

# The Authors

Maralene and Miles Wesner are multi-talented teachers and prolific writers. They have published more than 150 Audio-Visual Education aids, and pioneered new reading methods with their *Phonics in a Nutshell* (1965).

They have written articles, and mission studies for Southern Baptist periodicals. They were in the original group of writers to develop WMU's Big "A" Club material.

They've published several books with Broadman Press: *A Fresh Look at the Gospel* (1983); *You Are What You Choose* (1984); and *How To Be a Saint When You Feel Like a Sinner* (1986) and self-published 30 books by Diversity Press.

They are noted for their no-nonsense style, their clear illustrations, and their willingness to face controversial issues. From the dual perspectives of both academic and religious professions, they seek to be a bridge between the spiritual and the intellectual worlds.

They hold Masters Degrees (MEd) from Oklahoma University plus work toward a Doctorate. Miles also attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and served as a high school counselor. He has been the bi-vocational pastor of a small rural church for more than 50 years.

Both Maralene and Miles taught in public school and collages and served as educational consultants. Maralene taught Psychology and Speech for Southeastern Oklahoma State University for 32 years. She was chosen Oklahoma Teacher of the Year in 1975.

They have planned, led tours, and done research in all of the 50 states, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Egypt, Japan, and the Holy Land. In 1985, they were among a small group of Americans who were invited by Dr. Joseph P. Kennedy of the US/China Education Foundation and Bishop Ting, leader of the Three Self Movement, to participate in the First Symposium on the Church in Nanjing, China.

Now, they use their lifetime of varied experiences to write insightful sermons, essays, and books.



Titles by Maralene & Miles Wesner  
published by Nurturing Faith

*Sermons for Special Days*

*Life More Abundant*

*Do You Really Know Jesus?*

*If Jesus Were Here Today*

*101 Sparks of Inspiration*

101 *Sparks* OF  
INSPIRATION

Scripture-Based Sermon Starters  
and Devotions

**Maralene & Miles Wesner**

© 2022

Published in the United States by Nurturing Faith, Macon, GA.  
Nurturing Faith is a book imprint of Good Faith Media ([goodfaithmedia.org](http://goodfaithmedia.org)).  
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

ISBN: 978-1-63528-193-4

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission.

All rights reserved worldwide.

Scriptures marked KJV are taken from the KING JAMES VERSION (KJV): KING JAMES VERSION, public domain.

Cover photograph by David Cassidy.

# Contents

Preface.....	1	23: Excuses, Excuses, Excuses!
1: Abundant Life Is Available		24: Failure Is Not Final!
2: Almost Persuaded		25: Faith Needs Feet
3: Analyzing Your DNA		26: Five Rules for Living
4: Are You Alive?		27: Five Steps to Faith
5: Are You Mad, Sad, or Glad?		28: Fixers and Fanatics?
6: Arranging Priorities		29: Forgiveness
7: Behind Closed Doors		30: Forgive Their Ignorance
8: Belief Is Not Enough		31: Four Basic Needs
9: Bitter or Better?		32: Giving for the Right Reason
10: Change Is Possible		33: God Knows Your Name
11: Children Are Different		34: God's Plan for You
12: Christian Liberty		35: The Gospel in a Nutshell
13: A Church Full of Pauls		36: Handling Anger
14: Church Growth		37: Handling Difficult People
15: Common Copouts		38: Happiness
16: Conceiving, Believing, Achieving		39: Hiding or Healing?
17: Could I? Should I? Would I?		40: The Holy Spirit
18: Cutting Out the Middleman		41: How to Be a Light
19: Don't Blame Me		42: How to Fight Fair
20: Down but Not Out!		43: How to Slay Giants
21: The Edge of the Unknown		44: How to Spell Faith
22: Emotional Paupers		45: Is Bigger Always Better?
		46: Jesus's Ministry Methods

47: Jesus Respects Diversity  
48: The Language of the People  
49: Leaders or Charlatans?  
50: Learning from the Animals  
51: Lessons of Life  
52: Letters from God  
53: Leveling and Listening  
54: Little Things Mean a Lot  
55: Logic  
56: Looking for What's Wrong  
57: Love Your Enemies!  
58: The Lure of Certainty  
59: Masks, Armors, and Spears  
60: Ministering Angels  
61: Moral "I" Tests  
62: Nobody's Perfect!  
63: No Place to Hide  
64: Of Complaints and Compliments  
65: Of Sowing and Reaping  
66: Our Great Potential  
67: Pastor/Laymen Partnerships  
68: People Need People  
69: The Prodigal Son's Father  
70: The Pursuit of Happiness  
71: Rageholics  
72: Retaliation or Annihilation  
73: Seven Fundamentals of Faith

74: Sharing the Key  
75: Sins of Omission  
76: The Status of Christians  
77: Steps to Failure  
78: The Strange Gospel of Jesus  
79: Sunny Days or Stormy Nights?  
80: Talk or Walk?  
81: Three Principles of Behavior  
82: Three Useless Expressions  
83: Trash, Trinkets, or Treasures?  
84: Unanswered Prayers  
85: The Upside-Down Gospel  
86: Using Our Strengths  
87: Using Plan B!  
88: Wash-Basin Religion  
89: We Are Witnesses  
90: What Do We Really Want?  
91: What Is Love?  
92: What Is the Gospel?  
93: What Moves Us?  
94: What Should I Feel?  
95: What the World Needs Now!  
96: What to Do with Hostility  
97: Whited Sepulchers  
98: Why Am I Mad?  
99: Why Do Adults Say No?  
100: You Are Valuable!  
101: Z Is for Zeal

# *Preface*

Many churches today have lay ministers or bivocational pastors. These dedicated leaders often work at secular jobs yet must prepare two or three sermons a week. This can be a real challenge.

Most of the brief compositions in this book can stand alone as quick devotionals, or they can be used as “sermon starters” by providing suggested topics and outlines that include extensive scriptural research. This saves leaders and teachers time, but still allows them to add their own special insights, develop their own applications, and adapt the material to their own personal style.

All of these “starters” were originally used in a small rural church where we served as bivocational pastors for more than fifty years.



# 1: Abundant Life Is Available

Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). What, then, are the characteristics of those with abundant life?

1. *They have priorities.* They can separate the significant from the trivial, and emphasize issues that are within their areas of expertise and responsibility. Jesus said, “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt 6:33).

2. *They have focus.* They set specific goals and zero in on a few major projects instead of fragmenting their energy on irrelevant sidetracks and detours. Paul said, “I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal” (Phil 3:13–14).

3. *They have timing.* They avoid impulsive acts and practice deferred gratification patterns. They’ve learned to enjoy anticipation and are willing to endure delays. They know that going into debt is like grabbing one dollar today when they could have had ten dollars by waiting until tomorrow. Scripture says, “Let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1).

4. *They have limits.* They stay within moral and financial guidelines. They don’t overextend their roles. They know they can only control things within their own arena. Solomon said, “Keep sound wisdom and prudence” (Prov 3:21). He also said, “Like a city breached, without walls, is one who lacks self-control” (Prov 25:28).

5. *They have persistence.* They don’t start more than they can finish. They complete worthwhile projects as soon as possible. They would rather feel the accomplishment of doing one thing well than the excitement of having a dozen unrealistic pipedreams. Paul said, “Let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up” (Gal 6:9).

In order to develop these traits that promise abundant life, a person must have a relationship with Jesus.