

I love how Dena Dyer and Tina Samples have taken these stories of wounded women in the Bible and have fleshed out such vivid pictures for us of their raw emotions—as if we know them personally. This book is filled with surprisingly fresh insights and transparent applications both from the lives of the authors and others who have also been wounded. Any woman with emotional scars—and we all have them—will be blessed by reading it. And I believe women will find here a safe place for healing as they reach out to their Jehovah-Rapha Healer and embrace new friendships with these wounded women of the Bible.

—REBECCA BARLOW JORDAN

best-selling author of eleven books, including *Day-votions® for Women*, *Day-votions® for Mothers*, and *Day-votions® for Grandmothers*

From the moment I saw the title, I knew this was a book that has been waiting to be written. Thankfully, it was penned by two women who have known their own waves of suffering, felt the lingering wounds left in the wake, and experienced the healing that comes from the Savior who identifies with us, cries with us, pulls us out of despair, and heals us. You'll meet women of the Bible and women among us who—though centuries apart—have shared similar heartaches. Their fascinating stories point the way to comfort, hope, and wholeness. Think of this book as a companion as you journey from whatever heartache may be holding you back, to freedom, health, and a deeper, more profound joy than you ever dreamed possible.

—BECKY JOHNSON

best-selling author, coauthor, or collaborator of more than forty books

In *Wounded Women of the Bible*, authors Dena Dyer and Tina Samples bring to life women of the Bible whose stories may be well known but at times misunderstood or underestimated. By weaving these biblical stories together with modern-day women's issues, readers will come away with a fresh perspective and a deeper appreciation for these wounded women of the Bible—as well as practical tips for dealing with their own issues today.

—KATHI MACIAS

multi-award-winning author of forty books, including *Mothers of the Bible Speak to Mothers of Today*

How many wounded women do I know personally? Do I even know one woman who has not faced some sort of heartache? *Wounded Women of the Bible* will tug on the heartstrings of every reader, offering hope and healing to the brokenhearted.

—KAREN JORDAN
author, speaker, writing instructor

Wounded
Women of the
Bible

*Finding Hope
When Life Hurts*



Dena Dyer & Tina Samples

Wounded Women of the Bible: Finding Hope When Life Hurts

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*To my sweet, godly friends and prayer partners,
who have walked with me through many wounds.*

I love you dearly and give thanks for you.

Dena Dyer



*To all of those women who have been deeply wounded
and have no idea what to do with the wound—this book is for you.*

*May it touch the deepest part of your wound and bring
healing beyond your understanding.*

Tina Samples



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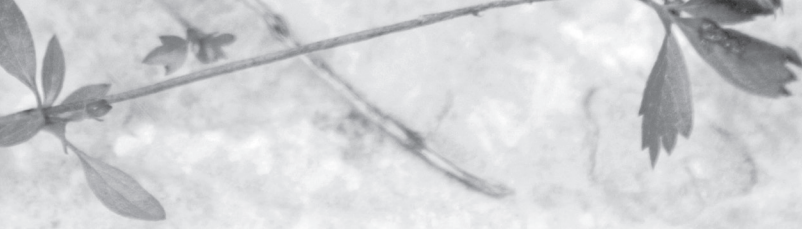
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Introduction

TINA ❧ As a child, I didn't know much about the Bible. When we occasionally attended church, I heard the familiar song, "Jesus Loves Me," but never really understood its meaning. I couldn't recite John 3:16 like most children can today. I don't remember playing with other kids in Sunday school or learning Bible stories. I don't remember hearing many stories of Jesus, or even learning much about His life or death.

What I do remember is being a lonely little girl, without a home, traveling to far-off places. With so many siblings, I took turns squeezing into the front seat of our old pickup truck, while the rest of my brothers and sisters lay in the back of the camper. While we traveled I sat on my mother's lap, learning to sing. In the midst of our family's problems and difficulties, my mother taught me to sing. She swept me up in her arms and pulled me close to her warm body. "Now listen," she would say before breaking into her deep alto. Beautiful music streamed from her lips. "Sing with me. You can do it!" Before long, I was singing the tune. I was only six at the time, but eventually learned to hold the melody while she danced around it with harmony. In our sad little world, she found something worth singing about.

Fast forward ten years and picture the two of us standing before a church, singing the same song. I can still sing the song today, only this time its meaning resonates through my heart and soul. Little did I know as a small child that my mother's song was a cry of hope, strength, and faith. I reflect back on its lyrics and out bursts emotions of loneliness,

the need for a friend, and carrying heavy burdens. But the writer concluded one thing my mother endeared to her own heart—a realization God had been searching for her all of her life. He was the perfect friend, provider, strength giver, and burden crusher. She realized in every day of her life, through every tear and sorrow, God would be there—He would not falter, waver, or tire.

Now, I realize my mother sang this during some of her darkest days. This was her hope, that though burdened and heavy laden, she could depend on God. She declared that whatever tomorrow brought, she would not face it alone; she would face it with God. My mother had reason to groan. She experienced sorrow and heartache on a daily basis. But today, she will tell you God brought something special into her life each and every day. It was a message a young girl wouldn't understand until she grew up.

A while back, the Lord brought me through an extremely difficult time. My heart ached and seeped, a wound difficult to explain. As others heard about the incident, women from the church I attended pulled me aside to share their story. At first it comforted me that others opened up about their own personal wounding. However, over time, so many stepped forward that it became overwhelming. I started counting the women—from one little church in one small town. In the final count, thirty-five women confessed to me, "That's my story." I realized I wasn't alone in my suffering, and my wounding wasn't just for me. I realized that God's plan to work in my life, and my family's life, had a broad scope; He wanted to bring healing to others facing the same issues.

Ladies, perhaps you never grew up in church or spent much time reading the Bible. Maybe you've always felt you could never relate to anyone in the Bible, and you've carried a wound that made you feel alone. I'm here to tell you that women in the Bible were wounded like you've been. Their wounds were similar to the wounds suffered by me, my mother, and even the women of one small church. Thank you for being willing to journey with us through the wounds of women in the

Bible, as well as the wounds of other women in today's world. You might find yourself saying, "That's my story." Our prayer is that you come away with greater clarity about God's love for you, as well as His healing power for your hurting heart. May you find His passion to give you hope in all things, and be assured of His desire to free you. He, too, has a song to sing over you—a song of courage, adoration, and love.

DENA ✨ When Tina called me and told me about the idea our Lord had given her, and that she wanted me to work on the book with her, I immediately thought, *yes!*

We had been friends, prayer partners, and kindred spirits for years, and had prayed for quite some time about a project we could tackle together. And when I heard the title, I knew it was a book that needed to be written.

How sweet of the Lord to give us such a rich, timely subject!

Tina and I have had very different lives. However, between the two of us, we've experienced many of the wounds suffered by the biblical women we studied. We've also seen God use excruciating wounds to purify, mold, and shape us into more resilient, hopeful believers.

My second thought after hearing the book idea from Tina was, *how in the world are we going to do this?* At the time, we lived eight hours apart. I was working a full-time job, as well as editing and writing a few hours a week. Tina worked as a music therapist and worship leader, as well as a minister's wife. We both had husbands with demanding jobs, two sons who needed attention, and other various responsibilities.

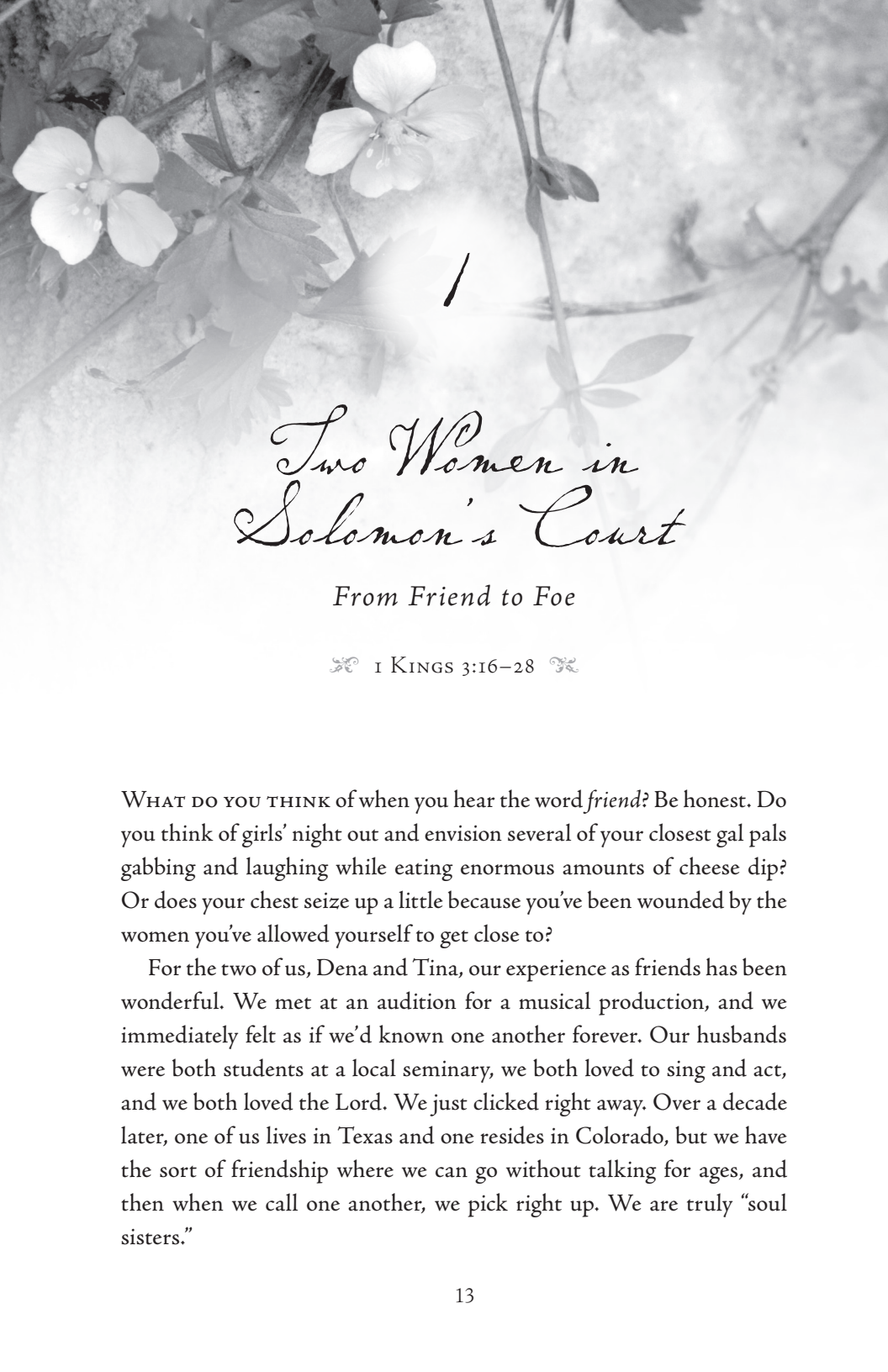
My third thought was, *Oh, no!* God always teaches me so much about any subject I write about. I knew that I would go through emotional turmoil while reflecting on my testimony, as well as stories from other wounded women.

However, God made it clear that this book was His from the start, and He would take care of us as we delved into the lives of wounded women. Somehow, we found pockets of time to write. Our families supported us and made it possible for us to dive deeply into a tough subject, and the Lord sustained us through prayer, His presence, and the comfort we received as we read His Word.

You'll hear us say it often in these pages, but I have to say it here first: He is so, so faithful. Through this process, God not only deepened our friendship, but He deepened our faith in Him. And He heightened our appreciation of His Word. We saw, like never before, that "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

We understand that each reader will come to this book at a different point in her faith (and life) journey. For those who desire it, we've included a study guide at the back of the book. It can be used alone, with a friend, or in a group.

Our heartfelt prayer is that while reading the stories we've shared in *Wounded Women of the Bible*—and reflecting on what God may long to teach you in regard to your own wounds—you would find His peace for your pain, His joy in the midst of your trials, and His hope for your heartache.



Two Women in Solomon's Court

From Friend to Foe

❧ 1 KINGS 3:16-28 ❧

WHAT DO YOU THINK of when you hear the word *friend*? Be honest. Do you think of girls' night out and envision several of your closest gal pals gabbing and laughing while eating enormous amounts of cheese dip? Or does your chest seize up a little because you've been wounded by the women you've allowed yourself to get close to?

For the two of us, Dena and Tina, our experience as friends has been wonderful. We met at an audition for a musical production, and we immediately felt as if we'd known one another forever. Our husbands were both students at a local seminary, we both loved to sing and act, and we both loved the Lord. We just clicked right away. Over a decade later, one of us lives in Texas and one resides in Colorado, but we have the sort of friendship where we can go without talking for ages, and then when we call one another, we pick right up. We are truly "soul sisters."

Sadly, though, not all of our friendships have been wonderful. Some have been painful experiences. We've both been in ministry for many years, and we've been terribly hurt by fellow Christian women. And we'll admit that we've done our fair share of hurting others as well.

Ladies, we're not the first to experience our particular wounds. Even in biblical times, there were mishaps in friendships, tensions between women, and betrayals of all kinds. In the book of 1 Kings, two women's lives intersected in a way that would forever change them. In the midst of their "friendship" journey, something went terribly wrong. See if you can relate, even just a bit, to their story.

TINA ❧ The young woman rose in the night, still weary from the stress of giving birth. Her baby's cries echoed throughout the room. "Come here, little one," she murmured as she pulled the child next to her warm body and began feeding him. She tugged at the blankets, tucking them gently around the infant to form a cocoon. Her tired lids drooped, and her heavy head drifted side to side.

Eventually, the fight for sleep became too much and she surrendered. The weight of her body slid to the hard ground, and she nestled next to her warm child. The moon glistened and the twinkling stars seemed to keep time with the singing of the crickets. Hours passed. Restless in the night, the woman rolled her drained body onto her baby, never realizing what lay beneath her.

When she finally woke, she found her child's face muzzled against her body. "No, no, no!" she cried; her trembling hands cupped his small frame as she moved swiftly to untangle the lifeless body. She vigorously rubbed the side of her baby's face and huddled over him, rocking back and forth. "Breathe, please," she pleaded. Dazed and confused, she held tight, pulling the baby to her chest. Her tears fell, pouring onto the body that lay limp in her arms.

In the midst of her pain and loss, she rose from her position and entered the area where her friend slept.

Did she go to wake her and then unexpectedly change her mind?

As her eyes fell upon the living child resting next to her friend, longing and passion stirred her heart. Quietly, cautiously, she placed her deceased child next to her friend. Without hesitation, she lifted the living child to her chest and claimed it as her own.

Was the mother of the dead child driven by exhaustion? Had grief forced her to make such a shocking move? We don't know her motives, but her story will forever touch our hearts.

Though most people focus on the loss of the living child and the wisdom of Solomon in this story, I want to speak about the wound between the two women. A woman will endure many wounds in her lifetime, but the betrayal of a friend is one of the most difficult to overcome. Why? God created women to need other women. Our hearts beat in tune with one another, our minds function much the same, and we're easily woven together—like threads in a tapestry.

Haven't you noticed that something magical happens when women gather? The air becomes thick with chatter. The room fills with laughter. Everything comes alive. *We* come alive! We need female connection and spiritual union.

As a young girl, I moved around quite a bit. It was one of the loneliest kinds of adventures a child endures. We almost never stayed in one place long enough for any of us to make friends, but when we finally settled down during my middle school years, I found a friend with whom I could laugh, spend time, and enjoy life. For the first time, I experienced what it felt like to have a true friend.

God often brings us those much-needed companions at just the right time. Perhaps their role will not be "best friend," but they will be the neighbor that provides us with hospitality, the mentor from a Bible study, or the one we sit next to at church every Sunday morning. Perhaps that friend will be someone we only see at work, or maybe

she'll be our movie friend or coffee buddy. Maybe the friendship runs deeper, and she will become our prayer partner or the one we run to when we are hurting. And if she's the one we share our deepest desires and secrets with, then she's a rare jewel indeed.

Strong Bond

First Kings 3 speaks of two women who shared a common bond. They were both prostitutes, pregnant at the same time. And prostitutes or not, they were women with real emotions and concerns. Though not much is said about them, there is one important fact that stands out in Scripture—they lived together in the same house. And because of that, it is fair to assume they were more than acquaintances. They most certainly found a way to visit, share about their day, and cook and clean together. There must have been a bond between the two.

Imagine sharing a house with another woman with both of you pregnant! That in itself is enough to bring about a significant attachment. And of course, there was much to talk about—whether they wanted to raise a boy or a girl, what kind of mother they'd like to become, and what they might name the children. Perhaps they sewed clothes, made blankets, and in other ways readied themselves for the arrival of their babies.

The two women also experienced something that most contemporary women will never share: they delivered each other's babies. Picture that moment when two babies, days apart, are brought into the world. What joy and life must have filled the home. They walked with one another for nine months through their pregnancies, and then helped bring new lives into the world together. Their willingness to fight over the living child indicates that the babies were wanted, treasured; to be childless was to be cursed of God. The two must have shared a glorious moment of celebration.

Soon, however, these two women who shared their home, their lives, and their pregnancies came face-to-face with devastating wounds—one from an accident and the other from a deliberate, hurtful act.

At some point during the night, one young woman lay on her child and smothered him to death. It was a tragedy—with pain beyond our understanding. What would bring that woman to take her child into her friend's room and exchange babies with her? She left her lifeless child there and claimed the living one as her own.

Grief causes us to do strange things.

Transparency—Difficult to Find?

Why is it difficult for us to be transparent? For some reason, we find it easier to lie and deceive one another rather than speak openly from the heart. We may even abandon our friend, shunning them without speaking a word.

Why was it difficult for the woman who lost her child to go to the other and weep in her arms? She could have unburdened herself, honestly crying out, "My child is dead!" The outcome would have been so different, with no wall of betrayal between them. I believe the woman whose child still lived would have embraced the one who had accidentally killed her own baby. She too had carried a child and understood how it felt to be a mother.

A while back, my husband and I went through a difficult time at our church. Though the issue involved my husband, I was attached to him and people could not separate the two of us. In the process, many women who had been my friends abandoned me. Rather than embracing me with love and grace as Christ would have done, they turned away. I desired to sit across from them and listen as they shared their deepest wounds about what had happened. Perhaps they struggled, as I did, to sort out their feelings. But instead of being transparent with me, they found it easier to walk away without speaking to me, leaving me in a puddle of pain.

While grieving and trying to work through my own hurt concerning the issue, I ended up having to endure the sorrow from losing friends whom I had confided in, trusted, and loved. What I needed most was

an understanding friend. On my face to the Lord in tears, I cried out. My soul and heart groaned in grief. “Why, Lord?” I cried. “All I ever tried to do was love them!” I felt betrayed that they could abandon me so quickly, filling their hearts with bitterness toward me. The wound was deep and lasting.

The Wound

The next morning the other woman rose from her sleep, gently reached for her child to nurse him, and then realized that something was terribly wrong.

“My child!” she screamed, as she held the lifeless baby in her arms.

In that instant, the two women shared another common experience. Both felt the sting of grief. They both understood how it felt to lose a child.

Frightened and terrified, the woman jumped up, kicking the covers to the side. Her heart raced as she ran toward the window. “Help me!” she gasped, sobbing.

As the mother moved from the dark shadows and into the morning light, a warm ray of sunshine fell upon the baby’s silken skin. Suddenly, the light revealed something the darkness had hidden. The baby she held was not hers. Bewildered, she quickly ran to the other woman—only to find her own child in the arms of her friend.

“That’s my child!” she cried, reaching for him.

Her “friend” quickly turned away. Clutching the infant tightly, she declared, “No! The child is mine!”

Envision the woman, draped in sorrow and pain, standing before her friend. Imagine what she might have thought or felt: *How could you? Why would you do such a thing? Why would you hurt me like this?* We have said similar words, and felt the same.

Sisters, God created us to be lovely beings. Women are gorgeous, striking, and captivating. He delights in us in every way. His print is strongly embedded in the creation of who we are. But along with our

God-given beauty, we also have a fleshly, willful side. We have strong opinions, feelings that are easily hurt, and a talent for holding grudges. We can become selfish, self-centered, and self-seeking. And, like the two women, we have a desire to protect ourselves from isolation, loneliness, and cultural prejudices. Every woman who has experienced that fleshly side, or who has had to face it from another woman, understands its impact.

Our minds are powerful tools. They can drive us to hurt others, cast them aside, and betray them. We rationalize our actions and create our own version of reality: *This is right! This is the truth!* In her mind, the mother who lost her child had decided that the child she now held was hers.

Healing Justice

The case of *Mother v. Mother* eventually ended up before a judge. They entered King Solomon's court. He was one of the wisest kings who ever ruled Israel.

The mother whose child was taken immediately pleaded her case:

"Pardon me, my lord. This woman and I live in the same house, and I had a baby while she was there with me. The third day after my child was born, this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there was no one in the house but the two of us.

"During the night this woman's son died because she lay on him. So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I your servant was asleep. She put him by her breast and put her dead son by my breast. The next morning, I got up to nurse my son—and he was dead! But when I looked at him closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn't the son I had borne."

The other woman said, "No! The living one is my son; the dead one is yours."

But the first one insisted, “No! The dead one is yours; the living one is mine.” And so they argued before the king. (1 Kings 3:17–22)

Their response to one another is similar to the ways we treat each other. But the Lord gave Solomon great wisdom, and he determined the truth. He ordered that the living child be cut in half, with one half given to each of the mothers. The child’s real mother made herself known by her deep love, shouting in surrender, “Give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!”

In the end, the right woman got her child back, and justice was served. But the situation is heartbreaking. Who knows what happened to the relationship between the two women? Some might say that the wound was too deep to mend. Others may say that a true friend would offer forgiveness.

When we have been betrayed by someone we have trusted, it *hurts*. The hurt runs deeply through our veins and attaches itself like a tight-fitting glove. It’s not easily removed. The pain is ever-present and strong. I’ve never met a woman who hasn’t been hurt by another woman at some point in her life. In fact, I’ve spent countless hours praying and crying with women who have been deeply hurt by other women.

So why keep pursuing this thing called friendship? God didn’t create us to desire friendships just so we could risk our hearts and then get pummeled by those who take advantage of us. Instead, He created us to crave friends, to be drawn in by fellowship. Through that amazing connection, we see Christ in ways we have not; we learn more about Him and about ourselves; and we learn to lean on Him in the midst of the trials and joys those relationships bring. Through that “heartstring” tie with another, we come to a larger understanding of the power of love: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). That is the power of friendship.

We have to remember: we can’t see what God sees, we don’t know

what God knows, and we have no idea how God will deal with any given situation. But we can rest in the assurance of Psalm 56:8: "You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book" (NLT). Psalm 147:3 says, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

God will restore us, in due time.

In my own life, the Lord sent women to hold my hand during that difficult time at church. Though I lost many relationships with women I'd considered friends, others endured. Instead of turning away, they gently walked beside me and placed their arms around me. They embraced me with phone calls, cards, and emails. They embraced me with love, warmth, and prayers. They embraced me with grace.

And the Lord revealed something to me: *These are your true friends, Tina.* They were the friend Christ would have been to me, had He been here in the flesh. I am grateful for those true friendships, and I am grateful that Christ opened my eyes to see them.

DENA ❧ When "Jules" called me and asked me to go shopping with her, I was thrilled. Though our husbands worked together, I had seen her as unreachable. Jules—younger, financially well-off, and beautiful—seemed like someone I couldn't relate to. I had never expected her to reach out to me.

But we had a great time shopping. From there, our friendship grew. We became buddies, then confidantes, and finally, prayer partners. Other friends of mine had recently found themselves overwhelmed with job and/or family responsibilities, and I was hungry for a girlfriend to share life with.

I'd often felt like the "giver" in my relationships, the one doing all the calling and pursuing, because I valued friendship with other women and made friends a priority. But Jules sought me out, bought me little

gifts, and made sure I felt included when she had social gatherings. She freely gave her time, affection, and words of encouragement.

I ignored the warning signs, of course, and put Jules on a pedestal that she never should have been on (I'm bad about that). At the time, I didn't see her faults. And I sure didn't own up to mine.

A Friendship Dies

And then it happened. Jules suffered a terrible loss, and all of a sudden, she shut me out. No more phone calls, no more shopping trips, nothing. Nada. Nil. Zip.

At first, I was confused. Later, I felt offended. And finally, after I heard about blatantly false things she told others about my husband and me, I got angry. In fact, I became livid and could barely speak of her—for months.

How dare she! I thought. After all, we were friends . . . accountability partners . . . sisters in Christ.

The wound went so deep that I couldn't speak of her without shaking. My husband tried to warn me that I was becoming bitter.

Never one to turn my back on a good grudge, I didn't dispute his claims. But I also wasn't about to give up on my righteous (I thought) indignation. I had trusted Jules. I had shared my life, my intimate thoughts, and my prayers with her.

It was, to put it simply, devastating.

One of the hardest parts of the whole situation was that Jules never owned up to any of her actions. Not once did she say, "I'm sorry" or even explain either the distance she put between us or the hurtful actions she took.

And like that mother whose child was taken, I felt something had been taken from me: my expectations of what a friendship should be. I, too, grieved.

I'm not proud to say it, but it took years before my chest didn't feel as if it were seizing up at the mention of Jules. I tried to just put her out of

my mind. I even tried to pray for her a few times. But it felt false. What I really wanted to do was pray like the psalmists, who—at times—asked for God to smite their enemies and bring destruction upon them.

My anger frustrated my husband. And to be honest, I was disappointed in myself. I loved Jesus. I knew He asked me to forgive. Hadn't He forgiven His enemies, even those who put Him to death?

I knew I needed to obey. But my “want to” was stuck.

Gradually, the thought began to sink in that I was only holding myself hostage by clutching the things I'd suffered to my chest as if they were trophies. I was keeping myself from new friendships God might want to give, because I was terribly afraid of being hurt again.

And so during a weekend retreat, after months of putting off doing what I knew I should do, I sobbed and asked God's forgiveness for holding onto anger and bitterness. I asked Him to help my emotions follow my actions, and I forgave my “enemy.” I completely turned Jules over to God.

“Bless her, Lord,” I prayed.

And—miraculously—I really, truly meant it.

Since then, though I haven't pursued a relationship with Jules, I've seen her through more compassionate eyes (funny how God changes us when we obey Him). I can look back on the past and see how things might have felt from Jules's perspective. Like Tina said, grief makes people do strange things.

Heidi's Story

Sometimes our own grief causes others to say and do strange things when they are around us. Recently, my friend “Heidi” shared her experience about that particular brand of disappointment and betrayal:

Brenda and I were in the same Sunday school class and our friendship just blossomed. I had been so wounded by my own mother's rejection of me that her friendship fed my soul.

Brenda and I became inseparable. My little boys called her Auntie. We talked for hours about any and every thing.

I had not realized how much trust had become an issue to me until I let go and entrusted her with my deepest struggles. She encouraged me and spoke God's truth into the dark places of my soul. Having grown up as an Army brat, I had never experienced long-lasting friendships. As a teenager, I lost my dad to cancer and was abandoned by my mom. I clung to the Lord for dear life. In the years that followed, I began to see God redeem those losses. My friendship—my sisterhood—with Brenda felt like part of that redeeming. I had found a friend who chose to call me family, and it was profound.

In the context of this joy, I never saw it coming: a wounding that cut to my core. My trusted friend sat across from me and passionately expressed her newfound belief that healing comes to anyone who has enough faith. My heart sunk, and I took a deep breath and asked, "So, Brenda, are you saying that if a believer is sick and prays but isn't healed, it's because that believer lacked faith?"

I silently begged for the answer I hoped she would give.

"Yes! That's exactly what I'm saying. As believers, if we have enough faith, then we receive healing!"

My mouth went dry. I tried one more time to clarify: "This is hard for me. So, are you saying that you believe that my dad would not have died if only we had more faith?" Her response would either carve a deeper wound or would salvage the pain I was feeling.

"Yes. That's what I'm saying. If y'all had enough faith, your dad would have been healed and wouldn't have died."

I felt so betrayed. The door of my heart slammed shut, and the rest of the evening passed in a blur. I let her know

definitively how wounding her statements were. But it fell on deaf ears and she didn't back down.

We remain friends to this day. However, due to various circumstances, we rarely see each other. I have tried to move forward with her, but I know it will never be the same. Where I once felt completely safe, I no longer do. The biggest loss of my life was blamed on my own lack of faith. It felt callous and insensitive, although I know that was not her intent. Her response to my direct questioning that night reinforced how oblivious she was to the pain she'd inflicted. She'd lost sight of my heart and all the pain about my dad's death that I had entrusted to her.

He Hurts with Us

When you experience the pain of a friend's betrayal, like Heidi or I did, you may feel as if you've been gut-punched. You wonder if you will ever be able to trust someone again.

From experience, I believe that you will . . . if you allow yourself to. Each of us needs friends, and all relationships come with risk. We may never understand how people who seemed to love us could hurt us so badly, but if we're honest with ourselves, we can begin to see how we, at times, have inflicted pain on others.

We all need God's grace—desperately.

Now, I have a question for you, whether or not you've been hurt recently or in the past: will you choose to believe that God hurts with you? That as your perfect heavenly Father, He longs to take you in His arms and hold you? One of the shortest verses in the Bible is also the most poignant: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). As Jesus stood beside Mary and Martha at the tomb of their brother—His dear friend, Lazarus—He cried. Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead in mere moments. So I believe He cried not out of grief for Himself, but out of compassion and empathy. He saw the hurting friends and

relatives of Lazarus, and His heart broke because He loved them so completely.

He sees our hurts, hears our cries, and feels our pain. In Luke 4:18–19, Jesus affirms that a large part of His purpose was to heal our wounds: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” God understands even when things don’t make sense to us: “Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit” (Ps. 147:5). He is our great comforter and will rip away the tight-fitting shroud of grief that surrounds our being: “The LORD sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground” (v. 6).

The situation with our betrayer may not have been resolved—but we can find resolution through Christ.

If we’re willing to let Him, God will bring us to a place where we can forgive—not to appease the other person, or to let the other person off the hook, but to bring healing to our own lives. He will mend our broken heart so that we can find a way to fully live.

Hopefully, one day, God will bring a true friend into our life who will stand with us, speak truth into our life, and embrace us—even in the darkest times. One who will not leave us; who will not abandon us; and who will be a friend to walk beside us, no matter what.

Whether we find that friend in our earthly lives or not, that is what Christ does for us. And whether our earthly friends stay or go, He remains steadfastly by our side.

He is, simply, the best friend we could ever have.