



30 Days of Shining  
with an  
Attitude of Gratitude

Rosann Cunningham

# 30 Days of Shining With an Attitude of Gratitude

By Rosann Cunningham

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Introduction	5
Day 1: Thank You, God, for Online Ministry	7
Day 2: Thank You, God, for Spiritual Gifts	9
Day 3: Thank You, God, for Technology	11
Day 4: Thank You, God, for Giving Us the Ability to Touch Life Around Us, and Feel Touch in Return	13
Day 5: Thank You, God, for Good (and Bad) Aromas	15
Day 6: Thank You, God, for the Feeling of Warmth	17
Day 7: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Time	19
Day 8: Thank You, God, for Quenching Our Thirst	22
Day 9: Thank You, God, for the Food We Have Available to Eat	24
Day 10: Thank You, God, for all Things Cold	27
Day 11: Thank You, God, for Giving Me a Family to Love	29
Day 12: Thank You, God, for Your Everlasting Love	32
Day 13: Thank You, God, for Your Creation	34
Day 14: Thank You, God, for This Place I Call Home	36
Day 15: Thank You, God, for the Friends You've Brought Into My Life	38
Day 16: Thank You, God, for the Gift of My Husband	40
Day 17: Thank You, God, for My Healthy Body and Mind	42
Day 18: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Motherhood	43
Day 19: Thank You, God, for Growing My Faith	45
Day 20: Thank You, God, for the Giving Me the Ability to Hear	47
Day 21: Thank You, God, for My Heart	49
Day 22: Thank You, God, for the Church	51
Day 23: Thank You, God, for the Clothes in My Closet	53
Day 24: Thank You, God, for Giving Me the Ability to See	55
Day 25: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Music	57
Day 26: Thank You, God, for Color	59

Day 27: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Your Wisdom	61
Day 28: Thank You, God, for Giving Us Grace	63
Day 29: Thank You, God, for Your Protection	65
Day 30: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Eternal Life	67
About the Author	69

# Introduction

Not long ago I sat across the table from my husband, head in my hands, feeling sadness in my heart. I had received yet another email from a weary soul, looking to me for wisdom and prayers over her situation.

Before I knew it I was crying to my man.

*"Honey, you would not believe how many readers I hear from on a weekly basis who are experiencing deep sorrow, trials, inner turmoil, hardship, marital problems, and a variety of struggles with motherhood."*

*"They reach out in desperation asking for advice or answers to their problems. But I don't know what to say to them. I don't know how to encourage them! It's becoming too much to respond to!"*

Is there really *that* much heartache in the world?

Unfortunately, yes.

The hardship I read about is absolutely overwhelming to *me* - a fellow mom, wife, and child of God whose been there on that same road of gut-wrenching emotion. I really want to be there for every one of these women, encouraging their precious hearts. I want to give them renewed hope!

But how? I can't fix their problems. And if I'm to be honest, I'm struggling with finding time (and energy) to be everything to everyone.

A quick look at my calendar shows a packed schedule spread across the next 12 to 18 months. It's full of everything from family time and responsibilities to personal life events to writing, ministry, church, and more. I'm crazy busy! How can I possibly be everything to everyone?

Later that evening I had one of those God moments. You know, when God speaks and you can't help but listen?

***God isn't asking me to be everything to everyone.***

***He wants me to point these women to Him, so He can be their everything.***

My friend, in our lifetime we're going to face difficulties and seasons of sadness or depression. We're human. We're broken by sin. We're selfish, all wrapped up in our worldly ways. We've become blinded by the junk!

And we're missing God's greatness!

His gifts and blessings are so much more than whatever it is we're facing or struggling through. We just can't see them because we're so focused on the fear on our hearts. We can't, or aren't willing, to look away from the bad and instead set our eyes on the *great!*

What we need is an attitude adjustment. We need to open our eyes and our hearts to the abundance of things we should be grateful for, because whatever it is we're going through, it's only for a time, it's not forever.

***We need to shine with an attitude of gratitude!***

So, let's embark on a journey together.

A journey of gratitude.

It will be a journey of looking for the beautiful blessings in our lives, and hopefully you (and I) will feel inspired to do something simple, yet powerful, each day to shine our thankfulness for those God-given gifts.

Let's spread God's light and His goodness and joy to our circle of influence.

Just like a smile can be contagious, I believe joy and gratitude can be too. Imagine the world around us beginning to shine God's light instead of statically existing in darkness!

If you're reading this book and jumping on the attitude of gratitude wagon, please know I'm praying for you.

I'm praying God will open your eyes to see how much He loves you!

I'm praying He'll reveal to you in tangible ways just how much you can trust Him, for His provision is perfect and is always right on time.

I'm praying as you read this book, that God will stir your heart up with more joy than you can imagine and that you will recognize it as a gift from Him.

I'm praying that wherever you are in your walk with the Lord, your relationship with Him will grow so much deeper than it ever was before.

I'm praying you will shine God's beautiful light to those around you, spreading His goodness and love to others.

Amen? Amen!

Okay, let's get started.

Plan to read a chapter each day - it should only take about 15 minutes - for the next 30 days. Each chapter offers a short devotion of gratitude and a simple challenge for you to work on that day. Enjoy!

# Day 1: Thank You, God, for Online Ministry

*“I want to start a blog.”*

They were simple words.

For some time I'd felt God nudging me to start writing about our hard journey. I thought maybe our story would help others going through tough times know they weren't alone, and maybe even give them hope, because God works miracles. I had seen His miracles in my own life!

What I never imagined or even thought possible was the work God would do in and through me as I started to write.

It started with a simple blog, ChristianSuperMom. A silly name to some, but to me, very fitting with my personality as a newly passionate Christian woman, wife, and mother with a strong desire to embrace those God-given roles and be great at them.

Then the emails started flooding in. Women asking me the same questions over and over again.

*“Rosann, I'm not sure I can go on in this storm one more day. How do you cope through it? How are you staying sane? How has your marriage not fallen apart?”*

And so began a ministry. Soon after, *UnEmployed Faith: Clothing Yourself in Strength and Perseverance Through his Season of Unemployment* was released followed by the start of a private support group.

No longer was I writing just to share my testimony and a few fun mom related tips and tricks here and there.

No-Sir-Eee.

God had given me a more meaningful purpose. He called me to be an encourager and a friend to those who felt completely alone in their circumstances.

This online ministry of writing books, of leading a support group, of responding to email after email of weariness screaming out from the hearts of others, of pointing the broken-hearted back to Christ is often overwhelming.

SO overwhelming.

*But it's totally worth it!*

Writers or bloggers often wonder if their words are reaching anyone. If they're making some kind of difference in the lives of others. God has shown me the answer is *YES!*

Not a day goes by that I don't look to Jesus and say "Thank You!" for this calling. I'm just in awe. So humbled by all of it.

Never did I imagine those simple words - "*I want to start a blog*" - would become a ministry.

*"This is God's way: Putting extraordinary tasks on the plates of ordinary people so that ordinary people can see what an extraordinary God can do through them."*

~ Priscilla Shirer

### **Your Challenge:**

I believe God has placed a calling on your heart. I don't know what it is or the specifics, but I know you do. Today, I challenge you to take a leap of faith and run with courage toward that one thing God is asking you to do.

Don't worry about whether or not you think you're capable of doing it. Trust that God will prepare you in baby steps or that He's already prepared you for the task. Go out today and faithfully turn your ordinary into extraordinary.

*Shine* with an attitude of gratitude knowing with God, all things are possible!

## Day 2: Thank You, God, for Spiritual Gifts

I have a friend who reflects the beauty of Christ every time I see her.

The other day after picking up my daughter up from school, I drove by two women standing on the campus sidewalk having a conversation. The closer my car got to them, the more aware I became of the brightness surrounding one woman in particular.

Her smile was big. She was actively listening to the other woman speak, and warmth seemed to pour out from her soul on that cold, rainy afternoon. Then I realized who I was looking at. It was my beautiful friend! Her spiritual gifts are many, but the way she lights up a room with her bright smile and warm, comforting presence is my personal favorite.

Spiritual gifts are different for each of us. And we often have many of them!

I tend to think of myself as not being very smart, but my husband frequently tells me he prefers to seek my “wise counsel” over any other person he knows when making a tough decision or working through a problem.

He says I have a way of clearing the emotional clutter of the issue at hand and seeing the big picture, all sides to it, all personalities involved and can provide an objective opinion. He tells me I’m also able to be honest without being rude or insensitive.

My husband has the spiritual gifts of negotiation, problem-solving, and peace-keeping. He’s calm, cool, and creative when it comes to situations of conflict. We always joke that he missed his calling in life - hostage negotiator.

The poor guy lives in our female-dominant home overflowing with estrogen, and almost everyday he’s talking one of his girls (me included) down “off the ledge” in our moment of unnecessary drama.

I have a few sweet friends who are amazing artists, [one who paints](#) for the glory of God and one in particular who reflects the [beauty of God through sculptures](#).

Another great friend of mine has a way of looking at the inside of a home, mentally transforming the style, decor, and organization in such a way that portrays the true heart of the family. Then she makes the vision in her mind a reality with her very own hands. She’s so gifted!

I’m truly grateful God has given His people spiritual gifts that can be used to enhance and bless the lives of others. It makes me feel good to use the gift of writing and encouragement to help others who are going through tough times. In the same way, I enjoy the blessing of my friends and family who make my life more interesting and enjoyable with their spiritual gifts.

*We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

~ Romans 12:6-8, NIV

**Your Challenge:**

Ask yourself, "what are my spiritual gifts?" and "how am I using them for God's glory?" Pray for God to give you wisdom in how best to put your spiritual gifts into motion for His greater purpose.

*Shine* with an attitude of gratitude for the way those around you enhance your life with their spiritual gifts.

## Day 3: Thank You, God, for Technology

There's a lot of debate about whether or not technology is a good thing.

I'm a woman who happens to love technology.

- I love having a microwave on those days I've been too busy to think about putting the potatoes in the oven far enough in advance.
- I love having a cell phone so my family can reach me when they need to, and so I can reach *them* when *I* need to!
- I love having a camera to capture those picture perfect moments in our life.
- I love knowing the chance of surviving some major illness or accident is much higher today with advancements in medical technology than it's ever been before.
- I love having a computer I can pour my thoughts into - a place where I can write for the glory of God.

There are so many wonderful benefits of technology, where we've been empowered to use it for good! I'm grateful God allowed us the wisdom to learn and grow beyond campfire chicken-on-a-stick and stone tablets.

That said, I'll confess I don't like the details of technology. I don't need to know *how* it works, just that it does. I can do light HTML coding (only because I'm a website owner), but I'll probably never understand gigabytes, megabytes, or any other kind of bytes. My eyes glaze over at the mention of them.

Because my husband *loves* technology, I'm not lacking in "Tech Toys" at all. He makes sure I have cool things to enhance our day to day activities, like the wireless speaker on my kitchen counter that I can stream music to from my iMac, iPhone, iPad, or Apple TV.

But if he dies before I do (and I pray I won't have to face that day anytime in the near future), I won't ever be able to move to a new home because I'll never get that place wired the way he currently has things.

Goodness, I don't even know what a router is! Lol! Okay, well, I know it's some computer internet thingy... :)

Our amazing God! Only He can place a technology challenged ordinary person into the extraordinary world of online ministry and make it work!

*Thank you, God, for technology. May each of us choose to use it responsibly.*

**Your Challenge:**

Pick four pieces of technology you use regularly, whether in your home or on your person, and “ditch” them for the day. In other words, don’t use them at all today. Recognize and reflect about how those items enhance your life, and be sure to thank God for always providing well for you and your family.

*Shine* with an attitude of gratitude as you think about how advanced our world is now compared to fifty or even twenty years ago.

# Day 4: Thank You, God, for Giving Us the Ability to Touch Life Around Us, and Feel Touch in Return

His hand touches my hand, and I feel safe.

His lips press passionate with hunger against my lips, and I feel loved.

Her little hand tugs at my pant leg, then wraps tightly around my fingers, and I feel needed.

When my sweet girl pulls near for a hug, my mama fingers instinctively touch and tousle little ringlets of brown hair and ribbon.

When I'm chilly, I reach for a blanket touching it's velvety softness.

In the bathtub, I touch very warm water and instantly feel calm, relaxed.

In the summer, my hands dig into rich garden soil, God's earth, and I feel empowered by His Spirit.

And in the snow, my hands feel cold and wet as they tightly form a ball between them, releasing it into the sound of squeals and giggles.

Can you imagine a life without touch? A life without feeling your lover's skin or your daughter's hug?

What if we never experienced the feeling of bread dough underneath our kneading hands, or the goo of pumpkin guts that cause so many "ewes and ahhs" while carving pumpkins with the kids?

What if we never felt the silkiness of a rabbit's fur, the durability of the leather on our favorite jacket, the furry warmth of the inside of an UGG boot?

The very fact that we're able to touch and experience these very tangible pieces of our life is a miracle!

To think God planned every tiny detail of our being, including something as simple as the power of touching and feeling...

He knew exactly what we would need in order to thrive - it just leaves me in awe of His greatness!

Thank you, God, for giving us the ability to touch life around us, and feel touch in return.

**Your Challenge:**

This morning, be intentionally aware of everything you touch. Reflect on the miracle of that sensation against your skin. How does what you're touching make you feel? How does what you're touching comfort you each day? Touch your hands together and say a prayer of gratitude to the One who blessed you so richly.

*Shine* with an attitude of gratitude as you hug your family members, snuggle with your pets, and touch your surroundings.

## Day 5: Thank You, God, for Good (and Bad) Aromas

I had just put my daughter to bed and walked out of her room when the smell hit me like a ton of bricks. My eyes seemed to be burning and I had a natural urge to cough a little.

I gave my husband a perplexed look. *"What is that smell?!"*

*"What? I don't smell anything."*

*"How can you not smell it? It's even hurting my eyes! It's like something's...BURNING!"*

Sure enough, our dishwasher was having a mid-cycle meltdown. Thank goodness we were able to smell the rather bad aroma of burnt something or other and turn off the appliance before things got really out of control.

The same thing happened a few months ago when my over the range microwave decided to burn out while popping a bag of microwavable popcorn. Talk about a disgusting smell through the house.

While I don't really like having my appliances break down or the bad aroma they leave in the air during those meltdowns, *I am* very grateful that I was able to detect a problem with my nose before things got really bad.

But then I think about so many great aromas in life...

The smell of my husband's cologne when he walks by. Mmm...

My vanilla caramel coffee with pumpkin spice creamer. Or a mug of fresh off the stove homemade hot chocolate. Mmm...

New baby smell...I'll never forget that one! When my daughter's were babies, I could not get enough of smelling their little cheeks snuggled into me.

Roses. I love the smell of roses. And gardenia! That's a very powerful aroma.

Fresh rosemary cooking ovetop of the pot roast in the oven. With a hint of thyme and red wine.

Driving through the orange trees in Southern California.

Fresh cut grass on a summer day.

The salty ocean air. And the aroma of steak and seafood cooking at the beachside restaurant where my husband and I had our first date...and our first kiss.

The smell of an old cedar chest being opened after years of sitting closed at the foot of my mother-in-law's bed.

Lavender epsom salts being poured under a faucet of hot water as I fill the bathtub for my evening bath.

Oh friend, I could go on an on...

How about you?

Thank God we have the ability to smell a variety of things in this world, and that those wonderful aromas exist in the first place!

Sometimes, it's just a simple unsuspecting aroma that can calm my nerves and bring peace to my soul.

### **Your Challenge**

Write down everything you smell today, good and bad, as the aroma hits you. Also make a note of what the aroma made you think of or how it made you feel. You can use the Notes app on your iPhone if that helps.

Before you go to bed tonight, read through your list and take a moment to thank God for the gift of aromas.

## Day 6: Thank You, God, for the Feeling of Warmth

The hot crackle of the flame in the fireplace.

The coziness of a blanket tossed gently over my legs and feet.

The heat from a shower.

The intense heat of my husband's body laying next to mine at night.

The warmth of my daughter snuggling into me as we rock together in a very tattered, well-used chair.

Every one of these situations describe a sensation I'm able to feel and appreciate. It's a sensation the God of the Universe gave us. It's a gift we often take for granted.

When my Father-in-law passed away, we had a private family viewing before opening the funeral home for calling hours. I'll never forget how shocked I was when my hand slipped down to rest on his as tears fell down my cheeks.

He was ice cold. Of course my brain knew this would be the case, but when I felt him, my heart - my senses - made the connection that he was gone. I had held his warm hand over and over again during our Sunday family gathering mealtime prayer. All that was left now was an ice cold empty shell.

Now, when my daughter hops into my lap to hug me or when I feel how hot my husband's hand is when he reaches to grab mine, I have a whole new appreciation for warmth.

When I tiptoe downstairs for my time with God early in the morning, and I notice how cold the house feels after sitting dark overnight with the air notched down an extra degree, I'm appreciative that I can walk over to the thermostat and switch it to Heat.

Or - I can flip a light switch on the wall and the fireplace will automatically turn on.

I think so often we forget what a gift it is to feel warmth. We forget how soothing heat can be on our aching muscles. We don't take notice of how hot the marriage bed gets in a moment of passion. Or even the heat from the hot sun beating down on a summer day.

Hmmm... I wonder what the temperature is in heaven...

*The the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (warmth), and the man became a living being.*

~ Genesis 2:7

No challenge today. Let's just be very aware of the warmth surrounding us, coursing through our bodies, and in those we love.

Let's shout our praise to the Lord for creating us in such a way that we radiate warmth to one another and can feel warmth around us.

## Day 7: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Time

Oh, how I hated that three-hour commute.

Years ago when we lived in Southern California, I was analyzing credit bureaus and underwriting car loans for a living. We had chosen to buy a home in a family-friendly neighborhood 52 miles from the office.

The result was a very long commute to work. One and a half hours each way, to be exact, and that was only if there weren't any accidents on the road. So I spent three hours, five days per week, fifty-two weeks per year, sitting in my car on the I-15 freeway. (This was commute time. Not time my employer paid me for.)

If you do the math, that equates to roughly 780 hours of my life every year sitting behind a steering wheel staring at a crazy person in the car next to me shaving their face, reading on their Kindle or talking on the phone.

That's 32 1/2 DAYS per year! Of crazy...

To add to the stress, in the Fall when we would fall back an hour, it would be dark when I left the house to drive to work in the morning and dark when I left the office to drive home at night. The only daylight I was able to enjoy was during my lunch hour, and half the time I didn't take a lunch hour for myself like I should have.

It was the rat race.

My husband and I both lived and breathed the rat race, day in and day out. And for what? We had maybe one hour with our baby girl each day before she had to go to bed for the evening. We weren't happy. Sure our bills were paid and we had a nice house.

But again - all that for what?

Is it the nice house and the cars and all the material stuff that bring happiness? Or is it the time we spend making a difference in the lives of those around us?

If you walked out your door today and were hit by a bus, would you honestly be able to say "I lived a full and meaningful life!"

Think about what your last five years have looked like. How much time do you spend with the people you love? How much time do you spend being God's hands and feet in this world? How much time do you spend smiling and laughing and creating fantastic moments and memories with your husband and your children?

Friends, my family has been down a very hard road in recent years. We've gone through long term unemployment, major financial crisis, and we've lost dearly loved parents who should not have died at the very young age of 75 years old.

The one thing God keeps pointing my eyes to see is the gift He brought out of our hardship.

The gift of time!

He took that commute away from me. He took our obsession with money and our dreams of keeping up with the Joneses away from us. I don't really care now about all of that nonsense.

He allowed us to go through deeply frightening trials so we would draw near to Him, but also so we could see there is a more meaningful purpose to our life. The time we're each given is short and we only have one life here on earth to live. One opportunity to get it right. God has shown me the value of time. No it hasn't been easy. Yes, we've sacrificed a lot and have learned to live on less.

It's worth it though! I always say if I could have any one super power I would choose the ability to stop time, or at least slow it down, because there never seems to be enough of it.

The thing is, God gives us plenty of time. We just don't choose to use it well.

We aren't meant to be so busy that we don't have time for our own family. We aren't meant to be so distracted by other bright shiny objects in our world that we don't have time to serve God's purpose or wildly chase the plans He has for us.

He's given each of us the gift of time.

What are you doing with that gift?

Are you trying to balance it all so you can have it all? (I know I'm guilty) Or are you submitting yourself to God and the way He would have you spend those precious hours and minutes of your day?

*“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?*

*The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. What has been will be again; there is nothing new under the sun.*

~ Ecclesiastes 1-3, 8-9

**Your Challenge:**

Take five minutes to be still in the presence of God. During this time, ponder the questions I've asked in this chapter.

Are you living a full and meaningful life? What are you doing with the limited gift of earthly time God has given you? Do you feel the Lord urging you to make some changes?

## Day 8: Thank You, God, for Quenching Our Thirst

Like most children, when I was young I always seemed to be thirsty.

I still sit baffled when I recall the way I'd grab the gallon of milk out of our refrigerator, take the cap off, intently position the plastic jug up to my mouth, and start swigging ice cold milk. \*Shiver\* Can you imagine the germs I shared with my older brothers who also drank from the jug of milk the same way?

Good grief, we must have driven my mom crazy with our lack of manners.

These days, I rarely drink milk.

In fact, at the moment I'm enjoying a morning cup of decaf coffee. It's a daybreak mild blend mixed up with peppermint mocha creamer. Yum!

With each sip of peppermint goodness, I can feel the warmth coursing from my throat into my belly. Most days I substitute coffee for green tea, but still use the delicious peppermint mocha creamer for flavor.

I'm a one to two cups of something-warm-and-delicious per day kind of woman, with the second cup usually brewing right around the 1pm mark.

I'm also a wine drinker. Last night my husband and I enjoyed conversation and dinner with a nice glass of Merlot.

I never used to like the taste of wine until I met my husband and he taught me that certain wines compliment and actually help enhance the flavor of the food we eat. Now it's very difficult for me to eat a perfectly grilled steak without washing it down with a sip of my favorite red wine in between bites. The mix of flavors helps me truly savor the meal.

Then there's water. When I was pregnant I carried around a tumbler of ice water everywhere I went. Now, it's a challenge for me to meet my bodies need for 8-10 glasses of water each day. I love how it tastes, but it's just not my initial preference when I'm thirsty. I'd rather have something with flavor like iced tea or lemonade or a soda. But water is the cheapest and healthiest choice I can make.

My point in talking about all of these different drinks is to point out one more thing we need to be aware of and thankful for.

There are plenty of places around the world that are lacking in safe, clean water to drink, and if they don't have water they sure don't enjoy drinks like coffee or iced tea or the plethora of other drinking options we have available here in the United States.

I'm forever grateful the Lord allows us the resources to quench our thirst - both physically and spiritually!

*...But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*

~ John 4:14

**Your Challenge:**

Read John 4 in its entirety and pray for God to fill your spiritual cup with His thirst quenching water of life. Then join me in drinking eight tall glasses of water today. Count them out loud as you finish each glass and make sure your family knows why you're doing so.

*Shine* with an attitude of gratitude for the refreshing water your body needs and that God has provided.

## Day 9: Thank You, God, for the Food We Have Available to Eat

*“Sweetheart, please eat your food.”*

She stalls.

She kicks her legs.

She falls off her chair and quickly squirms back in place.

*“Stop playing and eat your meal!”*

*“I don’t like it.”*

*“It’s good for you. Besides there are kids all over the world who are starving. Be grateful you have food in front of you to eat.”*

She sits for a moment pondering...

*“Why are they starving? Did their mom make broccoli too?”*

This is an actual conversation I had with my daughter a few years ago. She had just turned 4. I'll admit her response did make me giggle, but I was totally frustrated with her for not eating. The food fight is a constant issue around here, as I'm sure if you're a mom you can relate.

### **Here’s my “when I was a kid” story.**

My single mom didn't have a lot of money to spend on food and she certainly didn't have a lot of free time to make something everyone would like. We were served a lot of veggies from the garden, soups, pastas and ground beef.

In fact, I was just talking with a friend a while back about the infamous goulash dish.

You know the one. All week's leftovers thrown together in a pot. Add a cheese or tomato sauce, maybe some pasta if it's not already there, and you have an inexpensive and (arguably) nutritional meal to feed the family. Bonus: no food goes to waste.

Mom's policy was: if you don't like what I've prepared, you don't have to eat it. You may be excused, but you will go hungry until the next meal is served. She was not kidding. I quickly learned to love all the food she put in front of me. Even if I didn't really love it.

As I've grown older and become queen of my own home, I'm realizing how much I appreciate her doing that. Because she didn't coddle me about food, there are very few foods I don't like or flat out refuse to eat. Actually, I've probably developed too much of a preference for food! Haha! At least I'm sure the scale would agree with that statement.

When I think about food, I think about it's purpose.

Yes, food is there to nourish and strengthen our bodies and our minds.

It also plays a very meaningful role. (at least it does to me. lol!)

In my life, food brings family and friends together. Think about dinner each night. In our home we gather around the dining room table to eat our meal and share about our day. It's good, quality time where we connect as a family.

When we meet for fellowship with friends, there's almost always food at the center. It's as though it screams "welcome, enjoy!" and there's a sense of comfort and peace.

When it's cold outside, nothing warms me head to toe like a steaming hot bowl of my favorite soup. (Tomato. Actually it's a toss up. I really love [The Pioneer Woman's Corn Chowder](#) in a bread bowl too! :))

When I'm feeling a little stressed out, a few pieces of dark chocolate have a way of calming my nerves. (No I'm not a stress eater... I don't think...)

Thanksgiving is coming up. It is one of my favorite holidays purely because of the gathering of family and friends in thankfulness and gratitude, sharing turkey and all the fixings.

### **A sad fact**

Did you know right now there are [870 million people](#) worldwide who are chronically malnourished due to severe poverty and hunger?

These people aren't gathering around a festive table with a giant platter of turkey and stuffing in the middle. They aren't watching football afterwards or snoozing on their comfy sofa. And I'm fairly certain they aren't laughing their heads off while playing Pictionary or Trivial Pursuit. Odds are, they don't even have a roof over their head.

Friend, even in our greatest financial drought and economic hard times, we still have food to eat. We are very very blessed!

*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

~ 1 Corinthians 10:31 NIV

**Your Challenge:**

Prepare your family's favorite comfort food for dinner in the next day or so. Serve it up with a special drink you wouldn't normally enjoy with it. Milkshakes, perhaps? Or sparkling lemonade?

As you dine together, make sure you comment on how blessed all of you are because you have food available to eat when so many do not. Be sure to pray together and Thank God for His perfect provision.

# Day 10: Thank You, God, for all Things Cold

My husband still teases me about our honeymoon.

We flew to Curacao, 37 miles north of the Venezuelan coast. It was beautiful caribbean bikini weather, and there I was in a sweater. Cold. Running a fever, actually.

I'm one of those people who knows I'm running a fever because I get the chills so bad nothing seems to help me warm up. It must have been the stress of planning a wedding that knocked my immune system out of whack, because as we sat in the Admiral's Club waiting for our connecting flight, the sneezing, coughing, snot-running-like-a-faucet, and chills hit me fast and hard.

We enjoyed our week in the caribbean, but a good chunk of that time I spent snuggled under warm blankets with a Vicks Vapor Rub coated towel wrapped around my neck. Sexy! Lol!

I had a good excuse for feeling cold during my honeymoon. But even now, back in the normal day to day life I live, I'm frequently cold. My daughter even teases me for always being so cold. I can't help it. I guess it's just how God made me.

Yes, I love to be warm. I also love the changing of seasons and temperatures. This very moment, I have a fire roaring in the fireplace. I'm wearing my favorite jeans, a sweater, and my super warm cozy UGG boots. I'm also drinking a mug of my favorite hot cocoa.

Outside, it's cold. Snow is headed this way soon, I'm sure. I always love watching the first snowfall of the season.

You see, I love to be warm, but I also LOVE to play outside in the cold and the snow with my family.

I love to go sledding and build snowmen and have snowball fights.

I love the rosy cheeks and the cold nose kisses. I love the "smoke" that comes from our mouths when we breathe cold air in and out. I love it!

So today, I'm thankful for all things cold.

Cold weather.

Cold drinks.

...And yes, even head colds (because they give me a good excuse to snuggle up and stay in pajamas all day, nice and warm!)

*The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them.*

~ Job 37:10-11

*Thank You, God, for all Things COLD! Brrr...*

**Your Challenge:**

If you haven't already, arrange to watch the Disney movie Frozen with your family. First, brew up some homemade hot cocoa - you can even make a fun cocoa bar so your kids can load up their mug with whipped cream and peppermint candies.

If it's snowing outside, after the movie is over, go out and run through the snow playing together.

# Day 11: Thank You, God, for Giving Me a Family to Love

Get in the car.

Get out of the car.

Get in the car.

Get out of the car.

Do you ever feel like that's all you do, anymore?

It adequately describes what my days have been like lately. The last quarter of the year is always so unbelievably busy for our family.

The schedule is packed full of child drop offs and pick ups, school parades and programs, staggered ballet and gymnastics classes, youth club drop offs and pick ups, birthday parties to attend and birthday parties to plan, big school projects to work on with the kids, trips to the grocery store, trips to the gym, trips to the dry cleaners, trips to the gas station, and so so so much more.

At home, there's laundry and housekeeping, helping with homework, fetching snacks and drinks, planning and preparing meals, cleaning up after those meals, getting kids bathed and ready for bed or for their day, answering phone calls from extended family members, baking a gazillion cupcakes for a church event, and so so so much more.

Just for snicks and grins, let's add in the unplanned events. Sick kids or a sick spouse. Excessive doctors visits for an unexpected health concern. A death in the family. The uncertainty of future employment. Tough decisions needing to be discussed and prayed about. An intervention for a dearly loved family member who's lost their way, and so so so much more.

It's easy to get frazzled in the midst of all of it, but one thing I've come to really appreciate is how precious life is.

**Every moment, every smile, every hug, every touch of the hand experienced with a loved one is a gift from God.**

My little girl pushed and pushed all day yesterday for me to play the game [Doggy Doo](#) with her. Have you ever played that game? Um. Obnoxious. But she loves it and it makes her giggle. Thankfully, when I finally found a free minute to squeeze in a game with her while dinner was cooking, the doggy ended up constipated and stopped working. Shucks! In the trash with that one...

She was bummed, but hugged me as we sat together on the floor. *"You're the best mama a girl could ever ask for!"*

I really love that girl!

Earlier in the day, my older daughter was happily bouncing around the house expressing her joy for life a little too loudly for my impatient, burned-out self. Did I stop what I was doing to express joy with her?

No. I yelled for her to be a little less annoying. She stopped and became very quiet. I'd hurt her feelings. Suddenly I felt convicted by the Spirit within. *What is wrong with you, Rosann? Don't steal her joy! Go apologize and make it right.*

So I did. She was quick to offer grace and quick to forgive. And she was singing at the top of lungs again only seconds later.

I really love that girl!

My husband takes the biggest brunt of my burned-out state. There are only a few things he wants to do when he comes home from a long day at work. One of those things is to love his wife well, both physically and emotionally. When I'm running on empty, which has been the case an awful lot lately, I'm moody and selfish and too tired to have him touching me.

He worries about me, that I've taken on more than I can handle or *should* handle. He listens with understanding eyes and a grace-filled heart. He hugs me and tells me, *"it's okay, you just rest tonight. You need it."*

He sacrifices self for what he thinks is best for me. He tells me not to feel guilty for leaving his needs simmering for another night. (I do feel guilty though.)

I really really love that man!

I'm praying a lot this week. God is opening my eyes helping me to remember how precious these people are to me. What an amazing gift it is to have a family to love! So life gets hectic and our days become crazy busy all too often. None of that will ever change the fact that we are family and we are so precious to one another.

My worst nightmare is losing one of my children or my husband. I don't even want to think about the day my parents will eventually pass away. It was so hard for us to lose my mother and father-in-law last year. Yet I see God at work even in that trial, bringing my husband and his brother closer than they've been since they were little kids. My brother-in-law is even starting to grow on *me* these days. I love him. He's family.

What would I do without these beautiful souls in my life? Oh the hole of absolute emptiness I would feel inside...

Every day. Every moment. Every load of laundry. Every dirty dish in the sink. Every turn of the key in the ignition of my Camry is a gift.

Thank you, God, for giving me a family to love.

*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*

~ James 4:14

**Your Challenge:**

Clear your schedule and just be in the presence of your loved ones today. Soak up every ounce of pleasure they bring your heart. Speak words of love and affirmation. Hold their hand, scratch their back, laugh together, talk together... *BE* together.

*Shine* with an attitude of gratitude letting your loved ones know they are precious to you and your life would never be the same without them.

## Day 12: Thank You, God, for Your Everlasting Love

I just adore how God works all things, and how perfect His timing always is. I knew three weeks ago what today's *attitude of gratitude* topic would be about. What I didn't know is that two days before writing this chapter, I'd attend a women's worship event at our church where the very theme of our worship was centered around God's everlasting love for us.

Some days it's really difficult for me to fully grasp and comprehend God's love for me. I wonder, "*How can you love someone like me, Lord? I let you down over and over again.*"

I long to know God better. I long to be His hands and feet, and even a little sliver of His voice in this world. But I feel so dry a lot of the time. So ill-equipped. So unsure. I'm sinful and I lack knowledge and confidence in so many things.

Still, I can open the word of God and find His love for me splattered across page after page. I can look around my home and see blessing after blessing after blessing and know these are all symbols of His love for me.

I can sit in our church sanctuary and be so in tune with the Holy Spirit that I actually *see* Jesus stand in front of the congregation with his hand reached out gently touching the cheek of every person there to worship him. My own cheek, too.

I can pray anything on my heart, anytime, anywhere and even if the answer to my prayer isn't what I'm hoping for, God still reveals His love in tangible ways, sometimes by answering with a much better solution than I could have ever dreamed of. Other times by making me walk slowly through the desert so when I finally do arrive to my new destination I'll understand He truly wanted and knew what was best for me.

The sinfulness. Our brokenness. Our poor choices and attitudes and behaviors - they're all forgiven and they're all used in some way or another by the Master Artist, to chisel away at our core and ultimately make us look more like the original masterpiece He created us to be.

Yes, God's love is amazing. He loves me. And He most definitely loves you.

*The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with an unfailing kindness."*

Jeremiah 31:3

**Your Challenge:**

Watch this ten minute video by Skit Guys. It's called God's Chisel Remastered and it is so so good! I just know you will love it and relate to it and want to show it to everyone you know. Here's the link to the video (just hit play when you get there): <http://skitguys.com/videos/item/gods-chisel>

*Shine* with an attitude of gratitude knowing God's love for you is everlasting!

## Day 13: Thank You, God, for Your Creation

*“How can anyone see this and not believe in God?”*

My mother-in-law's words about her faith were few and far between. She was very private that way. But every once in a while something of beauty would take her breath away and she'd speak those words. I would always nod my head in agreement.

God's creation often leaves me sitting in total awe. To think He created the sun and the moon and the stars...

Wow!

I remember when we moved to Western PA. I was so blown away by nature around us. Things I'd never had the luxury of witnessing in Southern California.

For example, I was so excited the first time I saw a giant turtle slowly walking across the highway one morning. Seriously. It was as big as a car tire is round. It stopped traffic in both directions. We ended up late for church thanks to that turtle! Lol!

Then I was shocked at the magnificence of the bird's nest my daughters and I discovered one day on the ground below a tree. Have you ever seen one? How in the world do they do that with a beak and a few claws?

We also watched a mama and papa Robin very protectively caring for their babies one spring, and this past summer, there was more than one occasion when a family of deer crossed through our backyard. They're such beautiful and graceful creatures.

Let's talk about the changing of seasons from summer to Fall. Oh my, how I sit in awe of the gorgeous site of red and orange covered trees in this area. They are stunning!

God and His creation are everywhere we look.

Take a moment and look around you. It doesn't matter what your life circumstances are this very moment; there is something in your line of vision that is an amazing creation from the Lord. Whether it's a child that makes you smile ear to ear, or a tree that shades your home from the summer heat, or the coffee in the mug on your desk, it's all from God.

Here's a link to an incredible video by Francis Chan that shows a bigger picture of God's creation. It's short and definitely worth a look: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpChZxPfa-c>

*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?*

~ Psalm 8:1-4

**Your Challenge:**

Grab your journal or use the Notes app on your phone to jot down 5 things God created that you would be completely devastated to wake up tomorrow not having in your life anymore.

When you're done, stop and praise God for His work in our universe and in your home.

## Day 14: Thank You, God, for This Place I Call Home

During the summer, my daughters and I flew to Idaho to see my mom. We stayed in her home with her for two weeks and had an amazing visit.

The house my mother lives in these days is not the same address I grew up at. It is very much the same home I grew up in though. What I mean is the decor, the dishes, the plants, the aroma, the comfort of my mother's presence; all of it reflects my childhood "home."

However, there truly is no place quite like the home where we lay our heads to rest most often.

When we returned to Pennsylvania, it felt so good to sleep in my own bed with my own pillow. It felt so good to walk across the floors my daughters run barefoot on. It felt amazing to sink into my favorite chair and watch my favorite TV shows that had been recorded. And I was absolutely thrilled to be in the safe presence of my husband who I had missed so much during our trip.

A little confession...

Sometimes when I'm in someone else's home, I'll think to myself "it's a beautiful home but it doesn't quite feel comfortable enough." The thing is, it's not supposed to be comfortable to me. It's not my home! It is very comfortable to the family living there, though. It's their personal refuge.

I'll even have a moment of visualizing whoever lives there lazing around in their pajamas the way I would in my own home. I know. It's totally weird of me! It's just my way of trying to relate with others and their home life, I guess. (And it's only like a 10 second image flashing through my mind.)

Anyway, I feel incredibly blessed that God has provided a roof over my head.

He hasn't just provided any old roof either. I have a comfortable-to-me, safe place of personal refuge where I can run around in my pajamas with uncombed hair and yesterday's mascara smeared across my cheeks.

It's a place where I can be free to be me and know I'll still be loved and cherished by the awesome family members who live there with me.

It's a place where I can laugh, cry, pray, write and be the mother and the wife and the woman God created me to be.

It's home. I'm happy to have one.

*And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.*

~ Philippians 4:19, NIV

Unfortunately, there are too many without a home.

I've received many emails and prayer requests over the past three years from people going through severe financial hardship who weren't sure how they'd pay their rent or their mortgage that month.

Too many people are currently facing foreclosure because of a job layoff and no new job opportunities presenting themselves. Too many people are scared and uncertain about their future, and are wondering where God is in the midst of their storm.

Because I have a huge heart for those going through such tough times, I'd like to change things up a bit today.

**Instead of offering a challenge, I would ask that you pray with me the following prayer or say your own prayer for these families:**

*Father God, we come to You with praise and thankfulness knowing You are a God who loves us so much and Who knows our every need. Lord You have blessed us with a comfortable and safe home to retreat to when we need rest and family. And You have blessed us with so much more than even that! But there are so many in our nation and in our world who are without a personal safe refuge, called home.*

*Lord, You know who these precious individuals and families are. We lift them up to You, into Your very capable and loving hands. We ask Lord that You would reveal Yourself to each of them in ways unexplainable yet glorious. We ask that You comfort their weary hearts and that You provide wisdom and guidance.*

*Father, light a path for them to walk in the way You would have them go, where their blessings from You will flow abundantly, and where their faith will meet Your perfect provision.*

*May the glory be all Yours, forever and ever. In Jesus' name, we pray these things. Amen.*

*Shine with an attitude of gratitude for the good gifts God has given you, starting with the gift of your home.*

## Day 15: Thank You, God, for the Friends You've Brought Into My Life

Making friends has always been somewhat challenging for me. I'm a work in-progress with deep rooted issues that make it hard for me to trust others. I guess I find it hard to believe there are people out there who actually want to be friends with me - genuinely. And I've been hurt before. Who hasn't, right?

I'm learning to truly appreciate the friendships God has brought into my life, though.

I couldn't help but smile when a very dear friend of mine reached out through my website a few weeks back, trying to reconnect with me across the miles. We hadn't talked in a year! I wasn't even sure I still had good contact information for her. We had since changed ours too. Still, she found me and reached out.

I also have a sweet friend from high school who blesses me with her "presence" in Facebook quite often. She, too, lives clear across the country from me, yet every time she talks to me, my heart swells with joy over our friendship.

Closer to home I see God at work helping me to develop meaningful friendships with those I previously never felt good enough to be around, and I'm super blessed to have a very dear friend who completely loves me for who I am and she is one of the few people who I can say really *gets* me and my quirkiness.

Then I logged into my computer today, and was reminded instantly of the countless online friendships I've developed over the past three years I've been blogging. What a blessing my writer friends have been to me on this journey!

God has seen to it that friends are not an area of life I'm lacking in, and I'm forever grateful for His gift.

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

~ Hebrews 10:24-25

### **Your Challenge:**

Get together with a friend you haven't talked to or seen in a while. Let her know how grateful you are that God brought her into your life, and ask her how you can be praying

for her. Really make an intentional effort to make this get-together a true blessing to her.

# Day 16: Thank You, God, for the Gift of My Husband

He's a man of incredible faith, my husband.

This week has been full of uncertainty. A callback for further medical testing has left my stomach in knots, yet my faith remains strongly intact.

*"Do you want me to go in to the appointment with you tomorrow?"* he asks, with a serious, yet calm expression.

I sigh deeply before responding. *"No. I'm believing it will be nothing, so there's no need for you to take time off work."*

He looks me in the eyes and smiles. *"I'm believing that with you. If God allows it to be something though, we'll fight it like we have every other hardship we've had to face. We'll get through it and everything will be okay."*

God really knew what He was doing when He brought this amazing man into my life. Not only has my husband made me the happiest woman *ever*, but he is directly responsible for me being the woman of faith I am today.

He opened my eyes to God's word. He took me to buy my first study Bible. He pointed me to Psalm 91 when I was suffering with massive anxiety over his life threatening heart problems. He showed me what having faith looks like.

Best of all, he's the father of our sweet girls, the man who stood there firmly holding my hand as I labored and pushed their little bodies into this world.

He's my best friend. We've been through so much in our nearly 15 years together and with every trial our relationship has come out stronger. I'm so grateful for the gift he is. And I'm still so in love with him!

*The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

~ Genesis 2:18, 2:24

## **Your Challenge:**

Do something sweet and special for your husband today. Something you know he loves but you don't do every day. It might be giving him a back rub or even initiating intimate time in the bedroom.

You know best what would speak volumes of your love to your man.

Most important, make sure he knows you're grateful for him and your marriage.

# Day 17: Thank You, God, for My Healthy Body and Mind

Not everyone enjoys running. People often ask me why I do.

It's because it requires mental discipline and when I run, it's more than just a run. It's a worship experience. With my earbuds nestled comfortably and my Christian worship music playlist tuned in nice and loud, I get lost in the glory of God's presence.

Running in and of itself is not hard. It's our mind that makes it hard.

With every foot strike to the pavement (or the treadmill in many cases) I feel my soul being refreshed and energized. My legs get tired, yes. Some days my knees hurt too. Other days I just feel very low on energy. But I'm able to keep going because my thoughts are focused on the glory of God, not the way my brain perceives my body to feel.

It's like that in life when trials hit. We have to have a mental discipline that says, I'm not going to listen to the discomforts, the fears, the weariness. I'm going to set my eyes on Jesus, the perfecter and author of my faith and persevere.

Running reminds me of how strong and healthy my body and mind are, despite the challenges I've faced with my thyroid and adrenal glands in recent months. I know God's healing hands have been all over me.

I realize now more than ever that being healthy is a gift to be embraced and appreciated. I pray I'll remain in good health for a very long time.

*Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*

~ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

## **Your Challenge:**

Be healthy today. Choose to get some exercise, even if it's just a walk around your neighborhood. In fact, do it as a family! Choose to make healthy food choices. Choose to meditate on scripture today.

# Day 18: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Motherhood

She smiles.

She frowns.

She squeals in delight.

She cries out in fear.

***Thank You, God, for the gift of motherhood!***

My beautiful daughters simply amaze me.

In every emotion, there is beauty. Striking beauty. So many people tell me they're little mini-me versions of me. What a compliment!

What a gift it has been to give birth to them, to love them and teach them, to watch them grow, and to know intimately their inner beauty, their sweet sweet souls.

I love listening to them tell me a story of something that happened during the day, or describe an experience they had with a friend.

I look at them and fall in love with the freckles, the sparkle in their eyes, and the adorable crazy curls. They make me smile and when we smile together, God's love and His light shines bright.

Recently, after church, I removed sparkly, strappy, suede high heels from my weary feet. Without hesitation, my oldest daughter (only 9-years-old) slipped her feet into them and started to prance about like a fashion model. My other daughter and I couldn't help but giggle.

"My turn, my turn!" squealed my youngest. Then she stumbled around with her nose held high in classic Fancy Nancy fashion, twirling, smiling, and stopping to pose every few minutes.

More giggles.

It was at that moment I realized how much fun it is to be a mom to girls. I am blessed!

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

~ Genesis 1:27 NIV

**Your Challenge:**

Look at each of your children individually in silent reflection. What beauty of theirs stands out to you? As you look at them, remember God made them in His image.

Say a prayer of thankfulness for the gift of your children (and pray for God to be working in and through them), then take a few minutes to tell each of them you love them, and that you're so grateful to God for bringing them into your life.

# Day 19: Thank You, God, for Growing My Faith

It hasn't been easy - being refined by the hand of God.

The last ten years or more have been a hard and often fear-filled road.

My husband's illness. Severe panic attacks. Legal battles. Infertility. Job loss. Financial hardship. Moving. Starting over. The death of parents. We've gone literally from one crisis to another with barely enough time to catch our breath in between.

In the process, God changed me from the inside out. With every trial, I had to learn to trust Him more than I did before. With every trial, I had to learn patience as we waited for God's answer and His timing. With every trial, I became stronger.

As I think about this refining God has done in me, I can't help but realize the miracle in His work. Given where I started, the odds were against me being able to or even wanting to overcome the darkness. I could have easily stayed on the path leading to nowhere, but God had bigger plans for me.

So He planted seeds of hope and passion within me - seeds that grew into strong desires of striving for a better life. He took me from a young child who never went to church or read her Bible, to an early twenty-something who actually argued with her mother that God was not loving or good, to a passionate woman of faith continually growing stronger in her walk with the Lord.

Not long ago He showed me this major transformation in action when I was faced with my own health scare. After a very short, initially shaky response of "what if?" and uncertainty, my faith in God took over and I was at total peace.

I knew it was beyond what I could control on my own, so I prayed and handed it over to God. There were no panic attacks. No freak out episodes. Just peace. I spoke my mind about my health to God when I handed it over to Him. I felt Him telling me there was nothing to worry about, so I didn't.

And then I went to a special worship service at church - one where I saw Jesus right there in the sanctuary with us.

Call me crazy. It's happened to me twice now, where I see him during praise and worship.

He has grown my faith so much and I can't even describe the intense joy I feel when I realize how much He loves me. *Me! He loves me!*

I'm so so grateful for the journey of faith He's taken me on.

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

~ Romans 8:28

**Your Challenge:**

Journal about something happening in your life right now that is causing you grief.

Think about what lessons you've learned along the way, and look forward in your mind to see where God's trying to take you through this experience.

Then pray for God to give you peace, help you to trust His plan, and for you to be willing to change for the better.

## Day 20: Thank You, God, for the Giving Me the Ability to Hear

My youngest daughter loves to talk.

The other day she accidentally FaceTime called her grandpa clear across the country from us. What I heard while I was making pizza for dinner was a fantastic conversation of grandpa and granddaughter bonding in the other room.

At just six-years-old, she is super at making conversation and loves to talk about all of the new things she's been learning in school.

I love to listen to her. Of course, there are days when I'm desperately trying to focus on something I'm reading or working on, and her chatter continues on and on in the background until I'm ready to pull my hair out. We all need a moment to hear our own thoughts, right?

My oldest daughter is loud. Very loud. She's the first one to rise in the morning and she sings in the shower, volume at it's highest, while the rest of us try to catch another 15 minutes of sleep.

At dinner, she'll tell us a story about her day and her tone of voice is so loud we are constantly reminding her we're sitting in the same room with her - she doesn't need to holler. It's just her personality. She's incredibly full of life and...volume.

Then there are the moments (frequent ones at that) where my daughters fight and pick at each other. If only I had a remote control to turn off the fighting with a click of a button! It makes me crazy!

I wouldn't trade any of their chatter and fighting and singing and loudness for all the silence in the world though. I love being able to hear my beautiful daughters. I'm so thankful God gave me the ability to hear.

Think about other things we can hear besides our loved ones.

Birds chirping. Just this morning while I was enjoying my morning cup of tea, I heard what sounded like millions of birds singing loudly outside my window. I was in awe of it.

A car driving by. Without hearing the sound of a vehicle approaching, personal safety could be an issue.

Thunder. As a child thunder frightened me. As an adult, thunder still frightens me at times. Particularly when it's so loud our house shakes. But then I'm reminded that God created thunder! And how cool is that?!!

Water flowing. I think about the peacefulness of floating down the Clarion river on inner tubes, or the sound of a tropical waterfall while on vacation in Hawaii. One of my favorite sounds is hearing the ocean waves crash against the beach.

And when fear has taken control of my thoughts, I love and welcome the sound of God's still, small voice saying, "Rosann, do not be afraid. I am with you."

*The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.*

~ Deuteronomy 31:8

### **Your Challenge:**

Carve out 15 minutes today to sit in total silence. Yes, you can set the timer on your phone but turn your phone to vibrate or silent so it doesn't disturb you in the meantime.

Have a journal and a pen handy. Listen to the silence. What do you hear? Write it down. Maybe you hear God's voice. Or maybe you hear your thoughts. Perhaps you'll hear the humming of your heater, or a toilet flushing.

Whatever you hear, write about it and give thanks to God for giving you the ability to hear.

## Day 21: Thank You, God, for My Heart

Have you ever stopped to think about your heart and the work it does to keep you alive? You don't have to tell your heart to beat, yet it does anyway. You don't have to tell it to pump blood throughout your body, yet it does.

### **A few fun facts:**

1. A woman's heart beats faster than a man's. The heart of an average man beats about 70 times per minute while a woman's beats about 78 times per minute.
2. The heart begins beating at four weeks after conception and does not stop until death.
3. During an average lifetime, the heart will pump nearly 1.5 million barrels of blood - enough to fill 200 train tank cars.

*You can read more heart facts by visiting this website: [facts.randomhistory.com](http://facts.randomhistory.com)*

Often times, it's not until we or someone we love ends up in the hospital with a faulty heart that we reflect on just how much we depend on it each day.

Fifteen years ago my husband, only 37 years old at the time, spent two weeks in cardiac ICU at the hospital. Months earlier he had gotten ill with some upper respiratory virus and unknown to him at the time, the virus was attacking his heart muscle. It nearly killed him.

Thankfully, it didn't. God had bigger plans for my husband and was obviously not yet finished with his purpose here on earth. I can't tell you how happy I am that things turned around with his health and I've been able to enjoy so many years with him.

But the heart does more than just beat and keep us alive. Within each of us is a heart of compassion, and expressions of sorrow, joy, and love.

Our heart feels like it breaks when we experience a loss.

Our heart feels like it does flips when someone we're crazy in love with walks into a room.

Our heart helps us to feel and express love toward others, particularly our family, as we care for their needs, listen to their concerns, hug them close, and give them grace.

What other ways can you think of that your heart helps you to be the person God created you to be?

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

~ Deuteronomy 6:5

**Your Challenge:**

Teach your kids how to see what their pulse rate is. Do a Google search or ask Siri if you aren't sure how to do this. It's very easy.

Check everyone's resting pulse. Then get your family together and go out for a light jog, bike ride or walk around the neighborhood. Get your heart rate up, if you're safely able to do so.

When you're finished, check everyone's active pulse. How much of a change do you see? Talk about it and reflect on how miraculous the human heart is that it knows to speed up or slow down according to the demands of your body.

Thank God for blessing you with an amazing heart.

## Day 22: Thank You, God, for the Church

Finding a good church isn't always easy to do. Our previous church in California had a fairly low membership. Most of the members were senior citizens, which were all very delightful to get to know, but weren't interested in leading or running programs that drive in or keep younger families in the congregation.

So it seemed the same five young adult families worked their tails off to try to grow the church. As a result, those couples quickly felt burn-out and resentment because they weren't able to get their spiritual tank filled. They were only pouring out to others, but never getting "fed" in return.

When we moved to Pennsylvania, I remember being in awe of the fact that there's a church on practically every corner. Ok, maybe that's a stretch, but you get my point. Even better, the churches are gorgeous buildings, old architecture, strong and tall, stained glass windows, and giant bells in the highest tower ringing every so often.

The church we decided to become members of has a very large membership, with a healthy mix of young adults, college students, senior citizens, young families, and singles.

Because so many people offer time, money, and talents, the youth programs are awesome. My daughter's are thriving and growing in their faith.

The praise and worship team are incredible and can really get your toe tapping on a Sunday morning. The feeling of Jesus in the room with us is strong.

It's a very missions-oriented church, always seeking new ways and opportunities to serve others. I'm often challenged to step out of my comfort zone, set my selfishness aside, and do something meaningful for God's kingdom.

The people, the Pastors, and the church family as a whole are very genuine and friendly. Most are easy to talk to and will pray with and for us when we have a need.

Our Pastor reached out to us and actually came to our home to visit and pray with us before we ever became members of the church. He made us feel important and welcome at the church.

Our kids have loved attending Vacation Bible School, Youth Club, Sunday school, and Junior Adventures there.

I've been blessed by spending time in several women's worship events, even speaking at one of them, and also in a young adult women's weekly bible study group.

When my mother-in-law and father-in-law passed away our church family was quick to surround us with phone calls, meals, assistance, cards, and prayers.

It's an awesome feeling to belong to a church family. I'm thankful for God bringing us to our church and that He's using this church family to help us grow in our spiritual walk with Him.

Think for a moment about the ways your church family has made a difference in your life.

**Your Challenge:**

Get involved with a church, if you don't already have one you attend regularly. If you do have a church you love and go to on a regular basis, seek out a new way of serving your church family.

What gifts or talents do you have that you can offer as an act of service or a growth opportunity for fellow church members? I challenge you to talk to your Pastor and get something started that will bless others.

## Day 23: Thank You, God, for the Clothes in My Closet

*“I have nothing to wear!”*

If you're a female, you've no doubt said those words at some point in your life. Perhaps more than once.

I know I have. Just last Sunday, in fact.

I was trying to find an appropriate top to match the navy blue Ann Taylor slacks and navy blue patent leather Nine West heels I'd chosen to wear that morning to church. Hanging on the top rack of my closet are at least 60 different tops I could have chosen from.

But I had *“nothing to wear.”*

Pants? I have at least 20 different pairs.

Dresses? I'm guessing maybe 15.

Shoes? Haha, well, let's just say my daughter and I enjoyed some mother/daughter bonding over my 50+ pair shoe collection yesterday. She was shocked. I was admittedly a little bit embarrassed.

My point is, I'm not hurting for clothes. Not only do I have a lot of clothes to choose from, but many of them are very nice quality, name brand pieces.

It hasn't always been that way though.

When I was growing up, my family didn't have much to come and go on. Shopping for school clothes usually meant picking out three outfits at Kmart and putting them on lay-away for a few months until they were paid off and we could take them home.

In the meantime, I wore the previous year's clothing, even if it didn't fit all that great. Good thing I was always very petite. Maybe this is why I have such a love for clothes and shoes now that I'm older and more financially able to enjoy them.

To me, the clothing in my closet is very much a reflection of God's love for me. It reminds me that He's a God who provides. He knows my every need, and the desires of my heart.

Just as a parent loves to give good gifts to their child, so God loves to give good gifts to me, and you as well.

God gives us what we need, because His provision is perfect, and sometimes He loves to give us abundantly more than we ask for.

Think about the benefits of clothing for a moment.

- Clothes keep us warm when the temperatures drop.
- Clothes keep us dry when it's raining or snowing, or when we're sweating from a workout.
- Clothes help reflect our personality to the world.
- Clothes cover our imperfections, which helps our self-esteem.
- Clothes cover our private places, which is certainly a service to those around us. Haha!
- Clothes also help us to keep our bodily fluids and germs to ourselves.
- Clothes help us to look attractive for our spouse.

I'm so thankful God blesses us with His perfect provision. Next time I'm tempted to gripe or complain that "*I have nothing to wear*," I'm going to remember just how blessed I am.

### **Your Challenge:**

Grab a notepad and someone you love. Together, go count the number of shirts you own. Next, count the number of pants, then the number of dresses, and finally the number of shoes.

Now stop and say a prayer of gratitude to God for His perfect provision over your life. You, too, are blessed.

# Day 24: Thank You, God, for Giving Me the Ability to See

When we first moved from Southern California to Western Pennsylvania one thing I immediately fell in love with was watching the birds play in the trees outside my in-law's home where we were staying temporarily.

These weren't just birds though. They were the most incredibly gorgeous creatures I'd ever seen. And against the white snow covered ground and tree branches, they took my breath away.

Few birds grab my attention like the Red Cardinal or the Bluejay. In California, I was used to seeing seagulls. No big deal. But these red and blue birds against a snowy backdrop were jaw-dropping beautiful.

Something else that quickly caught my eye were the deer tracks that were all over our snow-covered yard, and even our front porch right next to the front door. So had I been watching in the middle of the night, I could have opened the door and touched a deer standing there! So cool!

Being far away from family has meant many FaceTime calls. But oh the joy when I see their face on my iPad, as if they're just in the next room! I can see them and hear them!! If only I could hug them, too. I challenge Apple to make that one happen next.

I look at my daughters and I see their gorgeous smiles, freckles, curls, and bright eyes. I know I'm blessed.

I look at my husband and see those grayish blue eyes that stare so intently into mine. I know I'm blessed.

I look at our home, somewhat in shambles today, but full of happiness and life. I know I'm blessed.

Sometimes being able to see the world around us means also being able to see silent sorrow in the eyes of a friend mourning the loss of someone or something they loved, or seeing joy dancing in the eyes of someone thrilled to be alive.

Being able to see life around us has a huge impact on our perspective.

What do you see when you look around?

I'm so grateful God gave me the ability to see. I can't imagine life without my sight.

*Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?*  
Mark 8:18

**Your Challenge:**

Play iSpy with your kids today. Add a special twist of gratitude to the game. Everything spied must come with a reason each of you are grateful to be able to see the item. Thank God together for giving you healthy eyes to see the gifts He's given your family.

## Day 25: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Music

The other day my husband and I were watching TV and a commercial came on for one of those mega music CD packs with all of the great songs of the 80's scrolling down the screen while they played a quick second or two audio-clip of the song.

I was instantly taken back to my childhood. I've always had a heart for music.

Music has a powerful affect on my human brain and emotions. Depending on the song, it can make me happy, sad, focused, sleepy, inspired, victorious, or even angry.

There are songs from the 1970's that I'll hear randomly and I'll suddenly have a flashback to being in the car with my dad while he listened to the then-popular hit. Any song by Barbara Streisand makes me think of my mom.

Over the years I've learned to use music in therapeutic ways. For example, during some of my and my husband's most difficult life storms, I turned to Christian worship music. The lyrics are usually taken from scripture so singing God's word helped encourage my weary heart and bring hope within.

Not long ago when I was struggling with thyroiditis one of the symptoms most difficult to overcome was anxiety. With anxiety, the mind is very powerfully involved.

So I found it most helpful to keep my mind occupied with something wonderful. Music! And not just any music. It had to be loud, happy, inspiring, feel-good, tap-your-foot, dance-it-out tunes.

When I need my mind to slow down and focus on one particular thing, like when I'm writing, or when I'm studying my Bible, or listening quietly for the Lord in prayer, I often find that turning on some soft instrumental music helps immensely.

When I ran a half-marathon a few years back, my entire iPod playlist was music that would enhance the experience and make a strong emotional statement about why I was running the race in the first place. I wanted to feel God's presence right there with me every step of the way. So the music was all contemporary Christian songs.

Music has taken me through some really rough seasons of life. It has blessed me and encouraged me in so many ways. I'm thankful God gave our world the gift of music.

*Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.*

~ James 5:13

**Your Challenge:**

For the remainder of this 30 day challenge, tune into a Christian radio station or listen to a Christian music CD, and crank the volume up! Do this every day. Pay attention to how your mood changes when you're "tuned in" to each song.

Praise God for the gift of music!

## Day 26: Thank You, God, for Color

Fall is my favorite time of year. Not only do I love the change of wardrobe, pulling my sweaters out of the closet and put on cozy socks, but I particularly love the changing of the leaves.

I never truly appreciate Fall colors until I moved to Pennsylvania and experienced Fall for the first time. Wow! I mean, truly, wow! It is breathtaking.

To drive down a windy, country road with trees on both sides (which is most roads I seem to find myself on these days) is a jaw-dropping experience this time of year.

God, our Creator, sure knew what He was doing when He added color to our world!

Of course, there are other sides to color that I haven't been quite so appreciative of. Take my red hair, for example.

I hated my hair color when I was young. The kids at school would tease me. They called me carrot top all the time, which really didn't even make sense because carrot tops are green. My hair certainly wasn't green, although my teenage step-sister had green hair for a few days after swimming in a local pool. I remember giggling to myself about that blonde hair-dye disaster one summer.

Not that I had any room to talk, at least not about hair disasters. I had my own a few summers later when I decided to start spraying a product called "Sun In" on my hair before blow drying it. It was advertised that it added blonde highlights to hair with the heat of the blowdryer.

A few weeks later my dad took me in to the salon to get a perm. The stylist asked me if I'd been coloring my hair. I said, "no." So she used a regular perm solution on my hair and because of my "Sun In" use, it fried my hair - totally. Fried it so bad I had to have my long hair cut boy-cut short and it was no longer red, but platinum blonde.

That experience, and several years of compliments on my natural hair color later, I finally decided my natural auburn shade of red was quite pretty and I'd keep it that way.

I love that God created people so uniquely different that even the natural shade of their hair is just perfect for them.

My husband and I are about to start a home renovation project that involves a lot of decisions about color. We've decided to go with a Hampton's Coastal feel in our home, so we're bringing in some blues, whites, and tans with hints of red here and there.

But then I look at my daughter's bedrooms and I have one girl with bright turquoise blue walls, and another one with bright purple walls. They chose their paint colors based on their personalities. One loves blues, the other loves purples. I'm okay with a little splash of fun color in their rooms, even if it doesn't necessarily flow with the rest of the house.

Look around your home. What colors do you see? How do they make you feel? Think about how God created each color you see. Isn't that cool?! He's so creative!

*When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.  
She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*

~Proverbs 31:21-22

**Your challenge:**

Look in your closet and see how many colors you have. Now, sort everything by color. All of your pink tops in one section, blue pants in another, orange sweaters here, purple dresses there.

You might be surprised to see how many different colors (and shades of those colors) you've been blessed with in your very own wardrobe. Thank God today for the gift of color, because it makes life interesting!

## Day 27: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Your Wisdom

Several months ago there was a group discussion in our adult Sunday School class about wisdom and where it comes from.

Some said, “God gives us the ability and desire to learn, so we gain wisdom from going to school.”

Others said, “Wisdom comes from experience. The longer we live, the more wisdom we’ll have.”

Here’s my answer.

Wisdom is a gift from God. It’s offered on every page of The Holy Bible. God’s word provides wisdom for our life.

The word of God is God’s wisdom.

*All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

~ 2 Timothy 3:16

Being wise, in God’s eyes, is not based on how many degrees we earn, or what we do for a living, or how many good deeds we’re responsible for. I believe It’s based on the wisdom in God’s word that we actually apply to our day to day living.

It’s not just that though.

We can pray for God’s wisdom, too. When the road of life gets hard and we aren’t sure what direction to turn, we can ask God to give us wisdom in making that decision. If we’re adequately tuned-in to The Holy Spirit, to the Word of God, and to the Body of Christ (our church family), we’ll hear God’s answer.

His wisdom is a precious gift!

*Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”*

~Isaiah 30:21

No challenge for you today. Just reflect on what you think wisdom is and where it comes from. Be sure to thank God for the gift of His Word, so it may be a lamp to your feet through this journey of life.

## Day 28: Thank You, God, for Giving Us Grace

Parenting is one of the most challenging journeys I've faced as a woman. It's also one of the most rewarding. I love my kids more than anything and thank God every day for bringing them into my life and trusting me to be their mom.

There are days though, when I lose it. You know, those days when we moms definitely don't qualify for Mom-of-the-Year award? Sometimes I think the only thing my children will remember about me or their childhood is how much I yelled at them.

*"I wouldn't have to yell, if you'd just turn on your ears and do what you're told the first time I ask!!!"*

Most of the time when my kids aren't listening to me, it's because they're having so much fun being kids. Playing together. Letting their imaginations run wild. Or they're completely focused on an art project or a book they're reading.

I don't want to be the mom who yells. But I do it. More than I care to admit. I'm a control freak. A perfectionist. I thrive on keeping things neat and orderly. Chaos and I don't get along well.

Wouldn't you know it, as soon as I lose my temper and raise my voice I feel instantly horrible. I hear the voice of The Holy Spirit convicting me.

- There's a better way to get them to listen.
- There's a better way to show your love.
- There's a better way to get your end-goal accomplished.

Interestingly, my kids know how to give grace better than I do! They must have learned that wonderful gift from their daddy.

As soon as I apologize for losing my cool, they quickly offer hugs and tell me, *"It's okay, mom. We're sorry for not listening."*

My husband is the same way - so quick to shrug it off and forgive. He's so patient and kind. Did I mention patient?

Hubby and I? Our brains aren't wired the same way when it comes to keeping our life and family orderly. He's a pick-your-battles, who-cares-if-there's-a-little-clutter, just-be-flexible kind of guy.

That's so not me! I think I actually became more high strung and controlling after having kids than I ever was before. I must drive my man crazy!

The thing is, I don't need to be this way. I don't need to control everything in my life, because the reality is, *I don't*. God does.

I don't need my home to look perfect all the time. Our family lives life there. It should reflect life!

I don't need to yell at my kids when they aren't listening. There's a better way.

I'm not perfect, and God doesn't expect me to be perfect. He loves me and He offers His grace and forgiveness unconditionally.

I'm so thankful for God's grace.

How about you?

*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.*

~ 1 Corinthians 15:10

**Your Challenge:**

Think of someone or a situation today you could extend a little extra grace toward. Then do it. Speak words of encouragement and forgiveness. Then pray for God to help you give grace more freely going forward.

## Day 29: Thank You, God, for Your Protection

Fifteen years ago I opened a Bible for the first time with a strong desire to understand God's word and apply it to my life.

My husband had just gone through a major health scare and my post-traumatic response to watching him go through such an ordeal was sudden panic attacks so bad I was certain I was having a heart attack.

Several doctor's visits later, my husband's cardiologist smiled at me and said, "*Rosann, you need to find a way to relax your mind and your body. Get spiritually connected. Exercise more. Lay off the caffeine. Get more sleep. You're fine.*"

As I opened that brand new study Bible not quite sure where to begin, my husband said, "*Read Psalm 91 first.*" So I did.

Have you ever read Psalm 91 in its entirety? It's really good.

That one very long passage, Psalm 91, changed my life and my faith forever. God's protection is real.

*"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him."*

~Psalm 91:14

It's a promise from God.

*"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."*

~Psalm 91:11-12

On my website I have a page where I share my testimony. [You can read it here](#). If you've already read it, you know my husband and I have been through the trenches of life the past decade or so.

It's been an important faith-transforming part of my life.

As hard as the journey and the storms have been, I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world. I can look back now having passed through them in God's capable hands, knowing not only did He protect us, but He brought so much beauty from them. I mean, He completely changed who I am as a person - for the better!

There are days, for sure, where I allow those past storms to haunt me with fear of what the future might hold. It's then that my husband reminds me, "*Rosann, read Psalm 91.*"

God's promises are abundantly spread throughout His word.

I'm so thankful God loves me and my family so much that He actually commands his angels to watch over us! I don't need to be afraid. I don't need to worry.

And neither do you. He's got your back, too.

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

~Psalm 91:1-2

**Your Challenge:**

Read Psalm 91 in its entirety. Then spend the next week memorizing it. It's a tough challenge, but a worthy one. You can do it! I did!

# Day 30: Thank You, God, for the Gift of Eternal Life

Death is a word that tends to grip my heart with fear.

It's not the dying that frightens me so much as it is the pain that those left behind have to endure as they mourn the loss of someone they loved deeply.

Truth be told, I worry about dying being painful too. I'm a wimp. I don't like pain. I don't cope well with it. Hopefully God knows this about me and when He feels it's time, will bring me home in a very painless method.

Something I'm encouraged about though is Jesus the Messiah. I watched The Son of God movie not long ago, and I was surprised by my reaction. I cried.

There's something about watching a story I've read over and over come to life on a screen. Maybe I'm just a very visual person, but watching Jesus show love and patience toward so many people, and seeing him suffer brutally for my sinful nature...crushed me.

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

~Romans 6:23

This man, Jesus, who was younger than I am today, was beaten, laughed at, spit on, and tortured. He carried the weight of this massive heavy wooden cross on his back to the place where he would be crucified. He died a slow, painful death on the cross as payment for my sins. And yours.

Without that sacrifice, I would have no place in heaven. Death for me would be spending an eternity in hell. I can't even imagine the horror.

But then he said the words, "It is finished." (John 19:30)

The gift of eternal life was given to all who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Thank you, God, for making the ultimate sacrifice so those who love You can spend eternity with You in heaven!

Thank you, for sending Your Son, Jesus.

Thank you, for Your everlasting love.

*If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

~ Romans 10:9-13

## About the Author

Rosann Cunningham is currently residing in Pennsylvania with her beloved husband, Mark, and their beautifully sweet daughters, Faith and Abigail.

After spending more than 15 years working full time as an underwriter in the auto finance industry, she now enjoys a more simple and full life as a stay-at-home mom and writer.

Rosann writes at her blog [RosannCunningham.com](http://RosannCunningham.com) with a strong desire to glorify God while sharing the heart of her journey through a life of faith.

When life slows down, Rosann loves to read other inspiring blogs and Christian books, enjoys fellowship with family and friends, cooks new-to-her recipes from her grandmother's recipe box, creates family scrapbooks, and spends quiet time in God's presence. Her week often consists of writing, loving her family, and running.

Rosann is the Author of UnEmployed Faith: Clothing Yourself in Strength and Perseverance Through His Season of Unemployment, and Refuel Your Inner SuperMom: A Practical Guide to Getting Your Groove Back.