**Crying Out For Our Children**

Featured writer for this segment – Renee Hodges



**Part 1**

*You may find conversation with me to be a little dull for your taste.
I’m not well-versed on a wide range of subjects, even narrow minded most say.
But I do know something about the great God of Israel. I’m acquainted with His only Son.*

*Bear with me a moment and you may be surprised. When I sing, you may sing along.*

*God’s children love to talk of storm clouds and valleys and lonely places so dry.
It won’t be long till someone starts singing. Soon everybody will cry.
It’s not that we’re sad, it’s just that we’re happy, and I can assure you right now.
When I’m singing of joy in the midst of great sorrow, I know what I’m singing about.*

CHORUS

*When you talk about a baby laid in a manager or a bleeding lamb on a cross.
Just mention a tomb and how it’s still empty and I may break out in song.
I’ll start singing about redemption and love’s old sweet story; sometimes I may get too loud.
But when I sing about Jesus and what He’s done for me,
OHHHHHHHH I know what I’m singing about.*

*Tell me about Jesus. Talk about the Cross. How I was lost now I’m found.
I’ll start singing about redemption and love’s old sweet story; sometimes I may get too loud.
But when I sing about Jesus and what He’s done for me,
OHHHHHHHH I know what I’m singing about.*
 by Kyla Rowland

I begin with that song written by our church’s favorite singer/author/songwriter Kyla Rowland because to understand someone who you’ve never met, you may need a few details. You may need to know what side of the fence I stand on, how I feel about life and all that goes with it, where my loyalties lie, and if I really do know what I’m talking about. Well, hang on ladies; you’re about to find out.

My name is Renee Hodges, and I’m a Pastor’s wife, a Pastor’s daughter, a Pastor’s daughter-in-law, a Pastor’s sister, and a preacher’s mother. Greg Hodges (Dr. VP Pastor as I refer to him) is my husband of 27 years this December. In addition to serving as the Senior Pastor of our church, he is the Vice President of our local community college with a total student body of about 4,000. We have two children - James Jr. and Lydia Horsley, 23 and 21 years of age respectively. Both of our children are in our church, serving in whatever capacity their dad needs them as most pastor’s kids do. Understand, in our home it was never a question of “are you going to church.” It was “get up, get dressed; we are going to church.” Even though my children no longer live in our home, things have not changed. If it’s time for church and if they’re not there, they are getting a text or phone call from me. We simply don’t play when the subject of “church” and “attendance” comes up. It is not what we do; it is who we are.

My life up until I married my best friend seems a blur, but that’s often how life becomes with seasons that come and go. Candidly, I’m not a fan of the changing seasons (as my ladies will attest to in my church or in my family) because I LOVE, LOVE, LOVE snow (as does my husband). If it was up to me, the white stuff would lay on the ground 24/7, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. I see it as perfect. PERFECTION! I simply love it for all it stands for and symbolizes as well as the serenity and beauty it brings to our surroundings.

The seasons in our lives as women come and go. As quickly as one begins, it seems to transition to the others which are not far behind. When I look and reminisce over my life up to this point, I see the good, the bad, and the ugly, but most of all, I see the Lord’s unwavering, unmovable, loving hand in it all. Could I “feel” that hand all of the time? Of course not. I’m a woman, a female (hormonal in every sense of the word) which means I am living on, dealing with, and overcoming the emotions that govern every aspect of my life. Yes, emotions are what make us real and cause us to have feelings. They can either cloud our judgement, hinder our decision-making process, or show us complete and total happiness that the Lord intended for us as His children.

Webster’s dictionary says that “***emotion”***  isas follows:

**“1a:**a conscious mental reaction (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feeling usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioral changes in the body

**b:**a state of feeling

**c:**the affective aspect of consciousness **:**[FEELING](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feeling)

**2a:**[EXCITEMENT](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/excitement)”

Wikipedia says, “**Emotion** is a [mental state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_state) associated with the nervous system brought on by chemical changes variously associated with thoughts, feelings, behavioral responses, and a degree of [pleasure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleasure) or [displeasure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffering).

Emotion is often [intertwined](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reciprocal_influence) with [mood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mood_%28psychology%29), [temperament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temperament), [personality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personality_psychology), [disposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disposition), and [motivation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivation).

Scripture portrays both human beings and God as having emotions. Human emotions and sentiments are important to the life of faith. Human feelings can be positive or negative and are subject to change and misinterpretation. Maybe that’s why God mentions it, the best I can figure, 5,844 times. Don’t you think how we feel is important to God? As my husband often reminds the church, our emotions are not saved, and they can be dangerous, but feelings are a real part of the Christian life and certainly a part of a woman’s life.

In part 2, we dive a little bit deeper into both the glories and the dangers of our emotions as women!

**Part 2**

In part 1, I introduced myself as a Pastor’s wife, Pastor’s daughter, Pastor’s daughter-in-law, Pastor’s sister, and Preacher’s mother. Yes, preaching and church are what I have known my entire life. It is who I am. Simply put, I was not getting out of this title or some may say, “stigma” of being in a Pastor’s family, with a title.

Who I also am is a female – complicated and emotional! While our emotions can certainly betray us, they are important to us as Christians and as women. Are they important to God?

I would say YES! The first emotion mentioned in Galatians 5:22 is the word “love,” the second is “joy,” and the third “peace.” Ladies, it is possible for us as women, females, young adults, older senior women, or teenagers to live in these emotions and have a wonderful Christian life and Godly home (and a little chocolate and a cup of coffee to go with them never hurt). So, if we as women can get our emotions in check, which is a daily task as Paul reminds us, we can rightly govern our life and make correct decisions not based on how we feel but based on what God says we should do. Boy oh boy, is that EVER hard for us women to do.

If we do not strive to be as Paul instructed Timothy in the second chapter of 2 Timothy, we will not ever be able to handle our lives, much less what Satan throws at us and throws at our families. We cannot conquer this world apart from Jesus being at the helm and steering us. Emotions not kept in check will cause us to do and say things that we can never take back AND cause us to make rash decisions and judgements. Our emotions can cause us to crash and burn. When that happens, we will feel that all hope is lost and that there is no way out, no victory, no finish line. One of my favorite quotes comes from Coach Vince Lombardi:

*“When we place our dependence in God, we are unencumbered, and we have no worry. In fact, we may even be reckless, insofar as our part in the production is concerned. This confidence, this sureness of action, is both contagious and an aid to the perfect action. The rest is in the hands of God – and this is the same God, gentlemen, who has won all His battles up to now.”*

It is at this point that I would like to explain how “the God that has won ALL HIS battles” is that same God that can WIN YOUR BATTLES whatever you may by facing in life with your home and your children.

In part 3, we will look at a time when I had to put my own words into action; a time when I had to realize that my emotions could do great harm or great good.

**Part 3**

I love both my children and am, as most any mother would say, very proud of who and what they have become. I know they are not done in their walk of life and have still yet to see all the Lord has in store for them. At the same time, it is a sense of pride and accomplishment we feel as mothers when our children are on the paths that we have prayed for and longed for them to take. With my children, it is no different.

As they were growing up and eventually graduated from high school (an event I did not necessarily enjoy as a part of me would have gladly kept them little all the days of my life), my husband and I told them that they were expected to go to college. In this case, it was Patrick Henry Community College as this is where their father serves as Vice President. We explained to them that we expected them to do their best, graduate, and then we would support whatever they decided. Selfishly, I thought they would always stay near home. My husband is an only child, so his sentiments were not as mine. He was ready to move on from high school, then to college, and on to another college, and yet another degree. However, I was not raised to leave. I guess you could say I was raised to stay, and I enjoyed all the laundry, the dirty clothes, the dishes, and the constant traffic in my house. At the same time, I knew it would come to pass, and sadly, it did.

Our son was to follow in his dad’s footsteps - college and more college and still in college, and in the middle of that he got engaged. I want to be very careful here not to bash a person or cause hurt. That is not what this article is about. It is about PRAYING and PRAYING SPECIFICALLY, with SPECIFICITY, for your children and their lives, their needs and wants, and the direction you pray they will go in.

Sometimes when people come into our lives it can be for good or for bad. In the beginning of his engagement, it was wonderful, and we were all excited and thrilled. As time progressed over the course of nearly 2 years, things began to deteriorate in his life. He began to change, his attitude towards his father, me, his sister, his poppa Jim, church, and even the Lord all became very hostile. Can a relationship play such an integral part in a person’s life? Absolutely it can. We soon found ourselves as [**Amos 3:3**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Amos-3-3/)  states, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

You may ask, how is that possible if our family seems to be a loving, Christian, faith-based, dedicated family? How could a pastor’s child get so far from his love for his family, his friends, his church? Well, I’d like to announce to you that, “IT CAN AND IT DOES HAPPEN.” Why in the world I thought my child would be exempt from the trials of life I don’t know, nor can I explain.

I’m the first to tell you I’m nothing and a nobody in this wide expanding world we live in. I’m just a sinner, saved by grace, just like each and everyone one of you out there in social media land. Let’s be careful here ladies that we don’t think ourselves “better than” another as Paul states in Romans 3:9. We are nothing on this earth apart from the love of Christ that should constantly dwell within us. If we become “too big for our britches,” then we’ve become too big. God will not use a woman who refuses to be humble before the Lord. I Peter 5:6-10 is a great example of this.

What messes we ladies make when we don’t follow what God is trying to teach us through His word. It pays to walk outside our world sometimes and scream up to the sky, “GOD, I NEED YOU AND I NEED YOU TO TAKE THE WHEEL OUT OF MY HANDS BEFORE I CRASH AND BURN ALL AROUND ME!” Yup, I’ve screamed at my backyard many times. I found myself at this point in my life, for the very first time, not being able to reach my son.

I had asked some preachers to reach out to him, to talk to him, to pray for him. I tried to sit him down in his father’s office at church, and with tears streaming down my cheeks, pleading with him about his attitude, his direction in life at this point, and the choices he was making that could totally change and transform the man that I still believed God wanted him to be. I begged and pleaded with my husband to get to our son and talk with him. Constantly, I begged him to get our son to change. I told his sister to get to her brother and talk with him. I’m here to tell you none of that worked. No one could make the difference here, and I soon realized that our family was suffering, our lives were becoming miserable, our church was hurting, and it was slowly becoming obvious that I was losing the son I had raised to something or someone I no longer knew.

For those of you who have lived this, I’m sure your case is far worse than mine. For some families, their challenges are because of alcohol, drugs, sex or any host of things the enemy puts in front of us. If that had been the case here, it may have made the whole thing easier to understand. I commend you mothers that have dealt with these issues in the lives of your children, and I praise you for praying for your children. We have heard Kyla’s own story of her son and the many years she prayed over him, but that was not my son’s struggle. His struggle was with faith, religion, the word of God, etc. To have gone into battle with Satan because of drugs, drinking, or the world I believe I could have done. For my son to now question who and what he was, the upbringing of his faith, his family, and church - I was not prepared for that nor was my husband.

Satan doesn’t fight fair ladies; he doesn’t have to. He’s Satan and he’s been a part of our lives since we were born, and he will be there until the trumpet sounds. I firmly believe it’s how we fight and deal with him that matters in our Christian walk on this earth. If we are not strong in our faith, geared up, and ready for battle, we will “crash and burn” before we ever get off our feet to walk. Before we ever get off the altar of prayer, we will lose.

Paul says in Ephesians 6:11-20:

**11**Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

**12**For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

**13**Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

**14**Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

**15**And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

**16**Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

**17**And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

**18**Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

**19**And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

**20**For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak

Ladies, without armor, how do you expect to win a war? Silly girl, you can’t, but you can with God’s armor!

*Renee*

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**Part 4**

In December of 2017, Dr VP and I were about to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary. It was also the month in which our son was getting married. In the months leading up to this, there were no family dinners anymore, no Sunday lunches together, no talking with our son even though he lived right beside us with Greg’s dad, and I knew the boiling point was nearing explosion. I told God so many times that this path my son was on was not right for him; it was not the one he was meant to take. Did we help him enough? Did we give him the reigns too freely for these decisions he made? Did we not see the warning signs soon enough? Did I believe foolishly that because he was our son, he would have been exempt from Satan and what was about to happen in his life that could change him and destroy him forever? How could I have made such a huge mistake here? Did I scream? Why yes, I did. At God? Yes, I did.

Over and over I screamed, begged, and pleaded. Now, the month that I told God could not come was upon me, and my whole family knew that I was miserable. Everyone that knew me knew I was an unhappy mother, an unhappy Pastor’s wife, and an unhappy Christian. I wish I could say that I fulfilled my duties and responsibilities in all of that, but I did not. Our Assistant Pastor’ wife stepped up many times and carried on when I could not or would not do what I needed to do. Do I believe that even in the valley God is good? Yes, of course I do, but my emotions were getting the best of me.

God knew long before this battle crept its way into our lives that there needed to be another who would step up in my place and take the wheel at times when I could not. That’s exactly what our Assistant Pastor’s wife did. Were my attitude and my actions wrong? Many times they were. I was an angry mother and an even angrier pastor’s wife because I felt like God wasn’t listening to me which made me even madder. How did He think I was going to get through Christmas, a wedding, and this chapter in my son’s life that I believed was so wrong for him? I can only say, God is loving – especially when we need love.

[**1 John 4:10**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/1-John-4-10/) - Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins.

[**Psalms 118:6**](https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Psalms-118-6/) - The LORD [is] on my side;

Even when I believed He didn’t have it all under control, He did. He never left during all the times of praying, pleading, and screaming out to Him. He was always there, listening to me as if I was the only child He had to worry about. Thank the Lord He loves us enough to put up with us and listen to all our complaints, our whines, and our problems. Where would we be had God not loved us enough to die for us? If he loved us enough to die for us, doesn’t that mean he would take care of us even when we are an emotional mess? As usual, God came through for my family just when I thought there was no hope, no end in sight, when I could not see a way, He showed up, of course, on time.

**Part 5**

On the Monday morning following our church’s three days of Christmas drama performances, Greg and I were packed and headed to the airport to fly to New York. That was my 25th anniversary gift. While I was excited by the trip, my husband and I were tired from the weekend’s activities, and we really didn’t feel well physically, emotionally, or mentally.

As we were driving to the Raleigh/Durham airport, it was a cold, clear day, and I remember thinking that there was no way we could have a merry Christmas in our family this year when everything seemed to be in turmoil. I was lost in thought. At that moment, my phone rang. I noticed it was my son, so I answered it almost dreading what I might hear on the other end. For the past year, our communication with one another had all but stopped, so I wasn’t sure why he would have been calling me, but God knew.

I shall never forget those words I heard coming from him. “Mom, I just want you to know I’m sorry for how I’ve been this last year, I was wrong. I know you and dad love me and I know you both were trying to help me, and I was wrong for how I acted and how I spoke to you and the things I said. I even called Lydia [his sister] and apologized to her and told her I was sorry for how I treated her and that I loved her and I knew she loved me and was only trying to help me. I told poppy Jim that I was sorry and that I knew I had made life difficult for him by living in his house. Mom can you tell dad? I don’t want to mess up your anniversary trip, but I had to call and talk to you. I just had to.”

You ask what did I do at that exact moment? I told DrVP to pull the car over right now and talk to his son which he did. He said the same things to his father that he said to me. You see ladies, when there’s an urgency in your child’s life, when the sound of their voice is loud and clear, when there’s help that is needed, you have to listen to them; everything stops. Why? Because that’s our child, and they need us. This is the exact same way the Heavenly Father STOPS when we call upon His name. He hears the urgency in our voice, and He puts everything on hold because we need Him.

“**I've never had a prayer He couldn't answer.
I've never shed a tear, He could not dry.
And when the waves of life
Are so high, you can't mount them,
He will roll you over the Tide.” By Kyla Rowland**

We turned the car around and headed back home. We were not worried about our flight, our trip, or anything else. In this moment, the heavy loads we had been carrying had been lifted. In that moment I didn’t see coming, the Lord knew what was ahead. We got to my father-in-law’s house, and as we walked through the door, I was met by my son who all but knocked me down as he wrapped his arms around me, cried, and said, “Mom, I’m sorry; I was wrong. I love you and I love dad, and I’m so sorry for what I put you both through.”

Prayer answered? Yes! The problems we were facing as a family were being handled by God in that moment. Was our son back with us? Yes, he was. Could we tell a change in him? Immediately. The loving, tender young man that I had known all of my life was now looking at me once again.

I can’t tell you that since that day in our lives, everything has been perfect. Like all of us, my son is still growing, evolving, changing, and maturing. Thankfully, he is back to his old quirky, funny, preaching self. Our church family welcomed him as always because that’s what families do, and they embraced, loved, and continue to pray for him. Our own family loved and prayed for our son because that’s what families do.

Those women who I called that day and told them of the answer to prayer that finally came will forever be my spiritual heroes because they had been praying for months. Now, they continue to pray for James even today. You may ask why I constantly reference “prayer” and “praying” in this story. Because ladies, we simply cannot live without the knowledge that we have a Heavenly Father who loves us and gives us a direct hotline to him. Not a cell phone, but a hotline of prayer - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. He’s available to us, and He never puts us on hold or tells us to hang on. We never receive a busy signal. For the child of God, it’s a DIRECT LINE TO THE THRONE ROOM that the world doesn’t have. We alone have been granted access because we are a Child of the King.

If you get nothing else, get this…

**VERSE I**

GOD TOLD THE ISRAELITES, RISE AND TAKE THE LAND;
FOR I HAVE PROMISED CANAAN TO ABRAHAM.

MARCH ON, OH, JOSHUA, SEVEN TIMES AROUND;
I WILL GIVE YOU JERICHO. THEN, HOLD YOUR GROUND

**CHORUS**

HOLD YOUR GROUND, TELL THE ENEMY, “NO”!

HOLD YOUR GROUND, GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL

TELL SATAN YOU WILL NEVER, NEVER TAKE ME DOWN,

FOR I WILL RISE, I WILL RISE, I WILL RISE AND HOLD MY GROUND

**VERSE II**

ON TOP OF MT. CARMEL WERE THE PROPHETS OF BAEL.
THEY CRIED TO THEIR GOD, BUT TO NO AVAIL

AS DARKNESS WAS FALLING, ELIJAH PRAYED FIRE DOWN.
HE CRIED “THE LORD, HE IS GOD!” ELIJAH HELD HIS GROUND.
By Kyla Rowland