

FIFTEEN-TIME GRAMMY AWARD WINNER

CeCe Winans

with SUZANNE  
GOSSELIN

BELIEVE

for it

Passing on Faith *to the* Next Generation

## Early Praise for *Believe for It*

“CeCe is a powerful woman of God who lives her faith on-stage and off. Her personal story and message of her faith in God is inspiring and something we need more than ever in our world today. I believe her book will help both older and younger generations who want to be authentic followers of Jesus and draw others to Christ!”

—Joyce Meyer, Bible teacher and bestselling author

“CeCe Winans and her family are treasured friends in ministry with me, my children, and she was especially a great friend over the years with my deceased wife, Lois Evans. The Kingdom work I have witnessed them leading and being a part of has spanned decades in multiple generations. That is the heart and biblical wisdom of what CeCe shares in *Believe for It*. My prayer is that this book helps people see what God can do through intentionality in family, church community, and fervent prayer.”

—Dr. Tony Evans, President, The Urban Alternative,  
Senior Pastor, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

“My friend CeCe Winans is a gifted and beloved Gospel recording artist, and she has written a new book that is refreshing and needed today. In a culture that is heavy-laden with failed marriages and broken homes, CeCe writes about the hope that Jesus Christ brings into family life when parents and children honor the Lord through obedience to His Word. Her own story will inspire and capture anew what happens when Christ is put at the center of our hearts and homes. No matter what has happened in life, it is never too late to ‘*Believe for It*.’”

—Franklin Graham, President and CEO, Billy  
Graham Evangelistic Association, Samaritan’s Purse

“I believe in the power of what God can do through family. What my friend CeCe Winans has done in ‘*Believe for It*’ shows how God uses generations to pass down faith.”

—Bishop T. D. Jakes, *New York Times* bestselling author



# BELIEVE *for it*

**Passing On Faith** *to the* Next Generation

**CECE WINANS**

*with* Suzanne Gosselin

**KLOVE**  
BOOKS

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FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE

# K-LOVE BOOKS

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## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this book to my mom, Delores Winans.  
Thank you for being a perfect pattern to model my life after.  
Your beauty and grace intensifies with each passing day.*



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## INTRODUCTION

I was the eighth child born in my family, but I was the first Winans.

Though my heritage is rich and faith filled, my family tree isn't picture perfect. My father, David, was conceived out of wedlock and raised by a single mother, Laura Glenn. Since his father, Carvin Winans, wasn't in the picture when he was growing up, my father went by the surname Glenn. So when my seven older brothers—David, Ronald, Marvin, Carvin, Michael, Daniel, and Benjamin (BeBe) came along—they were born Glenns.

My great-grandfather Isaiah Winans came from Mississippi. He was a bishop in the Church of God in Christ and founded Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ in Detroit, Michigan. A short time before I was born, my great-grandfather approached my dad and requested that he take the name Winans. Even though my dad's father hadn't been present during much of his life, my dad consented to his grandfather's wishes out of respect. And that's how I earned the bragging rights of being the first child of my family to be born a Winans.

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I have always appreciated my rich Christian heritage. I think that's why I'm passionate about influencing the next generation. We have all been influenced by those who came before us. Along with faith, music played a big role in my upbringing. I suppose it's fitting that music is what brought my dad and mom together. They met in 1950 as members of the Lemon Gospel Chorus, a city-wide gospel choir led by gospel great Louise Lemon.

Dad and Mom married in 1953 at the tender ages of nineteen and seventeen. Music was a part of their home, even before my oldest brother was born the following year. Mom played the piano, Dad played the saxophone, and both had impressive singing voices. (Later in their lives they would record several albums together.) Before children came along, both had traveled half the country in a handful of musical groups, so I suppose it's no surprise their children followed in their footsteps.

A large family wasn't part of my parents' plan. Mom used to tell us, "I only planned to have two children, a boy and a girl. It's just that the girl was slow in coming." Clearly God had different ideas. In 1964, I was born Priscilla Marie Winans. Priscilla was the beautiful baby girl name my mom had been saving up in her heart through all those years of having sons. Sometime early in my childhood, "CeCe" became my nickname. By 1972,

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God had blessed my parents with two more daughters, Angelique (Angie) and Deborah (Debbie), completing the Winans family.

I remember two major things about my childhood. The first is that our home was always filled with music. Gospel music played throughout our house morning and night. Most of my siblings played the piano and wrote songs—or at least they thought they could—so someone was always either playing the piano, writing a song, or rehearsing for a program. It seems we were singing before we learned to talk.

The second thing I remember is the faith that surrounded me; it was as strong and consistent as the air I breathed. My parents' commitment to the Lord and His Word enveloped us and guided everything we did. He was unequivocally the center of our home.

Dad came from a broken home and so did Mom. Her mother and her father weren't believers, nor were they married. Mom says she used to dread weekends when drunkenness and fighting broke out. Despite their fractured beginnings, my parents vowed together that they would stay married and raise their children to fear the Lord.

I was blessed to have a front-row seat to the power of this faith and commitment. By the way my dad and mom raised us, you would think the whole family tree was filled

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with saints. But no, like all families, we had our issues and generational curses. Our family may have been close knit (and still is), but that doesn't mean we didn't find ways to mess things up! For me, the beauty of the Winans story is that one act—my parents committing themselves, their marriage, and their family to God. It changed everything.

Through the years, as I've raised my own family—and seen my siblings raise theirs—I've realized to an even greater degree that no family is perfect. Not only that, but the world has become a difficult place in which to pass on authentic faith and a solid identity in Christ. Still, I am totally convinced God honors our commitment to Him and prayers for the next generation. My parents are an example of that. They raised ten children who not only loved to sing, but who grew up to sing God's praises.

Such a foundation is of immeasurable worth. The seeds of faith and service and discipline my parents planted in me have continued to grow and bear fruit throughout my life. God makes no secret of His plan for faith to be passed from generation to generation. Psalm 78:4 proclaims, "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done."

No matter the condition of your family of origin or your current situation, passing on faith to the next generation is possible. Establishing a loving, faithful household

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centered on Christ is not out of reach! After all, God used two teenagers committing their marriage and home to Him to raise up a family that would proclaim His wonders and glorious deeds around the world in ways that this young couple never could have imagined.

Even if you don't have children of your own, or your children are grown and out of the home, God calls you to participate in this calling as well. In Old Testament times, the charge was delivered to the community, to the people of God.

I hope to encourage you through my story and the things God has taught me along the way, from growing up a Winans to becoming an acclaimed gospel singer to getting married to raising two beautiful children of my own to founding a church. Our God is big and has a heart for all generations to believe in Him and be part of His big story. I pray this book helps you discover new ways of passing on powerful faith to the next generation.

The time is now! The apostle Peter said, "The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray" (1 Peter 4:7). Our world has never been more in need of truth and the power of God's Holy Spirit. Old, young, or in between, every one of us has a limited time on this earth to establish a legacy of faith in the next generation. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.



## CHAPTER

### • *one* •

# GENERATIONS

**T**en years ago, in 2012, my husband, Alvin, and I started a church. It's still a bit shocking for me to write those words. Looking in from the outside, it seems extremely unlikely that we, a couple with no seminary training quickly approaching retirement, one day decided to convert our living room into what would become Nashville Life Church.

Looking back, God had been hounding us for fifteen years. At that time, we attended a revival at Born Again Church, our home church of more than twenty years. That night, a woman of God whom we respect prayed over Alvin and proclaimed he would be a pastor.

I remember shouting, "Oh, no!" I'm not sure why that was my gut-level response. I don't carry any deep hurt

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from growing up in the church—in fact, quite the opposite. But I knew the weight and responsibility of such a calling. I also didn't believe a businessman and a gospel singer were equipped for such a task.

Alvin, ever calm and levelheaded, had a different reaction. "She missed it," he said simply. "I would walk on the moon before I'd be pastor." And that was that. Only it wasn't. Over the next decade and a half, as I enjoyed a successful music career and we raised our children, God continued to keep the woman's words on our minds.

A stranger would approach us at the shopping mall. "You're a pastor," he would say to Alvin.

"No, I'm not," my husband would reply.

Stranger: "Oh, yes you are!"

Alvin: "Well, whatever the Lord wants. Praise the Lord!"

These chance encounters steadily grew through the years until it became almost ridiculous how many people mistook my husband for a pastor. We began to wonder what God had in store and even wondered if we would pastor those in the music industry. About a year before we founded Nashville Life, the prophecies were coming so frequently we could not ignore them.

We decided to pray about it: "If it's your will, Lord, we'll do whatever you want us to do. But this is a serious calling."

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The catalyst came through our son, Alvin III. He was in his midtwenties at the time and going through a crisis of faith. He moved to Melbourne, Australia, to get some distance from us and to do his own thing. At that time, Alvin was consumed with his music. He had earned a music degree from Belmont University and was passionate about writing and producing. He entered competitions and wrote music that was secular. As I watched him spend time with friends who weren't living for Jesus, I knew something was off with his walk. He was searching for what he believed apart from Alvin and myself.

When Alvin III announced he was going to Australia, we were concerned about him being so far away. I prayed that God would bring him home, but I had no idea all that was at stake.

My son later told me, "Mom, I told God, 'Whoever gets me first, You or the devil, that's the way I'm going to go.'" Praise the Lord, God got him first!

When his friend, Wally, picked him up at the airport, he told Alvin about the discipleship ministry school he was attending at Melbourne Life Christian Church. Because he had no other plans, Alvin reluctantly agreed to join him. At the ministry school, God lit fire to Alvin's faith. Every time he called home, he seemed to have a

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more exciting story than the call before about what God was doing in his life.

My prayers of, “Lord, bring my son home,” changed instantly to, “Lord, you can keep him there for as long as you want. In fact, it’s fine if he never comes back as long as you’re working in his life.”

After about nine months, Alvin returned to Nashville. He was on fire for the Lord and wanted his friends in Tennessee to experience what he had in Melbourne. He asked if we could invite Dianne and Bram Manusama, the pastors of Melbourne Life Christian Church and the leaders of the Discipleship Ministry School, to our home in Nashville to lead a weeklong Bible study for a few of his friends. Alvin and I agreed immediately. When we asked the Manusamas to come, they weren’t surprised. God had already revealed to them that He was planning to use them to further His kingdom in Nashville.

Our son asked us if he could invite twenty of his friends, which we said was just fine. But on the first day of the event, forty-five showed up, packing into our living room and kitchen! These young people were hungry for God’s Word and His touch in their lives. That week God did a mighty work. As Dianne and Bram taught and the young people read the Word together, many were overcome by the Spirit and wept in repentance. They

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received healing and deliverance from addiction, anger, unforgiveness, and fear. At the end of the week, my husband told the young people to hold on to what God had given them.

“Go back to your church,” he said. “And if you don’t have a church, find one.”

Both my husband and I knew the importance of being plugged into a faith community. Many of the young adults who had come to our home did not attend church. We knew without believers surrounding them that what they had experienced that week could easily fade away. Like the parable of the sower and the seeds, these precious souls would face many challenges to their faith as they forged a new path. That’s why my husband encouraged them to continue their journeys sheltered by the fellowship of a local church.

Three months after that event, Alvin III asked if we could do it again. Those who had been transformed during the first event had spread the word, and more people wanted to come. The Manusamas returned to minister, and God did it again! More young people experienced transformation through the Word, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and repentance. As my husband observed what God was doing, Pastor Dianne looked at him and said, “This is your church.”

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My husband, Alvin, revealed to me later that he had made a specific request to the Lord: *If starting a church is Your will, bring it to our living room.* And that's exactly what the Lord did.

At the end of the event, Alvin said to the group, "Those of you who are part of a church, go back and stay on fire for God. If you don't have a church home, raise your hand." About thirty hands went up. And that is how Nashville Life Church began, meeting first in our living room and later at Wallace Chapel on the property of Christ Church Nashville.

During the years we met there, the pastors of Christ Church offered us such beautiful hospitality, an expression of the unity of the body of Christ. They made everything easy for us. I think God knew we needed everything to be easy in the beginning so we wouldn't give up.

## A NEW PURPOSE

In those early days of Nashville Life, God revealed something significant to Alvin and me. The ethnically diverse group of millennials who streamed to our church had a deep need for God's transforming power in their lives. Many came from broken homes, and some of their families

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were not comprised of Spirit-filled believers. They needed spiritual parents and were drawn to Alvin and me.

We came to find out that only six out of ten in the millennial generation were raised by both parents.<sup>1</sup> Roughly 40 percent were missing a dad or mom in the home while growing up.

Research shows that in weighing their own priorities, the next generation places parenthood and marriage far above financial or career success. The young people filling our pews longed to see a model of a strong, loving marriage. They craved the security and acceptance we could offer. They desired parental figures who could guide them spiritually, hold them accountable, and support them. And they found those things in Alvin and me. In those earlier days, pastoring looked more like parenting, but it bore much fruit.

I thought back to my mom and dad. Though part of the silent generation, with the Lord's help, they had reversed the curse of a fractured family and given my nine siblings and me the blessings of a loving home centered

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1. Russell Heimlich, "Missing Mom or Dad," Pew Research Center, March 22, 2010, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2010/03/22/missing-mom-or-dad/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2010/03/22/missing-mom-or-dad/).

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on Christ. This idea of older generations passing down faith to the younger is not a new idea. Scripture contains more than 150 references to generations. Consider a few:

Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the LORD.  
(Psalm 102:18)

One generation shall praise Your works to another and shall declare Your mighty acts.  
(Psalm 145:4, NKJV)

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. (Luke 1:50)

Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.  
(Psalm 71:18)

I particularly love that last one. The psalmist expressly asks the Lord to be with him in his old age so that he may declare God's power to the next generation. As I walked alongside the young people in our church, this was my

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prayer too—that God would allow me to pass on faith to those who are to come.

The charge to parents to pass on faith to their children appears early in Scripture. We see a perfect example of this teaching in Deuteronomy 6. Just after presenting the Ten Commandments, Moses orders the people—every generation—to honor the Lord and obey His commands. He says, “Always remember these commands I give you today. Teach them to your children, and talk about them when you sit at home and walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (6:6–7, NCV).

Passing on faith to the next generation is to be an immersive, all-of-life activity. Parents are to talk to their children about God constantly. They are to aggressively teach them the truth every day, every opportunity they get, so that their children will know the truth from the counterfeit.

When I think about my own upbringing, this method happened naturally in our home. The Winans kids were in church at least three days a week (more if there was a shut-in or revival). When we weren't at school or church, we were in the home singing gospel music, hearing the Word as part of family discussions, or preparing to serve in some way. We had fun and the usual family antics, of

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