

Mercy and Humility Lead to Heaven, Part 3

Though *General Hospital* and *Nashville* star Jonathan Jackson followed various Protestant beliefs during his youth, he—along with his wife and three children—ultimately found a home in Eastern Orthodox Christianity more than 10 years ago.

The lesson about the sin of pride that he had learned from C.S. Lewis became even more important as he joined his new church. Jonathan explained, “One of the main things that is focused on in Orthodox Christianity is, ‘I am the chief of sinners.’”

“[So], whoever you’re talking with, no matter where they come from or what background they are, the disposition of the soul should be an imitation of Christ, one of humility to say, ‘You will most likely enter the kingdom of heaven before me, so please pray for me and put a good word in for me. And I want my disposition to be that when you reach the [pearly] gates before I do, that if Christ says, ‘What was your experience with that person?’ you might say, ‘He never judged me.’”

The measure you give will be the measure you get. (Matthew 7:2)

May my love for others keep me too occupied to judge them, Jesus.

Mercy and Humility Lead to Heaven, Part 4

Jonathan Jackson's immersion in Orthodox Christianity led him to write the epic poem *The Harrowing of Hell*, about Jesus' descent into Hades to set imprisoned souls free following His crucifixion. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, Jonathan noted that the poem was partially inspired by "a theological...perspective around hell that I had never heard before."

"I believe it was Father Thomas Hopko that I heard this from originally. He talked about how even the flames of hell are God's love. It's not that God [is] like a pagan deity full of wrath and punishment. It's that God is always love. His face is always turned towards us in love, oftentimes with tears imploring us."

"As Christ said, the Father is not willing that any should perish...Yet we have free will. So, the experience in hell, the descriptions of burning and flames, it's not a vengeful, petty, angry God. It's the experience of a soul that has rejected perfect love. And the flame of God's love experienced by a soul that has rejected goodness and beauty and mercy, then that love feels like it's burning you."

He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. (1 John 4:8)

May I freely accept Your love, Lord, and live accordingly.

Mercy and Humility Lead to Heaven, Part 5

In a world that often focuses on the accumulation of power, Christians are presented with the God of the universe becoming part of humanity as a helpless baby. That idea fascinated actor, author, and musician Jonathan Jackson, leading him to explore the humility of Jesus.

Jonathan explained, “In the Orthodox Church, there’s a title for Christ. He’s called the Great Humility, which has always struck me. And there’s an icon that is called ‘The Great Humility’... where Christ’s head is tilted down from voluntarily accepting the sins of the world for us.”

“There’s such beauty there...The humility of taking on our flesh...receiving beatings and mockery and spitting and false witness and all of these things—and never returning any of that except with love, grace, mercy, and truth. To be hanging on the Cross and say in that moment—not philosophically or ideologically preaching forgiveness—but literally hanging from the Cross saying, ‘Father, forgive them,’ that is just incredible.”

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another. (1 Peter 5:5)

*Grant me the grace and strength to imitate
Your great humility, Jesus.*

Mercy and Humility Lead to Heaven, Part 6

The mercy of God is another aspect of Christianity that Jonathan Jackson sought to examine, partially because of his own past, referenced earlier, when he discovered and repented of his own judgment of people.

In Jonathan's epic poem *The Harrowing of Hell*, Jesus offers salvation to souls that human beings may not think are worthy of it. As Jesus says in the story, "Mercy...not sacrifice, is the way to heaven."

Jonathan reflected, "It's impossible to impress God with our self-righteousness...Just come to Christ. Look at the thief on the Cross. There was nothing he could do in that moment to earn anything, except [express] this beautiful repentance and say, 'Lord, please remember me when You come into Your kingdom.'"

"Christ doesn't turn to him and say, 'A little late here, buddy. You don't have time to earn it.' No, He turns to him and sees the honesty of this repentance, this soul who is giving everything he has to Christ and recognizing who He is. And He says, 'Today, you will be with Me in paradise.'"

**He has mercy on whomever He chooses.
(Romans 9:18)**

Jesus, I offer You my repentance and hope to join You one day in paradise.

‘The Power of Love’ for Easter

Instagram famous cosmetic artist Hilary Holmes is already well-known for her picture-perfect makeovers. Last Easter, however, she managed to pull off a miraculous transformation for a 60-year-old homeless man named Daniel. And not a stitch of makeup was required!

As the Melbourne, Australia-based Holmes explained, she first saw Daniel “sitting alone at a tram stop near her home” on Easter Sunday 2025. He was not “asking for help,” but Hilary went to talk to him anyway.

After learning the story behind Daniel’s 18 years of homelessness, Holmes created a GoFundMe page, appealing to her Instagram followers to send financial assistance for Daniel, who had been “robbed multiple times” and was suffering from “diabetes, 2 hernias, and 3 tumors.”

In just one week, Hilary’s GoFundMe reached its goal, raising more than \$31,000, which has already put Daniel far along the road to recovery in terms of clothing, housing, and most importantly, medical care. “The power of us,” Holmes said, as quoted in an article on *SunnySkyz.com*. “The power of love.”

**The Son of Man came to...save the lost.
(Luke 19:10)**

Risen Lord, may we strive to be someone’s miracle today.

A United Song of Praise

According to the *Greek Reporter*, as of 2025, it had been nine years since Catholic and Orthodox Christian Easter were celebrated on the same day. This is due to the fact that Catholic and Orthodox Christians follow different church calendars (Gregorian and Julian, respectively), as well as the latter faith always having their “Pascha” after Jewish Passover, in “Biblical sequence of Christ’s Passion.”

Last April, however, four parishes in Brooklyn (two Catholic, two Orthodox) decided to join their voices in mutual praise of our Risen Lord at a concert entitled “Walking with Jesus: From Palm Sunday to the Resurrection.”

This performance was held at Our Lady of Lebanon on the Friday following Easter. Bishop Gregory Mansour, Our Lady of Lebanon’s pastor, stated that the coming together was meant to serve as “part of a bigger picture for Christian unity.” St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral parishioner Mike Naber told *The Tablet*, “At the end, we are all Christians and should take our strength from Christ Himself...to be united.”

**All of you are one in Christ Jesus.
(Galatians 3:28)**

Lord, may we strive to remember there is far more that unites us than divides us as Christians.

Angels in Brooklyn

As she was a few steps away from her home in Bellerose, Queens, Janet Miranda tripped on an uneven sidewalk and fell to the ground, breaking her nose and injuring her shoulder. At first, she felt scared because there was no one around who could help her. Then, two angels appeared. Not the type with wings, but rather wearing Catholic school uniforms.

Christian Fiorillo and Colin Winn, eighth graders at the nearby St. Gregory the Great Catholic Academy, were walking home when they spotted Miranda on the ground.

As reported by Bill Miller in *The Tablet*, “Neither boy had first aid training, but their school and their families had already taught them the values of service and compassion. They used Miranda’s phone to call 911, then scrambled to a nearby deli, where they grabbed napkins for her bloody nose.”

Christian and Colin were honored for their actions at their school a few months later. Also in attendance were a grateful Miranda and members of her family. Regarding their actions, Colin said, “At St. Greg’s, we’re taught to always help others.”

Two are better than one...For if they fall, one will lift up the other. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

*May I respond to the needs around me,
Messiah.*

Grace Under Fire

Last April, lightning struck a house in Oklahoma City, sparking an all-consuming fire. Inside the home at the time were mother Jamie Eggleston, 11-year-old daughter Mandy, and younger son Ryan. Their husband/father, Kevin, was away on a business trip.

As he did before all of his travels, the last thing Kevin told Mandy was to “take care of” Jamie and Ryan. Little did he know how well his daughter would keep this promise.

That fateful morning, Mandy was the only one awake “when she heard a loud boom.” The youngster sprang into action, running to check on her mother and brother, who had also been jolted awake.

Setting aside her own fears, Mandy focused on getting Jamie, who had a sprained ankle, and Ryan to safety. “What Mandy did is a very adult thing,” Battalion Fire Chief Greg Lindsay said to *KFOR News 4*. “She got everybody out.”

The Eggleston family, while still reeling from the losses of their pets especially, remained more determined than ever to rebuild their home, inspired by Mandy’s act of courage.

**Save others by snatching them out of fire.
(Jude 1:23)**

Abba, may we teach our children courage in all things.

Listen to This...

Faulty communication is at the heart of much unhappiness. And unproductive dialogue isn't dialogue at all because the messages people want to send to others aren't being received. "Discussion is a dynamic two-way process rather than a transmission event," according to Michael Molloy, an educator who specialized in communication techniques.

Molloy believed that as a result of interruptions, criticisms, premature judgments, and other signs of non-participation, there "are no discussions anymore, only interesting monologues... Listening is not sitting quietly but actively receiving and interpreting what is heard."

"I show you I am listening to you by uncluttering my mind, encouraging you to go on talking, asking you to elaborate, clarify or explain, rephrasing what you have said, being excited about you and your message."

If you find that you frequently misunderstand what others say, consider following Molloy's listening techniques.

Do not answer before you listen, and do not interrupt when another is speaking. (Sirach 11:8)

Jesus, listening is hard work because I have so many things to say myself. Help me to develop the art of listening.

Police Officer's Lifesaving Effort

A mother went into labor without even realizing she was pregnant! That's when Officer Kelly Chappell of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department came to the rescue to save the baby's life, which was nothing short of a miracle.

This mother had given birth in her home's bathroom and called 911. The child was only at about 23 to 26 weeks gestation, weighed approximately two pounds, and had a bluish tint when Officer Chappell arrived on the scene. She couldn't locate a pulse, so she immediately began administering CPR by using two fingers to press on the baby's chest.

When paramedics arrived, they brought the baby and mother straight to the hospital. Both baby and mother are doing fine. The police department was so proud of Chappell's lifesaving efforts that they presented her with an award. "God puts you in a place for a reason," Chappell told *People*. "Every day you're just thankful the baby made it another day."

**I am with you, to save you and rescue you.
(Jeremiah 42:11)**

Lord, bless all police officers who strive to keep us safe.

Healing and Mercy After Suicide, Part 1

As a twice divorced, single mother of six, Therese Klug remained devoted to the practice of her Catholic faith and made sure that her children received a Catholic education. She looks back on those days as “controlled chaos,” but notes, “My children were not burdens; they were my blessings.”

Still, mental health issues can arise even in good Catholic families—and that turned out to be the case with Therese’s son, Travis. On August 15, 1999—during an era when mental health was not often openly discussed—she discovered that Travis had committed suicide in the backyard of their home.

Shocked and devastated, Therese found herself lifted up by her faith community, who showed up to offer material, emotional, and spiritual support. Members of her church even paid for the funeral. In a letter to The Christophers, she said, “I tell those mourning a loss to look around at the visitation or funeral and see all the people who are there to show their love. That’s truly the Body of Christ...I vowed to spend the rest of my life doing God’s work in thanksgiving of the gift I was given.”

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:16)

May families dealing with suicide find good support, Abba.

Healing and Mercy After Suicide, Part 2

Years after the suicide of her son Travis, Therese Klug found herself offering support to other families who had endured a tragic loss in this way. Her advice to those who want to help? “First, just show up, and be there to listen...and pray.”

The biggest source of healing for Therese personally came from the Divine Mercy devotion, which she was introduced to by a friend. “I pleaded with God that if Travis made it to purgatory,” she recalled, “I would pray and do good works and get him the rest of the way home.”

Therese prayed for Travis daily for the eight months following his death. And on Good Friday in the year 2000, she started praying the Divine Mercy novena. On the first Sunday after Easter, known as Divine Mercy Sunday, Therese listened to the bishop’s homily at Mass about trusting in Jesus’ mercy.

“I felt a tremendous weight lift from my body,” Therese wrote, “that weight of despair and heavy sadness. I instantly knew Travis was in Heaven with Our Lord. He was home. I made a promise to Our Lord to spread this devotion of Divine Mercy wherever I could.”

Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)

Allow hurting souls to experience Your mercy, Jesus.

The \$20 Kindness Challenge

When Kristina Ulmer lost her sister, Katie Amodei, in a car crash 12 years ago, Katie's purse was recovered from the vehicle by an officer at the scene. This bag contained "more than \$100 worth" of tips that Katie, a waitress, had earned that morning.

Ulmer, who teaches freshmen English at Hatboro-Horsham High School in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, recalled in *The Washington Post*, "Katie was such a kind person, and I remember thinking, 'This money should go towards kindness.'" Thus, the \$20 Kindness Challenge was born.

In 2018, four years after Katie's passing, Kristina took her sister's last tips and added her own money, totaling \$500—enough for each of the 25 students in her class to "perform an act of kindness with [\$20], then record a little video about it."

Eight years later, this kindness challenge is still going strong, with "over 350 acts of kindness" logged, from knitting caps for babies in the NICU to sending cards to veterans. "I believe she'd be ecstatic how I used her tip money," Kristina concluded. "I personally feel that this helps Katie live on."

**The teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
(Proverbs 31:26)**

Abba, may we gift our children a legacy of kindness.

How to Save a Life

At age 16, Australian Luke Melling was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma. His next 12 years included numerous treatments and four relapses. When Melling was 28, he was told he would need a stem cell transplant, and the procedure would require “a matching tissue type.”

Enter Alastair Hawken from Manchester, England. He “joined the NHS Stem Cell donor registry in 2008,” having decided to donate his stem cells after losing his mother to cancer when he was only 23. “She needed nine units of blood during treatment,” Hawken recalled on the NHS Blood and Transplant website, “and that inspired me to give back...I’m so grateful to have been a part of Luke’s story.”

In 2025, Melling flew more than 10,000 miles to Manchester to meet Alastair, whose “cryogenically frozen...donated...stem cells” had saved his life.

“There are no words,” Melling said of his emotional meeting with Hawken, “but I hope [Alastair] knows how grateful I am...The moment I got to give him that huge hug and thank him in person is a moment I’ll never forget.”

The blood is...life. (Deuteronomy 12:23)

Creator, may we take every opportunity to save a life.

Faith on the Field

New York Mets fans appreciate their favorite players, but they shouldn't forget the long hours and dedicated work of the grounds crew that keeps Citi Field in top shape. For Manager of Field Operations Nick Baker, his job is a labor of love.

As reported by Jim Mancari in *The Tablet*, the Iowa native grew up with a passion for the outdoors, so he pursued “a horticulture degree with an emphasis on turf management.” Baker was employed in numerous ballparks around the country before being hired by the Mets in 2019.

Baker is not just devoted to his job, however. He has always been—and he remains—a practicing Catholic. No matter where he worked, he commented, “First, I would find the ballpark, and then I would find the church to go to.”

The husband and father of three is also a model of patience since it takes 11 hours to get the field ready for a night game. “Staying grounded and staying patient,” noted Mancari, “goes a long way as a groundskeeper, so Baker’s Catholic faith has molded him perfectly for this unique career.”

Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord. (Colossians 3:23)

*May I employ patience in whatever work I do,
Creator.*

World's Oldest Skydiver

Who said life slows down after retirement? This is certainly not the case for Suffolk, England resident Manette Baillie. On the auspicious occasion of her 102nd birthday, she decided to go skydiving to raise money for three different charities, including the East Anglian Air Ambulance and the Benhall and Sternfield Ex-Servicemen and Village Club.

According to *The Straits Times*, Baillie first got the idea to go skydiving when she learned “about a friend’s 85-year-old father who had done a parachute jump.” The centenarian, who served in the Women’s Royal Navy Service during World War II and whose late husband was a paratrooper, boldly declared, “If an 85-year-old man can do it, so can I.”

This was not Manette’s first experience with risk-taking. Two years prior, she marked her 100th birthday by driving a Ferrari at 210 kmh at Silverstone racecourse. “I’ve been so lucky to be fit and well that I’ve got to do something with it,” Baillie said gratefully in conclusion. “I just want other people who are getting towards 80 and 90 not to give up anything. Just keep going.”

**There is no wealth better than health.
(Sirach 30:16)**

*Lord, grant us the strength and tenacity to
“keep going.”*

Wild Child Becomes a Nun

Smoking and drinking were some of Clare Crockett's favorite pastimes growing up in Derry, Northern Ireland. She even described herself as a "wild child." But when Crockett was 16, a friend invited her to go to Spain. The trip turned out to be for a Catholic retreat. At first, Crockett didn't attend any of the religious events, preferring instead to get a tan on the beach.

Everything changed, however, when she went to a prayer service on Good Friday "and touched the feet of a statue of Jesus," reported Paula Katinas for *The Tablet*. "When she returned from the retreat, she announced to her family that she felt a call from God to become a nun."

Crockett entered a convent in Spain and relished her newfound faith. She was working in Ecuador in 2016 when she died in a building collapse caused by an earthquake. Her legacy lives on, though, and she is being investigated for sainthood.

Sister Kristen Gardner, who is leading the cause for Sister Clare's canonization, said, "She had such a gift...She connected with people. It didn't matter if you were shy or outgoing. She got along with everyone and made them feel loved."

You did not choose Me but I chose you.

(John 15:16)

Inspire us to listen for and follow Your divine call, Jesus.

Cancer Survivor Advocates for Going Local

Mike Landesberg is a chef who reviews restaurants on Long Island, New York. After recovering from cancer four years ago, he also began promoting Long Island businesses through the Going Local Week Initiative.

Landesberg told the *Islip Bulletin* that when he was battling cancer, he received so much love and encouragement from people in his community that he now wants to support his neighbors and businesses in any way he can. Recently, he used his platform to help save two local restaurants by spreading awareness and producing a new wave of customers for them.

This prompted Landesberg to launch the Going Local Week Initiative in the town of Islip. Its purpose is to encourage consumers to shop at small businesses rather than ordering from huge corporations. Landesberg's goal is to make shopping at your local businesses "a movement, not just a moment." He hopes to expand this initiative across Long Island.

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you. (Matthew 7:12)

Lord, may I continue to support local businesses, since they are the backbone of our communities.

What Does God Do All Day?

Many years ago, Irene Nowell Tietze taught second grade in Franklin Square, New York. One day, she asked her students, “What does God do all day?” Here are some of the answers:

- “God makes people all day.”
- “He makes sure that we eat all our liver.”
- “He mostly helps people come up on the train to heaven.”
- “All day, God does the same thing. He picks up dead people and when He does, He gives them a halo.”
- “God lives up in the clouds...Now isn’t that a nice life?”

Children have funny ideas about God, don’t they? But so do adults, and ours aren’t nearly as clever. Some think of God as a scorekeeper who tabulates our good acts and bad. Others see God as a vengeful judge who metes out punishment to those who do wrong. There’s also God the warden who wants to encase us in fear. But God isn’t like that.

God is forgiving and merciful. God is the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep to go after the one which is lost—and rejoices when He finds it. God is love.

I am the good shepherd. (John 10:14)

Jesus, lead me back to Your fold when I wander from it.

Faith on the Run

For Isanti, Minnesota’s Deacon Vincent Charles, training for the 2025 Boston Marathon was not just a physical endeavor, but a spiritual one as well. As he told *OSV News*’ Nikki Rajala, he began long distance running in 2013, hoping it would help heal his grief over the death of his father. Deacon Vince kept up his hobby over the years and eventually set his sights on Boston.

Whenever he crosses paths with cars while running in Isanti, the deacon blesses drivers with the Sign of the Cross. Deacon Vince, who serves at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish, said, “It’s forehead-to-belly, not a little one. While I was running a few weeks ago, something—like the Holy Spirit—told me to do this, to spark in their mind that Christ is important. It’s become a regular practice for me to share that sign of God’s love.”

When running the Marathon, Deacon Vince literally wore his faith on his sleeve—and on his chest and back—with both family and religious pictures on his shirt. He also prayed for hundreds of intentions on the route in order to use his time in a spiritually beneficial way.

Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Help me incorporate prayer into my daily routine, Lord.

Seen, Prayed For, and Loved

As the Rome correspondent for *Catholic News Agency*, Courtney Mares spent years covering Pope Francis, both at the Vatican and in his travels. Following the pontiff's death in 2025, she reflected on his most endearing qualities.

Writing for the *National Catholic Register*, Mares recalled, “On a...papal flight to Malta, I told the Pope about my cousin Bobby, who has cerebral palsy and, due to his disability, has never been able to walk or talk. Without hesitation, Francis paused to pray. Right there, in the aisle of the plane, he bent down, placed his hand on the photo I held of my cousin and prayed for him with me. It was a small moment. But for my family, it meant everything.”

Mares also experienced other moments of Pope Francis' “quiet attentiveness to the needs of the people before him.” One year, after he held Mass for inmates in a prison, “Francis took the time to speak to each prisoner individually, listening, looking them in the eye...More than anything, he made people feel seen, prayed for, and loved.”

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

Jesus, help me love others the way You love them.

Care for Creation

During Abigail Standish's high school years, she attended a Catholic summer camp, during which she and her fellow campers went white water rafting. The excitement of the rapids was followed by some time in calmer waters, prompting Standish to take a transcendent view of her surroundings.

"I looked up in awe," she recalled to *The Catholic Sun's* Jamie Rose Bell. "I was like, 'Oh my gosh—God is here! Look at how beautiful this water is, look at how tall the pine trees are...God created all of this. God created me, but God also created these things for me and to be with me.'"

Standish went on to study theology in college, where she became particularly interested in Catholic Social Teaching, which taught her that theology "could be put into action in very practical ways...to serve the poor, to work for creation."

Today, Standish serves as coordinator of Catholic Social Teaching for the Diocese of Phoenix, with an emphasis on Care for Creation, which promotes "the human need for the natural world, and the earth's need for humans to...care for it."

**The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.
(Genesis 2:15)**

Creator, may the beauty of nature lead me closer to You.

Trust the Whisper, Part 1

Since childhood, Kathy Izard felt like she was being called to do something important with her life. She mostly ignored that still, small voice until she was 44 and had an experience in which she had to make a definitive choice.

Kathy and her family were volunteering at a soup kitchen that served the homeless in Charlotte, North Carolina. After reading the book *Same Kind of Different as Me*, co-authored by formerly homeless man Denver Moore, she invited him to speak at an event benefiting the soup kitchen.

As Kathy gave Denver a tour of the facility, which she thought would impress him, he instead lamented that they had no beds where the homeless could sleep. “What are you going to do about it?” he asked her.

Denver’s words haunted Kathy. She realized that she could continue down the road she was going—or attempt something seemingly impossible, for which she was totally unqualified, but that would change her community for the better. She chose the impossible. And she made it happen. More tomorrow...

For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26)

*Guide me in making the impossible possible,
Creator.*

Trust the Whisper, Part 2

As Kathy Izard reflected on Denver Moore's words to do something about sheltering the homeless, she felt like God was sending her a message. During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her book *Trust the Whisper*, Kathy explained, "That [whisper] felt inconvenient and uncomfortable, and I certainly was unqualified to do anything about housing...But at the same time, it was insistent."

Kathy quit her graphic design job to focus entirely on this new dream; then she connected with the right people. Together, she said, "We first started a pilot program called Homeless to Homes, and we moved 13 people directly from street to home, chronically homeless men and women who had been on the streets, probably an average of about eight to 10 years."

That program changed participants' lives, so Kathy and her team launched a capital campaign to create a new residence for the homeless that came to be called Moore Place. "It has changed the way this community believes that we can and should take care of those who are experiencing homelessness," she said.

Is not this the fast that I choose...[to] bring the homeless poor into your house? (Isaiah 58:6,7)

May my trust in You lead to works of mercy, Jesus.

Trust the Whisper, Part 3

In reflecting on what she was able to create to benefit the homeless, Kathy Izard credited God with being a key part of the plan. She said, “In the beginning, when I was hearing those whispers, I thought, ‘I can’t be called to this because only priests and nuns and monks and ministers are called.’ But I came to shift and understand that I think we’re all called. There’s something whispering to each one of us.”

“I hate to think how many times I was down at the soup kitchen and maybe feeling a little tug or nudge to do something more, but just saying, ‘Nope, not mine to do. Homelessness, that’s an unsolvable problem.’”

“I do believe that God doesn’t leave us alone in our whispers. I think He brings along the folks that we need to help us...That’s what I tried to bake into these stories [in my book *Trust the Whisper*]: ordinary people who were called to something that felt so much bigger than themselves...And I do believe that we can learn anything if it’s important to us, and we will have put into our path the people, the resources, the things we need to help implement [these goals].”

**The Lord was...in...a still small voice.
(1 Kings 19:12)**

*Teach me to discern and trust Your whispers,
Holy Spirit.*

Trust the Whisper, Part 4

One of the stories Kathy Izard shares in her book *Trust the Whisper* is that of Betsy Blue, who she got to know on a trip with some of her friends. Betsy shared her interest in helping the mentally ill because she had a family member with bipolar disorder—and because there was not one residential facility for mental health care in a 100-mile radius of her Charlotte, North Carolina hometown. Betsy had no experience in this area, so she was unsure if she should follow these promptings inside her.

Across the street from the inn where Kathy's group was staying were the grounds of an old monastery, so the ladies went to walk around one morning. There was an outdoor chapel and an altar where people had left flowers, rosaries, etc. Betsy found some pages there, started reading them, and began crying.

“It turned out it was a letter written by a mom who had a bipolar daughter,” Kathy explained, “and it was pleading to God for help. Her daughter was a runaway, and the mother didn't know how to find her. She didn't know how to help her...Betsy took this as her sign [to move forward with her idea].”

The wisdom from above is...full of mercy and good fruits. (James 3:17)

Guide me in producing good fruits, Messiah.

Trust the Whisper, Part 5

After reading that letter from a mother praying for help for her mentally ill daughter, Betsy Blue felt convinced that God wanted her to create some sort of mental health ministry. She, Kathy Izard, and 10 others came together to form a board to get this project off the ground.

None of them had medical or psychiatric experience, but they all had a family member who had suffered mental health issues. Three years and \$27 million later, they opened Hope Way, “Charlotte’s first residential mental health treatment center,” Kathy noted. “It’s a beautiful campus. It’s outpatient and inpatient...We treat over 500 clients in a given year and have just opened up something for children and adolescents, as well as eating disorders.”

“So, it really is a world-class center, which I think has a lot of miracles behind it...very divinely inspired. Betsy talked about...how it started out as this whisper, but she believes it was her purpose—and her husband Bill’s—to do the impossible and make this place real.”

They finished their building by command of the God of Israel. (Ezra 6:14)

Lord, lead the mentally ill towards the services they need.

Trust the Whisper, Part 6

Listening for God's whispers isn't relegated only to adults. That's why Kathy Izard penned an illustrated children's book titled *Grace Heard a Whisper*, about a young girl who perceives God's voice in her soul encouraging her to get people to pay attention to all the wonderful things in the world.

This book earned Kathy her second Christopher Award in 2025. (The first came in 2017 for her memoir *The Hundred Story Home*.) As a result of her accomplishments, Kathy gets invited to speak to groups all over the country. She has come to believe that each of these events includes at least one person that God wants her to talk with.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, Kathy said, "I go to talk, but I always go to listen [and ask], 'Who's the one person that I wouldn't meet unless I was showing up at this church or this conference? And who needs some encouragement to do whatever it is that they're doing?'" And it happens pretty regularly, as if God is saying, "Just get yourself there. I've got the person you need to meet."

A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. (Proverbs 16:9)

How can I offer encouragement to someone today, Lord?

Trust the Whisper, Part 7

The divine influence on the stories Kathy Izard has collected in *Trust the Whisper* are never far from her mind. So, when she was reading the novel *Rare Objects* by Kathleen Tessaro, she learned the Hebrew word “nitzotzot,” which gave her a new perspective on seeing God’s presence in this world.

She explained that the word means “divine sparks,” which exist inside everyone and everything. “It’s the idea that...when things are used for their divine purpose, they are set to release those sparks and to shine like the face of God in the world.”

“As I was writing all these stories...I started to realize that these ‘God dot’ connections were not how each one of us can do something by ourselves, but how together we can plug into God’s divine electricity...to shine our light and repair the world.”

“I feel like that’s what these stories show: tasks that should have been unreasonable and impossible, yet together they did become possible. I do think that’s because God was involved in each one of these stories and is involved in our lives.”

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)

May divine connections light my path, Savior.

Operation Babylift

As the Vietnam War was coming to an end in April 1975, President Gerald Ford organized Operation Babylift to get the 3,000 babies that had been fathered by U.S. servicemen out of the country before the North Vietnamese could kill them.

As reported by Jim Axelrod of *CBS News*, Thuy Williams, then age five, was put on one of these planes by her mother. She was adopted by an Oregon couple and grew up grateful to her new country.

Williams “spent eight years in the Army, built a construction company, and started a nonprofit that takes kids to Africa.” Today, she coaches numerous sports teams for young people. Williams explained, “I understand the opportunities that I had being here in the U.S. I just wanted to serve.”

Steve Ford, President Ford’s son, believes his father would relish Williams’ story. He concluded, “I think back on dad. He had the moral clarity to go save those babies. And we had an obligation to do something, to help them.”

**The Lord helps them and rescues them; He rescues them from the wicked and saves them.
(Psalm 37:40)**

Protect and guide children in war torn countries towards safety and new life, Prince of Peace.