

The
ONE
YEAR®

THE ONE YEAR® BOOK
of Inspiration for
GIRLFRIENDS

...juggling *Not-So-Perfect,*
OFTEN-CRAZY, but
Gloriously **REAL LIVES**



ELLEN MILLER

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TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

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The One Year Book of Inspiration for Girlfriends . . . Juggling Not-So-Perfect, Often-Crazy, but Gloriously Real Lives
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ISBN 978-1-4143-7331-7 *LeatherLike* Dusty Rose

ISBN 978-1-4143-3899-6 *LeatherLike* Black Patent

ISBN 978-1-4143-1938-4 Softcover

Printed in China

18 17 16 15 14 13 12
8 7 6 5 4 3 2

For Mammau



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Without you . . .

my Insiders, this book just couldn't have happened. Your support in carrying my business workload enabled me to have the time and mental bandwidth to write these words. Debbie, Jesse, Will, Becky, Mary Jo, Kathy, Carol, Paul, Clay, Christian, and especially Paula—who is also my dearest friend—thank you for your moral and physical support.

Without you . . .

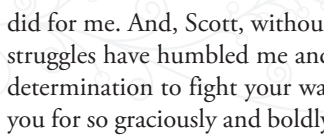
my dear girlfriends, I would not have had the confidence to even begin this journey. Your encouragement energized me and motivated me to do something I never thought I could have done. Elaine, Linda, Susan, Gretchen, Karen, Petey, Kathryn, Dina, Stacie, and all my girlfriend subscribers around the world—you are such a blessing to me. Kim Miller, my editor, and Jan Long Harris and the team at Tyndale—thank you for taking this chance with me.

Without you . . .

LifeNet, including Terry Smart and the other fabulous team of professionals there, I might not have this story of hope to tell. Thank you for giving my son the tools and encouragement to get his life back. I know God must have a very special place in heaven for those of you who selflessly give your time and energy to those in our society who are so deeply hurt and broken.

Without you . . .

my family, there is no story for you are the ones who give depth and meaning to my life. My in-laws Al, Harriett, and Dean who love me like their own daughter; thank you for always being so proud of me. My son-in-law, Adam, who is way more son than “in-law,” I thank you for the way you love and care for my daughter and granddaughter. Shauna, my light and best friend since I was eighteen years old, you bring me joy and happiness beyond words; I cannot imagine my life without you. To Ava, your very presence has ignited in me a desire to live intentionally in order to leave a meaningful legacy to you as my grandmother



did for me. And, Scott, without you I would not be the woman I am today. Your struggles have humbled me and brought me to my knees, and your courage and determination to fight your way back has filled me with hope and pride. Thank you for so graciously and boldly allowing me to share your struggles so that other moms who are also facing crisis with their children may find hope.

Without you . . .

Steve, I am only a ghost of myself. Your direction, support, and encouragement right me when I fail; your interest, insight and suggestions fuel me when I'm drained. And the way you love me—deeply, selflessly, and passionately—completes me. I am so blessed to have you as my husband. I love you with all my heart.

Without you . . .

my God, I am nothing.

INTRODUCTION

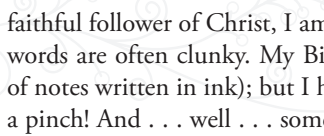
ON A SUNDAY afternoon in 2004, I had an “urging”—a really strange sense of calling—to write some of my girlfriends. I wanted to reach out to those women who I knew were in the difficult life stage of building a career while caring for a family. Since I had passed through that crazy life stage and lived to tell about it (along with my husband and kids), I sent a few of my gal pals an e-mail with a short note and a quote from Andy Andrews’s book, *The Traveler’s Gift*. On Monday morning, my girlfriends, some of whom I had not even corresponded with in over a year, responded with notes like “How in the world did you know that I needed that? Life is so hard right now. Keep ’em coming!”

Goaded by my dear friend and mentor Elaine Weeter, I agreed to begin compiling and sending out some of my personal stories, reflections, and thoughts. As my subscriber base grew, I launched www.ellenmiller.com, a blog for women seeking to live a life of uncommon joy. My musings, called Truth Nuggets, are sent via e-mail and posted to my blog. This book is a compilation of some of those writings.

In the movie *Shadowlands*, a student tells his professor, C. S. Lewis, “We read to know we’re not alone.” And, really, that’s why I began to write. Over five years later, my audience is global. It includes women of all faiths and no faith. These women range in age from their early twenties to nearly seventy. Some have never worked outside the home; others are high-flying executives. But they all long to live intentionally and to leave a legacy for others.

While my purpose in life is to encourage my girlfriends, my profession is marketing. I am the founder and president of a technology marketing company. Since 1994, Insider Marketing has helped launch some of the most innovative and significant products in the technology industry. Prior to opening the firm, I was an executive with a Fortune 500 company. During that period of life I struggled to maintain any semblance of balance between building my career, securing a new marriage, and raising my children. This was the life stage I refer to as my three-ring circus!

My purpose and profession are just two-thirds of who I am, however. Personally, I am a God-loving sinner saved by grace. While I am deeply spiritual and a



faithful follower of Christ, I am not a church lady. I can't pray like they pray; my words are often clunky. My Bible is well worn and read (literally red, with lots of notes written in ink); but I have a hard time recalling Scripture—especially in a pinch! And . . . well . . . sometimes I'm just selfish and prideful and impatient and—I guess you get the idea. I think church ladies are really neat; I'm just not one of them. Going on twenty years of marriage, I am head over heels in love with my husband, Steve. This is his first marriage and my second. Steve helped me raise our daughter, Shauna, and son, Scott. We've added to the crew with the addition of our son-in-law, Adam, and our granddaughter, Ava.

When I first began writing to my girlfriends, our son, who was addicted to drugs, had been missing for three years. Scott's drug dependency and recovery are a significant, if painful, part of our family history. For this reason, 50 percent of my profits from the sale of *The One Year Book of Inspiration for Girlfriends . . . Juggling Not-So-Perfect, Often-Crazy, but Gloriously Real Lives* will be given to LifeNet, a Dallas-based nonprofit that helps people recovering from mental illness and chemical dependency to rebuild their lives.

Scott believes our story can help other families who also live not-so-perfect lives, so he's given me his permission to tell our story. In fact, Steve, Shauna, and Adam have also generously allowed me to share some of their stories with you, since our experiences have been my best teachers for living a life of uncommon joy.

Because I am a real woman, living a real life—sometimes a very messy and complicated life—I face new challenges every day. I have found peace that passes all understanding in my relationship in Christ. I hope this book of inspirations will bring you joy and hope as you journey for the next 365 days through your real life too.

FINDING YOUR JOY

I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for joy. C. S. LEWIS

ARE YOU HAPPY?

The pursuit of happiness. A final destination so important that our forefathers included it in our Declaration of Independence. Millions *trade* their way to happiness—sometimes finding it in a corner office, others with a power-shopping trip to the mall—only to find that it quickly dissolves into discontent. Here today, gone tomorrow. Happiness, in reality, is just the emotion we feel when we are in a state of well-being. But emotions are fickle and can change with the weather or a ten-second hormonal surge! In fact, I think happiness is overrated—after all, it's so dependent on outside influences.

Do you have peace?

When my kids were teenagers, I would have these moments (sometimes hours) when both kids were doing well in school, their social networks humming; my job was going great; my husband was content and satisfied with his work—our little family a Norman Rockwell poster. And then the sun would come up and there'd be an algebra test, a girlfriend's hurtful words, or a boss's unreasonable expectation, and that peace would be a distant memory.

Peace is a state of serenity. But your peace can be interrupted when the telephone rings. For this reason, I know that peace is fleeting and, like happiness, should not be our lifelong pursuit.

So that leaves us with joy. Do you have joy?

Better yet—do you have *uncommon* joy? Do you live in a state of contentment that defies all logic in this world gone mad? Regardless of who has harmed you in the past, what circumstances may get in your way today, or what life-blows you'll face in the future, can you say you live in a state of constant, uncommon joy? To live with rich contentment, joy—which cannot be affected by outside forces—is required. Joy is a state of heart and is the only one of these three states—happiness, peace, and joy—that you and you alone can control. No one can mess with your joy unless you let them.

I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! (JOHN 15:11)

Have you maybe misplaced your joy? It's not gone—it's just in a very good hidey-hole. Let's go find it. Over the next 364 pages, I will share with you a few very practical but transforming tips to finding uncommon joy—regardless of how common your life is!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ELLEN MILLER is passionate about life balance. Why? Because she knows firsthand the miserable feeling we have when we're "off our game" and the joy we can find in everyday life when we're hitting on all cylinders. Her motto is: "You can have it all—just not *every* day."

Professionally, Ellen is a working gal. She served as a corporate officer for a Fortune 500 company while raising a family. She founded and now serves as the visionary for Insider Marketing, a technology marketing firm. Since 1994, Insider has had the pleasure of marketing some of the biggest brands in the technology marketplace.

But Ellen believes that her profession describes only a third of who she really is. Personally, Ellen shares her life with her husband, Steve; their grown children; and their first grandchild. She's not one to take this blessing of a sweet family for granted. But probably the most defining thing about Ellen is her purpose. In this life stage, Ellen has felt a calling to be an encouragement to other women of all walks of life.

Ellen believes that a fulfilled, content woman is vital to our society, our workforce, and most important to our families. A woman who purposefully chooses to live intentionally makes for a productive employee, a strong marriage partner, and a positive role-modeling mother. Her desire is to inspire confidence and motivate women to live to their full potential—with *uncommon* joy—for Christ.



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Daily.
Devotions.

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