



# Longing for PARIS

ONE WOMAN'S SEARCH  
FOR JOY, BEAUTY, AND ADVENTURE—  
RIGHT WHERE SHE IS

SARAH MAE

*"This book is a must-read for moms."*

SARA HAGERTY



This book is a must-read for moms. It stirred a great big ‘YES’ within me as I turned its pages. This message of embracing our hunger for beauty and depth and an exquisite life in God—right in the midst of raising children, young and old—is unique. It will invite any reader to consider extravagant motherhood, where God is big and beauty can be felt even among the dishes and diapers and laundry.”

SARA HAGERTY

Author of *Every Bitter Thing Is Sweet*

I suppose I have always struggled with the gap between my wildest longings for life and the often mundane details of what my days actually look like. Many times I’ve found myself dreaming instead of experiencing; hoping instead of embracing. Exquisite and vulnerable, Sarah Mae’s writing will inspire you to bridge the gap once and for all—finding exactly what you hoped you would in a place you may have given up looking. As you read her stories, you will find yourself nodding along, grateful for a voice that understands and ultimately leads you to the peace you’ve been chasing.

ANGIE SMITH

Bestselling author of *Mended, I Will Carry You, What Women Fear*, and the Bible study *Seamless*

Sarah Mae has a rare gift to unearth the longings each of us feels for the “more” in life that God created us to have. Compassionate, sympathetic, and inspiring are the ways she understands our personal needs and gently leads us to the One who satisfies. This book is a gift to all who have dreamed of places beyond our present reality and want

to know the hope we can cling to each day. I was deeply touched by her words.

SALLY CLARKSON

Author of *Own Your Life* and cofounder of Whole Heart Ministries

Are you struggling to figure out how to love the life you have right here and now? *Longing for Paris* shares Sarah Mae's journey to find joy and adventure in her own home and backyard. You'll be inspired to slow down, savor life, and embrace the everyday.

CRYSTAL PAINE

Founder of MoneySavingMom.com and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Say Goodbye to Survival Mode*

I love how Sarah Mae has spoken up for women's longings. She's penned the truth about how we dream and feel helpless about it when our lives demand attention to the daily. I feel seen in the pages of this book. I feel connected to my sisters. Most of all, I feel encouraged to love the space in which I live and find adventure in what already surrounds me. The things I read in *Longing for Paris* tell me I don't have to wait to really live, and that's some of the best news I have ever heard.

LISA WHITTLE

Author of *{W}hole* and *I Want God*

This book will speak to the heart of any woman who has wondered how she can fit her life-sized dreams into the tiny minutes of her every day. Through the lens of her own personal adventures, Sarah Mae frames truth with practicality and faith with tips for everyday application. In a word—*real*—Sarah Mae keeps it real. As she shares her

pilgrimage to living a beautiful life, Sarah Mae's honesty is refreshing, and her message offers freedom and hope to those who read her words.

CRYSTAL EVANS HURST

Coauthor of *Kingdom Woman*

Sarah Mae is an author who knows the deep longings of women and isn't afraid to go there. She did it with *Desperate*, and she's done it again with *Longing for Paris*. She inspires us with her relatable tales of adventure and leaves us feeling hopeful. Many of us know to "bloom where we are planted," but few of us have the courage to do it.

COURTNEY DEFEO

Author of *In This House, We Will Giggle* and founder of Lil Light O' Mine

Travel the world and change your life, or stay at home and do the same. Sarah Mae shows you the way. In *Longing for Paris*, you'll be entertained and inspired to lead a life you'll love.

CLAIRE DIAZ-ORTIZ

Author and Silicon Valley innovator

God made us to live with longing, but how do we reconcile that in our daily lives? In these pages, we get to walk with Sarah Mae to figure it out for ourselves. We find a safe place alongside this friend in searching to understand our souls and a kindred spirit who shares our sense of longing and adventuring and trying to find exactly what we've been looking for all along.

LOGAN WOLFRAM

Author, speaker, and host of the Allume conference

Our hearts and souls have become weary living in such a fast-paced world. *Longing for Paris* speaks into the desire to slow down . . . and live well right where we are. Though most of us won't be able to visit Paris, that doesn't mean we can't cultivate "Paris" in our lives. Sarah Mae shares powerful reminders to live with intentionality, savor the precious time we have with loved ones, and embrace life . . . living like the French and savoring life right down to the very last morsel!

ANGELA PERRITT

Coauthor of *You Are Loved Bible Study*, founder of LoveGodGreatly.com

*Longing for Paris* is one of those game-changing books. Sarah Mae leads you to a place that she herself has been . . . a place of embracing the season that you're in while holding on with hope and expectation for what is to come. Every page is filled with great truth, a depth of insight, and personal stories that will encourage and strengthen you in your own journey.

KARINA ALLEN

Blogger at *(in)courage* and *For His Name and His Renown*

Through tangles, adventures, stories, and faith, Sarah Mae's wisdom and insight is life-breath for your journey. Profound yet practical, *Longing for Paris* inspires the heart, encourages the soul, and unveils the very essence of the spirit: beauty that lies within.

LORI CORBY WOLFE

Rise Up event coordinator



*Longing for Paris*







*Longing for*  
**PARIS**

ONE WOMAN'S SEARCH  
FOR JOY, BEAUTY, AND ADVENTURE—  
RIGHT WHERE SHE IS

**SARAH MAE**



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Designed by Jennifer Ghionzoli

Published in association with the literary agency of The Fedd Agency, doing business at P.O. Box 341973, Austin, TX, 78734.

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#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mae, Sarah, date.

Longing for Paris : one woman's search for joy, beauty, and adventure—right where she is / Sarah Mae.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4143-7261-7 (sc)

1. Mae, Sarah, date. 2. Christian biography. 3. Desire—Religious aspects—Christianity. 4. Christian women—Religious life. I. Title.

BR1725.M2155A3 2015

277.3'083092—dc23

[B]

2015011966

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Printed in the United States of America

21 20 19 18 17 16 15  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1





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## FOREWORD



I'VE HIKED THE rugged trails of Thailand, and I've sat in awe of the Garden of Gethsemane. I've lost everything I owned in a hurricane and gone through the pain of burying my mom. Adventure and longings can fill us with lasting joy, while pain can leave us rolled into a heavy, protective shell. Now, as a mom with five young children, sometimes it's hard to give too much thought to my longings. It's hard because they all seem far-fetched. My reality is busy and demanding, and it doesn't lend itself to adventure—or so I thought. In recent years, to avoid disappointment, I chose to settle for a dull safety. Not dreaming, not longing, because I didn't want to come up empty. I compromised with my wild side, saying, “One day . . .” I allowed my flame to smolder.

Sometimes we meet a person who is never to be forgotten; Sarah Mae is one of those people. Within days of meeting her, a dream I had tucked away years ago began to rekindle. She has a way of reigniting a burnt-out wick.

As we spend time together, I can feel my courage rise, and

I catch hold of her fresh excitement for this life. As a friend, she has taught me to listen to others' hearts. She says that we are all "bursting with hidden beauty," and she desires to see that beauty unlocked. One of the ways she brings this forth is through her words of wisdom.

Her words overflow from the rich life she lives. She softly whispers correction in the ear of her energetic boy, she takes the time to curl her daughter's hair for a birthday party, and she can laugh with her husband, that sparkle still in her eye. She opens her heart and eloquently shares some of her razor-sharp experiences. She does this with such tender grace that the stories become a soothing salve for the hurting heart.

In the pages of this book, she invites us on her journey. The more I read, the more I begin to sense my own stirring. She shows us that there is, indeed, finding in the seeking. In a sense, this book is a journey back to our own awakening.

Sarah teaches us that we don't have to just press through difficult seasons in our lives. We don't have to just cope through the pain and survive. She shows us how to "untangle the tension" between longings and realities. She shakes us out of our "contentment with discontentment." She spurs our hearts to risk faith because, as she says, "When we believe God is with us, the unknown is exciting." She extends the challenge that we can wait for the right line of circumstances, or we can choose to look for fullness here in our now. With her words, she illustrates that beauty in this life is not only here, but it is here boldly beckoning.

Using the "colors of her soul," she paints a picture for us,



and it's beautiful. It's vulnerable. How has she gone from the paralyzing fear of boarding an airplane to now longing for Paris—wanting to fly high over the open seas? Her journey gives freedom not just for herself, but for all of us who have longings, even longings that may be tucked away awaiting their unfolding.

I may not long for Europe the same way Sarah does, but I do long for joy. I long for beauty and art and color in my life. I want romance in the daily grind with my husband. And dare I say I long for the adventure I once lived. Like Sarah, I can't go travel the globe in search of it; so how do I find it in my everyday routine? With depth, Sarah paves the way for us. In reading this book, we are emboldened to look into our souls, listen to their stirrings, and open our hearts to the beauty that truly does exist in our realities.

*Amy Smoker*  
*Mother of five, speaker,*  
*and cohost of A Night to Breathe*  
*AmySmoker.com*







## AUTHOR'S NOTE



*Dare we awaken our hearts to their true  
desires? Dare we come alive?*

JOHN ELDREDGE

I HAVE READ about women taking off to travel the world in order to discover themselves.

They journey to beautiful places and they meet interesting people, try irresistible food, and gain perspective into their souls. I have often thought about how much I would love to do that. I would love to go somewhere beautiful and release myself to it. I would love to go to Paris. But I have a family and a life that calls me to the normal everyday lifestyle, so I need to figure things out in my soul right where I am.

Some of you might relate.

Some of you might feel suffocated and are just about dying to get away or figure out your life or do something that gives breath to your soul.

*I get it.*

And so I'm asking, how do I navigate the tensions between my longings and my reality? How do I figure out how to enjoy my life right in the middle of the normalcy of it all?

When I began the journey nearly two years ago that has

now become this book, I was in a place where I felt stuck and tired and discouraged. Life was rolling over me, and it seemed as though I were just along for the ride. My days were controlling me instead of the other way around. But as frustrated as I was, I couldn't seem to discipline myself to make good choices.

I distinctly remember waking up one morning and thinking, *I wonder if I'll ever change. I wonder if I'll get through these years at home with my kids and realize that this season has been like water slipping through my fingers—essential to my life but beyond my ability to contain.* I wished I could hit a pause button to catch up. I didn't want to miss out on my days because I didn't want to miss out on my life. I wanted to *live wide awake*, and above all, I didn't want to regret my choices.

After having children, and coming out of the fog of sleepless nights and hormones, I realized that I was me—and yet I was different; I had to figure out who I was after having children. *I needed to discover myself again.*

That day was an awakening for me because it was then that I decided that I would no longer let the days carry me, but that I would *choose* to live.

I spent the next six months doing things like getting up early, trying new diets, parenting more intentionally, looking to do good works, and attempting to figure out who I really was. I was trying to figure out how to live an unregrettable life (the original title to this book), a life where I would be happy with the choices I made.



The initial writing of this book and the experiments I tried were the nudge to get me to wake up.

But just as I have shifted and grown a little bit more into myself, so has this book. Because I did wake up. *Here I am! I'm alive, and I want to be in it. I don't want to miss it!* Once I woke up, I began to wrestle with new feelings. I discovered that there were pieces of my soul I had hidden away, parts of me that I had decided years ago to snuff out in order to live right. And those pieces, those parts of me that God wove together, were not content to stay buried. They wanted out; they wanted to breathe and be resurrected from the dead.

No, they wouldn't stay underground.

Thumping on my soul, these longings for beauty and art and adventure wanted to be seen; I couldn't ignore them. But I didn't know what to do with them. Were they just selfish things trying to make a comeback into my life, or were they justified in wanting to be acknowledged?

I could push the longings away, but it was clear they weren't going to heed my instruction. I realized that this book was just going to have to come along for the ride as I figured out what to do with these longings in my soul.

So I began to gently peek at them in order to discern if they were real or just something I was going through—a phase that would pass. Nope, not a phase. I asked the Lord about them, and I discovered that there was a yearning in me that wanted something more, something I couldn't quite place. But on the surface, it looked like a desire to explore more of life. I was desperate to see and experience new things.





## *Longing for Paris*

I wanted to get out of the dailiness of life and into an adventure. I wanted to travel and see and touch and do, but my life didn't afford me that luxury. I couldn't just up and leave my family in order to figure out what was going on in my soul.

On the outside, I wanted Paris. But on the inside, what I was really searching for was a filling to the deepest parts of my soul. And I wanted to know what to do with Paris and my soul and my every day.

I wanted to know how to navigate the tensions between my longings and my reality.

And I wanted to know what was behind my feelings. Could I enjoy my life and my reality right where I was, even with these longings pushing on my heart?

Yes, I want Paris, the real Paris and all the exciting things that Paris represents. But at the end of the day, I have discovered that these desires are pointing to something else.

Now is probably a good time to tell you this book isn't really about Paris.

Oh yes, we will talk about Paris, because longing for the real Paris was one of the things that woke me up and helped me get out of the mundanity of my life. But Paris really is the catalyst that got me thinking more about my longings and the deeper parts behind them.

This book is the story of me untangling my life and figuring out how to experience and enjoy the good things all around me. It's me doing something about the fact that a half-dead life is no life at all.





I know I'm not the only one who struggles with longings and the desire to understand them and do something with them. I'm not the only one who doesn't want to live like a zombie.

I believe we need each other if we are going to keep on. Life is hard enough; we shouldn't attempt to survive on our own. We need each other and to hear each other's stories to know that there is hope and that our being alive and awake to life matters. It's what the world needs.

So this book is me allowing you to watch my evolution, to come into my unfolding story, on the chance that your soul has some longings and questions and color that want to come out as well.

Thank you for coming along. It's so much better doing this together.







THE CATALYST:  
*Paris & Questions*



*(A Must-Read Introduction to Understand Le Book)*

PARIS HAS FASCINATED me since I was a young girl.

Growing up, most of my life I lived with my dad and stepmom, except when I spent summers with my mom. I would lie in bed with her on those summer nights, all cozied up under soft blankets, and she would teach me French words and phrases. They all sounded so beautiful to me. With her large looping handwriting, she would scribble French words into a red notebook that had a French poodle on the cover, and I took it all in, making sure to tuck Paris into my heart. I wanted to learn, I wanted to keep listening to the beauty, and I wanted to hang on to my mom for a little bit longer because I knew the summer days would end soon enough.

My mom and her parents had lived on the outskirts of Paris when her father was stationed at the US European Command headquarters in Camp-de-Loges from 1964–1966. From the ages of ten to twelve, Mom called Maisons-Laffitte home. She told me she loved it there and that the people seemed so free, unencumbered by what others thought. They just lived and enjoyed life and food and conversation. My



## Longing for Paris

grandfather was also fond of Paris, particularly the wine and the eight- to eleven-course meals. Both my mother and my grandfather shared a love of the culture.

Hearing the stories of Paris from my mother and grandfather sets my heart yearning to see it for myself; I have never been there. I want to experience the beauty and the art and the food and the culture.

But this longing for Paris sparks something else in me. I find myself beginning to dream about living another life.

My imagination takes me to Paris in the 1920s. *Midnight in Paris*, one of my favorite movies, captures perfectly my ideal Paris. The movie takes the lead character, Gil Pender (played by Owen Wilson), back in time to that era, where he meets F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway among other writers and artists who have a genuine camaraderie with each other in that city that seems to never lose its sparkle. I would have loved being part of that time, going to cafés every day, writing, staying up late, and having long conversations into the night about God and faith and art and music and all of the things that set flame to my soul.

My imagination takes a turn, and before long I'm dreaming of two lives, paralleling each other. In one life, I'm doing what I'm doing now. I'm married, raising my precious children, homeschooling, and, as Barbara Mouser says in *Five Aspects of Woman*, trying to raise life above the mere existence where God has me. In my other life, I move to Paris and get a place at 39 rue Descartes where Hemingway wrote, wake slowly in the mornings, ease my way into my coffee, and run







my fingers on notebook pages ready to be filled. I have time to write words that matter, that encourage the soul, because I have time for depth. At the end of the day, I put my work in my bag and walk in the rain along the Seine, then stay up late in rooms filled with music and laughter. Conversations run deep, and my soul's need for beauty and purpose and relationship is realized.

Something in me aches as I come back to reality. Why these dreams? Why this longing? I'm happy with my life, thankful for all I have. *And yet . . .*

It is this longing for Paris that leads me to explore my *deeper* longings. And as I begin to look inside my soul, I see that attached to my longings are questions. Lots of questions.

"Lord," I groan, "what are these longings in my soul? Are they selfish? How do I live and sacrifice and raise my kids well and still 'follow my dreams'? Is following my dreams even biblical? What does it all mean? How do I navigate between my reality and my longings? Do I ignore them in order to sacrifice for my family? As a woman, I feel particularly confused with my longings. . . . What do I do with them?"

I want to know how to live between this tension of following my dreams and living a Jesus-following, cross-centered life. I want to know how not to shut out my longings, while at the same time giving myself to the daily work of raising my children well and not being so divided that I neglect them. I want to know, does the Lord approve of my dreams? And really, what are dreams? What are my longings, and why are they there? Can I be a good mom, an intentional mom, and



also allow my longings to come to life? And can I truly enjoy my life right where I am?

It is these questions that open wide a flood of yearning in me that has been dammed up for quite a while.

And it is these questions that have led me to write this book.

Before I could begin to really enjoy my life, tasting and seeing the goodness of the Lord, I needed to sort out some of the tangles and questions in my soul (as you read above). I needed to know how God viewed me, and I needed to *see* Him. The first chapter of this book is about that untangling. Once I began to work through the mess, I started to move forward in delighting in the people and the world around me. One of the ways I found myself being more alert to the gifts around me was to find ways to bring “Paris” into my everyday life. I think you’ll enjoy that fun little twist, and I hope you will join me in the sorting and then in the journey.

The unfolding journey is part serious and comes with depth and resolve, and part fun, where I am learning to enjoy the beauty and delight around me. You will read of me figuring out how to do adventure and romance, but you will also read some hard stories, stories that have shaped who I am and how they impact this whole thing, this life. Life is like that, a mix of fun and hard, beautiful and ugly, painful and life-giving. This book—the stories in it, the teaching—is all a mix, because I’m a mix of this life, as are you. I pray that the words in these pages will bring you relief where you are thirsty and a hand to hold and uplift you where you are weary.

We do not walk alone.



# UNTANGLING MY SOUL

BEFORE MY HEART would even allow me to consider Paris or other dreams, I had to sort through some bitter roots, weeds that had entangled my heart. Because of my wounds and anger and sin, I had a warped view of God, one that led me to believe that He didn't really want me to enjoy the longings in my heart. I believed that God was all practicality. He was interested in me "carrying my cross," not dreaming about the stirrings in my soul. After all, I thought my longings were selfish. I needed to buck up and be responsible. Being selfless meant having no self, no color, no joy other than the fact that I was to have eternal life. In reality I had to learn to see that because I am made in the image of God, I have



*Longing for Paris*

emotions that run deeply, long deeply, and ache deeply. I am a person of the deep.

*Deep calls to deep . . .*

PSALM 42:7

And because He loves me so, and because of His kindness, He led me to repentance and to clarity.

Come into my questions and see His hand as He leads me.



The Bible lay on my lap, open to 2 Samuel 3. I was reading a heartbreaking scene from the story of Michal (Me-call), King David's first wife.

But first, let me give you some of her backstory. We are first introduced to Michal, the daughter of King Saul, in 1 Samuel 18:20. At the time, David was Saul's military commander—a strong and brave and handsome leader—and Michal fell in love with him. Saul, who knew that his reign was in jeopardy because of David, capitalized on his daughter's love for the future king by giving David a dangerous task to win her hand—killing one hundred Philistines. It was a mission that should have sent David to the grave, but instead sent him into the arms of the woman in waiting when he returned victorious. He had doubled what Saul had required, killing two hundred Philistines.

After Michal and David were married, Saul's jealousy got





the best of him, so he sent men to David's house to arrest him. Michal found out about the plot and helped David escape. When she knew he was safe, she covered for her husband, by stalling and filling his bed with items that made it look like David was there. Of course, Saul's henchmen discovered the ruse, and soon after, Saul began a relentless manhunt for David (see 1 Samuel 19:11-17).

While David was on the run, he took at least two more wives. Saul had given Michal to another man—Palti—to marry.

David continued to assert his power and build up loyalty, and right before he became king, he demanded Michal's return. She was torn from Palti, who wept as she left and followed her, powerless to stop what was happening. Finally David's men told him to go home (2 Samuel 3:16).

Michal, the woman who had once loved David, now "despised him in her heart" (2 Samuel 6:16). Her reaction could have been the result of feeling neglected while David was fighting, being jealous of David's success as king, loathing him for taking other wives, or having second thoughts about her loyalty to him instead of her father. Venom spewed from her mouth when she saw King David celebrating the return of the Ark of God, the first time she had seen him since that night she helped him escape years before. Her words were meant to shame him.

How could her heart that had burned with such love for this man now be filled with such disdain? David basically tells her off, and the last we hear of Michal are these fateful



words: She “had no child to the day of her death” (2 Samuel 6:23).

And that’s it. That’s all we know.

My heart ached for Michal, for this woman who seemed to be a pawn between her father and her husband and power. And my ache led to questions, as pain oftentimes does, and then it made me mad, so I gave God my questions. “God, did You even care about Michal’s heart? Do You even care about women? *Do You even care about me?*”

I needed to know how God saw me. I needed to know I was more than parts, more than a pawn, more than a cursed woman trying to figure out how to live redeemed in a fallen world where men hurt women.

I needed to know what it meant for me, as a woman, to have a calling or a dream or longings. This was personal, not only for me, but for my daughters.

## WHO AM I, GOD?

How could I possibly begin to understand my longings if I didn’t even understand who I was to God? How could I begin to truly enjoy my life if I had these deep-seated questions?

I have been a Christian for many years now, and I know Jesus and His grace and His love. I have had great training in the Scriptures and in discipleship through The Navigators ministry. I have been poured into and have pored over the Scriptures for years, leading Bible studies and giving talks to encourage women in faith. And yet there I was, *begging* God





to tell me how He viewed me. I was desperate to know what I meant to Him as a woman.

I ended up in the book of Job. I have read Job before, and I wasn't interested in reading it again. Yet I felt led to read it again.

I read and I pondered, and I saw that Job accused God, just as I had.

Everything had been taken away from Job—his family, wealth, possessions, even his health. He was suffering in pain and yet trying to hold on to his integrity and righteousness before the Lord. But it was getting to be too much to bear.

I have pulled just a few lines from his bold accusations aimed at God.

*Is not man forced to labor on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired man? (7:1); You destroy man's hope. You forever overpower him and he departs. (14:19-20); . . . God has wronged me. (19:6); . . . Why should I not be impatient? . . . Why do the wicked still live, continue on, [and] also become very powerful? (21:4,7); Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. (23:3-4); . . . You have become cruel to me. (30:21)*

Job throws questions and indictments at God, exactly like I did: “Why, God? You are unjust! I don't even know if You're really good.”





*Longing for Paris*

But then along comes Elihu, a young man who has remained quiet while Job's other three friends' counsel exasperates Job and angers God.

Finally, Elihu can't hold it in any longer or he'll burst. He says,

*I am young in years and you are old; therefore I was shy and afraid to tell you what I think. I thought age should speak, and increased years should teach wisdom. But it is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding.*

JOB 32:6-8

After Elihu puts the three older friends in their place, he goes through the list of reasons Job has given for feeling he's been shortchanged by God and deserves answers. Elihu says, "Let me tell you, you are not right in this" (33:12).

*Far be it from God to do wickedness. (34:10)  
One who is perfect in knowledge is with you. (36:4)  
Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen. (37:13)*

And then, God says to Job . . .

*Gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!*

JOB 38:3







Job finally has an audience with God. And it's God's turn to barrage Job with questions, ones that none of us can even begin to fathom.

*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

JOB 38:4-7

God speaks two chapters' worth to Job, and in all of it He's asking Job to see Him for who He is. He is the almighty God, and all that exists is under His authority. He has reasons for His plans, reasons we cannot even begin to comprehend with our finite minds that hold such limited knowledge.

You know what Job says in return?

*I have declared that which I did not understand. . . .  
I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.*

JOB 42:3, 5-6 (EMPHASIS ADDED)

Job wasn't repenting because he *did* something; he was repenting because he *didn't see God for who He is*, and he



*didn't see God's love* for him. Job felt like a hired hand, and quite frankly, he was prideful. He recognized God's power, but he thought he had God's understanding.

As I read through and pondered Job's lament, considered Elihu's rebuke, and paid attention to God's rebuttal, I began to *see* Him.

In Hosea 2:16-20 (NIV), the Lord says, "In that day you will call me 'my husband.' . . . I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD."

Oh, that I would see Him and know Him!

#### THE COMMUNION TABLE

I found myself in the middle of all my accusations and confusion, and with thoughts of Job and Hosea swirling in my head, at a Sunday Communion service. Sitting in my chair, I took the bread and the wine, and in that moment the Lord spoke to my heart. All of a sudden, the truth was clear as day: *God didn't die for a woman; He died for me, because He loves me and I'm worth His very life for me to see Him.* God died for His *loves*. He wasn't obligated to die; He chose to. And now, I'm His *daughter*.

*I see You, God. I see You.*

I could stop asking, "Why God?" and start saying, "Teach me to see what I do not see."

It's interesting that God uses the Communion table to



make us see Him. In fact, after Jesus' resurrection, His own disciples didn't recognize Him until He broke bread with them:

*When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.*

LUKE 24:30-31

We see Him in the sacrifice. We see His love for us and His great mercy when we see that He was broken for us. He was broken for you and for me, personally.

I wished that Michal had been sitting beside me at that moment. There is so much that Scripture doesn't tell us, hidden things in her story, things I wished I could ask her and then share with her about God. I know this for certain: God cares about women, and He cared about Michal. I know this because He hasn't changed; His character is the same yesterday, today, and forever. If He cared and died for me, I can tell you He cared for Michal and He loved her.

God sees us, but how often do we truly see Him? He wants us to see that there is not one unjust or wicked thing in Him. He is fully good, and He is fully *for us*.

Let's face it. When we're hurt, we put up walls. We want to know, "Can I trust You, God?"

We're afraid we can't trust Him. Why?

Because we're afraid He won't come through.





*Longing for Paris*

And, yet, as we begin to see Him for who He is, we see He is trustworthy. He helps us see ourselves for who we are.

I can't speak to the specific strongholds that might be in your life, but I can say this: If you're at that point where you are desperate to hear Him like I was, then you are blessed.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3). The literal meaning of that Scripture is “blessed are those as helpless as a beggar.”

You are in a good place. God wants to bring you to where you can see Him and know who you are. Your destiny is not to be in pain, but to walk in confidence and know who you are as His son or daughter.

*The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.*

ZEPHANIAH 3:17

*As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.*

ISAIAH 62:5

As I began to see myself as a beloved daughter of the God who is not only my Father, but a happy Father who smiles over me, I began to see my longings in a new light.





## GOD CARES ABOUT OUR DREAMS

She told me that God cares about our dreams.

Her words made me catch my breath.

There we were, the three of us, friends huddled close at a restaurant talking over chips and dip and the most delicious chocolate cake. And she said those words: God cares about our dreams.

*He does?* I had thought that dreams were selfish, mostly, and the thought that He cared about dreams *never even entered my mind*. I remember another friend telling me once that she didn't even think dreams, as in "following our dreams," was even a biblical concept.

I was so confused. But this conversation at the restaurant did something to me; I felt the truth of my friend's words in my spirit as soon as they were uttered. And I was changed.

I knew in my depths that what she said was true: God cares about our dreams, because He cares about us.

He cares about me, His daughter, whom He loves and delights in. He cares about you, too.

There it is, the first thing in figuring out how to think about our longings and dreams: Our God cares about them. This is important theology. If God cares about us and delights in us and therefore cares about the things we care about as a Father cares for the joy in His children, we can exhale.

I've been so concerned with being "right" and "good" that I never stopped to contemplate the heart of my Father and



His pleasure over the things that stir my heart. He made me for goodness sake! He knew every piece of me before He even breathed a soul into me.

And He not only knew me; He designed me. He put the very ability to long in my soul; He gave me the gift of dreaming so I could have vision in this life.

The Bible says that without vision a people perish (see Proverbs 29:18, kjv). We need our dreams to give us the motivation to have a plan so that we can keep on. With no vision and no dreams and no longings, we lack the ability to creatively and joyously make plans for how we will spend our days. Granted, the Lord directs our steps, but we faithfully begin the walking of them.

Oh yes, dreams are biblical and good, and we can thank God for them.

I have learned that where we go wrong is when we hold so tightly to our dreams that we neglect to fully trust God with them. The reality is, some dreams are woven into our souls from our Creator, and some are the result of our sinfulness. The good news is we can ascertain which dreams are good and which are of the flesh by asking ourselves some “search me” questions, and then be open to God’s revelation to our hearts. I’ll explain the questions in a minute.

The other trouble we run into with our dreams is when we take our very good dreams and try to walk them out before their time, which can bring frustration and/or neglect to our families or where God has us. We all need time in the pasture, so to speak, where we can mature in faithfulness.





I call these years the “hidden years.” Consider David. As a young shepherd, he was hidden in the pasture tending to sheep, learning how to direct them and care for them before he would direct and care for a nation as a king. If we can be patient and trust our Father with the timing of our lives, I believe He will use us as He sees fit in His time.

But how do we deal with these longings in the meantime? What do we do with them?

Throughout this book you will see how I’ve been dealing with my longings, and I’ll even talk more in depth about dreams and longings in chapter 7, but for now, this:

If you’re anything like me, in the everyday of life, there seems to be a constant pull between self (the things I desire) and sacrifice. I want to do what I want to do, but my kids need me present and available most of the days, particularly because I have chosen to homeschool. They are my first work, so they get priority (in theory). But it is a battle. I have to choose daily to trust that God will use me when and how He pleases. I may not be able to use the gifts He’s given me outside of family full-time right now, but one day I may be able to. Perhaps one day I’ll be able to travel to Paris and maybe even take my family! I don’t know what the future holds, but I know that the God who holds it is good.

My friend Carrie Crawford, a breast cancer survivor, says, “Not what if, but *even if*.”

Even if I never go to Paris, He is good.

Even if I never have my longings fulfilled on this earth, He is good.





*Longing for Paris*

Even if something terrible happens to me or my family or friends, He is good.

Is it settled in your heart that He is good?

As you'll read in chapter 9, our longings are far deeper than what we sometimes think them to be.

In the meantime, on this earth and in our reality, whatever that may be, we trust. We hold on to our dreams with open hands, and we walk out this life one day at a time believing that our God cares about our dreams.

Because, friend, He does.

*For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother's womb.  
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works,  
And my soul knows it very well.*

PSALM 139:13-14

*. . . the LORD takes pleasure in His people.*

PSALM 149:4

**GOD DELIGHTS IN US AND IS GLORIFIED WHEN  
WE DELIGHT IN HIM**

Now I understand.

Because He cares for me and delights in me and wants me to delight in Him, I am free to enjoy the beauty around me.







His creation is a gift.

As I acknowledge that and thank Him for it, I unwrap more and more of His goodness and kindness.

It is like the delight I get when my children tumble out of their beds on Christmas morning, anxious to see and touch and open their gifts. Last Christmas, as I was in my bedroom, I heard them up and down the stairs all night, scurrying across the hardwood floors, back and forth between the living room and their bedroom, because they just couldn't contain their excitement. I yelled at them to get back in bed. But after I yelled, I smiled because *I knew*.

The next morning, the three of them got up early—before Jesse and me—to open and play with the one gift each that they are allowed to open without us. At 8 a.m. they jumped on our bed to get us up, and I brewed the coffee to help open our eyes to the glory of the day. Then Jesse and I settled in for the joy of watching our children open the rest of their gifts. Like past Christmases, I couldn't get enough of the brightness in their eyes, the giggles, and the utter, unabashed joy. I am delighted when they are delighted in the gifts we have chosen for them.

And it is this joy and delight that I believe God has when we enjoy His gifts.

He loves us, His daughters, and He is delighted when we delight in Him. In fact, we are told in Psalm 34:8 to “taste and see that the LORD is good.”



My youngest daughter laid three books on my bed. “Will you read these to me?” she asked.

“Just one,” I said. “Mommy’s busy.”

She looked at the books, pondered, and made her choice.

She curled up next to me and snuggled in close, her head resting on my shoulder as I read the story.

When that one was finished, she handed me the next one.

“Okay, I’ll read *one* more.” I did this because she was so close and so dear.

I read the third one because I’m a sucker.

After the last book was done, she closed her eyes and stayed awhile. We were cozy and warm. I smelled her hair, and I rubbed her head—and I thanked God that He had given her to me as my daughter. She is so precious. In her I *see* that the Lord is good.

*Taste and see . . .*

I’m going to do that; I’m going to take Him up on His offer to “taste and see that the LORD is good.”





**HOW CAN WE NAVIGATE THE TENSIONS  
BETWEEN OUR REALITY AND OUR LONGINGS?**

1. We believe truth. God does care about our dreams and our longings.
2. God gives us gifts to be used for His Kingdom purposes on this earth; we have purpose here.
3. God delights in us and the pleasure we receive from His gifts in us. He is a fun and colorful God, and He is happy with us because we are His.
4. He delights when we trust Him completely, knowing He does all things for the good of those who love Him.
5. He wants us to seek His face. He wants us to commune with Him.
6. We search our hearts and see if there is any offensive way in us (see Psalm 139:24, NIV). What is the motivation behind our dreams and longings? We wrestle this out in vulnerability, knowing we will most likely have to do this several times over our lifetime.
7. We give our dreams and longings to Him, trusting Him to do as He pleases, knowing He cares about us, our growth, and our total trust in Him.
8. We walk by faith, doing what we can when we can, knowing the season we're in and the extent of our capacity.
9. We recognize our longings are in us for a deeper purpose.



*Unearthing Your Longings*

What are you longing for, deep down in the depths of your soul? Take some time and think on it, getting to the root of your heart's desire. What fears do you have when it comes to your longings? Are you hurt, scared, angry, or sad about them? Offer your longings to the One who made you who you are. Ask Him to teach you what you do not see. Ask Him to help you to see Him for who He is: good and compassionate and a Father who cares about your dreams, a Father who *delights* in you.

*Go deeper by meditating on Job 42:3-6 and Zephaniah 3:17.*

**AN INVITATION TO PARIS!**



*Use your imagination . . . go on, close your eyes and dream. What would you do if you could go to Paris (or another place that calls to your heart)? What would you want to see? Where does your imagination take you? Keep the dreams of your imagination close, as you will be revisiting them during this journey of bringing Paris to right where you are.*