

Writings and Worship

CHRISTIAN JOURNALISM, FICTION WRITING, AND WORSHIP LEADING



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HERO

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CHRISTIAN
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A Little About Me



Since I can remember, I've been writing and singing. In college I was introduced to the world of journalism, and I haven't looked back since. I love writing news, features, columns, anything! I would love to work in magazine writing, public relations, professional writing, or anything in the media field.

I'm a diehard Hunger Games, Harry Potter, and Percy Jackson fan; I could talk about them all day. One day, I hope to write even a sentence that will be remembered forever and will inspire people like these books have inspired me.

Lastly and most importantly, I love Jesus with all that I am. I lead worship because it's my calling and my passion. Worship allows us to press into God's presence and there's nothing better.

TO BE KNOWN BY A LINE

"The sun persists on rising, so I make myself stand."

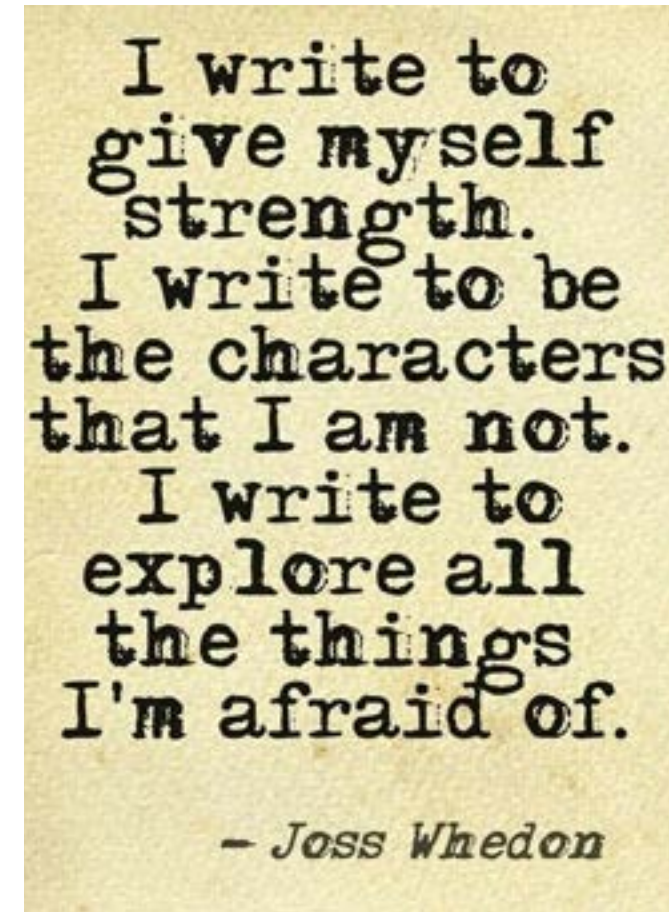
"Without the dark, we'd never see the stars."

"She has no idea, the effect she can have."

"Three years? That's a thousand tomorrows, ma'am."

"It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live."

As a writer, I catch lines in my favorite books that I love and I have a feeling I'm not the only one. We all seem to hold on to catchy or breathtaking lines from movies, songs, or books. Above are some that have always stuck with me. For me, these lines are beautiful and a brilliant work of art.



Lines identify the author and writer. Each one of those quotes belongs to a book and writer that has influenced my writing career as well as my life in general. These lines are just a part of an overall book that I love...a glimpse of a

part of the many stories that I have fallen in love with over the years. I have a feeling that you might can identify some of the ones above... Hunger Games and Harry Potter among them. These lines are an illustration of my

dream.

I dream of one day writing a line that will be known forever. I want to write a line that stays with someone and they hold on to for the rest of time. I just want my words to touch someone and to inspire someone. One day I want someone to remember what I wrote because it meant something to them or because they truly loved reading it. I believe that most writers will admit that they also dream of being known by a line--so we keep writing in hopes of achieving it. While this might seem over-ambitious, I believe anything can happen. So here's to writing and falling in love with simple and beautifully written sentences.

Story of a Hero

By Hilary Parr

9:02. One minute changed Oklahoma. It's a day we will never forget. April 19th will mark the 20th anniversary of the OKC Murrah Bombing. Like in any major tragedy, hero's stepped up in Oklahoma's greatest time of need. Fireman jumped

into action, business offered services, and people gave their time. One of those was Allen Houck of OKC. He is now a retired fireman that still remembers the bombing like it was yesterday.

Allen said that his first thought was to "get the job done."

He knew that it was his duty to help in the recovery efforts. Allen, like so many, spent days working the bombing. "I think my faith in Jesus and my duty to the fire department kept me going all those days," Allen said.

Allen explained that the hardest part was finding the bodies. "My captain felt like, since these were OKC people, that the OKC fire department should be the ones to bag them," Allen said. A hero comes in many forms, including a white haired, retired fireman. Though Allen would dismiss the fact, he is one of many heroes from the OKC Bombing.

20 years later we still remember the ones we lost and the ones who sacrificed their time and energy to help.



OKC Bombing Memorial

Photo by Hilary Parr



The empty chairs at OKC bombing memorial



Allen Houck at the memorial

STRUGGLES OF AN INSECURE WORSHIP LEADER

I've been leading worship since I was in junior high, so about 9 years. About 4 years ago I started leading with my best friend, so I took a more prominent role than I had ever had in years earlier. To say that I have learned a lot is an understatement.

I'm going to get real with you, I've always struggled with insecurity and still do. So leading worship has, at times, been a major struggle for me. But God is faithful and has worked in me; so here are some struggles I faced along with a resolution.

1. "Do I look nice? Is my outfit flattering?"

If I had a nickel for every time I painted my nails, picked a new outfit, or concentrated on what would look best on "stage," I would be rich. I constantly felt like I had to be dressed a certain way or I people would talk about me. I was focused more on my appearance than the heart of worship.

Resolution: It doesn't matter what I look like. People could care less what I'm wearing or if my nails are polished. (and if they do, it still doesn't matter) God should be the center of attention, people shouldn't see me, they should see God. I started to remember why I love

worship; it's time I get to spend in the presence of God. Worship leaders are there to facilitate worship.

2. Ad-libs and worship leader lingo

You know what I'm talking about. "Sing that out" "God be praised" "press into his presence." While the idea of things the Lord put on my heart during worship flood to my head, I very rarely would say them. At first, I was scared I would say something wrong or at the wrong time, so I stayed quiet. I wouldn't speak out or encourage the worshipers because I didn't think I would say it right.

Resolution: First off, it comes with practice. The more you say things while leading the easier I think it gets. But what I also learned is just what I said above: God laid these things on my heart and mind to say, so I need to say them. I think all worship leaders are unsure what to say and do starting off, it's something you learn and you let God lead. Remember that if God has called you, I believe he will equip you.

3. Am I doing the physical expressions of worship enough?

I think one of the biggest struggles of any worship leader would be

not allowing their worship to become a show. When a person leads worship many times a day or week, there's a temptation to just raise your hands like you always do and get through another set. But worship needs to always be raw and personal.

Resolution: every time you worship it needs to be real and authentic. Don't let satan convince you to raise your hands or close your eyes because it's what you are supposed to do. If you aren't truly worshipping, then chances are your flock won't be as eager to worship either.

I've learned so many things over the years. It's not about how good of a voice I have, how I look, or how I raise my hands. It's about being real and honest.

There's nothing more in the world that I love than seeing people worship Jesus. I'm so thankful God called me to lead His people to His presence. While I've struggles at times, God continues to refine me and show me ways to overcome my pride and nerves. He is the reason I worship. In the end, that's all that matters.

"THERES NOTHING MORE IN THE WORLD THAT I LOVE THAN SEEING PEOPLE WORSHIP JESUS"



Redefine the Image



Last night, I was sitting in my bed about to head to sleep and God came and interrupted my life in a beautiful way. It was like I got hit in the head, God opened my eyes to this revolution I need to be spreading. I kept thinking these three words... REDEFINE THE IMAGE.

The way I see myself is horrible and I can all but guarantee I am not the only one who feels that way about themselves. Our society has taken the image of a successful and worthy woman and morphed it into something far from what Christ would claim as worthy. Size, relationship status, money, clothes, talent, and looks...all these things are what our society has given us as the image of a woman worthy of love, success, and encouragement.

I'm here to tell you something... we need to REDEFINE THAT IMAGE. Our lives are not worthy because we are skinny, tall, rich, in a long term relationship, or anything else. Girls and women are constantly not living up to the standards that the world has presented for them and the standards they set for themselves because the image we long for is not the image Christ longs for us to be.

My heart cries for myself to see myself the way Christ sees me. He believes that I am beautiful, capable, worth the wait, and worthy of much more than I let myself believe. I long to look at myself and be thankful for the image I see, the image of Christ; but instead I am tied up on worldly aspects of my life-like my size and relation-

ship status that reads single. I believe that God has incredible things in store for me and for you...we just need to understand that We are his beloved.

Psalm 18:19... "He rescued me because He delighted in me..."

Holy cow! Christ, the Savior of the world, delights in me. THAT is the image I want to see when I look at myself...not self-hate because of the world standards that I can never live up too.

Want to join me in my pursuit to REDEFINE THE IMAGE...I hope you do. Christ loves you more than anyone ever could. You are loved, wanted, worthy, and beautiful; these are the images we should see when we look at ourselves.

Jeremiah 31:3...

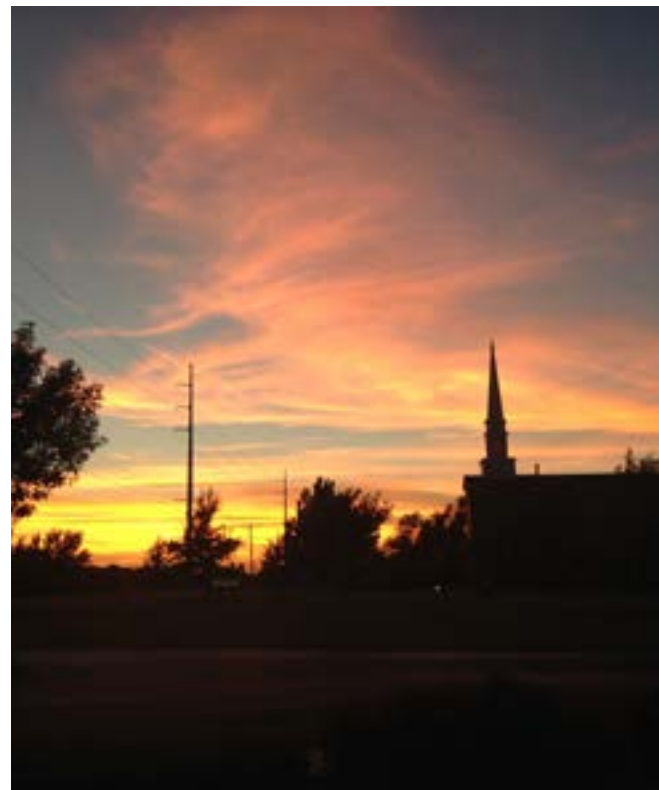
"I have loved you with an everlasting love..."

God notices you. He wants you to see yourself through HIS eyes. In a bethel song called "you don't miss a thing"—there's a line that says, "In a crowd of ten thousand, you don't miss a thing." God is always there. And I don't believe that he wants us to imagine these "perfect" people in society as the image that we should be...I believe that he longs for us to see himself when we look at ourselves.

Join me in this movement...as I daily try to REDEFINE THE IMAGE of what I should look and be like into what Christ sees when he sees me. Us **#redefinethimage** in pictures, tweets, and posts!

MY FAVORITE PICTURES

TAKEN BY HILARY
PARR



A Work of Fiction

AN EXERPT FROM "THE BATTLE"

The day had come: the day they had to tell their family. The car was nearly silent; the only noise came from 18-month-old Mia's soft whimpering while she slept in the back seat. Avery and Ryan's hands were interlaced and resting on the middle console. It was June 25th, and they were on their way to Sean and Sarah Adams's house for dinner. Unfortunately, while most of their family thought they were bringing good news, the news that the Dobbs bore was far from good. Avery tried to hide how nervous she was, fighting tears and the urge to hyperventilate. Ryan turned into the Adams's neighborhood and stopped a few houses away. He put the car in park, his eyes still ahead. Avery inhaled a shaky breath. She had to be strong.

"Avery, I love you." Ryan turned to her. He could see the tears flooding in her eyes.

In a weak voice, Avery answered, "I love you, too."

Ryan embraced her face in his strong hands and kissed her cheeks, removing the tears with his fingers. Avery knew he was hurting. She could see the darkness under his eyes and feel his hands shaking. They each took a deep breath, and Ryan drove the rest of the way to the house. When they arrived, Ryan prayed with his young wife and retrieved their daughter from the back seat. With one last look at each other, Avery and Ryan each found the other's hand and walked to the front door. Avery held Mia close and, feeling the child's warm breath on her skin, kissed the top of her forehead. As the door opened, the couple smiled and tried to seem as though they were in a good mood.

"Avery! Ryan! Come on in," Sarah exclaimed as she welcomed them into the living room.

Avery loved her new sister-in-law. Sarah was just like a real sister, and Avery knew that she would be a great help in the next couple of months. Even now, Avery could tell that Sarah knew something was wrong. Sarah knew her too well.

"Well, hey, little sister," called Sean as he made his way down from his upstairs office.

"Dinner should be ready soon," announced Sarah. "I'm making tacos!" Sarah made her way back into the kitchen with a shy smile and a glance at her husband.

Avery could see Sean's reservation as he looked over at Ryan.

"Well, man, hope you're feeling better after that flu." Ryan nodded in agreement and the men shook hands.

The family talked for a little while and then sat down at the table to eat. Dinner progressed with light conversation until Avery and Ryan both knew they couldn't wait any longer. Sean and Sarah knew something was up. It was time. Ryan spoke in a quiet voice.

"May we go to the living room? We have something we need to tell you."

The two couples made their way to the other room and sat down across from each other. Both women sat close to their husbands, and Avery held her sleeping daughter tightly in her arms. Ryan cleared his throat and began to speak.

"A few days ago, I went to the doctor to figure out why I was having so many headaches and felt so sick. Like you, we also assumed I had the flu. Turns out that wasn't it." Ryan paused and swallowed hard. "The doctors ran some tests and found a mass on my brain. They referred me to an oncologist and...there is no easy way to say this, but I have cancer. I'm scheduled to have surgery, but the doctors don't think that will give me very long."

The room was silent, except for the sound of Avery's muffled sobs. Ryan, the man who was supposed to be strong, even had tears in his eyes. Sean spoke first.

"How...long?" Although they all knew this was the most obvious question, it was a difficult question with an even harder answer. Ryan squeezed Avery's hand and looked up.

"The cancer is extremely aggressive. I have six weeks to as much as six months without the surgery. If I have the surgery, it could buy me two years or more. It's very risky, even life-threatening, but it seems to be the only option. The doctor was shocked that we didn't catch it earlier, but this type of brain cancer works fast and furiously. The statistics are not very good."

Defeat rang in the room. Sarah pulled out of her husband's hold and made her way to Avery and Ryan, tears streaming down her cheeks. As she knelt down, Sean came to her side and they both began to pray. Even in the midst of their hurt, both couples knew that God was big enough for this. God could heal Ryan, and if He didn't, then this time would be good for their family.

After the couples prayed, their spirits were higher. They knew their God was bigger than this tumor, and they were going to enjoy this time...while they still had it.

CHRISTIAN JOURNALISM

We've all seen it; the TV/Movie portrayal of a journalist that smokes like a chimney, drinks like a frat boy, and cusses like a sailor. They spend their day in a smoke filled office on the phone yelling at some source to tell it to them straight. They miss time with their family. And they will do ANYTHING to get the story {and I mean anything}.

I believe this is a misconception. Not all journalists are cut-throat drinkers with a vivid vocabulary. As a Christian journalist, this idea of a "typical journalist" has been posed to me for the last few years. Let's get one thing straight, I am first and most importantly a

Christian that happens to be a journalist and writer. Others may not live that way, but I do. So when you look at me, you might not think typical journalist but I am hungry for the truth to be given to people.

As a Christian journalist I may not backstab and run over my sources to get a story—I want to treat them right and if that means I don't get a particular story then maybe I don't. Maybe that makes me a bad journalist...I'm not sure. For me, Christian journalism means that I search for the truth so that people understand. I don't cover stories for vengeance or to uncover a juicy secret {although, let's be honest, every

journalist wants to be the next Woodward and Bernstein}. I crave to tell stories and discuss the things going on in society. But for me, my Christianity will always come first.

After the tragedy in Paris, this idea of Christian journalism has been playing in my mind. While I don't agree in the type of things that were produced by the magazine, as a journalist, I can't imagine being killed for something I write. I have a feeling that the face of journalism might be changing.

Christian journalism and what it looks like is a question that will always be around. In many respects, the an-

swer is different for each person. I want to be a storyteller, a writer, and someone who conducts myself in a Christian manner. For me, while I want to think of myself as a dedicated, hardcore, excited journalist that would do anything for a story I'm not sure that is exactly my title. Until I get that big story, I'll be here. discussing the small stories that still matter. Does Christian journalism look different than journalism? I think so.

The Christmas holiday is known for traditions; brightly lit trees set up in the living room, nicely wrapped packages given to loved ones, and hot cocoa sipped by the fire. In Shawnee, Oklahoma there is another traditions known and loved by all—the Annual Christmas Parade.

The Annual Christmas Parade is known as one of the largest community parades in the area and is hosted by Shawnee's Safe Events for Families. The theme of the parade is "Christmas Goes to the Movies" in honor of Jones Theatres celebrating 100 years of being in Shawnee.

Ronny Jones and family have been chosen to be the parade Grand Marshal. Executive Director of the Shawnee Convention & Visitors Bureau, Kinlee Farris, said, "In honor of celebrating 100 years of the-

atres, we are delighted to have the Jones Family as our Grand Marshalls for the Christmas Parade this year."

Jones explained that he is honored to have been asked to be the Grand Marshal. "I've been watching and working behind the scenes on many parades in years past. It will be a new adventure to be in the parade this time," said Jones. Jones Theatres started in downtown Shawnee. "I'm pleased we still have a theatre there [in downtown] after all these years," said Jones.

There is now three locations in the Shawnee area including the Hornbeck in historic downtown Shawnee, Cinema Centre 8, and Movies Six in the Shawnee Mall. Jones Theatres along with KGFF Radio will be sponsoring the annual "Cans for Film Festival"

PARADE STORY

written during internship at SCVB for the monthly newsletter

before the Christmas Parade at the Hornbeck Theatre. The admission is two cans of non-perishable food which will be donated to the Salvation Army. Doors will open December 4th at 3:30 pm. After a family friendly movie is shown at 4:15pm, attendees will be out in enough time to enjoy the parade which begins at 7pm. The Shawnee Convention & Visitors Bureau is gearing up for the Annual Christmas Parade and encouraging the community to participate in a photo contest. "We wish all of our partners a Merry Christmas! Get into the Christmas spirit early with our social media photo contest," said Farris.

Make plans to attend this years "Christmas at the Movies" Annual Christmas Parade on December 4th at 7pm. Come and celebrate Shawnee and Jones Theatres as we kick off the Christmas Season. "Don't forget to look for your favorite Christmas movie in a float and post a photo...watch our site for details," said Farris.

GRASP

an excerpt

Tomorrow would be the day I take a new name. When I had imagined that moment as a young girl I had never expected it to be like this. When I took on a new name I was supposed to be dressed in a beautiful white gown with a full tulle skirt with beading across the sweetheart neckline. I was supposed to be standing in front of a minister—fingers interlaced with the groom’s and staring into the eyes of the man I was going to be marrying. Instead, I was taking a new name under dire circumstances. I was taking a new name to try and save my life—by taking on a whole new person.

The rain outside the regional FBI office in Memphis beat down on the window of the seventh floor office I was sitting in. I stared lifelessly out the window— noticing the stark reflection of myself in the glass. I was exhausted, but when I closed my eyes I saw the things I had been working all day to forget; when they were closed I was back in that place again. So instead of taking a nap on the couch inside this office—like everyone thought I was—I sat staring at lightning flash across the downtown city. The air kicked on and it brought me back to reality. I could still feel his grasp on my arms; holding me in place while he tried to beat me. The bruises of his grasp were coming in bright blue and purple. I had spent two days at the hospital being fussed over while I had to explain every little thing that happened to me. My hands still shook like I was still captive. I got up and walked to the bag the FBI agent named Drew had brought in for me and pulled out the sweatshirt inside. It must be his—it smelled like sweat mixed with a wonderful smelling men’s cologne. He was the one who had found me, shaking—crying—and screaming. The sleeves went past my hands and I was grateful for the warmth and security the sweatshirt immediately gave me. As I sat back down, there was a knock on the door. The sound made me jump and tense up; I had to remind myself that not all sounds were bad sounds.

“Hallie? It’s Drew Camden, may I come in?” I knew it would be Drew—he must have drawn the short end of the stick and got stuck taking care of the shaking little redhead because he had been with me ever since they found me.

“Sure, come in.” My voice was still horse—a scary reminder of what all I had been through almost three days later. Drew walked in and stood far away from me and crossed his

arms, and his posture seemed business but his eyes showed concern.

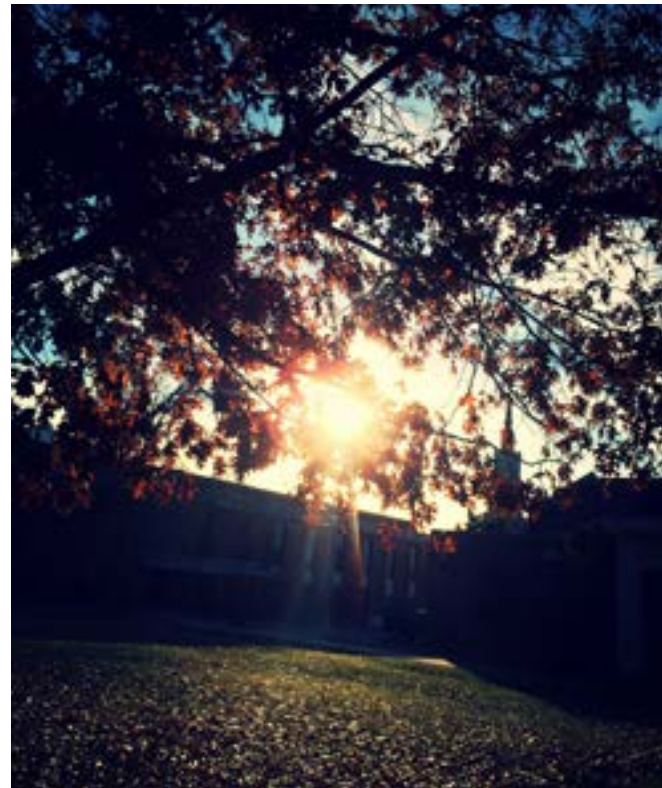
“Hallie, I know you have been through a lot. And I had a feeling you were not sleeping so I thought I would come in and see how you were doing.” It was a simple question really, but sitting here, I had no idea how to answer.

“I don’t know how to answer that Drew. That used to be a simple question. But I honestly just don’t know—I don’t know if I will ever know.” I could hear the defeat in my own voice. I didn’t want to fold and become just another scared statistic that eventually goes crazy and doesn’t understand life anymore. I looked up at Drew; his muscles are clearly defined even through the long sleeve collared shirt he wears. If I hadn’t been in this situation—I would have thought he was a perfect catch. Blonde hair, brilliant green eyes, and a smile that would make most girls go weak, but all I can think is how I must seem to him. He was the first one that found me; found me in that dirty cellar. I was screaming, crying, and bleeding from my head; I had slashes across my face from where he had hit me. And soon, I will be ripped from my life and moved to who knows where in less than a few hours. Drew took a seat in the chair behind the desk and looked at me and nodded.

“Then why don’t you just lay down and I will be here if you need anything.”

ZIP BANG

OBU 2011-2015



Thank you!

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