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# SHEILA WALSH



## THE LONGING IN ME



How Everything You Crave  
Leads *to the* Heart of God

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“Sheila is a truth-teller, wise counsel, and a force of raw honesty in a harsh world that begs us to be perfect. This book sings of release: from unfair expectations, from my own self-condemnation, and into the arms of Jesus who has no notion of halfway love.”

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THE  
LONGING  
IN ME

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# THE LONGING IN ME

How Everything You Crave  
Leads *to the Heart of God*



SHEILA  
WALSH



NELSON  
BOOKS

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This book is dedicated in memory of my friend and book agent, Lee Hough, no longer longing but finally home.

*The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through was a longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers.*

*For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.<sup>1</sup>*

—C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

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It seems to me we can never give up longing  
and wishing while we are thoroughly alive.  
There are certain things we feel to be beautiful  
and good, and we *must* hunger after them.<sup>1</sup>

—*George Eliot*

IT GREW DARK AS WE PULLED ONTO THE A74, the road that connects the west coast of Scotland to England's Lake District. It was raining quite hard, so my husband of six hours sat quietly, concentrating on the road ahead. I was quiet too. I had a terrible sense of foreboding, not what you would expect on the evening of your wedding day. Even so, I didn't see the accident coming.

All I remember now is the terrifying sound of screeching brakes and then the sickening noise of one car smashing into another, then another, metal twisting like pipe cleaners, broken glass flying through the air, caught in the headlights of oncoming traffic. Then for a moment . . . silence.

Once my husband was sure I wasn't seriously hurt, he got out of the car to see what had happened. We were number six in a ten-car pileup. The man who had smashed into the back of our car came to the passenger side and opened my door.

"You need to get out," he said, wiping a small stream of blood that had erupted from a gash in his forehead. "Some of these cars could catch fire."

My right knee was bleeding where it had banged into something on the

dashboard, and I had a cut on the right side of my head that dripped blood down over my ear and onto my collar. I grabbed my scarf and pressed it against the cut as I undid my seat belt and got out. Oncoming traffic had stopped. In the glare of headlights, I saw a woman lying on the side of the road, a man bent over her, calling her name. I didn't know whether she had been struck crossing the road or if she had been thrown from her car. The first two cars were almost unrecognizable; the second was the worst. The whole front end was crushed and twisted. The driver slumped over the wheel. Everything about his body angle was wrong. Someone sobbed in the back of his car. I heard a woman in the rapidly growing crowd of onlookers say that she was a doctor, so I moved out of the way.

I had no idea where we were. Were we still in Scotland, or had we crossed the border into England? I looked around, trying to get my bearings. All I could see on either side of the road were fields. I sat down on the wet grass, my "going-away" outfit already bloody and ruined. In the distance flashing blue lights came closer and closer, sirens blaring. I looked at our car, crumpled in the front and back, certainly not drivable.

In that moment, the strangest thing happened. I heard myself say out loud, "This is a picture of your life now, Sheila. You fought everyone to be able to marry this man, and now it's done and no one cares anymore. You are on your own."

I had no idea that night just how true those words would prove to be.

During the last thirty years since that bloody night, I've written a lot of books, but I've never talked about my first marriage. Partly because one person can never give an accurate account of two lives and partly because there were so many painful moments that have taken time to begin to process and understand.

In December 2012, my ex-husband died. For the first time I feel that I can tell this part of my story, not to harm his memory in any way, not at all, but simply to own my part of that journey and the lessons Christ continues to teach me today along this twisted road we all travel.

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In “Little Gidding,” the last of the four poems in T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, he wrote:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*<sup>2</sup>

I love this quote. I have written it down over and over again through the years because it resonates so deeply inside me.

Does it connect with you?

Let me ask you this. Do you ever feel as if you keep coming back to the same place in life over and over again and you wonder why you’re here? Didn’t you learn all you had to learn the last time?

You vowed you’d never repeat the same mistakes, react in the same way, and yet here you find yourself, right back smack in the middle of it all one more time!

What I’m learning is that if I don’t understand why I respond a certain way in a particular set of circumstances, I’ll do it again and again. The human heart longs for closure and understanding. In many ways it longs to right the wrongs of our childhood so we feel more in control of situations over which we had no control as children. We try to change the ending of something that scarred us badly. My prayer in this book is to help you find the one true Source who can meet your deepest longings so you can change the way you respond to life’s stresses, to give you real tools to heal from the past and find joy today.

When I looked for a companion to take along on this trip with us, there was no one finer than King David, the greatest king that Israel ever had. He was known as “a man after God’s own heart” (see 1 Sam. 13:14; Acts

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13:22), and yet he made some of the worst choices, ones that cost him and others dearly. As we walk through David's life, my life, and the lives of other women, we'll study the longings we all have and learn how to channel those to know God more and determine what to do when we lose our way. Longings are a part of life. They are not inherently good or evil.

A baby comes into the world with very primal longings:

To be held

To be fed

To sleep

To be clean and dry

Babies don't wonder if it's a good time for their mom to respond or if it's in the middle of the night; they simply roar out their need until they are heard. The longings continue into our adult lives.

We long to be seen.

We long to be chosen.

We long to be loved.

We long to know that we matter.

When those longings are left unmet, what do we do? Where do we go? Perhaps even more confusing, when those longings are met, why is there an even greater ache that remains?

I believe it is a sacred ache, a longing for the very heart of God.

I feel I should show my hand a little here and let you into a secret I discovered that has changed—and continues to change—everything in my life, moment by moment. It helps me understand my past, fully engage in my present, and find hope for the future. It's a staggering, hard-to-grasp, will-rock-your-world truth: no matter how great your longing is for God, it will never, ever compare to His longing for you!

## INTRODUCTION

My prayer for you right now, dear reader, is that God will grant you the grace and courage to pursue Him and, along that broken path, discover how much God has always loved and relentlessly pursued you.



## The Longing to Be Chosen

Fully, 100 percent chosen and fully, 100 percent known. Every good and bad thing . . . known! It didn't keep Him from giving His all for us, and He still keeps giving. Many can't know the power of this sacred privilege until they struggle enough in life to understand their need for it.<sup>1</sup>

—*Mike Colaw*

You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.

—*John 15:16–17*

HE WAS A LAB TECHNICIAN IN THE PHYSICS department in my high school. I don't remember his name but I remember his face because I dreamed about him at night. He had long, dark hair that grazed the collar of his white lab coat, big brown eyes, and just enough of a beard to cast him in my fertile imagination as a man of mystery. He wasn't particularly tall, five feet ten or eleven inches, but I decided that God had packed a lot into every single masculine inch.

Part of me knew he was out of my league. He was, after all, technically “staff,” and I was an awkward high school senior. I had greasy hair and chin acne that I tried to cover up with “flesh colored” Clearasil (which I’m sure would have done the trick had you been unfortunate enough to be born with an orange chin).

Even so I dared to dream. I would imagine I was walking along the school corridor, carrying my books, and *he* would bump into me, knocking me over and sending my books in all directions. He would, of course, apologize profusely as he bent to pick them up. Our eyes would meet. He would hold my gaze for a few seconds more than normal, and even as my face flushed an attractive, feminine shade of pink, he would take my hand and help me to my feet.

“Will you be at the senior dance this weekend?” he would inquire.

“I will,” I would reply, a slight tremor in my voice, which I decided men found attractive.

“Will you save a dance for me?” he would ask.

This is where I got a bit stuck. Should I reply, “I’ll save them all for you!” or, “I will try to save you one”? I didn’t want to sound desperate or too available or uninterested. There is nothing about being raised as a Scottish Baptist that prepares a girl for the ways of love.

For the three remaining days before the dance, I walked past his lab, laden with books, so many times that I had to get two aspirin from the school nurse for the pain in my shoulders . . . but all to no avail. He failed to make an appearance, much less an encounter.

I didn’t even know if he would be at the senior dance until I overheard Laura (name changed for obvious reasons) mention his name while I waited in line for the school bus. Laura was beautiful. She had long, silky, chestnut hair; sultry brown eyes; and a spectacularly flawless chin. Laura and I were in several classes together, but I don’t think she even knew my name. I wasn’t part of the beautiful crowd who revered her as their leader. I could only catch snippets of the bus-line conversation, but

I heard enough to know that “he” was going to be at the senior dance. Foolishly I blurted out, “That’s so great!”

Laura and two of her friends turned around to see who had punctured the golden bubble of their conversation with such an uncouth outburst.

“Sorry!” I said. “I just think he’s a great lab technician, and that must be tiring, and it must be nice to get out.” With every pathetic word that staggered out of my mouth and over my spotty chin, the girls pulled slightly farther away. Mercifully, deliverance came in the form of the school bus, which roared slightly louder than I had.

On the night of the dance, I anticipated the beginning of the more romantic stage of my life; I was dressed and ready three hours before I needed to leave. I didn’t know what to do with myself, so I just paced around the living room until my mom begged me to stop before she had to replace the carpet. Finally the time arrived, and my friend Moira’s dad pulled up in his car to transport the two of us to the school hall.

The social committee had done a fantastic job transforming the room where we sat every morning for assembly into a fancy nightclub with flashing lights and the requisite disco ball. The first few songs were fast, and most of the students danced together with no particular partner. But then a slow song began. Those who weren’t dating cleared the floor, leaving nine or ten couples under the lights. I retreated to a corner and pressed my back against the wall, feeling a familiar loneliness creep over me, a feeling I had known since my father’s suicide when I was a child. I was five when he drowned himself, and part of me had been drowning ever since.

I looked around the room to find Moira. Instead I saw *him* walking toward me. I looked to see who was standing beside me. Was it Laura or one of her girls? But they stood together on the other side of the hall, and they were watching him getting closer and closer to me. My heart pounded out of my chest as he walked right up to me and asked, “Do you want to dance?”

I don't think I even replied. I just took his outstretched hand as he led me to the dance floor. I remember the song that was playing, "A Whiter Shade of Pale," an older song by Procol Harum. I knew all the words. Simply perfect. I rested my head on his shoulder as we danced. I pulled back and looked into his eyes.

That's when everything changed.

He said, "I'm so sorry. I can't do this."

He let go of me and walked over to where Laura and her friends clumped together, laughing. It had clearly been a dare, a bet, a why-don't-you-dance-with-the-awkward-girl?

I thought of going all "Carrie" on them, but I just slipped away and hid in the girls' restroom until Moira found me when her dad arrived to take us home.

Even now, all these years later, I can still remember that sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach. I felt so stupid, and I was angry. I was angry with Laura, I was angry with her friends, I was angry with the lab technician (who I saw at close range, by the way, had grown a beard to cover up *his* chin acne!), but most of all I was angry with myself.

Why did I imagine for one moment that someone that attractive would choose me?

Why had I let them make a fool of me?

Why had I set myself up to be hurt one more time?

I disgusted myself, and I felt deeply, profoundly alone.

Have you ever felt that way?

You dared to dream for just a moment that you would get chosen, only to be disappointed one more time, and now you have to remind yourself that you will never be "that girl."

I've often wondered if that's why little girls love fairy tales. Is it because they always have a happy ending?

Do we love them because the girl we identify with gets picked, even if she's the least likely one, the one who is made to sweep up cinders while

her ugly, mean sisters get ready for the ball, and yet she gets chosen in the end? Or because, after the story takes a disastrous turn and she takes a bite of the poisoned apple, just as all seems lost, the prince arrives and saves her? The credits roll. In our vivid imaginations, they live a perfect life.

These are the stories of our childhood, but it seems today we need a story to take us beyond our childhood into young adulthood.

In 2005 American author Stephenie Meyer published the first of four books in her fantasy romance series about vampires and werewolves. The story's heroine is a very ordinary girl named Bella Swan, who falls in love with Edward Cullen, a 104-year-old vampire. The series sold more than 120 million copies and has been translated into thirty-eight languages. In 2008 the last of the four, *Breaking Dawn*, won the British Book Award for Children's Book of the Year, and the following year the series as a whole won Kids' Choice Award for Favorite Book.<sup>2</sup>

Think about that for a moment. A series of books about an ordinary girl being pursued by both a vampire and a werewolf captivated instead of terrified the hearts and minds of millions of children and young women around the world. Why?

Was it because Edward was aware of her every move, because he watched over her day and night and knew if she was in any danger at all? Was it because out of all the girls he had ever met during 104 years of being undead (think about it; that's a lot of girls), he chose her?

Whatever the reason, it resonated deeply and tapped into the longing of every girl's heart, that longing to be singled out and chosen.

Whether it's Bella from *Twilight* or Cinderella, deep inside we long to be seen and known, loved and chosen. If that were the story we actually lived, we'd have no need for fairy tales or vampire sagas because readers would have no gaping holes to fill with fairy tales.

Now, I'm not suggesting that every little girl who loves to dress up as her favorite Disney princess is trying to fill an empty void. That's just

part of the fantasy fun of childhood. Those childish tales can simply be part of the normal stuff of life. But for some of us, these stories highlight and deepen the longing in a broken heart. When we've had a happy childhood and been well parented, our internal radar looks for those admirable qualities in a mate. We want someone with good boundaries and fairly healthy self-esteem, someone who can handle a budget, who respects others and will respect us.

Many of us who were deeply wounded in childhood, however, have a warped picture of what that connectedness should look like. The innate longing to be loved and chosen can lead us into very damaging situations. We simply don't have a clear picture of what "normal" is. This warped perspective can lead us down many different heartbreaking roads.

I've read that sexual predators can sense when a young girl is broken and starving for affection, almost as if she emits a radar signal that she's looking for love and acceptance—and will take it in any form when "love" is offered.

The longing to be chosen is profoundly primal. When a young girl has a healthy relationship with her father, when she knows that she is loved and treasured, then that instinctive longing takes its place with every other desire and need in life. It weighs what it should. But when that need is unmet in childhood, the longing to be chosen becomes the driving force in life. As a young girl, I felt uncovered, exposed, unprotected. It was the perfect prelude to desperate choices.



I had just finished leading worship with Graham Kendrick and his band on the main stage of Britain's largest Christian arts festival, Greenbelt. It was an unusually hot, sticky August day. Some friends and I made our way across the vast field that housed the stage at one end, the concession stands at the other. We needed something cold to drink in a bad way.

Suddenly I heard the noise of a car engine and thought, *What idiot is driving across the field?*

It soon became plain as the car pulled up right beside us. The driver looked at me and said, “Can I talk to you for a minute?”

I looked around. Was he speaking to me?

He laughed, then got out of the car, stepping onto the muddied field. I noted his wing tips. The man extended his hand, introduced himself—I’ll call him John—and added, “I’m a record executive.” And he mentioned a few of the artists he worked with.

Now I listened.

“You have a great voice,” he said.

I could feel my face getting hot. “Thank you,” I said, noting his Scottish accent.

He returned to his car, mud-shoed.

I ran to catch up with my friends.

“Who was the guy in the red car?” one of them asked.

“Someone with more money than sense!” I said. “Imagine driving a car like that across a muddy field like this!”

I didn’t meet him again for several weeks during my very first solo concert—something that terrified me. Graham Kendrick, best known for writing powerful worship songs, was my boss at British Youth for Christ. He had written some songs specifically for me. I’d been much more comfortable in the only role I knew, as a backup singer, but Graham encouraged me to step out and see how God might use me under the spotlight. My debut concert took place at a holiday camp in England that we’d taken over for a couple of weeks each year in the fall to host a very conservative Christian convention. Being a staff member at Youth for Christ, I was seen as safe and was brought in to “entertain the youth.” I had great doubts as to how entertaining I would be, but the evening proved to be a life-changing event in many ways.

The concert hall quickly filled up as rumors of a band (as opposed to the usual one acoustic guitar and a tambourine) spread like wildfire. The band turned out to be great. I loved the songs Graham wrote. I surprised myself by loving every single minute of it. By the final song the crowd stood on their feet, yelling and clapping for more. It was both exhilarating and exhausting. That night I felt a deep sense of purpose. I had finally found a vehicle to communicate the love of God in a way that made sense to me. I thought of all the evenings I had walked along the beach, singing out to God, telling Him about my pain and my questions, yet deeply overwhelmed by His fiery, relentless love. Now I could sing that truth out loud to others. Wonderful.

As I left the stage that evening, the man with the red sports car and no sense stood nearby.

“You were amazing,” he said.

“I was?”

He stepped closer. “I want to sign you to my record label.”

“Well, that would be hard. I’m with Youth for Christ, so I can’t do that.”

Instead of hearing what I’d tried to communicate, he said, “I can make things happen.”

I had a strong conviction that he was right.

When I finally got back to my little cabin that night, I replayed the events of the evening in my head—heady stuff for a girl like me. I’d never been chosen for anything, but tonight the crowd had voted and cast their ballot for the least likely one of all. Me.

Sound familiar? That seems to be God’s way as well.

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who

## THE LONGING TO BE CHOSEN

think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. (1 Cor. 1:26–28)

I often wonder how seriously we take that passage in the church. We tend to look to the most articulate and gifted among us, but God has a different set of scales that He uses to measure a life. He looks at the heart. If you just take the last two lines of the passage above—“God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important”—it reads exactly like the story of the life of David, the shepherd boy whom God chose to be king over Israel.

Nothing about his early days would have made anyone believe he would be the chosen one. His own father missed it, but then again, so did Samuel, God’s prophet.

Before we meet David in Scripture, we’re given a picture of what happens when God’s people think they know what they need more than God does—a slippery slope.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever prayed a prayer and then been profoundly grateful in retrospect that God didn’t answer it the way you asked Him to?

I know I have.

David wasn’t the first king or the people’s choice. He wasn’t the one they wanted. You can read the whole story in 1 Samuel 8–10, but let me give you the “CliffsNotes” version.

Before Israel had a king, judges ruled them—some good, some not so good. Samuel was the last of the judges. He was an old man when the elders of Israel came to his home in Ramah. They had come for an intervention of sorts. Here’s why. As Samuel aged, he had continued as judge in Ramah and the nearby towns, but he had appointed his two deadbeat

sons as judges on the southern border of Israel. Whether he should have done that or not is questionable because we're told throughout the book of Judges that God appointed a new judge. Add to that the fact that his sons took bribes and twisted justice and you get a bit of a picture of the mess that led up to this meeting with Samuel. The elders put their cards on the table:

“ ‘Look,’ they told him, ‘you are now old, and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have’ ” (1 Sam. 8:5).

Pretty sad three-pronged statement when you think about it:

1. You're too old.
2. Your sons are hopeless.
3. We want to be like other nations.

Israel, God's chosen people, wanted to be just like everyone else. Samuel was devastated that the people showed such faithlessness. Not only that, but he carried the heartache of seeing his own children reject everything he had ever taught them.

Some of you might be there right now. How the enemy loves to torture parents who have been faithful but whose children appear faithless. Our son, Christian, is about to go off to college as I write this, and he is a great boy, but I know there will be moments in life when I will need to resist the torments of the enemy and stand on the truth that our God is sovereign and my son is on His schedule, not mine. Nothing will happen to your child today or tomorrow that doesn't pass through the merciful hands of God, even though at times it will feel like a severe, tearstained mercy.

There are many lessons for us to learn from the faithlessness of God's people. The children of Israel demanded a king, but they already had a King. They always had a divine King in God. Now they wanted what made sense to them, what they could see with their eyes.

I wonder if I'm much different at times.

God's Word is filled with more than three thousand promises. But when I walk through a hard season, I want tangible signs that God is going to come through for me.

Do you ever find yourself there?

We long for love and acceptance. We know that God loves us, but we can't see God with our eyes or feel His arms around us or hear His audible voice telling us that we are loved. So we look for that kind of love and acceptance in someone else.

If I could step back in time and talk to myself as I stood embarrassed under a disco ball, or caught up with myself running over that muddy field, or interrupt the high after my first concert, I would have said, "Sheila you are chosen. You're chosen by the One who will never unchoose you. You're loved when the crowd cheers and when the lights go out and they all go home."

But we don't get to do that, do we? As T. S. Eliot wrote, we just keep finding ourselves back at the same place again with a little more understanding.

So, back to the children of Israel. God said to Samuel, "If that's what the people want, let them have their king."

As they looked around, the Israelites saw that every other nation had a king who was a strong warrior leader, who would take them into battle. They wanted a victorious warrior-king too. Not only that, they wanted a king who looked like a king. That's exactly what they got in Saul. He was tall, dark, and handsome, but on that day when the people cried out, "Long live the king!" they had no idea what they had just signed up for.

Saul started well, but before long he showed how flawed his character really was. Life is like that. We can all put on a good face for a time, but add enough pressure and stress, and our wounds and flaws will surface. Israel's king showed himself to be a mean, selfish, petty, and violent man. But in God's eyes, he was a law unto himself. Three times Samuel caught him in serious acts of disobedience to God.

- \* He offered a sacrifice that he had no right to offer. He had been instructed to wait for Samuel. (See 1 Sam. 13.)
- \* He made the men in his care take a rash vow that almost cost him the life of his own son Jonathan. (See 1 Sam. 14.)
- \* He directly disobeyed a specific instruction from God to kill King Agag. This final act of defiance cost him everything and led to these tragic words: “And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel” (1 Sam. 15:35 ESV).

Saul’s disobedience broke Samuel’s heart. He grieved so hard and so long that God finally intervened and said, “Enough!” It must have seemed to Samuel that everything had gone wrong. But he would live to see that no matter how often we fail God, God never fails us.

We are introduced to David in person in 1 Samuel 16 but meet his character before that. In the last conversation Samuel ever had with Saul, he said this: “But now your kingdom must end, for the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14).

What an incredible commendation from God, a letter of reference from the Most High. I can’t think of anything I want more in life than that—to be known as a woman after God’s own heart!

God instructed Samuel to go to Bethlehem, where He had already chosen a king from Jesse’s sons. Do you remember who Jesse was? He was Ruth and Boaz’s grandson. Ruth’s story is the antithesis of the children of Israel’s. She wasn’t born an Israelite. She married into the nation. Then, even after her husband died, she refused to abandon her mother-in-law. Instead, she traveled with her to Bethlehem, saying, “Your people will be my people and your God will be my God” (Ruth 1:16). That passionate faithfulness had trickled down through the years and would also be found in a teenage boy out watching his father’s sheep.

This is what God told Samuel to do:

## THE LONGING TO BE CHOSEN

“Take a heifer with you . . . and say that you have come to make a sacrifice to the LORD. Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you which of his sons to anoint for me.” So Samuel did as the LORD instructed.

When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town came trembling to meet him.

These were days when it was alarming for people to see God’s prophet show up in town. According to author and professor G. Frederick Owen, “The people were on a long drift from God.”<sup>3</sup> But word was out that the king they had chosen had turned crazy. Now here stood God’s mouthpiece, having shown up uninvited.

“What’s wrong?” they asked. “Do you come in peace?”

“Yes,” Samuel replied. “I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then Samuel performed the purification rite for Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice, too.

When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Surely this is the LORD’s anointed!” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Sam. 16:2–7)

Though the minute Samuel saw Jesse’s oldest son, he knew he’d found his man, God said no. Eliab was the one everyone would have chosen—the eldest, strong, handsome—but God told Samuel that he’d already rejected him. He didn’t pass heart inspection.

Next, Jesse offered up the other six sons he’d brought with him, and each time God said no.

Finally Samuel asked if this was it, or if there were any others.

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse replied. “But he’s out in the fields watching the sheep and goats” (v. 11).

Isn’t it interesting that Jesse didn’t think it was worth bringing David out? After all, who was he? He was just a kid watching the flocks. Yet while he shepherded in silence, God saw him.

Now, let me ask you: How many ministry opportunities do you think David had out in the field? None that we would have noticed, but God did not miss one. He heard the psalms that David sang over the flock. He saw his courage as David risked his own life to snatch a lamb from the paw of a bear or a young goat from a lion. He discerned David’s heart and knew that this teenage boy who would sing in the darkness and fight in the light would be the one He would anoint as king of Israel.

I hope that encourages you as it does me. If you tend to look at other women and compare yourself to them, this story should be a wake-up call. Even within the church and parachurch organizations, we often discern wrongly. We’re drawn by charisma more than by character. But charisma cracks under pressure while character doesn’t.

David never asked to be chosen. He’d been hidden away, serving God with a full heart, when God’s choice ran like oil over his head. I, on the other hand, had a desperate need to be seen and chosen. When need is in the driver’s seat, you can find yourself on the side of the road in the rain with the smell of smoke all around you. Like me, and like a lady I’ll call Mary.

I never found out what her real name was, but I identified with her story. We were sitting opposite each other, waiting to board a flight. I asked her if she’d watch my bag while I went to get a bottle of water, and when I got back, she’d moved to sit beside me.

“I’ve read one of your books,” she said. “I think we have some things in common.”

## THE LONGING TO BE CHOSEN

She told me that her dad was a good man but he was always busy when she was growing up, there but not really there. “Even when we had special dates, he’d miss them,” she said. “There was always a good reason, so I couldn’t ever get mad. I guess I just got used to it.”

She told me that through high school and college she had longed to find someone who was different, but kept choosing guys who never kept their word. “You’d think I would have known better,” she said. “I always felt that I wasn’t pretty enough or thin enough. I just wasn’t enough.”

At that point the airline began to board our flight, and we never got to finish our conversation. By the time we landed and I made my way to baggage claim, she was gone. I prayed for Mary a lot that day. I prayed she would know that God keeps every appointment with His daughters, even when we forget.

Have you ever found yourself in a place like Mary’s?

Have your longings ever landed you right in it?

Do you ever find yourself thinking that nothing will ever change?

I want to pause here and acknowledge how painful that is, but I don’t want to leave you there. As a daughter of the Most High God, everything can change! It just takes some time and some commitment to begin thinking a new way.

Here, at the end of this chapter, I want you to do something for me. Why don’t you find a three-by-five card and write on it:

The God who created me has chosen me as  
His beautifully loved daughter. Because of  
that I can take other rejections in stride.

## THE LONGING IN ME

Now, place it somewhere that you'll see it every day, and read it over and over until you begin to believe it more than the lie that you are not worthy of being chosen. The God of the universe has already chosen you and says to you, "You are Mine!"

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A B O U T T H E A U T H O R

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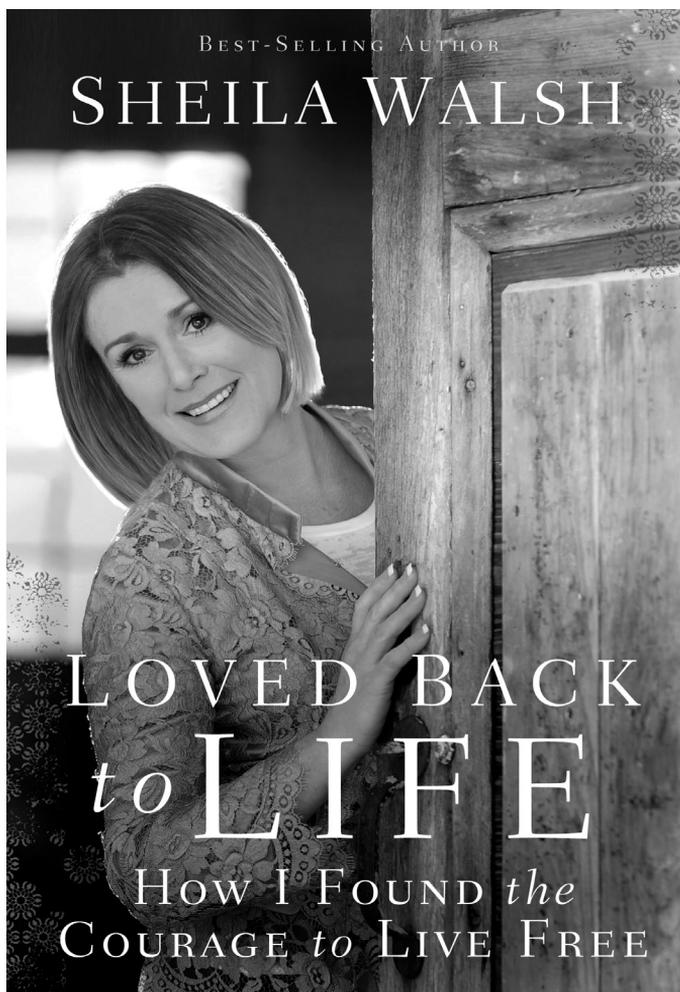
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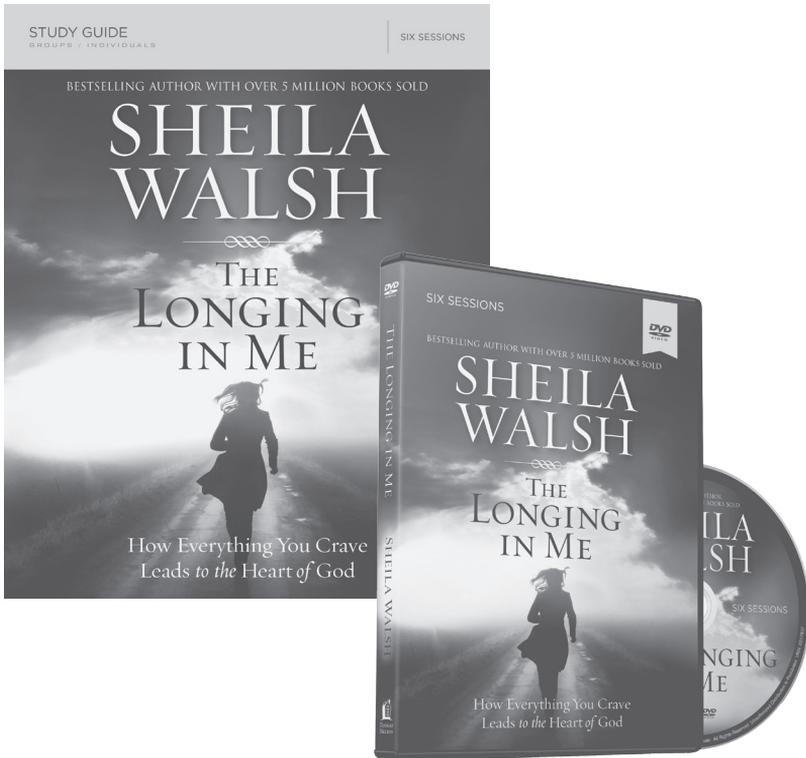
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# Do Your Longings Have You Going Around in Circles?



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