

A Chapter from My Book – Joan Webb



Joan is a valuable member of the Reconciliation Ministries leadership team, where she serves as a Mental Health Coach, Prayer Minister, Living Waters Coordinator, and much more. She joined the leadership team in 2006. Her passion for this ministry work has come from her own process of healing from childhood emotional neglect, domestic violence, sexual assault and relational challenges. Her understanding of dependency on the Lord to heal the deep wounds of this life is the foundational message Joan brings to those seeking help and hope.

But he said to me, “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.

2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV

Our lives are like a book being written over time; chapter upon chapter until the last chapter and THE END. If I can simplify how it's like a book (or a movie), there's a thesis, a body and a conclusion. Ah, but there's so much within it's pages (or script)! It has themes that run through it, a protagonist, an antagonist and many contributing characters. Sometimes the Lord invites me to examine or explore chapters in my life...the past and those currently being written. I've learned He's at the center of my growing story; He's the author and perfecter of my faith! The Lord reveals the relationship with His created people so well in Psalm 139: 2-6; 15-16 ESV.



“O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it...My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.”

These words catapulted my healing journey forward, leaping off the page and leaving me undone. They still do.

I can look back and remember with clarity how the Lord moved in one of the most difficult chapters of my life. The assaults to my heart, mind and soul were relentless; I could not see what needed care in the moment, let alone the care needed from my past. It was all in my “safe box” where I learned to keep all the pain. In my Heavenly Father’s providence and mercy, He allowed the “safe box” to overflow over time and to finally blow its lid. A kindness.

I met one of my dearest friends at a ministry event. I realized how the Lord brings people together in providential ways. As our friendship grew in Christian intimacy, I began to share many of the sources of pain I carried. I shared how I had experienced PTSD episodes on a few occasions (evidence my “safe box” lid was malfunctioning). I felt intense humiliation when the “I’m fine” exterior strength clashed with the reality of weakness as I was hyperventilating, sobbing and re-living past violence on the floor of a restaurant restroom. An uninvited trigger took me to past chapters against my will. I’m not a fan of re-runs. It happened after multiple deaths in a short amount of time: my grandpa (heart failure), my uncle (cancer), my mom (cancer), my friend from small group (lung/heart transplant), my friend from church (epilepsy), my close neighbor (suicide), a husband and wife in an accountability group (homicide/suicide) and my cousin (overdose). All this grief, along with other relational challenges, left my traumatized soul on overload. My friend suggested I attend a program called Living Waters. At the time I was just going through the motions of everyday life. Short of the occasional PTSD episode, I thought I was managing my life responsibilities and relationships pretty well. She saw needs I couldn’t see through my survival lenses. She persisted in her invitations...gentle, loving and accepting for four years! I finally attended Living Waters in 2006.

My first year as a participant opened my eyes to the truth that I really did matter; I never really thought much about my worth. I existed, I contributed, I was nice enough, I loved the best I could...was there more? The intriguing part of the Living Waters journey was the balance between growing in the truth that I was a good gift, and simultaneously discovering the depth of my many weak and broken parts needing God’s merciful forgiveness. Out of my pain and gaping wounds, I learned to live less than the good my Creator intended. To admit that out of my fear, illegitimate coping and tendency to self-protect, my reactions were just as offensive as what was done to me. My heart was divided; bitterness, hatred and anger toward my wounders, yet love for Jesus and His people. I learned



I could not serve two masters. I was challenged as the hard edges were painfully exposed and chiseled away. Hebrews 4:12b-13 often convicted me; describing the word of God it says, “it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.” Clean up on aisle ME was needed. I didn’t open my clenched fists so easily, but once I took that courageous step it was like the floodgates of freedom opened up! Pain brought me to my knees, and for once they truly bent before the cross. That changed everything.

In my current chapter, I have plenty of opportunities to apply what the Lord has shown me and continues to show me. I don’t keep these life changing revelations to myself; gifts from God are always meant to be shared. I keep my heart and mind open to other contributing characters willing to share what I still need. The antagonist of my soul has not yet been written off. The developing thesis is dependency on my Heavenly Father. I long for the concluding paragraph to include, “well done, good and faithful servant.”

Joan is a Certified Mental Health Coach and a Prayer Minister. If you would like to schedule an appointment with her, call 248.956.0265.