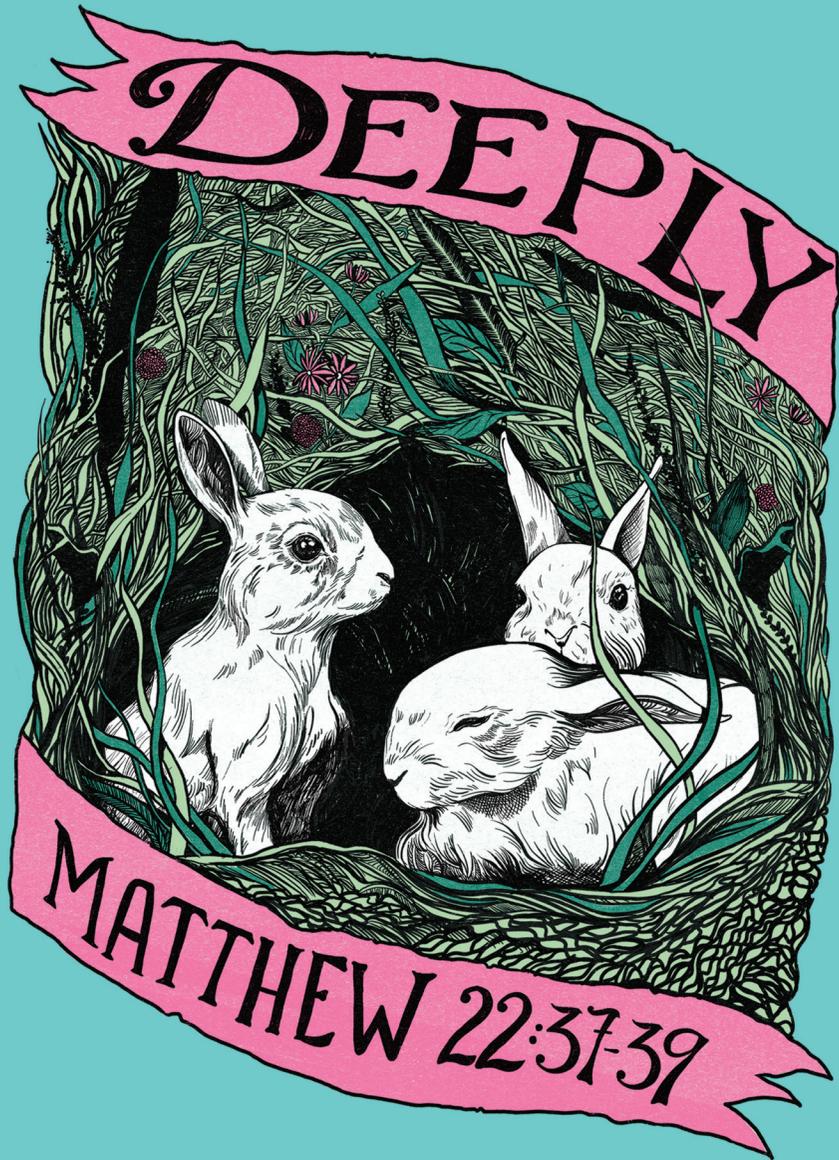


# GATHER

WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER FROM  IMMANUEL BIBLE CHURCH



**WOMEN'S  
CONFERENCE**  
MARCH 28-29



**REGISTER  
TODAY!**

# FIRM IN FAITH

Every Women's Ministry newsletter has a theme. Sometimes it is a very loose theme, sometimes I spell it out and sometimes I don't. But there is always a thread that runs through each article we include. This newsletter is no different. After the one went out last fall, I had a specific theme in mind for the Spring newsletter, but several significant events at the end of 2024 altered the theme. Specifically, the deaths of several Immanuel women within the span of a few short months changed my approach to this newsletter.

Dorian, Karole, Debbie, Valerie (and I know I could list others)—these are the names of Immanuel women that went into eternity in the last few months of 2024. Some suffered for a while before she died, while others died suddenly or after a very intense, brief period of suffering. Some were current Immanuel members and some were former members. Death is a part of life in this broken world, and certainly death is not a rare occurrence at Immanuel. But to lose so many women in such a short

period, and some under particularly sudden circumstances, has not been easy. However, it was not just the number of women we lost, it was the faith and character of these women that made it sting even more. Each of these women were faithful—faithful followers of Christ and faithful sisters in our church family.

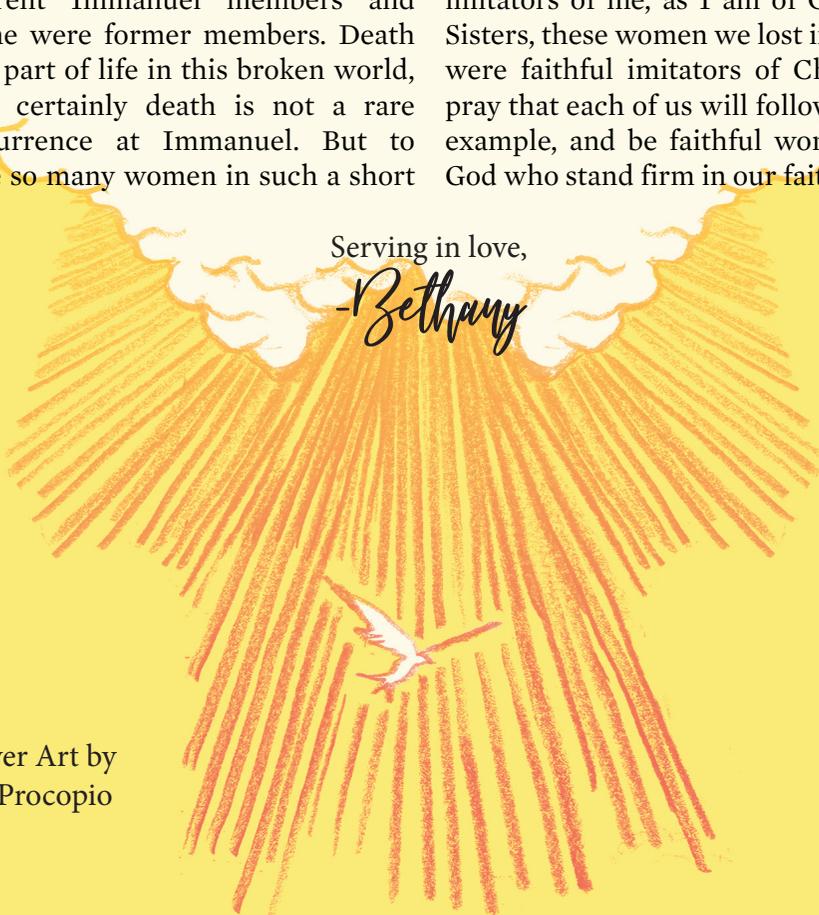
Isaiah 7:9 says, "If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all." These women each looked different in their daily lives, but each of them were "firm in faith." They loved Christ and His Word. They studied God's Word to know and worship God better. They loved and served the church. In whatever God called them to in their families, their work, and the church, they faithfully served. And they each stood "firm in faith" to the very end.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." Sisters, these women we lost in 2024 were faithful imitators of Christ. I pray that each of us will follow their example, and be faithful women of God who stand firm in our faith.

Serving in love,

*Bethany*

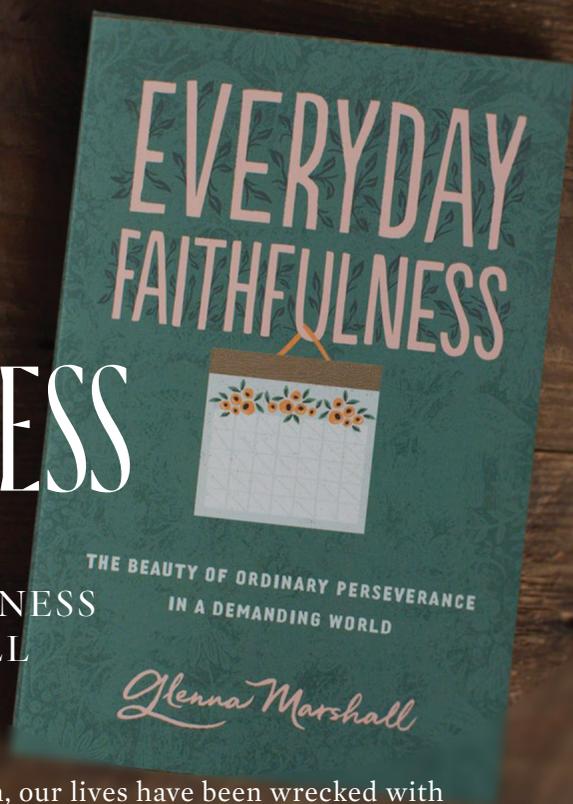
Cover Art by  
Ali Procopio



# BEING WOMEN OF ENDURING FAITHFULNESS

A REVIEW OF  
EVERYDAY FAITHFULNESS  
BY GLENNA MARSHALL

by *Becky Evans*



Ever since the fall in the garden, our lives have been wrecked with suffering, hurt, pain, waiting, lament, and the consequences of sin. Jesus said in John 16:33, “In this world you will have trouble...” and Peter said in 1 Peter 4:12, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” Yet, in this life, when trials hit us and when things don’t go the way we planned, we are surprised. We are annoyed. We ask, “Why me?” We do this even though God has already told us this life would not be easy.

**So how can we react to our life’s circumstances in a way that trusts God more? How can we remain faithful to God’s purpose for our lives to glorify Him in all things, even the things that don’t go our way in this world?**

In the book *Everyday Faithfulness*, author Glenna Marshall discusses what Christian faithfulness looks like when our lives feel hard—in the seasons of waiting, suffering, worry, spiritual dryness, and those seasons in between.

I always love reading Glenna’s books and hearing her speak because she is so relatable and down to earth as she shares practical ways to bring God’s Word into our everyday lives. She draws out the point that faithfulness is truly done in our everyday life; it is not a one-time decision that we then forget about the rest of our lives. We must daily, hourly, and minute by minute choose to make decisions to aid in our remaining faithful and steadfast to Christ. The wonderful news though is that God has given us everything we need to remain faithful; He has not left us without the answers.

Glenna states that everyday faithfulness is rooted in basic things—Bible reading (along with meditation and memorization of Scripture), prayer, and investment in the body of Christ (the Church). While all of that sounds basic, it takes discipline and perseverance to do these things. Faithfulness takes daily sustenance to grow, just as a garden takes daily care to grow. We have to prioritize these things in order to make them happen. We don’t

just drift into these habits of growth passively.

Everyday faithfulness is not easy because our flesh will pull us the other way, but everyday faithfulness is worth it. It draws us closer to Christ and grows our knowledge of God, which in turn produces in us joy and peace and the fruits of the Spirit that God desires to grow in us to conform us more to His Son. It will not happen overnight though—that is where the everyday part of faithfulness comes in.

However, as Glenna points out, this is not a topic and a book just saying “do better” or “do more.” We do not have to do more to earn God’s favor—that is not what this is about. Building habits of everyday faithfulness will help you grow into Christlikeness so that you already have habits built in that will help you endure and remain faithful when the pressures of life press on you. You will know the truth of Scripture more fully and be able to bring it to mind when life is hard.

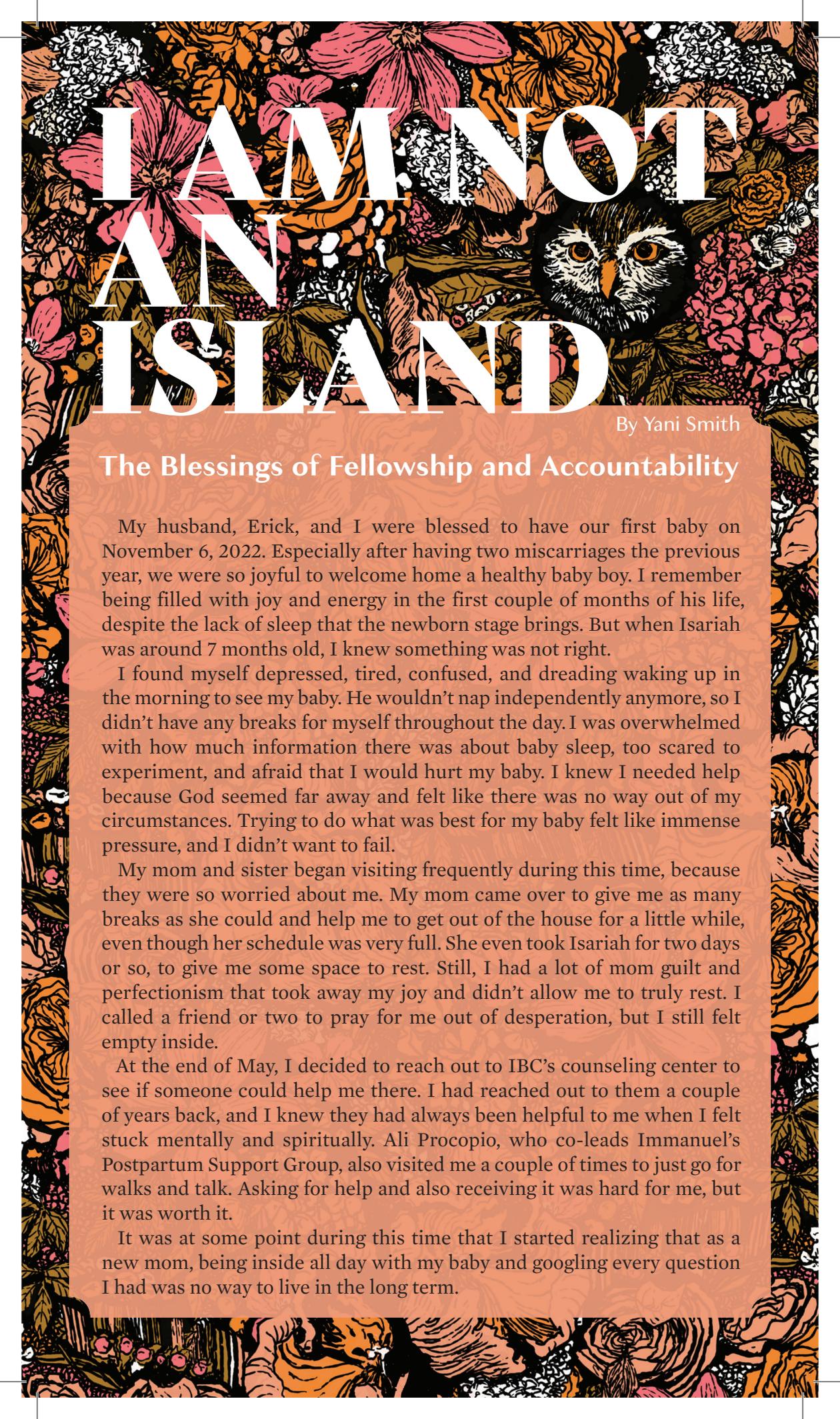
I have seen in my own life how everyday faithfulness permeates my thought life and my actions when those hard moments in life come. Looking back, I see when I have failed at this and other times when I have felt peace that passes understanding even in those hard times because I have been dwelling in His Word and with fellow believers consistently.

About 13 years ago, my husband and I were trying to get pregnant for the first time. In my mind, God would grant my wish of a baby on my time schedule. Instead, I had a season of waiting. A disappointment each month. Instead of leaning into God during that time, I became bitter and self-focused. I even turned that bitterness deeper when a friend of mine, who was not married at the time, became pregnant. I was bitter toward God and now my friend as well. Instead of digging into Scripture and prayer during that waiting season, I allowed Satan to grow those seeds of bitterness and pain. I did not listen to the words of 1 Peter 5:8 that say, “Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Eventually, God in His grace did bless us with a pregnancy and a beautiful baby girl, but my bitterness had already dug a hole and partly ruined a friendship—when instead I should have been wanting to be used by God to encourage and help my friend who found herself in a situation she hadn’t planned.

When we are not prioritizing Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with believers, our hearts will create other priorities and idols in our lives, and that is not what God wants for us and it is not what is best for us. Instead, He desires for us to find the answers in His Word, but we have to take responsibility for prioritizing our relationship with God and growing it through daily habits of Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship with believers.

My challenge to you and to myself is to stop making excuses. It is easy to say there is not enough time to read your Bible, prioritize prayer, or invest in the Church. Life will always get in the way, no matter your age or season of life. God’s Word will always provide more wisdom to us, and we will never know it all, but through everyday habits, we can continue to grow in our faithfulness to Christ. We will never be perfect, but let’s not make that an excuse not to start the habits that will sustain us in those hard seasons of life.

Rather, in hope, let us press on faithfully toward the goal “for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14)



# I AM NOT AN ISLAND

By Yani Smith

## The Blessings of Fellowship and Accountability

My husband, Erick, and I were blessed to have our first baby on November 6, 2022. Especially after having two miscarriages the previous year, we were so joyful to welcome home a healthy baby boy. I remember being filled with joy and energy in the first couple of months of his life, despite the lack of sleep that the newborn stage brings. But when Isariah was around 7 months old, I knew something was not right.

I found myself depressed, tired, confused, and dreading waking up in the morning to see my baby. He wouldn't nap independently anymore, so I didn't have any breaks for myself throughout the day. I was overwhelmed with how much information there was about baby sleep, too scared to experiment, and afraid that I would hurt my baby. I knew I needed help because God seemed far away and felt like there was no way out of my circumstances. Trying to do what was best for my baby felt like immense pressure, and I didn't want to fail.

My mom and sister began visiting frequently during this time, because they were so worried about me. My mom came over to give me as many breaks as she could and help me to get out of the house for a little while, even though her schedule was very full. She even took Isariah for two days or so, to give me some space to rest. Still, I had a lot of mom guilt and perfectionism that took away my joy and didn't allow me to truly rest. I called a friend or two to pray for me out of desperation, but I still felt empty inside.

At the end of May, I decided to reach out to IBC's counseling center to see if someone could help me there. I had reached out to them a couple of years back, and I knew they had always been helpful to me when I felt stuck mentally and spiritually. Ali Procopio, who co-leads Immanuel's Postpartum Support Group, also visited me a couple of times to just go for walks and talk. Asking for help and also receiving it was hard for me, but it was worth it.

It was at some point during this time that I started realizing that as a new mom, being inside all day with my baby and googling every question I had was no way to live in the long term.



I remember taking Isariah to one of my first postpartum support sessions at Immanuel one morning earlier that year. I was so nervous about how he would do, but to my surprise, he did great, and he napped in his stroller after the meeting while I was able to say hi to some friends who were helping set up the church sanctuary for Easter.

In the moment, I suddenly felt a huge sigh of relief. My son was not ruined because I had chosen to leave the house for one of his naps. And I started to realize how much I missed community. My desire to control my child's schedule and not ruin it had caused me to isolate myself from the rest of the people around me, and even my church community, which had always been so important to me.

I realized that in wanting to care for my child perfectly, I had neglected community and fellowship for months, and this did take a toll on my mental health and spiritual health. When Isariah was born, Erick and I left choir and our weekly Bible study group because we were too busy with the baby. Of course, there is nothing wrong with taking care of your family, especially in the newborn days, and temporarily not being able to do everything you once did, but we realized we were greatly missing the blessings of fellowship and accountability.

Slowly, Erick and I began to start connecting again to the body of Christ and made it a goal to make it to our ABF on Sunday mornings. This helped me to talk to and see other women and moms, which was so life-giving. Along with these changes, I started attending MUMS, which is a group for moms with littles from birth through pre-school, where I could really fellowship with moms who were in the same stage of life. This group has been like a balm for my spirit and for my weary mom's heart.

Eventually, I found a way to help my son's sleep challenges and I found out he was more resilient than I thought. I started resting more.

But I found that God had been teaching me more important things, hard things, through this trial. I learned to be humble enough to ask for help from others, especially those in my church community, and not feel like I am burdening them. I still fight thoughts like "they are too busy to help watch my kids" or "I don't want to call them to chat; they probably are busy with their own children," and have to remind myself that I am loved and that, as a new mom, I am not an island. I am doing something that is hard and new that I have never done before. I have to be okay with needing and accepting help and accepting God's grace when I feel so imperfect for the task every day, clinging to the only perfect One.

When I look back today, now a mother of two beautiful boys, I couldn't have made it without the hands and feet of Christ—His church. I've also most importantly learned that God works strongest through our weaknesses. Time has shown me that I have been able to handle the challenges of motherhood, one day at a time, not because of my abilities or my doing, but because I have learned to first trust in God and seek Him first. He says we can overcome any obstacle through Him, and He has proven it true.



# Reflections on Following Christ Together

By Ashley Kisselman & deedee Collins

For nearly 20 years, I prayed very specifically for a spiritual mentor. I asked the Lord for an older woman with rock-solid faith with whom I could journey through life, family, and faith. God answered me using the Spiritual Mentorship program at IBC in more ways than I could have imagined. As a mentee, I was uncertain what to expect, but God is so kind, and He made sure my mentor was a perfect fit.

My mentor challenged and pushed hard to grow me in my prayer life and study of Scripture through Godly

counsel and advice. She spoke truth even when it may have been uncomfortable, and she did so with grace and love. She was and is an incredible example of 1 Thessalonians 5:11, which tells us: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing.”

Furthermore, I sometimes am guilty of overthinking things or suffer from “paralysis by analysis,” and my mentor helped shift my perspective on challenging issues through conversations, God’s Word, and prayer. Her dedication to prayer

is an incredible example I am encouraged by and seek to emulate.

The mentorship program officially lasts for one season, but the relationship with my mentor blossomed into a sweet, enduring friendship that has continued well past the program end date. God knit our hearts together, and I thank the Lord for her every time I think of her!

- Ashley Kisselman

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In the ten years I have been blessed to be a part of the Women's Spiritual Mentoring Ministry, God has taught me new things every season. Just as each of us is unique, so is every mentoring relationship. The theme verse of the ministry, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1), encourages each relationship to grow together in our love for the Lord, His Word, and its application in our daily lives.

My recent mentee came into our season with many different desires on her heart. She was seeking after the Lord's will in marriage, parenting, career, and walking closer to Christ. It was a lot to process and pray over, but God was faithful in our times together. We looked to His Word, prayed together, and slowly peeled back the layers of heart

desire versus God's best for us. We enjoyed long walks, dinners with our families, and several Women's Ministry events. Month by month, I saw my mentee gain a new perspective for where the Lord was leading her. There were some big decisions to make, and more will be made in coming days, but seeing her increased trust in the Lord, and walking more intimately with Him, has been a joy to witness. It has noticeably blessed her family as well.

When we first started this ministry, many of the women who were asked to be mentors were not sure if they had anything of value to teach another sister in Christ. I wondered the same thing, but in every relationship I have had in this ministry, God has allowed me to grow spiritually—to be a better listener, encourager, and prayer warrior! God has created us for relationships; as we walk out this journey of life and faith together, we grow closer to Him and each other.

- deedee collins

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*Are you interested in being mentored as part of our Spiritual Mentoring ministry? Applications will open online in May for the next season. Questions? Email us at [spiritualmentoring@ibc.church](mailto:spiritualmentoring@ibc.church).*

# Our Hope in Life and Death

*By Sarah Fite*

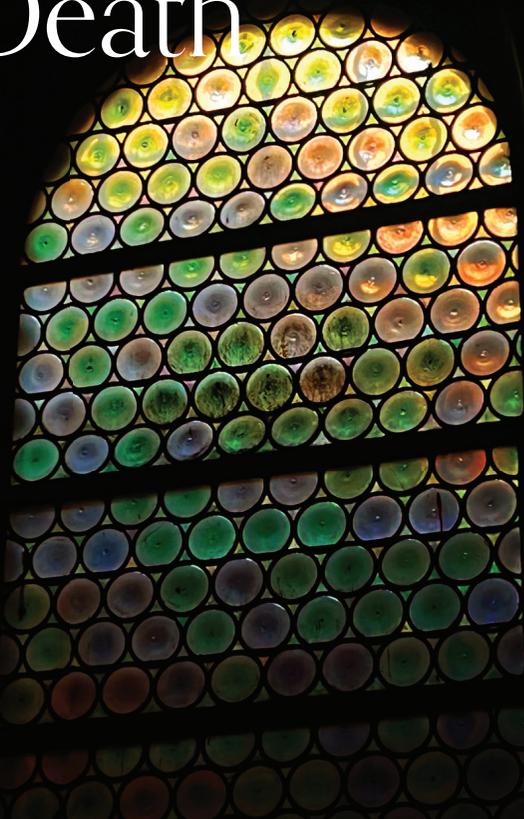
The year before I was born, my maternal grandmother died at the age of 50. Before I was old enough to feel her absence or even have an awareness of it, my grandfather remarried. We sometimes referred to my new grandmother as “Grandma Camille,” but to me, she really was just “Grandma,” because she’s the only one I ever knew, at least on that side of the family.

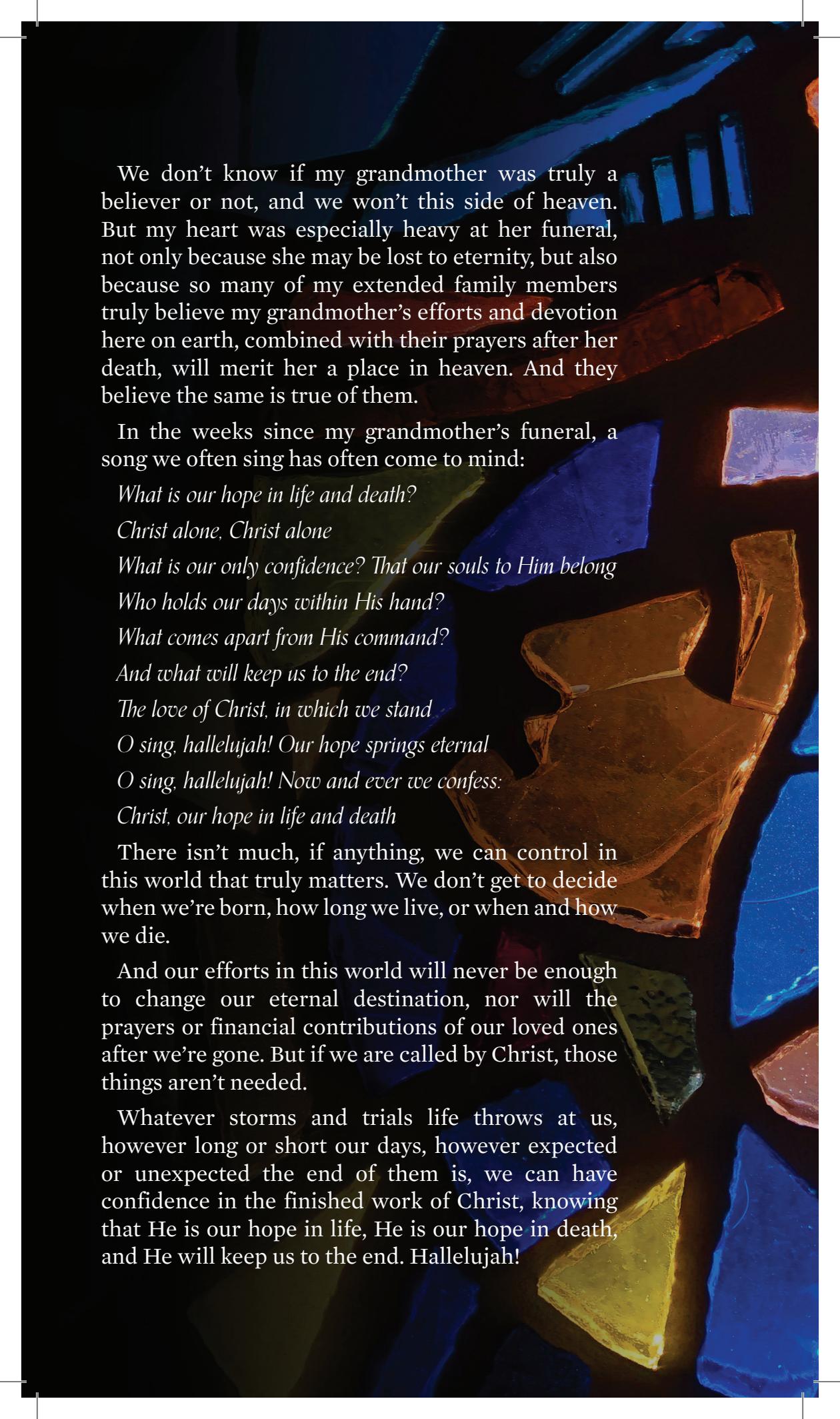
On January 23, I got the phone call from my mom we’d been anticipating for months—after four years of fighting, my grandma had died from ovarian cancer. Just over a week later, my parents and all my siblings made our way—some by plane, others by car—to Michigan to say goodbye.

I’ve been to my fair share of funerals at this point—for both of my dad’s parents, for the parents and husbands of friends, for a youth pastor. But for all of those funerals, while there was certainly grief at the loss of one so dearly loved, especially those lost what felt like far too

soon and sometimes under circumstances incredibly hard to explain or understand, there was also a sense of joy and peace, knowing those lost had put their hope in the finished work of Christ.

My grandmother’s funeral was a different story. As a lifelong Catholic, the service was a Catholic funeral mass, filled with what felt like so many contradictions—statements about the surety we have in Christ’s death and resurrection followed by prayers that God would be gracious enough to welcome her into heaven.





We don't know if my grandmother was truly a believer or not, and we won't this side of heaven. But my heart was especially heavy at her funeral, not only because she may be lost to eternity, but also because so many of my extended family members truly believe my grandmother's efforts and devotion here on earth, combined with their prayers after her death, will merit her a place in heaven. And they believe the same is true of them.

In the weeks since my grandmother's funeral, a song we often sing has often come to mind:

*What is our hope in life and death?*

*Christ alone, Christ alone*

*What is our only confidence? That our souls to Him belong*

*Who holds our days within His hand?*

*What comes apart from His command?*

*And what will keep us to the end?*

*The love of Christ, in which we stand*

*O sing, hallelujah! Our hope springs eternal*

*O sing, hallelujah! Now and ever we confess:*

*Christ, our hope in life and death*

There isn't much, if anything, we can control in this world that truly matters. We don't get to decide when we're born, how long we live, or when and how we die.

And our efforts in this world will never be enough to change our eternal destination, nor will the prayers or financial contributions of our loved ones after we're gone. But if we are called by Christ, those things aren't needed.

Whatever storms and trials life throws at us, however long or short our days, however expected or unexpected the end of them is, we can have confidence in the finished work of Christ, knowing that He is our hope in life, He is our hope in death, and He will keep us to the end. Hallelujah!



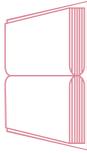
WOMEN'S MINISTRY

# Missions Statement:

Encouraging all women to be faithful followers of Christ who:

**READ • LOVE • OBEY & PROCLAIM**

## God's Word



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