

TRADING WALLS FOR ALTARS

Lindsay Allen

C2 Publishing/Mobile

For Jackson, Meredith, Sawyer, Elizabeth, and Marshall:

*"Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for my soul."*

Psalms 66:16

May you soon have your own amazing stories to tell of God's abounding love and faithfulness, but until then, you can enjoy mine.

For Derek:

"This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

Psalms 118:23

God has been so faithful to us, and I am forever grateful that He chose to place us together to experience His amazing works alongside one another.

Copyright © 2022 by NELLALLEN INC

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 979-8-218-05118-1

NELLALLEN INC

6508 Sugar Creek Drive South

Mobile, AL 36695

www.thec2life.org

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Contents

Recognizing Walls That Have Been There All Along.....	i
---	---

Part 1: Learning the Lingo

1. We All Have Walls.....	1
2. Altars Can Be Messy.....	7
3. Do the Hard Things.....	13

Part 2: Making the Trade

4. Trading a Storybook Character for a Savior.....	23
5. Trading Stereotypes for Surrender.....	27
6. Trading a Career for a Calling.....	33
7. Trading Comfort for the Great Commission.....	39
8. Trading Doubts and Anxiety for Trust in the Truth.....	45
9. Trading the Role of Victim for Forgiveness and Healing.....	51
10. Trading Discouragement for Confidence.....	59
11. Trading Badges of Honor for Humility.....	65
12. Trading Happily Ever After for Joy Now and Forever.....	71

Final Encouragement

13. Keeping Walls Down, Altars Up, and Boundaries Clear.....	77
--	----

Recognizing Walls That Have Been There All Along

I grew up in the land of “Bless your heart! Hey y’all. Come on in. How y’all doin’? Fine, how ‘bout you? Give me a neck hug. Stay a while. Y’all come back real soon, ya hear?” As a child, my family moved frequently from one southern town to another. Thankfully, I was pretty outgoing, so I easily started new friendships over the years which were mostly centered around common interests or activities. As a middle schooler, it was fairly easy to share my deepest thoughts and secrets with my besties (and keep theirs, too). However, when I entered adulthood, I never seemed to be able to break past the shallow pleasantries when trying to develop friendships. I was often shocked when marriages around me ended or when people within our church were found to be in scandal. I had no idea they were dealing with those serious things all along. These people had been carrying on as usual Sunday-in and Sunday-out, all while wearing smiles and smudge-free makeup.

I married my husband, Derek, when I was nineteen and instantly became a pastor’s wife. This wasn’t a shock to me like it is to a lot of women who marry someone in vocational ministry. In fact, I grew up as a pastor’s kid, and I felt strongly from a young age that I would marry someone in ministry. As a pastor’s wife, people kept me at a safe distance from their real struggles and problems. They wanted to be liked by me and to sit by me, but they didn’t want to be known by me. I had my part to play in staying in the shallows as well. I had heard from countless other pastors’ wives that you can’t make friends with the people you serve. It’s not safe. You’ll be hurt, or worse, you’ll hurt your and your husband’s ministry. That advice combined with my perspective as a pastor’s kid witnessing several church people act a fool, it seemed to just make sense. Authenticity just wasn’t going to happen for me outside of my marriage. The first real adult friendships I formed were with Derek’s best friend, Randy and his wife, Rachel. Even with them it took us years to get to a place of openness with one another where we felt the freedom to share real struggles. All the more, much of our comfort with one another was built on the years of friendship

Derek and Randy had already developed with each other beginning their kindergarten year. For years I was envious of their friendship. I remember thinking, “I will never have a real friend like that because I can’t go back to kindergarten and build one.”

My world changed in 2013 when my husband and I, along with our three kids at the time, moved from north Alabama to Miami, Florida, to plant a church. We quickly learned that people in South Florida were night-and-day different from those we had known in the cultural south. Things worked differently there. No one trusted anyone. People were overly suspicious and seemed to be just waiting for some catch or for the other shoe to drop at any moment. People generally expected that others only wanted something from them, or more specifically, to take advantage of them in some way. Our first realization of these nuances occurred when we tried to rent a house in Miami before actually arriving in the city. It was an impossible task! We were working with a real estate agent who tried unsuccessfully to get us into several rental contracts. She explained to us that none of the landlords would agree to rent to us until we were actually there in Miami. They didn’t believe we were credible, potential tenants. Instead, they suspected it was some kind of a scam. So, praying for God to provide, we loaded up our U-Haul and just drove south. Our agent called us about half-way through the drive down and said, “I just left your house! The landlords don’t know that it’s your house yet, but it meets all your requests and (most importantly) your budget. They want to meet you tomorrow before agreeing to lease you the house. I need you to go in there, put on that southern charm, and bring your baby!” That’s just what we did. Sure enough, they agreed to lease us the house despite the three other prospective tenants who were touring the home during our meeting. This helped us learn that our baby, along with our other two kids, was a fantastic tool to break the ice with new people. The would-be cold-shouldered people would let a little of their guard down around our kids and actually engage in conversation with them and, consequently, us. This was a huge win for us when we were trying to meet and gather people.

Soon after moving to Miami, we planned our first prayer meeting. We had met a few people during visits to the city before moving, so we contacted everyone we knew (all twelve of them) and

invited them to our home to help us pray for the new church we were starting and other specific prayer needs. At first, it didn't appear that anyone was going to show up. But, in true Miami fashion, about ten minutes after our announced start time, people started ringing the doorbell. Pretty soon, our living room was full of new faces. We took some time for introductions since no one knew each other before gathering that night. After the introductions, we gave instructions for the structured time of prayer. We set up stations around our living room with prayer prompts and Scripture to guide people's prayer time. It was all going so well! Then, we decided to finish the night by giving the group an opportunity to share their own prayer requests. Now, where I grew up, this would be the time when people would start asking for prayer for their uncle's neighbor's dog's left paw infection. So, you can imagine my shock when people started sharing real needs, like "Pray for me to be better about reading the Bible," or "Pray for me to have more healthy relationships." Then, I was really floored when it came time for the young couple in the circle to share. The husband went first. He shared with us his struggle with viewing pornography and asked us to pray for him and his wife and their baby girl to be able to have victory over the effects of his temptation and sin. I felt my face get flushed and all I could think was "What, what did he just say? His wife is sitting *right there!* What was his name again?" It felt like we were playing the what's in your purse game, and he had brought his Mary Poppins magic duffle bag. He just kept bringing out things that neither Derek nor I expected could come from such little investment in his life. The two opposite cultures represent extremes on a scale of emotional connectivity. Understanding where we and others fall on that scale has helped me better relate to and connect with others. In addition, it highlighted some unhealthy truths about my own life that needed to be addressed.