

Biographies for  
**SHARON JAYNES, GWEN SMITH  
& MARY SOUTHERLAND**

Co-founders of *Girlfriends in God* and co-authors of *Trusting God*



**Sharon Jaynes** has been encouraging and equipping women through ministry for over twenty-five years. From the time she met Christ as a teenager she fell in love with God's Word, and has a passion to bring God's truth to today's woman. Through the years, she has taught Bible studies, served as a counselor at Charlotte Pregnancy Care, and mentored women from all walks of life. Her mission is to **encourage, equip** and **empower** women to walk in courage and confidence as they grasp their identity as a child of God.

For ten years Sharon served as Vice President of Proverbs 31 Ministries and co-host for their daily radio feature. She is the author of 16 books with Harvest House Publishers, Waterbrook/Multnomah and Moody Publishers. Some of her titles include *The Power of a Woman's Words*, *Becoming the Woman of His Dreams*, *I'm Not Good Enough and Other Lies Women Tell Themselves*, and *5 Dreams of Every Woman*. She has also written numerous magazine articles and devotions for publications such as *Focus on the Family*, *Extraordinary Women*, *Decision*, *Crosswalk.com* and *In Touch*. Sharon is a frequent guest on radio and television programs such as *Revive Our Hearts with Nancy Leigh DeMoss*, *Focus on the Family*, *Family Life Today with Dennis Rainey*, and *Living the Life* with Terry Meeuwssen of the 700 Club.

Besides her own books, she has also been a contributing author in books such as *Chicken Soup for the Sports Fan's Soul*, *Stories for the Teens Heart*, *Stories for the Man's Heart*, and the *Women's Devotional Bible*. Her books have been translated into several languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, and Korean.

Sharon makes her home in North Carolina with her husband, Steve. They have one grown son, Steven.

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**Gwen Smith** is a speaker, author, concert artist, songwriter and worship leader who inspires women toward the heart of God through stories, songs, and Scripture. Her fun, enthusiastic, and relatable communication style puts audiences at ease and bridges generational, denominational, and racial divides. As a co-founder of the conference and devotional ministry *Girlfriends In God*, Gwen has helped thousands of women experience how the Word of God and the power of grace, through Jesus Christ, rejuvenates faith and enriches lives.

Gwen has shared her stories and songs on many television programs, including: **LIFE Today, The 700 Club, The Good Life, The Harvest Show, Homekeepers, Atlanta Live**, and many radio programs as well. She is the author of a book titled *Broken Into Beautiful* – which shares the same title as a heart-stirring song that she co-wrote and recorded. Additionally, she co-authored the new *Girlfriends in God* devotional book, *Trusting God*, with her GiG ministry partners Sharon Jaynes and Mary Southerland.

Today, Gwen and the ministry team at **Girlfriends In God** encourage more than 500,000 women daily through their online devotions. In addition, she is a recording artist with Consuming Worship, a Lillenas Publishing group. From 2008 to 2011, Gwen was a label artist for Great Worship Songs and a staff songwriter for both Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing and Sunday Best Music Publishing. Her newest CD, *Uncluttered*, was released in early 2011.

Aside from all this formal bio information, those who know her best would tell you that Gwen is just a car-pooling, coffee-drinking, chocolate-craving, Jesus-loving wife and mother who struggles like the rest of us with dirty dishes, everyday life, messy piles, mountains of laundry, complicated relationships and cellulite.

Though she travels regularly, Gwen's top ministry priority is, and always will be, her family. She and her husband Brad have been married since 1993 and have been blessed with three cool kids (named Preston, Hunter and Kennedy) who are now officially: two teens and a tween.

In her spare time, Gwen loves to cheer loudly at her kid's ballgames, play guitar, relax at the piano, and chat with her girlfriends. Her other interests include bargain shopping, hanging out at local coffee shops enjoying the dark roast, writing new songs, and studying her Bible. Gwen and her family reside in North Carolina, and attend LIFE Fellowship Church ([www.lifecharlotte.com](http://www.lifecharlotte.com).) Connect with her on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/GwenSmithMusic](http://www.Facebook.com/GwenSmithMusic).



**Mary Southerland** is **The Stress-Buster**, a leader at helping women manage stress and enjoy peace in their daily life. Mary Southerland is a dynamic communicator, delivering a powerful message that changes lives. She will make you laugh, cry and walk away thirsting for more! Through warmth, humor, transparency and solid biblical teaching, Mary leads women to discover the powerful truth of God's word and motivates them to apply it in their daily lives. An international speaker, Mary has spoken to thousands of women across the United States, Latin America, New Zealand, India, Thailand, South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Women identify with Mary, because she survived the road of clinical depression, infertility, adoption, full-time ministry, and the daily stress of life. She has worked "in the trenches" with pastor's wives and women's ministry leaders. Through God's power, Mary emerged with joy, strength, and victory. Her heart's desire is to encourage women and support leaders by helping:

- Create a culture of joy to face storms with strength.
- Turn past failures into future success.
- Handle difficult people with compassion.
- Motivate women to sign up and serve in helping others.

Mary's books include, *Hope in the Midst of Depression*, *Sandpaper People*, *Escaping the Stress Trap*, and *Experiencing God's Power in Your Ministry*. She has also been a staff writer for Rick Warren's Tool Box on Pastors.com as well as magazines such as *ParentLife* and *Proverbs 31 Woman*. Mary is the Co-founder of Girlfriends in God, a conference and devotion ministry for women, working with noted author, Sharon Jaynes and award winning composer, musician and author and worship leader, Gwen Smith to encourage and equip women for their life journey. Crosswalk.com, the largest Christian website in the world, and Bible Gateway host the daily devotions and have over 500,000 subscribers. As a frequent radio and TV guest, audiences appreciate Mary's cheerful wisdom and expertise.

As the women's ministry director of Flamingo Road Church, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, Mary began and led a community bible study, *Women in Focus* which grew to over 400 in attendance. Mary is now the Women's Ministry Director at Westside Family Church in Lenexa, Kansas, that has a weekly attendance of over 5,000. Mary's experience has helped leaders across America embrace challenges, such as facing transition and developing essential leadership qualities.

One of Mary's greatest pleasures is serving beside her husband, Dan, who is a pastor and author of *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change*. In September 2005, they helped start *The Next-Level Church* in Charlotte, North Carolina, and now serve at Westside Family Church in Lenexa, Kansas, where her husband is the Lead Teaching Pastor. Mary relishes her ministry as a wife, a mother to their two children, Jered and Danna, and *Mimi* to her three grandchildren, Jaydan, Lelia and Justus.