

The great virtues and enduring promises in Scripture are what Hope Valley and *When Calls the Heart* are all about. Brian Bird and Michelle Cox are now sharing those “God moments” with all of us in *When God Calls the Heart*. I love this devotional!

—LEE STROBEL, best-selling author of *The Case for Christ*

I am a devoted fan of the television series *When Calls the Heart*, so I know for a fact that anyone who loves this series as much as I do will want this exceptional book for their personal collection. It offers not only daily inspiration but poignant moments to ponder as well as sweet reminders of favorite scenes from a beloved cast of characters.

—BEVERLY LEWIS, *New York Times* best-selling author

So proud of my partner Brian Bird and coauthor Michelle Cox for these beautiful little booster shots of hope in *When God Calls the Heart*. If you're feeling cynical about the world right now, this book will cure you!

—MICHAEL LANDON JR., executive producer and cocreator of *When Calls the Heart* and the *Love Comes Softly* series

A lovely devotional. The perfect companion for the many fans of *When Calls the Heart*.

—FRANCINE RIVERS, *New York Times* best-selling author

Hearties are going to find encouragement and inspiration tucked away in the pages of this Hope Valley treasure!

—TODD STARNES, best-selling author and host of *The Todd Starnes Show* on Fox News Radio

This book of devotionals is a delight. Brian Bird and Michelle Cox have succeeded in capturing the spirit that resonates through all of Janette Oke's stories. The thoughtful and caring nature that impacts readers around the globe shines from these pages. Highly recommended.

—DAVIS BUNN, internationally best-selling author

I hadn't quite jumped on the bandwagon when everyone around me started celebrating the television series *When Calls the Heart*. And I admit that in spite of the fact that Brian Bird is one of the folks I'm proud to call friend. Then, one day I tuned in to season I, episode I. Several episodes later, I penned a quick note to Brian that roughly said, *I'm hooked, and I may never get back to work*. Now, another dear friend, Michelle Cox, has joined forces with Brian to write this book of devotions. The words are beautifully penned, and the messages are clear and poignant. Even not-yet-Hearties will want this book as an addition to their daily reading.

—EVA MARIE EVERSON, award-winning speaker and best-selling author, including *The One True Love of Alice-Ann*

A growing army of fans—the Hearties—have come to love the world of *When Calls the Heart*. Now let the show's cocreator, Brian Bird, along with inspirational writer Michelle Cox, introduce you to a *spiritual* world behind the TV series. Their daily readings will remind you to slow down, look up, and reach out to the One who gave us our hearts in the first place—and who wants to keep them close to His.

—MARK MITTELBERG, best-selling author of *Confident Faith*  
and *The Case for Christ Devotional* (with Lee Strobel)

The art of storytelling, when used for the purpose of revealing timeless and life-changing truths, brings an effortless and welcomed transformation that both realigns and reinvigorates the soul. It's like a melody specifically honed for readers, as if they are the only ones meant to be touched. Such is what I have found in *When God Calls the Heart*.

—CAMY "CAMERON" ARNETT, minister and entrepreneur,  
and cohost and producer of *The Christian View*; [CamyArnett.com](http://CamyArnett.com)

If you consider yourself a "Heartie" or not, *When God Calls the Heart* is an exquisitely crafted devotional that will bring out the rich resolve in each of us. Brian Bird and my dear friend Michelle Cox have extracted the very best out of this well-loved story and have written a devotional that will transport you right to the heart of Hope Valley. You will renew your warm friendship with Elizabeth, learn from the wisdom of Abigail Stanton, long to be a mother to little Cody, and laugh in good-natured frustration at Rosemary Coulter. *When God Calls the Heart* is a devotional that makes time travel possible, prayer more meaningful, and the principles of God jump right off the page.

—CAROL MCLEOD, best-selling author and speaker;  
author of *Let There Be Joy!*

We all have favorite settings and characters that remain in our hearts even after the stories are finished. With this book, we don't have to say goodbye to the gentle wisdom and heartfelt faith that makes *When Calls the Heart* such an amazing phenomenon. The applications found in this devotional are rock solid and the takeaways profound.

—EDIE MELSON, award-winning author and blogger, director of  
the Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference

*When God Calls the Heart* is an invitation for God to open your heart and your eyes to how He works in the everyday and to be filled with excitement for when, where, and how He is using you!

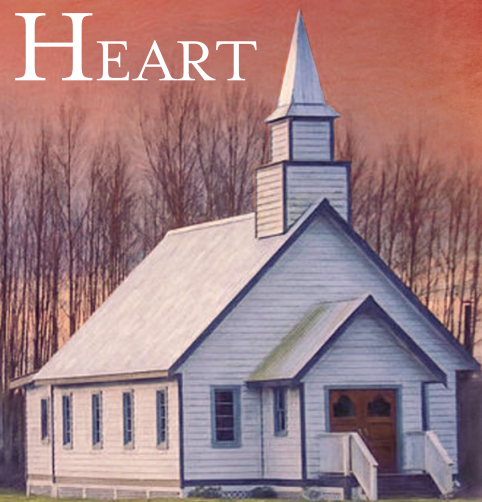
—ERICA WIGGENHORN, speaker and author of *An Unexplainable Life:  
Recovering the Wonder and Devotion of the Early Church* and *The Unexplainable Church:  
Rediscovering the Mission of the Early Believers*

FOREWORD BY JANETTE OKE

# WHEN GOD CALLS

❧ *the* ❧

# HEART



DEVOTIONS FROM HOPE VALLEY

Brian Bird & Michelle Cox

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*This book is dedicated to the Hearties—  
the best fan community in all the world.*



“You will seek me  
and find me  
when you seek me  
with all your heart.”

*Jeremiah 29:13*



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## FOREWORD BY JANETTE OKE

Actually, the only way I *could* look was up. However, “looking up” hardly described my present attitude.

I had taken a tumble on a small patch of ice and was now in an emergency room, flat on my back, waiting for an ambulance trip to the city hospital where I would undergo hip surgery. The medication had barely taken the sharp edge off the pain as I lay staring at the colorless ceiling above me. This had not been in my Sunday morning plans.

My best option was prayer. “Lord, what is this all about? What do you want to accomplish through this little mishap? Help me not to miss it.”

Life is filled with bumps. We all experience them. Some are mere inconveniences, others are life-changing. It is so easy to say that God allows them to build our faith—to make us stronger—to show others that God really can and does see us through the tough spots. All the statements are true, but a little hard to keep in mind when we are in the midst of a bump-time.

In the writer’s world, we are advised to “write what you know.” I’ve had enough bumps along the way to know something about them. I’ve also observed the bumps others have received. It seems few, if any of us, are bump-free. I kept that in mind as I wrote my stories of the pioneer people. It seemed that everything about their daily lives was bundled in difficulty. I also remembered the many joys, the blessings, and the treasures that life brings through family and friends, and the answered prayers. The producers of the much-loved films also have “real life” in mind as they guide the able portrayers of the story characters through carefully orchestrated scenes to give us, not just the words, but the faces, the actions, the emotional struggles and tensions of the people of Hope Valley.

As I visited the Town, a privilege for which I am deeply grateful, I thought, *Wow! I never knew it took so many, many people to produce a film.* They were everywhere, busily looking after their given assignments. A wonderful team had been brought together to use their various talents to help us share the lives of ordinary people in ordinary circumstances but with extra-ordinary faith and endurance. Talents come in various sizes, shapes, and intensities. When they are all working toward the same goal, we have “magic.” Add the wonderful Hearties fans and you could have a small city. An exciting city. They can get rather boisterous in their enthusiasm. Bless them! They push the whole process forward.

And now, a Hope Valley devotional. One more way to add talent to talent—all to the glory of God. We may see ourselves on one or more pages. Thankfully, the authors do not just speak of the bumps, but lead us to explore the best way to deal with them. And we get to share some heart-warming victories too. Thank you, Brian and Michelle.

Though I treasure the entire Scriptures, there are cherished verses that I have carried for many years, not just in my head, but in my heart. They apply to each of us. One of them is Proverbs 3:5–6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths” (NKJV). Translated into my own words—needed because I am still working to practice them—I hear this: really and totally trust God who has proven over and over that He is more than adequate to handle every situation, and don’t even bother to try to muddle through situations in your own limited wisdom or ability. In everything, recognize and admit that He is God—all-knowing, all-powerful, loving, and gracious—and only He knows what is best for you, and He will lead you if you let go and put your unwavering faith in Him.

—Janette Oke



# 1

## DREAM BIG ... EXPECT SURPRISES

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,  
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future."

JEREMIAH 29:11



"I can do this.  
We can do whatever God calls us to do—  
with His help."

—Elizabeth Thatcher

Elizabeth Thatcher beamed as she watched the passing beauty of the countryside out the window of her stage coach west. She had big dreams for her future. She couldn't wait to get to her new classroom in Coal Valley and to meet her new students. Elizabeth knew she would have to make some adjustments from her life of privilege back home in the big city, but she planned to face this adventure with courage and dignity.

Lost in her thoughts, she visualized the Coal Valley townspeople welcoming her with excitement, and the children waiting eagerly in their seats in the schoolhouse. The day couldn't get here soon enough.

But in that way that dreams sometimes unravel like yarn from a knitting needle, it didn't happen exactly like that. Elizabeth didn't envision a band of thieves waiting around the next bend for her. She didn't realize they would rob her of everything she had brought west. And instead of her triumphant entry into Coal Valley, she arrived limping, dirty, and bedraggled, hitching a ride in the back of a wagon. The thieves had stolen her dignity as well as her belongings.

Her welcome to Coal Valley wasn't what she'd imagined either. Instead of open arms and excitement, she was greeted with looks of skepticism and comments of derision. Coal Valley was no place for a princess. This was a hard luck town beset by tragedy—a coal mine accident that resulted in many of the children becoming fatherless, and a church fire that left the saloon as the only place to hold school.

And Elizabeth soon discovered that she wasn't prepared

for the primitive living conditions in Coal Valley. An out-house and wood-burning stove in the little teacherage she was meant to live in would mean an uncomfortable new lifestyle. None of it was what she'd expected when she set out to fulfill the big dreams God had put on her heart.

It's that way for all of us, isn't it? Do you have a big dream for your life? A giant goal? A worthy aspiration? Perhaps even something you believe God is calling you to do? It's all very exciting as you begin the journey—but it's easy to forget that life can sometimes derail your dreams or delay your timelines.

As Elizabeth learned, people can discourage us and circumstances can temporarily defeat us, but God never wants us to give up on the dreams He has for us. There is no such thing as being uncalled. We don't get to un-ring that bell—even when the world puts thieves and outhouses in our path.

Persistence always beats resistance.



## *Prayer from the Heart*

Father, I'm grateful for the big plans you've given me, but sometimes the waiting seems so hard. The bumps of life and hardships I face are discouraging. If I'm honest, there are days when I'm ready to quit ... to say that it's too hard ... to say that it isn't worth it. Remind me that even though I can't see what you're doing behind the scenes, you are in charge, you have my future in your hands, and you will equip me with everything I need to achieve what you have put in front of me. Thank you for entrusting me with this big dream. Help me to be faithful to your call.



## *What's on Your Heart Today?*

- Why do you have trouble trusting God with the big plans He gives you?
- Why is it important to remain faithful, even when things become tough?
- How can you recognize if your big dreams are from God, or if they are just your own desires?



## EVICTION NOTICES

Though one may be overpowered,  
two can defend themselves.  
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

ECCLESIASTES 4:12



**"You have every right to be afraid. We all do. But we mustn't lose hope. I believe that there's a reason for every fear we face and every hardship we suffer—and it's to make us all stronger people."**

*—Elizabeth Thatcher*

**T**imes were difficult for the widows of Coal Valley. They were still grieving the loss of their husbands and sons in the coal mine accident. All the responsibilities of life now fell on their shoulders, and the load was heavy. But then another lace-up boot dropped.

The widows discovered "Notice to Quit Premises" nailed to the doors of their company houses. Abigail Stanton and the others understood the company needed to make room for new miners who could clear the mine and rebuild, but how were the women going to move their families in two weeks' time, and where would they go? Coal Valley was their home.

With no time or money to hire a lawyer, Elizabeth Thatcher and her students searched for a legal way for the women to keep their homes, but their efforts fell short. Some of the widows wanted to give up and move on. Others wanted to fight to keep what they had. They loved their community and didn't want to lose the only homes their children had ever known. But Abigail had another idea: What if the women went to work clearing the shafts themselves?

Mayor Henry Gowen, head of the mine company, laughed when the women showed up dressed and ready to dig out the mine. They were willing to face the risks on one condition: If they could clear the shafts in time, they would have the right to stay in their homes. Mayor Gowen decided to humor them and agreed to the plan, but he fully expected them to fail within a week. He would get some work out of these stubborn women ... and then still take their homes.

Can you imagine the fear and trepidation of going to work



in a collapsed coal mine? Can you picture facing the dangers of a methane gas leak, or breathing in that black dust, or banging your hands, knuckles, elbows, and knees on all those sharp rocks?

What is *your* collapsed coal mine? What eviction notices have been tacked up on your door? What situation right now feels so overwhelming that you don't think you can get through it?

In times like these, we have a few choices. We can wallow in our hardships, and become worrywarts and victims of our circumstances. Or we can do what the widows of Coal Valley did. First, they kept their eyes on the prize. Failure was not an option. Second, they had to face their fears and get outside their comfort zones—that's the only way impossible challenges become possible.

And third, they realized that they were much stronger if they labored together than they would be as individuals—because as the Scriptures tell us, a cord of many strands is an unbreakable force.



## *Prayer from the Heart*

Father, why do I always try to fix my own problems? Why do I make a mess of things when I should just turn to you first? Please help me to trust you more in situations where I feel as if I'm trapped in a corner with no idea how to escape. Help me to get out of your way so that you can take charge. Teach me what you want me to learn from each situation, and provide the strength I need. Help me to also be vulnerable enough to ask my friends and loved ones for help. And, in turn, help me to be available when life has them in a bind. Thank you for never failing me.



## *What's on Your Heart Today?*

- How can you help to lighten the burden for others as they go through difficult times?
- How can you be more transparent with God and others when you face hardships?
- How does it change everything when you realize that God's resources and abilities are limitless?

## A WHALE OF A PROBLEM

Do not let those gloat over me  
who are my enemies without cause;  
do not let those who hate me without reason  
maliciously wink the eye.  
They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations  
against those who live quietly in the land.

PSALM 35:19–20



"As a teacher, I'm drawn to the truth. Numbers don't lie and facts are indeed facts, but sometimes we need to trust each other, because the truth isn't always what it appears to be. Sometimes an oil can found in a fire is not what it seems to be. And sometimes love comes just in time to save your life."

—Elizabeth Thatcher

Nobody in town suspected arson when flames destroyed their church. But suspicions arose when Mountie Jack Thornton discovered a blackened container of whale oil in the debris. He made it his mission to track down the guilty party.

Whale oil had to be special-ordered, so Jack was surprised to discover containers in Catherine Montgomery's shed. She said she used it for candle-making and vowed she didn't set the fire.

But other signs were pointing to Cat, especially since she was not home the night of the fire. Jack questioned her children. Her oldest, Gabe, said he didn't know where she was that evening—but she wasn't an arsonist. The youngest, Emily, spilled the news that Cat didn't arrive home until the next morning.

Later, when a necklace was found that also traced back to Cat, it seemed as if the evidence was overwhelmingly against her. Convinced that she was hiding something, Jack took Cat to his office to question her, and decided he had to lock her in a cell while he went to check out her story.

Have you ever been falsely accused of something you didn't do? The crazy thing is that these kinds of accusations don't have to be tied to big, dramatic events like an arson fire, or land you in a jail cell to bring conflict into your life. Most of the time, these situations are between a husband and wife, or a parent and a child, or a boss and an employee ... and over almost nothing. Yet they can ruin relationships and cause a lot of unnecessary anxiety.

Who do you turn to when you've been charged with something you didn't do? King David, beset upon by both enemies

and people who didn't trust him, cried out to Jehovah to rescue him. Do you cry out to your Maker when life treats you unfairly? The gospel writer, James, also wrote that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much" (James 5:16 NKJV).

In Coal Valley, the truth about the burned church was finally revealed, and as it turned out, Cat was being framed by a jealous Pinkerton guard because she spurned his romantic advances. She had friends who stuck up for her because there is always more to the story when a light is shined on misunderstandings, or even on the secrets and lies people sometimes tell.

In your situation, God will always be your protector if you bring your needs to Him. And then do another smart thing: don't be afraid to trust a friend to have your back. Sometimes that's how God answers our prayers. He sends someone into our lives to be His hands and feet of protection over us.



## *Prayer from the Heart*

Father, so often I mean to do well, but then I end up doing the wrong thing. Instead of trusting you with my circumstances, I try to take things into my own hands and to fix them myself. We both know that usually doesn't turn out well. Help me to trust you and to place my circumstances into your always capable hands. Thank you for the people who love me and are willing to have my back. And help me to be that kind of person for others. Remind me that things aren't always as they appear to be. Help me to dispense grace—even when it isn't warranted—and to show your love in every situation. Amen.



## *What's on Your Heart Today?*

- If you've ever been falsely accused of doing something you didn't do, what were the events that led up to that misunderstanding?
- How did you cope with the injustice of being wrongly accused?
- How does God's protection and unlimited grace give you peace?



## BE SOMEONE'S HERO

For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you,  
to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

DEUTERONOMY 20:4 NASB



"I needed an ending to my story and I found one.  
I found it in how the people of Hope Valley stood  
together to face their problems and their fears."

—Elizabeth Thatcher

The Garrison gang wasn't about to take no for an answer from Pastor Frank Hogan. He had been their explosives man at a very different time in his life, and they needed him back for a heist they wanted to pull—a gold train ripe for the plundering.

They figured they could tarnish his name in Hope Valley by leaking his shady past and leading the citizens to run him out of town. And the closer the train got, the more desperate they were with their strong-arm measures. Nothing like greed to fuel determination. Late one night, a rock crashed through the window of Abigail Stanton's café. On it were the painted words "Matt Landry," Pastor Frank's "before God" name. The message was clear. The gang would not stop harassing the town until Matt Landry rejoined their group.

The town called a meeting to discuss the threat. Mayor Henry Gowen suggested they send out a posse to hunt down the gang, but Mountie Jack Thornton shot down the idea. He knew it would only result in innocent people getting hurt. The town finally agreed to have the men take turns keeping watch over the town around the clock.

The gang also kept watch. They had smuggled one of their own into the town to be their eyes and ears. Jesse Flynn seemed like a nice, unassuming young man, and he told Clara Stanton, the girl who had his eye, that the gang would kill Pastor Frank if he refused them any longer. But Clara saw something good in Jesse and convinced him to turn from his outlaw ways and help Jack apprehend the bandits.

Hope Valley needed a hero. In fact, many heroes. And

it took nearly every man in town to stand up and be counted as brave. In the end, the townspeople saved themselves and Pastor Frank. By banding together, they were able to capture the Garrison gang and stand behind their pastor—a man who once had been lost, but was now transformed by God.

Have you ever been someone's hero? At some point in our lives, God calls each of us to overcome our fears and stand up for what's right and just in our communities. That means speaking out against what may be popular, convenient, or expedient, or what goes against God's laws. It means we can't always get along or go along with things just because it's easier.

The Bible says to stand firm in our faith, to be courageous and strong. It's always scary to step up like that, but here's the good news: God will go with us into that battle. He will fight for us, and with us, and never leave our side.



## *Prayer from the Heart*

God, I'm in need of courage. There are days when I feel I'm drowning in details or on a merry-go-round that won't slow down. I sure don't feel like a hero, but I know you've called me to step up and be one for you—because we live in a world that's in desperate need of truth-tellers and torchbearers. Can I do that? Not with how much I doubt myself. But my strength comes from knowing that you will go with me, that you'll speak for me, and that you'll hold my hand through it all. Thank you for being my ultimate Hero and for hearing me when I call to you. Let me be brave, in your name.

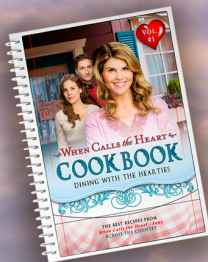


## *What's on Your Heart Today?*

- Where do you need rescue right now?
- Why do you think people generally have a hard time asking for help?
- Has God ever called you to be a hero? In what ways has God used you to help rescue other people?

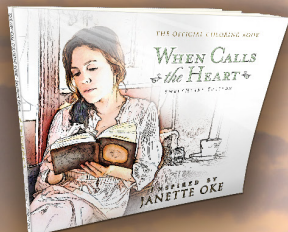


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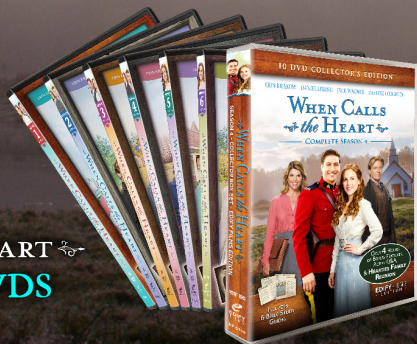
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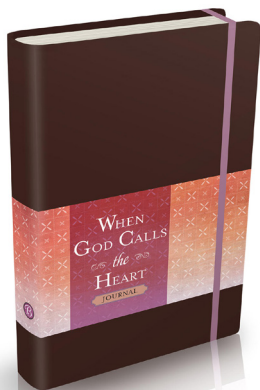


[www.WhenCallsTheHeart.com](http://www.WhenCallsTheHeart.com)

# WHEN GOD CALLS *the* HEART

## JOURNAL

When Elizabeth Thatcher followed her dream, hopped on a stage coach, and headed West to become a teacher, one of the things she took with her was her beloved journal. That journal became a treasure, for her, her loved ones, and for future generations who could get to know her, her life lessons, and accumulated wisdom through the words on those pages.



The same is true for us. There's something deeply meaningful about writing down our stories, the moments of our lives, our prayer needs, and chronicling our time spent in study and reflection with God.

Wrapped in exquisite faux leather, this elegant journal features high-quality paper with encouraging quotes. Reflect on the beauty of God, delight in the knowledge of his love for you, and express your thoughts in the space provided.

We're confident that by the time you fill in the last beautiful page, you'll have learned what Elizabeth Thatcher did during her years in Hope Valley. Because when God calls your heart, you can expect an adventure.

Happy writing!

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