

SOUP AND SECURITY

PAUL SAID IN 1 THESSALONIANS 2:8, “WE LOVED YOU SO MUCH that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”

This expresses my heart, and I believe the hearts of the other women who generously opened up their lives within these pages. Although we may not know you yet, I think if all of us could sit down (perhaps for a cup of hot mint tea or even a bowl of soup), we would find that our battles are very similar. I’m convinced we would quickly become endeared to each other.

This is exactly what has happened in my house every Sunday afternoon for the last six months. Around 12:30 PM, a group of friends began arriving to discuss the latest part of the book. I called this time Soup and Security. I would prepare a big bowl of soup, or as the cool days gave way to spring and summer, a big salad. As we sat around the antique oak table in my dining room, we would share a meal, read the latest version of the latest chapter and open up about our personal battles with insecurity.

Our Soup and Security group was made up of women who were far from being alike. We were a mix of college students, singles and young and not-so-young married women. One of us had children in college, and another had preteen grandchildren. We were black and white, married for just six months, married for thirty years, divorced, or even wondering if we’d ever get married. Some of us were raised in insecure homes where alcoholism, abuse and heartache prevailed; others of us were raised from the time we were young to serve God. We were a group who would never have guessed from outward appearances that our battles were much the same.

But as we opened up about our insecurities, we found that we were all very much alike in our spiritual battles. For each of us, insecurity turned out to be something much bigger than whether we were feeling particularly confident on any given day. This battle affected the way we viewed God and ourselves. Together, we began to understand that the way we fight this battle determined much about our walk with God and our view of whatever life sent our way.

On some days, I came to that table just a little afraid. There were many things I had written about that none of them knew about me. Was it possible that I had shared too much? Was I really ready to be open about the things I once was ashamed of, but now believed that God wanted to use for his glory?

What the women at that table didn't always know was the agony that brought those words to life. Often, I wrote out of times of prayer. I would go down on the elliptical trainer in my basement, and begin working out and praying out loud, surrendering my life and circumstances to the Lordship of Christ. Being an emotional person, I would often end up in tears as I dealt with the fears and heartaches of daily living.

But then, the words would begin to come. I would put the machine on pause and run upstairs rummaging for a pencil and paper. Then I would sit and write furiously as the words came. These weren't eloquent Biblical musings, but rather God himself discipling my motives and revealing to me the depth of insecurity that still resided in my heart. Often, I would think, *God, you don't really expect me to share this, do you?* Finally, I started coming to my workouts with paper and pencil in hand.

But in *Soup and Security*, I not only received valuable input that impacted the content of this book, I also found grace. These women responded to my openness by opening up their hearts in return. They honored the trust I had in them and then encouraged me to keep in the book the stories I might be tempted to remove. They gave me, an insecure soul, the courage to scorn the

shame I'd always felt about certain parts of my past or my character, and follow Jesus "the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

My father, who graciously agreed to let part of his battle be reflected in my story, had some wise words for me about this book. He said, "Remember, Robin, that you may look back one day and wonder, why did I include that? Was that really necessary?" Then he paused, and said, "Honey, only you can decide what to include. You just have to be ready to trust what you do share." So in that spirit, I give you my weakness, trusting that it may lead to your strength.

Because of the length and breadth of what God has brought together in these pages, I'd like to offer a few suggestions on how to approach it. My dream from the very beginning was to create a book that could serve as a resource on insecurity. A book that you could go back to again and again, and find more ideas for what to study and fresh inspiration for your battles.

I've divided the book into three sections. In the first section, we'll talk about the beginnings of insecurity—starting all the way from the Garden of Eden. We'll see how Satan attacks us with false securities and then talk about how knowing God gives us the power to take down Satan's strongholds. These teachings lay the foundation for what follows and introduce you to the seven questions that we'll address later. The study guide for these chapters is purposely short.

The second section is the heart of the book. Each chapter revolves around a question that we ask as women. Each will also highlight a false security that Satan seeks to sell us and will oftentimes take us back to the Garden of Eden to understand ourselves better through Eve. Lastly, the chapter will offer up the answer as found in the knowledge of God.

Infused throughout these chapters are my stories and the

stories of women (and sometimes men) from the Bible. Each chapter ends with (1) an extended story from a woman highlighting her battle with insecurity and (2) a study guide with numerous quiet time suggestions. There are many ways you can approach these chapters. But do remember that the study guide can be left for later, and gone back to again and again.

In this center section, I've also included many charts that contrast and compare Satan's whispers to our hearts with the truth of the Scriptures. I would suggest that you skim through these, and then focus on the ones that most speak to your heart.

In the final section, we'll look at the most-feared (and most-reverential) territory that we find ourselves unwillingly taken to: death itself. In *Soup and Security*, we literally wept our way through this terrain. You may be tempted to skip ahead and read the end first, but I'd encourage you to let God take you through this journey one step at a time. Save the end for the last.

Right from the beginning, I want you to know that this is a book that calls for a response. At least in part, I hope your response will be to find a woman, or a group of women (perhaps even your own *Soup and Security* group), with whom you can open up and find strength for the battle. In the material at the end, you'll find some suggestions for starting up a *Soup and Security* group.

As Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Watch your life and your doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." Although I've sought to carefully hold to the Bible's teaching, my goal isn't for you to agree with everything I share in these pages. Certainly, in my own search for security, I've allowed myself to look at the Scriptures from many different angles. My hope is that you'll simply take this message and apply it to the exact place you are in your spiritual journey.

Before we get going, I'd like to pause to give honor where honor is due. First, I thank my husband of twenty-five years, Dave. All through the process of writing, Dave encouraged me

not to hold back anything that would be helpful, even some of the details of his battles. (Be sure to read his letter in the back of the book.) I respect him for his example of courage, and I could never have completed this project without his undying support and sacrificial love. I also want to thank my children, Josh, Bekah and Caleb, who provided editing, encouragement and perspective.

Lastly, I want to honor the women in my Soup and Security group. I hope each of you will count this as your victory as well as mine: Jessica Armato, Nicky Cole, Judy Hastings, Latrease Heath, Crystal Keys, Candace Montgomery, Wonzey Moss, Stephanie Sullivan, Nicole Sykes, Amy Poirier, Rebekah Weidner, Brandy Rito, Shannon Barranca and Meegan Zillman. The quotes at the beginning of each chapter are from some of the women who were in this group.

Are you ready to get started? Once we are in heaven, I look forward to hearing your stories of how God led you through the valleys of insecurity to a secure place where you stand—complete, confident and unashamed in him.

Note: Most of the names and some of the details of the life stories in this book have been changed to protect the identity of people mentioned in the stories.