

## Dedication



I dedicate this book to every person who planted seeds of Truth in my heart, especially Abuelita Cloti, Karolina, my *Cursillo* reunion group at St. Simon's, and the many influential teachers and faithful nuns who invested in my spiritual formation at Espiritu (in particular, Ileana and Juliana). Without their loving investment, I may still be craving spiritual milk without the solid food required to live a powerful, persevering, and fruitful life for Christ.

Through this simple book I also celebrate Mother Teresa, whose compassion and selflessness draw me to the heart of Jesus, and whose example inspires me to do "small things with great love."

*The 3 Y's of Faith* is one such small endeavor conceived, pursued, and completed in love. In its simplicity, I have experienced God's gentleness, faithfulness, and sovereignty. For that and so much more, I am deeply grateful.

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## Introduction



Books about faith are plentiful. And that's a good thing. At different times in life, the right book can make all the difference. My family is living proof.

When our oldest son (now a young adult!) was a baby, my husband needed two major surgeries back-to-back. After the second one, I visited him at the hospital and noticed he was pretty discouraged. Nothing I said seemed to impart hope or cheer him up. I felt helpless.

As I left the hospital that night, a used book display across from the gift shop caught my eye. After browsing for a while, I picked up a pocket-sized book by someone named Archibald Rutledge. Though I'd never heard of him, something made me buy it.

Suddenly hopeful, I rode the elevator back up to Russell's hospital room and found him sleeping. So I left the book at his feet with a note that read, *I thought you'd enjoy this. Sleep well, sweetie. I love you.*

When I arrived the next morning, I found a new man. Russ was sitting up, looking optimistic and refreshed while taking in the clear blue skies outside his window. He'd read that little book several times, and his outlook completely changed. *Life's Extras* made all the difference.

The quick read is all about God's mercy and grace, His goodness and love. According to Rutledge, 'life's extras' are those things God did not have to create, but did. Like sunsets. Butterflies. Dew drops and icicles. Ladybugs, fireflies, and dandelions. And the author's favorite, the spectacular rhododendron.

That little book took less than an hour to read, but it continues to bear fruit twenty years later. Amazing how that can happen.

That day reminded me that God can do anything, and that He likes to use the mundane and simple experiences of life to lift our spirits and transform our hearts.

I pray this simple book has the same effect on every reader, for I'm convinced there is nothing we need more than to surrender to the good and loving God who created us.

Such surrender requires faith, and trust, and great courage.

May you be blessed with all three.

## Epilogue



While on vacation in New Smyrna Beach, I saw the most breathtaking sunrise I've ever seen. I woke up at dawn and the waves called my name. Within minutes, my feet felt the cool sand I shared with three seagulls, a few crabs, and an amateur photographer.

As predicted, at precisely 6:33 AM, the sun popped through the horizon like a ball of fire and began to fill the sky. In no time, the darkness fled and all was aglow in stunning auburn and crimson. It was a spectacular display of God's beauty, power, and faithfulness.

Beholding the radiance above me, I recalled Malachi 4:2, where the Lord proclaims, "But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays."

*Yes!* I thought. *What a fitting Scripture!* The Son of righteousness is our Healer. The Light of the World pierces through the darkness of our hearts and souls and fills all emptiness with His presence and life.

Our desperate prayers to the One who loves us rise on the horizon of our fears like a hopeful sunrise at dawn. There they meet: darkness and light, our fears and Christ's radiance, and the darkness flees. The Son of righteousness wins. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8).

In times of darkness, trust God with your desperate prayers. Remind your soul to wait for its sunrise. Christ will soon fill your sky, for the sun of righteousness still loves to rise with healing in its rays.

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 8:12

## Questions and Scriptures for Reflection



This section provides an excellent opportunity for reflection and spiritual growth. You may answer the questions after reading each chapter, each section, or after reading through the entire book. *The 3 Y's of Faith* is short on purpose, since I hope you will spend more time praying and sitting with God than reading. The book is meant to help you ponder your life, not mine. I am a fellow traveler on the spiritual journey, and these are questions I still ask myself. Our goal is God and His kingdom.

I encourage you to meditate on the Scriptures included in each chapter. They are rich and full of meaning, and will help you go deeper on your own. Take time to reflect on their relevance in your life and use them as starting points in prayer. Consider journaling about what you hear God whisper to your heart. As with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (and as with me at the remote little chapel in Alabama), Christ will meet you there as you ponder God's Word.

The questions can be answered privately or discussed in a small group. They can also be used during a period of time set aside for spiritual direction with a trusted pastor or priest. Be honest as you answer each question. This is about your relationship with God, and we are all on a journey to greater wholeness and depth on our walk with Him. None of us has arrived, but it's exciting to know we're on our way to something wonderful. Own your faith and watch it grow as you nurture it daily.

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Psalm 139:23-24

## Chapter 1 – A Desperate Prayer

1. Recall a desperate or difficult time in your life.
  - a. How was God involved in the solution or outcome? How was God's presence evident along the way?
  - b. Did you need help from others? Did you seek help? If you didn't, why not?
  - c. Did you think to pray along the way? Do you recall specific answers to your prayers?
  - d. How would you approach a similar situation now? Celebrate any growth that is evident as you recall that season of life.
2. Have you experienced what it means to pray with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength? How often? When was the last time?
3. Has your prayer life changed over time? How is it changing now?
4. Do you ever pray *with* the Scriptures, speaking God's Word back to Him and proclaiming His promises over your life? If not, try it! Praying God's Word is a powerful spiritual weapon that will also strengthen your shield of faith (Ephesians 6).
5. How does silence enhance your prayer life? Can you incorporate five minutes of silence into your daily prayer time? Ten? Thirty?
6. Do you pray throughout the day? If not, why not? If you do, how has it changed your life?
7. Are you going through a difficult time right now?
  - a. Have you considered talking to a spiritual counselor, priest or pastor? Might it help to see a mental health counselor, psychologist, or physician?
  - b. What gives you hope? Where do you see light?
  - c. Do you surround yourself with people and things that help or harm your walk with God (including what you watch and read as well as other activities)?
  - d. How can you become more intentional in guarding your eyes, ears, mind, and heart?
  - e. How are you caring for your heart, mind, soul, spirit, and body during this time of difficulty or sorrow?

*Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.*  
Isaiah 65:24

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. I have taken an oath and  
confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.*  
Psalm 119:105-106

*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*  
Hebrews 6:19