



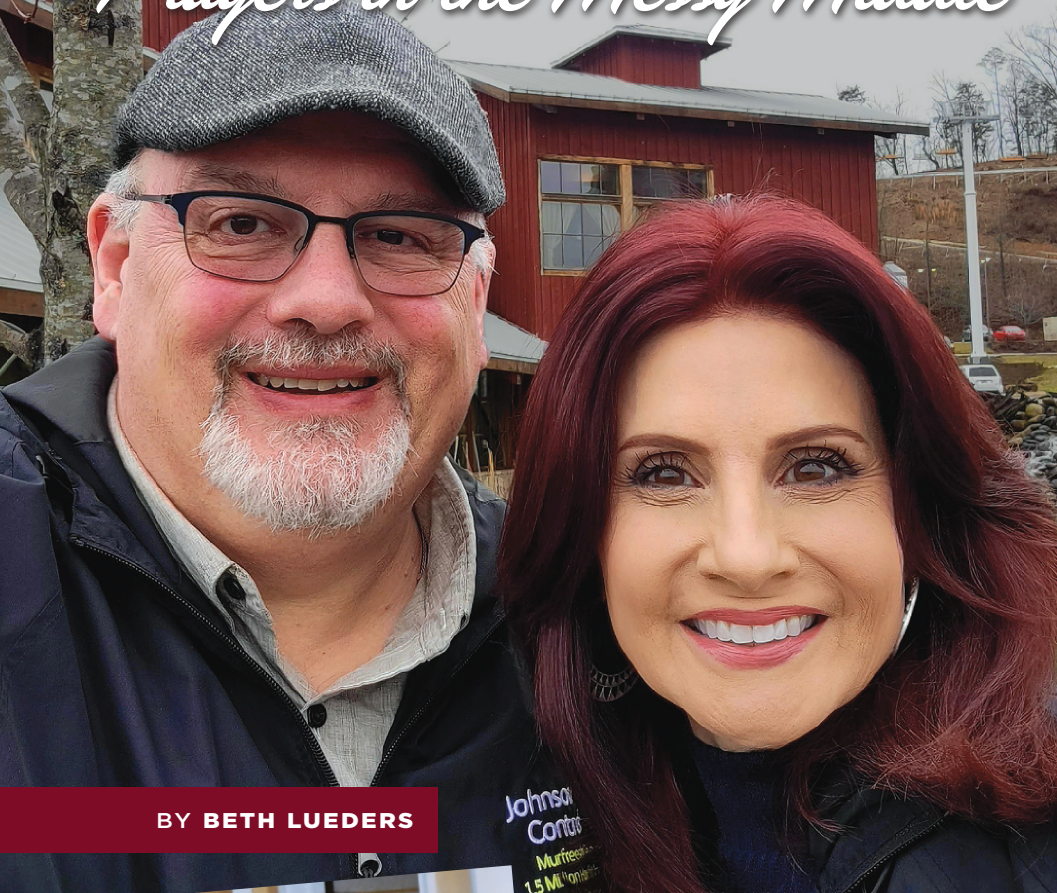
# POWER *for* LIVING

April 14, 2024

I Can Do All Things Through Christ

*Finding God in the  
Center of the Storm*

# Prayers in the Messy Middle



BY BETH LUEDERS



Monica and Joe with baby Joseph in 1987

**T**ears poured uncontrollable down Monica Schmelter's face. She gripped the steering wheel tighter. How would the on-air host pull herself together before arriving at Nashville's Christian Television Network (CTN) station?

Despite her angst, Monica sensed that someone was praying earnestly for her at that very moment.

Arriving at work that morning in 2000, Monica accepted a random phone call from a viewer of her



popular *Bridges* show. “Monica, I’ve only watched you a few times on TV,” the caller explained, “but I woke up at 2 this morning, and I’ve been praying for you since.”

The woman’s words comforted Monica’s burdened heart. And only God truly knew how much His distressed daughter needed the support.

While Monica’s *Bridges* viewers watched her daily 30-minute program on finding faith and hope in life’s soul-stretching journey, she was not ready to air her personal turmoil to the masses.

“At home, I would give myself 30 minutes every day to cry. I would run the water in the shower or the bathtub so that my son wouldn’t hear me,” Monica shares. “When my timer went off after 30 minutes, I would clean up my makeup and move on. That time was my little coping mechanism that helped me through, otherwise I would be crying all day. I had to get that focused.”

Focus she did. When your pastor husband of 16 years demands a divorce, moves out, and you are now solo parenting your 13-year-old son, you have little options to wallow too deeply in your shock and anguish.

Husband Joe’s request for a divorce more than leveled Monica’s fairly tidy world. Telling their teen son that his dad was moving out was Monica’s darkest day. “Joe and I both sat with our son and told him together, but I was sobbing and couldn’t even get the words to come out of my mouth,” explains the woman whose career depends on her steady voice.

As Joseph III listened to his parents’ bombshell news, he shot back, “Well, I’m just gonna be another statistic.”

Those words pierced Monica’s heart, and she longed to diffuse her son’s anger at his father. Her prayers would now include asking God to show Joseph that he could still love both of his parents even in his own painful questioning.

Monica could remember facing her own challenges as a teenager in Detroit, Michigan. Her parents sometimes fought, yelling and hurling things in anger. And as a



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONICA SCHMELTER

**Monica and her brother, Donnie**

teen, Monica started skipping school and smoking pot.

When Monica’s younger brother with Down Syndrome was hospitalized with respiratory complications, a neighbor invited Monica’s extended family to a church service on his behalf. Monica, 13, heard the Gospel that night and committed to follow Jesus. Although no one else in her family returned to church, Monica’s parents drove her to and from church services.



Monica and Joe with son Joseph in February 2023

When the pastor preached on Psalm 2:8 (KJV), quoting, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,” Monica began fervently praying for the salvation of her whole family—including her Pakistani immigrant grandfather, who was Muslim, and her parents who were not religious.

Monica developed a tight rapport with God, talking to Him about everything and recording those prayers on loose-leaf notebook paper that she kept in a Charlie® perfume box on her bedroom dresser.

“I was praying for everybody. I was writing down all my teacher’s names, my school classmates names. I prayed for 25 years before my parents came to Christ,” Monica shares. “Even my Muslim grandfather came to Christ before he passed. His second wife came to Christ and all four of their children, plus several of my high school classmates.”

But could intercessory prayer turn things around in Monica’s time of crisis? Would the pleading and tears to Jehovah Rapha, the Healer, bind up the jagged wounds in her marriage?

Joe left the pastorate and he and Monica started attending separate churches. Their former church family knew about the couple’s separation, but Monica feared telling her parents and her boss. Feelings of shame—and fears over the impact of her pending divorce on her TV ministry job—kept her locked in suffering silence.

Monica eventually shared her turmoil with her boss, adding that she was willing to resign if her personal crisis might harm the ministry. Her boss, however, assured Monica that the right thing was to stand by her, love her, and pray for her.

Monica says, “That brought healing in my journey as well.”

Monica was encouraged by the prayers of others, and kept her own prayers flowing heavenward. “I was

absolutely crushed and heartbroken. But in that hard season, I really pressed into the Lord. He helped me understand that no matter what happened with my marriage, He was going to see me through, and I could be a good mom through His power.”

In her grief, Monica sensed God softening her with compassion and kindness, which fostered greater humility in her.

“I was going through something that I thought a nice girl like me would never face,” Monica adds. “I learned that God is good no matter what we go through, and I learned to pray more intensely.”

About four weeks after Joe moved out, Monica broke the agonizing news to her parents. She was overwhelmed with their response.

“After I finally told my parents what was going on, it occurred to me that I had prayed for them for 25 years to come to Christ and now they were on their knees praying for me every single day,” Monica explains. “I had prayed for them so hard, and when I was in the darkest season of my life, they prayed just as hard for me. That was humbling and beautiful at the same time. The mother and father I fought for in prayer were now fighting for me.”

With God, family, and friends in her corner, Monica stayed in the ring to win back her husband. She gave Joe space and leaned closer to Jesus. One night when she couldn’t sleep, Monica turned to the Book of Psalms, an all-time favorite because of its real-life honesty.

“The Lord led me to Psalm 3:3, 4, ‘But you, LORD, are a shield around



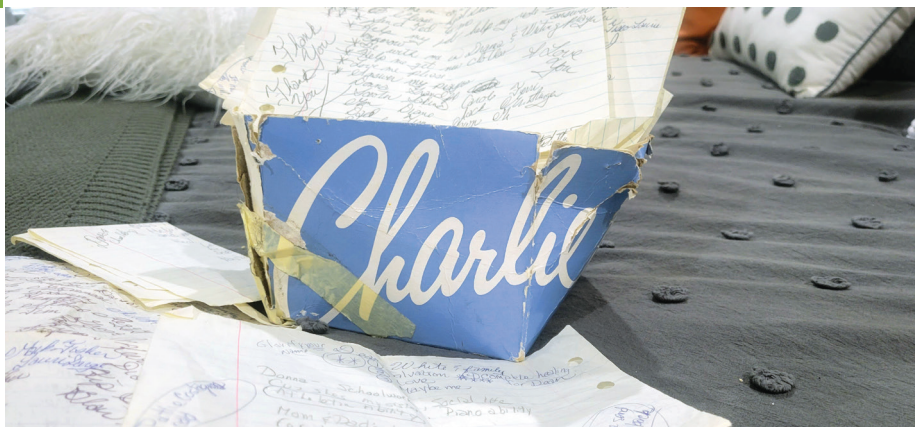
PHOTO COURTESY OF MONICA SCHMELTER

**Monica with her first guests on the new *Bridges* set**

me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain.’ When I was going through all this, I knew people were talking about us. You could feel the whispers of people,” Monica shares. “But that Scripture reminded that He’s the lifter of my head. Even if others say there’s no help for us, He is our help.”

Her gracious Comforter felt closer than ever as He helped Monica own up to her own shortcomings. At times during her childhood, Monica had watched her parents squabble by yelling and throwing things. Now she realized that during her marriage, her own anger had singed her relationship with Joe, and she knew she needed to take responsibility for the way she had expressed her emotions—and learn better ways to communicate.

Meanwhile, God was working on Joe’s heart too. After four months of separation, he called Monica. Joe apologized, asked for a reboot of



### Monica still adds written prayers to her 1970s Charlie® box

their marriage, and promised to go to counseling with her. Monica had been praying for these very specific things for months. Her Charlie perfume box overflowed with even more answered prayers.

“Our ways of relating had been so unhealthy. But I could see that Joe really wanted to apply himself in the counseling process, and I needed help for myself as well,” Monica says. “It took a good year before I really felt comfortable again in my marriage because it was such a rock-my-world kind of pain.”

Joe and Monica look back on the near-demise of their marriage as a time of refining from God’s hand.

In addition, the beloved television host’s own brokenness has shaped her empathy for her *Bridges* guests

and viewers working through their dark times.

“Through my trials, God has given me the opportunity to talk openly with others and affirm that there’s still the hope of Christ in the middle of the mess. Hope is not just in the results. God is right there in the process,” Monica explains. “Understanding this has helped me not focus on the results with people, but to look at the process. We have as much victory in the process as we do at the end of the trial.”

The couple, very much in love, recently celebrated 40 years of marriage. And with every passing year, they celebrate the faithfulness of God who gives us the victory of His presence even in the middle of our toughest trials. 🙏

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# Unwavering Faith

## Romans 4:19-21

For what do you have faith? Let Abraham's example be your inspiration for even deeper faith. Search the puzzle for words from the passage that are listed. The words may appear vertically, horizontally, backwards, or diagonally.

**Abraham...faced** the fact that his **body** was as good as dead—since he was about a **hundred** years old—and that Sarah's **womb** was also **dead**. Yet he did not **waver** through unbelief regarding the **promise** of **God** but was **strengthened** in his **faith** and gave **glory** to God, being **fully persuaded** that God had **power** to do what he had **promised**.

O M S R B M O W P R Y L T C T  
 F P N B S X H W R T N Z G O D  
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 T W Z K H C P X R L N T C H G  
 B O D Y M V F R Q H T I A F P

- ABRAHAM
- BODY
- DEAD
- FACED
- FAITH
- FULLY
- GLORY
- GOD
- HUNDRED
- PERSUADED
- POWER
- PROMISE
- STRENGTHENED
- WAVER
- WOMB

## DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- SUNDAY  Luke 2—3
- MONDAY  Luke 4—5
- TUESDAY  Luke 6
- WEDNESDAY  Luke 7—8
- THURSDAY  Luke 9
- FRIDAY  Luke 10
- SATURDAY  Luke 11





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# Jump in with Both Feet

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. – Hebrews 10:23 (NLT)

**H**ave you prayed for something—something important to you—but the answer hasn't come? There you are waiting ... and waiting ... and waiting, but nothing changes.

Maybe you were pretty enthusiastic at the start, thinking God would surely answer your prayer with a resounding “yes.” But still life goes on as if you had never prayed at all. You haven't even received an insight or heard His still, small voice speaking inside your heart assuring you that help is on the way. Now you feel your confidence slipping away, your faith wavering.

It's a difficult thing, and we all go through it. The important thing is to hang on. The answer will come—maybe not in the way you expect,

maybe not from the source you expect, maybe not in the time you expect. But it will come!

We serve a reasonable God. He has a reason for everything He does. Perhaps He wants to stretch your faith—see how much you trust Him. Or He's out to test your commitment to the thing you're praying for. Maybe there are other considerations that you don't know about. It could be any or all of these things—or something completely different.

Whatever His reason, you can rest easy knowing that He knows best, He sees all. He won't let you down. His promises are certain, His ways entirely sovereign. Keep trusting. As surely as the sun rises in the morning and sets again at night, the answer will come.



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