



HAPPINESS

Interrupted

Disrupted Not Destroyed

A DEVOTIONAL BY
L. ARCHIBALD

The Beginning...

10 missed calls, 3 voicemails, and 6 urgent text messages from several close family members and friends. Obviously, something was wrong and based on the people who were calling me I knew it had to do with my husband. And if I were to hear this news, the call I dreaded receiving from the first day my husband told me he was accepted into the police academy, I'd want to hear it from no one other than my mother. As soon as she answered, Mommy! What happened? Her brief silence was piercing. My heart was racing in waiting. My hands were shaking uncontrollably as I sat in my car in the parking lot of my job. I waited for what felt like a lifetime in that moment for her to tell me the worst thing next to something happening to my daughter. "Oh, you don't know?", she finally spilled out. Know what Ma? What happened? "James"...

My life as I knew it would never be the same. Rewinding just 1 week prior, as I gazed into my husband's eyes, proudly saying how happy I was, finally. That for the first time in years, I was in a great place. In less than a month, we would be happily celebrating our 1st year of marriage, our daughter was happy & flourishing, our careers were moving upward, and my every need & want was being met. We were happy. I was happy. And in an instant, everything changed.

One thing about life, you have no control or say so about the trials or tribulations that you will experience. Despite how much we try to plan and prepare, life has a way of knocking the wind out of us unexpectedly. I guess the true testament is what we do when our "happiness" is interrupted. How do we respond to the chaos that arises from seemingly nowhere? Yes, there are things that occur as a direct response to choices and decisions that we have made. Then there are those things that seem to occur when you're doing everything "right".

I have learned that in both scenarios, God is never taken by surprise. Our Father knows our ins and outs, the beginning of our story to the end of our story, and everything in between. And oh, that in between, but for now I digress. In short, God knows how the finished masterpiece will turn out even before the first stroke of paint glides across the canvas.

When I first decided to tell my story, I was a bit conflicted. I didn't believe I could tell my story in a way that would have the positive impact that I thought it should. What I mean is, I didn't want to be fraudulent in my writing. The truth is this ongoing process has been nothing short of hard. Every day it is a constant battle to not fall into a depression, to not lose faith, and to not just throw in the towel. There are people that view me as this super strong woman and question how I am doing so well. The real verity of it is some days I win and some days I lose, but whatever day it is, I never quit.

On that fateful Tuesday, October 23, 2018, after being told that my husband of 11 months, a rookie police officer, was arrested for a federal drug crime, I forgot how to breathe. I could not make my hands stop trembling. I could not stop my mind from thinking the worst.

What sign did I miss that morning when I kissed my husband goodbye? What sign did I miss just a week prior on our date night? How did I miss the voice of God on this? Trust me, your girl had been covering her husband in prayer daily, but I missed it. On that dreadful day my flesh could not even begin to comprehend the spiritual side of what was occurring.

I have learned a few lessons throughout this entire ordeal, but there has been one that has stuck out to me the most. That lesson: just because something is interrupted does not mean it is over.

This life is like a good movie or show you are watching. Just at the brink of a climax that has you locked in and on the edge of your seat waiting, it gets interrupted by a commercial or a preview to the next season. While we may be frustrated, you are left anticipating the next season (whew my God). Envision watching an adrenaline amped tv show and just when you are about to find out if the main character escaped you hear beep, beep, beep, we interrupt your regular scheduled programming. It is usually an emergency broadcast. Once they are finished alerting you of the emergency it takes you back to your regularly scheduled programming.

Despite all that life throws your way, despite all the delays & distractions, and in spite of the disruptions, it doesn't change the will of God for your life. Think of it as a commercial break, an emergency alert, or the prelude to the next season of your life.

Whatever comes your way, it does not mean life is over. There is always something on the other side; just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it's not there. Happiness is fleeting, it comes and goes. We can often times become happy and content with where we are, but God is saying no, I have something more and better for you. And sometimes that requires a disruption to your current state of happiness. Without it, we remain comfortable and miss out, or we allow our contentment to cause a delay in the things God is preparing for us.

Most trials can be used as a vehicle to level up. Our trials operate as a process of development. That process is different for everyone and may come with personal disappointments, heartbreak, financial ruin, reputation distortion, or identity confliction. However, keep in mind that hope does not disappoint. Detours only disappoint for but a moment. When we allow them to produce hope – God promises that hope will not disappoint.

As much as I would love to lose 30 pounds, that will not happen simply by wishing. That will only happen through a change of diet and exercise, and/or surgery. In whichever option I choose the pain I experience through the process will help me reach my goal. That may show up in the form of eating foods I would rather not eat, soreness from working out, or the healing pain after surgery. In strengthening your hope, that pain may show up in detours, tribulations, afflictions, and trials.

While I would like to tell you the pain of my husband being convicted and sentenced to prison strengthened my hope at that time it would be an inaccurate account. The pain that I have experienced and currently experience while walking out this process has been a true test of my faith. However, daily I practice not relying on my own strength. Every time I feel weak, I'm reminded of **2 Corinthians 12:9-10: God's power is made strong in my weakness.**

Even as I write this devotional, 4 years later I am still going through my process. While I am declaring victory over my husband's case, we haven't made it to the finish line yet. With that, every day I am faced with the collateral damage of what happened with my husband. It plays out in my marriage, in raising my teenage daughter, in my emotions and both my mental & spiritual health. So, instead of attempting to write a story that is not yet completed, I decided to share with you my daily walk in how I'm managing to not lose my mind and my faith.

I am going to share devotions, scriptures, affirmations, songs, and spiritual insights that have helped me and are still helping me to navigate through my process. My hope is that during this brief interruption in your life that you come to understand that even though all your days won't be up, they won't always be down. Even when it's difficult God has provided you with tools to guide you through any situation. Know that God has given us everything to win. Our Father, in all his sovereignty, wants us to do just that, win. The bottom line is this too shall pass. And that my friend is fact.

Disclaimer: God has given us many tools. Therapy is one of many.

The Blow Up

Scriptures: (GNT)

Isaiah 41:10

2 Timothy 1:7

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Song of Inspiration: Pulling Me Through, Todd Dulaney

There are somethings that happen in your life that you will never forget. You will especially never forget how it made you feel. On that 23rd day of October 2018, I will never forget feeling lost, confused, but mostly scared. I had no idea what the next few days would bring. At that time, all I had was fear, or so I thought. Even with knowing God had not given me a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7), in that moment all I felt was fear. It didn't take me long to get to a power source. We all need an earthly power source. Someone who we can go to when our flesh is weak, and the spirit man is shaky. That person should be someone who you find strength in and who can pray. By that evening I finally got to one of my power sources. That source for me was my dear mother. After Linda Ann prayed for me in the living room of my sister's house, I felt lighter. Although I did not know what the next few days would bring, I had a glimmer of hope. Instead of going home to cry my eyes out some more, I opened my bible. I prayed and asked God for a word. I needed his strength. I needed to know how we would get through this. I was led to Isaiah 41:10, "Do not be afraid-I am with you! I am your God-let nothing terrify you! I will make you strong and help you; I will protect you and save you." I was then led to Deuteronomy 31:6, "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and DO NOT PANIC before them. For the Lord, your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you." That night I went to bed with the peace of God.

An important factor to remember during a storm, is that although you may feel alone, you are not. God is with you. Our job is to seek him. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "My Grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." As you walk through this storm it will not be easy but make the decision to trust that God will never leave you nor abandon you, Hebrews 13:5.

Who I am

Scriptures: (AMP)

Philippians 4:7

1 Peter 5:7

Hebrews 4:16

Song of Inspiration: No Reason to Fear, J.J. Hairston

The days after my husband's arrest were filled with anxiousness & embarrassment. At this point, I still had not spoken to my husband and I still did not have any real answers. The entire family was on pins & needles. All the while, there was a narrative being spread on our local news stations. My husband's face was plastered on the news being portrayed in a light that was not the man I knew. My mind could not onboard how within days, our lives had blown up into a million tiny pieces. Our private life was on display for our community to see. I know most of us would rather deal with trials and tribulations in private, but sometimes, that is just not the case. People are watching. People are whispering. People are judging. Although the law says innocent until proven guilty, most of our society will convict you as guilty before you can prove yourself. The bottom line is we cannot control how people view or judge us. While going through this process, I've had to continuously remind myself of who I am. I am a child of God. And because I am God's child, I have access to his promises. I am promised the peace of God that surpasses my understanding, Philippians 4:7. I can leave all my worries with God, because He cares for me, 1 Peter 5:7. As a child of God I can confidently approach His throne and find grace. At His throne I will receive mercy and find Grace just when I need it, Hebrews 4:16. We can't always control the narrative, but we can control how in which we respond. I could not take on how the community was viewing our circumstance; I had to keep my eyes on God. There is too much at stake. God's name was on the line, and although I could not see it at that moment, deep down I knew somehow, some way, God would get the glory from this. I knew that God would not

leave us out in the ocean to drown, because baby I can't swim! So, God was going to have to come and save me!

If you're going through a situation with public eyes glaring at you in judgement, I challenge you. For just a moment switch your attention from the chatter to the word of our Father. Focus on how He views you and remember that God has the final say. Regardless of public scrutiny, God will restore your name. Even if you can't see the how, know that one day the circumstances that came to destroy you will be a testament of the great God we serve.

God's Plan

Scriptures:

Jeremiah 29:11 (GNT)

1 Corinthians 10:13 (GNT)
Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

Song of Inspiration: Still Slaying Giants, Jubilee Worship

When you're in the middle of a storm it's easy to focus on the storm instead of God. You get overwhelmed, you may feel like the walls are closing in on you, and you may even feel like you are all out of options. There have been times I felt like why would my beloved Father allow me to experience such pain? Why can't God just bring my husband home now? I have gone as far as asking God what was the point of getting married if you were just going to take my husband away from me? After my husband's conviction, it was difficult for me to envision the bigger picture. As frustrating as it was, I was still open to the idea that God has something greater on the other side of this storm. I found Jeremiah 29:11 helpful. The GNT version says: "I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for." To keep my sanity, I had to believe that God had a bigger and better plan for my family. Whatever it was, this is the route God was taking us. I also had to believe that whatever it is that I am going through that as a child of God, He knew His daughter. So that means He knew exactly what and how much of it I could withstand. Which brings me to 1 Corinthians 10:13(GNT), God will give me the strength to endure this process, and the God I serve will provide a way out.

So daily, no matter how you feel or what you are facing, meditate on Jeremiah 29:11 & 1 Corinthians 10:13. If we do not redirect our minds, we will be consumed by the problem and not the Waymaker. Please trust me when I say that I know how hard it can be, but also trust me when I say if you give it over to God the burden is made easier to carry. Worrying and trying to solve a problem that is bigger than me is out of my weight class. Pre-pandemic, I would often complain about going grocery shopping and then lugging bags and bags of groceries upstairs to my second-floor unit. Then I found Instacart. For a small fee each month someone else would not only do the shopping for me, but they would also bring the heavy bags of groceries up those same stairs to my door. I know, lazy, but hold on I'm going somewhere. What I'm trying to convey to you is I would much rather tag God in and let him carry the weight. Besides, whatever God is doing in my life is all a part of a bigger plan that exceeds anything I could ever dream of. Therefore, even if it hurts a little bit like sore muscles, in due time, it will only make me stronger, if I just keep pushing.

God's Timing = Perfect Timing

Scriptures:

Lamentations 3:25 (Easy)

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ERV)

Proverbs 16:9 (NLT)

Hebrews 11:1 (EASY)

Song of Inspiration: Turning Around, Vashawn Mitchell

In our lives, we usually make plans or set goals for certain dreams to be accomplished at specific times. I believe some of you can agree with me that if some of those things we planned or wanted happened, our lives would have taken a much different path, good or bad. I often think of a time very early in our marriage when my husband and I were trying desperately to conceive a child. Although, my husband is dad in every sense of the word to our amazing daughter, whom I had from a previous relationship, we both had plans and dreams to go half on a baby. Going into our marriage we could not imagine the struggles we would have in getting pregnant. I had obviously given birth already, and as a woman I experienced a regular cycle. In my mind, there was no reason

why I would not be able to conceive. Well, my husband and I tried and tried for months the good ole fashion way. We were met with negative tests month after month. Each month it was disappointment. We both tried natural supplements and googled remedies for getting pregnant. We were met with more frustration and hormonal imbalances. I was pumping my body with so many supplements, it didn't know what to do. I found myself on the brink of tears sitting in the nail salon. Crying and crying unexpectedly was quite unusual for me. Despite the frustration we continued to try. I was 35 when my husband and I married, so in my mind my biological clock was ticking. If we were going to have another child or two, we needed to get the ball rolling right? Well thank God our life at that time didn't go as we planned. Why? If our lives had gone as planned, I would be alone raising 2 children, instead of one. God knew what was to come. He knew that us bringing another child into this world at that time would cause us more heartache and struggle in the end. Although another child is what we wanted, it wasn't the right time. A lot of you reading this can attest to having the right plan, but if it had gone according to your timing your life would be in shambles. This is not to throw away the idea, plan, or vision. Instead, we ought to seek God for his timing. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says there is a right time for everything that we do under the sun. When God has given you a vision for your life, you should stand firm in your faith even if you don't see the manifestation of it right now. Hebrews 11:1 encourages us to be sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. I have committed to trust God's time instead of my own. So even in making my plans, I will trust God to guide my footsteps, Proverbs 16:9. If you find yourself getting frustrated because your plans are not going according to how you imagined, I urge you to refocus your mind by meditating on Lamentations 3:23-26 (Easy): "Every day, we can trust him to be kind again. We know that he will do what he has promised to do. He is my Lord; I say to myself. He is the reason why I can hope for good things. The Lord does good things for people who wait for Him. It is good when people continue to hope. It is good when they quietly wait for the Lord because He will save them." Our timing will never be perfect, but the perfect timing will always be God's timing.

Whoever said life doesn't come with a manual lied!

Scriptures:

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

Psalms 100:3 (Easy)

1 Kings 8:57 (ESV)

Song of Inspiration: Dwell, Jay Todd

Let's be honest, life can be hard. What's even harder is trying to navigate through this life without God. Our Father didn't just leave us out to dry without an operation manual. Like many of you, I've tried time and time again to do things my way. And like many more of you, I have failed time and time again. Is it not a crazy thing that we attempt to function without the tools that God has given us? God has given us clear directives to help guide us through the many trials and life's happenings. To be as transparent as possible, it has been only recent that I have ever really taken a close look at the fruits of the spirit. If you grew up in church like I did you may have often heard about the fruits of the spirit. It was only until having to face my true self throughout my current circumstance that I was led to this scripture: Galatians 5:22-23 which says "But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things." I realize that these Fruits will give me the nourishment I need while growing through any turbulence. Remembering that nothing compares to God's love. And because of His love for me, God will never leave me or forsake me. And because he loved me so, he sent Holy Spirit to bring me comfort. God will give you peace in the midst of the chaos. His word says "and God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus." I can keep going, but the bottom line is God didn't leave us out to dry. The Bible is filled with directives on how to function in this world. Grab hold to Holy Spirit and follow que. You won't be led astray. In fact, you'll be led to the right path.

It's Our Anniversary!

Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 4:16 (AMP)

Isaiah 43:2 (NLT)

Jeremiah 31:25

Song of Inspiration: Dependable God by Travis Greene

November 18, 2023, marked 6 years of marriage for my husband and me. When asked about marriage, I often say “you don’t know what worse is until the worse occurs”. Standing at the altar, you will never truly understand those vows that leave your lips. The day is filled with love and beauty, and with ease you repeat for better or for worse. Your mind is filled with dreams, and goals for your family. In that moment, you can’t even begin to fathom that worse will actually show up. Baby let me tell you, worse doesn’t care who you are, what title you carry, how nice and sweet you are, or how much you love the Lord. It’s coming to make you cash those checks you wrote on that beautiful love filled day. The thing is, if nothing else proves to you how much you love your spouse and that you meant what you said when you said it, worse will. It will make you strap up your boots, put on your gloves and fight for your marriage. Worse doesn’t come in the same way. It shows up in all different types of forms. Oh, and let me be clear this is not an attempt to discourage anyone from marrying. Marriage is a beautiful covenant that gets a lil ugly sometimes. With that said, make sure you got your armor on, Ephesians 6:11-18. The last few years have been far from easy. A lot of ups and downs. More downs than I’d like to admit at times. However, we still stand! During this time God has used people that we least expected, to bring us messages of hope. They come reminding us that God is with us, we will not drown, we will not burn up, and we will not be consumed (Isaiah 43:2). Those messengers always come at our most desperate moments. They come just at the brink of throwing in the towel. God is fatherly in that way where He sees His children having a difficult time in the process, and He sends hope. It’s been in those moments that I’ve gotten that extra boost of energy, that extra bit of strength to pull myself up, dust myself off, and charge on. Be open to receiving messages of hope from unexpected sources and in unorthodox ways. I promise this, you will know that it was nobody but God when the message comes. Close family and friends will not always have the answers or words to say. God has chosen specific people designated for specific moments who will come and remind you that God has not forgotten about you. There are people who God has placed you on their minds. They are praying for you; constantly bringing your name before God. Know

that just when you think worse has gotten the best of you God will send a messenger. Keep your heart open to receive the message.

Uh Uh Let Me Get that Back!

Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:3 (ERV)

Colossians 4:2 (ERV)

Psalms 62:5 (ERV)

Proverbs 4:23 (ERV)

1 Peter 5:7 (EASY)

Song of Inspiration: It Will Always Be You by JJ Hairston

To keep it real, this process has been kicking my butt! Yes, I said it! In all transparency, there have been periods where my mind was my biggest enemy. When I found myself stewing in depression, the starting point was my mind. Before I found myself sleeping all day in a dark room, cutting off communication with my family and friends, emotional eating, and suicidal thoughts it started with one thought of doubt. My perception of my

situation was distorted by a series of negative thoughts, fearful thoughts. And each time I pulled myself out of depression, it began with changing my thoughts. Reciting scriptures like Psalms 23:4(ERV) "Even if I walk through a valley as dark as the grave, I will not be afraid of any danger, because you are with me. Your rod and staff comfort me." Get where I'm going with this? The bottom line is, during tough seasons what you allow to run rampant in your mind will be the difference between victory or defeat, and life or death. It will be the difference of one day feeling down, or months and months of depression. Reminding yourself moment by moment, John 1:5(ERV) "The light shines in the dark, and the dark cannot put out the light." No matter what you're dealing with, it's not bigger than God. Darkness cannot overtake you. It's not an effortless task, but if you're willing to use your tools, shifting your mindset is possible. What tools am I referring to? I'm glad you asked! God's word (Bible), songs of praise and worship, replacing words of defeat to declarations of victory, seeking God's voice in prayer, staying connected to your circle of believers, and being intentional with how you spend your time. It takes little to no effort to allow your mind to become a playground to the enemies lies. Succumbing to anxiety and depression is easy to get into, and the deeper you fall it's not as easy to get out. It's in the same way you go and swipe your card and the funds are swiped right out of your account immediately, but when it's time for your refund it takes 5 to 7 business days. The nerve! Believe me when I tell you joy is yours! Peace is yours! They are not a figment of your imagination. Joy and peace are not so far gone that you can't take it back! And take it by force! The enemy will love for you to keep your mouth shut and to not speak the truth. He knows that if he can keep you bound by stinking thinking; your outlook can be shifted. Negative thoughts prevent you from seeing what's real. Start today, right now with one thought. One thought of I choose to believe that even in this, it's working for my good! God has made a promise to us all that if you search for Him with all your heart, you will find Him, Jeremiah 29:13.

Do you want to know how I can tell you all of this is true? It's because I'm alive to tell the story. I'm alive to tell you that I chose to change my thoughts. I decided that the enemy will not win. I decided to not be overcome by pain, and instead hand over the pain to the only one capable of carrying it, God. I allowed Holy Spirit to come in and do a work inside of me. It is a daily work, because as I mentioned early on, some days I'm up and some days I'm down, but I refuse to stay down. So, scoot if you have to, crawl if you must, grab hold to something and walk until you gain your balance and strength back. Get up and let's walk this out. Look em straight in the eye, and say uh uh let me get that back!

Hallelujah!

Scriptures:

Hosea 2:15 (EASY)

Romans 15:13 (ERV)

Psalms 51:12 (TPT)

John 16:33 (ERV)

Songs of Inspiration: Revelation 19:1, Maverick City & TRIBL and Believe For It, CeCe Winans

As I close this out, it's not the end, but the beginning. From the depths of my soul, I scream Hallelujah! God is wonderful! The enemy has tried every single plot, scheme, and trick to steal your joy and your mind! Yep, I know you feel it, I feel it too...BUT GOD! Think about it. Where you started, how you felt in the beginning, you're not in that same space anymore. Like the mothers of the ole church would say, "I could've been dead and gone". You could've not been here to tell the story, but God preserved you! Maybe everything isn't okay right now, but it could be worse. It was worse! You've

already experienced what it could've been, what it should've been. Now it's time to open up to what is and what will be. What better way to start than with a heart of thanksgiving and lifting a praise to God. Hallelujah! Just when you thought you wouldn't live through it, look at you living! Just when you thought you'd never love again, look at you loving! Just when you thought you'd always be sick, look at you healed! Just when you thought you couldn't walk away, look at you running! Whatever it is, look at you! God is wonderful! I really want you to get this. No really. Think over your life, how many times did God not play about you? How many times did God make a way out of no way? If He did it before what will keep God from doing it again? God has not changed his plan for your life just because there has been an interruption. **THIS WILL NOT DESTROY YOU.** I challenge you to trust that GOD has the final say; regardless of what man says, regardless of the doctor's report, regardless of what the judge says. The tribulations were not designed to kill you. Every last trial was designed for your good. Keep thanking God, even when you don't understand. Keep seeking God, even if you don't know where he's leading you. As I stated earlier this is not the end; it's just the beginning. Your story does not end here. To be continued...

My Prayer For You...

Lord God, our Father, I pray for the person reading this book right now. I pray for the strengthening of their mind, their heart, and their spirit. Father, you know Your son or daughter name by name, hair strand by hair strand. Father, You know us better than we know ourselves. Nothing takes You by surprise. You know each moment, each second. And as they walk through the process, I ask that You send hope. Lord God even if You don't take them out of the valley that You will cause them to know that You are with them. That You will never forsake them in times of trouble. We commit ourselves to You God. We commit our desires to You. We commit our plans to You. Lord, I pray that our lives will come into alignment with Your purpose and will. Heavenly Father I ask for Your peace to overtake them. The peace that surpasses all understanding. The peace that allows us to rest in You despite what our situations appear to be. God, we trust

that You will not let us down. You are our foundation. The solid rock on which we stand. Holy spirit comfort them in the midst of trouble and grief. Lord, we thank You for the victory over all hindrances, diseases, torments, and the lies told to us by the enemy. We claim victory and we hold to your promises. Father, we thank You for not forgetting us. We thank You Lord God for Your power and might. I thank You Father for pouring out Your love to each individual reading this. I pray that they will never be the same from this day forth, and that they will grab hold to You and never let go. And it is so in JESUS name, Amen.

In the beginning of this book, I told you therapy is a tool. God and therapy go hand in hand. Please use these resources as a starting point.

1. Forward Motion Therapy Services
Website: www.krystalrogers.com
Phone: 954-871-2322
2. Renee Perez-Bellifanti, MS, MFT
Phone: 754-800-4441
3. Montez Thomasson, LCSW
This Too Shall Pass Counseling
Website: www.this2shallpasscounseling.com
Phone: (954) 728-0351

Need prayer? An accountability partner? Email me!
prayformegirl@gmail.com

Need a church home? A circle of believers? Tell them I sent you.

1. Living Word Christian Center Intl.
Address:
5726 Washington St.,

Hollywood, FL 33023

2. Kingdom Builders Worship Center

Address:

2450 N. Powerline Rd., Pompano Beach, FL 33069

3. Grace United Community Church

Address:

901 NW 183rd St Miami Gardens, FL 33169