

CAN GOD'S WORD GUIDE THEM,
EVEN THROUGH TRAGEDY?

Paula Mowery
Lamp
unto her
Feet

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Dedication

This book is dedicated first to God, Whose Word is reliable and good.

The idea for this book came from perusing my grandmother's Bible. Though she has been in heaven for many years, I dedicate this book to Mamaw Smith. I still get chills reading the passages you highlighted and underlined.

1

Kenzie Murrah refused to move from the open casket holding her grandmother.

"Come on, Kenzie. Don't make a scene," her mother whispered coarsely while tugging at her elbow.

"Far be it from me to embarrass you, Mother." She jerked free from her mother's hand and whisked into the funeral home's lobby, pausing only to rub the cover of the well-worn Bible her Nana Nita insisted Kenzie have.

She opened to the first page where Nana inscribed in it a few days ago, while Kenzie visited her in the hospital.

"Kenzie, my precious one, this book will be a lamp unto your feet. When the darkness closes in, it will illuminate the way. Promise me you will read it every day."

"But Nana Nita, I like when we read it together. You always helped me to understand what it says and what it means to me."

"Precious one, you will need to do this on your own now." Nana patted Kenzie's hand.

Kenzie was pretty sure she understood what Nana Nita was saying, but she didn't want to accept the fact that Nana was leaving for good. Now that Kenzie was almost finished with college, there were so many other important decisions to be made.

Her parents had their own ideas about the path

Kenzie should follow for her life. Their way focused on money and status. Nana Nita explained that God's plans were the best ones to follow and He didn't concern Himself with money or status. Now with Nana gone, Kenzie was on her own to decipher God's will. Nana taught her to pray and read the Bible for instruction and guidance, but Nana had always been there to explain and pray with her. Would she mess up? Might she miss God's plan and take the wrong path? A haze settled around her heart and mind, threatening to drain any confidence or faith she contained.

~*~

Arriving back at her small apartment, she plopped onto her bed with a heavy sigh. She lay on her stomach, propping up on her elbows.

Nana Nita's Bible lay in front of her, and she stared at it. "OK, Nana, I hope you're right about the Bible illuminating me."

She opened the front cover. Nana Nita had glued a small square of paper with two short typed paragraphs entitled, *The Word of God*.

This Book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers.

Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter.

Lamp Unto Her Feet

Here paradise is restored, heaven opened, and hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design and the glory of God its end. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. Let it fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given to you in life, will be opened in the judgment, and remembered forever. It involves the highest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents—

Author Unknown.

A handwritten note below the paragraphs caught Kenzie's eye, especially when she spotted her name.

Kenzie,

Trust in His Word, and it will guide you step-by-step. Start at the beginning, Genesis 12.

Nana

"Hmm." Kenzie scratched her head. She drew in a deep breath and let it out. "All right, I'll try it." She shrugged and flipped to Genesis 12. Her eyes were drawn to a highlighted section, verses 1-3. She read through them once silently and then aloud.

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.'"

A note was scribbled along the margin:

Sometimes, no matter how scary, God would have us to move away from bad influences to a place where He can bless and you can be free to bless others.

Her cell phone buzzed, and she jerked from

surprise. The screen indicated her mom.

"Hello, Mom."

"Kenzie, could you meet your father and me for dinner tomorrow evening?"

She couldn't come up with a reason not to, though she tried. "Sure."

After obtaining the details, Kenzie ended the call and stared at the phone. *Now what?* They were too late to trifle with her education choice. Graduation was in one week. She had already been scoping out possible early childhood positions, but choices mid-year were slim. So much for graduating a semester early in December instead of May. She'd still need to rely on her job at Walmart to pay the bills. Another thing her parents hated.

The next evening, she pulled her little olive-green car into a parking space at her parent's favorite seafood spot. She hesitated. Would this be another Kenzie bashing? She opened the car door. May as well get it over with.

Her parents waved her over to their normal booth. Kenzie plopped onto the seat. Great. They sat on one side facing her like the inquisition.

"Hello, darling. How was your day?" Her mother's sing-song tone was coated with sugar but not sincerity.

"Fine."

At least she would get a good meal out of this. The restaurant had the best grouper fingers in the state of Maryland.

Idle chit-chat dominated until Kenzie was almost finished with her meal.

Her father crossed his arms and propped them on the table, leaning closer. "With graduation soon

approaching, we need to discuss your place at the chiropractic clinic.”

Kenzie’s last bite of fish turned to gravel in her mouth. She forced it down with a gulp of diet soda. “Dad, I’m going to work in early childhood. That’s my calling.”

Her mother rolled her eyes. “Your calling has no promise of advancement or success.” Her words dripped with sarcasm.

“Am I to assume you located a position in this field?” Her father’s eyes narrowed.

Kenzie’s chest tightened. “No, not yet. But it’s the middle of the year.”

Her mother raised her hand, palm facing Kenzie, like a traffic cop. “Spare me, Kenzie.”

Should she submit to their wishes? Was she doing the right thing? Suddenly, the verses from Nana’s Bible popped into her head, “get thee from thy father’s house.” Then, her cell phone buzzed. Who could that be?

“Excuse me.” She reached into her purse and pulled it out, reading the screen. A text from Lila. Kenzie hoped everything was all right with her friend. She took a quick glance. At least it provided a temporary distraction. She skimmed the text. Contact her immediately for a Pre-K job possibility. Kenzie’s arms erupted in goose bumps. She glanced at her parents. “Sorry to leave so soon. I need to take care of this.” She stood. “Thanks for supper.”

Her father started to stand. “Kenzie, we weren’t finished here.” His voice was stern, like when he had disciplined her as a child.

“I’m afraid we were finished, Dad. At least with the conversation about my employment. I’ll talk to you

soon." She raced to the car, bringing up Lila's number and pressing *call*.

"Kenzie, I'm glad you called me back so soon, because I couldn't wait to tell you about this. A Pre-K teacher at another school in town needed to leave because her husband is relocating. They asked all the other Pre-K teachers for recommendations. I told them about you."

Kenzie sat with her mouth hanging open, unable to reply.

"Kenzie? Are you still there?"

"Sorry, yeah, I'm still here." She shook her head in disbelief.

"So, what do you think? I'm going to e-mail you the information on getting your application filled out online. That is, if you want me to."

"Yes, of course. I'm sorry, Lila. I'm a little floored."

"Why? It's only natural for me to think of you." Lila's voice rose an octave.

"That's not what has me floored. Moments before you texted, I was having dinner with my parents."

"I didn't mean to interrupt."

"No, that's just it. The timing was perfect. They were harassing me into coming to work with them at the chiropractic office."

"I realize it would mean moving away from your family. I would understand if you didn't want to move all the way to Tennessee from Maryland."

"Actually, I think that's exactly what I'm supposed to do."

2

Trevor Wallen trudged through the door of his townhouse, beat from another late-night shift. He shucked his firearm and badge and stumbled to the shower. Why was it that speeders and young males searching for trouble always tripled on a Friday night? It was enough to make a policeman turn in his badge and search for another line of work. But Trevor would never be contented doing anything else, no matter how exhausted he became. Wearing the badge was his calling.

The hot shower revived him somewhat, but now he was famished. He fumbled around in the kitchen for something to tame the growling in his stomach. He settled for a fried bologna sandwich. As he settled into his worn recliner, he chuckled as he bit into his delicacy. Trevor's mother always rolled her eyes and shook her head in disgust when he chose his favorite food. He had learned the fine art of making fried bologna from his grandfather.

Trevor picked up the TV remote and sighed. He missed his family back in Colorado, but God had spoken clearly two years ago, when he moved to Tennessee. Would God ever bring him a companion? Someone he could build a life with? He'd dated a couple of girls from church, but they all seemed more like friends, not someone to spend the rest of his life with.

He glanced at the framed picture of his parents on

the mantle. This relentless search for “the one” was all their fault. He laughed. They were a prime example of a godly marriage, and they enjoyed each other. Was it even possible to find a good Christian woman? The singles leader at the church repeatedly said that you needed to be that good Christian person first. Trevor was trying. But his timetable and God’s had yet to match up.

He dozed in his recliner until late and stumbled to bed, sleeping in on Saturday morning. The day passed quickly with the chore of laundry to accomplish.

Trevor headed out for his Saturday night shift. Sometimes it could be as wild as Friday night. As he scooted into the driver’s seat of his patrol car, he did what he always did: prayed for wisdom and safety for himself, all his fellow officers, and everyone he might encounter that evening.

Everything was mostly calm and quiet, which meant everyone in his area was safe. Trevor pulled into a parking lot near Main Street as he checked his computer for any updates. A car streaked by, and Trevor’s instincts kicked in. He put the car into drive and turned on his siren and lights. He caught up to the red BMW, following close behind until the driver responded to the lights. Finally, the car pulled to the side of the road, and Trevor jogged up to the driver’s side. As he bent forward, he recognized the driver, Brett, from church.

Brett’s eyes lit up and a smile spread across his face. “Hey, Trevor, how are you?”

“Fine. Could I see your license and registration, please?”

“What for?” Brett’s eyes widened.

“You were speeding. I need to have your license

and registration.”

Brett leaned toward Trevor and lowered his voice, nodding his head toward his female passenger. “You’re not going to give a church buddy a ticket, are you?”

“Yes, Brett, I am. You were doing almost sixty-five in a thirty-five.”

Brett’s eyes narrowed. “Fine.” He reached into his glove compartment and then for his wallet. He slapped the information into Trevor’s awaiting hand.

When he completed filling out the information, he handed Brett’s ID and registration along with a copy of the ticket through the window.

Brett snatched them and glared at Trevor. “Is that all?” he said through gritted teeth.

“Yes. Have a nice evening. Be safe.”

Brett rolled up his window rolled before Trevor could finish.

Trevor slumped into the driver’s seat of his cruiser. There were times this job was awkward. But Brett needed to be careful, especially with someone else in the car. He was a grown man. Why did he act like a teenager racing through the street to impress a girl?

Sunday morning, Trevor strolled up to a table laden with doughnuts and coffee in the back of the singles Sunday school department. He picked up a small foam plate and grabbed two chocolate-covered pastries. A slap on his back nearly toppled the plate, but he recovered it and whirled around. Brett.

“Isn’t this cliché? Barney Fife with doughnuts.” Brett smirked and narrowed his eyes.

Trevor wasn’t about to walk into Brett’s trap. He kept his tone light. “I do like my chocolate-covered

doughnuts." Trevor slid past Brett, took the cup of coffee he was offered and hurried to a seat down front. Brett was enough to make Trevor lose his religion, but he wouldn't let anyone steal his faith again.

3

Kenzie plunked onto her small sofa and blew a wisp of hair from her face. Finally, the last of the boxes were unpacked. In between starting her teaching job, she struggled to get fully moved into her apartment. No rest for the weary, however. Her lesson plans wouldn't write themselves. And Monday was one day away. As she rose to make her way to her office, her cell phone buzzed. Glancing at the screen revealed Lila's name.

"Hey, Lila. What's up?"

"You sound tired."

"Yeah, but I'm proud to say all of the boxes are unpacked."

"Great. So, how about tomorrow? Come to church with me?"

"Lila, I don't know. I still have lesson plans to do and regs to read."

"Please?"

"Maybe when things calm down."

"OK, let me know if you change your mind." Lila's tone was loaded with disappointment.

"I will." She hated to let Lila down, but Kenzie was stressed enough as it was. She wanted to make a good impression in her new job. The principal had confided in Kenzie her wish to make the Pre-K program at Westend Elementary a model program. Kenzie was at a disadvantage starting in the latter part of the year.

She strolled to the small guest room she had turned into an office. As she flopped into her small padded desk chair, her eyes glimpsed Nana's Bible. Kenzie's chest cinched. Nana would certainly be disappointed in her lack of reading. She slid the book closer, opening to the Genesis passage. Wow, those verses rang true and parallel to her life. Kenzie wondered, if like Abraham, she could count on being blessed here in this new place.

A small star at the bottom of the page caught her eye. She hadn't noticed that before. Next to the star was printed: *Go to Exodus 20:8-11*. Kenzie shrugged and flipped to the next book, locating the verses.

As she read the scripture passage, her heart sank. She leaned back in her chair. Remember the Sabbath. She dreaded reading the note in the margin penned by Nana, but she picked up the Bible and concentrated on the words.

We must never let anything come between us and our worship of God in His church if we want His blessings.

Nana was right again. Kenzie scrolled through her cell phone contact list and found Lila's number. She punched *call*.

"Kenzie? Everything all right?"

"No, but it will be. Nana changed my mind about church."

"Your Nana? The one that died?"

Kenzie chuckled. "Yeah, I'll explain that later. But I need to go to church tomorrow."

Lila emitted a stifled squeal. "I'm so glad. Want me to pick you up?"

"Um, sure. Lunch afterward. My treat."

"Deal."

The next morning, as Kenzie followed Lila into the

singles Sunday school department, her stomach fluttered and her mouth went dry. Why was she so nervous? She wasn't some teen in a new school. But all of the new places and new people associated with this move had been intense. Without Lila, she would've surely experienced a breakdown by now.

Kenzie bit her bottom lip and surveyed the room. Two sections of folding chairs faced the front where a simple wooden podium stood. The room was abuzz with conversations among small coed groups scattered around the room, some standing, some sitting.

A tug on her arm pulled her attention back to Lila. "Come on. Let's grab a doughnut and coffee."

Kenzie nodded and followed. After she snagged a doughnut and a cup of water, she turned and stared into a broad chest. She halted, her eyes trailing up to the face above it. As her gaze met the handsome face, heat rose from her neck to her cheeks. "Sorry."

"No sorry is necessary." He gazed into her eyes and flashed a grin with perfect white teeth. "I'm Brett."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Kenzie." She nodded toward Lila. "I'm visiting with Lila."

"Lucky us." Brett winked.

Kenzie caught up with Lila, sitting on the end of a row about halfway back. After announcements, the teacher began the lesson. As the Word of God was taught, a peace settled in and around Kenzie's heart which hadn't been there for weeks. Exodus 20 and Nana's note had encouraged her to do the right thing. If she wanted to follow God's plan for her life, she needed to honor Him by attending church.

How interesting. Both times she consulted Nana's Bible, it had specifically led her. Could that really happen? Kenzie shook her head. It was just a

coincidence that those scriptures seemed to be the exact instruction she needed in her situation.

"I hope you won't shake your head at my proposition." Brett's voice whispered from behind her as the class ended.

Kenzie whirled around in her chair. "Excuse me?"

"Would you like to go out to dinner Friday evening?"

"Um, well..." Kenzie stuttered, trying to think straight as she got lost in Brett's light blue eyes.

"Come on. Don't turn me down. I'll show you the town." He crossed his arms over his chest.

Kenzie glanced at her friend for her reaction. Lila raised her eyebrows and gave a slight nod. Kenzie hoped that meant Brett was a good guy to go out with. How bad could he be? He was in church. "That sounds good."

"I'll pick you up at seven."

Kenzie nodded.

Brett walked off, and Kenzie turned to Lila who had a fist propped on her hip. "Well, la-ti-da."

Kenzie let out a nervous laugh.

Several others introduced themselves and welcomed her. She leaned toward Lila. "I'll never remember all these names."

"That's all right. We don't expect you to learn them on your first visit," a male voice said.

Kenzie's turned toward the speaker and her breath caught in her throat. He didn't have the model-type looks of Brett, but he was rugged, tall, built, steel-blue eyes, and definitely handsome in his own way. He sported a buzzcut, almost military like. It must have been blond. The little bit that stuck up appeared almost white.

"I'm Trevor Wallen. Glad you could join us today." He extended his hand toward her.

Kenzie took his hand. "Thank you. I'm Kenzie Murrah." She reluctantly let go of his hand, but the warmth was still there.

"Are you visiting?"

"No, I moved here a few weeks ago. I'm the new Pre-K teacher at Westend Elementary. Thanks to Lila."

Lila bowed slightly and grinned. "Trevor is a policeman."

Obviously one that stayed in great physical shape.

"I better get on to the sanctuary. I'm ushering today. Nice to meet you, Kenzie. If you should need anything, let me know."

Trevor disappeared down the hall.