

# *Contents*

Foreword .....	9
1 God's Pitcher .....	13
2 The Turtle Syndrome .....	16
3 But God .....	20
4 Whirlpool Syndrome .....	24
5 Open Hands Prayer .....	28
6 Action and Reaction .....	31
7 Worry Is Like a Rocking Chair .....	34
8 Fight for Friendship .....	38
9 My Times Are in Your Hands .....	43
10 Life Is So Daily .....	48
11 A Smile Goes a Long Way .....	51
12 Lessons from a Fall .....	55
13 Dealing with Temptation .....	59
14 Counseling Myself .....	62
15 Boundaries .....	67
16 Spiritual Glasses .....	71
17 Live Until You Die .....	75
18 Why Am I Here? .....	79
19 Stones of Remembrance .....	83
20 Lifelines .....	88
21 Don't Waste Your Suffering .....	93
22 Words, Words, Words .....	96
23 Everything Is Against Me! .....	102
24 Web or Net? .....	106
25 True Security .....	110

26	Forgiveness, God's Freedom .....	113
27	Following Directions.....	117
28	Do Not Judge .....	120
29	Fear vs Faith.....	124
30	What About My Feelings?.....	129
31	The Fear of God .....	134
32	Wait for God.....	138
33	Thoughts on Marriage.....	141
34	Thoughts on Parenting .....	145
35	Take Captive Every Thought.....	150
36	Challenge for a Lifetime .....	154
	Closing Thought .....	158

### Other Writings

Building and Sharing Family		
	<i>The Fine Art of Hospitality</i> .....	161
Marriage: True Companions		
	<i>First...the Kingdom</i> .....	167
The Sage of the Ages		
	<i>Our God Is an Awesome God</i> .....	172
Dealing with Miscarriage		
	<i>Life and Godliness for Everywoman, Volume 1</i> .....	178
Contentment vs Worry		
	<i>Life and Godliness for Everywoman, Volume 1</i> .....	185
As Our Parents Age (Comments)		
	<i>Life and Godliness for Everywoman, Volume 2</i> .....	189
Eunice and Lois		
	<i>She Shall Be Called Woman, Volume 2</i> .....	191



# *Foreword*



Dear Reader,

As I write this, you may imagine me, breathing a long sigh of relief.

Battle won.

Your holding this book demonstrates that the “important” has vanquished the “urgent,” and with it, all other worthy and unworthy distractions that might well have kept Gloria Baird from writing this book, and you from reading it.

I think it was about eight years ago, the first time I heard the germ of the idea for this book. It came from a group of Christian women who worked together in an office, and who had enjoyed the blessing of being in a discipleship group with Gloria every Thursday morning at 8:00 AM before their workday began. It rather amazed me how much they all got out of the group. It was not an ideal set-up. After fighting the morning rush hour, twen-

ty to thirty women would gather in a conference room, all wanting to tell good news or share struggles of the week, or ask for input about marriage or children or singlehood or offer a prayer request.

With only forty-five minutes together— maximum— how much effective personal attention would you really expect to get out of a group like that? It was Gloria's "pitcher analogy" in action. She allowed her unique self to be filled up on a regular basis, through her daily study of God's word, prayer and God's faithful discipling of her through relationships and all life's circumstances; and then she faithfully poured out what she was learning, understanding and experiencing each week with those women. She managed it in such a relatable way, they all testified that in those few short minutes they spent together each week, they had been changed—for good.

If you've picked up this book, you probably already trust that the message of God's wisdom is unspeakably powerful. And yet, not every messenger is able to deliver it in such a way that it sinks into your heart. *God's Pitcher and Other Spiritual Thoughts* is, without a doubt, all about the message. I would, however, wish for you to know that Gloria Baird is a remarkable and trustworthy messenger. She's a bona fide, spiritual maven. ("Maven" is Yiddish for "one who accumulates knowledge.") In his bestseller enti-

tled *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell describes the role of a maven in this way:

When people are overwhelmed with information and develop immunity to traditional forms of communication, they turn instead for advice and information to the people in their lives whom they respect, admire, and trust.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, a maven doesn't just latch onto a great message; she lives out the message in such a compelling way that it becomes contagious, and, like a happy epidemic, spreads good change. Then the good changes stick from person to person, producing the kind of lasting and meaningful impact that I believe we all would love to leave as a legacy.

Gloria is a maven of matrimony: her forty-seven-year marriage to Al Baird is consistently and intimately romantic, dynamic, fresh, outwardly focused and inspiring. All of us who have heard and followed her marriage advice from the Bible know our marriages are unquestionably better for it.

She is a maven of motherhood: her three daughters are faithful, committed disciples of Jesus Christ, married to faithful, committed disciples, and at this writing, her first granddaughter has just been baptized into Christ.

---

1. Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 275.

She's a maven of the marvelous message of God's wisdom for this hurting world in which we live: no stranger to tragedy or hard times (as a young woman, burying three of her children; as a women's ministry leader and elder's wife, serving in a fast-growing international fellowship of churches and often being brought in to help with all the ugliest, the worst, the most depressing and disheartening counseling situations), she remains one of the most sincerely and consistently happy, gracious, contented, relatable women I have ever known.

Gloria would probably tell you that the main reason she felt compelled to write this book was to make sure she passed on these valuable personal spiritual insights to her children and grandchildren. A noble ambition, and certainly more than a good enough reason to put pen to paper.

Let's make sure we take the wisdom still further. Whatever resonates with us from these pages, or whatever the Holy Spirit may teach us personally, may we pour it out generously to others.

She speaks with wisdom,  
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

Proverbs 31:26

Tammy Fleming  
Birmingham, England  
July 2008

tled *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell describes the role of a maven in this way:

When people are overwhelmed with information and develop immunity to traditional forms of communication, they turn instead for advice and information to the people in their lives whom they respect, admire, and trust.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, a maven doesn't just latch onto a great message; she lives out the message in such a compelling way that it becomes contagious, and, like a happy epidemic, spreads good change. Then the good changes stick from person to person, producing the kind of lasting and meaningful impact that I believe we all would love to leave as a legacy.

Gloria is a maven of matrimony: her forty-seven-year marriage to Al Baird is consistently and intimately romantic, dynamic, fresh, outwardly focused and inspiring. All of us who have heard and followed her marriage advice from the Bible know our marriages are unquestionably better for it.

She is a maven of motherhood: her three daughters are faithful, committed disciples of Jesus Christ, married to faithful, committed disciples, and at this writing, her first granddaughter has just been baptized into Christ.

---

1. Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (New York: Little: Brown and Company, 2000).

She's a maven of the marvelous message of God's wisdom for this hurting world in which we live: no stranger to tragedy or hard times (as a young woman, burying three of her children; as a woman's counselor and elder's wife, serving in a fast-growing international fellowship of churches and often being brought in to help with all the ugliest, the worst, the most depressing and disheartening counseling situations), she remains one of the most sincerely and consistently happy, gracious, contented, relatable women I have ever known.

Gloria would probably tell you that the main reason she felt compelled to write this book was to make sure she passed on these valuable personal spiritual insights to her children and grandchildren. A noble ambition, and certainly more than a good enough reason to put pen to paper.

Let's make sure we take the wisdom still further. Whatever resonates with us from these pages, or whatever the Holy Spirit may teach us personally, may we pour it out generously to others.

She speaks with wisdom,  
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

Proverbs 31:26

Tammy Fleming  
Birmingham, England  
July 2008

# 1



## *God's Pitcher*



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

God, the potter, shapes us as clay into various vessels for his use. If God were to allow me to choose what vessel I would like to be, I would choose to be a pitcher. A pitcher, like a vase or a glass, is designed to be filled. However, a pitcher has a spout so that whatever is in it can be poured out.

What fills the pitcher is of prime concern; no one would be attracted to a pitcher filled with poison or some foul-smelling liquid. The purpose of the pitcher is to be

emptied. It has a handle on it because it needs someone to do the pouring. It is important for the pitcher to be clean on the inside before it is filled. If the pitcher is dirty, its contents are tainted and undesirable.

One of my favorite gifts to give as a wedding present is a crystal pitcher. A crystal pitcher is especially useful because it is clear, transparent—you can see what is on the inside.

As I think of being a “pitcher” to be used by God, I see the necessity of being cleansed through the blood of Christ, and being continually washed, ready for use. Then I need to be still to allow God to fill me with his word and his Spirit, so that there is good that will overflow when God is ready to do the pouring.

God frequently uses the people around us to “grab the handle” and help the pouring process. This analogy comes to life for me as I begin writing this book. I know that God has taught me many things that have helped me through the years, but I also know that he wants me to share these lessons with others. It has been an easy overflow for me to talk about these as I teach and counsel others, but it has taken the urging of several people around me to do the extra pouring out in writing.

The clear, transparent quality of the crystal pitcher is a necessary ingredient for being used as God's pitcher.

Without being open about my insecurities and hesitations, others would not know how to help and encourage me. In essence, I could allow my pitcher to be partially filled with those insecurities, and that would prevent God from totally filling it with whatever he desires.

Satan is eager to add to or take over the filling process with his lies. It is my choice to determine who will fill my pitcher. I must be willing to be emptied of myself to be filled by God.

What a challenge, but what a privilege to be God's pitcher!





# *The Turtle Syndrome*



You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance.  
Psalms 32:7

As we flew from Boston to Texas to spend Christmas with our family, I was preoccupied with anxious thoughts about my mother's health. She had recently had a bone marrow test but had not gotten the results. We were hoping and praying for a good report, but we also knew that the news is not always what you want to hear.

As I reflect on this time, I think it was one of the first times I seriously considered that I could lose my mother. With the depth of those feelings welling up in me, I began

to prepare for the worst. I remember thinking that I needed to be strong and ready to handle whatever report we would face.

Thankfully, when we arrived, we got the news that her test results were good. I soon forgot about the tests and all my concerns and went on to enjoy the Christmas holidays.

However, on the trip back home I remember telling Al that I didn't seem to feel the same excitement and warmth that I usually felt in our times with the family. As I was trying to think through this experience, I remembered hearing someone say that we cannot just shut off our painful feelings without shutting off the good feelings as well. Then I realized that was what I had done. I had tried to "steel" myself so I wouldn't fall apart if there was bad news, but I had also "steeled" myself so I didn't feel the good things either. I had basically put myself in neutral.

That experience was the birth of my "turtle syndrome" analogy. I began to think about the way God gives the turtle a shell for its protection. But the turtle cannot eat or move unless its head and legs come out of the shell. The shell does keep out the bad, but it could also keep out the good. The turtle must be vulnerable in order to live.

Obviously, we are not turtles, and God did not give us shells for protection, yet we often try to protect ourselves.

We want to be in control especially in the area of our emotions. When feeling sad, we may try not to cry; when feeling weak, we may try to seem strong; when feeling lonely, we may try not to need anyone; when feeling tempted, we may try to hide it. Too often our deepest emotions are the ones we bury or mask under our “shell.”

In a similar way that the turtle has to be vulnerable to live, we also have to be vulnerable to experience real life. God makes it possible for us to be vulnerable because he is our protector. In reading through the Psalms, I was amazed when I realized how many descriptions of God relate to protection: shield, refuge, stronghold, rock, fortress, deliverer, support, Savior, Redeemer, ever-present help, hiding place.

As I have come to be more aware of the protection God has promised for my life, I have been convicted that my self-protectiveness is sin. When I try to protect myself (not meaning being wise in locking my doors or not walking alone in dark alleys), I am trying to take over God's role. My lack of faith that God will really do what he promised moves me to try to take control.

I have to decide to trust God and be totally vulnerable with him. To me that means expressing my feelings and completely surrendering to him. When I can trust God to be my protector, it is much easier to be vulnerable with the people around me.

Vulnerability breeds vulnerability, helping me to see that others have similar struggles. Out of my shell, I can actually feel safer and more bonded with others than ever!

