

ISSUE SIX
THESE SILENT DAYS



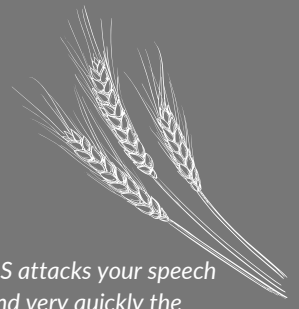
REVIVE

devotional

SPRINGVALE
WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Welcome to Revive

These Silent Days



May 2020 my father was diagnosed with Bulbar Onset ALS. This type of ALS attacks your speech first. It paralyzes your vocal cords, tongue and the muscles in your throat, and very quickly the ability to speak is lost – the sound is there, but you're unable to form the words to communicate in a way people can comprehend. My father was a gifted communicator, eager to form connections with people and engage in conversation, but his disease robbed him of his gift and isolated him from his great pleasure of being able to talk to people. During my father's illness, I became his voice... I spoke, so he could be heard. We often don't fully grasp that our time here on this earth is limited. We are on a clock that we cannot control.

Jesus says in John 9:4 "As long as it is day we must do the work of Him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work". It's easy to think "now is not my time" and put off or delay what you are called to do today, but in truth, there should be a sense of urgency to step into the work of Him who sent us.

My Dad is now gone, he no longer needs me to speak for him, but I still have another Father who requires my voice and there is limited daylight left and still work to be done.

So, I will speak – wherever I might have an opportunity, even if my voice faces opposition or rejection...or just indifference. I will keep forming the words, as long as there is still sound – and I will wait on my Father's direction to take me where He leads, wherever that might be, even if it's not where or how I think it should be. Because to have a voice is a privilege and a gift, and I didn't appreciate the simplicity and significance of that until I saw it so brutally taken.

I continue to speak for my Father – because today there is still daylight, but night is coming and there is still work to be done.

I wrote this passage (above) in 2021. The message delivered on September 22, 2024 at Springvale Church called "These Silent Days" was, in my mind, the completed message (at least for today) of what I started here with these words in 2021. Around the same time my father was losing his voice, I was finding mine and discovering, or at least looking for, the words that I want to be able to leave behind for my daughters – who are someday going to find their voices.

On these next pages are what I would call my "random musings" and writings. Most are from the "what does it mean to me?" Application sections of my teachings from the Tuesday morning Bible study. I hope in some way they make sense, though they've been shortened from their original versions, and offer you a moment to pause and consider the questions that have clearly been on my mind. I can see some common threads that keep emerging for me in my journey. Jesus called us to go and share the gospel. We only have these days before us... let's not be silent.

Lori Doner Jones

day one

Je Te Laisserai De Mots

this is a portion of teaching from
our Ephesians "Life In Christ" study



It used to be that my children listened to my choice of music while in the car. Control of the radio was my domain, which meant during their formative childhood years they were highly subjected to country music, as every child should be! Once they magically got big enough to escape the backseat and sit up front, it seems they also managed to achieve some new-found power with regards to the music we listen to! Both my daughters are very musically inclined and the youngest especially has the most diverse, eclectic playlists you can imagine! Not long ago, Peyton jumps in the car and plugs in her phone and I am waiting to hear what obscure alternative gem she is about to present me with, but instead, she plays this beautiful, captivating song in French. Of course I have no idea what it means, but it sounded so lovely and haunting. For many years she was in French Immersion so she translates it for me, and she says it's called *Je Te Laisserai des Mots*, translated it means – *I will leave you words....*

As she said these words, it just grabbed my heart...

I asked her to translate the rest and as it played, she translated. Later I looked it up again, each of the words, because it just resonated with me. I listened to the original author of the song, and he noted that some of the words are altered in different versions but these are the words HE wrote...

*I'll leave you words
Underneath your door
Underneath your singing walls
Just near the place your feet pass by
Hidden in the holes of your sofa,
And when you're alone for a moment
Pick me up,
If you'd like to, pick me up. (some versions say embrace me...)*

As I listened to that song and those words, I really felt like that sounds like God's love song to His people - at least to me.

I'll leave you words... gentle reminders everywhere you look, all the places near where you walk, hidden and yet visible, and He asks for us to spend a moment alone with Him, to pick up those words, to embrace them.

He left us with words... a lot of them. How often do we pick them up?

As I was in my rabbit hole thinking on this, I heard a woman online ask, "if the government came into your house today and removed your bibles, and you only had left what you could remember or what you had memorized, where would the Word of God be for you and the generations behind you? What would happen to the Words He left?

We can see how God's people throughout history let His laws, His Words, slip away and this often resulted with them in exile or wandering the wilderness.

I wonder how we are doing? I wonder if we know the wilderness better than the Promised Land? We have more access than ever before to the Word of God, and yet we know that across North America, the study of God's Word is less than ever.

I wonder, on a personal level, if we also miss the gentle "Post-it-like" notes He leaves for us as reminders, under the doors, in the less obvious, maybe the French song on the radio... He is there, and longing to talk to us...

Lord, let me be aware of the words you have left for me.

Let this be my prayer today:

I'm single-minded in pursuit of you; don't let me miss the road signs you've posted.

I've banked your promises in the vault of my heart so I won't sin myself bankrupt.

Be blessed, God; train me in your ways of wise living. I'll transfer to my lips all the counsel that comes from your mouth; I delight far more in what you tell me about living than in gathering a pile of riches.

*I ponder every morsel of wisdom from you, I attentively watch how you've done it. I relish everything you've told me of life, **I won't forget a word of it.***

Psalm 119:10-16 (msg)

***Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path***

Psalm 119:105



day two

Dad Down the Hallway



Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

-Psalm 91

I was remembering my father yesterday. I do everyday, but yesterday, I thought about Him coming to stay with me. Before Covid, my husband used to travel quite a bit for work. When he was out of town, often one, or both of my parents would come stay with me. Sometimes, it was just my Dad who would show up at about 9:00 pm at my house and say he was just stopping in to stay the night and keep the girls and me company. My parents knew I was nervous with my husband away, even though I'm grown and a parent myself, they still wanted me to *feel* safe. Left by myself, I would hear every sound; the furnace coming on, the groaning of the house, the wind tapping the branches on the window panes. Every creak and squeak would keep me awake and feed my fear and anxiety. But, with my Dad soundly sleeping down the hallway in the guest room, my panic would disappear. I would have a sound sleep, relaxed and peaceful and my worry would fade. I didn't listen intently to the noise. I just would feel safe to go to sleep. Nothing bad would happen on my Dad's watch. He was just there, nothing else had changed, the house still groaned... but my mind had peace.

Losing my Dad has revealed to me some things about the love of a father, and helped me see my Heavenly Father perhaps a little clearer, and how He *must love me*, even more than my Dad did. If my Dad wanted me to be at rest and not afraid, shouldn't I believe God would want that for me too?

Shouldn't I know that He wants me to have the same security in Him that I would feel about my Dad sleeping down the hallway? I don't have to listen for every bump in the night, because He is watching over me. I am okay no matter what happens, and I don't need to fear the terror of the night. He is my refuge, my mind can have peace.

Psalm 91 says "I will rest in His shadow." That says something significant about His proximity to us; He is close enough to cast His shadow on us. He isn't "just down the hall"... He is even closer.

*Lord, Let me feel your presense today and be at peace with the things I cannot control. Let me rest in your shadow and know that there might be uncertainty and fear but you are still in control and **you love me**, even more than any earthly father ever could. So I can rest. The sounds of the night are silent when you are near. I pray in Jesus' name.*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

-Philippians 4:6-8 (NIV)

God's plan is like a beautiful tapestry and the tragedy of being human is that we only get to see it from the back with all the ragged threads and muddy colours. We only get a hint of the true beauty that would be revealed if we could see the whole pattern on the other side, as God does.

- spoken by Matt Murdock
in the Netflix series "Daredevil"



day three

So Close, and yet so far away

this is a portion of teaching from
our Nehemiah "Revival" study



I read a story recently about a woman, Geraldine Largay, who was sixty-six when she set out to walk the Appalachian trail with a friend. About two thirds of the way through, the friend was called back home for an emergency, but rather than quit as well, Geraldine decided to continue on alone. A few days in, she left the trail to relieve herself, but got confused as she'd wandered into the dense woods and then could not find her way back to the trail. Soon she realized she was lost and tried to text for help but there was no signal. It is thought that she survived twenty-six days but not rescued, despite an extensive search. They just weren't searching in the right area.

Her body was recovered two years after she disappeared, and the really sad part was that her campsite was discovered only about two miles from the trail. Where she had placed her tent was densely forested under branches of large trees, but nearby was an open canopy. If she had placed the tent there, she could have been seen from the sky. Sixty-seventy yards from where she was, the dense forest opened up and there was a logging road within a thirty minute walk. She was so close, but so far away and just couldn't see or be seen.

This is what I think Paul is referring to in Ephesians when he speaks of walking in the "futility of our minds." To be darkened in our understanding, alienated from the life of God, because we just can't see the right path home, the way forward is just... obstructed by trees.

Geraldine knew she was in trouble and spent those twenty-six days writing in a journal knowing that she was going to die there – she saw the truth – but it came too late. It wasn't her fault. She wanted to be saved but just couldn't find her way back. I think many do this in their spiritual life - they wander off the path maybe very innocently, and find themselves lost, but the good news is, it's not too late to say today, "I need to get back on the path to Jesus".

In his book "Loving God with all You've Got" Sunder Kirshnan talks about the idea that we Christians can sometimes be close to the kingdom of God but not quite in it. He discusses the story in the Gospel of Mark when the scribe ask Jesus what is the greatest commandment and Jesus tells him it is to "love the Lord, our God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbour as yourself" to which the scribe replies wisely and Jesus looks at him and says "you are not far from the kingdom of God". Sunder notes that studying that passage gave him pause to consider that we can be close, but not **in** the kingdom.

Sunder writes:

"I began to think of a game I played as a child called "chutes and ladders". The game board consists of a series of ladders with numbered rungs; you roll the dice on each turn to see how many rungs you can climb and the object is to reach the top, but there are chutes on some of the rungs and if you land on one of those, you slide down to a lower rung. The chute that everyone really dreads is at rung #98 - just 2 rungs from the top, because if you land on it, the chute slides you all the way down to the first rung. That was funny, but I saw the serious side to it when I read John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". In that allegory of the Christian life, the hero saw a road to hell right at the entrance to heaven. It's possible to be so near the kingdom and yet really, really far."

At a time when we live in a post-Christian culture and many in our faith are “deconstructing” and leaving the church because they are rethinking their faith and the authority of scripture, we need to recognize the chutes that might seriously prevent us from being Kingdom bound! We need to ask ourselves who is control in our lives?

*“We cannot enter the Kingdom of God on our own merit, but **faith and repentance** must be received. They are conditions for the Kingdom life. And as Scripture tells us, we can reject these gifts leading to salvation (e.g. see John 3: 36). Without them, we will continue to live in the kingdom of the world – perhaps loving Jesus and desiring to serve him, but serving Him in our own way and without His power. That is the definition of the spirit of religion – God’s work, man’s way; or worse, man’s work, man’s way with a passing reference to Jesus and His name.”*

- John Van Wagoner (Jesus Restores Blog)

I went to a funeral recently, and the Pastor shared the gospel, offering hope and peace to all who were there, and then he said this; “To be saved, all you have to do is believe in Jesus. That’s it. You don’t have to go church or do anything special, you can’t earn your way to heaven, all you have to do is believe.” Just believe - I have to be honest, that made me squirm in my seat because I don’t believe it’s entirely true. There are lots of people who believe Jesus historically existed, many others who believe He was at least a prophet, if not in fact the promised Messiah, and even demons recognize the divine nature of Jesus - all believing these as facts without actually surrendering their lives to Jesus. You can believe, but not follow Him and I’d go as far to say if you believe, but don’t follow, you have missed the point. You may be not far, but not in the Kingdom.

I certainly don’t want to wander off the path and realize all too late... that I missed the point. If I believe, it ought to change me; If it doesn’t, do I really believe?

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” - Matthew 7:21-12

Lord, Thank you for Your sacrifice for me. Thank you that You’ve provided a way for me to experience You here and also to be with You in Heaven. Please help me to believe and follow You. Help me to repent from the ways I grieve Your Holy Spirit and help me walk with You. Help me see clearly the path ahead so that I may stay focused on where I am going. Stay close to me always so that I can always find my way back should I lose my way. Please don’t let me settle for being “not far, but not in the kingdom”. My soul longs for you. I pray in Jesus’ name.

Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Mark 9:23-25



day four

Anti-Hero

this is a portion of teaching from
our Ephesians "Life In Christ" study



"You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become calloused and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ! Assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the Truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness". Ephesians 4:17-24

In the Fall of 2022, our Women's Bible Study was exploring Ephesians and right around the same time Taylor Swift released her album called "Midnights". One of the first singles released was a song called "Anti-Hero". An anti-hero is the main character in a story who lacks conventional heroic qualities and attributes, such as idealism, courage, and morality.

What was interesting to me, since we were studying what it is to walk differently as Christians, was how much this "break-out hit" song reflected the "old self" we were seeing in Ephesians, and the realization of the human condition apart from God. In what she describes as her most autobiographic album, Swift identifies this as a song written to explore all that she hates about herself. These are some of her lyrics.

*I have this thing where I get older but just never wiser
Midnights become my afternoons
When my depression works the graveyard shift
All of the people I've ghosted stand there in the room
I should not be left to my own devices
They come with prices and vices
I end up in crisis (I've realized all this time)
I wake up screaming from dreaming
One day I'll watch as you're leaving
'Cause you got tired of my scheming
For the last time
It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me
At tea time, everybody agrees
I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror
It must be exhausting, always rooting for the anti-hero*

The song Anti-Hero, I think, gets really honest about what we truly are; in the dark at midnight, sleepless, pondering our purpose and realizing that though we get older, we don't get wiser - "it's me... I'm the problem"... Left to our own devices, we make things worse. We are selfish, riddled with vices, at our core covert narcissism that disguises itself as altruism. We'll do anything if it means we don't have to look too closely in the mirror and see the truth.

The world is dark... and even in the song she indicates that the end is Hell... and in truth that is the path without Jesus. This is what we truly are; the Anti-Hero. Though I don't think Swift intended to write a Christian truth - as I studied Ephesians and heard this song, the sentiment struck me as timely. In reality, we spend a large portion of our lives rooting for that anti-hero, trying to find ways to both escape her and embrace her, being both ashamed and simultaneously proud of her; and the irony is that this character knows they aren't enough - they KNOW they are NO HERO - they know they are just the opposite. They are self-aware enough to KNOW they are the problem, to see their own darkness, and even to loathe it, but not enlightened enough to know WHO truly is the hero in the story and who ultimately sets them free.

It seems that if you give it a catchy beat and throw some sequins on it, I wonder if we don't start to almost celebrate our brokenness. I wonder if we don't start to appreciate the hot mess that we are, and this is how Satan invades even our self-awareness and twists it to the point where we "Shake it Off", rather than addressing the problem.

Our futility hangs in the fact that even if, or when, we see that we are the problem - *are we driven to change?* Or are we calloused to the seriousness of it all?

I think the Apostle Paul would say - "take off your anti-hero cape, and stop rooting for her!" She's your old self and it is, in fact, futile and exhausting...and put on Jesus, your Saviour, your Actual Hero, because He is Life and Truth and this is where we will find ourselves and realize we are meant for more. He is THE WAY!

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you, rise up from the dead and Christ will give you light. So be careful how you live, Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days " Ephesians 5:14-20 (NLT)

Once you have discovered Jesus and you are saved and you can see what the old life truly is - walk away from it! Turn your back and don't look back! Embrace your NEW identity. We are made in His likeness and we are His disciples here on this earth - meant to be light in the darkness.

As we look at the "global church" today, I wonder how dim our light looks in a dark dark world... We can change that... "Awake O sleeper..."

Lord, Thank you that we are a new creation in Christ. Please help us to realize that we are made in your image and are made for more. Fill us with Your Spirit so that we can walk closely with You and so that we can leave the "old self" behind and walk in the fullness of the new creation you have made us to be. I pray in Jesus' name.

***"At one time you were darkness,
but now you are the light of the Lord.
...Walk as children of Light"
-Ephesians 5:8-9***



day five

My Brother & Esau

this is a portion of teaching from
our Ephesians Life In Christ study



My brother Glenn had a consuming interest in birds of prey. He took some courses, got a falconry certification and a license, and decided to train a hawk. Glenn set out to capture a hawk less than a year old because you need to start working with them when they are young enough to be taught. Much like people, a more mature bird isn't so inclined to change.

He did manage to obtain a bird, and although he didn't immediately name it, I felt that it needed a biblical name. It was a red hawk, so I called him Esau. Esau in the Bible is the older brother to Jacob and is described as rough man, having qualities of "redness". Glenn needed to train Esau which is, of course, easier said than done. I was captivated as Glenn explained the difficult process that Falconers use to train these birds ... You do it the DARK!

Apparently, hawks are not like owls, in that they aren't nocturnal. They sleep at night when their vision is not clear, and instinctively stay calm and still during these hours, as a defensive mechanism. Every morning at 5 am, when it was still black outside, Glenn would go into the hawk's enclosure and just wait. As the sun gently rose, the bird would gradually see him more clearly and eventually look at him a little strange as if to say, "when did you get here?" Because it had been such a gradual event, the bird would remain calm. If Glenn tried to approach him during the light of day though, Esau would be aggressive, like a scared dog who barks and lunges as a defence, but the difference in the dark, was .. well, night and day.

After several days of doing this, slowly Esau became accustomed to Glenn. They were not friends, but Esau started to just get used to him and accept that Glenn was there, and started to acclimate to Glenn's presence.

For the first two days Esau wouldn't take food from Glenn, but on the third day he would eat from his glove. By day eleven, Esau would hop from his perch to the glove to eat. By about day, thirty Esau was flying with Glenn without a line or any restriction. Amazing ?? I think so! So, I asked "How did you train this hawk so quickly to do as you asked it?" And he smiled and leaned in and said... "Hunger".

Every day Glenn would track information about the bird. He noted the temperature outside, the surroundings, he would weigh him, and keep careful track of the bird's weight fluctuations. If Esau gained too much weight he would not pay any attention to Glenn and have no motivation to follow, and or incentive to go out and fly. But if he was hungry, Esau was attentive - primed for training. However, if he was too hungry that didn't work well either. Glenn needed to know the prime time for training, and that had to do with his hunger. Esau, knew that Glenn held what his appetite desired and was eager when his hunger was *just right*. And it took little to no time at all, for him to be controlled by that.

All Glenn had to do was understand Esau's hunger - and he had him.

Now let me be clear, I am not comparing my brother to the devil! But isn't that what Satan does? He slips in when we aren't paying attention or when our defenses are down, into the area where it's dark and he waits. He allows us to become comfortable, and he learns where our hunger is; maybe it's pride, jealousy, anger, lust, an addiction or preoccupation, and he waits until we're hungry, because in that moment our will is easily bent... I wonder – what are you hungry for?

Is it God? Is it Jesus? Is it the Spirit? Are you hungry to live a Life in Christ – or are you hungry for something else?

This is going to take some honesty here from us. Where is your hunger? I think if you love God, you'll want to feed daily on his Word, and that will result in being filled up with the Spirit; and the things our flesh wants won't be so tempting. When we don't eat of His Word and hunger for Him, when we aren't filled by the Spirit, when we leave ourselves empty and we aren't abiding in Christ - we let our guard down and our flesh starts to burn with the things our old nature yearns for that *will us fill up* with something different - and then the enemy has us where he wants us.

Bryan Chappel says in his Reformed Expository Commentary on Ephesians: – “Since the power to “stand” is ours, then why do we not stand? The gospel answer is not that our enemy is too strong, because Satan is defeated. Neither is the answer that we are too weak, because resurrection power indwells us. Rather the answer is that we do not have sufficient desire to resist. It sounds contrary to the cry of the heart to say that we do not have a desire to stand. We desperately want the dismissal of the sin from our lives. Yes, we want it gone, but until then - we still want it. The sin appeals. Our armour is not too weak to withstand Satan’s attacks unless we let him in, but we do!” (p343)

Why do we let him in? Because we're hungry... So let me ask you sincerely, where is your hunger?

If we look in Matthew Chapter 4:1-2 – it says this: “*Jesus was led to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after forty days of fasting and forty nights – he was hungry*” – and this is when the devil came to him, when he hungered. In addition, in Luke 4:13 it says “*when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him, until an opportune time.*” This shows us that the devil doesn't quit, he just waits for another time! We must be battle ready, anytime, anywhere. Satan is waiting. 1 Peter instructs us to “*be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*”, and if he doesn't succeed at first, he will look for another opportune moment.

(As a side note- in the story of Esau and Jacob – Esau sells his birthright for a bowl of stew – his hunger undid him! I wasn't actually considering that when I suggested the name, but now I think it fits!)

The answer is to feed your hunger for God, because if you're filled everyday with the Spirit, you'll be full up - and you can say “Not today Satan!” BUT - don't think he's not weighing you each day, waiting to be ready for a day that you'll be vulnerable. We **need** the armour of God every day.



It took Esau about thirty days before he was flying without a line. I asked Glenn – “aren’t you afraid after all this work he will just fly away?” and he said – “No, not really, I’ve studied him, I’ve trained him, he’s now free to do as he will. He can stay and I’ll continue to care for him, or if he lifts into the air and doesn’t come back then he’s free to do so.” But then Glenn shared that he has this lure which is a bit of his insurance that the hawk will return. When Esau gets far away, he calls him back and throws the lure in the air and it’s always baited with a generous portion of meat, and the bird knows it. It’s never empty...it’s a sure thing. When that lure is released into the air, Esau always turns around and comes back to Glenn, not because of love or devotion or because of his identity with Glenn as a special companion, but simply because he wants that meal.

What are you hungry for? If you don’t know the answer, be sure that your enemy does.

Here’s the encouraging part though; God doesn’t leave you alone in the dark with your enemy. He is always with you. Where the enemy is **weighing** you to find your weakness, God is also there **waiting** for you, and in your weakness He makes you strong.

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

The whole point of “Life in Christ” is to love Him. Not because we get to go to Heaven if we do – but because God loves you – when you were still a sinner, He loved you. He sent Christ to die for you and when the truth of God’s love and the sacrifice of Jesus for YOU, pierces your heart - it ought to change *everything*. It ought to set our lives on fire. As we get to know Christ and abide in Him, wanting to be like Him becomes our consuming hunger and becomes an undying love and if it doesn’t – then we need to take long look at ourselves – because He’s worth it all.

You get to choose which hunger you feed.

“Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance, the only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

-C.S. Lewis



Lord, hear my prayer, that I might be hungry for only you. Teach me to seek you with determined purpose and how to live a life in Christ and to dive into deeper love – an undying love. Teach me how to not allow the desires of my old self to distract from the relationship I have with you and becoming all you want me to be. I pray in Jesus' name.

Update: About a year after Glenn started training Esau he decided to release him. Esau flew away but would still come back to the farm and sit atop the telephone pole calling out to Glenn, waiting for Glenn to bring him easy food that filled his immediate need rather than making the effort to hunt for himself. Sometimes though it's our desire to be free, our hunger keeps us going back to the easy meal and the captivity of our flesh.

**“We need to encourage
new believers to feed on
God’s Word – it is
nourishment for the soul.”
— Billy Graham**

***“All that will matter forever
and ever in our heavenly
state is the glory that came
to God through our lives”***

-Beth Moore “Believing God”



day six

Reign or Rebellion

this is a portion of teaching from
our Genesis "Reign & Rebellion" study



In the story of Cain and Abel we meet two brothers, both of whom bring their offerings to God. The offering of one brother, Abel, is accepted and he is praised, while the offering of the other brother, Cain, is rejected. God's attention is mostly directed to Cain, in this story; the one who is not accepted, and He asks, *"Cain, why are you angry? And why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door, Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."* Many people believe Cain's offering was not accepted or viewed favourably because he only gave a portion that was of little consequence to him, whereas his brother gave his very best, the finest of what he had. He gave his ALL.

Country music artist, Miranda Lambert, recently had a concert in Las Vegas and during the concert she stopped, mid-song and reprimanded a group of people who had prime tickets, front and center. She addressed them and said *"Hey I am singing some country music here and you're more worried about taking your selfies than listening to me sing - and it's ticking me off!"* The artist clearly felt disrespected and though these women had gone to the concert, they weren't there as fans wanting to really enjoy the music or the show, but rather they were just there to be dressed up, have a night out and take frivolous selfies. Many people were greatly offended that Miranda Lambert called out these "fans" and felt if the women had paid money to be there, they could do what they wanted. A lot of drama ensued, as some people felt she was justified in her actions, while many others felt Miranda was out of line and subjected Miranda to a taste of cancel culture as she received harsh criticism for her spontaneous reaction.

As I thought about it - I think we do that to God. We go to church on Sunday morning and we make sure people see us and we pat ourselves on the back for showing up. Then we sit in our seat don't really listen, we get anxious, watching the clock, as the time passes and our stomach starts to growl, we start to shift around in our seat hoping the Pastor will wrap up fast because we have a full day scheduled with other things. Often we show up late... and feel that as long as you get there prior to the Pastor being on stage, you're good. I wonder... If the Worship Leader stopped mid-song on Sunday when YOU walked in late and said *"Hey - I'm singing about my Lord and Saviour here and you're late, and carrying a Starbucks - what's up with that?"* how would we respond to that? Would we be angry? We'd probably be offended, but how does God feel when we saunter in late like it's all about us and not about Him? Does our worship of Him look a little like a selfie, where God is just somewhere in the background and our back is to Him and the focus is clearly of us?

This was Cain's first problem - his heart. He was at the concert, but he was taking selfies, rather than being focused on God. The quality of his offering revealed the insincerity of his worship, and I think we are all inclined to this. When you're at the altar, is God getting your best, or are you at the altar at all? Where is your heart? Are you loving Him with your whole heart, soul and mind, or are we going through the motions? It's not just being in the building that counts. It's where your heart is... does it belong to Him?

The second thing I want to discuss is even more challenging to grapple with. I want to draw your attention to Abel because this chapter seems all about Cain. Abel did what pleased God,

Abel gave it all. He came in humility and gave the best portions of what he had to give, and God gazed upon Him, approved him, favoured him, respected him... then Abel, was violently murdered by someone who should have loved him. This is a hard pill to swallow, because it points to something really challenging. Sometimes being "blessed and highly favoured by God" means you will suffer. Sometimes, doing what is pleasing to God will misalign you with the world, will put you in a place of persecution, ridicule, alienation and yes, maybe it will cost you everything, including your life. Sometimes you're the collateral damage for someone else's sin, and you did *nothing* wrong. I look at Abel and I think, "Man, he got ripped off here - HE died!!!" If he had done LESS- he would have lived! He wouldn't have upset Cain! By doing what pleased God, he put himself in harm's way.

Who else do you see in scripture that was violently murdered, though he was favoured by God and did everything right? Is there anyone else you know that was betrayed by the ones who should have loved him? Is there another, whose blood was spilled and those responsible were shown mercy and grace? Jesus! Jesus died brutally on a cross, betrayed by those He came to save, and his death provided mercy and grace to all.

We aren't going to understand everything here on this earth. We spend a lot of time comparing ourselves to others, and wanting life here to look the way we want it to look. Abel's story points to what it means to follow God, and to be Christ-like. Life might not look fair or just. I think this is important to note, because our world is moving toward a dark place and bringing your best to HIM might mean trouble for you here on earth, but our treasure isn't here.

Like Cain, we WILL all come to a moment where God says "*why are you angry? If you do well will you not be lifted up and if you do not, sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it*". I think that if I am listening, God is probably telling me this daily. This is the choice we all have, before us each day. We can choose to follow him, or to choose our own way... When our "feelings" get the best of us - will you Let Him reign? Will you choose to do what is pleasing to God? Will you obey Him and His Word? Will you trust Him, even if you have doubt? Will you submit - OR - do you desire to be the one to reign yourself? Because if it's the latter, it's rebellion. Either He rules, or you do. And as we grapple with that decision, what you can see is those that choose their own will, end up moving further away from God's presence. You can't have your own sovereignty and the favour of God.

Like Cain, I am also the daughter of Eve, and I tend to want to control the narrative, I want to know "all the things" and have the answers and I want to be in charge. I want to follow God, but I don't want to end up like Abel. It's my human nature to want to control, but I still get a choice. As much as sin is crouching at the door, my saviour's blood also lies there at the door as my offering and ONLY because of His sacrifice **can I** rule over sin.

I choose to let him Reign because I know how the story ends. I know that to be lifted up doesn't mean we will have things easy here but we'll be in our new Eden with our LORD one day and it will all make sense. We know how it all ends. So what do you choose?

"I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven."

- A.W. Tozer



day seven

Building Generations

this is a portion of teaching from
our Genesis "Reign & Rebellion" study



One of my daughters drew a family picture probably about 6-7 years ago – and in it, it shows her family and what each of us is thinking.

Above the picture of me, in my thought bubble, there's a cross, and it indicates that what's on my mind is Jesus. And as I prepared to teach Genesis Chapter 10 & 11, I thought of this picture and everything that I am currently striving toward building, and I wondered if she drew it today - what would SHE draw into the thought bubble? As pleased as I was when I saw it the first time, I might be worried about what it would show today. It might have a whole bunch of bubbles above my head showing how many things are on my mind.

It's easy for us to get distracted, even when it starts off with Jesus in mind. I know that when she drew this, it was a time in my life that was really difficult, and I was very much seeking God. I remember I would get up every morning at 6 am and watch sermons by James McDonald while my husband was the gym. I had exclusively worship music on in the car, I was attending two bible studies... Jesus was on my mind all the time. But you know, as life got easier and the pressures eased off, my constant clinging to God maybe did a little too, though not on purpose. I would bet, when Noah was in the ark, waiting, in the dark for the rain to stop, he probably focused on God constantly and then after the crisis seemed over, and a bright future seemed imminent, we saw that Noah, the only righteous man alive, let his guard down. The bubble above his head, maybe showed some new desires. He went and built a vineyard and got drunk. Sometimes our flood times or times of crisis are the moments where God feels the closest because we need Him so much and it's so dark. When the trial seems lessened, our heart shifts and we maybe stop pursuing His Kingdom and start building our own. As I think on that, I wonder what this picture of me would really look like today and I wonder for you too – are you and I focused on building HIS KINGDOM? Or are we building cities and towers and a name for ourselves – like in the story of Babel? Sadly, that is our nature... but we don't have to repeat the cycle we see here in Genesis.

I think a lot about the time we have here on earth and what it will mean when we are gone, and what we'll be known for. I went to funeral last year, for a woman who was previously a neighbour of ours when I was a child. I had not seen the family in decades, but I took my mother as she had known them for many years. And what I heard there was very moving. This woman had requested that the theme of her funeral was "Meet me in Heaven". I loved that! First of all, I had never seen a funeral with a theme and I loved the concept that her children and her grandchildren were all left with one simple instruction; her legacy to them... *I am going to Heaven - meet me there!* Her whole funeral was a discussion of this theme and a testimony to her faith and her love for Jesus. They said she as she got older, she would memorize scripture as her eyesight was failing and she never wanted to be without God's word. The picture of that is so compelling to me. She's building God's Kingdom; her name, here on earth, speaks of Jesus.

When a woman loves the Lord like that, when she dies, the generations of her life see that testimony. God wants to bless you with a name that blesses others and builds His Kingdom. Just like in Babel, the man-made bricks and tar they used were temporal, their build was never completed. It did not yield them heaven or a name and still they were dispersed, because when it's our Kingdom we are building without Him, it's all just temporal. It's all a vapour; it doesn't last and it doesn't get us anywhere. But the Kingdom work we do lasts long after we have left this earth and are with Him. I think back to what God told Cain - *"if you do well, won't you be lifted up?"* We spend our lives here trying to build our towers and lift ourselves up when all we really need is to do what He asked - no tower was ever required to reach Heaven.

I wonder... what marks our lives would leave on these generations, if our thought bubble only contained HIM; if everything else came second, and we were fully submitted to God and His Reign and we let our own Rebellion end here. What if we turned it all around and headed back to our Saviour? This choice all we can really control, and we can trust that if we do well, we'll be lifted up.

Lord, Let this be the cry of our heart that our passion is only for you. Help us to limit the distractions of our busy lives and make room for you. Help us to prioritize time in Your Word and in prayer and let us not rely on ourselves but seek you with determined purpose always. In Jesus' name I pray.



day eight

Coming Harvest

this was written in 2021 as I prepared my three
year ministry plan for Springvale Women



Recently, My father passed away and I have been preparing a memorial book for him where I have included the messages spoken at his funeral. After re-reading what the Pastor said that day, it gave me some pause to think about what had been said of my dad.

What he said was this: *"I am a Preacher, but I honestly think that John had more faith than me. As a farmer, since he was 19, John had no other option - other than unwavering faith in God."*

What if I had no other option but unwavering faith in God? How would I be different? I had never really thought too much about what that was like for my Dad until his funeral. How every year he would buy seed and leverage his assets, over extending his reserves to put seed in the ground and then hope for a good harvest. I never considered the stress of it all or how he never let us see him worry. I never thought about it much because my dad made it all look like he had it under control. I never considered the weight for him or how each day he must have handed it over to God; the continuous debt, the uncooperative weather, failing machinery, safety for his employees, a bountiful harvest - the pressure to not lose the farm that had been in his family for seven generations at that point (and now nine), or the feeling of always getting by only by the "skin of his teeth". I never considered the great faith he must have had, until this Pastor said it - *"He had more faith than me... the Preacher."* I never considered that every year, every day, every moment was a surrender of all that he could not control, having really nothing on his own terms and being required to continually step out in faith. This gives me some insight into what is truly being asked of us as Christ followers.

Do I believe what I say I believe? Do I even know what I believe?

Throughout scripture God is often revealed as we step out in faith. Sometimes we just need to boldly act. Each day I long for my dad, but I'm still seeing the signs of his servant life being revealed. Each day I am so thankful for what he left behind. Each day since he passed, I see the signs that followed. Sadly he maybe never got to see those signs himself and often we don't see all the signs, or the fruit of the seeds we plant while we are here - that too, we must take on faith. The Gospel of Mark leaves us with the Great Commission: *"And He said to them, 'Go into the world, and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation'"* Mark 16:15

What kind of impact would we have if we pursued that Great Commission, and really took that to heart?

We have a job to plant some seeds - and let God bring the harvest.

I want to see God move in miraculous ways around me and know that there is no other explanation other than the glorious hand of God revealing Himself to me. I want to see His glory... I want to fully experience God - **not just believe in Him, but belong to Him**, to fully squeeze out the full experience of what is offered to me.

In my career in sales, I am always cognizant of the concept of “money left on the table”. This refers to the money in a deal that is potentially available but never asked for by the sales rep if they don’t push the limits of the deal or recognize the cues or what’s being said in the negotiation... and they end up leaving the extra potential on the table, never picking up or receiving the whole package or all that is maybe available to be achieved. That’s what I think I do with God. I leave Him on the table. I take parts, but not the whole gift, and I don’t even realize what I am leaving there on the table... what the potential is for more... God is infinitely more than I can imagine!

I wonder if what’s required, is for me to step out in FAITH – like my dad, and with ANTICIPATION and EXPECTATION, do what God is asking of me... to step into the water, to step out of my comfort zone and into a life that is truly surrendered. I want to be ALL-IN. Imagine the possibilities!

What kind of fruit would I see in me then? What would become of the seeds I plant today when I am gone? What am I leaving on the table?

We step out in faith, God moves... and signs follow ...

“Crash into Me” by Bethel Music

I have come to this place in my life
I'm full but I've not satisfied
This longing to have more of you
I can feel it my heart is convinced
I'm thirsty my soul can't be quenched
You already know this but still
Come and do whatever you want to
I'm standing knee deep
But I'm out where I've never been
I feel you coming
And I hear your voice on the wind
Would you come and tear down the boxes
That I have tried to put you in
Let love come teach me who you are again
Take me back to the place
Where my heart was only about you
And all I wanted was just to be with you
Come and do whatever you want to

Prayer

(portion from the book

“Lead me Holy Spirit”)

Stormie Omartian

Lord, I pray You will help me bear good fruit in my life. Teach me how to plant the right seeds in my heart. Grow up what has already been planted in me from Your Word. I know that every moment I spend in your presence in worship, praise and prayer waters, nurtures and grows the seeds of Your character in me.. Help me to have faithfulness, gentleness and self control so that I can reflect the nature of Christ in everything I do. I pray in Jesus' name.

**In every unique circumstance
we have to discern when we are
seed sowers and when we are
harvesters**

-Willie Robertson “The Gospeler”



day nine

I've waited my whole life ...

this was written in 2021 as a devotional for a women's event in Toronto . It's now been 11 years since my grandfather went to be with Jesus



Eight years ago, I sat alone with my grandfather just days before he died. I was worried he wasn't eating, and told him that if he didn't eat anything he'd end up back in the hospital. I remember him looking at me, almost defiantly, as he said "That's not where I am going!" He knew he was at the end of his life. I struggled for the right words in that moment, and eventually I replied, "Well, you're not going anywhere today, but when it is your time, it's exciting to think about that moment when you'll see Jesus, isn't it?"

My tired grandfather relaxed his face and I saw him close his eyes and smile. His whole demeanor changed, his face softened, his voice was peaceful and steady, and he emphatically and longingly said this; "Absolutely... I have waited my whole life to see the Lord." It was almost as if he wasn't even answering my question in that moment, it was just the simple utterance of his heart sighing...

That right there, was the most evangelical moment of my life. That was the moment where I saw my grandfather as he was - a man who loved God and had truly waited his whole life to meet his Saviour; a man with blessed assurance. As I watched peace overtake him, I knew he had something I did not have. I saw something that day that changed me. Not because he had said anything profound - not because he was trying to create a moment or give me last words of advice - but because it was real; his assurance was visible. I could tangibly see what he believed, and that was something truly remarkable to behold! What he said in that moment, planted a seed.

That moment has lived on and wandered in my mind ever since he went home to be with the Lord. His funeral service became a pivotal moment for me and each prayer that he had prayed with regards to me - all the seeds he had planted over the years, on my behalf - met me head on. This is when I encountered a crisis of faith that caused me to ask myself:

"Do I believe what I say I believe?"

It set me on a pursuit of understanding, that made God real to me. This is where I encountered Jesus; the Jesus that I had always believed in, but I don't think I truly knew. I had called myself a Christian, and it's not as though I had lived a life apart from God, but God was not at the center of it. I went to church, but my heart was complacent. At the foot of my grandfather's casket was where I started my long journey back to God. This is when the God I inherited from my Christian family, became truly my own.

My grandfather had lots to say to me about the importance of living a Christian life while I was growing up, but to be honest, I did not see that for what it was. I thought I was a disappointment to him. I thought he was more concerned with whether I went to church, than who I was. I wanted my grandfather to know me - he wanted me to know Jesus. Period. And those two realities clashed. It wasn't until he was gone that I realized how deep his love was, that he was more concerned about my salvation than anything else. For all the words my grandfather spoke to me, or preached at me, about God - it wasn't his words that hit my heart - but rather the manifestation of his belief in those final moments that finally spoke to me.

I believe it was on that day, with my grandfather preparing to leave this world, that God reached out and honoured my grandfather's faithfulness to Him, by placing Grandpa Lloyd, right in the heart of my story, weaving him into a moment of my awakening.

After he died, my aunt gave me my grandfather's testimony, written about twenty years prior. What a blessing it was to have his thoughts, in ink on paper, in front of me decades later. As I read his words, there was nothing exceptional or profound, it was just a simple expression of my grandfather's love for Jesus and gratitude for the blessings he'd been given. But through his testimony, the word that kept recurring - the word that stood out to me - was **REVIVAL**. My grandfather had experienced revival and was praying for it in the church. Through prayer, he had been sowing these seeds of revival for decades.

Henry Blackaby asserts in his study, "Experiencing God" that, "the way you **live your life** is a testimony of what you believe about God." I would offer that the way you **leave this life**, is also a testimony of your belief. At the end, my grandfather was still looking forward. He had no doubts about where he was going, and in the end, his steadfast faith and belief was tangibly visible. How I longed for, and still journey towards, what he had; Peace... Assurance... Belief. Before I left my Grandpa that day, he asked me to play him some music. He wanted to hear the Gaithers sing "The Eastern Gate". More than a few times in his last months he had asked me to play this particular song for him. It was long into my journey, that I realized the prophesy in his choice.

"He'll be with us at the meeting, Just inside the Eastern Gate. Oh, the joys of that glad meeting with the saints who for us wait! What a blessed, happy meeting, Just inside the Eastern Gate!"

My grandfather spoke that over me from his death bed; "I'll meet you there"; as though this was his final prayer for me... the final seeds. "I'll meet you at heaven's gate. Make sure you get there..."

Today, the ministry called "Revive" at Springvale Church was inspired by my grandfather's testimony, and that very moment, years ago by my grandfather's side.

The last sentence of the book of Mark says this of the disciples, *"and they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following."* - Mark 16:20 We can't always see God's plan. We can't always see the end when we are at the beginning, but if we believe in His Word, we need to step out in faith and "live the life that is a testimony of what we believe about God." Sometimes we won't see all the signs that follow from our faithful obedience, but rest assured, that although we might not be here to see the results, God is using it all. My grandfather never knew the power of that moment, or that God had entered into it. He didn't get to see the results on this side of heaven, but I like to imagine that when he finally saw his Saviour, that maybe Jesus said, "Good and faithful servant, your harvest is still yet to come... **watch and see what I am about to do!**"

The seeds we plant today live on, long after we leave this earth, and as we believe in His promises, then *"we know that all things work together for the good of those that love God and are called according to His purpose."* Romans 8:28 - which by the way, was my grandfather's favourite verse.

Today let's remind ourselves of what we truly believe, and then let's go live our lives as testimonies to what we believe about God.

Let's go plant some seeds.



day ten

You were made for this

inspired in part from our Nehemiah Study "Revival"



A few years ago the grass in my front yard started to get really weedy and it wasn't doing well. I have a lot of retired men living around me and they have really beautiful, plush, green grass and mine was looking very sad. My husband got a couple bags of topsoil and seed and we had a big plans to reseed it and get it all perfect, but life gets in the way. We were busy, so the bags of dirt sat in my driveway for months and even over the winter, and the grass didn't get fixed. The season came and went and maybe came and went again and the bags of dirt sat on the driveway. I had what I needed right there on premises but I did nothing with it. It was there within my reach and at my disposal, but sat unused, just a big old bag of dirt in my driveway. I wonder if we don't *right now* have all that we need to grow a better garden around us and we've left it sitting in the driveway?

Sometimes when we think about serving God we see our limitations and all the reasons why we aren't enough. We say to ourselves things like this;

- I don't have time.
- I can't go to Bible study because I don't know enough.
- I can't lead or teach because I don't have a seminary degree - I am not qualified.
- I can't share the gospel because people will think I am weird and will want to avoid me.
- I can't tell people about Jesus and how he's changed me, because they know I am not always Christ-like. I am not worthy to tell others how to be better!

We all have our excuses. Take a moment to consider - What's holding you back?

You might not feel qualified to do what God has called you to do, but you have all that you need. I think we sometimes forget that! Jesus said in Luke 18:27 "*What is impossible with man is possible with God.*" We were never meant to be perfect but we don't need to be! Jesus can take whatever we can give and do something amazing with it. If He can take a handful of fish and feed thousands with it, He can take whatever is in your hands and multiply it. Don't be afraid to step out in faith and do what God has called you to do.

Years ago, my husband shared me this piece of advice that I often have to remind myself of: **"the greatest obstacle to good, is great"**. What he was trying to tell me was this: While you are trying to get things perfect, you are missing out on a whole lot of good things! Truthfully, I don't want to do things unless I can do it well - and let's be honest, that's going to really limit me! I wouldn't have created this book without his advice, because it will never be exactly the way I wanted it. The words won't be right, the grammar will be flawed, the story won't be creative enough or articulated the way it was in my head, and I'll definitely miss saying things that might be important! One thing I have learned is that my words don't have to be perfect. God will use them anyway! They don't even have to be good, I just need to write them and let Him do the rest. Just start moving... take a step. Make an effort today to do something a little out of your comfort zone. Use what you have. Don't leave all the potential sitting in the driveway, and never get to see what God can do with it! Start planting seeds... and then watch as God grows something better than you imagined.

Get Ready for Revival. You were made for this!

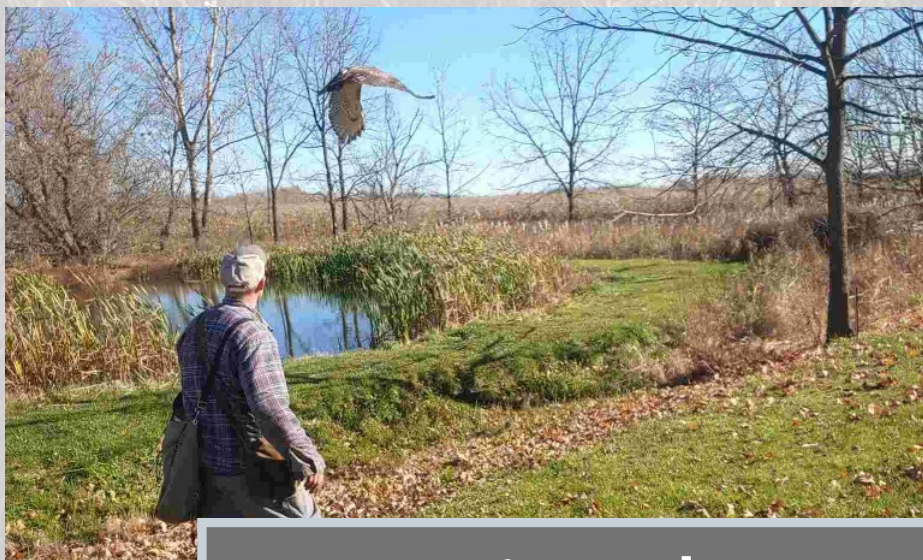
REVIVE

www.ReadyForRevival.ca

WRITTEN BY

LORI DONER JONES

women@springvale.org



springvale
women

FALL 2024