



INSPIRATION FOR LIFE
Guidenposts

JUNE/JULY 2021

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and Open the
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and More Blessed

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INSPIRATION
FROM**

Max Lucado
Savannah Guthrie
Katie Brown



**SNEAK
PEAK
PREVIEW!**

UPLIFTING DEVOTIONALS

Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.

—PSALM 37:4 (NIV)

A recent writing exercise asked me to list everything I loved.

Here are some items on that list:

Chocolate, of course. The smell of cut grass. The relaxed, quiet pleasure of a job well done. Laughter around the dinner table at the end of a meal. Red barns at summer twilight. My cat's head butt against my shin. My husband's greeting as I walk through the door.

I delight in these things. Do I delight, in the same way, in God? Where is God on that list?

The way my mom folds me up in her arms when she hugs me. My dad's patience. The sparkly way the air feels before a thunderstorm. Being all alone in a dark, cool church.

I look at the list again. God is there, suffusing every single thing on that list with grace and holiness and joy. I delight in him by delighting in them. This perfect world! My perfect life! I am blessed to be alive.

Indeed, God gives me the desires of my heart.

God, no matter what happens today, my life is good. You make it so.

—AMY EDDINGS

ANNA BERKUT/GETTY IMAGES

Max Lucado

PASTOR &
BEST-SELLING
AUTHOR



*We had a chat with pastor and best-selling author Max Lucado about what we've been facing in the past year, from the coronavirus pandemic to global protests against racism. Among his latest projects is the upcoming book *Begin Again: Your Hope and Renewal Start Today*, which is full of biblical help. And as Max proved in our talk, he is full of practical help for the challenges of our times.*

1 What do you make of the unprecedented times we are living in?

This is a time of upheaval unlike any I have ever seen, unlike anything the

world has ever seen. It's global upheaval. It's physical: Covid-19 can attack your body. It's emotional: You're isolated from the people you love. It's financial: So many people

ROBERT SEALE

are facing severe setbacks.

In seasons of immense change, what's important is to look for what has *not* changed. For the person of faith, that means the existence of God, the sovereignty of God, the plan of God. Turn to those and believe. We serve an unchanging God.

Early in my ministry, I served in Brazil. I came to understand there are certain things that are transcultural. They supersede culture. The need to know who God is. The promise of forgiveness. The promise of eternal life. No matter where you are, no matter what language you speak, those are human longings.

2 What do you think is one of our greatest spiritual challenges?

We elevate ourselves. We position ourselves higher than we position others. That is such a struggle. I hear that in the conversations about race, equality and acceptance. There is a strain of superiority. We have had a wake-up call, after some 400 years of positioning one race over another.

There's a question that helps me in a conversation. I ask myself, "What is it like to be you?" What is it like to be a Black male today? What is it like to be a female in a world marked by men in gray flannel suits?"

INSPIRED LIVING

To become a better listener, don't allow yourself to be formulating a response. A couple with marriage issues was talking with me recently, and the husband said, "I act like I'm listening, but most of the time I'm just reloading." Let's listen. Hear the whole story. Really respect what it's like to be you.

I find people are so happy to talk about their situation. Earlier today, I was on a Zoom call and a new person was on it. "Tell us your story," I said. I love that phrase. He did for four or five minutes. I didn't try to direct it. People will share who they really are.

3 Is there a prayer you find yourself saying these days?

Lord, I ask, what are you doing? By permitting this pandemic, by showing us these racial issues?

One morning I prayed, and I heard the word *calling*. I understood that to mean that God is calling people back to himself. Calling us to walk more closely with him. Calling to those who don't know him, getting their attention. We are being reminded of how frail we are.

I turn to the story about Jesus walking on the water. The whole point of it. Coming to his disciples in the middle of the storm. He kept that storm from them, but he let it. He let them see then showed up in the midst

Q&A
WITH
FAITH
LEADERS

Everyday Blessings Childlike Wonder

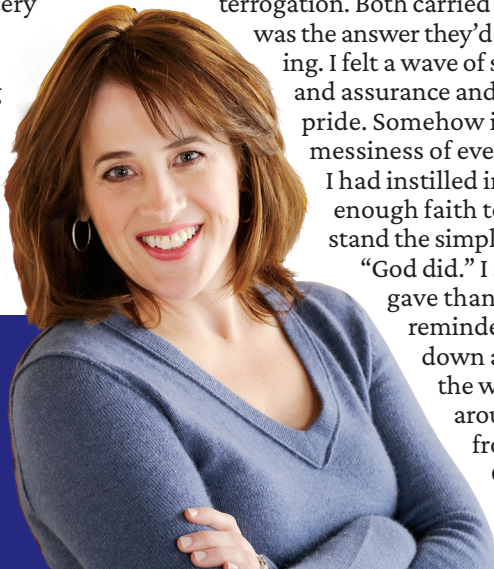
By **KATIE BROWN**, Los Angeles, California

From the minute I woke up, I was behind schedule. Typical. I loaded my two young daughters into the car to run errands. Our town, Petoskey, was built along Lake Michigan. To get from one end of town to the other, you have water on one side of you at all times.

Before we even left the driveway, the girls began to bicker. I let their chatter fade into white noise as I rushed around. Grocery store. Dog groomer. Post office. Gas station. Then something made me glance in the rearview. My younger daughter pointed toward the water and said, “Who poured that?”

“Who poured that?” I repeated. I looked out at the expanse of blue, stretching as far as the eye could see. Everything seemed to slow as I took a breath and answered, “God did.”

Now I have one daughter who is highly scientific and needs to drill down to the proof of the matter. My other daughter is extremely visual and needs to see in order to understand. Yet there was no follow-up interrogation. Both carried on as if that was the answer they’d been seeking. I felt a wave of satisfaction and assurance and, yes, even pride. Somehow in all the messiness of everyday life, I had instilled in my girls enough faith to understand the simple response “God did.” I silently gave thanks for the reminder to slow down and take in the wonders all around me—from the Great Lake to my growing girls. **C**



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WITH KATIE**
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decor video at
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/katiebrown](https://guideposts.org/katiebrown)

COURTESY KATIE BROWN

Keeping the Faith As Bold as Fireworks

By **TY'ANN BROWN**, Vice President, Ministries

July 4. It's the most American of holidays and a rite of summer for so many of us. Barbecues, carnivals and—of course—fireworks. I grew up in New York City, in a building that overlooked the East River. Every year my family and I would go to the rooftop so that we could get as close as possible to those famous Macy's Fireworks. They seemed so beautiful, so magical—almost heaven-sent. I would gaze at the sky in awe.

As an adult, I wasn't that impressed by fireworks anymore. But one year, I was visiting Mom on July 4 and she called me to the window. Watching the sky light up and hearing her oohs and aahs, I got

caught up in the excitement too.

That's when I started thinking about what fireworks could teach us about faith. Sure, it would be great if we all maintained faith as big and as bold as those fireworks displays all the time. But that doesn't always happen. We have doubts; we turn away from God at times.

But fireworks can remind us to pause—and look upward. To look toward God—and toward the beauty he can bring to our lives—if only we pay attention. As Matthew 5:16 says, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*”

I hope you catch a beautiful fireworks display this Fourth of July. More important, I hope you let your life, and your faith, sparkle all summer and all year long. **C**



PRAY WITH TY'ANN
Join Ty'Ann on Facebook
Live to pray together!
Go to facebook.com/ourprayer the
first Wednesday of every
month at noon ET.

PHOTO CREDIT TK

Depression affects
16 million Americans.
And I'm one of them.
Here's what I've learned

By **MICHELLE WILLIAMS**
Atlanta, Georgia

The Most Powerful Words

I need help.” The three most powerful words a person can say. I should know. It took me a long time, but I finally said them. It most likely saved my life.

I guess it started when I was about 13. Today I understand I was having symptoms. Back then they were just feelings that left me unsettled: a passing sense that nothing mattered or would ever really matter, anxiety that made me climb out of bed in the middle of the night and pace the floor for no reason, a kind of spiritual numbness, feelings of not being loved even though I was. I soon learned that these were signs of depression. In a way, I thought I simply had to live with them. Even years later, when I was performing in Destiny’s Child, those feelings would rear up. I’d be like, “Oh, depression. You still here? I gotta go do a show. We’ll talk later.” I tried to ignore what was happening.

Or maybe I was just trying to accept it.

Three years ago, I plunged into such a dark hole that I couldn’t get out. I could barely get off my sofa. Things came to a head when I didn’t show up for a promised event with my pastor and his wife. Didn’t call or text. Just didn’t show up.

“This isn’t like you, Michelle,” they said. It was then that I finally allowed myself to say those three powerful words. *I need help.* I called the therapist I’d been seeing—that much I’d been doing—and she recommended a facility to go to. After a week, I made. I drove to the facility, packed a bag, and changed into clean clothes. My therapist, Dr. [redacted] bad Hall [redacted]

More
adult
sive
ize
7

**STORIES
TO HELP YOU
THROUGH
LIFE’S UPS
AND DOWNS**



GREETINGS FROM
SMALL-TOWN AMERICACASEY
ILLINOIS

By JIM BOLIN, Casey, Illinois

Casey, Illinois, is a small town—population: 2,700—but we're home to some really big things. Literally. We've got 12 attractions that are the world's largest, according to Guinness World Records.

How did that come about? It goes back to my wife and daughter wanting to open a tea shop. I wanted to draw more people to Casey to support our local businesses. One night, the sound of wind chimes gave me the crazy idea to build some that were tall enough to break the world record. My family owns Bolin Enterprises Inc., a pipeline and tank maintenance company. Between jobs, our employees and I recycled old pipeline and built a 54-foot-tall wind chime in the middle of town. There's a cross at the top. I'm a man of faith, and I wanted the wind chime to point people to God. The welder who worked on it used religious symbols—the ichthus and the Star of David—for the braces that stabilize it. My wife wanted to include a piece of Scripture, and we chose Romans 1:16.

We assembled the wind chime in November 2011. In order to qualify for a Guinness World Record, the object has to be able to perform its intended function, so the chimes had to, well, chime. It takes wind of six miles per hour or greater to move them, but they work. And that's how tiny Casey, Illinois, set the record



MICHAEL D. TEDESCO

POSITIVE PEOPLE
& INSPIRING
SMALL TOWNS
ACROSS AMERICA

est Wind Chime. I-70, advertising chime. It wasn't in town got busier, with out-of-state cars. at the wind chime would be time project. Little did I know. In 2012, to publicize the town's golf course, my crew and I built a 30-foot-tall, 6,659-pound golf tee. In 2013, Guinness representatives verified it as the World's Largest Golf Tee.



COURTESY JIM BOLIN

When you walk up Main Street, you'll come across 12 record-setting objects. You can mail a letter from the World's Largest Mailbox. It takes 10 men to rock the World's Largest Rocking Chair! We've got the World's Largest Wooden Shoes, the World's Large-

est Barbershop Pole and the World's Largest Teeter Totter.

You'll also see about 20 items that don't set a record but are still big. Really big. You and your family can pile into our giant hanging birdcage and take pictures in front of our enormous mousetrap or super-size pizza slicer. There's a behemoth bookworm by our library and a huge toy glid-



BIG STUFF

Jim (left) in front of the world's largest rocking chair; the town's supersize mailbox, knitting needles and wind chime. See more at bigthingsmalltown.com.



er plane at our airport. I used a lot of recycled materials, including telephone poles, to construct the attractions and kept putting Scripture on each. And I plan to build more.

Come to Casey and see these big things for yourself! You'll find that folks in our small town have big hearts too. We love visitors! ❧



Not Like Me

By **CAROL WEIS**
Easthampton, Massachusetts

The knot in my stomach grew tighter. I was dropping off my teenage daughter, Maggie, at her friend's house. She was staying over with some high school classmates, kids in her drama club, girls and boys. I was worried, maybe more than I needed to be. I trusted my daughter. I hoped she had learned from my own history. Still, as she turned and waved, I couldn't stop myself from saying, "Remember, honey, no drinking."

"How many times do I have to tell

you, Mom?" she said, annoyed. "My friends and I don't do that!"

I wanted to believe her. Maggie was 16, the same age I was when I had my first real drink. Both my parents drank every single day, enough to cause trouble in their marriage and constant fear in our family. Alcoholic parents usually produce two types of children: abstainers or problem drinkers. I was the latter. I worried Maggie could be too.

I became a serious partier in college, going to keg parties and drinking way

I didn't want my daughter to make the same mistakes I did. Neither did she, I found out

too much. Then I drove home drunk; there was no such thing as a designated driver back then. Besides, I thought I drove better when I was drinking. I thought I did *everything* better. Alcohol gave me the confidence I wished I actually had. It banished the fear, at least temporarily. My twenties were even worse. I added drugs to my repertoire. I increasingly worried about what I was doing to myself. Yet I didn't want to stop.

During those wild years, I met my daughter's dad, who drank as much

I did. The first time he came to me in Philadelphia, where I was working as a cook, I told him I thought I had a drinking problem. "Try to stop," he said. "I know what alcohol does to you, you're not one of those people who were heavy drinkers and then moved to a new town and started listening to the radio." By the time I moved to Easthampton, he was gone.

PHOTOS COURTESY CAROL WEIS

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