

Insights

The Way to a New Life

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2012

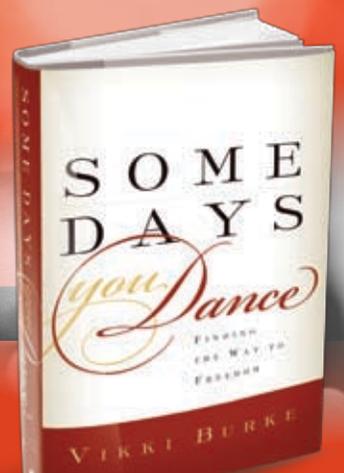
Denial isn't faith.

Find true
freedom
in the face of betrayal, abuse,
heartache and depression



EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW ISSUE

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Vikki's new book ►





ARMS

Open wide

BY VIKKI BURKE

The sun slatted through the blinds in stripes of light and shadow giving our home in Los Angeles the impression of a jail cell. At nine, I'd never been to jail. But I had been imprisoned.

Even now that day stands out in my memory. My mother, dressed in a silk blouse and wearing diamond earrings, clapped her hands in delight over the keyboard of her new organ. My two sisters, brother and I gathered around to hear the song she'd learned.

Slow and halting at first, her confidence grew and she sang the words as she played. “It is no secret what God can do. What He’s done for others, He’ll do for you. With arms wide open, He’ll pardon you. It is no secret what God can do...”

Those words stirred something in my soul; something that should never have died in a nine-year-old child.

Hope.

Hope sprang to resurrected life and I slipped out of the house pondering it.

With arms wide open, He’ll pardon you.

It is no secret what God can do.

In the back yard, I opened my arms and my heart wide to God. Then I prayed the most fervent prayer of my life.

“God, please... kill me!”

That was my defining moment.

The words of the song swimming in my mind, I knew that God had heard me and that He would answer. Limp with relief, I slid back inside. In the bathroom,

I looked at my reflection in the mirror.

Eyes bruised with fatigue and fear, I stared at my stick straight hair and sighed. I remembered the sting of my mother’s hand on my face as, brushing my hair, she’d slapped me over and over in a screaming rage.

Rubbing my fingers over the flush on my cheek, I tried to imagine how different my life might have been with curls.

I’ll bet she’d love me if I had curls.

I would *never* be good enough to be loved.

Looking the Other Way

Violence had been so woven into the fabric of my family that I’d hardly blinked the day a bullet whizzed past my head and drilled a hole into the fence post behind me. I could

get my hands on a gun and I knew how to use it.

At nine, I’d pondered and dismissed the idea of suicide. I wasn’t afraid of a bullet. A good, clean death sounded so much better than constant fear and suffering. But every Catholic knew that suicide was a mortal sin.

Still, death seemed my only way out. My older sister had already proven that running away from home didn’t work.

She’d gone to the police and spilled the beans—told all of our ugly secrets. She told them about our mother’s rage and the endless beatings. She told them that dad was an alcoholic. Even drunk, though, he had standards.

He would never hit a woman.

Kids, on the other hand, were fair game.

Yet, as far as I was concerned, dad was innocent of all wrong. He was a victim as much as we were. My mother egged him into rage. She pushed him over the top until he beat us to shut her up.

For years our neighbors listened to us scream and turned a deaf ear. Our teachers pretended not to notice our bruises and black eyes.

The police looked the other way too. They brought my sister home, forced her to march right back inside a house where they knew she would be beaten and abused. I shook with rage as I realized the brutal blows we suffered were nothing more than an inconvenience to them. They didn’t want to be bothered with us.

My only solace lay in this: God wouldn’t look the other way. He’d kill me and take me someplace safe. A place where children weren’t stalked with fear. A place where I wouldn’t shudder and try to stifle the sobs in bed at night when my body throbbled in pain.

Mayhem. That’s what would break out in our house if dad died. Like it or not, I had to pray. This time I didn’t open my arms and heart wide to God. Jaw clenched, I hissed, ‘I’m not going on pretending. If you’re God—heal my dad!’”

Layers of Pain

In time, I faced facts. God wasn’t going to kill me. He’d looked the other way too. Disillusioned, with no way of escape, I hardened my heart against Him. I didn’t understand the concept of depression, nor did I recognize its symptoms. I felt as though I’d stepped into emotional quicksand that crept up my feet and ankles until it swallowed me completely.

Helpless, I felt as though I were being buried alive.

Then, on top of it all, my dad was diagnosed with cancer.

For years we’d attended Mass on Christmas and Easter. Now, desperate for a miracle, my mother forced us to go to church often, demanding that we pray for him. Imagining what life would be like without my dad, my heart fluttered like a butterfly beating its wings against my chest. My hands felt damp and my mouth went dry. Dad was the only restraining force in our lives.

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Turning the Tables

The following year, I stood heartbroken among the black-shrouded mourners at his funeral. Numb with grief, I felt enraged at God. *I wanted to be in that casket.*

Why didn’t you kill me?

My worst nightmare came true as mom’s rage escalated. But what she didn’t anticipate, what nobody had factored in, was that mine had blossomed as well. For years I’d stuffed my outrage over the beatings we’d endured. I’d stuffed my outrage over the injustice of the police refusing to help us and others who refused to acknowledge our plight.

It had simmered like lava in a volcano. The next time mom decided to beat me, it erupted. I reacted without thought. The fury of a thousand beatings boiling over, I grabbed my mother by the throat and choked her. The feel of her flesh in my

hands and the sight of her fear as she fought for air was intoxicating.

I'm ending this! I thought as rage pulsed through every fiber of my being.

"Stop!" my brother's voice broke through the haze as he yanked me away from her.

"Traitor!"

I screamed.

I glanced at my mother and watched her cower. My eyes cold and flat, I saw the fear that had stalked me all my life looking back at me from her eyes. Finally, I had turned the tables on her. "You've beaten me for the past 16 years," I said. "I'll beat you for the next 16."

Scrambling to my room, I slammed the door and made a vow to myself. *No one would ever beat me again.*

Still devastated from losing my dad, I learned from a friend how to relieve the pain through marijuana, mescaline and Angel Dust. I soared through life on a cocktail mix of drugs and rage.

At the beach one day, a young woman witnessed to me about Jesus. Furious, tears streamed down my face and I almost choked on my reply.

"I hate God!"

Even after my venomous response, she gave me a copy of *Good News for Modern Man*. I didn't read it. As Catholics we'd been taught that reading the Bible would make you crazy.

My family was crazy enough.

I couldn't risk it.

A New Beginning

I moved out immediately after high school graduation, and filled my first year of independence with work, friends—and drugs. Then Gary, an old friend and heavy drug

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user, called to say he'd moved to Seattle, become a Christian and gotten sober.

"Vikki, you've *got* to come to Seattle for a while," he insisted.

Curious, I took a leave of absence from work and left for Seattle. Gary had a small group of friends the likes of which I'd never known. None of them worked. Rather, they spent all day reading the Bible. They urged me to join them

and, feeling tentative, I opened a Bible for the first time and started reading.

Days later, I looked up in shock. I'd been ripped off! I'd just read the parable of the 10 virgins and it made sense to me. The Bible wasn't so hard to understand that it would make you crazy!

Spending long days curled up with a Bible, I met a shepherd boy turned king. I read about Hannah and Samuel. I shuddered at Queen Esther's bravery. On those pages I met Jesus and my reaction to Him surprised me. I loved Him. Adored Him. Embraced Him. I closed my eyes and pondered what I'd learned. I realized that there was something about God I'd never understood.

He would never kill a nine-year-old girl.

Even if she begged.

After a month of saturating myself in the Scriptures, I went home changed. I'd never heard the term born again. All I knew was that I went to Seattle with ice in my veins and a heart as hard as the fist that beat me. I returned tender for God

and hungry—ravenous—for more.

"Vikki's changed!"

I heard my mother whisper into the telephone one day when I stopped by. She watched

me with wary eyes; the hunter having become the hunted. My life settled into a new rhythm. Instead of using drugs, after work each day I spent my evenings reading the Bible.

God in Los Angeles

Gary had given me so much advice, but particularly warned me to stay away from "those Los Angeles churches." One day while driving busy streets for an apartment to rent, I noticed a bearded man standing on the corner with a huge book. Passing by, I recognized him. *Jeff!* I parked and got out.

"Vikki, you've got to visit my church," he urged. Now a Christian, Jeff was witnessing on the street, and that giant book turned out to be a Bible.

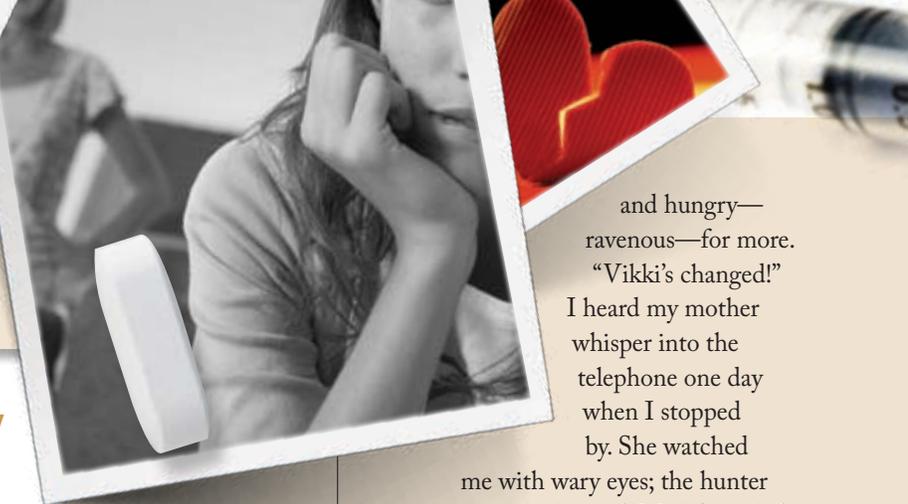
"I can't," I explained. "The Holy Spirit doesn't live in Los Angeles and He doesn't go to churches."

Jeff threw back his head and laughed. "That's not true, Vikki. The Holy Spirit is alive and well in Los Angeles and He shows up at our church on a regular basis."

My life shifted again when I visited Jeff's church and found I felt at home there. The small group of young people I met—a group that included Dennis Burke—soon had a profound influence on my life. Together we started our own coffee house, hiring Christian bands with names like Petra and Second Chapter of Acts that no one had ever heard of at the time.

A group called Agape Force taught us how to do street evangelism, which we loved. On Saturdays we hitchhiked to the beach to witness to people, urging them to join us at the coffee house that evening.

"Let's get a Hari Krishna today!" I suggested as we set our faith for target audiences. Soon, the Lord brought a girl who was part of the Hari Krishna group across our path and we presented the plan of salvation.





The Secret

Life was good, except for the dark secret that I dared tell no one.

I still *hated* my mother.

Climbing into my car one day going to work, I heard the Lord say something so radical that I almost veered off the road.

“Vikki, I want you to say, ‘I love my mother.’”

“Are you kidding? I hate my mother!”

Ignoring my response, the Holy Spirit kept repeating the instruction. From that day forward, every time I drove my car He gently insisted I say those four simple words: I love my mother.

“But I *hate* her!” I argued.

Day after day and week after week, God and I argued the subject of my mother. In time, I gave in. “All right!” I sighed in exasperation. “I’ll say it. I love my mother. But we both know I really hate her!”

I had no idea why God demanded that I say something that I didn’t mean. Yet each time I got in the car, He required it and I did it—feeling like a liar every time.

After about six months, however, the strangest thing happened. One day when I said, “I love my mother,” something broke on the inside of me and tears welled in my eyes. Sobbing, I said, *“I love my mother!”*

I repeated the words in awe as I realized that it was true. For the first time in my life, I loved my mother! For years I’d hoped against hope that she would change. That she would love and cherish me. Now, without any evidence of change in her, God had changed *me*.

Right or wrong; cruel or kind; deserved or undeserved—I truly loved Lavena Chavez. In all honesty, she wasn’t an easy person to love, but the love of God through Jesus had made it possible.

Learning to Live by Faith

Without hatred blinding me, I could look back and see that my mother hadn’t been all wrong and my dad hadn’t been all right. Theirs had been a toxic, dysfunctional relationship fueled as much by his alcoholism as by her rage.

I hated some of the choices she made. I hated to see all of my siblings nursing their pain through one form of addiction or another. However, through the eyes of love I could admit that she was acting out of the pain and rage leftover from the abuse she herself had suffered in her life. Without being born again, she was powerless to stop the madness.

Grateful for how God had transformed my attitude toward her, I still puzzled over exactly how it had happened. I had no idea the puzzle would be solved when one of our friends decided to attend the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International meeting in Denver the summer of 1971. There he heard a young minister by the name of Kenneth Copeland and bought all of his teachings on reel-to-reel tapes.

Back home, we held meetings and played those tapes.

When I heard Brother Copeland teach on the power of our confession and I studied Mark 11:23, all the pieces fell into place for me. Suddenly I understood why the Lord had insisted that I confess that I loved my mother.

Later that summer we traveled to San Francisco to attend the world convention of the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship and heard Kenneth Copeland preach every day. Hungry to live by faith, we traveled to as many of his meetings as possible to learn more.

During this time, Dennis had pursued a relationship with me. When he proposed, I accepted with joy. We married in June of 1973 and spent two weeks in Fort Worth attending one of Brother Copeland’s meetings. In October of 1976, we moved to Fort Worth when Kenneth and Gloria hired us to work for Kenneth Copeland Evangelistic Association.

A Spirit of Heaviness

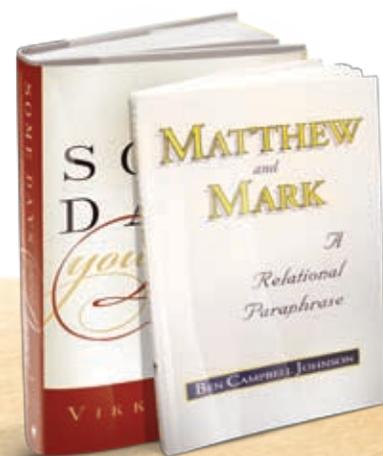
Although I’d been delivered from rage and I loved my mother, I still suffered bouts of depression. Often, the insidious emotional quicksand overwhelmed me to the point that I went home from work and collapsed in a listless heap on the bed.

Kenneth Copeland’s anointed music ministered to me and, without knowing I was being led by the Holy Spirit, I started listening to his music for hours at a time. God used that music to drive away the oppression that had haunted me.

In 1979, with Brother Copeland’s blessing, we started Dennis Burke Ministries. Things were good. I’d conquered the depression and developed a relationship with my mother I’d once considered impossible. She adored Dennis and our daughter, Jessica.

I had everything that I’d ever imagined: A wonderful husband, a beautiful daughter, a global ministry and a safe and peaceful home. I worked endless hours in the ministry.

No-nonsense encounters with Jesus.



Get Vikki’s full story in her new book, *Some Days You Dance*. Also in this special offer, you will receive this relational paraphrase of the books of *Matthew* and *Mark* by Ben Campbell Johnson. Study the Word in the same straightforward translation Vikki used to grow closer with the Lord.



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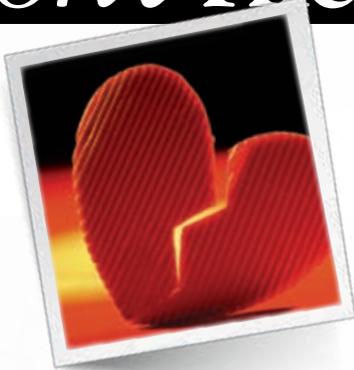
FINDING
THE WAY TO
FREEDOM

V I K K I B U R K E

what others are saying

Get Vikki's full story, and find your own answers.

Don't hide the pain.



In a gripping new book that reads like a novel,

Vikki Burke recounts how running a worldwide ministry with her husband didn't automatically exempt her from feeling burned-out and disillusioned with her Christian life. No matter what she tried, she couldn't seem to shake feelings of despair and hopelessness. "What's wrong with my life?" she writes. "Why am I so frustrated, angry and insecure? Why don't I enjoy the joy the Bible promises?"

Yet, in her desperation, she found the answer—an answer that may surprise you.

Perhaps you've experienced some of these same feelings. Some days you feel like dancing, but on others, you feel like a complete disaster. Maybe you're saying, "If something doesn't change fast, I have no idea how I can possibly go on." If you're struggling, today is your day. For yourself, or as a gift for someone you love, order *Some Days You Dance* and join Vikki on the journey to recovery.

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"...my hat is off to you for daring to be "real" and to actually bring genuine hope to women who struggle with a less-than-perfect upbringing.... Bravo! A fantastic and encouraging read!"

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—Tina Keys

\$19⁹⁵

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continued from pg. 5

I supported Dennis and traveled to speak myself. I kept a pristine house, and to the best of my ability, I did it all with excellence.

Had I checked my own emotional pulse, I might have realized that I was juggling faster and faster to keep everything going. I did not, however, allow myself the luxury of introspection. I managed to do everything, and do it right.

Then in August of 1994, without warning, I woke one day unable to do anything at all. Something inside of me had broken and I could no longer function. Built like a house of cards on a faulty foundation, my hard-earned emotional health crumbled and fell, and I was powerless to pick up the pieces.

From the depths of my despair, I saw my life through a prism of truth. While I did have a wonderful husband, daughter, ministry and home, that wasn't the entire picture. I didn't have a single real friend. What I had were walls, thick emotional walls that kept everyone a safe distance away. I had a façade more than a life. Somehow along the way I'd become addicted to work—to getting it all right.

Free at Last

The journey from that day to this is a story every believer needs to hear. While space doesn't allow me to tell it all here, this much I will say: without realizing it, there was a *lie* that took root in me as a child that drove everything I'd done.

I'll never be good enough to be loved.

In retrospect, I did to myself the same thing that the police did. The same thing our neighbors, teachers and the church did. I looked the other way. I slapped that little girl back into an emotional closet and ordered her not to come out. While I don't believe it's healthy to dwell on the past, neither do I believe that denial works.

Denial isn't faith.

It's quite the opposite. It's trying to hide the past from yourself and from God.

To begin my recovery, I had to confront things that I didn't want to remember. I had to tear down the mask of perfection that I'd worn too long. I had to become vulnerable to God, and to others. I slipped outside of all pretenses. Then I opened my arms and my heart wide to God. Certain that His arms were opened wide to me, I prayed a heartfelt prayer filled with faith.

"God, please... heal me."

This time, He answered just the way I expected. He took me on a journey to real and lasting freedom. He led me out of the emotional prison of shame, blame, guilt, and fear that had shadowed me as long as I could remember. He turned my sadness into such joy that some days...I dance.

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(601) 544 - 8485

February 5

New Life Family Fellowship
3101 Highway 66 E
Caddo Mills, TX 75135
(903) 527 - 3099

January 15

Omega Church
3737 Roosevelt
San Antonio, TX 78214
(210) 923 - 2220

January 17-19

KCM Ministers Conference
14355 Morris Dido Road
Newark, TX 76071
(817) 252 - 2900

January 21-22

Living Word Christian Center
9201 75th Avenue North
Brooklyn Park, MN 55423
(763) 315 - 7000

February 19-20

Heritage of Faith Family Church
52406 Highway 12
Frisco NC 27936
(252) 995 - 6677

February 21-22

Avon Worship Center
40082 Harbor Rd
Avon, NC 27915
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