

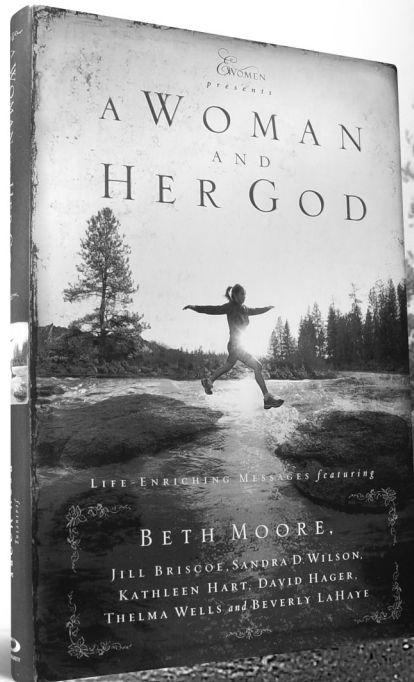
A WOMAN AND HER GOD

Ever since Eve, the relationship between God and the women He created has played a titanic role in the history of the human race and is one of the most prominent themes of the Bible.

Yet today, many Christian women struggle with that relationship.

That's why renowned Bible teacher Beth Moore hit the word processor and assembled a team of experts—including Jill Briscoe and Beverly LaHaye—to encourage Christian women in areas such as how to make prayer easier and more effective . . . how to see yourself as God does . . . how to handle different stages of life . . . and more.

Whether you are a woman or a man with a heart for the spiritual life of his wife, mother, sister, or someone else, this is an encouraging resource worth obtaining. **And it would also make a wonderful gift for someone special on this Mother's Day.**



To receive this resource as our thank you for your support of Dallas Seminary, use the enclosed reply card (for subscribers) or call 800-992-0998. Thank you!

VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—*veritas*—from God.

Meeting “the Holy Who?” in the Rough Patches of Life

by Jill Briscoe

Jill BRISCOE



Jill Briscoe has an active speaking and writing ministry that has taken her to many countries. She has written more than 40 books, including study guides, devotional material, poetry, and children's books. Jill is executive editor of *Just Between Us*, a magazine of encouragement for ministry wives and women in leadership. She serves on the boards of World Relief and Christianity Today, Inc. A native of Liverpool, England, Jill launched into youth evangelism after becoming a Christian at age 18. She married her husband, Stuart, in 1958, and since then they have ministered together through Telling the Truth media ministries. They reside near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where Stuart has just completed 30 years of ministry as senior pastor of Elmbrook Church. This article is taken from an address given at Dallas Seminary's Chafer Chapel on October 20, 2004.

If you would have asked me when I was growing up in England who was the Holy Ghost (we didn't call Him the Holy Spirit then), I would have probably answered, “The Holy *who?*”

When I was six years of age, World War II was in full swing, and bombs were part of my life. We lived in Liverpool, which was pounded night after night, and I seldom slept in my little pink bedroom. We would wait until a siren began and hurry down to a shelter our dad had dug for us at the bottom of the yard. When the horrible noises of death and destruction began, I would try to remember the prayers we had said in school that day.

Prayers and Scripture readings were daily events in

(continued on next page)



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every English public school back then, and I am thankful because my family did not attend church. Where would a little British girl like me have ever heard of Jesus, if not in prayers in my school?

So I listened daily to our headmistress intoning the Apostles' Creed, and I was proud to know some of it by heart. And one particularly bad night when the blitz wouldn't quit, I tried frantically to recall the words I thought I knew.

"I believe [yes, I thought I did] in God, the maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." And somewhere in there were the Virgin Mary and the Holy Ghost—and suddenly my little six-year-old mind was riveted by those words. *Did I believe in the Holy Ghost?* I knew my headmistress didn't because she told us she was an atheist. Who believed in the Holy Ghost?

And suddenly into my little bomb shelter, God came.

He came near. I was totally unchurched, without God, and without hope. I didn't know

what was happening; I didn't know anything. But I experienced for the first time the Holy Ghost.

When I went to college in Cambridge at the age of 18, some theologian in Germany had decided that God was dead, so that was the talk around campus. But I kept running into people who believed in the Holy Ghost.

I got sick one night and was rushed to a hospital. They thought the problem was my appendix, so they took it out, but that wasn't the problem. That was a little scary. What were they going to do next?

But God just needed me flat on my back. There was only one way to look, and that was up! And God in His grace, out of 40 women in that hospital ward in Cambridge, put next to me a Jesus-lover and a glory-giver named Janet. She was in incredible pain, but she took me on as

a project. She began, literally, to make me hungry and homesick for what I sensed in her life: the aroma of Christ.

And suddenly into my little bomb shelter, God came near.

JANET, JESUS, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Janet led me thoroughly, totally, to Jesus Christ. That night, after she led me to the Lord, lying in that hospital bed, she said, "Go to sleep, Jill, and I want you to say this, 'All of God in all of me.'"

I said, "What does that mean?"

She said, "You have received the Holy Ghost."

And I said, "Oh, I know about Him. I feel He has been shadowing me all my life, but I didn't know who He was."

She said, "Well, now He lives in you, and you are going to find out what He can be to you."

I began with her help to study what it meant to have the indwelling Christ in my heart. Janet gave me a Bible, and I began to find out in the New Testament what the Holy Spirit did.

When the disciples were frightened out of their minds, He gave them boldness. When they were scared for a knock on the door, He gave them boldness. The Holy Spirit gives you boldness.

In the Old Testament, at creation, the Holy Spirit hovered. In the New

Testament, the word is a little bit different but it has the same idea, that of overshadowing.

Do you remember what Mary said when the angel came and told her that she was going to be the mother of Christ? Mary didn't say, "Why?" She said, "How?" The answer that the Holy Spirit gave Mary was that He would hover and would overshadow her.

In 50 years of ministry, I have been overwhelmed most weeks of my life, and in those moments with a glance heavenward, I have sensed that I was overshadowed—I have experienced the overshadowing work of the Holy Spirit.

Whenever God does anything big, He does it in His Spirit. As in Genesis, He hovered over chaos and created an ordered thing. So when we are in chaos, God will hover. His Holy Spirit's work is to bring peace.

OIL FOR YOUR LAMP

On 9/11, I happened to be in the air in a plane, one of 57 that got diverted to Newfoundland. The pilot said, "All the air space is closed, all

the borders are closed, and I am going to land you in Newfoundland, and I can't tell you why."

My heart panicked as chaos and disorder raged. But at least I was able to glance heavenward and say, "Help." And immediately into my mind came Psalm 139:16: *Every day ordained for you is written in my book before one of them comes to be.* I hadn't a clue what that meant, but suddenly the hovering and overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit was there. And I got a great sense of excitement that began at the bottom of my feet and began to work its way up. Peace. Where there is chaos, the Holy Spirit brings peace.

I began to study symbols of the Holy Spirit—water, wind, oil—and in 2 Kings, the story about a little pot of oil caught my attention. It is about the wife of a man from the company of the prophets. And suddenly her husband drops dead.

She went to Elijah and said, "Your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know he feared the Lord." She was poverty-stricken, and the creditor was coming.

She knew that when the creditor came and she had sold everything in the house and had nothing left, her children would be the ones to go and be taken by the creditor. So she cried out to Elijah.

She was not only bereaved; she was absolutely bankrupt. But then she cried out to Elijah, who reminded her of the one thing she had forgotten, which was the little pot of oil. And he told her she needed to get all the empty vessels she could, shut the door, and pour out. Pour out of what? The little pot of oil.

The woman and the children were watching, and of course all the empty vessels were filled. Elijah said, "Now sell it and live off of it."

This is basically my story, that in ministry, in life, in marriage, in family, in my extremity I often forget the little pot of oil. I might run out of courage, many times. But I never run out of God.

What I have to learn to do is when I think I am bankrupt, I need to appropriate what I know I have, and I need to pour out of my emptiness when I think I have run out. *Because I am never going to run out of God.* When you are

empty, count on the fullness of the Person you received and begin to pour out.

A TOTAL BURN-OUT CASE

When Stuart and I left our professions—he was a banker and I was a teacher—and entered full-time ministry, we ended up going with a youth mission. We had three missions that came after us, and we chose the one that would give us the opportunity to serve together.

Four men, Steven Offer, Stuart Briscoe, Allan Redpath, and Major Ian Thomas, were our lead team, and they couldn't do it from home. So suddenly I found myself with three kids and my husband gone for 10 months of the year for 10 years, and I had run out. I became a ministry widow.

After a bit, fortunately, I cried out to "Elijah"—my Elijah was the wife of Major Thomas.

So I went to her, and I remember it took me a long time to swallow my pride and say, "I have had it; I am bankrupt; I thought I could do this but I can't. I'm not the

good little missionary wife I thought I was. I want my husband back. They think I am a widow every time I go and watch the soccer games. I can't do it."

I expected her to take well-worn Bible verses and hit me over the head with them, but she didn't.

Instead, she said, "It is hard, isn't it?"

"It is over 'hard,' " I replied. "I haven't got it! Nothing is left."

She looked at me and said, "Oh, yes, you have the little pot of oil, Jill."

Then Mrs. Thomas took a deep breath (and she told me afterward that she took a big risk) and said, "I am going to send you a couple of the Bible students tonight, and I want

you to go out with the outreach team.

"You have been shut up in that little lodge with three small children, you are away from everything that is happening, and you haven't been involved with anything your heart loves."

"Joan, I don't care; it is

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gone,” I told her. “I am out. I don’t care about those kids on the street anymore.”

However, I am English and I am used to doing what I am told, to respect authority. So she just took a deep breath and said, “You will do this.”

SAVING THE LOST BEATLES KID

That night, I remember standing huddled in a door in Lancaster outside of an incredible place with a thousand kids gyrating to the music of the Beatles who were playing inside, and after them the Rolling Stones. What should I do? And then that “little voice” said, “Pour out. Just start pouring out.”

Then came out a young girl with a guitar on her back. I walked out of the door in sheer obedience, tapped her on the shoulder, and asked, “Do you want a cup of coffee? You look cold.”

“Sure,” she said.

I took her into the coffee shop and began to pour out, in sheer obedience, and suddenly He began to pour in. That is how it works. If I had waited in that doorway for some feeling

or some push, I would still be there. But if you pour out, He will pour in. He began to pour in, and suddenly my heart began to be engaged with this beautiful, brown-eyed kid on the run.

I got her into my car so I could take her home for the night. She looked at me startled and asked, “Who are you? Are you a social worker or something?” I asked her to tell me about herself.

She said, “I am on the run. I am a pastor’s kid.” And again she asked, “Who are you?”

I said, “All you need to know is I am Jill, and I am the answer to your parents’ prayers tonight.”

The Spirit of God began a movement in that town, all those years ago. And it has never quit, with a hundred thousand kids now in groups in the public schools!

But where did it start? It started with a totally burnt-out, desperate missionary who thought she had “run out,” but who found that you never run out of God.

I took her into the shop and began to pour out, in sheer obedience, and suddenly He began to pour in.

God will raise them from the ashes

Where will the next generation of Christian leaders and vibrant Christian laypeople come from?

When I first came to Dallas Theological Seminary 20 years ago, the statistically correct answer was, “Probably from good Christian homes and backgrounds.”

Prayerfully, that will again be true someday. But not today.

Although a good Christian home is still the ideal place for the formation of strong Christian vocational and lay leaders for our churches and ministries, the hard truth is that the past four decades, beginning with the sexual revolution in the ’60s, have taken their toll on the American family.

Many of the men and women whom our churches and seminaries are training for leadership come from broken homes—and even if not from broken homes, from a morally broken society in which their hearts and minds are targets of every manner of contrary influence.

And that’s where God will glorify Himself.

He will raise up leaders from the ashes of broken families and a corrupt society.

In Genesis, God breathed life into a body He had formed from the dirt. Jesus healed limbs as useless as dead branches. Ezekiel prophesied how God will one day reconstitute, from “dry” bones, a spiritually unbelieving national Israel into a believing nation. Paul reminded the early church that not many of them were noble or mighty. And Christ, who made the blind see and dead rise, was Himself raised from the dead.

And so at Dallas Seminary, we include in our training of leaders specific measures to help them find God’s power and wholeness in areas of their lives that may have been scarred by the difficult environment our society has bred.

That, in turn, will help them minister to others.

As Jill Briscoe so movingly reminded us in the chapel message from which this article is taken, God’s Holy Spirit delights in transforming our brokenness into His masterpiece.

I hope God used this message to bless you—wherever you are in your walk with Him.

Please know that your prayers and financial support for Dallas Seminary are being used by God as He builds the next generation of leaders. Our broken world needs them. His Spirit will use our obedience to transform cracked vessels into leaders that will transform a broken world—to His eternal glory.

Mark Bailey
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President

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