

# “Make my life a prayer” changing lives through foster care



*“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”*

This passage from James is often quoted as a source of encouragement. Elijah prayed for rain and the heavens opened, he prayed again and the rains stopped. Daniel prayed and survived the lion’s den. It has not always been so for me. I struggle with prayer, and unlike Elijah, cannot often point to concrete results when I pray for the rains to stop pouring into the lives of vulnerable children.

My prayer life is a puny shadow of Biblical heroes who prayed through the night, in whale’s bellies, and

prison cells. Yet, I passionately devote myself to the work God has given me – helping youth in foster care. Recently, colleagues asked me if I’m a believer. When I said yes, they thanked me for “making my life a prayer” for vulnerable children. I was reminded of the Keith Green song, “Make My Life a Prayer to You.”

What a revelation – my life as a prayer! These children are continuously on my mind, heart, and spirit. I may not always see the blue skies following the rain,

but I trust that God is true to His word.

I’ve always loved the story of Esther. She was an orphan, alien, and stranger in the land when she became Queen. Because she knew both suffering and compassion, God gave her a heart for people and access to the throne. In a particularly stunning moment, the King asks, “What do you want, Esther? Name it – anything you want, I will give you – I will even give you half of my kingdom!”

What did she do? She asked for help for her people. She stepped up and spoke up. The orphan, the stranger, the alien. The girl who knew pain, trauma, and grief. She



**By Sue Badeau**

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set aside her own needs, stepped up, and spoke up for her people.

When we allow our own pain, suffering, and life experiences to soften our hearts to the needs of others, we begin to develop the boldness and courage to approach the throne of Grace on behalf of our suffering people. In my life, this has meant a life devoted to children in foster care.

My husband and I first saw the lifelong effects of growing up without belonging to a family when we met homeless men like Gerry, Kurt, and Benjamin. Fidgety, fast-talking, tellers of tales with deep emotion, boundless grace, and delightful humor - but also homeless, hungry, and alone at age 50, 60 and 70 because they had no family of their own when they were 15, 16, or 17.

Getting to know these men spurred us to become foster parents, in hopes of making a difference for the next generation of disconnected young people.

Soon we met Greta, Marcie, Billy, and Dwayne. Teens on the brink of transition. Living in foster care. Soon to cross into adulthood, and like Gerry, Kurt, and Benjamin, soon to be homeless. Hungry. Alone.

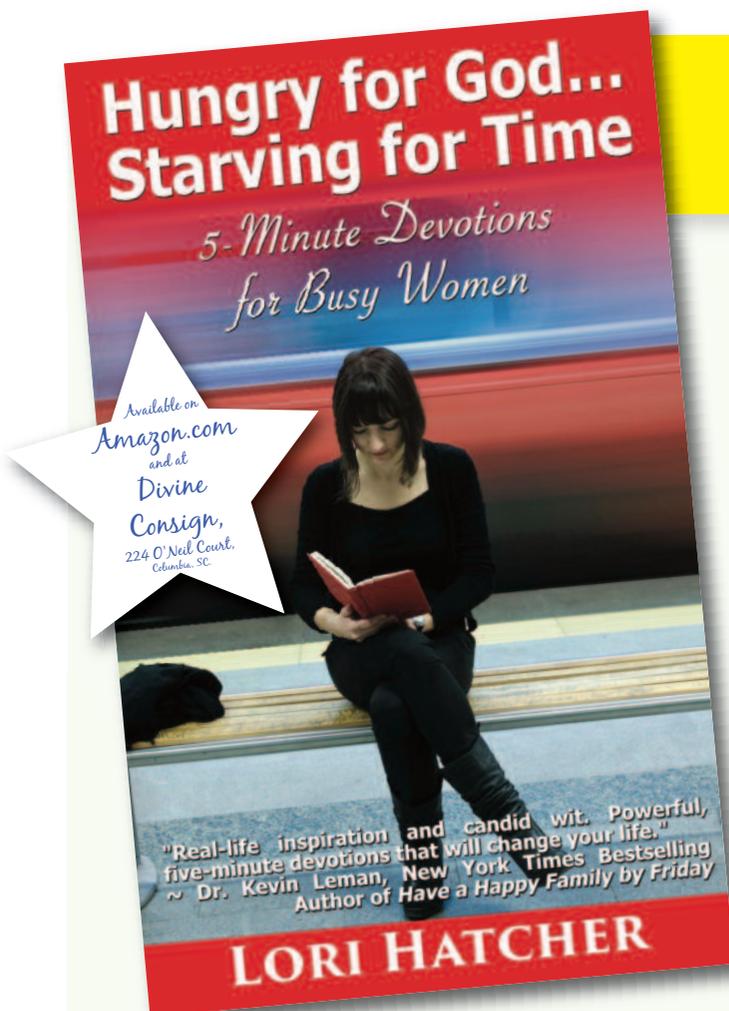
One who influenced me deeply was Mary. Mary was 19, pregnant and alone when I met her.

A nurse friend asked me to reach out to Mary, who'd been hospitalized following a suicide attempt. After stabilizing her medically, hospital staff asked whom they could call on her behalf. She replied, "Nobody." After several more attempts she became agitated and yelled, "You don't understand,

I grew up in foster care and I. Ain't. Got. Nobody." My friend was shaken to the core by this and came to me, asking if I would visit Mary.

I wasn't sure what I had to offer, but I visited Mary, gently getting to know her. She began to share her life story, growing up in foster care, but quickly became confused. She couldn't remember all of the places she'd lived or people she'd been told to call "Mom" or "Dad." Foster homes blurred together until the cold December morning when she woke up in a group home, expecting a day like any other.

When a staff person knocked on her bedroom door telling her to gather her things because she was moving, she didn't flinch. It was a common occurrence in her life. As they walked toward the front door, she asked, "Where am I going this time?"



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FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

He opened the door, looked out upon the snowy winter day, and said, "Happy Birthday, Mary! You're 18. You're free of the system now – go anywhere you want."

A year later, she was 19, pregnant, and alone.

We cried, hugged, and prayed together. I connected her with resources.

*My life was never the same.*

That day I realized children in foster care are "my people." Over 75 children in foster care have shared our home and our lives. We adopted twenty. We advocate on behalf of children in foster care continuously. We approach the King's throne on their

behalf. They do not need half of the kingdom. Just a chance to come inside. To have a home and a family. To belong. That was my prayer, over 35 years ago, for these, "my people," and it remains my prayer today.

Every human being longs for safety and connection. When you step up to become a foster parent, you change lives – whether one or many. You bring hope where none exists. You may never see the rain stop in their lives, but you'll know that you're making a difference.

It doesn't take a lot of money or college degrees, just a strong belief that every child deserves a family, that no child should transition into adulthood saying, "I ain't got nobody," and a willingness to learn effective strategies for parenting children who have experienced trauma. *ROC*



To learn more about foster care, adoption or other ways you can make a difference, please visit my website, read my blog and buy my books at [www.suebadeau.com](http://www.suebadeau.com) or visit [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org) or [advocatesforfamiliesfirst.org](http://advocatesforfamiliesfirst.org) or [fosteringfamilies.today.com](http://fosteringfamilies.today.com)

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