

"A real wake-up call" - Tricia Marie Kaiulani Evans

How She Hopes

DISCOVERING LIGHT IN THE
DARK SEASONS OF YOUR LIFE



COURTNEY DUMLAO

Foreward by John DeMello



The
Adonais
Properties

PRAISE FOR HOW SHE HOPES

In this day and age so many people face the stress and demands of our fast paced society. We must struggle with seasons of discouragement and confusion. I believe that this book contains keys on how to identify and navigate these seasons that we all encounter. Courtney has approached this common condition with a transparency seldom found in other books. I have always been one to appreciate the value of truth conveyed in an applicable way. Simple and real is how I would characterize this book. Courtney is a spiritual daughter of our ministry and we are so proud to see her grow into her own potential and now help others along in their life's journey. I strongly encourage everyone who reads this book to be ready to grow into your own potential as well.

APOSTLE JOHN DE MELLO



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The Adonai's Properties ~ Hawaii

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This book is dedicated to my husband, Kevin.

For supporting our family and being by my side always.

You are still my computer love.

I love you always and forever.

I also dedicate this book to my children, Keola, Carson, and Khloe.

May you always find hope in every season of your lives.

And I dedicate this book to you, the reader. It is my heart's desire that this book brings you the hope and confidence for tomorrow that you are searching for today.



INTRODUCTION

You would never know by the sparkle in her eye, or the playful smile she wears, that despair threatened to overtake her life. Many look upon her and wonder how she hopes for a brighter tomorrow when today looks so dark. It is her foundation of faith that keeps this courageous woman bold in her daily walk.

What you do not see is the seasonal impact of trial and error on this woman. Each season she has come through changed her sparkle. She is not perfect. She has, at times, lost her focus on the source of her hope. But she overcame that season of despair and so can you.

In this book are tools to help you find hope and learn how to persevere through the various seasons of life. Each chapter has a tool to help you navigate the darkness to find the light. For who hopes for what they see? It is through our faith, in hoping for what we do not see in the darkness that allows the light to break through.

You are not alone in this process of breakthrough. I, too, have stood in the light and soaked in the warmth and joy of the moment, only to have the day turn into a season of bitter darkness. Hope gives us the power to harness the dark; the faith you use to grow hope conquers that darkness.

The purpose of the pain is may be unknown for now. It may feel like the darkness is overtaking your mind and heart, but you are stronger than you know. You are brave enough to let go of the pain and take the necessary step toward hope. This oftentimes is the hardest part of the healing process. That first step requires you to let go of the security blanket of pain, and to surrender to the vast freedom of hope. It can be a hard step to take, but not impossible. You can do this. Are you ready? Are you ready to be set free from fear and the burden of pain? God did not allow your story to end today for a reason. He does not want you to carry the burden of pain. He wants you to glow with the light of love and hope. After all, it is contagious ... it is time. Let your light shine, sister!

Let's spark a fire of hope with prayer:

Dear God,

Here I am. I am seeking peace and comfort in exchange for the pain and heartache of seasons past. I thank you for the lessons learned during those seasons. I thank you for the opportunity to start fresh today. I thank you for the healing that has already begun to take place in my heart, mind, soul and body as I surrender to your will for each upcoming season of my life. I thank you for those you have placed in my path to guide, protect, help, and love me. Help me to be aware of your holy presence as I am made new and my hope in you is restored. I thank you, Lord, for all that you are doing in my life to strengthen, sustain, and fulfill me. I pray that I am a blessing to others as I become a conduit of your love as you shine through me in all my future seasons.

In Jesus' name... Amen.



CHAPTER 1

IDENTIFYING YOUR SEASON

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

EMBRACING THE SUCK

My sanity was questionable as I entered empty nest stage one. There was no other option but to embrace the suck as I watched my son load his bags into the back of my silver minivan. As we drove, sniffing in sobering silence, the dawn broke over the mountain, a glorious display of oranges, pinks and blue filling the sky. The summer morning promised a gorgeous day. Yet my family was experiencing a loss and change that we were not quite ready for. You see, my oldest had just graduated high school two weeks prior. He was on his way to basic training for the U.S. Army, five thousand miles away from home. We knew once he landed we probably would not hear from him for a few weeks, and only through good old-fashioned, pen-pal letters. A part of my identity was boarding that plane, changing not only the trajectory of his future, but mine too.

My son, leaving for basic training, was the same age I was when I found out I was having him. The sobering reality that my identity as a mother and as a woman was

so tied up in my son and other children caused me to panic. Letting him go felt like letting go of myself, and it was scary. It wasn't just me—my entire family was entering a new season of life and I had no idea how to cope with the loss of his presence in our day-to-day lives.

I knew that this is what God had intended for him. I was so excited for his own experience that I had not thought about what it would mean for me and the rest of my family until the day we had to drop him off at the airport. He was officially no longer just my son, but a member of the U.S. Army, and now under their jurisdiction and not my own.

After our tearful goodbyes, we made our way home and each of us went to our rooms to cry out our emotions. It was then, I realized, I have two options: I can be dragged down by my own despair or I can rise up and do something about it. I'd like to say I rose up right away, but I didn't. I'm stubborn and it took a while for me to process my emotions. I had no choice but to embrace the suck for the moment, and I did. I wallowed in my sorrow for a good few days and then I awoke to this quote by John Rohn: "You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind; but you can change yourself. That is something you are in charge of." This season I was experiencing I could not change, but I could change my outlook. Instead of looking inward at myself, I began to look up, to God, and I started to see him in a new light.

STARTING A NEW SEASON

Dark gray clouds hover and brisk winds roll over the grass. The air is damp, yet no rain is falling from the spring sky. Winter is refusing to let go of change, but spring has arrived, ready to take over. The two seasons clash, each one determined to have its way, one withholding change, and one determined to cause change. With every seasonal shift a storm will brew. The clashing of hot and cold air in the upper atmosphere creates

a sensational changeover with each transition.

The blending of the old and new creates an uncomfortable season on the earth and in the air. It makes perfect sense then, that we humans become uncomfortable as we experience change. Out with the old and in with the new is intimidating for some and exhilarating for others. With a change of seasons comes a change with the reality of time. The daily schedule may be adjusted. Some shifting may be out of your control, such as the changing of the clocks; you do it because you must. However, some changes you are in charge of. You have a choice to cultivate your new season and to adjust to the atmosphere you are now in. There is no one more capable of cultivating this new season than you. You can choose to nurture this season into one of prosperity or let it wither to one of decrease; it all depends on how you prepare yourself mentally and physically. The first step for preparation is to identify your season and determine what it means to be the cultivator of it.

Now, I am sure you are wondering, how do you prepare for the unexpected shifts of a season? The unexpected loss of a loved one? The end of a marriage? The child gone too soon? The loss of a job? Addictions? The relationship that ended? How do you prepare for betrayal and heartache? You don't. That's right, you don't. You can't. It is too great a burden to prepare for, and no matter how prepared you think you are for that season of loss or change, it still hits like a tornado on a beautiful early spring day and destroys your routine. However, you can identify that the season of destruction, loss, and pain is temporary. That you are not alone. That you truly can overcome all things through Christ who strengthen you (Philippians 4:13). You lean into his strength and stop trying to rely on your own strength for the moment. You declare that what God has allowed, what the devil meant for evil, God intends for good. It may not look like it at the moment. It will come when you surrender to the season, when you accept that, yes, this major shift has occurred in your life. Now, how do you move forward? How do you use this pain to help someone else in the future?

SPRING IS STARTING

As a mama hen steers her chicks through the garden, the sun peeks over the mountain top a few minutes earlier today than last week. Spring is here. The beginning of new life speaks of hope and goodness to come. The heaviness of winter has passed. The days are getting longer and the air is warmer. It is a time to savor the steamy coffee outside with the rays of sunshine rather than from inside looking out the window. The time to be a spectator in life is over. It is time to go outside and be a part of it.

This is a time of great celebration in many cultures. The late Robin Williams once said, *"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"* and I could not agree more. Think about it: way before electricity and technology, if you made it through the winter it was a testimony to your strength and vitality. Then, as the spring progresses, the rains come. As it nourishes the ground, the plants absorb the water. Our hearts are just like the ground, in need of refreshing. This is done through the word of God (John 7:37-39) and it is needed in the seasons to come. You may feel your soul needs life-giving water to thaw out the ice in your heart from the winters past. I want to encourage you. Just as the temperatures rise when spring transitions into summer, so must you adjust your internal spiritual thermostat to continue to thrive in your new season: it is time for spring to surrender to the blistering heat of summer.

SLIDING INTO SUMMER

Summer is arguably the most loved season of the year by many. It is full of vacations, fun, and soaking up vitamin D. Bright colors at the pool and maybe a sweet iced drink in the evening on the porch cheer up almost everyone. Summer weekends at our home mean sand-covered floor mats and kids laughing or bickering, in the backseat. Sun-kissed skin slathered in sunscreen; a trunk filled with coolers, beach chairs and large tote bags of towels, lotion, snacks and speaker. As I sit and watch my children play in the water and build sand towers, life feels gloriously simple and unhindered...

for a minute. Cue DJ skipping the vinyl. Last summer, when I experienced empty nest stage one, I did just this: sat at the beach, watched the kids, played the music ... but it was not the picture-perfect days I just listed. Oh no, this time was different. We did all the same activities, I even had more time with them, but the colors and sounds seemed dull. Life just was not the same and I truly struggled with my favorite family activities. I felt fragile, lost, and alone, not for the first time in life, but it was different this time.

That same summer, like many communities around the world, we experienced extreme wildfires burning a little too close to home. It was amazing to watch the infernos from a safe distance of many miles away. In wonder we speculated at what the fires would mean for the brush and wildlife that were in the vicinity. The impurities of past harvests were being burned up, clearing the way for new life in the next season. This refining of the ground is actually good for vegetation and farming. In fact, it plays a critical role in influencing vegetation and the life cycles of trees and plant communities. If the intense heat of the fire is good for the ground, I wondered, is this intense pressure of change, in this season, good for my soul? And the answer is yes. Yes, my friend, the pressure of change and the intensity from the heat in our souls, hearts, and minds is good for us. It allows us to grow and mature and more importantly, heal.

FINDING FALL

Have you been to a valley in the fall? The harvest of colors from the spring and summer rains are incredible. The rusts, reds, and yellows are breathtaking.

“Autumn carries more gold in its pocket than all the other seasons,”

Jim Bishop

The intense, stifling heat of summer ebbs away and the refreshing wind of the fall descends. Days become shorter, the nights longer. The late Billy Graham once said, “Mountains are for views and inspiration, but fruit is grown in the valleys.” The season of harvest is upon the nation. The abundance from crops planted in the spring is now in full array, ready for winter storage.

What are you harvesting this fall season? After all, fall is known as a season of gratitude and appreciation. For farmers who lived off the land, their gratitude came from the successful harvest of their plantings months prior, which meant their survival in the cold months to come. Self-examination of our actions, hearts, and attitudes will reveal much about the seeds we have planted in seasons past. Recognizing our own internal dialogue that does not serve us is one of the first steps in finding hope for tomorrow’s season. Winter is coming, and you need to be prepared for it or it will blindside you and leave you without the resources to withstand the bitter cold.

WONDERING IN WINTER

Scrolling social media, I see my loved ones across the nation bundle themselves with gloves and snow boots, carrying ice scrapers to their cars, and pictures of thermostats that read 9 degrees. And I think to myself, “God bless them, I could not handle that kind of winter.” I would not be prepared. Shuffling to my car for my morning commute, I usher my daughter to the car door. Goosebumps dance across my arms as I fold into my seat and start the car. We close our doors, I push the button, start the engine, and read the thermostat on my car ... 59 degrees ... holy mother, winter is here! Yes! Do you know what that means? Tomorrow, I can wear boots!

Shorter days and longer nights make for this crisp, cool, Maui morning, and I love it. But the reality of it is, this is a season of preparation. It is cold outside in the mornings now; I need to make sure my daughter has her jacket and I need my hot coffee.

Christmas is soon, so I need to shop and prepare for that too. As a person who plans almost every occasion and day to the brink of military time, winter reflects what we should be doing all year long, preparing for the next season. During this winter season, life seems to not be blooming. The ground is hard, green grass has turned brown for many. Snow covers what was bright green during the summer. With each December 31, many wonder what the New Year will bring them. Some doubt anything good or new, while others are perpetually optimistic and hope for exciting new changes. This season is less about the big moves of planting and harvesting and more about the small steps of planning to lay the foundation for the next harvest.

TRANSITIONING

Finding hope for the new season may feel exhausting or hopeless at this point. I understand, truly. But you cannot stay there. You must surrender that feeling that you won't find hope. Hope is there, but you are hanging on so tightly to the despair you are unable to see the light trying to peek through. When you abandon the despair, the light will be visible to you. I promise.

“No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.”

Hal Borland

Surrender is the catalyst to the evolving season of growth and change. Fighting the change, refusing to surrender to it, no matter the circumstances, will only encourage fear, doubts, anger, resentment, and pain.

Your time on earth is not meant to be permanent. Seasons are transitional unless you choose to allow the world to move around you while you stand still. But you are called

to be more than stagnant. To be stagnant would be to deny the world the joy of your presence. Let the words of Billy Graham reassure you: "I have read the last page of the Bible. It's all going to turn out all right." I hope you find comfort in these words. What you are experiencing is nothing new to the human race. It has happened before, loss, betrayal, grief, addictions, death, life. Change is not new to humanity, just to you. *"History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new"* (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Yes, it sucks to experience these life moments. Embrace the suck, acknowledge it, but please, dear loved one, do not dwell in it. This too shall pass. I understand the heartache is real and the pain cannot simply be pushed under the rug. I'm right there with you. But it can be surrendered to the throne room of God. Let's surrender the pain together.

Let us pray.

Dear God,

I surrender my season and life to you. I seek your love and comfort in each and every season as I try to make each harvest count for your kingdom and the call you have placed upon my life. I surrender all the pain of seasons past into your hands, God. Please deliver me from my pain and sorrow. Heal my heart and mind. Restore my joy for tomorrow. Fill me with your wisdom and discernment as I work my way closer to you. Thank you for loving me and guiding me as I walk with you in this new season. Protect my feet as I walk, Lord, and let no harm befall me as I seek your way in my life. Let all that has been stolen from me in seasons past be restored to me according to your perfect timing. I trust you, Lord, to be with me in each season of my life.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.