

# BLESSED TRANSGRESSIONS™



THE ONLINE CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

#1  
Reader's  
Choice:

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ARE YOU  
READY  
FOR  
*BATTLE?*

PLUS: The Answer to Unjust Suffering

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# Are You Ready for Battle?



By Lesley Crawford

[lifeinthespaciousplace.wordpress.com](http://lifeinthespaciousplace.wordpress.com)

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I had no idea I was getting involved in something so violent. My aim was to improve my fitness, so I had begun going to exercise classes.

At first it was mainly dance-based classes, but then I decided to take it to the next level and try Body Combat. I knew it was based on martial arts, but I was not prepared for the graphic narrative the instructor provided as she went through the class.

“Punch, punch, punch, punch, HARDER! ”

“Under the chin and right on the nose....and kick between the legs!”

"Grab his head and slam it on the ground!"

This went on for a whole hour. It was completely non-contact, but she encouraged everyone to imagine an enemy- maybe an ex or someone who had angered them- and to do the whole class pretending they were fighting against that person.

At first I struggled. I'm really not a violent person. I'm not the sort of person to hold a grudge, and even when someone has deeply hurt me I can't imagine getting any pleasure from inflicting painful revenge.

But then I thought of an enemy.

**We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.**

**Ephesians 6:12**

I thought about the anorexia which was holding my friend captive and destroying her life. I thought about the abuse I experienced and the impact on my life- the years of silence and shame and hiding.

I thought about the brokenness I saw in the world and in



so many people's lives- grief, heartache, stress, illness, anxiety, depression... the list goes on.

I thought about the enemy behind them- the one whose purpose is "to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10)- and my inner warrior was released.

Suddenly my punches became stronger, my kicks more vigorous, and I felt like I was actually fighting. Every blow proclaimed Jesus' victory over all these things, declaring that the outcome of this battle has already been decided and the enemy will be defeated.

I certainly got a good workout that day- and who would have thought an exercise class could become a spiritual experience?

Paul writes in his letter to the Corinthians, "I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadow-boxing." (1 Corinthians 9:26) It is important to recognise that we are in a real fight with a real enemy, and the choices we make matter.

The final outcome is fixed- Jesus wins- but the devil is not going down without a fight.

In the Body Combat class, we were constantly remind-

ed, "Keep up your guard," and that is crucial in our spiritual lives too.

**Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil.  
He prowls around like a roaring lion,  
looking for someone to devour.**

**1 Peter 5:8**

Fortunately God gives us armour to enable us to resist the devil, but we need to take it and use it.

**Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

**Ephesians 6:14-17**

We need to fill our hearts and minds with God's truth so that we can stand against the devil's lies. We need to hold to the righteousness we have in Christ so we are not drawn back into guilt and shame by Satan's accusations. We need to be ready to step out in obedience to God, and to live by faith and not by sight.

We need to know God's Word and use it as Jesus did in fighting back against the enemy.

And we need each other. Someone once pointed out to me that there is no armour for the back of the body. We are not meant to turn and run away. We are meant to stand and face the enemy, but we also need to be watching each other's backs and standing together and encouraging one another to keep going when it is hard.

Remember the outcome has already been decided...

**The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.**  
**Romans 16:20**

...and we know how the story ends.

**Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All of these things are gone forever.**

**Revelation 21:3-4** 

# You Are Being Made into a Diamond



By Kelly R. Baker  
[kellyrbaker.com](http://kellyrbaker.com)

When you woke up today you have already put a great deal of time into becoming a priceless diamond, cherished by your heavenly Father. You might not feel like a precious gemstone. You might be asking, "Have you seen my life lately?"

Life is full of stresses, but you can probably relate to those seasons when you feel like you can't take it anymore. Those are the days when your heart is like a fragile eggshell, and the slightest circumstantial impact will cause it to crack. Your emotions splatter without restraint onto others.

Some seasons are long and wearisome. You feel like you can't bear one more day. Living life is stretching



you to your greatest limits; you know if you're not careful, you'll snap like a rubber band stretched past its point of endurance.

God is never blind to these types of strains. In fact, He will use these times to create something beautiful in us. It is the unforeseen result of intense trials.

### **Four Ways the Making of a Diamond Relates to Life**

Did you know an enormous amount of factors have to meet together to produce a diamond? If you love God, then He takes every single factor of your life and transforms it into what is good the same way precise constituents come together in the natural to yield a diamond. He's God like that.

**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**

**Romans 8:28 NASB**

**Conditions.** Diamonds form under extreme conditions of extreme temperature and pressure. Does that sound familiar? It will if you've been under a massive amount of pressure, or if you've frequently found yourself in hot water.



**Placement.** The rare crystals form deep in the upper mantle of the earth. So deep, that no way exists to drill to that depth. Others do not always understand how you feel when you're going through an intense season. That's because God is doing a deep work in you. Only God knows exactly how deep He is going in your heart.

**Rupture.** These remarkable jewels come to the surface by deep volcanic eruptions. This happens when you are "just so done" with the strain that you run to the Father's arms. Crying—or even weeping—your heart wrenches with the weight of the pressure, and in your humanness you "erupt."


**Value.** Diamonds are unique in that they exist in various sizes, colors, and shapes. You may have heard the quote, "We all want to be diamonds, but few want to be cut," floating around the internet, but they are cut out to be displayed. God loves to put His diamonds on display.

**And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work  
in you will bring it to completion at the day of  
Jesus Christ.**

**Philippians 1:6 ESV**

God is faithful. He will complete the work He has started in you because He treasures you. How pleasing to envi-

sion how God views each one of His children as His exquisite creation!

You are being made into a diamond. Run straight to Him—the Diamond-Maker. Cling to His promises. When you come out the other side you will be beautiful. 

# Four Ways to Bring Revival to Your Soul



By Christin Baker  
[garmentsofsplendor.com](http://garmentsofsplendor.com)

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**I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.**

**Jeremiah 31:25**

One summer in high school I went on a missions trip with a group of other students to the western part of Mexico. It was an incredible experience that completely broadened my horizons and gave me a love for serving others.

One aspect of the trip that was fun and memorable was the journey itself. Our group took two 15-passenger vans and drove from West Michigan to Ensenada, Mexico—nearly a 40 hour drive!

I distinctly remember noticing the vast change in



landscape as we traveled from the Midwest to the rocky terrain of the Southwest. Lush, green plains and fields were soon replaced with dusty plateaus and caramel-colored sand, speckled with shrubs and cacti. The long ride may have been hot and stuffy, but the view was absolutely breathtaking.

My long trek west makes me think of the condition of our own spiritual landscapes. Is your soul green and vibrant, or does it resemble a dry, barren land in need of water? Do you enjoy the fruit of joy, peace, and contentment, or do you find yourself frazzled, distracted, irritated and defeated? Do you need the Lord to refresh and revive your soul?

I know I do.

We all sometimes need an awakening, a spiritual refreshment and retreat for our weary souls. A spirit that is more alive, revived and refreshed. A soul that is full of health, strength and vigor. Just as David cried out to God in **Psalms 63:1**,

**...my soul thirsts for you, my whole being longs for you,  
in a dry and parched land where there is no water.**

When my soul is in need of a spiritual revival, I think of

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. This barren valley of lifeless skeletons illustrated the spiritual state of the nation of Israel at the time: dead. But when the breath of God prophesied through the mouth of Ezekiel, tendons, flesh, and skin covered the bones, and the Word of God brought the bones to life as a vast army (Ezekiel 37:11-15).

So how do we find rest and renewal for our souls while in our own barren valleys?

**I have observed four “R’s” to spiritual revival:**

**Remember** – Remind yourself of what God’s Word says about who you are on a daily basis. Remember the things that God has done in your life. The way he delivered you from the clutches of the enemy.

How he snatched you from the pit of darkness and brought you into his wonderful light. How He provided for your every need and brought you through each trial. Remember that He is God!

**I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will  
remember your miracles of long ago.**

**Psalms 77:11**

**Recount** – Retell, rehearse, and speak the Word of God to your soul. When Ezekiel witnessed the valley of dry bones, God spoke to him:

Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!’”

**Ezekiel 37:4**

In order to bring life and vitality to our own hearts, we must do the same. Speak the Word of God to your soul.

Allow the breath of the Holy Spirit to refresh the barrenness of your broken land. Speak life to yourself and over your situation. Life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). What we say to others and what we say to ourselves matters.

We must speak the life-giving, Spirit-breathed, fresh wind of God to our souls—and watch the dry valleys of our hearts break into streams of living water!

**Repent** — After Peter and John healed a lame man in Acts 3, Peter addressed the crowd that stood in amazement around them. Peter’s message was simple:

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come



from the Lord.  
Acts 3:19

Did you catch the connection? Spiritual revival and refreshment does not come until we repent from our sins and turn to God.

Are there areas in your soul that remain stagnant and lifeless? Have you completely turned that area over to God? Is there hidden sin buried deep within those valleys? Bitterness? Worry? Unforgiveness? Jesus invites us to turn those things over to Him; it's time to leave it all at the foot of the cross and receive a new wave of refreshment for our souls.


**Refresh others** — **Proverbs 11:25** says it beautifully,

**...whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.**

When we give a cup of cool water to those around us, we refresh others with love and humility. When we step out and meet the needs of others, we no longer wallow in the desert land of our own parched souls, but think of ways to be a blessing to others.

When we do this, our valleys no longer look so dry and dreary. God gives us strength and powerful revival

when we reach out and refresh others with His flowing fountain of life.

So speak words of hope and healing to your soul today. Clothe yourself in garments of Christ's revitalizing splendor, and find rest for your soul. You will be revived, renewed and completely refreshed! 

# The Answer to Unjust Suffering



By Erika DeWitt  
[blessedtransgressions.org](http://blessedtransgressions.org)

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If we were having a coffee date, I'm sure we could fill the entire conversation with memories, or perhaps current situations, of unjust suffering in our lives.

It's the suffering that we haven't caused for ourselves but suddenly appears, breaking our hearts and leaving us with no answers as to why it happened or when it will be corrected. Experiences like these always stay with us, because, it seems, there are always questions lingering that we can't silence.

Unjust suffering looks like a hard and dedicated worker losing their job. It looks like a parent losing their child well before their time, whether hours or years from birth.



It looks like someone else getting the one thing you most desired in your heart, and now your dreams have become like ashes.

The apostle Paul experienced unjust suffering himself, and by inquiring of God to take it away, he gained the answer that can silence every lingering and painful question about why undue suffering comes our way.


Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say, 7 or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

**2 Corinthians 12:9**

Paul, being so advanced spiritually, could have boasted and been praised by many people who knew him. But, even though he chose not to boast, he was given a “thorn” in his flesh to keep him from inner conceit.

The fact that Paul asked God three times to remove it shows us he was initially confused by the purpose of this “thorn,” and wanted the unjust suffering removed from his life so he could carry on with righteous work. But God would not do so, telling him, “My power is made perfect in weakness.”

When we are afflicted, weakened, suffering—we have the opportunity to draw near to God, whether it be immediately or eventually. This ultimately humbles us, and reminds us of our dependence on him. Paul needed that reminder despite his heart and spirituality being in the right place, and so do we.

Now, dear one, when you are suffering and tempted to ask God why... just realize he has already given the answer. His power is made perfect in your weakness, and sometimes that weakness is not your fault. It's merely part of the plan God has had for you all along, to keep you very close and dependent on him. 

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