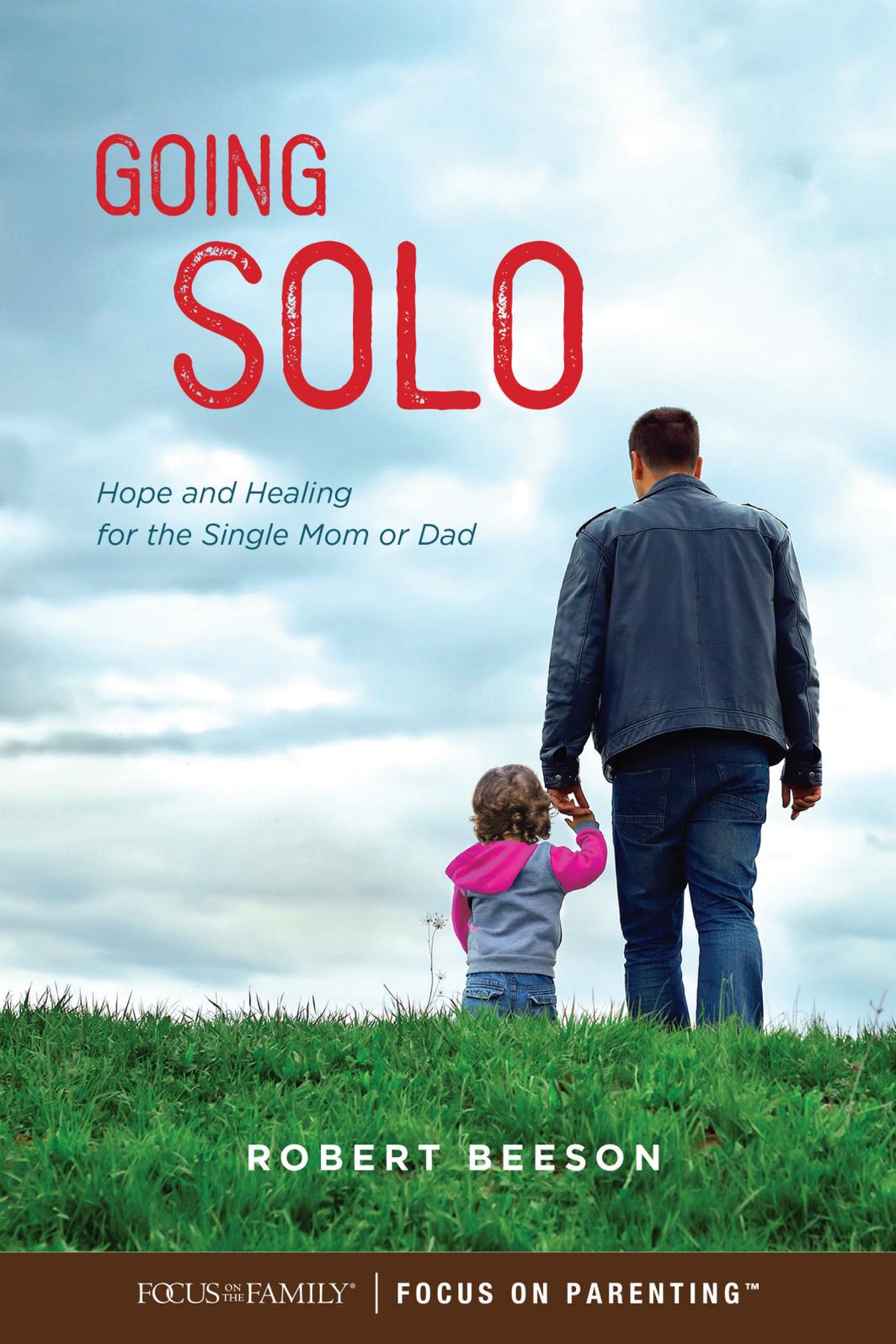


GOING SOLO

*Hope and Healing
for the Single Mom or Dad*

A man in a dark leather jacket and blue jeans is walking away from the camera on a grassy hill. A young child in a pink and grey hoodie is walking beside him, holding his hand. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

ROBERT BEESON

There simply aren't enough books with the insight and hope Robert Beeson gives in *Going Solo*. I've personally watched Robert's journey as a solo parent and have been amazed by what God has done to point him and his young girls to true north. Anyone who's been through the desert of loneliness and fear as a single parent will find encouragement and direction through Robert's story.

TROY DUHON

Executive producer, *God's Not Dead*

I love this book! Robert's journey of healing offers transformative help and hope for all solo parents who feel overwhelmed and overlooked. Let his story assure you that you are not alone.

DONNA VANLIERE

New York Times bestselling author and speaker

Beeson's debut project is honest, hopeful, and full of practical help. As he puts it, "Sometimes life doesn't turn out as we envisioned." For those struggling to make sense of being a solo parent—whether you are widowed, divorced, or separated—this book is for you.

DR. BRAD MATHIAS

Tween Gospel Alliance and Pastor of Four Winds Anglican Mission

Robert's story is humble, heartwarming, and hopeful. In *Going Solo*, he gives voice to the millions of single parents who need to know they don't have to walk alone

and inspires *every* parent (including me!) to become more intentional in loving our kids well, especially when life gets crazy.

CONSTANCE RHODES

Founder and CEO, FINDING*balance*; author, *The Art of Being: Reflections on the Beauty and the Risk of Embracing Who We Are*

This book is a truly honest and transparent look at the journey of becoming a solo parent. What a great reminder of how to care for yourself and allow others to help and love you. *Going Solo* is an essential read for every individual going through loss, separation, and single parenting. All I can say is, “Wow.”

PRESTON CENTUOLO

Author, speaker, and CEO of The Youth Alliance

GOING SOLO

*Hope and Healing
for the Single Mom or Dad*



ROBERT BEESON

With ROBERT NOLAND



TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®

FOCUS ON PARENTING™

Going Solo: Hope and Healing for the Single Mom or Dad

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FOREWORD

IF YOU ARE A SOLO PARENT, then you probably don't have a lot of time to read books. But this one is worth fighting for. It's the book I wish someone could have handed me as I journeyed through my own season as a solo parent, and I don't say that lightly. What Robert has written in these pages is immediate and honest; but beyond the openhearted stories and counsel, this book radiates with something incredibly elusive in the season of solo parenting—hope.

The Scriptures tell us that, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12). And if you're living a solo parenting life right now, then you probably know how accurate the proverb is. Hope is a much-needed companion when life has been turned upside down and the ground on which we stand no longer feels secure. It is the call to take another step forward when we must provide stability for children who have been thrust into new realities and circumstances that are likely not of their choosing. It is a North Star when worry and anxiety are closing in like the

hounds of hell and exhaustion is a constant companion. Hope is an irreplaceable part of the journey ahead—and hope is what *Going Solo* helps you find.

Yes, it's good to know that we are not alone on this challenging journey, but this book does more than commiserate. What you'll find as you make room for *Going Solo* in your life is safe and sacred space for your heart. It's probably been a while since you've had much of that. *Going Solo* allows you to simply listen without needing to say a word to anyone. This is a true gift. When was the last time someone poured their wisdom into you without expecting anything in return?

Going Solo wraps you in the knowledge that others have walked the road you are on and survived. It offers camaraderie in honestly approaching the singular difficulties and unique joys the solo parenting life presents. But this is far more than a memoir. Robert not only bares his soul's struggles during his season as a solo parent, he also shares practices he learned along the way that held his frayed life together—practices that can rescue what is tattered inside you.

He doesn't pander or offer lightweight solutions. Rather, he looks you in the eyes and tells you the truth:

- That this journey is going to take some time, but every step forward is worth celebrating.
- That equilibrium will return in fits and starts.
- That a new normal, which feels sane and hopeful, will happen—but not by accident.

Having lived the solo parenting story myself, I found this book to be an honest friend, a spiritual guide, and

a life coach—all of which I desperately needed as a solo parent but didn't have. Thankfully, you do. You're holding that friend, guide, and coach in your hands. And if you will carve out a small space in your life for this little book, you will find it is a compass, guiding you through the murky waters of solo parenting.

As the days go by and you slowly begin to find balance once again, pass it on. There is no shortage of solo parents in the world, but there is a shortage of people willing to honestly share their story in a way that acknowledges the pain and difficulty but also falls face-first into the mercy of God—the only source of hope.

Brian Hardin

Founder, Daily Audio Bible, and author of
Sneezing Jesus: How God Redeems Our Humanity

A FEW WORDS FIRST . . .

FROM FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE, I know the last thing you want or need as a single parent is an instruction manual to add to your already exhausting list of things to do. I get it.

Rest assured this book is *not* that. The intent of *Going Solo* is not to *fix* you. In fact, I would offer that I don't think there is anything wrong with you. I have enormous respect for the burden you are carrying and, truthfully, most people just don't realize how overwhelming your load is. I know that the single parents of the world are superheroes in disguise.

So why do I use the term *solo* parent and not *single* parent? Because I see an important distinction between the terms. In this modern-day culture we hear about single parenting as if it's just a new normal. It is not normal. Parents were designed to parent together. It is not meant to be done alone, yet it happens. *Single* parent sounds like just another label, a box to check on forms along with your race and gender. But to me, this issue is more than a status and label. It's a condition:

Solo.

Alone.

Only.

Unaccompanied.

If you have read this far, you have felt these words and experienced the condition. *Single parent* is a status; *solo parent* is a condition.

My hope is that no matter how you got where you are—through separation, abandonment, divorce, death of a spouse, or a surprise pregnancy—that you will hear hope in my story of divorce and solo parenting. Because I’ve led a Solo Parent Society group that includes widows and widowers, I recognize there is a vast difference between how divorced people and widows and widowers become solo parents. Yet we still face many similar issues and emotions.

I invite you to walk with me through the many facets of the complicated solo parent life. I had to learn a lot the hard way, and I didn’t do everything right, as you will see when you read my story. Because I know all too well that simply following some formula or ten-step plan will not eliminate your struggles, I simply share my story and what I’ve learned along the way. As you read about my challenges and hear my raw emotions, you will know you are *not* alone and that others have walked and are walking this lonely and difficult path.

I hope the examples in this book will help you, but more than that, I pray you will find, just as I did, that our heavenly Father can use this season to show Himself to you in unexpected and incredible ways. I’m praying that you will experience, maybe as never before, the eternal truth

that you are loved, accepted, and cherished right where you are.

To see my personal images and videos that correspond with the events and ideas of the book I invite you to visit the *Going Solo* picture gallery exclusively available at <http://soloparentsociety.com/going-solo/gallery>.

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CRAZY TIMES

I THINK I KNOW YOU. And I'll bet you know me, too. The fact that you are holding this book means there is a good chance that if you're not brokenhearted, you at least *feel* broken. Whatever circumstances led you here, the result is brokenness.

So let's be honest. No matter how you view life now, no matter how you keep score of your mistakes, and, despite people saying, "You're better off without him or her" or the opposite, "I thought you two were perfect together," well, here you are. Here we are.

If you went through a divorce as I did, you are probably feeling . . .

- alone, yet free;
- broken, yet hopeful;
- angry, yet relieved;
- sheer terror, yet strangely numb.

It's *all* in there spinning inside you—the dizzying array of emotions of feeling a freeing finality from an unbearable and seemingly hopeless situation, all the way to the absolute dread and fear of going through the rest of your life alone.

If you lost a spouse to death, I imagine the thought of finding wholeness again might even trigger a sense of guilt. You may think that moving on might be disrespectful to your late spouse, and part of you may resist returning to the wholeness you once felt.

If you are a parent who has never been married, you may feel the wonder and beauty of the life you brought into the world colliding with the fear and dread of thinking, *Who would ever want to date not just one person but a whole package?*

For all of us, it's a world of conflicting and overwhelming feelings.

If only it ended there. As if it couldn't get any worse, here's the kicker: You are now a single parent responsible for the life, welfare, care, future, and happiness of some younger souls who are facing just as much pain as you are. But they didn't get a vote in creating the mess.

The tragedy of being a single parent is that your home has been blown apart and you are now expected to be *both* parents—but, at best, you feel like *half* a parent, if that. You

know you have to be strong, but you feel unable to heal your own wounds, much less piece back together the innocent hearts and souls of your children. Whether the pressure is coming from friends, family, other parents, or even your own kids, the expectations feel undeniable and daunting.

You feel deserted, kicked in the gut, and left for dead. You are going through, or have gone through, a process that points out every flaw you have for the whole world to see. Separation. Divorce. Questions. Judgments. Criticisms. Regrets. Justification. Pain. And more pain.

I know this because I have lived it. Well, survived it. And still am. Every day.

Define the Season

Right out of the gate, I want to make a few things quite clear.

Although it may feel impossible right now, you *can* get better. Healing can come. There *is* life on the other side of this. I want to share with you what I discovered in my own pain and show you that hope can be born again in your heart. Life can be fuller; relationships can be richer; you can be happier, satisfied, and content in your soul. You can journey through a transformation that, with the right perspective, will bring more good into your life and overcome all you feel you have lost. This will not be easy; it will take effort and energy. But trust me, it will be worth it. Let's face it, coming out of a marriage wasn't easy. Nothing about this is simple. Whether the divorce or loss was partly or mostly your doing (or none of your doing), or you were as

surprised as anyone, there *is* hope, rest, and restoration, even in your suffering. In fact, what matters right now is what you do with *right now*.

Either the season will define you, or you will define the season.

When I decided to be intentional about how I navigated this season in my life, I discovered four principles that saved my sanity—maybe even my life. I call them my four Ps:

- Pause
- Prayer
- Practices
- Perspective

These are actually choices we make, and we will explore each one as I share my story with you. I believe God shows Himself clearly in the midst of the details of our everyday lives, and these four Ps can be threaded throughout even the mundane moments of our days.

I want to share with you what happened in my own season, not only to identify with the pain you're feeling, but also to illustrate how I walked through that time. While the details of my divorce and entry into single parenting may be quite different from yours, I'm going to bet you find yourself identifying with my feelings and relating to the pain. While I was a music industry executive at the time of my divorce, it really doesn't matter if you are a homemaker or a human resources director, a retail store clerk or a Wall Street broker. Becoming a solo parent is all about what happens within the four walls of your home and in your own heart.

My own story can be compared with a carefully constructed powder keg surrounded by people holding their fingers in their ears awaiting the explosion. Well, everyone except me.

Overnight Success

“I’m headed to the Grammy Awards,” I told the unassuming, silver-haired gentleman seated next to me in first class. The flight attendant brought me my cocktail, also known as my “preflight ritual.” I stirred the drink, sniffed the familiar smell of whiskey, and continued my oratory of résumé reciting.

“Yeah, I think this is the fourth year in a row my projects have been nominated, so I’m headed to LA for the awards. It’s fun. I mean the show is long, the seats are uncomfortable, but there are usually one or two good acts. Truthfully, I really go for the after-parties. Those are worth the trip.”

I’m not sure he was impressed, but it didn’t matter—I was.

The year was 2002. It had been nine years since I’d started my company—Essential Records. Though I wasn’t a musician, I was an entrepreneur who loved the entertainment industry. My record label became very successful, very quickly.

For an American missionary kid from South Africa who’d been raised in Zululand and then later attended a prep boarding school, this new life back in the States was like living in Disney World. Seemingly overnight, there

were gold and platinum records. Awards. Celebrities. Traveling. Parties. Fine restaurants. Fine wine and liquor. A lot of all of it. To say I was living the high life would be an understatement.

The irony of all I just told you is my record label dealt with Christian music exclusively. Just in case you aren't familiar with this genre, this means the artists sing songs about Jesus. Here's an even stranger detail. Prior to this success in gospel music, I didn't drink alcohol, do drugs, or party. Unfortunately, the Christian music industry can be just like many other organizations run by sinners; people are involved for various reasons. I do want to make it clear, however, that there are many committed and godly people involved in this industry—there were back then and there are today. But I was widely regarded as the rebellious renegade record exec. I wasn't exactly cut from the same cloth as many of my colleagues. I took virtually every opportunity I could to "live it up."

Business and Babies

Let's rewind to 1994, when I met my wife.

While attending a music convention in my home of Nashville, Tennessee, I spotted a woman I'd met a few years earlier when I lived in California. I had not seen her since then. Strangely enough, the night before the event started I had dreamed about her. The next morning I told a friend about what happened.

"I bet she'll be here for the convention," he said. "I know she works in the industry now."

It's crazy, but she was the first person I saw at the convention. I remember thinking, *This must be a sign*. I felt as if I had been given the keys to the candy store with a pre-destined road map to pleasure. My company was quickly rising to the top, and now literally "the girl of my dreams" was standing a few feet away.

I told myself this must be God Himself handing me everything I desired. After all, I had spent most of my childhood in Africa as a missionary kid, chasing snakes and building forts with no TV, radio, or phone, cooped up in a boarding school. Now He was unleashing all at once every pleasure I had *never* had. I was making up for missing the typical American kid's life.

The "dream girl" and I reconnected that evening, and the spark was there. In my nothing-to-ninety-miles-per-hour fashion, we blew right through dating, courtship, and engagement. About three months after we met at that convention, we were married. Imagine a young woman hearing a successful record exec say, "I dreamed about you last night before I saw you here today." While true, it was also a great line to sweep a girl off her feet!

The first few years of our marriage were almost everything I hoped they would be. We lived a charmed life, traveling to Hawaii and Europe. One particular year, we enjoyed ten cruises.

The record company grew increasingly successful, and I received more and more accolades. I hired more staff. We received gold and platinum records, recognizing millions of units sold. All in all, the artists' projects I worked on were nominated for thirteen Grammy Awards, and we won five

of those. We also received thirty-eight Dove Awards—the Christian music industry’s equivalent to the Grammy Awards.

Money. Fame. Success. What’s not to love about such a life? Depending on who you are, it can be a truly blessed journey or a road to disaster.

I can see now that during those years of managing a major record label, there were so many lessons I needed to learn. And I did learn a few of them—just not enough at the time, and not enough *in* time. Now I know that we often don’t grow in maturity when life is going completely our way.

About three years into our marriage, my wife and I found out we were pregnant with our first child. We experienced the overwhelming excitement, along with the common fears, that every couple has with their first. My wife was the most beautiful pregnant woman I had ever seen, and as cliché as this might sound, she really did have a glow of grace and contentment. With new life on the way, we both believed that God was giving us a fresh start in our marriage. I knew I needed one for myself.

During those nine months, I vividly remember coming face-to-face with my shortcomings, coupled with the guilt of my transgressions, all standing in stark contrast to the beauty of new life that was about to bless both our lives.

With all the success also came the trappings and pitfalls of wealth and luxury. I had worked hard and certainly played hard. I acted as if I didn’t have a care in the world, but I was always hearing the voices of guilt and shame calling out to me about what I knew were bad choices. My

behind-the-scenes partying and living it up were not consistent with the messages of hope and even godliness I had been promoting though our label, and deep inside I knew it. I felt like a self-absorbed counterfeit. And yet even though I often felt like a failure before my family and God, He was about to bless our lives, entrusting us with a child. I thought this could bring a clean slate to our marriage and force us to let go of our past baggage. An innocent beauty would be relying on us, and I wanted to get this right.

I remember one night sitting upstairs in our home, listening to songs from the musical *Les Misérables*. In what remains to be one of my favorite songs of all time, the character of Jean Valjean sings “Bring Him Home.” After observing the beautiful love that a young man, Marius, has for his daughter, Jean prays to God on the war-torn barricade, asking Him to save Marius’s life—“to let him live”—even if it means that God must take his life instead.

The words moved me deeply, describing the depths of my own soul. As I listened to this song repeatedly, my spirit was singing this song to God, telling Him how I had failed so many times yet was amazed that He would choose to bless me anyway. I asked Him to please not hold my transgressions against my child, to “let her live,” and to make only me responsible for the wrongdoings of my life.

I was overwhelmed by the great love that I was experiencing—more love than I had ever understood before. I already loved this child more than anything in my life, and we hadn’t even met.

Our first daughter, Zoe, was born in January 1997. As

I cut the cord, we heard her first cry. She was healthy and beautiful. We were blessed.

If you are a mother, please forgive me. I know my words pale in comparison to the intense emotions you surely know how to articulate. But as a father, I was experiencing something far deeper and grander than ever before in my life.

Remember the hope for a fresh start and the prayers of pleading and gratitude I mentioned? After experiencing the sacredness of my firstborn's birth, after facing and confessing my own personal failures and shortcomings head-on, any reasonable man would have course-corrected to a new destination. But that's not what I did.

I dove deeper than ever before into my business and industry relationships as my professional success continued. My staff became like family, and I allowed them to compete with my real family.

Over the next four years, we welcomed two more daughters, Skyler and Zara. Each of their births was a spiritual experience—profound and beautiful. Each time I felt as if I were coming up for air after being underwater in a sea of selfishness for far too long, as if God were giving me His breath.

All the while, the work of my hands was turning out rewarding and reverent songs that contributed to one of the best seasons in Christian music history. To this day, I feel privileged to have been involved in those projects and working with those artists.

One of the recordings I had the honor of developing was a worship series entitled *City on a Hill*, which remains one of my favorite musical endeavors. For the record

release, we premiered the project at a legendary musical venue called the Orpheum Theater in New Orleans at the International Christian Retail Show, an annual convention.

During one of the songs, “God of Wonders,” which involved various well-known artists all engaged in worship, I remember being so moved and humbled that I went downstairs underneath the stage and wept through the entire song. As I cried, the words and melody moved through the venue’s speakers and into my spirit. I was witnessing the beautiful things that God was creating and blessing me with yet pursuing my own self-centered and narcissistic desires. So often, the Father moves and works His will in spite of us.

Unveiling to you the constant thread of God pursuing my heart is crucial to where we take this subject matter. I’m telling you that I was living my life as if it were all about me to help us all understand that life is not about us!

Monetizing Manure

Do you remember when I was bragging about my accomplishments to the guy in first class on my way to the Grammys? Just after takeoff, somewhere around my second drink and after reciting all my accomplishments and successes to this captive audience seated beside me, I decided to take a break and ask him what he did for a living. You know, just to not seem too self-focused.

His answer: “I’m in manure sales.”

Wow, I thought. This guy sells poop! My view of my

career immediately went up a few notches. Manure sales had to be one of the most laughable jobs I had ever heard of. But this guy was sitting in first class, next to me. That means there had to be at least some money in, uh, poop.

On the heels of that comment, I thought it would be nice to take control of the conversation again. So I fired off that my company had gained about \$80 million in revenue the previous year. Without missing a beat and emitting a humble elegance, this man delivered a massive gut-punch of perspective with his response: “Last year, my territory did around half a billion dollars in sales.”

I quickly compared his half a billion to my \$80 million. He won—I wasn’t even close!

No one hands out awards in LA, or anywhere else for that matter, for monetizing manure. No one would think the payout on poop is sexy. But with one sentence, this unassuming guy deflated every sail on my boat. He reminded me of a vital concept that I desperately needed to learn. Perspective is important. There’s always someone bigger, faster, and smarter, whether it’s your neighbor or your competitor. Things are often not actually as they seem. I know my life certainly wasn’t.

Giving Up Control

During the tenth year of our marriage, my wife and I were in regular counseling and I had started to clean up my act. The change came after three dramatic things happened within a six-month period.

First, I found out we were pregnant with our third daughter on the same day as the September 11 attacks.

Second, during an afternoon soccer game, one of my far-too-young friends “fell wrong” on the field and died a few days later.

Third, and probably the most profound, my friend and I got drunk one night at an impromptu company party and vandalized a promotional vehicle owned by an artist known as TobyMac. Toby is a veteran Christian singer/songwriter who was also a friend and colleague. The incident was captured on video, and this was before *everything* was caught on camera. In our inebriated state, we had convinced each other that everyone would think this was just a funny gag, a practical joke. Needless to say, that wasn't everyone's perspective. (More on this story later.)

These situations taught me one thing: No matter how much we might think we have life under control, we don't. In reality, there's only a thin thread of grace separating our demise from our finest hour. Whether by an act of our own hand, a terrorist attack, or a freak accident at a soccer game, life can end—or change dramatically—in a moment. The life we wake up to on any given day is a gift.

In marriage counseling, my wife and I directed a fair amount of blame at each other for various reasons, some legitimate and some not. Sometimes the storms of life do irreversible damage. In fact, they can so devastate that there's nothing visibly left intact. My spiritual paradigm certainly allows for the fact that God can do anything, but in a marriage both have to cooperate and allow Him to work to accomplish what *He* wants.

Career, success, money, kids, marriage, or even just the busyness of life can keep us believing we are making forward progress. But if we start making the activities and our ambitions the source of our security, in what seems like only a second our lives can be forever altered, taken from us, or at the very least, our deep emptiness can be exposed.

Back in those days, I latched on to *anything* that created the appearance of progress. I was blind to the fact that I had become caught up in the *perception* of forward motion. In truth, I was standing still, and our marriage was headed directly into a devastating storm made by our own hands.

Even though I had built such a poor foundation for my family, when my wife finally left the girls and me, I couldn't remember how we had gotten to this place. And in that moment of realization, it really didn't matter. All I knew was this: What once was, now wasn't. And it seemed as if it happened in a heartbeat.

SOLO CONFESSIONAL

"I felt horrific shame and embarrassment as a parent, a man, and a Christian. I tried to hold on for as long as I could even during all my wife's affairs. Long after the fact, I began recalling all the red flags and felt that I had made a big mistake. Somehow my ego told me that I could be bigger than the problem and that my love was all it would take to fill the holes in her heart. I repented, and still do, daily for the sins of not

totally seeking God first and for ignoring the signs. When she asked for a divorce, I refused to file, hoping that I could eventually turn things around. I didn't want anyone to know, perhaps to avoid the finality of it all, perhaps out of embarrassment. I felt that my witness as a Christian was irreparably damaged."

JIM

The Rain Sender

Sometimes life doesn't turn out as we envisioned. Consider what happened one Saturday morning in my neighborhood as I opened my windows to let in the springtime breeze. The birds were chirping, and I could hear my neighbors tackling their weekend chores of washing the car and mowing the lawn. I had just shut my eyes to take a brief nap when I was startled awake by someone screaming. This was not a playful outburst.

I jumped up, ran to my front door, and looked outside to see a teenager lying on the ground, screaming in agony. Our neighbor's son, an all-star high school football player, had lost his footing on the slick grass while mowing. As he fell, his right foot slid under the mower into the powerful blades. I quickly saw that this was a significant injury and potentially the finish to his career, the sudden end of his hopes and dreams.

His headphones were dangling by his side, still playing the music he was listening to only five minutes before when he was in a very different state of mind. The contrast

is stark: One minute it's a beautiful spring day and you're enjoying some tunes while mowing the lawn. Then the next minute comes—and tragedy strikes.

The fact that life can change so suddenly is crazy to me. No one is immune. No one is safe. There are no guarantees that we will not experience pain and suffering in our lives, at times unforeseen and completely undeserved.

When my wife left, you could say I had it coming, considering the way I was living. The truth is that I did sow a great deal of destruction.

But you couldn't say that about my neighbor's son. He had nothing coming to him except good. What did he do for this to happen? Nothing. He ended up losing two of his toes, which set him back in his football career. But he fought on to rehabilitate and even earn a university scholarship. Just as that young man was injured, many spouses and children are cut deep by divorce. They didn't see it coming, and they don't deserve it either. Yet it happens—shattering hopes, dreams, hearts, and lives.

Because of life's volatility I have a long-standing love/hate relationship with Matthew 5:45: "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Unexpected and seemingly undeserved hardships don't seem fair and can cause us to blame someone or something, even if there really isn't anyone or anything to blame.

But what if it's completely clear who or what caused the damage? Blame won't change the brokenness. Pointing fingers can't and won't bring healing. In fact, doing so only infects the soul.

Blame, bitterness, unforgiveness, hatred, and even revenge will not bring comfort or healing or satisfaction. These deflective distractions only deepen the pit we can fall into. We feel broken. We feel alone. We feel abandoned and betrayed.

I knew that no matter how I ended up in that moment of divorce and solo parenting, I was most certainly *there*. And so were my soon-to-be ex-wife and my three innocent daughters.

And it's the same for you: No matter how it happened, you are here in this solo parent situation, with your fears, failures, disappointments, anger, exhaustion, questions, chaos, and brokenness.

The Game Changer

Undoubtedly, 2006 was the hardest year of my entire life. I was burned out in my personal life and my career. It was the year I chose not to renew my contract as head of artist development with Provident Label Group—a Christian music conglomerate. It was also the year my marriage ended.

For the sake of my girls and their mom, I am going to leave out the details of my ex's behaviors that led to her leaving and the court's ultimate ruling giving me full custody of my three girls and supervised visitation with their mom. Although she filed for the divorce and left the girls and me, I had legitimate legal and biblical grounds for ending the marriage. In our situation, I agreed that divorce was in the best interest of everyone, most importantly the girls.

So regardless of how we got where we are, how do we

begin to put the pieces back together? That's a tough question to ask when the best we can hope for is surviving today while trying not to lose any more than we have already lost.

So the question must go deeper than "How?" and certainly get past "Why?"—although it's easy to constantly ask ourselves both of those questions.

For me, the questions became "Who?" and "Where?"

Who am I now that the bottom has dropped out of my life?

Who am I now that everything is stripped bare?

Where am I? Where do I belong? Where do I go from here? Where *can* I go from here?

Even though I was still breathing and God had given me the grace of another day, there were many mornings that I just did not *want* a new day. I only wanted the nightmare to end. The grace of a new dawn brought me no comfort. But my questions of "Who?" and "Where?" began to be answered from an odd source.

Early in 2007, I scheduled a meeting over coffee with the man who originally bought my company and moved me from LA to Nashville. At this point in my career, I was trying to start a new business, and he would be taking care of manufacturing and distributing the product to retail.

I needed a \$20,000 advance to finish a recording. Now, depending on your reference, that may sound like a lot of money, but during that time in the music industry, it was actually a modest request with the potential of a quick return. Due to my track record in the industry, I expected this would be a no-brainer. And this particular man had always been fond of my entrepreneurial spirit.

He listened as I told him how my wife had left, how I was raising three girls on my own, and starting this new business. After he tuned in intently, he politely and quite casually said, “No, Robert.” In fact, he said the words as if he were doing me some kind of favor.

To my surprise, he then added, “But I do want to buy you a book.” Although my face remained expressionless, inside I was screaming, *Are you kidding me?! I ask for a business loan and you offer to buy me a book?!*

But this guy had a knack for doing things his own way. The coffee shop was in a bookstore, so I followed him over to a section where he perused the titles and pulled out his gift to me. As he handed me the book, he said, “Now, don’t tell anyone I’m buying you this, because a lot of people might view this message as ‘new age.’” My friend was a very conservative Christian. Still somewhat offended that he would have the audacity to *not* grant my request for money, I assured him this exchange would stay between us.

Well, as you might suspect, my friend had given me just what I needed. I just couldn’t see it in that me-focused moment.

Since God can use anything He wants when He wants, I heeded the book’s message to zero in on what I came to call the *constant*. This simple concept saved my life. My prayer, as we move forward together, is that it can save yours, too. I do want you to know as you press on in this book that you are not alone, so please start thinking “we” more than “me.”

This level of inward-focused hard work must be intentional, so let’s get started.