

A
SUDDEN
GLORY



God's Lavish Response
to Your Ache *for* Something More

SHARON JAYNES

Best-selling author of *The Power of a Woman's Words*

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This book is dedicated to my mom,

Louise Edwards Whitehead.

*Thank you for allowing me to share our story
so that others may know the hope and healing
of Jesus Christ and experience moments of sudden glory
as they live and move and have their being in Him.*

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THE GLORY ACHE

O God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need for further grace.

—A. W. TOZER, *The Pursuit of God*

It happened again.
I was not surprised.

Her words of frustration and longing spilled from her heart to my e-mail inbox.

Dear Sharon:

I have lived a very blessed life. I have been married to the same man for forty years. I have four beautiful daughters, who seem to have married the perfect mates, and nine wonderful grandchildren. I was raised in a Christian home, and my mother is still alive and healthy at eighty-five years old. My husband is retired, and we are living comfortably. I have never been abused or mistreated. I have

friends, and most would say that I am a happy person. And yet, something is missing. With all the good things in my life, all I really want is a close relationship with Jesus.

I am trying, I really am. Even though I was raised in church, I married a Jewish man and drifted away from God. I gave my life to Christ at a women's Christian meeting fifteen years ago and have been pursuing God ever since. I felt that recommitment was necessary for me. It was a new beginning. Now I do an online Bible study, am an active member of a local church, visit a shut-in once a month, and help with vacation Bible school. I have taught Sunday school, and I attend church regularly and pray daily.

I have been reading and studying the Bible and know that when you seek forgiveness, it is given. I have asked God to forgive me of the choices I have made and believe that He has. Now I am asking God to let me know what His purpose is for my life. What does He want from me? What does He have planned for me? I am trying very hard to listen for His direction. I am willing to follow His path, whenever I realize what that is.

Here's the crux of my problem. After I gave my life to Christ, I joined a church and began reading the Bible daily. Yet I never experienced that overwhelming feeling of change that so many others experience. In my quiet times, when I seek to know Him better and wait quietly for answers, I do not get the nudges that others talk about. I know that some people hit rock bottom and then experience a dramatic life change accompanied by an emotional high. I sometimes wonder if I will have to experience some great trial in order to have the wonderful feelings of a true relationship with Christ.

I have worked on identifying my sins, thinking that this might help me feel closer to God. I am working on not gossiping and not being prideful or vain. I am always working on my patience. I don't have

any serious vices, but I am constantly working on self-improvement. I try to start each day with quiet time, Scripture reading, and prayer. I try to have a God-focused day.

Is something wrong with me? Do other women feel this emptiness too? Should I be feeling something more? What more should I be doing? I know Christ loves me, but something is missing and I don't even know what it is. What should I do?

—Stephanie

Oh, Stephanie, I whispered, no you are not alone. Your words echo the longings of women all around the world, and I dare say, through the ages. Why is feeling close to God so hard? Why does this faith journey seem so difficult?

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING MORE

This was the first time I had heard from Stephanie but not the first time I had heard the heart-cry. The particulars of her story were different, but I had heard the same longing from countless others.

Most of us come to Christ with a certain “inloveness”—a stirring of emotion mixed with an inexplicable knowing that we’ve discovered our reason for being. But some years into our spiritual journey, the wonder that swelled during the early years ebbs into routine religion laced with busyness. And we secretly question the point of it all. *There has to be more than this*, we muse. *There has to be something more. What am I missing? What’s wrong with me? I’m doing all the right things, but God seems so far away. I’m trying as hard as I can, but it never seems to be enough. What does God really want from me anyway?*

For decades, as I have had the privilege of ministering to women, I have heard the same heart-cry from those who desire to have a deep, intimate, exuberant relationship with Christ but don't know how to find it.

Perhaps you can relate. You long to feel close to God but sense there's just

something lacking, that you've missed the mysterious formula to make it happen. I call this a "glory ache"—a persistent longing to experience God's presence on a daily basis. Perhaps like most women, you've tried desperately to balance the montage of mundane demands and somehow slip God into the white spaces that are few and far between. You long to spend time in the sacred with God but find the desire crowded out by the responsibilities of the secular—the daily demands that lay claim to your attention. You yearn to experience God's presence but feel far away from Him as you reach to click off the bedside lamp and collapse exhausted once again. *Maybe tomorrow*, you sigh.

Sound familiar? If so, you are not alone.

The travesty is that we allow the busyness of life to crowd out the Source of life. As the psalmist wrote, "We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing" (Psalm 39:6, NLT). Ann Voskamp echoes that lament: "In a world addicted to speed, I blur the moments into one unholy smear."¹

And in that unholy smear, that blur of the world passing quickly by, we know something's not quite right. So we strike out to make it all better. And most of us are quick to think "something more" means "doing more." We ramp it up and gun the engines—sign up for a new committee, volunteer for a new cause, bake one more casserole to feed the sick. We attempt to silence the hunger pains of the heart by feeding it the bread and water of duty. And at the end of the day, while we might feel a self-induced sense of well-being, the hollowness in our souls that can only be satisfied with God echoes with the grumblings of hunger still.

We long for a sense of closeness with God, but we have a hard time putting our finger on exactly what that closeness would look like. It's just something more. Something different. A flavor we have yet to taste. A country we have yet to visit. A sunset we have yet to experience. A lover we have yet to embrace. *There has to be something more*, we cry! And we are quite right. We are craving the closeness that comes with an intimate relationship with Jesus.

So we try harder. We go to Bible studies, attend church, say our prayers, and read our devotions. Check, check, check. And yet, we constantly feel that we are somehow letting God down. With the last “amen” of the day, we sigh, *What more does God want from me?*

One January morning a few years ago, I asked God that same question. I had just finished a big writing project and was ready to tackle the next big thing for God. I snuggled in my favorite den chair with a steamy cup of coffee and my well-worn Bible to spend some alone time with my heavenly Father. I read a few verses and said my prayer. Check. Check. When I started to get up, I felt God’s invisible strong hand holding me back. He wasn’t finished. *Be still, and know that I am God*, He seemed to say. *Cease striving.*

Suddenly I saw myself with the disciples caught on the stormy Sea of Galilee. As I pondered the past twenty-five years of my life, I saw myself reeling in the waves of ceaseless activity. A squall of busyness raging around me—and in me. Reeling from one foamy crest of work and deadlines to the next and hanging on for dear life. In my mind’s eye, the fellow passengers were not the motley crew of first-century disciples but women from every walk, trying to steady themselves in the turbulent waters of life.

“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” they asked. “Help us!”

Then I sensed Jesus speaking to me just as He had spoken to the raucous wind and waves: *“Quiet! Be still! Settle down!”*

So I sat.

After a few moments, I realized I didn’t really know how to *be quiet and settle down*. I had never mastered the full idea of “be still and know.” I knew that God was God. It was the “be still” part that stumped me. Sitting still was not in my nature, and perhaps it was my nature that God was trying to tame. My “nature,” or natural bent of working for God, was standing in the way of my worship of and communion with God. My daily routine of sanctioned quiet times was getting in the way of the divine romance in which He wanted me to engage.

Does it surprise you that I could say such words? Oh, friend, I am nothing if I am not honest. I have that glory ache just like you. Sometimes I can get so busy doing, doing, doing that God's gentle whisper drawing me closer is drowned out by the noises of my own making. How sad to admit that, sometimes when God extends his hand to invite me onto the dance floor of life, my dance card is already full. Many nights *I* lean over to turn out the bedside lamp, collapse in exhaustion, and sigh, "*Maybe tomorrow, Lord.*"

I don't think "be still and know" comes naturally to any of us. Aren't we taught to get moving? "Keep your eye on the ball." "Focus on the target." "If you don't know where you are going, you probably won't get there." Motivational phrases for sure. But this was God talking, and He had a different message. While the world prods, "Don't just stand there; do something!" God was telling me quite the opposite: "Don't just do something; stand there."

Now He had my attention. So I stayed put.

"Okay, God," I asked, "what do You really want from me?"

He surprised me. He often does, when I take the time to listen. Acts 17:28 came to mind. I believe He put it there. "In him we live and move and have our being." *Learn what that means*, He seemed to say. I opened my Bible again and read the words, pondering each phrase individually.

In Him.

We live.

And move.

And have our being.

I sensed God speaking to my heart. *That's where you will find the secret to satisfy that glory ache. That's the answer you are searching for. That's where you will find what your sisters hunger for. You've been asking the wrong question. It's not what I want from you. It's what I want for you. And in this one little verse, you'll find the key—not just for yourself but also for others in the boat with you. This will calm the squall of your frantic heart.*

God startled me that morning. I was expecting Him to give me a new

assignment—something to do for Him. Another project to complete. Another study to devour. Another cause to support. But He surprised me. It was none of the above. It was one verse: “In him we live and move and have our being.”

I wondered, *Could this be the key to unlock the door behind which the salve to satisfy that glory ache was hidden? The door upon which I had been knocking far too long?* I was excited to accept God’s invitation as He extended His hand for mine.

ASKING THE WRONG QUESTION

Could it be that we have made our relationship with God far too difficult? We strive so hard to draw closer to the heart of God. And all the while, God’s outstretched hand is reaching to draw us in. Another translation of Psalm 46:10 reads, “Cease striving and know that I am God” (NASB). *Cease striving.*

For over a half of a century, I had been striving, pursuing, and seeking God. And like a cat chasing its tail, I had been going in circles. Circling in the wilderness with the Israelites, if you will. Saved from slavery, for sure. Headed to my own personal Promised Land, hopefully. But somehow stuck in the wilderness, wandering, ever circling but not quite reaching Jordan’s shore.

And I am not alone. Statistics show that one of the top desires of Christians is to grow closer to God.² During a recent poll, 65 percent of churchgoers said they were declining or on a plateau in their spiritual growth.³ On the other hand, Peter wrote: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). We have everything we need to experience the ever-growing, continually maturing, abundant life. So why aren’t we? Why are most of us languishing on the desert plateaus of mediocrity and complacency? Why are most of us satisfied munching on the predigested truths of teachers rather than pulling up to the banquet table and feasting with God at a table set for two?

“God, what do you really want from me?”

I've pondered that question since the genesis of my relationship with Christ. Perhaps you have too. When you boil down all the water from the diluted soup of questions men and women have simmered in their hearts through the centuries, this is the one question left in the pot. And somehow we feel that if we could answer that one question, we would discover why that glory ache persists and how to satisfy our yearning.

I had asked the question a thousand times, but on that one frosty January morning, I got quiet enough to listen. And then, in the stillness, He showed me that I and my busy sisters have been asking the wrong question.

Rather than ask God what He wants *from* us, we need to ask Him what He wants *for* us.

I meditated on Acts 17:28 throughout the following year, after the day God whetted my appetite with the possibilities wrapped up in those ten little words. I came to realize that what He wants *for* us is to sense His presence, experience His love, and delight in intimate relationship as we *live and move and have our being* in sacred union with Him. And when we do, He opens our eyes to His glory all around and the ache for something more is soothed.

GLORY DEFINED

Have you ever wondered why you were created? You were created for God's glory and to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7), because it pleased Him to do so (Ephesians 1:5). The concept of glory can be a difficult idea to wrap our human minds around. It seems so otherworldly. We can catch glimpses of its meaning throughout Scripture, but then like a shooting star that appears for just a moment, it quickly slips away into the vast expanse of God's infinite wisdom. But let's see what we can know about this bigger-than-life word.

In the Old Testament, the most common Hebrew word for "glory" is *k bôd*, meaning "weight, honor, or esteem." The Bible associates God's glory with how He manifests Himself or makes His presence known. Some theologians refer

to these as theophanies. He made His presence known in a consuming fire (Exodus 24:16–17), a moving cloud (Exodus 13:21), and a still small voice (1 Kings 19:12). His glory is reflected in creation (Psalm 19:1) and in His sovereign control of history (Acts 17:26). His glory is made known through the life of simple human beings like you and me.

The same concept of God’s glory is in the New Testament in the Greek word *doxa*, which means “glory, honor, and splendor.” John wrote, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his *glory*, the *glory* of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). After Jesus’s first miracle, turning the water into wine, John wrote: “This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his *glory*, and his disciples put their faith in him” (John 2:11). In Hebrews 1:3, the writer reveals this about Jesus: “The Son is the radiance of God’s *glory* and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”

The verb form, “to glorify,” is *doxazo*, and primarily means “to magnify, extol, praise, to ascribe honor to God, acknowledging Him as to His being, attributes and acts,”⁴ i.e., His glory. It is the revelation and manifestation of all that He has and is. When we glorify God, we are giving a display or manifestation—or a reflection—of His character. To magnify God is to make Him easy to see. Jesus said that the disciples would glorify God when they bore fruit (John 15:8). Through their actions, they would point others to God and make Him easy to see.

God’s glory is how He makes Himself known. It is almost incomprehensible to think that He would choose mere human beings to accomplish such a task. But as Scripture tells us, we were created in His image (Genesis 1:26) and as a display of His glory (Isaiah 43:7). You were created to make God recognizable to others—to show others what God is like. He makes Himself recognizable to us and through us. The glory of any created thing is when it is fully fulfilling the purpose for which it was created...and that includes you and me.

Glory is a big word—a weighty word. In this book we are going to zoom in on one aspect of glory—how God makes Himself known in your life as you *live and move and have your being in Him*.

Can you remember a time when you sensed God’s presence and you were absolutely sure it was Him? Perhaps it was when you first believed, or maybe it happened just yesterday. You may have felt an overwhelming sense of His love, received an answer to prayer, felt an inexplicable peace, or witnessed a miracle. But when it happened...oh, when it happened...you knew you had encountered the Divine. The moment came and went, and you were awestruck. Do you remember it? That was God making Himself known to you personally. I call that *a sudden glory*—an intimate moment with your Creator, the Lover of your soul, a genuine “inloveness,” a glimpse of heaven.

To illustrate what I mean by this, consider how Sheldon Vanauken, author of *A Severe Mercy*, describes the moment he knew he was in love with his wife, Davy:

One who has never been in love might mistake either infatuation or a mixture of affection and sexual attraction for being in love. But when the “real thing” happens, there is no doubt. A man in the jungle at night, as someone said, may suppose a hyena’s growl to be a lion’s; but when he hears the lion’s growl, he knows [full] well it’s a lion. So with the genuine inloveness. So with Davy and me. A sudden glory.⁶

I have been in the jungle and heard the lion’s roar. I knew full well it was Him. So with the genuine inloveness. So with Jesus and me. A sudden glory. Time and time again.

All throughout our lives, I dare say, throughout our days, we will experience a sudden glory in unpredictable moments. Or, at least we could.

A friend shared a moment of sudden glory in her life:

Life was hard after my divorce. With no child support and only a part-time job for income, there were days when I didn't know how I would put dinner on the table for myself and my four children. I often had to choose between buying groceries or paying the electric bill. On one such day, I walked to the mailbox praying I wouldn't find another cut-off notice from the utility company. Thankfully there was nothing of the sort. Instead I found an envelope that had no return address, and inside it was a note that read, "Jesus loves you." Tucked behind the note was a grocery store gift card for an amount that would buy groceries for at least a week.

In that moment I felt as if God had wrapped His arms around me and whispered to my heart, "I see you. I love you. I care." His presence was suddenly so real that all I could do was stand there and cry.

These moments are the salve for the glory ache. They are the manna moments to stay the hunger until we finally reach heaven's home. Do you yearn for those glory moments? Well, guess what. God longs to give them to you even more than you yearn for them!

THE CALLING OUT OF GOD

Eden was full of God's glory—breathtaking beauty with unbroken union and constant communion with God. But as we know, something went terribly wrong, and Adam and Eve found themselves naked and ashamed. And what was the first thing they did when that happened?

They hid.

They hid from God.

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8-9). God called out.

God.

Called.

Out.

“Where are you?” God asked. It was the very first question in the Bible, and it was asked by an all-knowing God. He still asks that very question today. Perhaps you’ve heard it as well. I have.

The real tragedy of Adam and Eve’s disobedience was that union between God and mankind was broken. Shattered. Destroyed. But as soon as Eve sank her teeth into the forbidden fruit, the shadow of the cross rose on the horizon and God’s redemptive plan to restore all that we had lost was set in motion. All through the rest of the Old Testament, from Genesis 3:9 to Malachi 4:6, we read of God calling humanity back to Himself.

We read of cycles of humanity’s fellowship with God, followed by humanity’s rebellion against God, followed by God’s wooing humanity back in the midst of difficult circumstances, followed by humanity’s repentance, followed by humanity’s fellowship with God, followed by humanity’s rebellion against God, followed by God’s wooing humanity back in the midst of difficult circumstances, followed by humanity’s repentance, followed by humanity’s fellowship with God, followed by...

And all along God continues His passionate pursuit of the human heart as He relentlessly romances us, His image bearers, and calls out to us first one way, then another.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word for “Scripture” is *mikra*, which means “the calling out of God.”⁷ And isn’t that what the Bible really is? The calling out of God to draw mankind back to Himself? To restore our original glory through

the finished work of Jesus Christ? He begins with *calling out* that very first question: “Where are you?” He ends it the same. “I stand at the door and knock” (Revelation 3:20).

The Bible tells us, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). There is not one of us who is completely and perfectly living the life that God had intended in the garden. But the good news is that Christ in us is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). It is through union with Jesus that glory moments occur. Without Christ in us, we are not even able to detect or reflect God’s glory at all. And yet, that was God’s original intent for us “in the beginning.”

Most people would agree that we are born with an inherent inner nagging that there has to be something more than what we see. Solomon wrote: “He has also *set eternity in the hearts* of men” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). No matter how humanity has tried to satisfy the hunger, quench the thirst, or mask the reality of God’s existence, eternity continues pulling at the heart. A longing to experience God persists. The glory ache is a chronic throb.

But here is the good news! Aren’t you ready for some good news? This is not our final home! We are merely passing through this thing called life. And until those who know Christ leave this earth and enter God’s glory once and for all, until we inhale eternity, He gives us *glimpses of glory* right here on earth! Moments of sudden glory abound, if we will but take the time to recognize them, to embrace them, to enjoy them...to taste and see that the Lord is good!

And how do we do that? It is all wrapped up in that little verse that God filled my mind with on that chilly January morning: “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

THE ROAD TO GLORY MOMENTS

For twelve months I pondered the words *in Him we live and move and have our being* before I put pen to paper. I listened to others traveling down the road

with me. Women trying to juggle taking care of children, aging parents, longing husbands, demanding work schedules, unending household chores, and faltering faith. Women trying to fit God into their busy schedules and never feeling like they do it well. I've seen guilt become a constant companion as women crouch behind the bushes with Adam and Eve rather than walk with God unashamed.

Do you long to recapture the radiant wonder of your early years of faith? Have you felt the hunger in your own heart for something more? Have you experienced the nagging ache to catch glimpses of God's glory here on earth?

For me, that early wonder was energized by the emotional surges of a teenager falling in love with Jesus for the very first time. Passion comes easy during those years when youths dive into the sea of new discoveries with reckless abandon. But as we surface to breathe in the air of adulthood, we tend to float along on the current of Christianity and swim in the school of other like-minded saints. That's not a bad place to be. It is safe. But it is the bold and the brave who venture from the saintly swarm, venture into the deep sea of grace, and explore the depths of God's fathomless wonder. Treasures in the deep are waiting to be discovered by those willing to leave the surface and plunge headlong into God's all-encompassing presence.

I want to experience God anew, not just today but every day. I don't want a tent revival religion that stokes the embers into a bonfire for a few days or even a few weeks. But I want to experience God's presence with every breath. Is that your desire as well? I believe the map to such an existence is tucked inside that one little verse...*in Him we live and move and have our being.*

C. S. Lewis quoted historic author Dr. Samuel Johnson in *Mere Christianity*, "People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed."⁸ Throughout the pages of this book, I hope you will be reminded of God's passionate pursuit of your heart and let yourself be caught all over again. I pray that you will be reawakened to the deep desire to know Him intimately. For some, an intimate relationship with Jesus may be a new idea altogether; for others, a reawakening of a forgotten or waning romance.

I find myself kneeling with Tozer and echoing his poignant words:

O God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Thy glory, I pray Thee, so that I may know Thee indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, "Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away." Then give me grace to rise and follow Thee up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long.⁹

Peer with me through the lattice as the Lover of your soul comes running.

Listen! My lover!

Look! Here he comes,
leaping across the mountains,
bounding over the hills.

My lover is like a gazelle or a young stag.

Look! There he stands behind our wall,
gazing through the windows,
peering through the lattice.

My lover spoke and said to me,
"Arise, my darling,
my beautiful one, and come with me.

See! The winter is past;
the rains are over and gone.

Flowers appear on the earth;
the season of singing has come.

the cooing of doves
is heard in our land.

The fig tree forms its early fruit;
the blossoming vines spread their fragrance.

Arise, come, my darling;
my beautiful one, come with me.”

(Song of Songs 2:8–13)

As you turn the following pages, I pray that you'll begin to see new patterns of truth emerge—as if peering through a kaleidoscope at God's love. And my prayer is that you will begin to grasp the truth of how God really feels about you and what He really wants, not just *from* you but, more importantly, *for* you. My prayer is that you will begin to see many displays of sudden glory throughout the moments of your days so that you will have an undeniable assurance of His presence and love as you *live and move and have your being in Him*.