

Jane Walters

Give Me Strength!

Finding all
we need in God

‘This is a deeply restorative and strengthening book, that reveals a loving God meeting us in the painful places of our lives. With pastoral wisdom and gentle wit, Jane invites readers to soften barriers around their hearts, souls and minds, allowing God, the wonderful counsellor, to enter their pain and bring genuine healing. For anyone who carries wounds from life’s journey, these pages offer medicine for the soul.’

Benny Marrett, church leader, Christ Community Church, Attleborough

‘Honest and gentle, *Give Me Strength!* is written by someone who has been through tough times and, by God’s grace, has come through them and learnt valuable lessons from them. While Jane doesn’t pretend to understand everyone’s circumstances, she offers practical tools that are rooted in scriptural truths and applicable to a wide range of struggles and pain. I would describe this book as a life jacket rather than a lifeboat – helping us to find our way through the pain and to grow stronger as a result, rather than to seek rescue from the storms. It’s a book to savour and to take time over, and is a powerful vehicle for the Holy Spirit to work in and through the tough stuff that life inevitably throws our way.’

Nicki Copeland, author and speaker

‘You know when you read a line that takes your breath away? This book contains some stunning lines. This one is my favourite: “My own pride deferred to this seedling, whose apprentice I surely was.” Near the beginning of the book, a precious truth nestles: God’s fingerprints are on us. I had never seen it that way before. It’s a fitting start to a book which encourages us to be God-sufficient, not self-sufficient. *Give Me Strength!* flips the script from “I need to do everything myself” to “God is here to help”. Between these pages, we meet a God who never walks out. Much of it resonated with me, reflecting truths I have learned from life experience. Whether life has knocked you sideways or not, this book is a guide to freedom in God.’

Emily Owen, author and speaker



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JANE WALTERS

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Writing this book has involved reflecting on a lifetime of journeying with Jesus, and I am so grateful not to have had to walk it alone. There are too many dear friends and companions to mention, but if you're reading this, I mean you!

Roy, I owe so much to you. What a joy it was to read each raw chapter to you and have your thoughtful input. Without you, some of this book wouldn't have made sense. Without you in my life, nothing makes sense either. Thank you for loving me so well.

For reasons of confidentiality, I cannot name my counsellor, who came into my life at the perfect time. You helped me make sense of things I couldn't understand and always pointed me to Jesus. I have thanked you many times before, but there is always reason to do so again.

Many thanks to the entire team at BRF Ministries, who have trusted me with this second book. Your challenges provoked me to go deeper and do better, for which I can only be grateful. I felt in safe, prayerful hands throughout the process. You are lovely to work with!

Above all, I give God all the credit, the honour, and the glory. I would always choose a hard life with him than an easy life without him.

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INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this book lies in a series of encounters I had across a number of years with people who, in a nutshell, were hurting. I spent hours listening to their stories, empathising with their situations, and bringing them to God in prayer. Not that I have been immune from such difficulties myself; far from it. But I have learned to be utterly grateful to God for leading me through each trial, and then for being able to comfort others with the comfort I had received. Ironically, though, I had no sooner embarked on the writing process than a major crisis hit my family, breaking up our unit in an instant, and plunging me into another deep wilderness experience. Finally, several years on from that, I have fulfilled my intention: to share how we can all draw strength from God through the most testing times.

I make no claim to have all the answers, but I have got a pretty good idea of what some of the questions are. We all ask them as we work through our own areas of pain and suffering.

- What is going on?
- How long have I got to put up with this?
- How on earth can I keep going when...?
- Where is God when I need him?

The wonderful thing is that this is not a self-help book. (Plenty of them exist, and maybe you have read your share.) Why is this ‘wonderful’? Because although there are steps we can take which may prove helpful, ultimately we’re leaning on God and asking him to make the difference. It is not about learning tips and techniques; in fact, in many ways we can say it is not up to us at all. My firm belief – rooted in what the Bible says and borne out in my own experience – is that God is not only the only one who can help, but the only help we ever need. Our cry of ‘Give me strength!’ need no longer be one of exasperation but

our most sincere prayer for help. That is why, throughout, I am pointing us to God. He is the one with the answers. He is the one who cares incredibly deeply for each of us. His is the only strength we ever need.

How to use this book

The content is divided into daily sections, each day taking around five minutes to read through. That is not to imply this is any quick fix, though. Just as life's events may have taken their time catching up with us, so we can't expect the remedy to be instantaneous. We can't rush the restoration process. We are worth the effort! So, I would encourage you to take the book at your own pace. Don't feel the relevance of a particular chapter? Move on and find one that better hits the spot. Need to spend a couple more days thinking about something? Take your time. There is no stopwatch.

If at all possible, don't skip over the response sections. While I sincerely hope that what I have written will be of help, ultimately it is our interaction with God that matters. He is longing to connect with us, and the suggestions I have made will hopefully enable that to happen.

The evening reflections are a gentle way of mulling over the day's theme before settling down to sleep. Through them, we are entrusting ourselves once more to God, who delights to watch over us as we lie down and sleep.

Working through this book on our own will encourage deeper intimacy with God as we seek him over our difficult issues. However, there is no doubt that getting into discussion with others – with its natural opportunities to pray together and offer mutual support – can add another dimension. The set of group studies in the final section of the book offers standalone material, tied into the book's themes, with suggestions on how to best encourage each other.

It has been my privilege to produce this material, and I pray it will be of enormous benefit and blessing to you.

Suggested songs playlist



Each chapter has a suggested song at the end for further reflection and worship. You can find these songs compiled in a Spotify playlist via this QR code.

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FINDING STRENGTH IN JOY

‘This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep.’ For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, ‘Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’ The Levites calmed all the people, saying, ‘Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve.’

NEHEMIAH 8:9–11

Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

PSALM 30:5

When life becomes painful or difficult, joy is often the first thing to leave, and its absence saps our energy. With everyone wearing their masks so successfully around us, we may be left concluding that happiness is only for other people, not for us. Putting on a brave front or trying to make light of it only proves that we can’t strive or force our way into joy. The good news for our weary souls is that joy is a God-given gift.

In Sunday school I was told that joy stood for Jesus-Others-Yourself. Putting ourselves squarely at the bottom of the heap was the way to lasting contentment, or so I heard it. It’s true that serving Jesus and caring for other people brings satisfaction, but I question whether it’s the actual source of real happiness. On the other hand, our current self-obsessed, me-me-me culture, where we place ourselves teeteringly high on top of the heap, might bring moments of fun and enjoyment, but it’s still not real joy.

I once knew a lady called Phoebe (a fitting name, meaning ‘bright, shining’) who had recently become a Christian. She radiated happiness, lighting up every room with her smiling presence. She told everyone she met about Jesus and what a difference he had made. (Not that she needed to, since it was so obvious.) But then, after a special celebratory meal with the family, Phoebe’s only daughter decided not to go home with her parents but to drive over to a friend’s to stay the night. Tragically, she fell asleep at the wheel and drove into a wall, being killed instantly.

As the whole church tried to process the enormous shock, I remember wondering what would happen to Phoebe now. Her faith was so new. Surely this would completely derail her. The funeral was one of those horribly incongruent types: the church filled with vibrant young adults whose lives lay ahead of them, while one of their number lay in a coffin. Everyone was in tears, as you would expect, but even through the tears Phoebe’s smile was still there. Her joy amid the tragedy felt nothing short of miraculous. It was a gift to all of us.

In that season, and for the years following, Phoebe demonstrated something powerful wherever she went: that joy had little to do with life’s circumstances, but everything to do with God at work. I have heard some people say that joy is a deep-down thing, while happiness is more superficial. But true joy, that is indeed rooted deeply within us, will keep bursting through to the surface. It reminds me of those wild flowers (alright, weeds) that somehow manage to grow through tarmac and concrete – their inherent life-giving energy is dynamic and unstoppable. In the case of joy, that irrepressible life-force stems from it being part of the character of God himself.

In Galatians 5, the apostle Paul lists what he calls the ‘fruit of the Spirit’: ‘love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control’ (vv. 22–23). The Holy Spirit represents the very essence of God, so this fruit is describing elements of his nature. We can therefore say God is love, God is joy, God is peace, and so on, and each attribute would be a perfect fit. Aquinas put it this way:

God is happiness by his essence: for he is happy not by acquisition or participation of something else, but by his essence.

Since we are created in God's image, it follows that we have a capacity for joy and happiness within us, simply by virtue of being alive. And where this joy has been squashed and squeezed, trampled and trashed, we can receive fresh filling through the Holy Spirit.

Do you hear this?

We have not 'lost our sense of humour'.

We are not unable to see 'the funny side'.

Or, even if that is so, it is completely understandable why. We have been hurt and damaged, our confidence is diminished, our hope even more so. Yet joy can be ours, and it is found in God, as Augustine declares:

Following after God is the desire of happiness; to reach God is happiness itself.

It's an astonishing truth that joy can be present where there are no real reasons for happiness. Whenever we experience a 'joy that passes understanding' (to misquote a phrase) in situations that don't warrant it, it's not because we are denying our loss or grief or whatever. As Professor Lindsey Godwin observes:

The answer I've come to embrace is this: joy isn't just allowed – it's necessary. In a world that can feel overwhelming and heartbreak-ing, moments of laughter, play, or connection aren't a betrayal of reality.¹

Let's pause there for a moment. Some of us haven't found life funny for a very long time. Some can't remember the last time we laughed, or even felt like smiling. If joy is like light coming into darkness, we can't seem to find the light switch. It may provide another opportunity for

lament, for grieving over this lack of joy. We miss that side of us and are wistful about its return.

Take hope.

God wants to do what Isaiah promised:

‘Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.’

ISAIAH 43:18–19

The context of the Nehemiah verses quoted at the start of this chapter is that Jerusalem’s city walls have now been completely rebuilt. It was a tough project, met with all kinds of opposition, but the workers had rallied together and seen it through. Now, the law is being read to the people and they are cut to the quick by its message. They are heartbroken and dismayed, yet Nehemiah urges them not to see it like that. God is with them, there is no need to grieve – ‘The joy of the Lord is [our] strength.’

Joy acts like fuel for our souls. It burns within us like a tiny pilot light, ready to burst into flame, even when there seems no reason to be joyful.

Life, meanwhile, conspires to suck the joy out of us, to dampen that spark. Sometimes the battle rages hard, 24/7, and in our despair we cry ourselves to sleep. Psalm 30:5 is a verse to cling to: that even the most tear-stained night can witness joy returning in the morning. Even though nothing may have changed, God is still with us, still the giver of joy.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

JOHN 1:5

Response

There are several different ways of taking this forward. Joy isn't all about fun and laughter, but even smiling can lift our spirits and kick-start change on the inside.

- 1 Do something that makes you laugh: watch a TV show, tell an old joke, or meet a friend. Exercise that funny muscle!
- 2 Make a gratitude list, thanking God for as many good things as you can think of.
- 3 Make a list of 'joy thieves', those things that steal your joy, then offer them to God.
- 4 Last but definitely not least: pray for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit, to replenish your joy tank.

For further reflection and worship, listen to 'Joy of the Lord' by Rend Collective.

NOTES

¹ psychologytoday.com/us/blog/possibilitizing/202501/finding-joy-when-the-world-feels-heavy



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It's tough living in a culture where strength and resilience are prized, and where it's shameful and embarrassing to admit we are anything other than 'fine'. Drawing from her own life experiences, which include loss and bereavement, Jane Walters compassionately addresses the issues which weaken us, offering safe space to process them in the light of scripture. Through biblical examples she demonstrates how weakness is the perfect starting point for God to step in and help us. Thought-provoking daily chapters, with questions and reflections, encourage us, individually or in groups, to seek after God and find his strength.



Jane Walters is chair of the Association of Christian Writers and enjoys supporting emerging talent through leading retreats and workshops. Her twin loves are being creative as a musician, skilled textile craftworker and qualified interior designer, and drawing on her love and understanding of scripture, communicating it honestly and accessibly. She contributes regularly to *Day by Day with God* Bible reading notes and has written *Bless the Work of Our Hands* (BRF Ministries, 2026).

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