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INTRODUCTION

If you have surrendered your life to Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you have a *call* on your life. My desire is to encourage women to live life in fulfillment of that call. The older I become the more I realize how precious each day is, and I know we can never get that day back. Do not squander your days, dear sisters!

Following the example of Joan of Arc, who sought God on her knees, received a directive from Him, and then stood and followed His leading, you too can be inspired and equipped to live out your purpose in first hearing from God and then taking your stand in following Him.

This first volume of *Hearts of Purpose*, “The Call,” is guided by Song of Solomon 2:4, “His banner over me is love.” Just as Joan of Arc could step forth in full confidence under the banner of her *calling*, so we too have the banner of God’s love over our lives.

Hearts of Purpose brings you ten real-life stories about ten ordinary women doing extraordinary things for the *Glory of God*. As you read of how God called these women to service, and how they stepped out of their comfort zones to respond to that call, you will be motivated to explore *His call* in your own life.

We invite you to use the discussion questions at the end of each chapter to stimulate thought and growth in your private reading, or in small-group discussions.

Let this reading experience be an invitation for you to take a step closer to fulfilling *your God-given calling* in Christ Jesus.

— **Gail Grace Nordskog**



A CONVERSATION WITH JOAN

Gail Grace Nordskog Interviews Joan of Arc

GAIL: Welcome to *HEARTS OF PURPOSE* and the real-life stories about ten ordinary women doing extraordinary things for the *Glory of God*. I am your host Gail Nordskog and my guest today is Jeanne d’Arc, or as we say here in America, Joan of Arc. Joan, thank you so much for coming and encouraging our readers!

JOAN: Gail, thank you for having me share some of my life story with you and your readers. I want them to see the common thread between what God called me to do so many years ago for the suffering people of France and what your authors are doing today because of God’s call on their lives. By the way, I love the portrait you chose for the cover of this book!”

GAIL: I was hoping you would like this one, chosen from among the hundreds of portraits of you over the centuries. But I am curious why you love this particular portrait.

JOAN: The artist, Albert Lynch, was able to capture one of the most exciting days of my life. I was probably just thirty miles from the Reims Cathedral, which you see depicted in the top left corner of the painting. What a beautiful sight! Reims and most of northern France had been under the control of the English for close to one hundred years — the Hundred Years’ War — you may have studied that in your World History class in high school.

God chose me, a young peasant girl from a poor village in northeastern France, to lead the French army and drive out the English. My people were weary and hopeless after so many years of defeat,



destruction, and needless death. There is a Scripture that says, “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty” (I Cor. 1:27).

I fulfilled that Scripture in my young life. On July 17, 1429, by God’s divine mercy and grace I saw the city of Reims liberated after being held by the English for years, and the dauphin, (a French title given to the heir apparent) crowned king in that very cathedral! Dauphin Charles VII was crowned King Charles VII of France. This is what I was *called* by God to do.

The banner, the breastplate, and the butterflies you added, Gail, are not insignificant.

GAIL: I was hoping you wouldn’t mind the butterflies! We added ten of them on your cover portrait to represent the ten women featured in this book. Each of these women is so much like you in their character and love for God: gentle, humble, bold, courageous, and obedient to God’s call.

JOAN: The armor that I wore was heavy, durable, rugged, and meant to withstand brutal assault. The butterfly, on the other hand, is perhaps one of God’s most delicate creatures. Yet because it wears the invisible armor of God, it survives against outrageous odds, carrying out the purpose for which God created it.

GAIL: That is a powerful analogy reminding us to put on God’s spiritual armor every day, as we read in Ephesians 6.

JOAN: Allow me to share something that happened the day before the coronation at the cathedral of Reims. You will see the connection with the butterflies. My friend Gérardin d’ Epinal had come to visit me and witness the coronation in Reims. Gérardin shared this at my trial: “She seemed to fear nothing but treachery. . . . God still seemed to be wholly by her side. Swarms of white butterflies had recently been seen escorting her banner. Little more than thirty



miles separated her from her goal of Reims.”¹

GAIL: What an incredible story, Joan, and there are certainly no coincidences with God! Is it true that your parents came to the coronation?

JOAN: My parents did come, showing me their love, forgiveness, and respect. At first it was very hard for my father to believe God had called me for such a time as this. I so loved my parents, especially my mother. It was said of my parents that “they were good and faithful Catholics; good working people of good repute, leading an honest life according to their condition,”² for they were not rich. I was very close to my mother. She taught me about the love that Jesus has for us. She taught me how to pray the Lord’s Prayer.

GAIL: Joan, can you share with us some of your childhood memories and when you first began to sense God’s *calling* in your life?

JOAN: Yes, I would love to reflect on those precious days of my childhood. I was born in 1412 in a little village called Domrémy. I had four siblings — three brothers and a precious baby sister. Like everyone else in our village we were considered a peasant family. Of course we children never thought of our poverty. It was just the way life was in France. We lived in a simple stone house right next to the village church.³

When I was just about thirteen, while I was praying I started having visions — first of Michael the Archangel and later of St.

1. Ben D. Kennedy, *Maid of Heaven: The Story of Saint Joan of Arc*, accessed May 1, 2017, http://www.maidofheaven.com/joanofarc_gower_coronation_rheims.asp.

2. “Today Is St. Joan of Arc’s Birthday - Maid of Heaven,” Catholic News World, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://jceworld.blogspot.com/2014/01/today-is-st-joan-of-arcs-birthday-maid.html>.

3. Eric Metaxas, *Seven Women: And the Secret of Their Greatness* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Books, 2015), 3.



Catherine of Alexandria and St. Margaret. They instructed me and were great comforters. I referred to them as “my voices.” God works in strange ways, and differently in each of us. Remember, the apostle Paul had visions and dreams. I believe because of my youth and inexperience God allowed these visitations to embolden me for the many battles and treachery that were ahead of me.

GAIL: Help us understand that time in history, because France, England and America are allies on the current world stage. Will you give us a simple explanation of what this war was about and what caused you, a young, inexperienced peasant girl who never learned to read or write other than your signature, to pick up your banner and march into battle?

JOAN: When I was young the English and French were not allies, but had been at war for years. The war began in 1337 when Edward III of England claimed the throne of France through his mother, Queen Isabella. She was the daughter of King Philip IV of France. It was King Philip’s intent to resolve political conflicts between France and England by arranging for his daughter to marry King Edward II.

King Edward III based his claim to the throne of France on his mother’s nationality, but the French people rejected his claims. This led to the Hundred Years’ War between England and my country, France.

By the time I was born the war had been raging for decades. Most of the war had been fought on French soil and we, the French, had not won any significant victories in decades. In 1429, when I was seventeen, the English had conquered a good deal of France’s northern territory, and sections of southwestern France were under the control of the Anglo-allied Burgundians.⁴ Philip, the powerful Duke of Burgundy, owned considerable land in the north and was

4. Ibid., 4.



willing to give in to English demands and crown an English king to the French throne in order to keep the peace.

Gail, there is nothing new under the sun. People suffered under the powers of evil long before the Hundred Years' War and long before I was born — since the beginning of time. As Christians we need to do what we can to stop the evil *of our day*, through prayer, fasting, and action. Your authors are fulfilling the calling of God to be His hands, feet, and voice, to heal the broken-hearted, set the captives free, and take a stand against the forces that would destroy lives in *their* day — bringing hope and a future instead.

I am sure your readers are aware of the wars of hatred raging still today in the Middle East. Certain Islamic factions want to destroy Christians and Jews. This is just like the Crusades of medieval times. Jesus told us there will be wars and rumors of wars.

GAIL: Joan, please give us your perspective on the Crusades.

JOAN: Many people have heard of the Crusades, and it is taught in your era, Gail, that the knights were fighting wars of European colonialism. This is not true. When we were children we heard the stories of the sacrifice and bravery of these warriors. All boys yearned to be just like them when they grew up, and young girls still dream of finding their knight in shining armor!

These men were asked to protect the innocent followers of Christ in the Holy Land. Christians were being killed, their land seized, and their churches destroyed because of their faith in Jesus.

The knights were responding to over five centuries of Islamic jihad against Christians in the Middle East. Around 1077 the Christian emperor of Byzantium, Alexis I, appealed for help to the Western Churches. Pope Urban II challenged the knights of Europe at the council of Clermont in 1095:

The Turks and Arabs have attacked [our brethren]. . . . They



have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians, and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire. . . . On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you . . . to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians.⁵

The crusaders saw themselves as pilgrims seeking to recapture and liberate Christian lands from vicious invaders, and to restore religious freedom to the Holy Lands.

Gail: Thank you for that, Joan, and this puts me in mind of our need to be Crusaders in our own time surrounding the issue of the blood that is on our hands as a “civilized” nation: since 1973 we have legalized the vicious slaughter of unborn babies. May we see Crusaders in our generation standing up for these innocent children! Now let’s go back to the portrait on the cover. Please tell us about the significance of the banner in the painting.

JOAN: I actually had three different types of banners, or standards, but the one depicted in the cover painting represents the one I carried into battle and into the cathedral for the coronation. Oh, what a glorious day that was!

The purpose of the banner was to indicate a clear location to which my army could rally when dispersed in the confusion of battle, with their visors down, as visors must be down during the fighting. On several occasions when my troops were losing ground I would ride into the midst of the battle. My men would know my position on the field when they saw my banner, and there I could rally them on to victory.

5. “Pope Urban II’s Speech Calling for the First Crusade,” Christian Broadcasting Network, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www1.cbn.com/spirituallife/calling-for-the-first-crusade>.



GAIL: Where did you get the idea for the images on your standard and the two other banners?

JOAN: I asked my Lord's messengers what I should do, and they answered me, saying, "Take up the banner of your Lord." The field of it was sewn with lilies, and thereupon was our Lord holding the world, with two angels, one on either hand. It was white, and on it was written the names Jesus Maria, and it was fringed with silk.⁶

The fleurs-de-lis, the lilies that represent French royalty, were everywhere on Coronation Day! Not only on my banner but all over the cathedral, which itself was in full glory. It was so beautiful, so exciting! Oh how I thanked the Lord through many tears that day.

During my trial I was asked "What do you love best, your banner or your sword?" I replied, "I love my Banner best—oh, forty times more than the sword! Sometimes I carried it myself when I charged the enemy, to avoid killing anyone. I have never killed anyone." Again I was questioned at my trial about the presence of my banner in the cathedral of Reims at the coronation of King Charles. I boldly answered, "It had borne the burden, it had earned the honor."⁷

I knelt beside the dauphin as the crown was placed upon his head. He was now officially King Charles VII. I had tears streaming down my face as I boldly declared, "High-born King, now is the will of God accomplished. For He it was who ordained that I should free Orléans and bring you here to this City of Reims for your sacring, to blazon it forth that you are Rightful Lord. And now

6. "Her Battle Standard," accessed May 1, 2017, <http://saint-joan-of-arc.com/banner.htm>.

7. Ibid.



the Realm of France is yours.”⁸

GAIL: Joan, it amazes me that God chooses ordinary woman like the “Maid of Orléans” to do extraordinary things for His Glory! Like you Joan, the ten women who share their stories in this book are just ordinary woman — faithful handmaidens of the Lord. Their stories and callings are unique and challenging. They share their weaknesses and strengths, their struggles and their triumphs, but most wonderful of all, they share how they love the Lord with all their hearts, minds, souls, and strength, and their actions demonstrate how they love their neighbors as themselves.

Joan, in conclusion, is there anything else you feel led to share with our readers?

JOAN: Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing, and so give their lives to little or nothing. One life is all we have to give, and we live it as we believe in living it — and then it’s gone. More terrible than dying, even dying young, is squandering the possibilities of who you could become if you just allow God to use you.⁹

I suffered a martyr’s death by burning at the stake. I was nineteen years old. My last words this side of heaven were, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,” as I looked longingly at a crucifix. Please be comforted in knowing that our merciful Lord will give us the strength to endure, even if we are called to a martyr’s death.

In the book of Acts we see Stephen, the first martyr for Christ (Acts 7:54-60). Thousands more have followed him, including me. I am honored to have been chosen, and now stand with Stephen,

8. Metaxas, *Seven Women*.

9. Maxwell Anderson, *Joan of Lorraine* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1946), 80.



those who have gone before me, and the many who follow. We are a “great cloud of witnesses” cheering you on as you make your own sacrifices.

Go forward bravely. Fear nothing. Trust in God; all will be well.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Jesumme'. The letter 'J' is large and stylized, with a long vertical stroke extending downwards.

Gail Grace Nordskog's recommended reading list
for your further study of Saint Joan:

Metaxas, Eric. *Seven Women: And the Secret of Their Greatness*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Books, 2015.

Sackville-West, Vita. *Saint Joan of Arc*. London: Folio Society, 1995.

Twain, Mark. *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2016.

“Her Battle Standard.” saint-joan-of-arc.com/banner.htm.

Jarus, Owen. “Joan of Arc: Facts & Biography.” livescience.com/38288-joan-of-arc.html.

