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# JOANNA WEAVER

Best-Selling Author of *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*

Finding Your Place  
*in the Heart of God*



# Lazarus Awakening

LAZARUS AWAKENING  
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## What's Tripping You Up?

I have a problem. You wouldn't notice it just looking at me—at least I hope not. I look pretty normal walking around. But as I've reviewed the surveillance footage of my life, I have to admit a disturbing truth:

I am a chronic tripper.

If there is a slight unevenness in the surface I'm walking on, my toe will invariably find the imperfection. Any little flooring flaw has the power to send me hurtling through space, arms windmilling wildly as I attempt to regain my balance. I'm especially susceptible to microphone cords, as I found out one Sunday in our early years of pastoring.

Eager to welcome a newcomer, I left my place on the worship team just before the call was given to greet each other. Two steps into my journey off the platform, I suddenly took flight. My shoe heel had caught on one of the cords. But thinking quickly, I managed to slip out of the snared pump as I sailed through the air.

The crowd, still seated, watched in amazement as I landed on my feet in the aisle somewhere between rows one and two. When I finally stopped moving, I was standing right next to the pew I had been aiming for.

"So glad you could join us," I said sheepishly as I shook the startled guest's hand. The crowd chuckled.

"It was nice of you to drop in," the man replied with some quick thinking of his own.

We all erupted in laughter. It was a moment I'll never forget but one I'm not eager to repeat. Because tripping is not only humiliating. It's dangerous.

Especially when it comes to our walk with God.

## THE PROBLEM WITH GRAVECLOTHES

When Lazarus came forth from the tomb, John 11:44 tells us that “his hands and feet [were] wrapped with strips of linen,” and there was “a cloth around his face.” Scholars have differing opinions about the details of what that looked like.<sup>1</sup> But it’s clear that the man reentered life in a hindered state.

And so do we.

Though our spirits have been fully resurrected by Christ and we’ve been born again, remnants of our flesh still linger. Loose ends of our lower nature dangle around our lives, threatening to trip us up in our walk with God.

In a sense, the graveclothes that hindered Lazarus describe well the graveclothes that hinder us as Christians:

- His feet were bound, affecting his *walk* with God.
- His hands were bound, limiting his *work* for God.
- His face was covered, clouding his *watchfulness*.
- His mouth was covered, muffling his *witness*.<sup>2</sup>

Any of that sound familiar? I know it does to me. No wonder many of us feel ineffective in our walk with God. For we, too, struggle with a shroud.

Graveclothes in themselves are only pieces of flimsy cloth. Yet if they aren’t systematically removed with the Lord’s help, they turn into spiritual chains that restrain us. Blindfolds that keep us from seeing the Enemy’s devices. Muzzles that smother our attempts to proclaim the good news.

Unfortunately, it is possible to grow so used to our graveclothes that we actually like them. They’re comfortable. They’re familiar. They’re like an old pair of sweats broken in by years of wear and stretched out in just the right places to fit our natural bent toward waywardness.

Once we’ve gotten to that point, taking off our graveclothes and putting on something else seems a bit extreme. Why work at becoming new when old ways come so much easier? Why take time each morning perusing a closet of godly virtues when we can slip on whatever we’ve left lying around the night before?

Wrinkled, tattered, and torn though our graveclothes may be, wearing them feels more natural and comes more easily to our fallen natures than the time-consuming task of changing in order to become new.

## LETTING IT GO

One of my favorite reality television programs is *The Biggest Loser*. I love the transformation that occurs as contestants daily work at shedding the pounds that have imprisoned them for so long. At some point in the process, they are asked to run a course—an easy task, considering how far they've come and how hard they've trained. But there is a twist. As they run, they must wear a backpack filled with weight that is equivalent to the amount they have lost.

"I never knew how hard it was to move, let alone live, with all this weight," someone invariably says in an interview following the race.

If we could only see the freedom that awaits us if we'd get rid of the things that hinder us. The abundant life that could be ours if we'd abandon our secret affection for the things that weigh us down and trip us up.

When runners prepare for a race, they know they must run light and lean if they hope to win. Anything that slows them down or hinders movement must be removed, and anything with the potential to trip them up must be dealt with, or they risk losing the race, no matter how hard they run.

The writer of Hebrews applies this same light and lean strategy to our lives in Christ: "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (12:1).

This contest we are in is serious business, the writer emphasizes. It requires serious preparation. The term "throw off" in Hebrews 12:1 doesn't denote a casual activity, like shrugging off excess clothing. Instead, the Greek word describes a much more deliberate and energetic action. Greek scholar Rick Renner says *apotithimi* means "to lay something down and to push it far away and beyond reach." It implies "a deliberate decision to make a permanent change of attitude and behavior"<sup>3</sup>—exactly what is needed to shed graveclothes.

Hebrews defines two things we must remove if we want to run free:

1. "everything that hinders"
2. "and the sin that so easily entangles"

While sin's removal seems obvious, it is the more generic "everything" of point one that often gets us into trouble, especially if we're seasoned Christians.

The King James Version word for "everything that hinders" is *weight*. It can



refer to the heavy things of life that press down and overload us—like overdue bills, marital strife, job layoffs, rebellious kids. But weights can also consist of the “riches and pleasures” mentioned in Luke 8:14. As Ray Ortlund puts it,

Your danger and mine is not that we become criminals, but rather, that we become respectable, decent, commonplace, mediocre Christians. . . . The twenty-first-century temptations that really sap our spiritual power are the television, banana cream pie, the easy chair, and the credit card. Christian, you will win or lose in those seemingly innocent little moments of decision.<sup>4</sup>

Because, you see, one aspect of “weight” has to do with the importance we assign things—the value we give them in our lives.

Too often, unfortunately, we determine worth according to the wrong set of scales, using the “differing weights and differing measures” of the world, which Proverbs 20:10 tells us “the LORD detests.” Whenever we give in to our culture’s topsy-turvy tendency to “call evil good and good evil,” whenever we exchange “darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20), whenever we rationalize something as acceptable when God says it isn’t, we’ve got it all wrong. Such fraudulent scales must be abandoned if we are ever to run free.

So how do we do that? It’s not as difficult as we often make it. Instead of trying to shed hindrances on your own, take both the things that weigh you down and the false weights that throw you off, and bring them to Jesus. Allow Him to give you a new set of standards by which to live. Trade in the dishonest scales of the world so that you will be able to discern heaven’s true measure—“that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2, NKJV).

At the end of the obstacle course, all the *Biggest Loser* contestants are given a chance to throw away the backpacks that hold the weight that used to define them. You don’t see them hugging those backpacks or wistfully kissing them good-bye. They don’t reminisce fondly about the number that used to appear on the scale. Instead, they take those packs, and they fling them as far as they can possibly throw such large amounts of weight.

And as they do, nearly all of them say, “Never again. Never again.”

## TANGLED UP IN LIES

When Hebrew 12:1 speaks of the sin that tends to trip us up, the term translated “entangles” in the New International Version is interesting. It comes from the Hebrew word *euperistatos*, which means to surround, to attack from every side. According to Strong’s concordance, it carries the idea of “(a competitor) thwarting (a racer) in every direction.”<sup>5</sup>

Have you ever endured that kind of attack—the kind that feels as if all hell has been set loose against you? There have been periods in my life where I’ve felt that Satan had me in his cross hairs with the sole purpose of taking me out of the race.

For many of us, his agenda began in our childhood and has its roots in lies we’ve internalized as truth. Lies created by careless comments by teachers. Abusive statements by peers. Abandonment or neglect by parents.

Though we may have forgiven the perpetrators, the lies we’ve believed can still thwart us in the race we’ve been called to run. Sideswiping us with insecurity. Blind-siding us with fear. Hindering us from moving forward as they seek to pull us back to past pain.

Not long ago I received a letter from a reader that illustrates the life-damaging entanglement such lies can produce.

Dear Joanna,

This morning I had an “aha” moment as I read *Lazarus Awakening*: I am seventy-seven years old and just now realizing what “graveclothes” I have been living in. When I was sixteen years old, a group of young people were going to an after-church party. I asked one of the young men if I could ride with him. He said his car was full. Then he went out the door onto the porch where the others waited. I overheard him say, “Guess who I just got rid of?” I was crushed!

At nineteen, I married a man who drove off one day and never came back. I had to get my own divorce. Later I found out he became a very abusive person and died a lonely, miserable man.

Even though God had protected me from him and later gave me a wonderful husband who was the love of my life for forty-five years, I still felt like the young girl whom two others had gotten rid of. Those words were the graveclothes that I had lived in all of these years: “Guess who I got rid of.” I even went so far as to believe my beloved husband had willingly died so he didn’t have to live with me any longer.

Sixty years is long enough to wear graveclothes. I am asking God for the wisdom, the strength, and the help in getting rid of those words. I no longer want to live believing no one wants me around. I no longer want to believe even God wants to get rid of me. I want the graveclothes off! I want healing, and I want freedom to be the child of God I was created to be.<sup>6</sup>

Let me ask you, what false belief haunts your nights and stalks your days? What past pain seeks to wrap a lie around your heart so tightly you can think of little else? What memories seem to trip you up just when you feel as though you’re finally moving ahead?

Bring your graveclothes to Jesus, my friend. With the Holy Spirit’s help, begin to unwind the deception and leave it at His feet. Then “stand fast . . . in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1, NKJV).

### LURED TO DESTRUCTION

While the Greek word for “entangles” describes an attack from an outside enemy dedicated to knocking us off course, I believe it can also refer to the hindering we do to ourselves—the particular kinds of sin we find ourselves participating in time and time again.

Besetting sin—that’s what early writers called those familiar attitudes and behaviors that keep reasserting themselves, threatening to trip us up. Paul refers to this kind of sin when he writes, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do” (Romans 7:15).

Have you ever felt as though you’ve taken one step forward with the Lord only



to fall two steps back? I certainly have. Why does it keep happening, we wonder, especially when we are so eager to please the Lord? James gives some insight into our dilemma when he writes, “But each one is tempted when, *by his own evil desire*, he is dragged away and enticed” (1:14, emphasis added).

In other words, it is our own moral weak spots that keep getting in our way.

When it comes right down to it, what keeps tripping us up is *us*.

Strangely, it is often legitimate needs that cause the most trouble. Our hunger to be loved. Our need to be significant. Our longing to feel secure. Unless these needs are ultimately met by the Lord, they are easily distorted into “abnormal desires,” which is how the *New American Commentary* translates “evil desires” in James 1:14.<sup>7</sup>

Satan loves to turn legitimate needs and emotional vulnerabilities into unholy obsessions, twisting what we long for into lures fashioned for our destruction.

Like a fisherman who baits a hook and dangles it in front of a waiting fish, Satan uses counterfeit love, false security, and tin-plated success to lure our hearts away from God. Because the hook is usually hidden and we're slow to feel its pain, we can fool ourselves into thinking the temptation is harmless. That we can get away with sniffing without touching. Touching without tasting. Tasting without chewing. Chewing without swallowing.

But “do not be deceived,” Galatians 6:7 tells us, “God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (NASB).

In other words, don't be deceived. That e-mail relationship you've rekindled with an old flame is eventually going to burn you.

Don't be deceived. That tendency to blurt out confidential information to get attention will ultimately come back to bite you in the end.

Don't be deceived. That compromise you think is crucial to climbing the ladder of success will eventually cause you to fall further than you ever dreamed.

The simple truth is this: God loves us enough to let us trip on our graveclothes. For until we stop pursuing abnormal desires and “chasing after the wind,” as Ecclesiastes 1:14 puts it, God has no choice but to give us over to our “stubborn hearts to follow [our] own devices” (Psalm 81:12).

Unfortunately, by then we've usually swallowed the devil's bait—hook, line, and sinker. Caught in a full-blown affair, shunned by friends, entangled in a web of

deceit, frantically trying to recover a life we so carelessly threw away. Or living with less obvious but just as deadly consequences. For even when it seems we've gotten away with rebellion, its fruit will manifest itself somewhere. Especially in our spiritual progress and growth in the Lord.

For it is impossible to move forward with Jesus when we're sucking on Satan's lure.

Just ask the Israelites. When they insisted on doing things their own way, Psalm 106:15 tells us, God "gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (NKJV).

### TRIPPED UP BY PATTERNS

Of all the abnormal desires the Enemy likes to exploit within us, I'm convinced that nothing is as deadly as the unconscious patterns we tend to develop in our lives. Though we've been born-again in our spirits, our soulish natures—consisting of our minds, wills, and emotions—tend to run in ruts created by repetition. Self-defeating grooves formed by less-than-holy reactions arising from our flesh.

One of my early patterns was self-pity, as I've written about before. It was tied to an abnormal desire to be loved and accepted.

How did I know this was a pattern? Simple. I kept repeating it. No matter the situation or conflict, I always seemed to end up huddled in an emotional corner, singing a sad medley of songs. "Nobody loves me. Everybody hates me. Poor, poor, pitiful me." Convinced that others were to blame while dismissing my own responsibility.

While at first self-pity wrapped itself tenderly around me like a warm shawl, confirming my victim status, it quickly turned into a straitjacket. The graveclothes that initially comforted me eventually tightened around me, choking out my joy. My hope. My breath. My life.

I don't know what cyclical responses you keep returning to, but may I suggest it would be wise to find out. Begin by asking yourself, "What pattern keeps popping up time and time again?" Then consider this: "What abnormal desire might lie behind that reaction?"

Is it pride that lurks behind the rage that erupts when certain buttons are pushed?

Is it insecurity that causes overwhelming paranoia when you overhear someone talking but can't quite hear what they say?

Is it love-hunger that causes feelings of rejection to surge within you when recognition is given to another or your value is ignored?

The circumstances may vary, but as you look closer, you can see a common denominator: your responses. Ugly, lower-nature reactions birthed out of legitimate needs twisted into unholy obsessions by the Enemy as well as your flesh. Petty, self-defeating patterns that need to be given over to Jesus, then given over again. And again and again. Continually surrendered to God until you no longer surrender to them.

### BRING THEM TO JESUS

I'm so glad we have a Savior who wants to do more than resurrect us. He wants to set us free.

When you find yourself held down and held back by false weights, past lies, besetting sins, or reactive patterns, consider the advice Beth Moore gives in her book *Get Out of That Pit*. She suggests we follow three principles:

- *Cry out.* “Open your mouth, say, ‘God, help me!’ and mean it. Not as a figure of speech. Not with half a heart. With everything you’ve got, look up and cry out. Bring heaven to a standstill. Get some attention.”
- *Confess.* Name every contribution you’ve made to your pit cycle as well as your self-destructive tendencies. “Get as specific as you can, and when you think you’ve thought of everything, ask God if there is anything you’re overlooking.”
- *Consent.* Agree with God concerning your situation and the instructions He gives. “God wants you out of that pit. He wants you in victory... All you have to do is *consent* to what He already wants.”<sup>8</sup>

I would also advise finding a trusted Christian you can talk to. There is something so powerful about confessing our “faults one to another” and praying “one for another” so that we might be healed, as James 5:16 (KJV) suggests. When we do this, we invite the person to help us unwind our graveclothes, but we take the first



### *Tripping Points*

Graveclothes are often revealed by repeated reactions and cyclical responses. For instance, if you find yourself offended by someone, only to be offended by someone else the very next day, that's a sign that other people might not be the problem. Consider the following emotions and behaviors. (Note there is space for you to add others that come to mind.)

Are any of these responses overly familiar to you? Number the three that occur most often in you. Then prayerfully consider the "Shedding Graveclothes" suggestions on the opposite page.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> insecurity         | <input type="checkbox"/> need to control     | <input type="checkbox"/> urge to escape    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> negativity         | <input type="checkbox"/> depression          | <input type="checkbox"/> self-pity         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> touchiness         | <input type="checkbox"/> emotional "stuffer" | <input type="checkbox"/> sharp tongue      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-hatred        | <input type="checkbox"/> fear                | <input type="checkbox"/> self-centeredness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> quick temper       | <input type="checkbox"/> dishonesty          | <input type="checkbox"/> easily offended   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> procrastination    | <input type="checkbox"/> emotional bully     | <input type="checkbox"/> isolation         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shame              | <input type="checkbox"/> defensiveness       | <input type="checkbox"/> judgmentalism     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> blame              | <input type="checkbox"/> self-medicating     | <input type="checkbox"/> envy              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fantasizing        | <input type="checkbox"/> denial              | <input type="checkbox"/> people pleasing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> self-justification | <input type="checkbox"/> resentment          | <input type="checkbox"/> paranoia          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other:             | <input type="checkbox"/> other:              | <input type="checkbox"/> other:            |

*Search me, O God, and know my heart...*

*See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

PSALM 139:23-24





### *Shedding Graveclothes*

When it comes to getting rid of the graveclothes that trip me up, I've always wanted God to deal with me quickly, the way a chef slices an onion. But God knows what I need, and in His wisdom and mercy, He takes me at a pace I can handle. Here's the shroud-shedding process I've found helpful as I have tried to cooperate with God's work in my life.

1. Ask God to reveal the graveclothes you need to remove (Psalm 139:23–24). They may include besetting sins, lies, or cyclical patterns you identified in the previous sidebar, “Tripping Points.” Ask Him to show you the truth about the danger they pose and to help you let them go.
2. Choose new responses *before* you find yourself in trigger situations. In many cases this involves determining to do the opposite of what comes naturally—for instance, being quiet rather than reacting with lots of words (Romans 12:2).
3. Don't get discouraged when the process takes time. Some graveclothes have more layers than others. The fact that a certain issue reappears doesn't negate or diminish what God has done in you. It may not be the same layer but a deeper one (2 Corinthians 3:18).
4. Multiple layers of graveclothes may indicate an area of vulnerability that you will always struggle with. Guard yourself and your responses accordingly (2 Corinthians 12:9).
5. Keep pressing on toward Jesus. Graveclothes are shed best as we pursue our friendship with Him. For as we fix our eyes on Jesus, we become less like us and more like Him (Psalm 34:5).

*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,  
I press on toward the goal to win the prize  
for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 3:13–14



step by being accountable. We choose to live out our repentance not only before God but also before a witness—going beyond just saying we’re sorry and actually proving that we’ve had a “change of mind, heart, and direction”<sup>9</sup> by changing the way we live.

This doesn’t happen all at once, of course. It’s a process. It takes time.

I wish I could tell you that after walking with the Lord some forty years, I’m now sanctified fully and so much like Jesus that a halo occasionally appears over my head. Sadly, that wouldn’t be true.

While I can point to areas in which I’ve experienced immense victory, I still have weak spots that I’ve struggled with for years. A temper that flares when I’m provoked or tired. A habitual tendency to grumble and complain when things prove more difficult than I expected. Troubling inconsistencies that arise when I compare the person I want to be with the person I actually am.

But I’ve come to realize that while I am not what I should be, I am no longer what I was. I don’t entirely understand why remnants of graveclothes still cling to the periphery of my heart, causing me to default to certain patterns when a particular button is pushed. But that doesn’t negate God’s deep work within me. It simply means there are layers still to be unwound.

“Will you give that to me?” the Holy Spirit whispers, His hand outstretched, waiting to exchange my graveclothes for Christ’s righteousness. “Will you give me access to that?” He requests, pointing to a sin-infected place in my heart. “I want to set you free. But you must cooperate.”

The more I listen and obey, the more strength and endurance I find for my race. And the more I am able to “press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:12).

### DON’T GIVE UP

Though you may have recently taken a few steps back or even fallen flat on your face, don’t give up on your race, my friend. Remember it is a marathon you run, not a sprint. It’s a lifelong process you participate in, not an afternoon track event. Which is why Hebrews 12:1 specifically urges us to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”



The Greek word used here, *hupomon*, which William Barclay translates as “steadfast endurance,” speaks of patience. But lest we misunderstand it, Barclay reminds us that it doesn’t mean “the patience which sits down and accepts things but the patience which takes charge of them.”<sup>10</sup>

“Exercise yourself toward godliness,” Paul prescribes in 1 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV). In other words, Joanna, put forth some effort. Don’t expect it to be easy. Sweat if you must. Keep on keeping on, even when the going is rough.

Perseverance is important on so many levels—especially when we compare our race with the easier ones others seem to run. *Why did she get the inside track?* we wonder. *Why did he get the Nike endorsement, the cool shoes, and the twenty-six-room mansion?*

While we may not understand the lane we’ve been assigned or appreciate the life we’ve been given, that really isn’t the issue. The real question is this: What will we do with “the race marked out for us”?

Will we give up before we begin? Will we sit down at the edge of the track in fatalistic resignation?

Or will we stand up and courageously master the course we’ve been assigned? Pressing forward with perseverance, our feet pounding the pavement in a tenacious pursuit of God. Running with a steadfast endurance in the lane He’s designated as ours.

Always remembering...we do not run alone.

## A GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Though the race you and I are called to run is far from easy, the writer of Hebrews reminds us that we are surrounded by encouragement as we run it. We not only have a Savior waiting for us at the finish line; we also have His Holy Spirit bearing us up, infusing us with strength as we run. The sweet Paraclete—the “one who comes alongside”—also lives within us. He is our Comforter, Teacher, and Friend.

There are also people lining the grandstands of heaven cheering us on, the “great cloud of witnesses” described in Hebrews 12:1. The preceding chapter, Hebrews 11, identifies these supporters as runners who have gone before us, spiritual giants who accomplished great things for God.

But may I remind you? Those forerunners of faith struggled to shed some of the same graveclothes you and I struggle to leave behind. People like

- Noah, the guy who built an ark to save his family but passed out drunk afterward.
- Abraham, the would-be patriarch who packed up and followed God but also tried to pass off his wife as his cousin when he feared for his life.
- Sarah, the chick who followed Abraham to heaven-knows-where but doubted God's faithfulness when her biological clock ran down.
- And more...many more.

Though each of these men and women fell a time or two in their race, they all got up from their failures and kept pursuing God. Some, like Abraham and Sarah, received their promises. Others, however, "were still living by faith when they died," Hebrews 11:13 says. "They did not receive the things promised."

I don't know about you, but I would struggle with the inequity of that. Yet these heroes of faith didn't let disillusionment trip them up. Instead, they refused to get wrapped up in this life, for "they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:16). Though imperfect and flawed, they pursued a higher goal.

"Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God," verse 16 tells us, and, oh, how that resonates in my soul.

Some of those mentioned had sordid, mixed-bag stories. None of them walked entirely free of graveclothes before they died. But they didn't let that stop their pursuit of heaven. For their eyes were fixed on the unchanging One.

And in return, the unchanging One changed them.

## LOOKING TO JESUS

One of the rules of running is this: you go where you are looking. You can't run a competitive race and turn your head now and then to enjoy the scenery. You can't stay in your lane if you are constantly looking over your shoulder at the competitor behind you.

Why? Because the human body tends to follow the gaze.

That's why Hebrews 12:2 tells us to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." When it comes to running the race of life, we must look to

Christ. His beauty. His perfection. His altogether wonderful ways. For He has gone before us, and He knows the path we should take.

It makes sense to follow the Savior, because He's the only One who will matter when our race is finally done.



### *Fix Your Eyes on Jesus*

I love what Anne Ortlund says in her book *Fix Your Eyes on Jesus* about focusing on the Lord as we pursue the high call of being more like Him.

You get no forgiveness from just looking at all your sins.  
You get no healing, just concentrating on your diseases.  
You get no redemption, just studying the pit you're in.  
You get no crowning with glory, just fixing your eyes on your failures.  
You get no fulfillment of desires, just looking at all you don't have.  
You get no renewal from focusing on your oldness, staleness, dryness.

*Only He*

"forgives all [your] sins...  
heals all [your] diseases...  
redeems [your] life from the pit...  
crowns [you] with love and compassion...  
satisfies [your] desires with good things,  
so that [your] youth is renewed like the eagle's"  
(Psalm 103:3–5).

*Only He!*

Look to yourself, and ultimately you'll be embarrassed. But

Those who look to him are radiant;  
their faces are never covered with shame (Psalm 34:5).<sup>11</sup>



At the end of his life, Paul wrote,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7–8)

May I ask you, how much do you long for Christ’s appearing? Oh, I’m sure that, like me, you can’t wait for the day when the trumpet sounds and we meet the Lord face to face. But I want to see Him before that, don’t you?

I want to see Him today. In my home. In my church. In my quiet time. I long for His appearing...especially when I look in the mirror.

### LETTING HIM SHINE

I recently traveled to speak at a women’s conference in Georgia. In the office foyer of the host church hung a photograph of one of the most inspiring pieces of art I’ve ever seen.

It depicted a man with the bottom half of his body covered in bronze. But it was the top half that captured my attention.

With one arm thrust upward, the man gazed toward heaven. With his other hand he grasped the shell of bronze encasing his lower torso and peeled it away from his body, revealing something exquisite beneath—a pure, transparent, crystal human form. Yet it was so much more than that. A light seemed to emanate from within.

It was a breathtaking visual of what Paul describes in Colossians 1:27: “Christ *in* you, the hope of glory” (emphasis added).

Part of our purpose on earth is to peel back the layers of our lower nature—to “put off [our] old self,” as Ephesians 4:22 instructs—so that we might provide an accurate reflection of who God really is. We are called to be living representations of the love and life of Jesus. I don’t want the Light of the World to be hidden under a bushel, no. And I certainly don’t want Him to get buried beneath my graveclothes.

Think of it. The Prince of Peace and the Pearl of Great Price lives within me—

and within you. The great Alpha and Omega, the Bright and Morning Star, was placed in us at salvation and is waiting to be revealed to a watching, wondering world. To let Him shine, we simply have to cooperate with grace and do what only we can do. Diligently running the race marked out for us. Throwing off everything that might get in the way. Peeling off layer after layer of graveclothes that keep tripping us up and holding us back.

For when we do, something marvelous happens. Jesus is revealed in you and me. All because we took His advice to loose Him and let Him go!

## BONUS CHAPTER: “WHAT’S TRIPPING YOU UP?”

### ***Questions for Discussion or Reflection***

1. Even if you’re not a chronic tripper like me, you’ve probably had a klutzy moment or two. Share your most memorable one.
2. Which of the graveclothes responses identified in the “Tripping Points” sidebar on page 184 do you default to most often? What new response would you like to give next time your buttons are pushed?

### ***Going Deeper***

3. Though you considered this passage in your chapter 8 Bible study, I’d like to focus on it once again. Read Hebrews 12:2–3. (You may also want to read *The Message* version of this passage found at the end of the bonus chapter.) Describe what Jesus endured in order to be obedient to God. Now read Hebrews 12:4. What does this last verse say to your heart?
4. Compare 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 and Hebrews 12:5–11. List the different aspects of discipline that are mentioned and the reasons given for the importance of discipline in running the race we’re called to run.

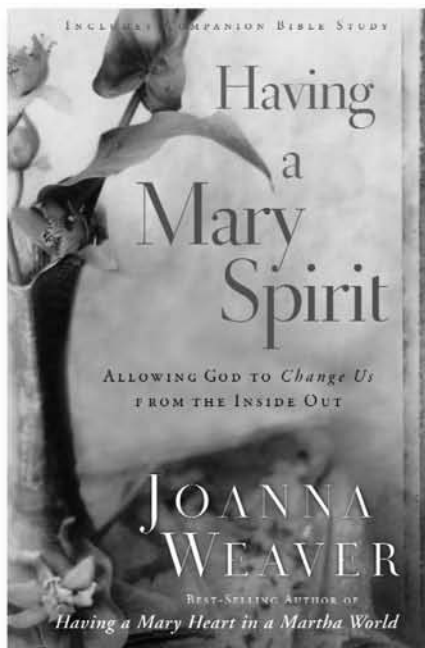
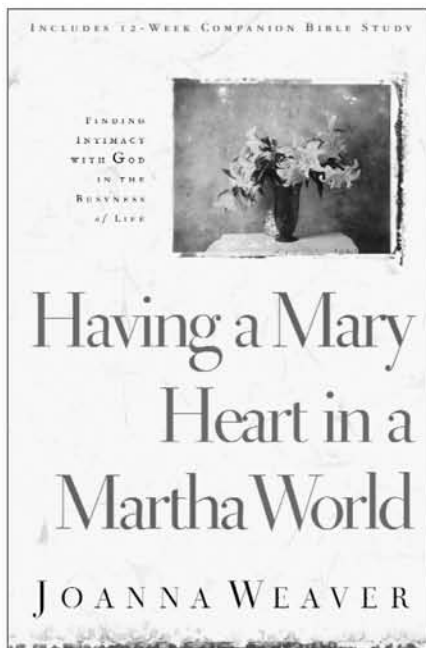


5. Hebrews 12:12–13 speaks of strengthening the weak places in our lives and making “level paths” for our feet. What does Proverbs 4:23–27 have to say about this subject? Practically speaking, what would making level paths look like in your life?
  
6. Read James 5:16. How has confessing your faults to another person helped unwind your graveclothes?
  
7. Early Methodists used to meet weekly for accountability. They would ask each other the following questions:
  - Have you experienced any particular temptations during the past week?
  - How did you react or respond to those temptations?
  - Is there anything you are trying to keep secret, and, if so, what?<sup>3</sup>

How would answering these questions help you shed graveclothes? Are there other questions you would add? Who would you allow to ask these hard questions of you?

8. What spoke most to you from this chapter?

*Lord, whatever it takes  
make me like You...*



Learn how to make room in your Martha lifestyle for Mary devotion in *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*. Then, in *Having a Mary Spirit*, learn how to bare the deepest corners of your heart to the One who accepts you where you are, but loves you too much to leave you there.

**Each book includes a companion Bible study  
for group or individual study.**

Visit [HavingAMarySpirit.com](http://HavingAMarySpirit.com) or [JoannaWeaverBooks.com](http://JoannaWeaverBooks.com) for more information.