

STACEY THACKER

*Fresh  
Out of  
Amazing*



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## FRESH OUT OF AMAZING

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*For Mike*  
*You were right, of course, about the writing thing.*



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## Part 1

### Hello, Fresh-Out-of-Amazing Girl

I see it in your eyes as you force a kind smile and simultaneously hold back tears when I ask you how you are doing. All day long, you've felt like everything is falling apart, and you are trying to keep it all together. You are running everywhere and feeling responsible for everything. But in this moment you are tired. *You are so very tired of being the one who is strong and dependable and brave.*

I understand, my sweet friend, more than you know. In fact, I think I can safely say that we both understand the phrase *fresh out of amazing* without needing a dictionary to explain it. We feel it deep in our souls.

We have hearts full of good intentions, but we have a tendency to overestimate our own awesomeness. This mind-set worked well for us—until we walked by the mirror and caught a glimpse of the tired, worn-thin lady looking back at us. We didn't much like what we saw, so we hurried past, grabbed our coffee-on-the-go cup, and out the door we went. *Maybe she won't be there when we get back*, we thought. We hoped.

I understand your tiredness because, like you, I've been trying so hard to become a better version of myself. Only I think I lost her in

the process. Or maybe I found her and didn't really like her. What do you do when you are living out the storyline of your life and you don't like the way your character is behaving?

For a long time, I didn't like my character—and I didn't know how to fix her. So I ignored Miss Fresh-Out-of-Amazing because no one else seemed to notice. After all, people usually don't linger long enough to look intently. They accept “fine” as the answer to “How are you doing?” and move along their merry way.

Hiding was the easy part. And I did it pretty well.

Then one day everything began to change. I found myself desperately wanting to quit my job, and I went so far as to write my resignation letter. That course of action sounds perfectly respectable...except the job I really wanted to quit wasn't at a fancy office that accepts resignations on the third Tuesday of the month. It was the one job I had always known I wanted: being a mom. But where does a mom go when she wants to resign?

You see the problem, don't you?

I'm guessing you feel the same way. I didn't really want to resign. I just wanted to escape needing to be amazing and finding myself fresh out. But can I tell you something I've learned recently? Fresh out of amazing keeps bubbling up to the top because it has deep roots in my life. Does it for you too?

That idea of deep roots reminds me of the movie *Groundhog Day*. Bill Murray plays a weatherman stuck in a time loop. Every day he wakes up and discovers it is still Groundhog Day. His version of living the same day over and over again is slightly funnier than the one I'm playing out. The struggle is real. I'm practically a professional at feeling this way. In some ways I would tell you it is simply what I do to keep going. It is how I get things done. Or, lately, why I'm not getting anything done.

Are you nodding your head in agreement? Finally, somebody has pulled back the curtain and revealed that the wizard behind the



whole operation is really just a girl gasping for air and needing to be rescued.

I get the mixed-up feelings, though, of being found out yet happy I can stop pretending. We are more alike than you know.

## Because Two Are Better Than One

The girl who lives in my Google Maps app is awesome. Although much of the time she pronounces the names of streets I know like the back of my hand dreadfully wrong, she gets pretty much everything else right.

The other day I needed to get to a restaurant I had never been to before. It was across town, and of course it was rush hour and raining. Google Maps Girl was not at all stressed by these inconveniences. She told me there were several options I could take to get to my destination. One route, however, would be a bit faster because of traffic. I took her advice. During the drive, she told me in advance where to turn and which lane to get into when I turned onto a four-lane road. If that weren't enough to make me sing her praises, she let me know I was going to arrive at my destination early in spite of the traffic and the rain. I'm a girl who rarely arrives on time, so my early arrival was cause for a small dance party in my van as I pulled into the restaurant parking lot. (If only Google Maps Girl could find a way to get me caught up on my dishes. That would be even more awesome.)

Now, I know something about you simply because you picked up this book and started reading. I know you are a woman who feels fresh out of amazing. I know you are looking for answers. I know you are grateful that somebody else has said it aloud and you can raise your hand and say, "Me too."

But here is what I don't know: Which route did you take to get here? We don't all become fresh out of amazing the same way. Just like the Google Maps Girl tells me there are many ways to get to

my destination, there are just as many ways to arrive at a place in your life where you feel you need to be amazing, but you are, frankly, fresh out.

What you will find in Part 1 are five different types of fresh-out-of-amazing girls. Each girl has taken a different route to get to that point, but the results are the same. Here is a quick glimpse of each one:

- **Burdened and Busy:** This fresh-out-of-amazing girl tries to be lots of people all at once, and she's not feeling particularly good about how she's doing any of them. She is trying hard to balance life as all these people. In the process, her life has fallen into much busyness, and she is not in sync or communion with God. This girl is overwhelmed and frazzled even though she may be doing everything right.
- **She's Amazing and I'm Not:** This girl has always felt fresh out of amazing. To make matters worse, everyone else is doing amazing things, and she is not. When will it be her turn to be amazing?
- **I Feel Like My Dreams Have Died:** This girl has a dream in her heart, but no matter what she does, she keeps coming up short. For reasons she can't explain, it seems like the answer is always no. This pattern can send a girl into a tailspin of "Why me?" because dreams that slip away hurt like crazy.
- **Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire:** This fresh-out-of-amazing girl has started believing the lies of the enemy. She has made fear her friend, and she is convinced the trial she's facing is going to defeat her.
- **When You've Lost Your Song in the Valley of Bitterness:** C.S. Lewis called pain a megaphone used by God

to get our attention. After I turned in the manuscript for my first book, *Hope for the Weary Mom*, and completed a busy season of ministry, my dad died suddenly after a long battle with cancer. In the days and weeks that followed his death, “fresh out of amazing” took on new meaning for me. God had my attention and began to speak a new word of truth over my heart.

I have struggled in each of these areas because I am a bit of an overachiever. Maybe you will find glimpses of yourself in one particular chapter. I’m guessing you might really grab onto one chapter and say, “Hey, that’s me!” But don’t skip over the others. There are truths on every page for you and maybe for your best friend. So read it with her in mind too.

In this first section of the book, you will identify your core issues and take the beginning steps toward wholeness. Think of me as your very own Google Maps Girl. I will be there with you every step of the way. When we get to our destination, we will be ready for a deeper conversation because we have bonded. I just love that about road trips. Don’t you? I don’t even mind if you put your feet on the dashboard.

Part 2 is your invitation to move from being fresh out of amazing to gazing into the heart of Jesus. I will take you through a step-by-step process I believe will help you see that where you stand now is an opportunity and not the end of the world.

But we’ll talk more about that later. For now, let’s begin.



## Chapter 1

### Can This Fresh-Out-of-Amazing Girl Live?

Hurricane.

*You have got to be kidding me, I thought.*

I slid onto the floor next to a pile of three-day-old clean laundry. The television was muted with an afternoon talk show, and I was buried in every way. How was I going to manage surviving a literal storm when there was already one brewing inside me? I watched the public service announcement scroll across the screen. I was not amused.

I had been pushed to the brink the entire week. My husband had been out of the country on business for about two weeks, and—I have to be honest—I was not doing well. My youngest was almost two years old at the time, and her sleeping was not consistent. I was two years tired.

My oldest girls were excited because they had a special school event scheduled for the weekend. I was trying my best to share in their chatty exuberance, but I could not get on board. You see, they needed help with their book reports and their costumes for the schoolwide book ball. How could I not be proud of my girls who had worked hard all summer reading their favorite books? They were each planning lavish outfits so they would match a beloved

character. In addition, their book reports needed to be edible. Cute, right?

Now, there are two things you need to know about me: I don't sew, and creative cooking is completely lost on me. I am lucky to get a meal on the table with at least two food groups each evening. So creating and executing a book report that people might want to eat was causing me to stress a bit.

I'll admit it: I was in my room, hiding from my responsibility and the girls' expectations when the television announced the impending storm. I had been through hurricanes before, but never when I was alone with my children. I think I started laughing nervously—and then the tears followed.

In that moment of desperation, I poured out my heart to Jesus. It felt like the storm inside me was pouring out. He met me in every way there on the floor and breathed hope over my weary soul. In the next few minutes I can't explain exactly what happened, but when I got up I felt better. I also knew without a shadow of doubt that he wanted me to write about what I was feeling. So I put this on my blog:

I've pretty much fallen short in every category. I am tired and not really good for much right now. The trouble is, Lord, that I need to be amazing and I'm fresh out of amazing. At least it sure feels that way.<sup>1</sup>

For the first time in my life I put the words on a page and spoke them out loud: *I'm fresh out of amazing.*

I think somewhere deep inside I wished that hurricane would go ahead and blow right through and take me with it. At that point it wouldn't have taken much more than a gentle breeze to knock me over. I felt like a pile of dry, brittle bones that could easily be blown in every direction. I think the question swirling around my heart as the wind whipped up a mess outside sounded a lot like this: *Can a fresh-out-of-amazing girl live through this?*

In the days that followed, God literally and figuratively calmed the storm. The hurricane was downgraded, my girls' school event was canceled, and my husband returned home. Over the next three years God did an extraordinary hope-filled work in my life. But it was only the beginning.

Have you ever noticed how questions tend to boomerang back into our lives if we don't answer them soul-deep the first time? Recently, this nagging question—*Can a fresh-out-of-amazing girl live through this?*—came back around. God knows just the right time to have us revisit a lesson we need to learn in the worst way.

I think questions like this cry out for a lively discussion with a good friend, preferably over coffee and Panera Cinnamon Crunch bagels. So if we were sitting together today in my kitchen, I would start a pot of coffee and tell my kids to walk the dog to give us a few quiet moments. I am desperate to know what you think about this question. Once the coffee finished brewing and the kids were on their way, I would pour you a cup. Of course I would pour a cup for me as well, look you in the eye, and say, "Can this fresh-out-of-amazing girl live?"

I'm guessing you might look at me kind of funny and say, "Where did that question come from?" I would smile, take a sip of my over-creamed coffee, and say, "I'm so glad you asked. Let's talk about some dry bones, shall we?"

## Dry Bones, the Bible, and What Happens When God Asks the Question

One reason I love the Bible is it answers the most critical questions we need to consider. It is also gloriously filled with everyday people like you and me who ask the same questions we do. Mothers, fathers, writers, farmers, Pharisees, sisters, fishermen, foreigners, and sinners grace the pages. You don't have to wade very far in to find someone who looks and thinks like you do.

Last week I found a reflection of my fresh-out-of-amazing self in

a story about the prophet Ezekiel. Now he didn't use my language, but I think he might have appreciated it. He was in a pretty unique situation, and God showed up with a pep talk we can all benefit from. If you aren't familiar with Ezekiel, let me tell you what his Facebook profile might have read if he were alive today instead of 570 BC:

Ezekiel: Pastor and prophet to exiled nation of Israel. I prefer to be a messenger of hope and comfort, but sometimes I have to tell it like it is. I see things like dry bones, and God talks to me. I love words, and I have been known to eat them.

But if Ezekiel had a Facebook profile, he wouldn't have many friends or likes on his status updates. Prophets were not always popular, as you can imagine. In Ezekiel 37 we get a glimpse of his life:

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry (verses 1-2).

Although this type of thing probably didn't happen every day in his life, Ezekiel was accustomed to having visions and hearing God speak. So this journey to a field of dry bones probably didn't set him into panic mode as it might have done for me. If you suddenly find yourself in a valley filled with dry bones, I am not the person to call for help. Just ask my husband about the last time he took me to see a mildly scary movie. Nope, I don't do dry bones or seeing dead people of any kind. But Ezekiel did just fine with those bones.

The language in this scene is highly symbolic and richly layered with truth. God was literally grabbing hold of Ezekiel and inviting him to see something amazing. It was a God-directed work,



something that only he could orchestrate. And at the very beginning God posed a question to Ezekiel to see if he knew the answer: “Son of man, can these bones live?” (verse 3). The question itself was rhetorical. God wasn’t looking for the answer; he knew the answer. God wanted Ezekiel to declare with his own God-made mouth the truth he himself desperately needed to hear: “O Lord GOD, you know” (verse 3). Good answer, Ezekiel. Good answer. The truth is always, “O Lord GOD, you know,” because he *does* know.

Next, God gave Ezekiel a short to-do list. The first item on the list was to prophesy over the bones, and the second was to prophesy to the breath. *To prophesy* here means “to pour forth words as with great emotion.”<sup>2</sup> God didn’t want Ezekiel to pour out any old words. He wanted Ezekiel to say this:

O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live (verses 4-5).

When Ezekiel obeyed, he saw God’s living and active word take a pile of dry bones and resurrect an entire army. He witnessed the Spirit breathing life into those brittle bones. What was dead became alive because of the power of God.

Does that image give you chills too? Bones on the ground became an army ready for war! What can God *not* do?



The truth is always, “O Lord,  
GOD, you know,” because he *does* know.



I love what happened next: God explained the vision. How many times have you scratched your head and asked God, “What are you

doing? Why do you want me to do this?” Ezekiel didn’t have to wonder because God told him in great detail what the vision meant.

You see, God wasn’t really concerned about a bunch of dry bones. Those bones represented the whole house of Israel, and God’s heart was entirely focused on them, his people. They were captives broken by a brutal ruler who had destroyed their home in Jerusalem and left it in ruins. So God was moving toward his people in their agony. Israel said: “Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone, there’s nothing left of us” (Ezekiel 37:11 MSG).

Dried up.

Hope is gone.

Nothing left of us.

Sounds like agony to me.

Don’t you hate it when someone is telling you a story and, in the middle of it, starts telling you another story? They go off on a tangent, following a crazy rabbit trail, and you have no idea where they’re headed. That can be frustrating. I promise you, though, you will not be frustrated with what I’m about to tell you. So let me push the “pause” button for a brief moment in this gripping dry bones story because of the four-letter word in this passage: hope.

I have made a habit of studying this word when I find it in Scripture. The definition of *tiquah*, the Hebrew word for hope, is “cord, hope, expectation, things hoped for.”<sup>3</sup> That the word is defined as “cord” puzzled me, so I did some research and found another place *tiquah* appears in Scripture:

Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet *cord* in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household (Joshua 2:18).

This verse is from the account of a prostitute named Rahab who lived inside the wall of the city of Jericho. She hid the Israelite spies

whom Joshua had sent to scout out the city. Her entire family was saved from utter destruction because of her kindness and courage.

During the siege upon the city, she was told to hang a cord—a *tiqvah* of scarlet—out her window. Anyone in her home at the time would be saved. She was to hang “hope” out her window and it would secure her salvation that day. Not only was her family saved, but they were grafted into the nation of Israel. Check the genealogy of Christ in Matthew and guess whose name you’ll find. That’s right—Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute who was saved when she hung up a scarlet cord called hope, is a relative of Jesus.



God’s Word has the power to  
resurrect and revive our lifeless hearts.



Now, back to our dry bones. The nation of Israel knew about Rahab and the scarlet cord called hope, but they had no such cord of hope to hold onto. Or did they? God’s people felt cut off from him, but they weren’t. God saw them, faint and discouraged, and he was going to restore them. They had not lost their cord of hope. They just couldn’t see it.

Depleted and desperate, the people of Israel were now in a position to listen to God. Knowing that, God told Ezekiel he was going to do these things for Israel:

**Resurrect:** In Ezekiel 37:12, God said he was going to open the graves (of his people’s hearts) and bring them back to life. How was God going to do this? By the power of his Word. God’s Word has the power to resurrect and revive our lifeless hearts. I wonder if we truly understand the power God’s Word has. Jesus affirmed this power when he said, “The Father can give life to those who are dead;

in the same way, the Son can give the gift of life to those He chooses” (John 5:21 THE VOICE). God was choosing to give the gift of life to Israel just when they needed it most.

**Restore:** Israel’s restoration was inherently tied to the land God had promised them in his covenant with their forefather Abraham. Sitting in captivity in a foreign land, however, was utter defeat for them. God not only told Ezekiel that Israel would return to the land of his promise, but he also said, “I will carry you *straight* back to the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Eternal One” (Ezekiel 37:12 THE VOICE). God told the truth and proclaimed a promise he himself would bear the burden of fulfilling. Like a shepherd carrying a wandering lamb, God promised to carry his people in his arms to demonstrate to them he is Lord.

**Renew:** God was not yet finished with his hope-filled prophecy. He then promised to put his Spirit within his people and give them life. Offering this work of complete healing, God called them out of the graves with the power of his Word, he restored them to the Promised Land, and he breathed the breath of life into them. They could not breathe life into themselves. God would do this. This was a prophecy of great hope for a people who needed it as they sat captive in a foreign land. Through it God demonstrated he had not forgotten Israel, his covenant promise of being their God, or his loving-kindness to them. Their cord of hope—God Almighty—was not gone. He was holding onto them the whole time. He had spoken of his faithfulness, and he would be true to his Word.



God told the truth and proclaimed a promise he  
himself would bear the burden of fulfilling.



## Back to My Kitchen Table

So, after telling you about dry bones and the bonus tangent story of Rahab and the cord of hope, I would refill your cup of coffee and say again, “Can this fresh-out-of-amazing girl live?” We would probably look at each other and then look down at our coffee and pray the kids would burst in and save us from having to answer. Fresh out of amazing feels heavy. And it can be hard to talk about. We might imagine right there at my table the dry bones covering us six feet deep. Still, both of us would have a choice to make. Regardless of our choice, the truth would still be, “Only God knows.”

God knows what we need when our own bones are dry and our hope seems lost. We need to hear from him, do what he says, and then watch his restorative work in our lives. We need to trust his Spirit to revive us. Friends, fresh-out-of-amazing girls are objects of God’s grace too. He wants to move in our lives in ways we can’t imagine. And we will not be able to point to crafty words, winning strategies, or brilliant performances when he is finished. We will point to him.

Can this fresh-out-of-amazing girl live? Only God knows. This is what he does.

## How God Renovates Our Hearts

I’ve never remodeled an old house, but I love to watch those fixer-upper programs on television. First, the host shows the prospective buyers a home that is in a pretty horrible state. He tells them to look beyond the ugly because it has stunning potential.

The buyers can see some obvious problems. They know going into the deal that the house needs to be repainted and refloored—and for goodness’ sake! The 1970s called and wants its avocado-green kitchen back. The couple takes the risk and makes the purchase for pennies on the dollar.

Inevitably, after the renovations are underway, they find major structural issues that need to be addressed. The homeowners seem

shocked that their fixer-upper truly needed more than cosmetic changes. Suddenly their investment looks more like a money pit. About midpoint during the show, they despair...only to cry tears of joy later when they see their home reborn. As it turns out, they were in the great hands of their master builder, and now they have the home they always dreamed of.

Hearts are like homes. Our hearts have doors and walls and rooms filled with every aspect of life. If you looked at mine in the past few years you would see the façade of one weary and worn woman doing her best to choose hope every day. As I began to write about hope and live out the truths God was teaching me, I saw real change in myself. Others did too. But, with every truth I applied, God revealed more work I needed to complete at a deeper heart level.



Fresh-out-of-amazing girls are  
objects of God's grace too.



God has indeed met me in my mess, but my fixer-upper heart needed a complete remodel. My foundation had cracked under the weight of other people's expectations, my walls were covered with to-do lists, and my wiring was outdated by the idea that I was responsible for everything. God was whispering to me. Really, it was more like a calling I could hear in the distance. It echoed louder as the days passed, but I had no clue where to begin the demolition process. I just knew the project was about to get messier.

Years ago I thought that once we passed through a trial or a test we moved on to the next thing. But lately I've begun to realize you don't move on; you move inward. God just keeps putting his finger on an issue that needs deeper work because he cares that deeply. He

has the good intention to not just do a temporary cosmetic fix. God wants a heart-level overhaul. He desires our maturity more than just our maintenance.

Maybe you can relate to the mess I'm talking about. You think you are doing pretty well because God has been doing business in one key area of your life. You honestly believe you are about to have a breakthrough when suddenly it feels more like a breakdown. I have found that the Master Builder of our lives is ever patient and thorough. We can find great confidence in this truth: "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

**1. He begins the work.** We can't possibly begin the work ourselves. So, in his great wisdom, God starts the process. Left to my own accord, I would rather sit and drink my coffee every morning and read a fashion magazine instead of reading his Word, praying, and inviting him to move in my life. I know the work God wants to do in me is not going to be comfortable. Works of his grace rarely are—and that work gets messier before it gets better. Songwriter and worship leader Kristene DiMarco says, "Anything inspired by the Holy Spirit will always be dripping with hope."<sup>4</sup> Girls, no matter how messy it gets, the outcome is worth the mess—and there is always hope.



God wants a heart-level overhaul. He desires  
our maturity more than just our maintenance.



**2. He completes the work.** Is it any wonder God is committed to the work he begins? He does not abandon us once the walls begin to come down. He will not leave us demolished and hopeless.

Matthew Henry said, “We may be confident, or well persuaded, that God not only will not forsake, but that he will finish and crown the work of his own hands. For, as for God, his work is perfect.”<sup>5</sup>

I don’t really think we want him to do a half-baked job. We want to be perfected but we want it on our terms. We know what we want but we don’t quite know how to get there. But God does. He has the vision and we simply need to lean into that work. It is always in our best interest to let God work in us until he is finished.

**3. He has a goal with eternity in mind.** A promise has a powerful pull, and this verse includes the promise of completion on the day when Jesus comes to set all things in this upside-down world right. That day is yet to be. So it would seem to follow that the work God has begun in our lives may take more time than we would like to give it. But a promise is a promise. We can be sure that a slow-to-be-fulfilled (from our perspective) promise is still a promise.

God is willing to pour all that he is into our lives because on the day when Jesus comes back to claim us, we will be ready. Tears of joy may break forth when we see what God was building in us all along. We will be the dream he knew we could be. He will have labored over every nook and cranny, and then his work will be complete.

Doesn’t this New Testament promise remind you of what God said to Ezekiel? “I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live” (Ezekiel 37:5). Scripture always supports Scripture and this truth is confirmed here. We will know that our resurrection, restoration, and renewal are his work, and we will know by his work that he is the Lord.

## What If I’m Not Fresh Out of Amazing Yet?

When I first started writing *Hope for the Weary Mom* with my friend Brooke, someone asked us if we minded being known as “those weary moms.” I realized in that moment that not every mom would call herself weary. Oh, maybe she finds herself having weary moments, but she would not define herself as a mom who tends to



be overwhelmed by life and the ordinary days that mothering often strings together.

Many moms live just slightly above the place I would call weary. God makes each of us unique, and he works in our lives in a thousand different ways. My weary-mom world may not resonate with every mom, and I'm okay with that.

The same can be said about being fresh out of amazing. Maybe you picked up this book because you liked the cover or your best friend told you to read it. (Bless her if she did.) Perhaps, though, at this point of chapter 1, you are wondering if this message is for you. Quite frankly, you are not in a fresh-out-of-amazing place. You are actually doing pretty well. Your hope is firmly in place. You are chasing your dreams and have all the faith you think you need for the days ahead. You may actually feel amazing today.

Goodness, that makes me so happy for you, and I truly do wish you were sitting in my kitchen with me. I need people like you in my life more than you know. This past year I prayed that God would send me just those types of friends to encourage my heart. He was so faithful to do that. These girls invited me to lunch, bought me coffee, and showed up to cheer me on. God sent real live friends into my life to encourage me. Has he done that for you too?

But here is something you might consider before you put this book back on the shelf or tell your best friend *thanks but no thanks*. Maybe you aren't reading for yourself today. Could it be that God wants to give you words for a sister-friend who needs you to speak truth to her? Is it your turn to show up with coffee for a fresh-out-of-amazing sister who simply needs a hug and a good word?

I like to think there is something for every girl in this book. I have done my best to walk through the pages of God's Word and tell stories that I think will encourage you no matter where you are today. You don't have to be in the depths of despair to read this book or like it. You might find you have only moments here and there when you feel fresh out of amazing. I believe God wants to enter

those moments—and he can do more than you can imagine with a moment we surrender to him.

You might also want to keep this idea in mind as you continue to read: Fresh out of amazing can sneak up on you and plant itself squarely in your life without any warning signs. Perhaps there is a bit of that just around the bend of the road waiting for you that you simply can't see. This book might be one way God is preparing your heart for that season. If that is the case, do me a favor. Don't resist this part of the journey. Heart preparation is always beneficial and worth our time. I like what Dr. Billy Graham said: "Mountaintops are for views and inspiration, but fruit grows in the valley."<sup>6</sup> If this is your time on the mountaintop, I pray you will be inspired. But if it is time for growing fruit in the valley, let's get on with it and see what God has in store for us.

### I'm Ready. Are You?

Writer and speaker Lysa TerKeurst said, "I started this message with the need to live this message." My friend, this is where I am today. I'm willing to work my way through this message and see where God leads. Such God-initiated, God-completed work in my heart is necessary. I don't know about you, but I'm ready. The Lord has been dropping all kinds of hints that it is time to find a once-and-for-all solution for this familiar place. That solution will begin and end with him.

I'd love to have the honor of walking with you as well. I find the best place to start any new journey is with a word of prayer. I'll share mine with you, or you can pen your own. Either way, it is time for dry bones to live. Jesus won't leave us. We have the promise he will carry us home. Complete.

*Lord,*

When I'm fresh out of amazing, I feel as though I am just like a pile of dry and brittle bones. Lifeless. Desperate.

And you ask, "Can this fresh-out-of-amazing girl live?" I look at you and say, "Only you know, Lord. Only you know." Because there is nothing left in me, it has to be you.

Jesus, you said, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." Lord, send your life-giving Word. Where I see hopelessness, show me possibility. When I feel cut off, draw near. You open the grave of my heart, and you revive me. You restore. I am blessed by your grace.

Let my life be a testimony so that others see and know you are God.

*Amen*