

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *JESUS IN ME*

and

RACHEL-RUTH LOTZ WRIGHT

Jesus Followers

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Real-Life
Lessons for
Igniting Faith
in the Next
Generation

BOOKS BY ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ

The Light of His Presence

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*The Vision of His Glory: Finding Hope Through
the Revelation of Jesus Christ*

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Real-Life Lessons
for Igniting Faith
in the Next Generation

Anne
Graham
Lotz
and
Rachel-Ruth
Lotz
Wright



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JESUS FOLLOWERS

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Auhor is represented by Alive Literary Agency, 7680 Goddard Street, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80920, www.aliveliterary.com.

Hardback ISBN 978-0-525-65120-8

Ebook ISBN 978-0-525-65139-0

The Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file with the Library of Congress.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

waterbrookmultnomah.com

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

First Edition

Book design by Susan Turner

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Dedicated
to
Bell, Sophia, and Riffin
and
to the parents and grandparents of the next generation

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I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant
between me and you and your descendants after you
for the generations to come,
to be your God
and
the God of your descendants after you.

Genesis 17:7

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INTRODUCTION

The Race of Life

Almost every weekend during the spring months, my husband, Danny, would take our three young children to watch the track-and-field events at the University of North Carolina, which was his alma mater.

One of their favorite events was the four-by-one-hundred-meter relay race, in which four runners compete as a team. The race is still one of our favorite Olympic track events! As it begins, the first runner from each team crouches at the starting block, gripping the baton. When the signal is given, the runner explodes out of the starting block and runs the first hundred meters as swiftly as he can. As he completes his lap around the track, he approaches the second runner on his team. The second runner is already in full stride when the first runner reaches out and passes the baton to his teammate, who continues running at full speed in front of him. The second runner then runs his hundred-meter lap and passes the baton to the number three runner, who takes it in full stride, and so on until the fourth runner crosses the finish line, clutching the all-important baton.

Winning a relay race depends not only on the speed of the runners but also on each team member's ability to transfer the baton. If the

baton is dropped or even bobbled, precious seconds are wasted, and the race may be lost. If the runner fails to pass the baton, the team is disqualified from the race altogether.

You and I are in a race called life. The Baton is Truth that leads to faith in Jesus Christ. Each generation receives the Baton from the previous generation, runs the race to the best of its ability, then is responsible for passing it smoothly and securely to the next generation.

Passing the Baton of Truth traces all the way back to the first generation of humanity. Following Adam and Eve's disobedience, when sin entered the human race, each person faced the decision of whether to seek a right relationship with God or pursue his or her own selfish desires. In Genesis 5, we find a genealogy that lists ten generations and reveals the passing of the Baton from one to the next. Each man listed lived in the midst of a civilization dominated by Cain's attitude of defiance toward God. The civilization was so wicked that it provoked God's judgment, resulting in the Flood.

Amid the wickedness of Cain's civilization, these ten men stood out like giants surrounded by spiritual dwarfs. Like a ten-man relay team, each received the Baton of Truth from the one who had preceded him. It is interesting to note that each generation was represented by a named individual, not a couple. Could it be that some of these individuals were single parents? While we can't know for certain, we do know that each received the Baton, then grasped it for himself, running his own race with diligence and perseverance. Regardless of whether or not they had believing spouses . . . regardless of their wicked surroundings . . . these individuals successfully passed Truth to the next generation.

Like Cain's civilization, ours is experiencing a bankruptcy of moral and spiritual values that threatens to erode our very existence. The flashing-red-light warning for you and me is to beware of . . .

getting caught up in the way everyone around us is acting . . .

indulging in self-pity or self-focus as struggling parents, single or otherwise . . .

living for our own selfish desires and happiness . . .

conforming to the pressure of the opinions of others . . .
succumbing to the fear of our cancel-culture . . .
and thus neglect to pass Truth to our children.

As parents, grandparents, and mentors, we must strive to be giants among spiritual dwarfs by receiving, running with, and relaying to the next generation the Baton of Truth that leads to personal faith in Jesus Christ.

In order to be successful, it's imperative that we be genuine Jesus Followers ourselves. And that's why I felt compelled to write this book with my daughter Rachel-Ruth.

Drawing on the Genesis 5 genealogy as a framework, the pages that follow are divided into four parts to reflect the four-by-one-hundred-meter relay race and expand on the biblical description of the very first transfers of the Baton. These transfers seem to emphasize the unique impact of our witness, our worship, our walk, and our work, all of which lead to a smooth, successful passing of the Baton. Rachel-Ruth illustrates each segment in the race of life by sharing stories from our family, offering vivid descriptions of how the Baton was passed to us, inspiring us to live in such a way that we can effectively pass it to those who follow.

Our hope is to encourage you to be intentional as you, too, seek to be a Jesus Follower who successfully passes the Baton to the next generation.



Genesis 5

The Beginning of the Race

¹ This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. ³ And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters. ⁵ So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.

⁶ Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begot Enosh. ⁷ After he begot Enosh, Seth lived eight hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters. ⁸ So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died.

⁹ Enosh lived ninety years, and begot Cainan. ¹⁰ After he begot Cainan, Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years, and had sons and daughters. ¹¹ So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; and he died.

¹² Cainan lived seventy years, and begot Mahalalel. ¹³ After he begot Mahalalel, Cainan lived eight hundred and forty years, and had

sons and daughters.¹⁴ So all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died.

¹⁵ Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot Jared.¹⁶ After he begot Jared, Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters.¹⁷ So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died.

¹⁸ Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch.¹⁹ After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters.²⁰ So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died.

²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah.²² After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters.²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.²⁴ And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

²⁵ Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begot Lamech.²⁶ After he begot Lamech, Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had sons and daughters.²⁷ So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died.

²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had a son.²⁹ And he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed."³⁰ After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters.³¹ So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died.

³² And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.¹

PART ONE

Our Witness

By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

Hebrews 11:4

The Bible states in Genesis 1 that in the beginning God created everything. Everything! Day by day by day, He brought everything into existence where nothing had existed previously. On the sixth day of Creation, God created people in His own image with the capacity to have a personal relationship with Him. And that's when the race of life began—in the Garden of Eden with our first parents, Adam and Eve.

While Genesis 1 offers a telescopic view of creation, chapter 2 presents a more detailed view.

The Baton Is Received Face to Face

In Genesis 2, we find that God created the first man of the dust of the ground. He breathed His own life into him, and the man became a living person. And then God created woman from man and gave the woman, Eve, to the man, Adam. So Adam and Eve lived together in the Garden of Eden in the visible presence of God.

Think about it. They knew God face to face. They knew the sound of His voice. They knew the touch of His hand. They saw the light in His eyes when He was with them. They saw the expression on His face when He was talking. They witnessed His strength and wisdom as He worked side by side with them. They knew God in a personal relationship. They knew firsthand that He was real, He was alive, and He was present in their lives. This was paradise. This was the Garden of Eden. This was their home.

Then the darkness of death and evil crept into the glory of creation and the perfection of paradise. The devil disguised himself as a snake that slithered up to Eve, tempting her to doubt God's word, then disobey what God had said. She fell for the temptation and led her husband, Adam, to do the same. As a result, sin entered the human race.

The snake had said that if they disobeyed God, they would be like Him in that they would know good and evil.¹ Following their sin, they knew good because they were separated from it. They knew evil because they were saturated in it.² Tragically, all who followed were born with a sin nature, which separates people from God to this very day.

In judgment for their disobedience, God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. A holy God could no longer have fellowship with His beloved children, who had been created by Him and for Him.³ Their sin was a barrier.

The Baton Is Relayed Faith to Faith

Genesis doesn't give us details, but God must have told Adam and Eve that they could come back to Him by faith through a blood sacrifice. Later, His law clearly revealed that without the shedding of blood, there would be no forgiveness.⁴ All the sin offerings in the Old Testament were visual aids that pointed to the Lamb of God,⁵ who one day would be sacrificed on the cross to make atonement for sin. Each time someone presented a sacrifice in the Old Testament, it was as though God said, "I owe you forgiveness." The New Testament tells us that the blood of animals cannot take away sin, but Jesus did! His sacrifice, foreshadowed so long ago in the Garden of Eden, paid all the IOU notes in full.⁶

The requirement of a blood sacrifice seems to have been clearly communicated to Adam and Eve, because their second son, Abel, chose to approach God in that way and God commended him for it. Abel chose to receive the Baton.

There is no record of Abel teaching or preaching. At this early stage of history, there may have been few other people. Instead, he seems to have silently lived a righteous life that was very different from that of his brother Cain. Abel's witness has stood the test of time, influencing those who have followed, including you and me.

What caused Abel to choose to be a righteous man? I wonder whether it was the positive example of his own father within the home. Did Adam's absolute confidence in the reality of God influence his

son? Surely, although he was now separated from Him, Adam never forgot the touch of God's hand, the sound of God's voice, the expressions on God's face, the authority of God's spoken word. His faith in who God is and what God had said would have been unshakable because he knew God firsthand.

The Baton of Truth was relayed also to me by a positive example of faith within the home.

My own parents were so confident in who God is and what God has said that it never crossed my mind—nor, to my knowledge, the minds of my siblings—to doubt either God's existence or God's Word.

Both of my parents were raised by parents who were confident in God. My maternal grandparents were so confident in who God is and what God has said that they left everything in order to devote twenty-five years of their lives to establishing a hospital and caring for people in mainland China. Later, when they were run out of China by the Japanese and returned home to the United States, my grandfather established himself as a highly respected church leader and helped found two national Christian magazines.⁷

My paternal grandparents were so confident in who God is and what God has said that my grandmother taught a weekly Bible study in their home and my grandfather was instrumental in beginning rescue missions all across the country. My grandfather also met with other men in his city to pray that God would raise up an evangelist to the world, never dreaming that God's answer would be his own son.

Who has impressed you with his or her confidence in God? What a blessing to have parents and grandparents with confident faith. What a blessing to be a parent or grandparent with confident faith!

Whether or not it was Adam's example that inspired Abel, we do know that Abel made his own decision to live a righteous life. His decision to bring a blood sacrifice, when his brother Cain gave God whatever he felt like giving, revealed his receptivity to the truth and his obedience to God's word.⁸ Although he lived with parents who had rebelled against God and with a brother who was defiant, angry, and belligerent,⁹ Abel turned to God.

While we need to speak up and share the truth,¹⁰ a witness that is lived may be even more powerful than one that is spoken. It's not just what you and I say but who we are that catches the attention of those around us. As you read Rachel-Ruth's stories, this truth will be fleshed out in living color.

Abel's righteous witness provoked anger and jealousy in his brother Cain, who then rose up and murdered him. Abel's choice to live by faith in God was a silent witness for which he paid the ultimate price. Yet in doing so, he effectively passed the Baton to the next generation. It was for this witness that the writer to the Hebrews singled him out for commendation, saying, "By faith he still speaks, even though he is dead."¹¹ Abel's life, although brief, was not wasted. His faith in God, expressed through his silent witness, secured him an honored place in Hebrews 11, which is often referred to as the Hall of Faith.

Although to our knowledge Abel never married or had children, he did have a younger brother, born after he was murdered. Adam and Eve named this younger brother Seth, which means "appointed," because, as Eve said, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him."¹² Surely, as little Seth grew up, he was told about his two older brothers . . . about the lives they had lived . . . about the choices they had made. As a result, Seth chose to receive the Baton of Truth and passed it to his son Enosh.

What will people think of you when you're gone? What will your grandchildren know about you? Perhaps you see shadows of this ancient generation in your own family tree as you consider those who chose faith and those who did not. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, like Abel, you are remembered throughout generations to come as one whose life bore unmistakable witness to your faith in God? The choice is yours.

The following stories have been written to encourage and challenge you to think through the legacy you are building. The stories are written from Rachel-Ruth's perspective, drawing on her firsthand knowledge of parents and grandparents, and in them, you will learn about the powerful witness of previous generations that has borne rich fruit in her life. We pray you will be blessed.

Making the Most of Every Opportunity

Anyone familiar with Billy Graham—known to my family as Daddy Bill—knows he shared his faith boldly, without hesitation. Whether witnessing to individuals or preaching in a crowded arena, he did not speak with rehearsed precision. He spoke with passion and conviction because he believed every word he said with every fiber of his being! His deep love for Jesus was always evident in the fire in his piercing blue eyes and the passionate conviction in his familiar voice.

Thousands, even millions, came to faith in Jesus because Daddy Bill's passionate heart for the gospel came through in everything he said and did. Nothing brought him more joy than seeing someone come to Christ! My grandmother, whom we called Tai Tai, told my mom that she and Daddy Bill were once the guests of some friends at a beautiful beach resort. At dinnertime, no one could find Daddy Bill. When Tai Tai went looking for him, she found him behind their building, sharing the gospel with one of the groundskeepers.

My paternal grandfather, whom we simply called Grampa, also

shared the gospel with everyone with whom he came in contact, whether a pedestrian on a street corner in New York City, the person riding next to him on the subway, the waiter at the delicatessen he frequented, or one of the hitchhikers he often picked up for the sole purpose of sharing the gospel with them.

One Thanksgiving he and Gramma were driving down from New York City to spend a week with us. Mom had fixed a beautiful meal to enjoy upon their arrival. We waited and waited. When they finally arrived about eight hours later than expected, we learned Grampa had picked up a hitchhiker, then driven the guy to his destination—six hours out of the way—because Grampa wanted him to know Jesus!

He would say he “didn’t give a rip” about what people thought of him; he cared only about what Jesus thought of him. When we get to Heaven, I can’t wait to meet all the people who he led to Christ. At Grampa’s funeral, a man told my dad he had seen the notice of Grampa’s death in the paper and had come to the service because he wanted the family to know that Grampa had led him to Christ at the local McDonald’s, where Grampa went every morning for a cup of coffee.

It’s clear that the witness of my grandparents made an impact on both of my parents, instilling in them the importance of sharing the gospel at every opportunity.

When I was in elementary school, each Christmas my mom would come in to share the gospel through the Christmas story. I attended a public school that did not look favorably on the Bible or any type of Christian teaching. To share the Christmas story openly without using a Bible, my mom had to be creative. She had the clever idea of using the encyclopedia. As she sat surrounded by my classmates, teachers congregated in the doorway and the principal made a show of being present. But no one could argue with what the encyclopedia said about Bethlehem, the angels, baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. While writing this, I took a moment to look up the words *Jesus*, *Mary*, *Joseph*, *angel*, *cross*, *forgiveness*, *resurrection*, *heaven*, *eternity*, and *peace*

in the dictionary. And do you know what? The same thing is true! The explanations are right there. You can share the gospel from the dictionary! Try it the next time you feel led to share the gospel and someone tells you not to read the Bible in a public setting. Just thinking about it makes me smile.

The Lord has used my mom to share the gospel with many others over the years, including when she led Just Give Me Jesus revivals worldwide in large arenas. She always shared the gospel in the opening session, inviting people to come to the cross and pray with her to receive Christ. Over the years, hundreds of people streamed down to the platform. Her Friday night message on the Cross is the most powerful message I have ever heard. At every revival my mom not only focused on the audience but also had a burden for the production crew—the guys who worked behind the scenes with the lighting, the audio and video equipment, and the stage.

I remember one revival in particular that took place in the San Diego Sports Arena. The revival began Friday evening, then went all day Saturday, which also happened to be Mom's birthday. She gave three sixty-minute messages, emceed the program, then stayed almost two hours after the conclusion to greet people who lined up to speak and pray with her.

We had arranged to meet some special friends for her birthday dinner in El Cajon. She was to come straight to the restaurant from the arena. We waited and waited and waited. We finally went ahead and ordered our dinner. After we finished eating, Mom came in. We could all tell she was totally wiped out, but the sparkle in her eyes let us know she had been up to something special. And then she told us. As she was getting ready to leave the arena, she asked the guy who had handled her audio for the last five revivals whether he knew that his sins were forgiven and that he would be going to Heaven. He answered, "I'm not sure," to which Mom replied, "Would you like to make sure now?" He said yes! So Mom returned to the arena, sat down with him to answer his questions, then prayed with him as he confessed his sin, asked God to forgive him, and invited Jesus into his

heart. Mom said it was the best birthday present she could have ever received.

And then there's my dad. When he wasn't talking about the Lord, he was talking about the Yankees or football or Carolina basketball or a difficult patient he encountered in his work as a dentist. Dad just loved to talk. Many men were drawn to my dad because he was a big manly guy who would shoot straight with them. He told it like it was, whatever it was, just like the New Yorker that he was. He led several men's Bible studies, and he would randomly call on guys to answer questions, which meant they all came prepared every week for fear of embarrassment! Many men came to Christ in his Bible studies. Dad's faithfulness in leading was especially apparent the week that Hurricane Fran roared through our city, destroying the electrical grid and mangling the telephone wires. He walked the three miles to his Friday morning Bible study, found no one there, and never let the guys forget that they didn't show up when he did!

Sharing the gospel is not just for the evangelists and pastors of the world, like my grandfathers, or for Bible teachers and study group leaders, like my parents. Those who have placed their faith in Jesus are called to go and tell the good news to everyone: neighbors, cab drivers, professors, plumbers, coworkers, friends, family, and the list goes on.

I've been raised in a family where telling people about Jesus is as common as drinking water. My husband, Steven, and I have tried to instill that same priority in our three girls. They feel confident in sharing the gospel because they've seen me sharing the gospel just as I've seen my parents and grandparents sharing the gospel. Hardly a day goes by when I'm not trying to talk about Jesus or His Word with someone in my path. I'm not telling people about Jesus out of a weighty sense of duty. Sharing the gospel is not about reciting a rehearsed speech, performing a mechanical exercise, or repeating some formula. I talk about Jesus because I love Him! God's Word says, "Out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."¹ God's love should flow out of our hearts, compelling us to share it with others in our everyday lives. So what does that look like?

My girls have shared the gospel with friends through text messages, with classmates at school, and with teammates on the practice field. They tell people about Jesus because they love Him.

My middle daughter, Sophia, had a high school tennis match at an opposing high school one hot September day. We took our puppy, Sader, along. He needed to get his wiggles out, and my youngest daughter, Riggan, was happy to oblige. Riggan has never met a stranger. She will talk your ears off! She is full of personality and loves the Lord with all her heart. She had already shared the gospel with multiple people in her young life. That day she noticed another girl who, like Riggan, was about ten years old and who also was there to watch her sister play tennis. They immediately struck up a conversation and began to walk Sader in the grass outside the tennis courts.

The two girls never stopped talking and never stopped walking. They even carried the puppy when he got tired as they continued to walk and talk. Over two hours went by. The tennis match ended, and I motioned for Riggan to head to the car. The girls hugged, smiled, and waved goodbye like dear friends. When Riggan jumped in the car, she exclaimed, “Mom, I just led Jane to Jesus!”² We all screamed with excitement! She explained that as they walked around the tennis courts, she began to tell her new friend all about Heaven. Riggan said the girl asked her a ton of questions, which she answered as best she could. She then asked whether Jane wanted to make sure she was going to Heaven one day and whether she wanted her sins forgiven. The girl responded, “Of course!” So Riggan stopped and prayed with her on the spot. To this day, they are close friends. Her mother has also become one of my dearest friends.

On another occasion, we were in Florida, visiting my husband’s family. My mother-in-law and I took my girls and our five-year-old niece, Annelise, to the Mall at Millenia on the south end of Orlando. It took us over thirty minutes to get there through traffic, which ended up being a divinely appointed drive. Riggan and Annelise were in the very back of the car. I knew they were talking the whole ride, but I couldn’t hear what they were saying. When we got to the parking lot,