



A Light
in the
Darkness
A Spiritual Journey of Healing

Janet Cameron

A Light in the Darkness

Copyright © 2014 by Janet Cameron

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the author.

Edited by Libby Gontarz lgontarz@mchsi.com 480-982-6558

Unless otherwise marked, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version®. Copyright ©1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

“Why Don’t You Pray?” ©Susan Crawford. Used by permission.

“All Alone” and “Life” ©Imogene McLarty. Used by permission.

“If Only a Bud” ©Mrs. Ollie Rogers. Used by permission.

All other interspersed prose, prayers, and poetry previously published or unpublished ©Janet Cameron. All rights reserved.

Cover image: iStock

ISBN: 978-163110-992-8

Inspirational Prose, Prayers, and Poetry

A Father's Love

Hope

You Are My Child

Hide and Seek

A Prayer and Declaration

A Prayer of Thanks

Why Don't You Pray?

A Light in the Darkness

All Alone

A Marriage Blessing

Praise to the Lord

The House

The House Renewed

Dancing with My Beloved

Life

If Only a Bud

My Father

Father and Child

The Lord Is My Shepherd

A Father's Love

As she played in her bedroom, peace flooded her with joy. Her Daddy would look in on her to make sure she was all right and to sometimes play with her or come to her tea party. Her brothers and sisters would come in and play as well. As evening came, they went out to stroll in the garden where it was peaceful and cool.

No one knew the wicked ruler had sent spies to come and carry the little girl away. The spies grabbed her as she strolled through the garden alone. She had been waiting for her Daddy, but He had not yet come out to see her. The spies carried her off to the wicked ruler's castle. It was dark, gray, and cold. He put chains on her and locked her up in his dungeon. He laughed and told her, "You are mine now!"

When the little girl's Father discovered what had happened, He became enraged at the wicked ruler. He called His children and servants together to war against the wicked castle. They mounted on their finest horses, and the Father and His oldest Son led the attack. They sent a messenger to slip into the castle to comfort the frightened little girl and tell her that her Daddy was coming. The messenger told her not to be afraid but to rejoice because her Father would be there soon to take her home.

The Father's troops stormed the wicked castle at dawn. The battle was great, and the oldest Son was wounded and died on the battlefield. There was great mourning for Him, and the Father wept. The wicked ruler laughed with joy "You'll never get Your daughter back now," he shouted. "She is mine!"

After spending three days weeping and grieving over His children, the Father visited His Son's tomb. He looked down at His Son's body and whispered, "We are not defeated but power shall flow from Our throne." Then He leaned over and breathed life back into His Son. The Son rose with power in His wings and fire in His eyes. He mounted upon a white stallion and led His family and servants back to the wicked castle.

By now the little girl was very frightened indeed. She had been told that her Father and Brother had been defeated and that she would never leave this horrible dungeon. Then arose from her window the rays of a new dawning day and a dove lit there as if to say, "Peace, be still." Her fears started to subside, and hope began to rise up within her. Her Father would come.

At dawn, the battle began. It was a fierce fight, and when the wicked ruler could see that the oldest Son was leading the battle he began to tremble. The wicked servants were crushed one by one. Fear, Hopelessness, Anger, Rejection, Loneliness, Low Self-Esteem: each fell under the Father's army. The Father's army flooded the wicked castle, and when the battle was over the oldest Son went down into the dungeon and freed His little sister. He hugged her and reassured her as He carried her home. After they returned home, the Son handed His sister over to their Father. The Father hugged her, held her, and rejoiced over her return. Then He made a decree to all the land that His daughter would never be left alone, unprotected, or powerless ever again and that the wicked ruler was to be banished from the land forevermore.

Saying Good-Bye

*Do not hide Your face from me;
do not turn Your servant away in anger.
You have been my help; do not leave me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation.
When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the Lord will take care of me.
Psalm 27:9 – 10*

While shadows of Daddy are tied mostly to Grandma's house and Sundays, I also have shadows of the house we grew up in while in Perryton, Texas. We lived in a two-bedroom house. In a child's eyes the house was huge, but in reality it was just a small two-bedroom house like any other. The front door opened up into what I remember as a large living room. There was a large bedroom off to the left, which at one time my sister and brothers shared. Next you entered the kitchen with its dirty looking, yellow linoleum floor and the dining room table that had that same linoleum look. Off to the left was a little hall with the bathroom and Mama and Daddy's room. To the back of the kitchen was a closed in back porch with a dark brown linoleum floor. On this porch Mama did laundry and used a large machine to iron and press Daddy's shirts.

I don't remember ever going into Mama and Daddy's bedroom. To my knowledge, that room was almost always off limits to us kids. I think this is a good rule, for parents need a place to go and have privacy. I remember stories about Susan and my brothers in that front bedroom. Susan had a bed of her own, Bill and Jim shared a bunk bed, and Mike had a bed to himself since he was the oldest. Bill did not like a dark room and would put a shoe in the door. Mike and Jim would kick the shoe out and close the door. This drove Bill crazy because he was on the top bunk and would have to climb down to put the shoe back in the door. Sometimes he would get upset enough to kick a hole in the wall up by his bed.

When Daddy felt that my brothers had reached an age where it was no longer appropriate for us all to share a bedroom, he built an apartment-style room onto the garage. The additional room was built to one side of the garage. It had a small porch step up to the door. As you entered, the bathroom was directly off to the left, and there was a short hallway from the door to the bedroom area. Each of the boys had a large closet with built-in drawers underneath, and there was room for three single beds. A large window ran across the back of the room.

I remember thinking how special it must have been to have a room that was not attached to the house and, thinking as kids do, that my brothers had an awful lot freedom that Susan and I did not have. They also got into a lot more trouble with that freedom. Bill later would tell stories of how Mike and Jim would shut him up in the closet. They may have thought it was fun, but Bill did not. I think Bill probably had to develop some survival skills while living in that room with Mike and Jim. I also remember a story of how Mike made Jim mad one time, and Jim chased him with a croquet mallet into the bathroom and put several holes in the bathroom door.

Growing up, my brothers were very wild, and Daddy was not there to help them curb their behavior. Mama had the job of keeping all of us in line and raising us. Daddy was rarely home during the week.

Daddy's first job there in Perryton was at the local radio station, KEYE, which is still broadcasting today. Daddy later moved into a career in the cable company. He took lots of trips out of town for training. It was on one of these trips that he met Cas. He made several trips to Maine, where she and her daughters were living at the time. One thing led to another, and he decided to leave Mama and marry Cas.

Recently, while talking about our past, Susan told me that Daddy used to call Mama and we all got to visit with him over the phone when he was gone on his trips. She then told me that we eavesdropped the night Daddy called to tell Mama that he wanted a divorce. I had no memory of this, and it really challenged my feelings about my Dad. You see, all my life I had considered my Dad to be an honorable man even though he left us. No wonder I buried that memory. Who wants to find out your Daddy is leaving by eavesdropping on a phone call! Daddy didn't even have the courage to sit down and tell Mama face to face; he had to do it through a phone call. When Susan told me about this, for the first time in my life I felt true anger toward my Dad. That phone call and decision to leave us set into motion the darkest periods of our fragile past.

I used to have a recurring nightmare about that house in Perryton. In the dream there was a sandbox in the corner of the house in the back. (I don't know if there really was a sandbox, but there was in the dream.) I was playing in the sandbox when a shadow of a figure came after me. I remember running, looking for anyone who would help me, but there was no one to help. I ran around the house to the front yard looking for safety, but there was none to be found, so I ran to the other side of the house by the road. I could never find safety as the shadow figure would come after me. I would always wake up before whatever or whoever was chasing me could catch me. I believe that shadow of a figure was the fear of being alone, of being abandoned. Again, when I look back on this part of my life, I see the same frightened little girl, wondering what she did wrong that her Daddy would want to leave her, her sister, and her mother behind, wondering what she needed to do to gain his love and approval.

Mama was devastated by the news that Daddy was leaving. She had been married to him for nineteen years. She spent those years raising us kids, making sure we went to church to hear God's Word, and praying for Daddy's salvation. She had never held a job. Mama didn't even know how to drive a car. She was absolutely devoted him, and now she was to be left on her own. What made matters worse was that Daddy told Mama that he had come to know the Lord when he met Cas, but the urge to be with Cas was so strong that he felt he had to leave his marriage and be with her. Because of what the Bible says about adultery and divorce, I wondered for a really long time whether he had really come to know the Lord.

Daddy never paid much attention to what went on at home. He was rarely there. He did not even know when our birthdays were. This was especially painful for my sister Susan because he left on her birthday. I don't remember this, but when she told me that was the day he left, my heart broke for her.

There are many things I do not remember about the time when Daddy left. I do remember sitting outside the courtroom while they were deciding our fate. I often wondered what was so wrong with me that I should be the only one to be taken out of school and brought to the courthouse. For a long time I thought this memory might be a figment of my imagination because no one else seemed to have the same memory. Later I found out that it was not just me outside the courtroom. Susan was there with me, but she had no memory of it at all. Mama was very afraid of losing all of us kids and being left alone, so she found the meanest lawyer in the county. I always felt good about that. It was comforting to know how much my mother loved us and was willing to fight for us.

The court decided that my brothers were old enough to choose who they wanted to live with. Mike chose to go with Daddy and Jim chose to stay with Mom. Susan and I were to live with Mama, and Bill was to go with Dad and Cas. This was a difficult time for Bill, and at one time he ran away to come back to be with us in Perryton. Daddy did not take this very well. Although Cas talked him into letting Bill stay with us, Daddy refused to pay any child support for Bill because he was technically still under Daddy's custody. I remember Jim taught Mama to drive a car. That helped her become a little more independent, which in turn helped her take care of us better.

Jim lost all respect for Daddy and couldn't stand to be around him. They barely spoke to one another all the way up to when Daddy died. The only reason Jim even came to the funeral was to support me and Susan. Bill also could not stand to be around Daddy. We lost relationship with our Dad, and the hatred and anger that resulted from having our family ripped apart devastated each of us for an entire lifetime. Every one of us has what we call "Swiss cheese memories," full of holes for the things we can't remember.

We were not allowed to speak Daddy's name in our home, and Mama fought to keep him from having visitation rights with me and Susan. I would see a root of bitterness grow inside my mother and later be pulled out while she struggled to understand why she was left alone. I would not visit my Grandma again until I was grown and my Grandpa had passed away. I wouldn't see my cousins again for almost fifty years.

Everyone in my family hated my Dad for leaving Mother—everyone but me. I knew what he did was wrong, and it hurt to the core of my being, but I couldn't hate him. He was my Dad, whom I really never got to know, whose love I desperately desired though I never knew how to obtain it. There were times when I wondered why I couldn't hate him too and wondered why he chose to help raise Cas's daughters and neglect his own. The price that Daddy paid for his transgression was very great, but the saddest part was that the ripple effect of it influenced our entire family—my grandmother, aunts, and uncles—and everyone who came in contact with us. Opinions were made, bitterness and hatred grew, our self-esteem was shattered, and our ability to show love was hindered. For myself, my ability to relate to men would be greatly damaged. Oh, that man would understand the effects of divorce go far beyond him and contaminate so many!

Hope

The Lord took me for a walk one evening to a most unusual place. We walked through a place of ruins. The walls were made of cold stones and were about four feet high at the highest point. Each room had a fireplace that was black and cold. The only part left standing of this once great place was a lonely tower with an attached balcony. At the top of the tower was a window with a beautiful pink vase.

I asked the Lord what this place once was and why He had brought me here. He turned to me with sadness in His eyes and said, "This was once your mother's spiritual home." He began to tell me how it had been a beautiful, warm place. She had built a room for each of her children, and she would build a fire in each fireplace so that the Spirit of the Lord might warm them. She watched over her home with care and lifted her family up to the Lord every day in the privacy of her prayer tower.

Then one day the enemy attacked and devastated her home. He took some of her children captive and destroyed the walls of her home. She hid and protected the remainder of her family in the prayer tower where the enemy could not enter. She protected the fragile vase in the window and refused to yield to the enemy.

I wept as I listened, for I knew it was true. Then I asked the Lord, "Why is there a fragile pink vase in the window of the tower?" He smiled and explained that the color pink represented hope. It was presented in the form of a vase because hope is very fragile, and once it is lost, then only the Master Creator can restore it. Then He led me up the stairs to the prayer tower. It was a small room with a place to hang my coat so I could enter without the cares of this world. It had a mattress on the floor so I could rest in the presence of the Lord, and it had a small table where the Word of God was open. In the window was the vase of hope, which had been protected over the years. It was larger than it had looked from the floor below. We walked out onto the balcony that was attached to the tower. The balcony overlooked a meadow where delicate wildflowers grew beside a pond with cool, clear water. There was a flock of doves in the meadow, and, to my surprise, my mother was there as well. She looked radiant with joy. She was like a young girl, and she began to run across the field. As I looked in the direction she was running, I saw a magnificent mansion that shone bright as if made from lucent gold. The Lord touched my shoulder and smiled. "I made her a new home, stronger and free from the enemy's grip. She's free, for whom the Son sets free is free indeed."

He gently led me back to the prayer tower and told me to remember there were still those in my family that were captives of the enemy. He then lovingly charged that I watch over the prayer tower and the hope which was within its walls, for the hope started by one is passed to another and another until the time is fulfilled that all are set free.

Since the Lord gave me this vision of my own family, I realize that it is also referring to my spiritual family, to mankind. I pray that every woman that has experienced emotional devastation will one day be set free. Until that day, I will pray over them in the prayer tower of my heart and hope that the love of the Lord will become real to them and shine a light in their darkness.

On Our Own

*We have become orphans and waifs,
Our mothers are like widows.*

Lamentations 5:3

I don't remember what job Mama was able to get in Perryton, but the only two places I remember her working was at Furr's restaurant and as a nurse's aide. I'm pretty sure that in Perryton she worked as a nurse's aide at the hospital. Before she met Daddy, she had gone to nursing school, but she dropped out when they got married. She usually worked an evening shift, so we did not see much of her. She worked long hours trying to provide for the family.

Susan and I learned very quickly how to take care of ourselves. We would get ourselves ready every day during the week and walk to school, and we would get ourselves to church if Mama was unable to take us. We learned to take care of ourselves around the house. Out of necessity we learned to cook whatever was in the house. Sometimes we came up with some interesting meals. Mama always tried to make sure we had the bare necessities of bread, milk, and eggs. She provided what she could, but the money needed to survive was just not there. Sometimes she would go down to the local butcher shop and get the bones they would give away as dog bones. We would have what we called "dog bone soup" from this. She would boil the bones until all the meat would fall off, and then we would add all the vegetables we had in the house. This was usually a really good meal. There were other times that we just didn't have anything in the house except bread, so Mama would spread mayonnaise on the bread and top it with sugar. To this day some of us will not eat mayonnaise.

It seemed everyone in Perryton knew our family; we were like the charity case for the town. Everyone felt sorry for us but could not come up with a constructive way to help. In the '60s it generally was not socially acceptable to be divorced, and help for single mothers was not available like it is today. The year after Daddy left, the school principal decided that Susan and I were unkempt and needed haircuts. I do not remember my mother ever being consulted on this, but the school personnel took Susan and me out of school one day, and we got our hair cut. This was very embarrassing and was burned into both of our memories. I do not remember having any friends in Perryton, as I always felt looked down upon and judged. Susan, however, had a lot of friends there. I envy her for that. Some of these friendships have lasted a lifetime.

The one thing that I will always remember about Perryton is that this is where I met the Lord in church. Mama kept us going to church even though she felt betrayed by God and would not go herself anymore. On one of those Sundays right after Daddy had left, I heard the pastor, Brother Jones, speak about God in a way I had never heard before. He was preaching about how God would never leave you nor forsake you. All I could think about was that I had been forsaken by everyone in my life at this time, and if God really would never leave me, I wanted Him in my life. I went down to the front and asked Jesus to come in my heart and be my Savior.

I was almost nine years old at this time, and I wanted to be baptized. Brother Jones called Mama and told her of my decision. Mama was furious. She was so angry with God at this time in her life that I think I just poured fuel on the fire. She chewed Brother Jones up one side and down the other. He told her that I was young and he could explain to me that I should wait until I was older to get baptized, which made Mama even madder. She told him no, it was my decision, and he was to baptize me. I am sure that Brother Jones was totally confused. The baptismal service was that night. I shall never forget it.

We lived in Perryton until I was fourteen years old. Most of that time I spent by myself. I had two favorite places to go and play. One was at the railroad tracks behind our house. I loved the railroad tracks, but you had be careful because there were signs up stating no one was to be on the tracks, and you would get in trouble if anyone saw you over there. I loved walking on the track as if it were a balance beam. There was also a bridge, and I could slide between the railroad ties and go under the bridge. In my memory this bridge was huge and exciting. In reality it is only about four feet long and three feet high. I couldn't believe it when I saw it as an adult. I loved playing under this bridge. It was my fort, my castle, my hideaway.

I don't have a lot of good memories about Perryton, but I do have one that I think of fondly that involved that old railroad bridge. Perryton is in Tornado Alley, so we would get a lot of tornado warnings. Some of these warnings would turn out to be real. One year a tornado hit Perryton. It was huge; you could see it miles away. Tornadoes move very quickly, so you have to move quickly to get in a safe place. In that part of the country everyone is taught where a safe place would be. We were told to go to a cellar, get in a ditch and lie flat, find a tight closet in the middle of the house, or get in the tub in the bathroom.

This particular tornado appeared to be coming directly down our street, so we knew we were in trouble of getting hit and did not have a lot of time. We did not have a cellar to go down into. Jim and Bill were living with us at the time, and Jim took the lead to get us all to safety. He took us out to the ditch by the railroad tracks; after all, this is one of the places we were taught would be a safe place. It was raining, and we became afraid that the ditch would fill up with water and we might drown in the ditch, so we decided to get under the bridge. (This is a funny sight in my mind today after realizing how small that bridge really is.)

However, we became afraid that the bridge would fall on us. Wet, cold, and muddy, we went back to the house.

While we had been running around out by the railroad track, my mother had walked down the street toward the tornado to get our elderly neighbor, Mrs. Chase, and had brought her back to the house. They were sitting in the kitchen when we came in. All four of us were scared, wet, and muddy, and here was my mother calm as calm can be. She asked me to fix them a cup of coffee. While I fixed them coffee, that tornado jumped our house and hit the trailer court down the way. I guess Mama figured that, since we did not have a place of safety to go to, we should just wait it out in the house and trust God. We would either survive or we wouldn't, but either way we were in God's hands.

My other favorite place to play and be alone was the drainage ditch and drainpipe

behind Mrs. Chase's house. Our street ran across the railroad tracks, and the ditch that ran alongside the tracks emptied into a drainpipe that ran under the road. As an adult I realize this is a terrible place for children to play, but as a child my imagination could go wild down in that drainpipe. It was a great hiding place.

I spent a lot of time in my hiding places. Believe it or not, I found great solitude and safety there. No matter what was going on, when I was in my two hiding places, I was invisible to the world, and shielded from any harm.

Susan and I were often on our own. We did our chores, fixed meals, and pretty much took care of ourselves. One of our favorite things to do was the laundry. We would hang the clothes out on the clothesline behind the boys' room and eat the cherries off the tree. None of those cherries ever reached the house. We spent a lot of time around the house and around the neighborhood.

We had what we called a backboard in our backyard; it was like a board wall. I do not know what it was used for, but because of it there was a lot of scrap lumber in the back. I remember stepping on a board with a rusty nail back there. Since my whole foot was attached to this board, I just stood there and called for help. Mom pulled that nail out of my foot and then took me down to get a tetanus shot.

Another time Susan and I cut our feet because our window had been broken from the outside and glass was in our bed. We thought we had gotten it all out of our bed, but we missed a piece, and that night we both hit it at the same time and pushed the glass into each other's foot. Again we were taken down to get tetanus shots. I think this was the time that we found out that Susan is allergic to tetanus shots. She had a very bad reaction, and her arm swelled up. It was rare for us to go to the doctor because we didn't have the money to go. We usually did our doctoring at home.

I also remember a city pesticide truck that would come into our neighborhood and spray from time to time. It would go down the dirt road that ran between our house and the residential area next to us. It would spray a huge white cloud of pesticide, and some of the children in the neighborhood would run behind that truck in the cloud of pesticide. I wouldn't be surprised if I killed some of my brain cells from doing that. Looking back, it is hard to believe that this memory is real, but I remember the pesticide had a sweet smell to it.

Another memory I have of Perryton was catching mice. We had mice, and Mama told me she would pay me to get rid of the mice. I got twenty-five cents for every dead mouse and fifty cents for every live mouse that I took out of the house. I learned that there was a nest of mice behind our stove and set a trap to catch the mice live. I always took them out and threw them in the garbage barrel, which had a hole in the bottom. I probably got paid for the same mice over and over. I looked at it as a game then, but cannot stand to be around mice or any rodent today—funny how things change.

As children we did everything that children do: we wrestled and fought with each other, we took pleasure in scaring each other, and we protected each other when we needed to. Jim used to try out the new wrestling moves on me and Susan after we watched wrestling on TV. Most of the time I enjoyed this until Jim would forget we were a lot smaller and weaker than him. Susan and I had our fair share of fights. One in particular

ended in Susan helping me run away from home. As I recall, she and her friend did not want me to play with them, so I threatened to run away. Susan helped me by putting some stuff in a large red bandana and tying it to the end of a baton. It looked just like a real hobo would use. I took that and my pajama pillow, and she helped me out of the window.

Susan thought I would just go down to the end of the block and come back. She never expected me to be gone for a few hours. Mama didn't even believe Susan when she first told her, but after a while they did go looking for me. I had gone over to the church. I knew I would be safe there. As I sat on the steps of the Baptist church contemplating what my next move would be, a policeman came by to talk to me. He was polite and never forceful. He asked me what I was doing, and I told him I was running away from home. He smiled and asked me what I was going to do about food, to which I answered, "I don't know, but I'll figure out something." Then he asked what I would do about money. I answered, "I don't know, but I'll figure out something." He smiled and went back to his car. I am sure he kept a distance and watched me until I decided to head back home. I met Mama and Susan about halfway home, where I was promptly scolded and got a spanking the rest of the way. We laugh about this today.

We loved our pets in Perryton. Jim had a dog named Brownie, a collie mix. He was beautiful and loyal to the family. I remember that Brownie would get caught by the dog catcher. Jim would go down and break him out of the pound. This got Jim in trouble more than once.

My dog Troubles, however, is the one I remember the most. Jim brought a little puppy home one day, a cross between a cocker spaniel and a dachshund. Mama had enough trouble taking care of us, and when she found out the puppy was a female, she just didn't think she could take care of a dog that could have puppies of her own. She told Jim to take the dog back where he found her, but he refused. I am so glad he did; I simply don't know if I would have survived Perryton without that dog to cheer me up. Mama named her Troubles because she knew how much trouble a female dog would be. She did have several litters of puppies, but we always managed to give them away. We even nursed her back from a bout of distemper. That dog was a great comfort to Mama and me. I think God gave her to us to show us His love. Troubles was always there to comfort us when we were down, to keep us company and play with us, and to just love on us. When Mama and I left Perryton, we took Troubles with us.

When I look back at this time of my life, the frightened little girl had now become an orphan. My dad had just left us, and my Mom was never there because she had to work all the time to support us. But Jesus was there. He never left, and although I paint a poor picture of my parents, He never left them either.

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>