying Rope - Benjamin Vrbicek*

*A Prayer for Ukraine - Mitch Everingham*

*Bearing God's Image - Kelly Ottaway*

*Three Questions - How to Retain More from What you Read - Adsum Ravenhill*



Editor's Note

# I Can't Swim

*by Adsum Try Ravenhill*

My wife and I just moved away from the seaside and are now living in a town just west of London. In all the time I lived there, I never stepped foot in the sea. In fact, I barely got close. A host of medical issues definitely played a part, but the reality is that I just can't swim. I had a membership at a pool—one not far from the sea itself—but even then, I wasn't physically strong enough to really get going, so I used it to exercise and relax, but I still can't do much more than tread water.

During our last week in Brighton, I was sitting in a pub at the marina there and I thought about hiring a boat and just going out to sea for a bit. I looked up the prices and was dissuaded, but I sat for some time imagining what it would be like. Whenever I told people I lived in Brighton they would ask, "How often do you go to the beach? it must be amazing!" to which I would reply, "I don't."

We can live our whole lives surrounded by amazing things we never truly appreciate. When I tell people I write book reviews and host a podcast on books, people often say, "Oh, I wish I read more books, I just don't."

Writing, by my estimation, is one of the most underutilised resources most of us ever encounter. Whether it's the cost, the time it would take to learn to do it well, or the sheer choice, readers are often overwhelmed to the point that it feels impossible.

As the editor of this magazine, I'm obviously biased, but even so, I believe you'll love the articles found within. The writers featured cover a wide range of subjects, writing styles, and lengths, meaning that you're bound to find something you resonate with. Don't let the world of writing look like an ocean to you, instead, just give one of these a go, even if you can only tread water for a while, then come back and go again. I know not everyone reading this struggles with reading, but many do. It's too late for me to go back and live by the ocean, but your journey might just be beginning.

**Adsum Ravenhill** is married to Anna and together they are passionate about seeing young men and women disciplined within the context of the local church. You can find Adsum through his writing at [The Raven's Writing Desk](#) and alongside Anna as the co-host of the [Consider the Ravens Podcast](#).



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# THE BATTLE CRY OF THARSEO

Wendy Willard

“In this world you will have trouble.”  
— John 16:33

Given the past eighteen months, I'd say Jesus's words in John 16 are clearly an understatement. In fact, if I focus only on the first part of verse 33, I can feel smug indignation brewing in my soul. To counter such sentiments, I decided to spend more time with what immediately follows the declaration of trouble: “But take heart! I have overcome the world” (v. 33b).

What especially piqued my interest was the Greek word *tharseo*, which is often translated as “take heart.” For a bit of context, this is the last statement Jesus makes before looking toward heaven and praying, “Father, the hour has come . . .” In fact, the entire next chapter of John's gospel is Jesus praying for himself, his disciples, and all believers. When he finishes praying, he is betrayed by one of the people he just prayed for and arrested.

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You may recall that leading up to this the disciples have been trying to understand what Jesus is telling them about the days ahead. When Jesus tells them he is speaking plainly—no longer in parables—they are relieved, saying, “Finally . . . this makes us believe you came from God.”

And then we get Jesus’s response. The Message paraphrase reads like this: “Do you finally believe? . . . I’ve told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart [tharseo]! I’ve conquered the world.”

*“This ‘take heart’ dares us to boldly trust in someone—in this case, Jesus—persisting even when we are tempted, again and again, to give up.*

— Quote Source

Take heart! In Greek, this word tharseo means to have courage and be of good cheer. On their own the words seem banal, but coupled with the preceding comments about trouble, they take on a sense of defiance against the status quo. This tharseo is an action requiring perseverance and passion. It’s daring us to boldly trust in someone—in this case, Jesus—persisting even when we are tempted, again and again, to give up.

I was fascinated to find this word is only used a few times in the New Testament, where it is spoken by Jesus in all but one instance. In every case, tharseo is a command directed to his fellow heirs, as follows.

1. When Jesus hears the blind man shouting, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” he stops and instructs the people to call him. Mark 10:49 says they call to the blind man, using this same phrase: “Tharseo! He’s calling you!”
2. When Jesus is walking on the water and the disciples are terrified, he tells them, “Tharseo! It is I! Don’t be afraid.” (Matt. 14:27; Mark 6:50)
3. When Jesus is healing the paralyzed man, he says, “Tharseo, son; your sins are forgiven.” (Matt. 9:2)
4. When Jesus is healing the woman who has been bleeding for twelve years, he says, “Tharseo, daughter, your faith has healed you.” (Matt. 9:22)
5. Then, when Paul is in prison, Jesus appears to him and says, “Tharseo! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.” (Acts 23:11)

So in the New Testament, this phrase—tharseo—marks five pretty important points:

First, Jesus is calling us.  
Second, don’t be afraid.  
Third, our faith heals us.  
Fourth, our sins are forgiven.  
And fifth, press on.  
Take heart!  
Have courage!  
Be bold!  
Don’t give up!  
Trust him!

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Consider all of the people to whom these words were spoken: a man who literally couldn't see the road ahead of him, a very diverse group of twelve who didn't always see eye-to-eye (remember that group also included the guy who would later betray him), someone who was dependent on others for pretty much everything, a woman who felt cursed and exhausted for more than a decade, and a man who was in captivity. Can you identify with any of these people? I can.

And consider what was going on in Paul's life when he heard the same word. He's given up everything to follow Jesus, the guy he previously hated. He's changed his ways and has gone all-in for Christ. He feels compelled to go tell others in Jerusalem about his conversion, but then it seems like God might be telling him not to go. Paul goes anyway and ends up getting thrown in jail. It's a disaster. Can you imagine how discouraged he might have felt?

And when Peter had been in jail the church held prayer meetings, but no one held prayer meetings for Paul! If I were Paul sitting in that jail cell, I'd be rehashing it all over and over again in my head. What did I do wrong? Why did this happen? Where's the purpose in all of this? Clearly I'm not good enough. Let's be honest, I have been in this situation more than I might like to admit—trying to make decisions while balancing the desires of my heart against the Spirit's leading—and then struggling to make sense of it all when failure stares me in the face.

But look at what happens. In The Message paraphrase, again, we read it like this, "That night the Master appeared to Paul: 'It's going to be all right. Tharseo. Everything is going to turn out for the best. You've been a good witness for me here in Jerusalem. Now you're going to be my witness in Rome'" (Acts 23:11).


*"Perhaps even more important to note is what he didn't say. Jesus didn't come at him with "Why did you screw up, Paul?"*

Perhaps even more important to note is what he didn't say. Jesus didn't come at him with "Why did you screw up, Paul?" Paul already knew his failures, and Jesus did not condemn him. Instead he praised him! It didn't matter that the people had rejected Paul's teaching. Jesus said, "Just as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." In other words, what you did back there? The thing you thought you did wrong because of how this trouble-filled world responded? You didn't. Go do it again in the next place I'm sending you. Tharseo.

I like to think of the key verses that use this word as a battle cry for us in this trouble-filled season: He's calling us. We don't have to worry or be afraid. Keep the faith—it heals us. Our sins are erased. He's with us and will help us keep going. Take heart!

He's known what we're up against and is equipping us. We may not always particularly like the way that plays out . . . it often hurts. But we must remember the end result. Trusting Christ means this pressure is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, an abundance of joy, and a wealth of generosity.

Wendy Willard ([www.slathy.com](http://www.slathy.com)) has spent the past two decades deep in the trenches of child welfare, as a mother and a foster parent and an adoption advocate. A Devotional for Adopting Moms and pieces included in Daily Guideposts, Faith, Hope, & Connection: A 30-Day Devotional for Adoptive and Foster Parents, Mom's Devotional Bible (Zondervan), and (in)courage.



FIRST, JESUS IS CALLING US  
SECOND, DON'T BE AFRAID  
THIRD, OUR FAITH HEALS US  
FOURTH, OUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN  
AND FIFTH, PRESS ON  
TAKE HEART!  
HAVE COURAGE!  
BE BOLD!  
DON'T GIVE UP!  
TRUST HIM!  
WENDY WILLARD



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# SOMETIMES I THINK I HEAR SINGING

Andrea Sanborn

I wake in the night to the moon rising, hushed, over the lake. I sense it there, in the soft lapping of water, in the cattails whispering in the breeze.

I drive to an ordinary errand, on an ordinary day, and quietly, tenderly, feel a weight lift in my spirit. Ben snuggles under the covers arranged just so, eyes drooping. He folds his hands. "Pray?" he asks. Angels hover, close. Silent music stirs; swells. I turn my head; search the darkness, knowing.

How often do we move through our ordinary days unaware of the music? We receive our daily bread and move on, unconcerned. A friend's eyes are hollowed. Weary. We lift her grief in prayer; we lift her up to Jesus, surrendering in the trust we live by. I sense it then, an undercurrent among our bowed heads; a soft melody of hope just beyond apprehension.

There is light on the periphery of our perception. Music just beyond our comprehension. The veil thins between us. I bow my head in gratitude at the table before me – breathe in, and a holy hush invades, infinitesimal, and yet...

He sings over us – a lullaby, a lament, a rejoicing in our existence. Are we listening?

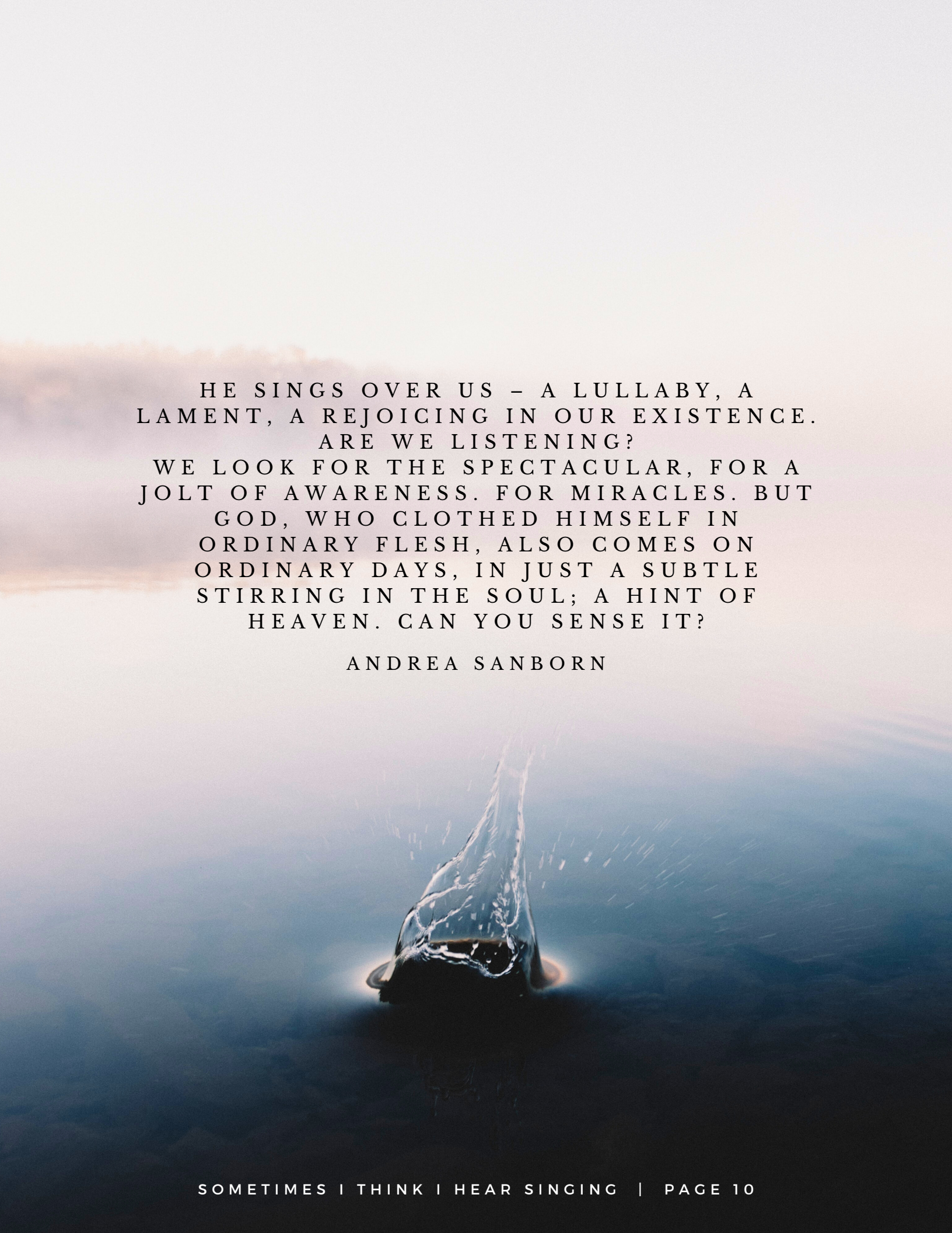
We look for the spectacular, for a jolt of awareness. For miracles. But God, who clothed himself in ordinary flesh, also comes on ordinary days, in just a subtle stirring in the soul; a hint of heaven. Can you sense it?

*"The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing."*

ZEPHANIAH 3:17

Sometimes I think I hear singing. In the far reaches of our awareness, woven through the moments, He sings. Over me. Over you.

Andrea Sanborn You can find Andrea's writing on her blog, A View of the Lake ([andreasanborn.com](http://andreasanborn.com)) where she posts twice a month about the breathtaking beauty of following God in a broken world.




HE SINGS OVER US - A LULLABY, A  
LAMENT, A REJOICING IN OUR EXISTENCE.  
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ANDREA SANBORN

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# HELD BY TENDER HANDS

Chris Thomas



I am a reed,  
but not like others.

I suppose I should be. I grow by the quiet waters of a sheltered pond. In the late Summer evenings I watch the same dance of the Dragonfly as she gently kisses the smooth surface and momentarily shatters the mirrored sky. I grow beneath the sprawling branches of an ancient tree that drinks the same water I do. I grow among my brethren, other reeds who bow their heads each evening, only to lift them again to greet the rising sun, nodding with the warm breeze that carries the smell of earth and harvest. I don't grow alone.

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I am a reed, but not like others

Oh, it may appear I am the clone of those who gather round me; tall and straight I stretch toward the sky. The creatures of the wetland make their home around my feet, the birds of the air come to harvest from my crown, and like my brethren, one day the workers from the village will come and harvest us to weave into their art. We reeds have a noble calling. But I am not like the others.

I am wounded. The fibres of my being have faltered. Where others stand strong and secure, I feel the soft place within, the weakness that threatens to topple me. While others sway with the gentle evening breeze, I fear that their breeze will be my storm. Rather than sway, I bend, and I know that one day the bend will become a break.

I am bruised.

When the other reeds of the river are woven into tapestries of beauty, I will not be wound around my brothers, I will still be standing here, alone. Or worse, I will be hewn in half and thrown down; a bruised reed broken and left behind. I'm sure it is only a matter of time. Like the fire that burns the chaff away, when it has done its intended work the labourers of the field stamp out the smouldering remains. Or like the nightwatchman who blows out the candle before the smouldering wick stings his eyes with unwanted smoke, so my tall crown will be cast down to the mud in which I stand.

And so here I tremble, a bruised reed who will not feel the sharp edge of the scythe, but instead the calloused hand of the harvester who will break me away in favour for those who have withstood the season of storms.

I am a reed, but not like the others.

Then, one new day as the sun treads its well worn path across the blue parchment above, as the ancient story unveils another chapter, I see the workers make their own well-rehearsed journey toward the bank where I grow. Like a dream I've dreamt before, the baskets swing from their sides, empty now, but later filled as they retrace their steps, tired from a day of labour. I watch them come in the morn, and I know that I will watch them leave again in the eve—it is the way of every bruised reed—broken and left behind.

But then I feel his hands; it was not what I had expected.

He was a harvester, but not like the others. I feel his hands upon my crown, expertly exposing my shame, running gently across the weakness of my being, wrapping themselves around my wounds. The hard hands of the worker are more tender than I thought were possible, as precise in their diagnosis of my suffering as the well-practiced hands of a man of the fields should be.

# SEND

These hands held me. The rising sun could not kiss me so tenderly as these hands held me now. To be held by tender hands, especially when my wounds were so evident beneath them, when my bruising made me prone to shrinking away, was the sweetest gift of life I'd ever tasted. Not broken. Not cast aside. Not trampled beneath. Not left. Not forgotten. But held.

I've been held in tender hands.

*“This is my servant; I strengthen him, this is my chosen one; I delight in him. I have put my Spirit on him; he will bring justice to the nations. He will not cry out or shout or make his voice heard in the streets. He will not break a bruised reed, and he will not put out a smouldering wick; he will faithfully bring justice. He will not grow weak or be discouraged until he has established justice on earth. The coasts and islands will wait for his instruction.”*

*(Isaiah 42:1–4, CSB)*

Dear friend, look to Jesus in your wounded years. He sees your bruising, the yellowed remains of your suffering. There is no need to hide them away, to disguise your pain, or to pretend that it does not still hurt. He sees it all.

Dear friend, bring your bruises to Jesus. He will not break you off and cast you aside. That little bit of flame that remains, the small glow that just burns in desperate defiance of the approaching night, he will not snuff it out. The breath he breaths on you is to fan that smouldering wick into flame again. The hands that hold you now are not to cast you aside, but to draw you near.

Take courage, my friend, from one bruised reed to another, you need not fear the touch of Jesus.

**Chris Thomas** serves as a Teaching Pastor in a rural church on the East Coast of Australia, just a few hours north of Sydney. Gratefully married, he's a father of five. He sometimes writes at his blog, *The Ploughman's Rest*

Dear friend, bring your bruises to Jesus. He will not break you off and cast you aside. That little bit of flame that remains, the small glow that just burns in desperate defiance of the approaching night, he will not snuff it out. The breath he breaths on you is to fan that smouldering wick into flame again. The hands that hold you now are not to cast you aside, but to draw you near.

Take courage, my friend, from one bruised reed to another, you need not fear the touch of Jesus.

Chris Thomas

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# LEARNING TO “UN-PLAN”

Laura A. Pyne

What’s your calendar look like for the next month?

If it’s anything like our family’s its a jumble – especially this time of year – of sports practices, competitions, art classes for the lone girl-child of the family who longs for creative outlets, travel for work – both mine and my husband’s – and more.

As we march toward summer, school becomes more frantic with a lot more “THROW ON YOUR SHOES, I CAN SEE THE BUS!!!! WAIT WHERE’S YOUR JACKET!?” and a lot less gentleness and calm hugs as we stroll toward the bus stop.

There’s a lot more running – literal running – at this time in the year than there is at the calm start, when the new schedule feels exciting and doable.

And that’s just the start of it. Our family’s plans – and my own plans – don’t stop with the calendar for the month ahead.



# SEND

We have dreams for summer trips, and bookings to schedule. We have thoughts about the best school to send our oldest to next year, unsure of whether the current option is right for him.

And beyond that, there's more. We have career aspirations (my husband), books to write that right now just live in my head and maybe a few notebooks (me), though some have made it to an actual typed out draft. We have thoughts about adding on to our home. Goodness, we even talk about where we want to live when we retire (somewhere warm).

Our conversations with friends often revolve around topics like this – what's next? What's after that? Hopes, dreams, so on.

It's not that these things are bad.

It's not wrong to have hopes dreams and desires.

But, lately I've been reflecting on various scriptures relating to a project I'm working on, and one that has stuck with me is Proverbs 19:21:

"Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand."

Our plans are many, as this writer in Proverbs points out so succinctly.





## But plans and purpose are two different things

In our heads, if we're achieving what we set out to achieve, we're doing well. Yet the Bible tells us time and time again that it's the Lord's purpose in each of our lives and for this whole world that will endure: they'll be what matter for eternity.

Whether we make it to T-ball practice or not, or whether the next book I put on paper is read by a single person (or even becomes a book in the first place), it has nothing to do with God's purpose unless it is ordained by him and part of his plan instead of my own.

And yet – our plans and our successes are our measure.

We take the gifts and talents God has given us, and we decide how to use them, instead of giving them back to him, asking to align our dreams and hopes with his plan.

We take the greatest gift of all – assurance that everything here has a purpose that is beyond us – and we cheapen it by determining what we think it should all look like. We're really good at it.

We listen to the voices around us, we watch the successes of people we know and people we follow online, and we use those as the measures for our own lives... when none of those things were ever meant to be the measure again.

Our worth has nothing to do with our plans. Our worth has everything to do with the fact that the God of the universe lovingly and individually created each one of us and set us on a specific purpose that's part of a great picture that we will never be able to see on this side of heaven. Our worth has everything to do with the fact that he loves us enough that 2000 years ago he sent his son to be born, live among us, and die on a cross to cover over all of our sins – the very thing we're getting close to remembering as Easter approaches.

And yet... we keep planning.

Don't get me wrong: it's okay to keep a calendar. I honestly don't know how any of us would remember anything without writing it down somewhere in a central location.

But, if we're using our schedules, our dreams, and whether or not we're hitting the benchmarks we've set for ourselves to decide whether or not we have worth, whether or not we are successful, or whether or not we are content... it's time to rethink it.

It's time to remember that it's the Lord's plan that endures, whether we're walking in it or not.

For me, that means learning to un-plan. To give my walk to God each and every day, asking him to direct my path and set things on my heart that he would have for me. To look away from what I see online and the longing and striving I feel when I seem to fall short, and to look at his truth instead.

What role does your plan play in your life and your heart today? Are you able to give it to God to find true rest and satisfaction? Can you un-plan?

**Laura A. Pyne** is a follower of Jesus, wife, mom of five, writer, runner, nature-lover and digital marketing professional. Laura believes in sharing stories that help us all center around what matters most, supporting women and growing. We're all on this journey together!



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Laura A. Pyne



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# FINDING JESUS AT THE NUB END OF JARED C. WILSON'S FRAYING ROPE

Benjamin Vrbicek

The guys at the church often tease me about being a fanboy of Jared C. Wilson's writing. Last year they even took a picture from Wilson's Instagram page and photoshopped my head into the picture as though I were just hangin' with my bud. You might even say my relationship with Jared is as his relationship is to actor Mark Ruffalo. I just let the office guys tease me. They know I'm right.

I could mention a few reasons why I appreciate Wilson's writing. I've done that in other blog posts—hence my reputation. This afternoon, I'll just share one reason. Wilson seems to understand what it means for faith to wear thin and to know what it means to need Jesus, not theoretically but experientially. To say it another way, Wilson knows a Christian's salvation rests in the strength of Jesus, not in the strength of one's faith in Jesus. Knowing this difference matters a lot, especially as you suffer. And knowing the difference matters as you commend Jesus to others.

Wilson writes in his book *The Gospel According to Satan*, "When you get to the end of your rope, there is Jesus" (84).



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In his writing he doubles back over and over again to this theme of finding hope in God when all around our soul gives way. His words remind me of Paul's comments about finding hope in God when Paul wondered if he would even live or perhaps if he even wanted to live. "For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia," Paul writes. "For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death." This is the nub end of Paul's rope, and he attributes trials of such severity to God's desire that his children find their strength in him, not in their own ability. "But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead" (2 Cor. 1:8-9).

"Until God is your only hope," Wilson writes in another book, "God will not be your only hope. Utter brokenness is key to gospel wakefulness, because we will not be all-satisfied in Christ until Christ is all we have" (*Gospel Wakefulness*, 127). This quote comes from a transparent section where Wilson describes a terrible season in life and marriage. I'll say more about that season in a moment. Wilson continues, "I was groaning in prayer in our guest room, flat on my face, wetting the carpet with tears the moment the Spirit whispered the gospel into my ear. That moment changed everything for me."

Referencing this same, depression-filled season in another book, he writes, "It's my conviction that God will not become your only hope until he becomes your only hope" (*The Prodigal Church*, 212). Wilson writes something similar in his earlier book *Gospel Deeps*, my personal favorite in the Wilson corpus: "I realized that God would become my only hope when he had become my only hope" (*Gospel Deeps*, 116). Then, with the proverbial twinkle in his eye, Wilson adds, "Let the reader understand."

I do understand. And the longer I walk with Christ and serve in pastoral ministry, I'm coming to understand better. This is the Christian life—knowing the goodness and grace and sovereignty of God and coming to know it deeper. I'm reminded of the line in the last chapter of Lewis's *The Last Battle*, when the faun named Tumnus says to Lucy, "The further up and the further in you go, the bigger everything gets. The inside is larger than the outside."

Wilson repeats this theme in his latest book, *Love Me Anyway: How God's Perfect Love Fills Our Deepest Longing* (Baker Books, 2021). After writing two books about gospel-centered ministry mainly for pastors and church leaders, Wilson returns to writing for a broader Christian audience. While maintaining his faithfulness to biblical, gospel truth, he also writes with an artful, maybe even playful, prose that so many seem to have appreciated in his book *The Imperfect Disciple*. *Love Me Anyway* explores the key phrases in the great chapter on love by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, as well as our cultural fascination with love songs.

## SEND

“It is at the end of your rope that we find Christ is more than enough.” Good writing only infrequently uses exclamation points, reserving them for only those sentences truly deserving. Wilson’s next sentence has one. “And I have come to believe that for a great many of us—if not all of us—Christ will not become our only hope until Christ has become our only hope!” (Love Me Anyway, 129). Later in the book Wilson adds, “I had come to the end of my rope and found there the sufficiency of Christ” (164).

But more using similar phraseology as in his other books to repeat the theme of finding the strength of Jesus when faith wears thin, in Love Me Anyway Wilson gives his most extended recounting of the season in life which precipitated his wakefulness to the glory of the grace of Jesus Christ. The season brought him to a place of wakefulness not merely to gospel propositions about Jesus but a gospel encounter with Jesus.

Many years ago, as he lived for a long and lonely season in the spare bedroom of his house because his marriage was so poor that his wife didn’t want him in their bedroom, God showed up and began to warm cold hearts. You’ll have to get the book to read it. The details of the story are similar to what he wrote near the end of The Prodigal God, but in Love Me Anyway the story comes with more transparency. Wilson expected the marriage would dissolve, though he prayed it wouldn’t. And with his face wetting the carpet many nights he prayed God could change him. God did. Because God can. And does. Our God loves to make his power perfect in our weakness and be there for his children when our hands slip from the nub end of our rope.

**Benjamin Vrbicek** is a teaching pastor at Community Evangelical Free Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and the managing editor for Gospel-Centered Discipleship. He and his wife, Brooke, have six children. He earned an M.Div. from Covenant Theological Seminary. Benjamin is the author of [Don’t Just Send a Resume](#) and [Struggle Against Porn](#), and coauthor of [Blogging for God’s Glory in a Clickbait World](#). He blogs regularly at [Fan and Flame](#), and you can follow him on [Twitter](#)

THIS IS THE CHRISTIAN  
LIFE—KNOWING THE  
GOODNESS AND GRACE  
AND SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD  
AND COMING TO KNOW IT  
DEEPER

BENJAMIN VRBICEK

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# A PRAYER FOR UKRAINE

Mitch Everingham

As news of the war in Ukraine began to break, I found myself feeling helpless. Just a few hundred kilometres away from the comfort of my home in Switzerland—lives were being uprooted, families torn apart, and homes were being bombed. Nearly two months on, that hasn't changed. Across this time, I've found myself returning again and again to a prayer I wrote in the early days of the war—when my helplessness finally gave way to prayerful action.

Writing prayers has been a practice of mine for several years now; in part because of my upbringing in an Anglican church where liturgy was woven into the fabric of my faith—but also because I know of no other way to express the depths of despair I feel when suffering is thick and hope feels thin. To me, the beauty of written prayer is the opportunity it affords to linger with the words we choose to offer before God. Sure, there is a time for raw and unfiltered cries, as well as spontaneous requests and petitions. However, I've come to find that carefully penning my prayers is a way of heeding the wisdom of the teacher in Ecclesiastes; 'Guard your steps when you go to the house of the Lord' (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

In this case, it has offered me the chance to sit with the gravity of the war, empathise with the plight of the people being affected, and draw from the deep well that is the pages of Scripture and allow them to give language and form to my prayers. This prayer has a Trinitarian shape and a deliberate Scriptural flavour throughout. The first stanza of the prayer is a lament that calls on God the Father to respond and intervene. The second petitions God the Son to bring peace and comfort to the afflicted and the frightened. The final stanza asks God the Holy Spirit to convict those in power to fight for peace instead of war, and to be present with believers in Ukraine.

I hope and pray this prayer is helpful in some way for you or your church, but more importantly than that—I pray that the people of God would be people of prayer in this moment.



# SEND

God of every nation,

We cry out to you on behalf of the people of Ukraine,  
knowing you hear our prayers and see their circumstances.  
We plead for you to intervene and bring peace,  
to defend the defenceless,  
to protect the vulnerable,  
and to provide safe passage to those who seek it.  
We grieve and lament the evil that is taking place,  
and confess we don't know how to solve it without you.

In our weakness and uncertainty—  
you are strong and wise;  
so we call on you to act quickly,  
with both mercy and justice.  
Bring justice by the means and in the measure required in your wisdom.  
Be merciful and spare the lives of children, women, men, and the innocent.  
Turn instruments of war into possibilities for peace.

Father, what some intend for evil—we plead that you would use for good.

---

Prince of Peace,

Above all, every person needs you.  
Make your peace that transcends all understanding known to those living in Ukraine.  
Guard their hearts and minds.  
Comfort the mourning, frightened, and weeping.  
Bind up the wounds of the brokenhearted and injured.  
Be with your people and grant them resolve to be a light in the darkness,  
a city on a hill,  
bearers of hope.

Reveal yourself to those who don't know you,  
that they may be rescued spiritually and physically.  
And for those in Russia that grieve their governments decisions;  
provide wisdom as they seek to be a voice for the voiceless.

Lord Jesus, may the people of Ukraine find strength in you—their fellow sufferer.



# SEND

Spirit of Truth,

You are the one who convicts the world about sin,  
righteousness,  
and judgement;  
so we ask you to bring a contrite heart to Russian leaders.

We don't presume to know every detail, but you do.  
Please work to bring about a desire for peace,  
and a commitment to minimising loss of life in the minds of every person with influence  
and power in this situation.  
Grant wisdom to leaders of other nations,  
stir them to provide the support and generosity needed in Ukraine right now,  
both now and in the months to come.

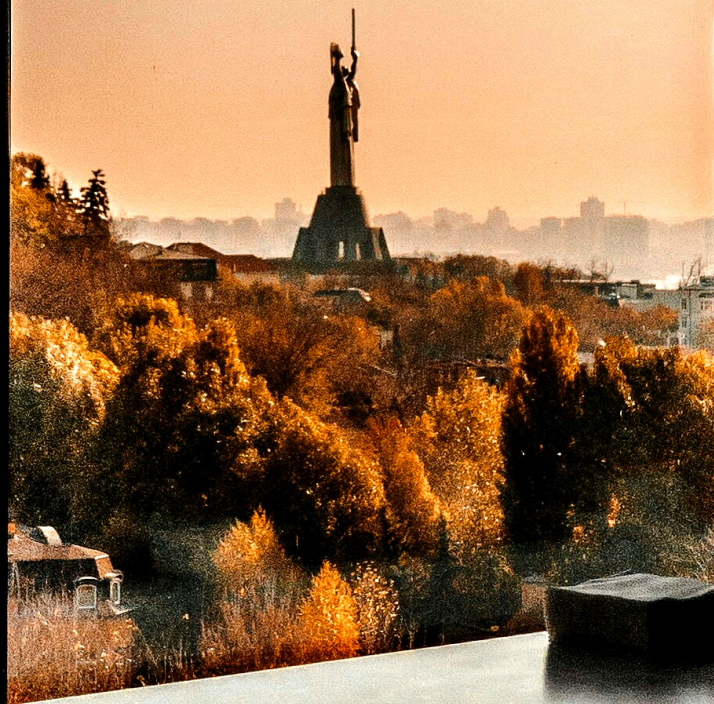
You are the ultimate Advocate and Comforter,  
please be that in this moment for all believers in Ukraine.

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Come Lord Jesus, come.

**Mitch Everingham** is a pastor from Sydney, Australia, who loves Jesus, his wife—Suz, coffee, being outdoors and reading a good book (in roughly that order). He's currently living in Switzerland and serving at Riverlife International Church, Bern, and is studying MTh in Missiology at Edinburgh Theological Seminary, Scotland. His first book, *Finding Peace through Prayer: Eight Practices for Living in Hard Times*, is being released in late 2022 through Wipf & Stock. You can find his writing and a free e-book on spiritual formation at [resilientrhythms.co](https://resilientrhythms.co)

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MITCH EVERINGHAM





Recently, my son and I started some flower, pumpkin, and tomato seeds to prepare for planting season in May. I've been doing this for six years or so now, and it brings me great joy. Bringing my 4-year-old son into the experience reminded me of the first year I started seeds. I doubted myself 100% but was proven wrong when almost everything sprouted. Delight grew and a new hobby formed.

I believe planting and growing things is one special way we reflect God's image. As I witness the excitement and wonder in my son's eyes, looking at the greenery poking through little soil pods, I think of the joy and delight God must have known when he commanded plant life to come forth.

When we plant, we depend on the right ratios of soil, water, and light, but God did it in a word, a breath. Yes, he created those other elements that would then sustain plant life, but the initial creation was simply a command to exist, and then it did. And it was good (Gen. 1:11-12).

In reflecting on God's joy in creating plant life, we also get a glimpse into God's pain in cursing creation. This good world created by him, full of green and thriving plant life, now tainted and cursed would bring forth thorns, thistles, and toil. Beauty would fade and die. What was once supposed to live forever would now emerge and live for the length of a breath. Sometimes we read so quickly over the creation and fall accounts, that we fail to pause and imagine God's joy and pain in those moments. The plants my son and I grow will eventually die. Some won't make it through hardening off or be fruitful; some will live all season long, produce

good fruit, and then wither away in the fall. However long they all live, their end is certain. But thanks be to God that in his glory, he planned to restore not just humans, but all of creation to himself. What is currently withering will be permanent again someday (Rom. 8:19-22).

So today, I thank God for the good opportunity to reflect his image in planting and growing produce. Unlike him, I don't always know exactly what each plant needs; only he holds all knowledge and wisdom (Rom. 11:33). And unlike him, I can't command something to grow; only he holds that authority and power (Psalm 33:9; Neh. 9:6). But I reflect his image in my desire and joy to bring forth life to the extent that a finite human can. We can steward the ingredients of earth he's given us in ways that make us more like him—whether that looks like growing tomatoes in pots or farming vast fields of various crops.

How do you like to steward the privilege of reflecting his creativity?

**Kelly Ottaway** is a wife and mother in southwestern Ontario and serves at her local church in various areas. Kelly practices as a Licensed Professional Counselor at a crisis pregnancy center in Ontario and a private practice in Jackson, Michigan. She writes for a Christian infertility organization—Waiting in Hope—as well as for her newsletter, [\(Springs of Joy\)](http://Springs of Joy) ([kellyottaway.substack.com](http://kellyottaway.substack.com))



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KELLY OTTAWAY

# THREE QUESTIONS

## How to Retain More from What you Read

by *Adsum Try Ravenhill*

I've been writing and podcasting about books for some time now—mostly either reviews or interviews—and one of my main goals is to help readers to get more out of the books I recommend, I'm not interested in just letting you know this book was great or I loved this and so you might too ([you can read more about my process here](#)). Though picking up a book and taking the time to read it is necessary to absorb and digest the contents, reading alone does not naturally beget understanding. In fact, with literacy rates decreasing it seems unlikely that seeds of understanding are finding purchase in readers at large.

It's a wonderful time to be a writer.

Other than a short spell in my teens, I've always loved reading and over the years I've learned to hone my spider-sense for important information and tidbits which are worth retaining, as well as detecting themes and those odd particularities that only seem to belong to writers and authors. There is no replacement for an experience like this, and so when people ask me how they can read more, or read well, or just read at all, it can be tempting to just say, "keep reading." Though I think that's part of the answer, and I believe that—as with any skill—the long game and the goals which come with that are important, it smacks of discouragement for those just starting off.



# SEND

## Lost Keys

If you fit the following the criteria:

1. Human
2. Reading this Article

Then you've probably lost your keys at some point and you know how frustrating that can be. As you rummage through pockets, bags, nooks, and crannies you end up finding all sorts of objects you weren't looking for, I find this brings up mixed emotions, on the one hand, it's great that they've turned up, but why now when I could really use my keys! What if it wasn't just keys, what if, off the top of my head, you were moving house and suddenly your alan key, electric screwdriver, and knife have all gone missing.

Pandemonium ensues.

While looking out for these three objects which you know are definitely in the house somewhere, how often do you reckon you'll drop your attention? After all, you've got three hours until you have to move out!

...

Now on the hunt—with my aptitude for observation now heightened to the point that I could join the Avengers—my passport, National Insurance Number, oddly enough my keys, a box of paints, a couple of trinkets from our wedding, and not one, but five alan keys turn up, as well as the aforementioned electric screwdriver, and knife... in this purely hypothetical scenario I mean.

This is an article about reading I promise.

What makes you pick up a book? Until recently the books I picked up fell into three categories:

1. Fictional Books I think will interest me
2. Non-Fiction Books that will edify or inform me
3. Non-Fiction Books that will help me to disciple, edify, and inform others

Recently though, I added a fourth to that list:

4. A Book I've been sent or asked to review

Though that might not be a scenario you're likely to find yourself in, I've found anecdotally that most people at the start of their reading journey, or just getting back in, usually find themselves holding books given them by, or recommended by, friends, family, or someone they respect. With *Gentle & Lowly*, *Rembrandt is in the Wind*, or *Women of the Word* now in hand, readers are left to navigate foreign territory full of unknown variables.

# SEND

Rather than handing you the keys to success, I contend that looking for lost keys might actually be a better approach.

## Firstly

If you fit the following the criteria:

1. Human
2. Reading this Article

Then you don't know everything.

Sorry to have to wake you up to that truth, I know it's a surprise, but I felt it needed to be said. Thankfully, if you don't know everything, there's mostly something in this book that you don't already know.

I don't have three specific questions for you that you can ask every time to read any book better, but instead, I suggest that you should take the time to find three questions you'd like to be answered by this book.

I've found that whilst reading for review I've learned so much more than I'd intended because when asking questions like:

1. Who is the intended audience?
2. Does the author fulfil his/her mission statement for the book by the end?
3. Which quotes stand out?

I've been wide-eyed enough for my peripheral vision to catch other answers I would have missed, to questions I'd not thought of asking. Like looking for an alan key, an electric screwdriver, and a knife, you will end up opening boxes and cupboards you might have been tempted to walk past and thereby find something even better than you'd hoped.

## Finding Questions

First things first, you need to read. I suggest you read three things:

1. The Blurb
2. The Contents Page
3. The Introduction (note: not a foreword written by another writer, but the author's introduction)

On occasion, I've had to encourage readers to forget the title of a book entirely because the book inside has nothing to do with the title—either the publisher has decided on it, or the book evolved after the title was first written down, whatever happened, titles are not always the best way to judge a book.

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By reading just those few pages, probably five at most, you'll get an idea of what the author wants to talk about and what they'll be able to teach you. You can then sit down, pray, and then consider some questions.

## Don't be too broad

This will take some practice, but try not to be too broad. Let's say this is a book on marriage, don't ask:

1. What is marriage?
2. What makes a good marriage?
3. Whom should I marry?

Why? For one thing, they aren't good questions, but they are also so broad that to answer them in-depth you may need to memorise the book. Instead, be more vulnerable, be more specific.

1. How can I be a better Husband?
2. What struggles has the author had in his/her own marriage and what did they learn?
3. Which stories, verses, and quotes encouraged me?

These questions might be more difficult to answer, but you're far more likely to remember the answers and they'll have your eyes primed to look out for more specific details.

## Ask Your Own Questions

Reading books to help others still falls under this bracket, but don't ask questions you don't want answers to, if you're not interested, why ask?

Someone may have given you this book and said, "I learned how to be a better small group leader by reading this book." If you're not a small group leader though, asking a question like:

1. How can I be a better small group leader?

That would be fruitless.

Though that might seem like a silly example, I've seen people read books with similar thoughts in mind. Don't do that, adopt your loved one's excitement about the book, but not their specific question. Find your own questions.

## Sit the Author Down

If the author was sat across from you, after reading the introduction, the blurb, and the contents page, what would you ask?

Are you intrigued by the reason they chose to write about this topic? Are you encouraged by their testimony? Are you impressed by the author of their foreword? Do you want to learn to write like them?



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Whatever your motive, interest, or initial thoughts, let those inform your questions, the author has spent months if not years pouring themselves into this book, there's a high probability they've anticipated your questions and answered them during that process. Ask them questions and expect them to answer.

## Finally

To help you to put this into practice, [here's a simple bookmark](#) you can print off and fill out with your three questions. Whenever you read that book, pull the bookmark out and read the questions first, remind yourself what you're looking for and then start to read. Once you've finished the book, leave the bookmark in, in the future when you come back, reading those questions again is far more likely to bring memories of the book back to you, and it will help you to remember exactly what you loved about the book in the first place.

This is a very different article from my usual reviews and bible studies, but I hope it has been an encouragement to you. Now, go and read.

Grace and Peace,  
Adsum Try Ravenhill

**Adsum Ravenhill** is married to Anna and together they are passionate about seeing young men and women disciplined within the context of the local church. You can find Adsum through his writing at [The Raven's Writing Desk](#) and alongside Anna as the co-host of the [Consider the Ravens Podcast](#).

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