

When the

CROWN

CRACKS...

28 Doable Devos
for When Life's Not a Fairy Tale



Sophia Joy

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Sample

Loveland, CO

Group
Real. Bold. Love.

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Dedicated to my mom, who has helped me repair and polish my crown through the craziness of life, and to Pastor Ray, my biggest cheerleader through pain and fear.

Sample

In the midst of devastation, heartache, and loss,

simply putting on your lipstick and claiming a crown doesn't seem to work the same magic it did on those days that were filled with sunshine and rainbows. After all, life was great; you were rolling around the kingdom like you owned the place. Life wasn't perfect, but it was filled with blessings, and you had no reason to question your royal status.

Then one day—out of that same blue sky—lightning strikes and it isn't long before the storm clouds and rain block out any flicker of the sunshine that so recently warmed your heart. In that darkness it's easy to feel your crown slip or crack. Often it feels more like it's ripped from your hair and hidden in the tangled undergrowth of pain.

Princesses aren't supposed to get hurt, right?

How much simpler life would be if only that were true. However, the strongest princesses I know have felt intense pain. A husband in perfect health one day, and paralyzed from a mysterious illness 48 hours later. A marriage torn apart by infidelity and alcoholism. A child lost to a heart defect. Cancer.

All these princesses experienced great pain, suffering, and loss. They also grew moment by moment to trust God's plan and, in retrospect from the safety of God's loving arms, they learned to appreciate the growth from the struggle.

Although it isn't always easy to remember to run to God when you're struck with the onset of tragedy, it is vitally important. We tend to reason that "Pain doesn't feel good, and God is good, so God really shouldn't have much to do with it other than making it stop. What else would a loving God do?"

In actuality, these trying moments are huge boulders that God has allowed to roll in your direction. Boulders that can either push you snug up against God's chest, held so tight your nose is stuck right up in his hairy armpit, or drive you so far away that trying to draw close to God seems like climbing Mount Everest.

Sweet princess, I wish there was something I could write in this book to instantly take away your pain, confusion, and frustration—but there is nothing like that to be written. Instead, this book will offer you a daily safe space to explore your feelings, offer comfort, and encourage you through challenging times—directing you to the loving arms of God.

Each day you will look to the CROWN to find those loving arms. After all, any royal knows the crown is the defining accessory.

Please know that you are amazing and wonderful and that sometimes God places people in your life to help you through challenging events. If at any point your feelings are overwhelming and you feel you may be an endangerment to yourself or others, call a professional counselor, therapist, or hospital right away.

Sample

Keep Your Eye on the C.R.O.W.N.

Each day as we see what God has in store for us we'll be focusing on our C.R.O.W.N.

Comfort

A select verse from the Bible to show how much God cares about you and wants to hold his daughter through this challenging situation.

Respect

A princess with a cracking crown needs to respect herself, her feelings, and especially her God.

Outward Thinking

The simplest way to make your life seem a little easier is to lend your hand to someone else, claiming at least a moment to remember life exists outside your struggle.

Workout

Physically release some stress while giving yourself a natural high from an elite endorphin rush.

Nutrition

Pass over the bon-bons. It's time to focus on foods to improve your mood and claim your princess pride.

Comfort

When the comforts of royal life are snatched away and you're left hoarse from shouting from the tower for your prince to come to your rescue, it is good to know there are words for such an occasion tucked away in the Bible. This book of God's Word is filled with verses of comfort, hope, encouragement, and peace.

It's easy to want to believe that your princess status leaves you exempt from pain and suffering. That promise simply isn't there. Instead, verse after verse offers comfort in times of pain, leading us to believe that God expects our lives to have painful moments. Wait a minute. I'm a princess, daughter of THE King. Why would God expect a royal like me to experience darkness and discouragement? Much like the princess tormented by the pea beneath layers and layers of mattresses, modern-day princesses just like you need a struggle to see the pure intentions truly in your heart. When hardships enter into our lives, our true character and center of life will come into focus.

For some this may be an unexpected bump in the road that will quickly come to pass, while for others it could be an ever-deepening moat ready to swallow you whole with no end in sight. The verses found in the Bible do not minimize the challenges we experience. Sometimes life stinks, and there may not be a Bible verse that can change that fact. What it can change

is your *response*. It can offer hope in something bigger than circumstance.

That doesn't mean God wants us to have those painful moments. However, we are humans living in a world full of other humans lending itself to the opportunity to be disappointed and empty.

The good news is God is with you, and he will use our human mistakes for the good of those who love him.

Each day will bring an inspiring verse. Take time to meditate on it. Read it more than once. Ask God to use the verse to speak to your heart, heal your wounds, and bring you a comfort no person can offer.

Respect

Respect is a key component to surviving struggle; especially respect for yourself and for God.

Pain, hardship, and suffering work their evil ways by planting seeds of doubt. What easier way for evil to win than to make you think you're the problem—or better yet, that maybe God is the problem.

The princess that illustrates this perfectly is Princess Elsa of Arendale (you remember her from *Frozen*—right?). As a child she finds her magical gift to create snow and ice wondrous and playful. But this gift turns devastating

after a single accident that injures her sister. Despite the joy the ability brought Elsa and her sister, Elsa is asked to hide her gift. The resulting pain and fear is bigger than the possibility of good that could have blossomed out. Elsa has become the problem and is isolated from the kingdom.

It's tempting for us to travel the same path as Elsa. A broken relationship or lost job definitely twists the knife into the heart of our ego, deflating the momentary value of worldly worth. At times we may even wish for a poisoned apple to speed along the inevitable pain. Sickness and loss of life point the finger at the God of the universe who can stop everything in its tracks if he so wishes. The problem with this line of thinking is that it leaves out the fact that God both knows how the story ends and God is the writer of our stories. He may not enjoy seeing us struggle, but he can see past this moment and open our eyes to God's eternity and plan.

In times of struggle it is challenging, at best, to remember how wonderful you are and how awesome and intricate God's plan is. But it is also a most excellent time to truly examine your heart and ensure that God is at the center. To remember that the blessings of life that come and go and cause joy and pain are just life's blessings rather than the meaning of life. That your cup is full with just you and God, and that everything else fills your heart to overflowing in order to share that love with the world.

As you mend your broken crown, you will take time each day to focus on recognizing where your heart truly is and the feelings you are experiencing. You'll be encouraged to make God your foundation and center and to evaluate the truth of your feelings. You'll spend time in reflection that even the magic mirror may envy as you open your eyes to your continued value and God's unending love, even amidst evil queens and glass coffins.

While princesses are not immune to pain, despair should not enter their kingdoms. Recognizing the difference can be hard. Pain can be intense and overwhelm you for long moments, but focusing on the strength of God being enough can be the tiny, little ray of sunshine that will eventually part the clouds—revealing the blue sky of peace.

Outward Thinking

What you feed grows.

No, we aren't talking nutrition just yet. Rather, this is a simple explanation reminding you that the place you devote your energy to will become a bigger part of you and your life.

When life feels like it's crumbling around you, it's too easy to replay every second in your brain, thinking maybe there is a way you could have prevented the pain.

When you concentrate solely on the hole in your life, it starts to look bigger. Then, at some point, you can't help but stick your finger in the hole and poke around because it bothers you so much. Next thing you know, the hole is bigger, and it's even harder not to think about it.

Compare it to a beautiful painting that you lovingly created. You admire it...yet are not satisfied with the result of the little bush in the foreground. It has a spot on it that you tried to turn into a cheery bird, but that didn't work and now every time you look at the painting, all you can see is an ornery, short bush with a blue blob that steals the attention from the rest of the canvas.

You may be tied up in knots gazing at this beautiful work of art, because despite the vast beauty, the only thing you see is failure and pain...until you let yourself focus on the rest of the painting. Once you can accomplish that, the spot seems a little smaller. Trust me, it's still there, and it will probably be the first thing you see for a long time, but it doesn't have to consume your masterpiece—or you.

In the Bible, God says in Isaiah 58:10, "Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon."

He is providing the answer to escaping pain and sadness. Reach out to others. Your life circumstances may seem insurmountable at the moment, but they are

still not the only problems in the world. Each day you will be challenged to look outside yourself at the world around you and the people in your life that could use encouragement, comfort, and help. As you are forced to reach beyond your problems to your princess heart, you will be renewed to see the light that is within you offering hope and peace.

Workout

Have you ever wondered why the princesses in fairy tales never stay in bed for three days without showering or changing clothes and probably not brushing their teeth? Not only does it make a very uninteresting story, it also does no good whatsoever. When you hear the evil queen wants you dead, you go for a run through the forest and are lucky enough to meet seven little men that you can cook and clean for. That definitely sounds like a happily ever after escape, right?

Perhaps not. But, getting outside and moving will make you feel better. Science says so.

Aerobic activity—the kind that gets your blood pumping and showing a princess glow while still able to talk—promotes several responses in your body that help improve your mood. First, it controls cortisol levels. Cortisol is a hormone that your body releases in response to stress. It's great for escaping danger but not so great for replaying the moment your stepsisters

crushed your dreams for a night out. Also, exercise releases endorphins, another hormone that improves your mood and reduces the perception of physical pain.

Another benefit to adding activity is to embrace a healthy sense of control. At times struggles can feel immensely chaotic and increase stress simply because we feel like we no longer have a grip on what happens in life. By dedicating about 20 minutes a day to an exercise routine, you can experience a sensible amount of control over one aspect of your day. Be careful not to go overboard, however. Princesses will find no peace being a control freak.

You will notice the focus on aerobic activity. This is because studies have shown that 20 minutes a day can be effective in treating mild depression and possibly anxiety. Some of the days will also include reflective practices to improve breathing. When you feel down, often your breathing becomes shallow, which then continues the cycle of not feeling great as you're not getting as much oxygen as your body craves. The breathing exercises will help you to focus only on breath for 10 to 15 minutes, improving your sense of peace and your clarity of mind.

The suggested activities are relatively simple, so feel free to do more if you are up for it. Do what feels comfortable. Just make sure to get out and do something.

As always please consult a doctor if you haven't exercised recently or if you have any specific medical concerns.

Nutrition

Food can be at the heart of any princess problem. Depending on the degree of the pain or the problem at hand, food can feel like a huge comfort or it can be revolting to think about. The primary concern as we examine nutrition while correcting your crown is to make healthy choices, using food choices to help heal rather than create more hurt.

Many foods will help perk up a princess. Throughout your journey to repair your crown you'll focus on adding foods that contain nutrients shown to help ward off depression and improve your mood.

Some of these foods include omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, tryptophan, serotonin, and antioxidants. Omega-3 fatty acids may help to boost mood when they are converted into an anti-inflammatory hormone. B vitamins such as folic acid and B6 may be helpful in treating mild depression and increasing the efficacy of prescription anti-depressants. Tryptophan is an amino acid that helps create serotonin, a neurotransmitter that offers positive feelings and a state of calm. Several different antioxidants are also suggested as they help to reduce inflammation and promote communication between the gut and the brain.

Why do you want your digestive tract and your brain to talk? Many neurotransmitters and hormones are formed in the digestive tract. If your gut is happy then your brain is happy. You've probably noticed the opposite association if you're nervous about something and need to run to the bathroom quickly. Thankfully, adjusting your diet should be easier than a mad dash.

Again, don't get crazy with control. Rather, focus on including healthy options to help you feel better. A princess might as well give herself the right fuel to rule the kingdom once the witch finally gives up.

C—Tears

“Jesus wept.” (John 11:35)

God loves you just because you are. It might be hard to believe, but anything you do can't make him love you more. He sent his Son to die just for you. What more do you need to believe how much he loves you?

R—Write It Out

There are places to write in this book each day. Or you can find a journal or an old notebook you can use to record your thoughts throughout this journey. Writing your thoughts is a great, healthy outlet for all the emotions stuck inside you. Whenever you have things you want to say to a person or you have a situation that has stolen your crown, write it down. The simple act of releasing words to paper can at least momentarily ease your pain. If you're not sure where to start, simply write how you feel.

I feel _____ .

Notice the period. Don't try to analyze why you feel how you do or what is making you feel that way. Stop

with how you feel and leave it at that. Just take the first step to owning your emotions.

O—Write a Note

You are a blessed princess. Even when it feels like everything in your world is crumbling, you have blessings surrounding you. In order to see them, you have to shift your focus to the things that encourage you. Today think of one person you are grateful to have in your life. Now write that person a note (one that requires a stamp is super special), thanking him or her for their role in your life.

The person I'm writing a note to is...



W—Walk It Out

Take the opportunity to get outside, hopefully in the sunshine, and walk. Look at the beauty around you and let it soak into your soul. Open up your heart and talk to Jesus as your blood begins to flow. If you need to, let the tears flow as well.

