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# UNBRIDLED FAITH

*100 Devotions  
from the Horse Farm*



CARA WHITNEY

Foreword *by* Dan Whitney,  
“Larry the Cable Guy”



THOMAS NELSON®  
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*Unbridled Faith*

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*To my Aunt Julie, who shined her little  
light into so many dark rooms.  
Arnie, Char, and Orlando, for encouraging me to saddle up.  
Shirley, for being my role model for gentleness.  
Beamon, my spiritual driver.  
And to my Little Beedy, for loving us so  
well because you love God first.*





## FOREWORD

I'm sure the first thing you are wondering is, *Why is Larry the Cable Guy, the "Blue Collar Comedy Tour" comedian, writing the foreword to this devotional?*

For starters, my real name is Dan Whitney.

Secondly, the author is the love of my life, my wife, Cara.

I was the son of a preacher and grew up on a farm raising pigs in a small town of 1,200 in southeast Nebraska. I accepted the Lord into my life in my early years, then again in my teenage years, and thirty-seven more times somewhere in between then and now. I was apparently scared of a little cog in life called "hell." I went to church three times a week, attended two Christian schools, and also went to Bible college. Mixed all together, the inevitable result was—*tada!*—me turning out to be a comedian. The Lord blessed me with an outgoing personality and a talent for humor, so I took it and ran with it.

Unfortunately, as the entertainment industry goes, and as the life of an unattached and unaffiliated Christian goes, I became wrapped up in everything this world had to offer. I would have been described as a "backslider." To my regret, I spent too much time away from Jesus Christ. No, I never got to the point where I shunned Jesus or didn't care about the things of God; I was just less engaged in any kind of a walk with Him. Fame, making money, and having a good time crowded out what I knew was best for my soul. Here's the problem with that: a Christian who doesn't stay engaged in God's Word every day and feed his need for spiritual food begins to gradually fall away from God's purpose in his or her life.

This is where my wife comes in.

One night in June of 2003, I met a quiet little lady from a small town in Wisconsin who grew up the same as I did, minus the church activities. Cara wasn't really a religious person, and that would be putting it mildly. She didn't think too much about Jesus or anything spiritual. She actually kinda despised Christians because she thought they were all hypocrites. (All I have to say to that is, "Guilty as charged.")

For sure, I wasn't much good in helping her find the love that Jesus had for her. I was too busy sliding backward down the dark side of Hollywood. But Cara has always been very smart and inquisitive. Every now and then she'd ask me a question about the Bible because she knew I grew up in a Christian home, and she had questions about my real beliefs. The sad shame of it all is that after all my biblical schooling, and growing up how I did, I could barely answer any of them.

In 2005 we got hitched, and then Cara and I were blessed with two kids and a great family. Things were like a fairy tale, and then, *boom!* Health problems hit her and scared us to our knees; we thought she had cancer. It's crazy how a big health scare like running tests for cancer causes you to begin to review your life. It's something God uses to get your attention, that's for sure. He certainly had ours.

Hang with me now. I know I'm more or less telling my wife's story, but it relates to me writing this foreword.

My wife has always been an excellent detective. She's constantly interested in how things work. She's the type who will watch detective shows and try to figure out who did what before the show's over . . . and she's usually right. Well, during her cancer scare, she told God she was gonna search out Jesus and see what He's all about. My wife delved into

the life of Christ like Columbo! (He's a TV detective from the seventies . . . tells you what I know about modern shows.)

Anyway, she started reading the Bible and devotionals and doing big ol' Bible study guides. She joined a women's group at the church. She signed up for phone podcasts of pastors and watched videos of apologetics scholars. She bought and ordered just about every learning and study book or CD you can get, including taking an online class at Liberty University. When it was all said and done, her search for Christ had set us back five figures! But the cool thing about it was just like it says in Matthew 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Cara had transformed throughout the weeks, months, and years right in front of me into someone who now had peace and happiness. She had a family who loved her, but she also had a deeper joy because of the hope that only Jesus Christ our Savior can give. It was the most incredible thing I've ever witnessed (blowing away Nebraska's back-to-back NCAA football championships in the nineties).

It's amazing to me that I've had this privilege of watching God work in her life. It truly is. When a person opens her heart, seeks the truth, and is truly engaged in the words and teaching of Jesus, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit gives her a peace and a happiness that's unexplainable. My wife is living proof.

While I was watching all this happen, the Lord also began to speak to me. He let me know that I am loved, forgiven, and not ever forgotten. And no matter how many things I've said or done that betrayed who I really wanted to be, or how far away from God I had taken myself, Jesus will always have His arms open to welcome me or anyone else who took a

wrong road back into His arms. We are all sinners and have fallen short, but God's grace is free and abundant.

This world is an unforgiving place; the kingdom of God is not. That's why Jesus died for each one of us, and it's why I am writing this foreword. My wife Cara, a petite and shy girl who grew up on a cattle ranch in a town of forty people, not only searched and found hope in Jesus, but has touched everyone's life around her.

Including me. Her husband, Dan.

I'm so proud of my wife, and I hope these devotions will encourage you like they do me. One of her big goals in life is to point everyone she can to the life she has found in Jesus Christ. She's as bold for Christ as anyone I've ever known. She loves people and she shows it by helping folks stay engaged in the good news of Jesus.

Thanks for reading this little foreword, and thanks for reading my wife's book.

*—Dan Whitney,  
aka "Larry the Cable Guy"*



# 1



## WELCOME TO THE BARN PARTY

*“Rejoice with me, I have found my lost sheep.”*

LUKE 15:6

**M**y funny horse is the life of the barn party. His name is Sven, but I call him Fat Benny. He can gain five pounds just by looking at grass (just like my husband with a cheeseburger). He is very vocal, so if he sees me, he will whinny. But as big as he is, his whinny is very wimpy. Fat Benny knows he’s fat, so if he wants something on the other side of the fence, he lays on the fence until it collapses and just rolls over the top of it. Benny’s antics give joy to everyone at the barn.

Whether it’s through your animals, kids, or friends, if you’re like me, you find joy in a lot of different ways. However, if you and I want to share the joy of heaven, we need to find our greatest joy in salvation. Jesus told us that there will be “more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7).

Our upside-down culture prizes fast cars, expensive clothes, fleeting fame, and shallow relationships over eternal blessings. But as citizens of the kingdom of God, we should put our salvation—and that of those around us—at the top of our lists of things that bring us joy. Think of it: the angels rejoice when one of God’s human creations comes to faith in



Him. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, the heavenly beings celebrated when you confessed Him as Lord.

There will be a party in heaven for you! Now, doesn't that make you want to kick up *your* heels?

.....

*Lord, thank You for the gift of salvation—and the great celebration that awaits Your followers in heaven, amen.*





## 2



# IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY

*"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends."*

JOHN 15:15

**H**orses are amazing animals. When I feel sad or depressed, my horses seem to sense my pain. They turn their ears toward me and even lean into me. In those moments, they aren't just sweet creatures to ride, train, and enjoy; instead, they are my friends.

Still, even if we're surrounded by comforting friends, at some time in our lives, we will be hit with pain so excruciating we will wonder if there is any point in going on. Whether it's a financial crisis, a health catastrophe, or a relationship implosion, our very souls will cry out, "This is too much! I can't live through this!"

Yet with God, we don't have to pretend everything is okay. He longs to be the "friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). He created us, so He knows us better than we know ourselves. We can be honest and real with Him. And His power can help us endure tough seasons. We just have to be humble enough to admit we need Him. You are not big enough to handle life on your own. Run into the arms of a heavenly Father who loves you and weeps with you. Trust Him to be the most loyal, best friend you've ever had.



.....

*Lord, thank You for being not only my creator, sustainer, and savior, but also my friend, amen.*



# 3

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## SILENCE AND PRAYER

*Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.*

JOB 2:13

When I brush my horse, I am really telling him my problems with my hands and my heart. In return, my horse leans into me, seeming to say, “It’s going to be okay.” By his mere presence, he comforts me. He doesn’t have to say a word.

Scientists from England did an amazing study recently that showed that horses know the difference between humans’ happy and sad facial expressions and react accordingly.<sup>1</sup> If only we humans were always good at reacting well to our friends’ suffering. In the Old Testament, Job was successful and blessed by wealth, friends, family, and stability. Then Satan began to test him, taking away everything—including his health. Job’s wife told him to curse God and die. Then his friends came around. Their presence comforted him, and they were great encouragers—until they began to speak, suggesting that Job must have done something sinful to deserve all his suffering. The more they said, the more agitated Job became. Instead of helping him by sympathizing and listening, Job’s buddies gave him advice and told him their theories.

Too many times, we are like Job’s so-called friends. We are uncomfortable with silence, so we rush to fill gaps in conversation with truisms



and opinions. What if we prayed for wisdom before we spoke? It just might make all the difference.

If we wish to be godly encouragers, we must not speak until we have truly listened and prayed. Our words do have a place when we are trying to help someone. But we must let silence and prayer do the talking when we are not sure what to say.



*Lord, use me to encourage and minister to others—especially those who are hurting. Show me how to be Your hands, feet, and face. Above all, show me how to simply listen, amen.*







## 4



# BUCKED OFF OUR HIGH HORSE

*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

JAMES 4:10



I assumed I knew what my horse Nelson was thinking. Even though I showered him with care, love, and all the things *I* would like if I were a horse, in truth Nelson couldn't have cared less about me. He bucked me off while someone was holding the lunge line. I went on a wild ride, sailing through the air and into the sand, while my friend, who was still holding the lunge line, was dragged across the arena. I was unhurt, but my ego took a beating that day.

On occasion, we all need to be bucked off our high horse. The greatness, forgiveness, and eternal nature of God should humble us. The person of Jesus—His sinlessness, compassion, and self-sacrifice on the cross—should also humble us.

Being humble, for many people, seems like a form of weakness. Pride sneaks in when we start to think we are strong enough to handle things better than God. As believers, we must walk in the footsteps of Jesus and place ourselves under His loving guidance. The Bible has some harsh words about pride: “To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech” (Proverbs 8:13).

Pride is a sin that leads to other sins. When we're filled with pride, too easily we become egotistical and arrogant. However, if we surrender



to God daily, asking for forgiveness from our pride, He cleanses us and equips us to deal with life and to love the people around us selflessly. As we walk in humility, we can enjoy the day-to-day release from stress as God intended.

What are you waiting for? Climb off your high horse and fall on your knees before Jesus.

.....

*Lord, forgive my pride. Teach me to be humble as I surrender to You daily, amen.*





## 5

# THE ONE-TRICK PONY

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

ROMANS 8:38–39

**H**orse training is about understanding the horse, not about tricks, food, or force. A good trainer coaxes the horse toward a goal by getting to know the animal first. The trainer gently works with the horse, establishing trust and building the relationship slowly. Bad trainers, however, use fear as a technique. They manipulate and mistreat their horses, believing that domination is the ultimate goal.

In much the same way, Satan uses fear to intimidate and distract us from following God. Our enemy is like a one-trick pony compared to God, but if we allow him to, he can interfere in our lives and wreak havoc on our emotions. Like an abusive trainer, Satan mistreats and manipulates, offering false, right-now rewards in contrast to God's eternal ones. The devil also will do everything he can to trick you into thinking that you're still struggling with something God has already freed you from. Don't give in. During those moments, keep your eyes fixed on the cross and hold tight to the truths found in Scripture.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. When we confess



our sins and trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, we can rest assured that we will spend eternity with Him: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Not only did Jesus give His life so we might know the forgiveness of sin and life eternal with Him, but Jesus also gives us the ability to flee from the devil and have abundant, joyful life here on earth.

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*Lord, steer me clear of the devil’s tricks. Thank You for Your gentle leading, amen.*





## 6




# SKITTISH

*When Jesus and his disciples had finished eating, he asked, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than the others do?"*

*Simon Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know I do!"*

*"Then feed my lambs," Jesus said.*

JOHN 21:15 CEV



**S**ometimes, I think my horse fears two things: objects that move and objects that don't. In all likelihood, if you look up the word *skittish* in the dictionary, his picture appears next to the text.

And on certain days, I'm skittish too. I trip myself up with doubts and insecurity, and I run away at the slightest provocation. Do you ever have days like that? Fear is a real and powerful force in our lives. It's a force that Satan likes to use to trip us up. The enemy's goal isn't always to hurt us physically, but rather to tempt us to believe that God is not trustworthy.

Peter was one of Satan's victims.

The fisherman-turned-follower-of-Jesus was so afraid after the Lord was arrested that he denied knowing Him three different times. After the resurrection, Jesus met Peter again and asked him if he loved Him. And three times Peter affirmed that he did. After our Lord had destroyed the power of death and had risen from the dead, He stood eye to eye with Peter—giving His disciple a second chance. Once Peter had confessed



his love, Jesus assigned him the task of looking out for others. It would not always be an easy job, but as long as Peter released his fear and daily trusted in God, he would succeed.

While the enemy's tactics never change, neither do God's promises. Peter was frozen with fear, but later he was restored to faith. And as we learn from the book of Acts, God used Peter to bring thousands of people to faith—in one day. Satan lost the battle. Is fear pulling you down? Confess it to Jesus and put your trust in Him right now.

.....

*Lord, forgive me for the times I have doubted You and allowed the enemy to bring fear into my heart. Empower me to escape that trap and follow You, amen.*





# 7



## SALT OF THE EARTH

*"You are the salt of the earth."*

MATTHEW 5:13

**D**id you know that horses, like people, need extra salt when the weather is hot? And even when it's not hot outside, my horse loves salt.

In Christ's day, salt was a form of currency. It was expensive and hard to obtain. Because Jesus understood the value of salt, He referred to His believers as the "salt of the earth." For us Christians to lose our saltiness means that the gospel has been diluted in our lives. Instead of influencing the world, we let the world unduly influence us. Maybe we quit spending time with God daily and watch too much television instead. Or maybe we focus on all we don't have instead of the gifts God has freely given us. Whatever the specifics, the person who does not protect the biblical truth in her life from the ideas and ideologies of this world will have little flavor left to bless the lives around her.

The truth is, biblically illiterate churchgoers are spiritually immature and vulnerable to anti-Christian teachings and doctrines. Without a firm grasp on the Bible that's nurtured through daily engagement, believers quickly lose their saltiness. They can't stand strong in the faith they claim and are less confident in telling others about Christ.

Life will present you with all kinds of flavors, but it's your salty



side that God *loves* most. Get into God's Word—and get growing and witnessing.

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*Lord, I don't ever want to lose my saltiness. Help me to grow in faith and wisdom, and let my light shine before others, that they may see Your good deeds, amen.*





# 8



## WATER CROSSINGS

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."*

ISAIAH 43:2

Water crossings are not my horse Sven's favorite thing to do. He plants his feet and won't go in. Sven will tiptoe up to it and back, then step left and right. He'll do anything *but* put his foot in the water. I have been told horses have limited depth perception, and they can't tell how deep water is unless they go in. In that case, maybe I need to be working on our trust issues instead. Sven needs to have confidence that I won't ask him to cross where it's not safe to go.

Throughout our lifetimes, you and I will face countless situations where we're not sure it's safe. Some obstacles will be tougher than others, and some will seem downright impossible to overcome.

God will not put an obstacle or situation in front of you that He can't handle. Better yet, God promises to be with you over, around, and through all of them. As Psalm 23:4 says, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

If you have trust issues, take the first step by submerging yourself in God's Word today. The real enjoyment in life and in faith comes when we are willing to get our feet wet. Then take your cries and prayers to



Jesus, who with His eternal power will keep your head above the troubled waters of this world.

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*Lord, give me the strength to handle the obstacles in my life.  
As I pass through the waters, I will trust that You are with  
me—just as Your Word promises, amen.*





# 9



## ONE OF A KIND

*God has also given each of us different gifts to use. If we can prophesy, we should do it according to the amount of faith we have. If we can serve others, we should serve. If we can teach, we should teach.*

ROMANS 12:6–7 CEV

**W**e all have our opinions on what horse breed is best. God designed each breed differently, from Shetlands to Clydesdales. All of them are exceptional, but none have the same personalities, talents, or abilities. For instance, Fjords and Shetlands have a pony personality. Ponies are like boys—they can be naughty, for sure, but when they see you've reached your limits, they switch gears into charming mode. Even though ponies might have big personalities, by definition they are tiny. You would never ask or expect a Shetland pony to pull a heavy wagon.

Like the many differences between horse breeds, there is a huge diversity of God-given gifts in the body of Christ (the church). The Creator gives each of us a unique personality and talents in order to serve Him, and there is no reason for you to think more highly or more lowly of your gifts than you ought to. After all, you are a one-of-a-kind masterpiece, the very workmanship of God (Ephesians 2:10), knit together in your mother's womb, fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13–14).

Whether you teach, preach, encourage, or minister, you are unique. You have been fashioned and equipped by a loving God. He gave *you* the



gift of eternal life through Jesus and the opportunities to tell the world the good news. Don't waste a moment more! Get out there and use your God-given talents today.

.....  
*Lord, I praise You and thank You for giving me one-of-a-kind talents and gifts. Help me use them for You and use them well, amen.*





# 10

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## STAND STRONG

*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

**D**uring trail rides, Sven has perfected a trick I like to refer to as the “sneak and eat.” When he thinks no one is looking, Sven grabs the first green thing he sees and tries to eat it. No matter the consequence, the temptation is just too much. The next thing you know, he’ll have an entire branch sticking out of the sides of his mouth.

We can all relate to temptation. The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, fell into sin after they were tempted, and they lived in a picture-perfect environment. Even Jesus was tempted, although He did not sin.

Thankfully, God does not allow His children to be tempted beyond the borders of their limitations. The fact is, we *will* wrestle with sin in this life, and we won’t experience its complete vanquishing until we meet the Lord in heaven. However—and this is important—because of what Jesus has accomplished for us, we are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:13–14).

The next time you feel tempted to sin, ask God for help to overcome it. What’s more, ask Him what to do *before* you get tempted. Maybe you