

INSPIRING STORIES FROM MY JOURNEY THAT
BROUGHT THE BIBLE TO LIFE

it's
real
to me

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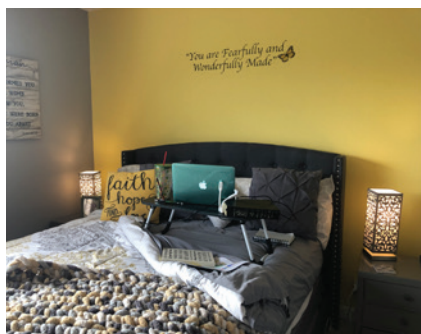
ME, AN AUTHOR?

The story of Jonah is surely a familiar one from the Bible. Jonah tries to **run away from what God has planned** for him and ends up spending three days in the belly of a whale, then is spat out on the very land where **God had appointed him** to preach. Jonah's time isolated inside of that whale gave him perspective, wisdom, and motivation to finally obey the Lord. While many find this story a bit too far-fetched to be true, I believe it and find its message extremely relatable, not just in my own journey but on a global level as well.

While this chapter is exactly halfway through the Bible (as well as my book), it's the one I chose to write last. I waited until the end because I didn't know if I would stick with it and follow through with what the Lord put on my heart so many years ago. Like Jonah, I was clear on what God was stirring in me to do, but I ran from it. The desire to write a book has been within me for some time (If you are anything like me and you skipped over the intro and headed straight into Chapter One, you may want to take a minute to go back and read that now). It's not that I didn't want to write a book, it's that I didn't think I could actually do it. So I always had an excuse ready to go: my kids keep me too busy, I'm working full-time again, my marriage is falling apart, I have a ministry to run, my dad's passed and my mom needs me, I need to focus on dating after divorce because once I'm 50 I'm sure it'll be a challenge. But with each passing year, God never took my desire to write away, instead He just used my excuses and gave me more to write about.

I remember telling God years ago that unless He could somehow hide me away for at least six months without a social life, a job, or my family to worry about, I didn't see how authoring a book would be a possibility. And God, in His infinite wisdom, knew that Covid-19 would one day

enter our world, quickly remove all of my excuses and give me the very sheltering I had asked for. Having just moved to a house that made caring for my mom much easier, staying isolated at home in order to protect her health, plus spending far less time with my adult sons who did not want to expose their Mimi to outside elements, pretty much met my terms of negotiation with the Lord. But He even threw in a bonus to keep me from getting distracted: it was nearly impossible to date with a highly contagious illness looming through our planet. It didn't matter that I was 49 (or "forty-fine" as my girlfriends and I like to say), the unlikely chance of meeting a great guy via Zoom or in the grocery store with masks covering our faces, only shows how determined the Lord truly



was to have all my attention and see this through together.

God even accommodated me with my very own whale. After a few unsuccessful attempts to sit in a chair at my desk, I decided to move my home office to my queen-sized bed. Compared to Jonah's

contemplating quarters, God truly was treating me like a queen. In recent years my lower back has not been my friend, so sitting or standing in one position too long can be debilitating. Getting up from my "throne" to help my mom every couple of hours, gave my legs and spine the continual stretching that was needed. I ordered a cute little bed tray that was designed more for a laptop than for a breakfast, and propped up pillows all around me to keep me comfortable. As you can probably surmise from my first 28 chapters, many of these stories required me to tap into an array of emotions. I did not have to fight the temptation to curl up under the covers, for I already was there. While revisiting areas of my past, I allowed myself to feel deeply, go there fully,

and be as authentic as possible to what was happening in that moment and what my response was to it. I was surprised to learn how often my outward and inward responses did not align. It humbled me to realize how little I actually knew, yet how much God wanted to show me. If I had written this book while my boys were still living under my roof, it would not have been as easy to access the pain I felt when they weren't with me. If I had written this book before my miscarriage, or my divorce, or my dad's death, not only would those stories be missing from it, but other stories would lack the depth of understanding and peace from God that each experience taught me. So while it did take me 10 years to finally sit down (or in my case, lounge) and make this dream a reality, it wasn't too late. In fact, it was the perfect time for me to stop and truly reflect on every aspect of my life and honestly seek God in writing my story with Him in the starring role. Sometimes I spent all day writing, only to later recall different details as I slept, or went for a walk, or heard from a sermon, or learned during a Bible study discussion. I constantly revisited stories until I was confident in their accuracy and the explanation of God's power within them. I couldn't help but wonder if this might be how the authors of God's Word felt as they would write and recall events. There are times I go back and read what I wrote and realize those words were more from God than they were from me. Many people have told me that this often happens to them as well when they sit quietly and journal or pray. I found other's insights invaluable to me. Any story that included someone other than myself, I would track them down (thank you, social media), email them the unedited version of "our" story and ask for their blessing as well as any further clarity on this experience through their eyes. At times I would change a name or two to make the person more comfortable with me sharing something so personal, but the story itself was accurate or became accurate after discussing it further with them. Oftentimes people would recall details

that had slipped my mind and now made the story even more beautiful. Some even sent me photos that they had taken from our shared experience. My boys found the stories of their childhood endearing and humorous, but worked with me on what I was allowed to share once my reflections hit middle school and beyond.

My prayer has always been that each of my stories speak the truth in love and give God the glory. That is why I knew I would have to self-publish. "It's Real to Me" is my personal, God-ordained book of moments throughout life where God has clearly shown Himself to me. There is no way I could allow a publishing agency to take control of that. Instead, God brought Toni Purry to mind. She was not only a fellow sister in Christ but a successful, self-published author. I hired Toni to guide me through every stage of the process and not only do I now have a book, but a strategy and a platform for it to reach others.

So here you go world: my book of obedience. I never imagined actually getting this far, so I have no expectations on how it will be received by others. But much like Jonah, my instructions were to simply tell, and in finishing this chapter, I have done just what was asked of me. What I hadn't anticipated was how much I would enjoy the process of writing, be blessed by connecting with family, friends, and acquaintances whom I share these stories with, and be eternally grateful for this imperfect life that has allowed me to experience the Lord in so many perfect ways.

Jonah 2:8,9

"Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.' "

Hindsight is one of the most helpful aspects to understanding the Bible because we're told how the stories end. In my own life, I may not understand why God allows things to happen, but because of the Bible I do understand God's character.

This Book is a collection of real, honest, and vulnerable testimonies that prove God's love and provision throughout my life.

THIS BOOK IS FOR *you* IF...

You're unfamiliar with the Bible and want to know how it applies to you.

You know the Bible, but struggle to understand how it applies to you.

You view the Bible as an old outdated book written by a bunch of old outdated men.

You're curious how the Bible could bring wisdom, clarity, and hope to your life.

Your belief in the Bible is solid but you could use a little encouragement from a fellow sister in Christ.

You need a fresh look at a dusty book.



Meet Kimberly



Kimberly Preston is a daughter, mother, teacher, speaker, author and above all else a child of God. She's raised two amazing sons, traveled to Africa for mission trips, and founded a growing ministry. She's also felt God's hand on her life as she's walked through miscarriages, divorce, and the sudden death of her beloved dad; which led her to become the loving caregiver to her disabled mom. Her life isn't perfect, but she's willing to be open and transparent about it. Kimberly's stories demonstrate how God used her imperfections to grow her perfectly into the woman He's designed her to be.

Kimberly
PRESTON

