

Endorsements

MILEPOST 95 IS BEAUTIFULLY written, touching, hope filled. Page takes you with her to the dark and scary places-constantly pointing to the only hope-God our Father. Masterfully written.

—Jami Amerine,
Author of *Stolen Jesus* and blogger at
Sacred Ground, Sticky Floors

ARE YOU AT ROCK bottom and wondering if God actually exists? I invite you to follow Page's journey to usher in hope to those places of your life that feel utterly hopeless. Watch as God unfolds in her life. Milepost 95 will help you regain trust that He can work in your life too.

—Carey Bailey
Life Coach
www.careybailey.com

MILEPOST 95

*From Wreckage
to Redemption*

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PAGE GESKE

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Dedication

TO MY MANY FRIENDS and family who encouraged me to tell my story, to keep writing, and *not give up on my God-sized dream*—because everyone’s story matters.

But, especially to Holley Gerth, whose words helped me pursue my dream to write my story to encourage others to press on during difficult times. As I carried a copy of this quote around with me when I wrote in Barnes & Noble and other coffee shops, her words below helped me continue during the six years of writing this manuscript.

At some point in pursuing your dream, you will get tired. You will sit down on the side of the road and say, “For crying out loud, if I knew it was going to be this hard and take this long, I never would have started down this path.” Your job in those moments is simply this: don’t quit. Because just over the next hill, just around the next bend is the breakthrough you’ve been waiting for, and you will miss it if you stop now . . . What’s most likely to defeat you isn’t external circumstances or challenges, it’s you! Don’t give into discouragement, doubt, or fear. Don’t let the enemy tell you that you’ve goofed this

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up for good and it's over. Just keep going. You will get there, one way or another.

—Holley Gerth

*You're Made for a God-Sized Dream:
Opening the Door to All God Has for You*

If you have a God-sized dream, pursue it with a vengeance and allow the Lord to bless you on the journey of seeking Him and His best for you with your whole heart.

Introduction

MILEPOST 95 IS MY story. The one I carry in my body that only I am qualified to tell.

It is a transparent story of the breaking of my protective shell through disappointments, a life-altering accident, emotional abandonment, major illness, and loss. Yet it is the story of perseverance, leaning into God, and learning to choose joy.

It is a story of the mileposts that have marked the major passages God has brought me through. The mileposts mark my journey in learning to trust, finding motivation to thrive, staying positive, and laughing through the storms and trials.

My story reveals how Jesus called me to be a light during a time of darkness and encouraging during a time of despair. And how He used a time of rehabilitation to bring me closer to Him while fulfilling the destiny that He had chosen for me.

If you are struggling with an unexpected and unwanted transition in your life, *Milepost 95* will remind you how God can use your most broken moments to give inspiration and hope to those around you. My

story shows how Christ can take the wreckage of our lives, and redeem and transform it into a beautiful tapestry.



Two Final Prayers

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

—Psalm 23:4

I LOOKED OVER AT my daughter Andrea at the wheel. The evening sun burnished her red hair with golden highlights that warm, summer evening. Taking a break from driving, I glanced out the passenger side window at the high desert flat terrain of eastern Idaho with its sagebrush and patches of lava rock.

She's doing great. Andrea was sixteen and enjoying driving our new-to-us Honda Pilot. I had driven most of the way from Kalispell, Montana. Andrea and I had a great road trip, talking and reflecting on the week behind us and before us.

I leaned my head on the window and smiled at the memories we had made in our week of family vacation in the Flathead Valley of Montana, near the majestic mountains of Glacier National Park.

After stopping at the Frontier Pie Shoppe restaurant between Idaho Falls and Blackfoot on Interstate 15, I had asked, “Would you like to drive?”

“Sure, Mom.” Her face lit up. Andrea was always up for driving.

We had three hours to go before we’d be home. Andrea was a good driver. *This will be a great mother/daughter trust moment when I can show I believe in her driving abilities. It’ll build her self-confidence.*

In the passenger’s seat, I pulled out my thank-you notes and pen and worked on several notes. I had interviewed for several jobs in Montana before we left and wanted to get the notes checked off my to-do list before returning to work the next day.

The heavy grinding sounds of the car hitting rumble strips on the side of the road caused my head to jerk up. *The guardrail is way too close! We’re going to crash!*

This is going to be bad.

As the Pilot swerved, I immediately closed my eyes. *Lord, be with us! Show me how to pray!*

The car continued to swerve out of control. Then there was the sharp sound of glass shattering and heavier sounds of metal breaking.

Someone is screaming. I knew it was Andrea. My beautiful young daughter was screaming as if she were watching a horror movie unfold before her eyes.

Holy Spirit, show me how to pray!

I thought of the scripture that said, “My times are in your hands” (Psalm 31:15). *Maybe this is my time to die.*

Strangely, the realization that I might not live did not cause fear. Inside, I had a deep knowing that I would be in the presence of Christ if I were to die. I knew the Lord and I knew my soul would live on eternally with Him.

In those seconds of shattering, it was as if time stood still.

Thank you, Lord, for my life. Oh Lord, be with David and Champ. David, my eleven-year-old and Champ, my seven-year-old, were safe with their dad back in Montana.

Then the Holy Spirit dropped a thought in my mind. *Pray for a physician to arrive at the scene.*

That's an odd prayer. But I had asked the Holy Spirit how to pray. Who was I to question His leading?

The second prayer I prayed was for Andrea. *Lord Jesus, be close to Andrea.* I felt an urging, *Ask God to send someone to be with her.* My Mother's heart wanted her not to be alone. I wanted someone there who would take care of her, hug her, and reassure her that everything was going to be okay.

Lord, am I about to enter the gates of heaven and meet you? I knew in heaven I would be fine—I would be with the Lord and there would be no more sorrow, pain, or tears. But my prayers were now for my daughter. *Send someone to be her helper and friend!*

Shaken hard despite being strapped in my seat belt, I felt as if I was trapped in a metal container as the car careened from side to side. I braced myself for the coming crash and leaned back in my seat, pushing my right foot to the floorboard as if I was helping brake. I pressed myself into the floorboard of the car as if my life depended on it. As flying shards of glass exploded around me, I instinctively closed my eyes and mouth tightly.

The Pilot came to an abrupt and shuddering stop in a grassy area of median between north and southbound traffic on Highway 15.

I opened my eyes knowing I wasn't dead. *I'm still here. I can smell burning rubber. It must not be my time to die.*

Then the excruciating pain hit me. I knew I wasn't in heaven because there is no pain there.

A searing pain ripped through my body—the worst pain I had ever experienced in my forty-plus years of life. Not like childbirth when you

know that in the end of all your contractions and hurt you will hold a beautiful baby. I wouldn't have wished this pain on my worst enemy.

Although I was in the grip of intense pain, I immediately turned to see how Andrea was. She was crying hysterically, but seemed to be uninjured.

Through her sobs, Andrea asked me, "Mom, are you OK?"

"It's just a car. The most important thing is we're both still alive." As her mother, I wanted to comfort and reassure.

We had both survived a very bad car accident. There was no fire. We had a lot to be grateful for. It didn't escape me that the car we had only nine days was beyond totaled.

It was then that I looked down and gasped. I was bleeding profusely. Chunks of flesh were missing from both of the backs of my lower calves. My right fibula, the bone from your knee to your ankle, was sticking straight up, and my right hip was in unbearable pain. My right hand had a cut on the top of it—and my ear was bleeding as well. It looked as if someone had thrown a grenade and aimed it at my legs and it had exploded in front of my face.

My whole body started to shake. *I'm going into shock. I can't pass out because I need to be here for Andrea. She needs her mom. What will happen to her without me?* I had to stay alert for her.

Then I saw movement outside as other travelers who had stopped to help gathered around what was left of the car. Just knowing they were there was comforting. We were not alone on the side of the freeway. I could hear their voices outside but they seemed to be coming through a tunnel far away.

"Has someone called 911?"

"How many are injured?"

"Can they get out of the car?"

Two Final Prayers

In the chaos of noise around me, I heard a female voice saying, “Let me through. You really need to let me through! My name is Beth, and I am a physician.”

At that very minute I felt the Lord’s presence. His peace rushed over my body and into my spirit. *God, you are so good.*

Beth was the earthly physician that the Great Physician had sent in answer to prayer.

She began to evaluate me and then started asking for towels and blankets so she could tourniquet my legs. As my body shook from being in shock, she worked quickly on my legs to prevent me from losing even more blood. The blankets helped with the chills.

I never saw Dr. Beth’s face; I just remember her voice and how competently she worked on me. I will probably never be able to thank her in person for her act of service and kindness. But I believe she played a major role in helping save my life. They told me later that I lost 75 percent of my blood at the scene of the accident. If it had not been for her care, I could have bled to death that night.

To me she was like an angel who swept down to do a job that God in His infinite care and concern had called her to specifically do that night. And then, poof! Dr. Beth was gone as if by the quick swish of a fairy wand after playing an important role to help save my life.

God had directly answered my prayers that night. I was left with a deep assurance that He was with me. This gave me the strength and confidence I needed. *Thank you for being with me, Lord. Help me through what is ahead!*

The wail of sirens in the distance broke into my thoughts. The ambulance arrived and the paramedics began to cut me out of the twisted vehicle. I looked up to see the face of a handsome paramedic who was working carefully and diligently to get me out of the car. It sounds like such a “girly” thing to say, but his handsome face helped me focus on something other than the excruciating pain I was feeling from all over

my body. I saw it as a gift. *How good are you Lord to provide a handsome face as a distraction in the midst of all this mess of blood and brokenness?*

I was most conscious of the throbbing pain in my right hip. Something sharp seemed to have punctured it, and it was bleeding. My bones felt shattered.

I was so grateful to see Andrea was able to open her door and get out of the car. She only had a little cut on her arm but other than that she was spared injury. *Thank you Father for protecting my daughter and keeping her from injury.* As her mom, I was grateful I was the one going through this rather than her.



I was rushed to the closest trauma center, the Portneuf Medical Center in Pocatello, Idaho. In a burst of activity my jeans were cut off and tennis shoes removed. I could tell by the speed and focus of the ER doctors and nurses as they assessed my injuries that it was serious. Someone handed me a document to sign allowing a transfusion.

I was coherent enough to beg, “Please, don’t cut my T-shirt.” My Teanie Weanie Falls Brand team had won second place in the master’s division for 2006, the previous year, and my souvenir Sawtooth Relay shirt was sacred to me. I had lost enough that night—I was not going to lose my hard-earned shirt too! The nurse got it off me without cutting it.

The Sawtooth Relay is a sixty-mile race I tried to do each year that starts in Stanley, Idaho and ends in Ketchum and travels through the breathtaking Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho and over Galena Pass. Now I wondered, *Will I ever race again?*

In all the chaos of the activity in the ER, I noticed a nurse who was talking to Andrea. Nurse Jenny was attentive, comforted her, and was watching out for her while the medical team was trying to stabilize

me. The medical team was about to give me a pain shot and I knew I was about to enter “La-La Land.” My daughter would be alone in the hospital—five hours from her dad and brothers in Montana and two-and-a-half hours from her friends, family friends, and any support system. At that moment, I remembered the second prayer I had prayed as we were crashing—that there would be someone there for Andrea so she would not be by herself. Watching Jenny with Andrea, I was comforted once again.

It was hard to concentrate on anything but the pain. On a scale of one to ten, my pain right then was about a twelve to fifteen! Part of me just wanted to surrender to the pain meds and not feel anything. I found myself having an interior dialogue with God. *Lord, it feels like heaven would have been the better choice right now.*

Again, I knew better than to question the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, the creator and author of life, who was quite capable of ending my life at Milepost 95. He chose not to take my life, but to preserve it.

In the depths of incredible pain, I embraced the reality that God had answered my prayers. He had spared my life. While my body was in the midst of excruciating pain, my soul was at a deep level of peace. I was incredibly grateful. I remembered God’s promise in His Word to watch over me wherever I go. *God, you never left me. You’ve been with me through it all.*

On July 1, 2007, the Lord of the universe answered two of what I thought were my last prayers on earth. I trusted Him to take care of me and my daughter and whatever would come next.

I had no way of knowing what some of those next things would be.