

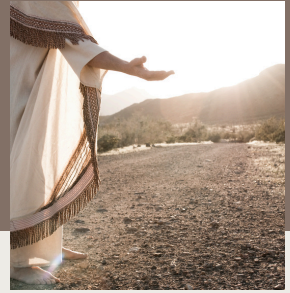
A SUICIDE PREVENTION E-RESOURCE

# Gospel Hope for Your Darkest Days

Praying Through ministries  
[@prayingthroughministries.org](https://prayingthroughministries.org)



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## A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

*Dear Reader,*

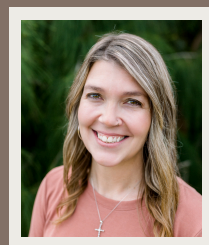
Praying Through ministries was founded in 2020 when the world was shut down due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Walking through suffering can often be lonely, but during the pandemic it was especially isolating. Hoping to bridge gaps and build connection through Christian community, the Praying Through Facebook communities were created for women journeying through the NICU and child loss.

The sharing of burdens and the prayers women prayed for one another in these online communities led to organic, authentic, lasting friendships. From these very real connections, the heart behind Praying Through ministries outreach was born.

Since our inception 4 years ago, our online communities host over 900 women. Over 8,000 items of Biblical encouragement have been sent to over 3,000 families in over 47 states and in 8 countries. And in addition to serving families grieving the loss of a child at any age, our ministry has recently expanded to now minister to families navigating childhood illness and childhood hospitalizations.

The heart of Praying Through ministries to serve families with Biblical Truth and encouragement is also what inspired this e-resource on suicide prevention.

*- Jessica Sanders*



## DISCLAIMER

This e-resource, including all information contained within in, is provided as an encouragement and information resource only, and is not to be used or relied upon for any diagnostic or treatment purposes, patient education, or any other reason. This information is not meant to be used as a substitute for professional treatment, and does not contain all-encompassing or comprehensive information. You are highly encouraged to consult with a qualified mental health care professional with any questions or concerns you may have, and should not dismiss or delay in seeking such advice because of information contained in this e-resource.

We expressly disclaim all statutory and implied warranties of any kind, and shall have no responsibility or liability for any damages, loss, injury, or liability whatsoever suffered as a result of your reliance on the information contained in this devotional. We do not warrant that the information contained or referenced herein is complete, accurate, or current.

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*God,*

even if I can't see you,  
even if I can't feel you,  
I want to believe  
you are with me.

Speak to me  
through these pages.  
Reveal yourself to me.  
Guide me out of this pit.

*Amen.*

## DAY ONE

# Closer Than Ever

By Tabitha Yates

*"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."*

*-Psalm 34:18 (ESV)*

I walked into church and slumped into my seat towards the back row, as wave after wave of defeat crashed over me. Tears began to fall and I couldn't tell you what the pastor preached about or how long the service was, all I knew was I cried through its entirety, completely sure that I was alone in my sorrows and in this world. Not one person came up and asked if I was okay and in my troubled mind, their lack of concern for me amounted to a lack of the love and nearness of God and it was too much for my soul to bear.

Perhaps, you too find yourself at the end of your rapidly fraying rope. Maybe your loved ones don't understand the painful situation you have been or are currently going through. If we're not careful, we can project others' perceived lack of connection and empathy onto Jesus and assume He is distant and callous to our hurts.

(continued)

## DAY ONE

# Closer Than Ever



In the New King James Version of our verse, Psalm 34:18, it says, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.” Nigh means that He is here and ready to help. This verse does not suggest that God is aloof and far from His people, but rather shows Him as a loving Father ready to swiftly spring into action the moment we need Him.

He is a God who cares deeply about our pain and will not leave our side as we face sometimes harsh realities in this fallen world. He has come to bind up our wounds (Psalm 147:3), to wipe every tear (Revelation 21:4) and comfort us in all our troubles (2 Corinthians 1:4).

(continued)

## DAY ONE

# Closer Than Ever

While we may struggle with a broken heart and broken circumstances in this life, and our feelings might tell us that we are going through these trials alone; The Bible promises us that God is closer than ever in our suffering and that He cares intimately about our pain. It is so important, particularly in times of overwhelming grief and powerful emotion, that we weigh and measure what we feel against what God's Word says.

**Breath Prayer:**

*Inhale: The Lord is near.*

*Exhale: He counts every tear.*

**Prayer:** *God, I thank you that in my heartbreak, in my doubts, in my questioning and in my silence, you are never far away. You are intimately acquainted with my sorrow and you hold me through all of life's hardships. Thank you that the darkness is not dark to you and that You see a bigger picture than I can right now and you have a plan that is for my good, not for my destruction. Help me to cling to you as I trust you through circumstances I might not understand right now. In Your precious name, I pray. Amen.*



*Inhale:*

The Lord is near.

*Exhale:*

He counts every tear.

## DAY TWO

# Connecting to the Source of All Comfort and Strength

By Chelsea Crow-Fuentes

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."  
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (ESV)*

Comfort was a foreign concept to me after wrestling with depression for 10 years. Up until that point I had been a prisoner to intrusive suicidal thoughts, ideations, and cognitive distortions which can better be described as the scathing lies and vicious attacks of the enemy. He was out to destroy me and, as far as I could see, he was winning and I was ready to give up.

I could not feel God's presence. Where was He, the King of Kings and the hero of my childhood, during the intense suffering of that decade? I no longer had a grasp on His truth and could not see beyond the darkness and the lies.

(continued)

## DAY TWO

# Connecting to the Source of All Comfort and Strength

I had given up hope that anything would ever get better - that anything could ever really change. The feelings had been persistent for so long that I could not even imagine a life beyond them. I was so exhausted trying to do it all on my own, and my lack of protection and understanding nearly led me to complete destruction.

But then, JESUS. He allowed me to get to my lowest point so I could finally let go and invite Him into my pain. As I partnered up with Him, He was faithful to lend me His comfort and strength in the midst of the suffering. He carried me through the very worst moments of my life.

I felt this as a sense of strength and peace that surpassed understanding. I knew these supernatural feelings did not come from within myself, and the credit could only be given to the Holy Spirit.

(continued)

## DAY TWO

# Connecting to the Source of All Comfort and Strength

The apostle Paul was no stranger to suffering nor was he a stranger to God's hope and comfort. He intimately experienced first-hand the comfort of The Lord along with his many hardships throughout his life. He openly praised God for His mercy and comfort instead of cursing God and questioning His presence (as was my experience).

Webster's Dictionary gives us an acceptable yet shallow definition of comfort: "A state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint, and the easing or alleviation of a person's feelings of grief or distress." The original text of Scripture uses the word "paraklesis" in this passage which gives us a deeper meaning.

The comfort of God is more than just soothing or removing suffering; it is the idea of strengthening through the pain and coming alongside us to support and help us by increasing strength and bravery (as the Latin word for comfort, "fortis," is synonymous with). Paul knew not the worldly comfort of ease and freedom from his suffering, but he connected to the source - the powerful God of all comfort - who provides nearness, strength, and help. When we do this, He will not fail us.

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## DAY TWO

# Connecting to the Source of All Comfort and Strength

What I confidently believe because I know on a personal level is that God never wastes your hurt, your pain or your suffering if you give it to Him and invite Him in. Once we experience His mercy, grace, and true comfort, He gives us a renewed purpose and equips us to share what we have received from Him with others who are hurting around us.

That's what He has done for me and I know He will do it for you too. Friend, He is with you and He is waiting to shower you with His comfort.



(continued)

## DAY TWO

# Connecting to the Source of All Comfort and Strength

**Breath Prayer:**

*Inhale: Blessed is the God of all comfort,*

*Exhale: who is near and comforting me.*

**Prayer:** *Father, I come before you and thank you for your promises and for giving me much more than the world can offer me. I choose to bless your name and guard against the lies of the enemy. I know you are waiting to pour out your comfort upon me, giving me the strength to go on and the bravery to choose life over death. Allow me to fully depend upon your comfort as you carry me through the pain, the grief, and the unimaginable despair. I know you are a good God and you will one day redeem all that is broken and wrong. Allow me to release my burdens and tear down any barriers standing between me and your mercy. Give me rest for my soul and free me from the bondage of suffering. Thank you for the plans and the future you hold for me when I cannot see beyond this dark night of the soul. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.*

*Inhale:*

Blessed is the God  
of all comfort,

*Exhale:*

who is near  
and comforting me.

## DAY THREE

# Finding True Rest for your Tired Soul

By Kysa Schaefer

*"Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."  
Matthew 11:28 (ESV)*

"I'm tired." These two small - yet enormous - words were the ones that drove me to plan ending my life. I found myself completely overwhelmed by the weight of the many burdens I was trying to carry. It felt like every time I turned around, a new piece of bad news was coming my way.

Despite how hard I was working to solve each crisis, things seemed to be spiraling further out of my control. It didn't feel like there was a single aspect of my life that wasn't unraveling: finances, work, health, fertility, love. The constant torrent of pain and the deep exhaustion of trying to cope had pushed me to my limit.

My soul desperately needed rest that it wasn't getting. I had made a habit out of looking to all of the wrong things to ease my overwhelm and heal my hurt. I thought it was my sole responsibility to unburden myself.

(continued)



## DAY THREE

# Finding True Rest for your Tired Soul

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus is speaking to those of us who desperately need true rest, and He is instructing us where to look for it. Hint: we won't find that rest within ourselves or in earthly solutions. Doesn't this verse seem so obvious? Yet, how often do we find ourselves trying to come to rest in our own way?

I tried countless strategies to carve out rest and healing for myself during my darkest days, but the rest I was craving eluded me. As humans, we are not designed to work independently of our Creator God. Nor are we designed to sit alone with our disappointments, fears, and pains.

We cannot expect to be okay if we never seek rest, as we are created in the image of a God who rested on the 7th day (Genesis 2:1-3). Life is tiring and overwhelming. We need rest in Christ.

(continued)

## DAY THREE

# Finding True Rest for your Tired Soul

Throughout the scriptures, Jesus invites us into a relationship with the Father. He tells us to come and rest (Matt. 11:28), to ask Him for what we need and to seek Him (Matt. 7:7-11), and to abide in Him (John 15:7). These invitations are often coupled with promises of what the Father provides us, and reminders of His unfailing love and sacrifice given freely to us. God understands that this broken and sinful world will continually try to tear us down.

He knows the enormity of the struggles we face, and how weak we are when we try to stand against the crashing waves by ourselves. If you are tired of the pain, the abuse, the crushing weight of loss, and the agony of grief, come to Jesus with it and rest. Rest knowing that He sees you, weary and heavy laden, and that He is actively moving in seen and unseen ways to restore you and relieve your burdens.

Rest knowing that the ultimate restoration work has been done on the cross. Rest knowing that God cares about your life so much that He purchased it by the blood of His perfect Son.

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## DAY THREE

# Finding True Rest for your Tired Soul

In a fallen world, life can exhaust us to the brink. We can be overcome with responsibilities, tragedy, sin, disappointment, and failure. If you find yourself in a dark place, like I did, please heed Christ's call to come! Come and rest. When we lay our burdens at His feet, we experience miraculous rest and healing.

**Breath Prayer:**

*Inhale: I come weary and burdened to Christ,  
Exhale: and He gives me rest.*

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, You know how heavy the burdens of life can be. You see me in my utter exhaustion and despair, and this is why you have invited me to find rest in your precious son, Jesus Christ. Please provide me with true rest for my broken and tired soul. Please restore my strength and my hope, and please help me to make an intentional and regular practice of coming to your Son to rest. Thank you for your restoration power. Amen.*

*Inhale:*

I come weary and burdened  
to Christ,

*Exhale:*

and He gives me rest.

## DAY FOUR

# Surely One Can't Recover From *This*

By Jessika Sanders

*"I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.*

*He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD."*

*-Psalm 40:1-3 ESV*

So, this was what rock bottom looked like.

At eight months pregnant, I was almost unrecognizable. I didn't mind though, every bit of discomfort and growth was worth it to have a miracle growing inside me. However, when my husband casually confessed his infidelity over breakfast, I felt the pangs of rejection. Our marriage was far from perfect—neither of us knew the Lord, the verbal abuse had led to very contentious circumstances, and his anger was mounting so much that I expected it to escalate to a physical altercation.

(continued)

## DAY FOUR

# Surely One Can't Recover From *This*

In my heart, I knew we wouldn't recover from this. We all but hated one another. Although I didn't want to get a divorce like my parents, I knew our hardened hearts wouldn't soften. So, as I laid on the cold tile floor, crying myself to sleep, my mind spiraled out of control as the inner dialogue became deafening:

*You had one life and you messed it up. You are a failure. You're breaking your family apart. Your children will suffer just like you did. How will you ever make it as a single mom? You don't have a job. You don't have a car. You don't have a home. How will you ever provide for them? You are going to be alone forever. Who would ever want you and all your baggage? Everyone would be better off without you.*

I felt hopeless and an utter failure. My surroundings felt dark and dank.

While I was new to suffering, David, the author of Psalm 40, was not. Seemingly unseen and undervalued, David was overlooked by his father concerning the kingship.

(continued)

## DAY FOUR

# Surely One Can't Recover From *This*

The object of anger and jealousy, King Saul sent his men to hunt David down and kill him. David spent years literally running for his life and hiding in caves! Once David was king, power and the desires of his flesh won when he took another man's wife and had the man killed. David was in anguish over what he had done, and his grief was compounded when the infant son he had conceived with the woman died. David was not a stranger to suffering.

In Psalm 40, we see a man who is in the pit of despair crying out to God. Though he is unworthy (with literal blood on his hands), David knows God's character and is both patient and expectant that the Lord will hear him and respond. We read that the Lord inclined to him and heard his cry. The Lord didn't just cock his head to hear David better, but rather shifted His position to come close.

(continued)

## DAY FOUR

# Surely One Can't Recover From *This*

God wasn't deterred by the dark mess David had gotten himself into. Like a loving father or even like a good shepherd, He reached down and with His mighty, able hands, plucked David out of the muck he was stuck in, and placed him on a firm foundation.

If you find yourself curled up at the bottom of a dark, cold, damp chasm without hope for the future, please know that no matter how alone you feel, you are not. You are one cry away from a ray of light breaking through the darkness that surrounds you.

Nothing can separate you from His love. Nothing will keep God from pursuing you, His beloved. So, whether that cry is an audible one or one from within the depths of your soul, let it out, so that you can let Him in. He is faithful to save, to set you on solid ground, and can radically change your life.

(continued)



DAY FOUR

# Surely One Can't Recover From *This*



***Breath Prayer:***

*Inhale: You hear my cry.*

*Exhale: You rescue me from the pit of despair.*

***Prayer:*** *Jehovah Rohi, you are the Good Shepherd. When a sheep wanders off or falls into a ravine, you leave the entire flock to save it. Lord, I am that sheep. I am alone. I am broken. I am scared. Come near to me. Rescue me from this pit of death. Fill me with your peace and with hope for the future. Transform me like only you can. Amen.*

*Inhale:*

You hear my cry.

*Exhale:*

You rescue me from the pit  
of despair.

# Common Experiences of Child Loss

The death of a child is the worst experience a parent can ever go through. It obliterates previous beliefs and assumptions held about the function of life and the world, and at times even the hope for the future. It shakes up core beliefs, identity, and is a profound family crisis. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve, and everyone, even within the same family unit, will express the feeling and emotions of grief in different ways.

Experience	Explanation of Experience
Shock	Even if the death is anticipated, nothing can prepare you for losing a child. Shock is oftentimes part of the process but can be particularly profound when death is unexpected, sudden, and tragic.
Numbness	This is a physiological self-protective response to guard you from the emotional overwhelm and inability to process the impact of something so significant such as the loss of a child.
Sadness	Heartbreak and despair are natural responses to such a great and unfathomable loss.
Depression	Prolonged sadness that leads to physical distress and somatic symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, eating, carrying out expected responsibilities and roles within your life, frequent headaches, feeling easily fatigued, diminished sexual interest, as well as other medical problems and conditions.

# Common Experiences of Child Loss

Experience	Explanation of Experience
Deep Emptiness	It feels like an unimaginable void that is impossible to fill, and like a part of you died when your child died.
Helplessness	Feeling a loss of control over your own life, inability to make decisions, and moving forward in life without your child seems impossible.
Loneliness	A profound pain and deep desire to see, hear, hold, and touch your child again. This can also manifest as a feeling of abandonment.
Anger	This is a common reaction which takes on many forms. Anger can be directed towards others in the society: women who are careless in pregnancy and go on to have healthy babies, parents celebrating important milestones in their children's lives, the ignorant and hurtful remarks of others, others not acknowledging your child's life and existence, etc. Anger is also oftentimes directed towards God for allowing this senseless tragedy to take place, and sometimes even towards your child for leaving you. Anger is not always expressed in negative ways, and is very powerful when directed as a catalyst for awareness and positive change.

# Common Experiences of Child Loss

Experience	Explanation of Experience
Guilt	<p>Guilt and regret are common experiences in grief, and are often paired with irrational thoughts such as, "it is my fault," and living in the world of "if onlys" - "if only I had done xyz differently, they might not have died." Self-blame is our brain's way to try to make sense and safety out of a loss that doesn't make sense in any template here on earth.</p>
Shame	<p>This self-judgment is also paired with irrational thoughts which attack your own personhood. Shame's lies include: "I am bad," "I deserve what happened," or "I am unworthy of love."</p>
Confusion	<p>It feels challenging, if not completely impossible, when trying to figure out how to integrate the loss of a child into the life narrative and make sense and new meaning of such a devastating loss.</p>
Denial	<p>This is often a part of the grieving process to help cope with the initial shock of the death.</p>

# Common Experiences of Child Loss

Experience	Explanation of Experience
Fear	<p>Fear or generalized anxiety can often infiltrate your world when a loss has made you question everything you thought you knew about the world and the assumed safety you once had. This is a very vulnerable state and causes worry that something else that is devastating and terrible is going to happen to you. Fear can also show up as the fear of your child and their memory being forgotten over time.</p>
Thoughts of Suicide	<p>Almost every bereaved parent will experience overwhelming thoughts and feelings surrounding the seemingly impossible task of going on with life and waking up every morning without your child. It is important that if these thoughts become persistent and/or accompanied with a plan of suicide, seeking professional help is critically important. Suicide only compounds grief for the family and friends left behind, steals the opportunity for you to honor your child's memory and have a positive impact on others journeying through the same pain of loss, and it is never the answer to the pain and hopelessness you may feel.</p>

# PTSD

Whether you are walking through child loss or are grappling with the aftermath of witnessing your child endure medical trauma, the feeling of panic, the tightness in your chest, the racing heartbeat are likely all familiar indicators that your PTSD has been triggered by something or someone.

If you are unfamiliar with it, by definition, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health condition that develops following a traumatic event characterized by intrusive thoughts about the incident, recurrent distress/anxiety, flashback and avoidance of similar situations.



## Common Symptoms Include:

- \*Nightmares
- \*Memory loss
- \*Negative thoughts about yourself or the world
- \*Intrusive thoughts
- \*Self-isolation
- \*Anger and irritability
- \*Avoiding reminders of the event

# PTSD

## Plan of Action

If you have been experiencing some of these symptoms following your traumatic event, and you are already seeking professional help for tackling the triggers as they arise; one of the next best things you can do is develop clear boundaries and a plan of action to put in place for how to deal with a triggering person, place, or thing.

When you are facing grief over losing your child or walking through very difficult medical or mental health circumstances, you are likely already facing what feels impossible, so it is completely understandable for a trigger to push you past what you can tolerate and leave you looking for the nearest exit door, whether that be mentally or literally.

It is okay to be overwhelmed with the flashbacks and want to avoid things right now that bring them to the surface. You will climb this mountain a little at a time, so we understand if you need to call a timeout and find an escape route from someone or something you're not quite ready to face at the moment. Let's explore what this looks like and some steps that you can take when you find yourself in this spot.



## To identify if you are experiencing a trigger, ask yourself these questions:

- What is happening around me?
- What emotions am I experiencing?
- What situations heighten a negative emotional response?
- How does my body feel right now?



After labeling who or what has brought a powerful emotional reaction to the surface, you can do a quick analysis of whether you need to use some coping strategies to get through the situation or whether you need to temporarily remove the external stressor until you are feeling more grounded and better able to navigate the situation.

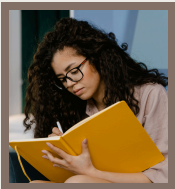
If you are at the beginning of your journey and just starting to identify and develop coping mechanisms for your triggers, while it is not always possible to anticipate or avoid every triggering situation, you may feel the need to keep your environment a bit more controlled initially. This is your safety plan, which enables you to quickly remove yourself from a place, a moment, or a conversation that you don't yet feel equipped to take on.

When situations do arise and you feel some of those PTSD symptoms rearing their head, there are some steps you can take to deescalate and they include:



**\*Ground yourself and focus on your breathing:**

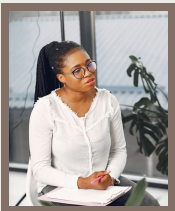
Remind yourself of where you are in this moment, instead of allowing your emotions to pull you back to a traumatic event from the past.



**\*Self-soothe:** Pray, use positive self-talk, journal, engage in calming actions (a walk, a bath, listening to music, reading your Bible...whatever you find soothing), do more of the things that bring your mind back to a place of peace.

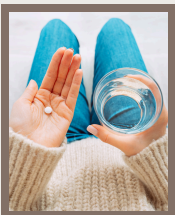


**\*Connect with a support network:** Find a number of "safe" people that can include friends, family or professionals that you can call, text or reach out to when your emotions start to rise.



**\*Schedule regular sessions with your therapist:**

Continue to address triggers and coping strategies. Some very helpful forms of therapy for PTSD are Cognitive Therapy and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), as well as Somatic Experiencing Therapy.



\*If your symptoms are regularly hindering your ability to be functional on a daily basis, you may consider medication as you continue to work through triggers as they arise. This should be discussed with your doctor and you should never feel ashamed if you find yourself in this position.

# When to Seek Help

It is never too early to reach out for help. After suffering through the unimaginable loss of a child, extra support is necessary. Any time you experience any suicidal thoughts or ideations, immediately reach out for help. Finding help can assist you in knowing you are not alone, suicide is not the answer, and with the right help, you will get better. Apart from suicidal thoughts or ideations, there are other warning signs and symptoms to be aware of and to seek help for.

- ✔ Feelings of hopelessness
- ✔ Feeling there is no reason to live or purpose for your life
- ✔ Feelings of emptiness
- ✔ Feeling trapped or like there are no solutions
- ✔ Feeling an overwhelming sense of guilt and/or shame
- ✔ Feeling unbearable pain (emotional and/or physical)
- ✔ Fixation on the desire to join a loved one who died
- ✔ Giving away things/ Getting affairs in order
- ✔ Disconnecting/ Isolating/ Withdrawing from the community/family/friends

# When to Seek Help

- ✔ Increased alcohol or drug usage
- ✔ Increase in anxiety or agitation
- ✔ Changes in eating and/or sleeping habits
- ✔ Showing rage or thoughts of seeking revenge
- ✔ Exhibiting risky behaviors
- ✔ Romanticizing death
- ✔ Experiencing flashbacks or intrusive thoughts
- ✔ Changes in cognitive capacities (focus, concentration, memory, etc.)
- ✔ Experiencing hypervigilance
- ✔ Feeling frozen and/or unable to complete tasks or responsibilities
- ✔ Feeling overwhelmed by life in general
- ✔ Feeling alone or lonely

Of course this is not an exhaustive list and there is never any shame in reaching out for help. We need others to help carry us through the darkest seasons in life. There is hope and purpose in your future.

## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

### – *Tabitha Yates*

Tabitha Yates wrestled with depression and anxiety from as early on in her childhood as she can recall, following physical, verbal and emotional abuse in the home. After her parents' divorce, continued abuse happened through Tabitha's childhood church. After years of fighting through the mistreatment, neglect of her mental health, and then spiritual abuse that was occurring; she decided to give in to her years of suicidal ideation and made her first suicide attempt at 15 years old. Tabitha saw no other way out and no way she could save herself from the cycles of abuse that surrounded her. After surviving her attempt, she was eventually hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital and ordered to stay. This was the rock bottom for her.

After so many years of horrible treatment by church leaders, Tabitha had turned away from the church and believing Jesus to be exactly what the church had represented; she denied Christ as well. She spent years trying to separate Christ from Christianity and eventually found her way back to His endless love.

As a young military parent, Tabitha's first-born daughter was born early with a cleft palate, hearing loss, global developmental delays and so many more complications than one could possibly be prepared for. The years of wrestling with God's plans and why He allows us to endure certain trials, resurfaced as Tabitha almost lost her daughter multiple times due to illness and complications from her birth defect. Tabitha was later diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on top of her existing Bipolar and anxiety diagnoses, as a result of childhood abuse and all the medical trauma her daughter endured.

## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

### – *Tabitha Yates*

In a way, every hardship, every trial, every loss, and every tear led Tabitha to this exact place in her life, where she clings to Jesus with all that she has, advocates for mental health awareness particularly in faith-based settings and ministers to people who are deeply wounded; because she know what that pain feels like. Tabitha wants you to know she understands frantically searching for something to hold on to when everything is falling apart and she sincerely encourages you to hold on, seek help and reach out; because there's more to life than what you're feeling right now.



Tabitha Yates is a writer, mental health advocate, former educator, and the founder of The Redeemed Mama community. She is the author of the upcoming book, *Jesus and Therapy: Embracing Mental Health in the Christian Community*. Following her own struggles with mental health and after surviving a suicide attempt, she now has a passion for reaching out to the hurting, the rejected, and the prodigals--walking with them as they heal and recover from their past wounds.

Tabitha has a desire to educate and equip the church on mental illness until it is more openly accepted, more widely discussed, and the stigma is removed. Her writings and perspective are grounded in her Christian faith and focus on clinging to Jesus through the hard times, emotional well-being, mental health, and abuse recovery. She encourages her readers to pursue Christ and necessary help and interventions, while creating a dedicated support system and allowing God to redeem their story.

## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

### – *Chelsea Crow-Fuentes*

For ten years, Chelsea lost her connection to God's love, grace, and mercy. She struggled with Major Depressive Disorder characterized by intense suicidal ideations as well as self-harm behaviors. She eventually turned to substance use and abuse to mask the pain and lost all hope of a future. In 2009, she survived a suicide attempt and was placed on a fourteen day hold in a neuropsychiatric hospital. Upon being released she immediately returned to her home church, desperate for any glimpse of hope she could cling to. Chelsea was frantically searching for a meaningful identity, purpose for her life, and hope for any future at all. It was on that night, the Creator of the Universe whispered to Chelsea through the verse, Mark 8:35, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." Mark 8:35 (ESV)

God never left her even when she could not see beyond the darkness. While she was struggling with lack of purpose, loss of hope and a false identity, she was holding on so tightly to her life in an attempt to find her own answers, that she nearly lost her life completely. After ten exhausting years of trying to do it on her own, God invited her to fall back and rest on the foundation of faith built throughout her childhood. He offered her rest for her soul. Rather than physically dying, she committed to spiritually die to herself so that she could truly live for Him. Although the struggle continued for another eight years, she stands firm with complete deliverance from suicidal ideations and depression.

## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

– *Chelsea Crow-Fuentes*

With the help of professionals and treatment, God offered His complete freedom in His perfect timing. God has redeemed her life and given her a purpose for living. He miraculously broke the bondages of depression, shame and addiction. He graciously led her to become a counselor, and allowed her pain and suffering to be used to help and support others walking down similar paths. He has blessed her beyond measure with a life she could never even have dreamed of. And the best part is, His healing and grace wasn't reserved for only her - it's for you too.



Chelsea is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT) in California and is a Certified Perinatal Mental Health clinician (PMH-C) as well as a Certified Somatic Experiencing Practitioner (SEP). She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and a Master of Arts degree with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy from Azusa Pacific University (APU). She is a Clinical Supervisor and an Adjunct Professor at APU's MFT Program, and teaches the Crisis & Trauma course.



## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

- *Kysa Schafer*

Kysa has always been fiercely independent and achievement-driven. She would go so far as to say that she fights daily against the idols of achievement and ego. When Kysa hit rock bottom in 2016-17, she had let her worship of achievement completely run away with her life. In her eyes, she needed to be doing all of the things that signaled success in America: buying and putting sweat equity into a home, having at least one side hustle, climbing the corporate ladder, volunteering, taking on leadership roles in trade associations, having a committed relationship, keeping up a busy social schedule, pushing her body to go faster and longer on every run, and never ever showing any cracks in the facade.

Unsurprisingly, as all of these earthly attainments thoroughly dominated and exhausted Kysa's time and energy, she fell out of relationship with God. Instead of listening to the Holy Spirit within her telling her that Jesus's death and resurrection was *enough*, she was listening to her own inner dialogue telling her that she wasn't enough. A few health setbacks with close family members, and her own devastating diagnosis that would make it a challenge to have kids sent her over the edge in an already fragile state. Thankfully, at this time, Kysa and her soon-to-be husband Steven had just found a life-giving church to attend, and a Pastor whose passion for the gospel redirected her to listen to the only voice that matters: God's. Kysa embarked on 4 years of counseling and dove back into a relationship with the Father. During that time, she experienced the joys of marriage, becoming an Aunt, fellowship, and a wonderful new job. She also experienced the heartbreak of loss and infertility, as well as learning to battle against burnout, depression, and anxiety.

## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

*-Kysa Schaefer*

The remarkable thing that kept her from hitting rock bottom again during those four years of rebuilding was that she was actively taking a stand to tune out any influence other than the influence of the gospel story, and what that beautiful story meant for her life. With the help of her therapist, Pastor, and Pastor's wife, she learned how to truly rest in God's presence and surrender to Him. She also reconnected with her baptism and practiced the daily act of 'dying' to her old self (who worshiped achievement and her own ego) and coming alive as a daughter of the King. Praise, glory, and honor be to God the Father who is enough, and who is everything.



Kysa Schaefer lives in Portland, OR with her husband Steven and her sons Benjamin and Jakob. Kysa works part time as a Civil Engineer, but her greatest passion is serving her family as a wife and a mother. Kysa is also passionate about her role in the body - or family - of Christ. She has volunteered over the years as a Sunday School teacher, enjoying every moment of teaching young ones the good news of the gospel.

When Kysa and her husband began to try for children of their own, they experienced the heartbreak of infertility. After four years of waiting, they were blessed with children through IVF. During the process of navigating infertility and loss, Kysa discovered another calling on her life: to come together with families experiencing similar hardship and grief and pray for them in their darkest hours. This calling led Kysa to Praying Through Ministries, where she volunteers as a member of the Prayer Team and eResource Team. During her time with Praying Through Ministries, Kysa has come to believe even more in God's presence and goodness as He has provided her with a community of support, belonging, grace, and hope in the midst of crisis and trauma. Her prayer for everyone who interacts with this ministry is that they feel God's presence in their lives and know that they are not alone.

## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

*-Jessika Sanders*

Though her parents were believers, when Jessika was born less than what they had wanted (just one child instead of twins), her parents stepped away from the faith. Raised not knowing of Him, Jessika lacked a foundation. Her parents' divorce was the catalyst for what would be decades of confusion and hurt. Untreated wounds from molestation, inappropriate sexual encounters with those she trusted, mental and verbal abuse, and struggles with worth and identity, Jessika became an adult who repeated the unhealthy ways modeled for her.

In her late 20's Jessika traveled overseas looking for herself and her worth in a man. She ended up marrying a muslim man and living in Istanbul, Turkey. Sadly, the honeymoon was over before it even began. Some deep-seated, cultural patterns reared their ugly head and the relationship soon turned toxic. Not wanting to follow in her parents' footsteps because of all the emotional damage it had done to her, Jessika endured. She endured until her husband served her a breakfast plate of bacon and eggs with a side of infidelity.

Eight months pregnant and with a four-year-old in the other room, Jessika hit rock bottom. As she lay on the bathroom floor, she sunk into a deep pit of despair. The devil was relentless, flooding her mind with seething lies, guilt, and shame to the point where she was ready to end her life. However, she began to pray three simple words to a God she didn't know, "God, help me." Again and again she prayed those words until she fell asleep.

## AUTHOR TESTIMONY

*-Jessika Sanders*

She woke up the next morning and though her circumstances hadn't changed, she felt an unexplainable peace. There was still incredible tension between her and her husband, but the Lord had pulled her from the pit and was drawing her to Himself.

Four months later in March of 2017, she walked through the doors of a church and officially accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior and allowed Him to radically transform her for His glory.



Jessika Sanders is a wife and mother of three. Saved by grace, she is not the sum of her past mistakes. She is more than the things that happened to her in her childhood and more than her failed marriage. Jessika has a heart for encouraging people in their faith as they journey through the difficult seasons of life and served on staff at her church for over a year.

Jessika is a published writer who has been featured in Proverbs 31 Ministries' [Hope When Your Heart is Heavy](#) devotional (2021), Focus on the Family's Clubhouse Jr. magazine (2023), and Tyndale's [So God Made a Mother](#) (2023). She is the coauthor of The Good Book Company's [In His Hands: Prayers for Your Child or Baby in a Medical Crisis](#) (2024). Jessika is the founder and Executive Director of Praying Through ministries.

You can follow her on social media @Jessika Sanders Writer and at [www.jessikasanderswriter.com](http://www.jessikasanderswriter.com)

## RESOURCES

### **Mental Health Resources/Websites/Phone Numbers (USA)**

#### **National Crisis Text Line**

Text HOME to 741741 and connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7 about any type of crisis.

#### **Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

800-273-TALK(8255)

24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones.

#### **National Maternal Mental Health Hotline**

Call or Text 1-833-943-5746 (English and Spanish)

24/7, Free, Confidential Support Line for Pregnant and New Moms

#### **Postpartum Support International Hotline**

Call or Text 1-800-944-4773 (4PPD)

Text en Español 971-203-7773

Leave a confidential message at any time, and a trained and caring volunteer will return your message during business hours. They will listen, offer encouragement, and connect you with local resources as needed.

## RESOURCES (CONTINUED)



### **2-1-1**

Phone service providing 24/7 free and confidential information, and referrals for mental health services, help with food, housing, employment, counseling, and more.

### **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

[nami.org](http://nami.org)

### **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

[afsp.org](http://afsp.org)

### **Know the Signs**

[Suicideispreventable.org](http://Suicideispreventable.org)

### **Mental Health America**

[Mentalhealthamerica.net](http://Mentalhealthamerica.net)

### **MentalHealth.gov**

[Mentalhealth.gov](http://Mentalhealth.gov)

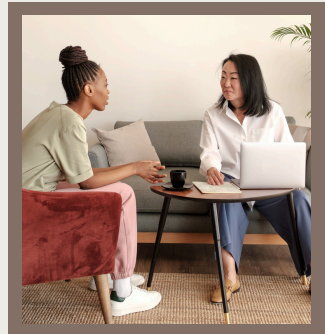
## RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

Find a mental health provider near you:

**Postpartum Support International Directory**  
[psidirectory.com](https://psidirectory.com)

**Christian Counselor Directory**  
[christiancounselordirectory.com](https://christiancounselordirectory.com)

**Psychology Today Directory**  
[Psychologytoday.com](https://Psychologytoday.com)



## What are the types of mental health professionals?

There are many types of mental health professionals who can offer you support in a variety of ways. It is important to find someone who specializes in suicidality and can offer Biblical truth.

### **Pastoral Counselors**

Pastoral counselors are clergy members with training in clinical pastoral education. They are trained to diagnose and provide counseling. Beyond providing psychotherapy, pastoral counselors utilize resources such as prayer, scripture study, and participation in the congregation community.

*Degree Requirements: Masters in Divinity, Graduate or Doctoral degree in Biblical Studies, Theological studies, or Spiritual Studies, Graduate or Doctoral Degree in Pastoral Counseling*

## RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

### What are the types of mental health professionals?

#### **Psychiatrists**

Psychiatrists provide psychiatric, medical evaluation, and treatment for mental illness. A psychiatrist can diagnose, prescribe and monitor medications.

*Degree requirements: Doctor of Medicine (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO), plus completion of residency training in psychiatry*

*Licensure & credentials: Licensed physician in the state where they are practicing; may also be designated as a Board Certified Psychiatrist by the Board of Neurology and Psychiatry*

#### **Psychologists**

Psychologists are trained to evaluate a person's mental health using clinical interviews, psychological evaluations and testing. They can make diagnoses and provide therapy.

*Degree requirements: Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in a field of psychology or Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.)*

*Licensure & credentials: Psychologists are licensed by licensure boards in each state*

#### **Clinical Social Workers**

Clinical Social Workers provide case management and advocacy, and are trained to diagnose and provide counseling.

*Degree requirements: Master's degree in social work (MSW)*

*Licensure & Certification: Varies by specialty and state. Examples of licensure include, but are not limited to:*

- LICSW, Licensed Independent Social Workers
- LCSW, Licensed Clinical Social Workers
- ACSW, Academy of Certified Social Workers



## RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

### What are the types of mental health professionals?

#### **Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists/Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors**

These masters-level health care professionals are trained to evaluate a person's mental health, diagnose, and use therapeutic techniques based on specific training programs. They operate under a variety of job titles—including counselor, clinician, therapist—based on the treatment setting.

*Degree requirements: Master's degree (M.S. or M.A.) in a mental health-related field such as psychology, counseling psychology, marriage or family therapy, among others*

*Licensure & Certification: Varies by specialty and state.*

*Examples of licensure include, but are not limited to:*

- *LPC, Licensed Professional Counselor or LPCC, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor*
- *LMFT, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist*

#### **Pre-Licensed Therapists**

These masters-level professionals are working towards their state requirements for licensure under a designated clinical supervisor.

*Degree requirements: Master's degree (M.S. or M.A.) in a mental health-related field such as psychology, counseling psychology, marriage or family therapy, among others*

*Certification: Varies by specialty and state. Examples of pre-licensure include, but are not limited to:*

- *APCC, Associate Professional Clinical Counselor*
- *AMFT, Associate Marriage and Family Therapist*
- *ASW/ACSW, Associate Clinical Social Worker*

## RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

### What are the types of mental health professionals?

#### **Psychiatric Or Mental Health Nurse Practitioners**

These practitioners provide assessment, diagnosis and therapy for mental health conditions or substance use disorders. In some states, they are also qualified to prescribe and monitor medications. Requirements also vary by state as to the degree of supervision necessary by a licensed psychiatrist.

*Degree requirements: Master of Science (MS) or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in nursing with specialized focus on psychiatry*

*Licensure & credentials: Licensed nurse in the state where they are practicing. Examples of credentials include, but are not limited to:*

- *NCLEX, National Council Licensure Examination*
- *PMHNP-BC, Board Certification in psychiatric nursing through the American Academy of Nurses Credentialing Center*

**Source: NAMI <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatments/Types-of-Mental-Health-Professionals>**





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