

An illustration at the top of the cover shows three grey, jagged stones and two brown sticks of varying lengths and orientations, set against a yellow background with a repeating pattern of the word 'Words' in a light orange font.

# STICKS ~and~ STONES

May Break My Bones

*But Words Can Kill My Spirit*

The author's name is enclosed in a large, orange speech bubble that points towards the bottom right of the cover. The background behind the bubble is yellow with the repeating 'Words' pattern.

Joyce Schneider



Big things come in small packages! There is a very big message packed in the pages of this little book! Through the use of scripture and personal experiences, Joyce shows her readers that Satan is the Father of Lies and God is the Great Truth Teller. Joyce's ability to use her own life experiences to reveal God's truth to others is amazing! Her honesty, transparency and humility are both rare and refreshing. Because of this, she is incredibly sensitive to the Spirit of God working in and around her. Thank you, Joyce for being a willing servant devoted to sharing His truth with a hurting world!

—LaDonna Alexander  
Biblical Counselor –Little River, SC

In her newest book, *Sticks and Stones*, Joyce Schneider opens up her heart and shares her life in hopes that others will see the goodness of God and let him heal their past. We all have issues and sin that we think we've dealt with, but oftentimes we put a bandage on the problem, thinking we cured it, but in reality it is festering beneath the surface, causing doubt, discouragement, and hopelessness. Joyce takes the reader on a journey through the experiences of their life and shows them how with God and his people, you can overcome. This book is a must for those who are hurting and struggling, and it is a great reminder of God's power in the realm of forgiveness and victorious living.

—Sherrinda Ketchersid  
Writer – Ft. Worth, TX

This book is, as Joyce Schneider states, "A message of healing and hope for others who are hurting." As Joyce shares the deep wounds of her heart and how healing has taken place, she gives Christ's path of hope and healing to other

wounded hearts. As she says, “When I finally allowed God to rule over my life, my life started to really change.” Those reading the comfort and hope offered by Joyce will also find their lives changed.

—Lynn H. Mosher  
Writer - Louisville, KY

When I Look at Joyce Schneider and see the total transformation that I have been privileged to observe, all I can say is “Glory to God.” She has renewed her mind through her love of God’s Word and allowed Him to impact every part of who she is and what she does. The power of *words* entrapped her, but the power of *God’s Word* has freed her to a life of abundance. This book is a transformational journey to freedom, not just for Joyce, but for anyone who is believing the lies. As you read this story, allow God to shine his light of truth into your darkest places and you too will be changed. “...Looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Enjoy the journey.

—Andrew DeLong  
Senior Pastor, Tree of Life Church – Naples, FL

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*“The Lord gave the word and great was the company of those who published it.”*

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# *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to all the hurting souls who are believing the lies. May you find God's truth within you.





# Acknowledgments

It never ceases to amaze me when I reach the point in my writing where I get to give thanks to those who have helped me make this book a reality. As I have said before, it does take a village to create a book, and I wish to give thanks to my own special village for assisting me in bringing *Sticks and Stones...* into fruition.

It is such an honor to be able to share the stories of my life with you, sharing what God has been teaching me through the journey. I pray the lessons in these pages will bless and encourage you as much as they have blessed and encouraged me.

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Last, but certainly not least—I always save the best for last! Thank you, Lord Jesus! Thank you for giving me these lessons to allow me to grow closer to you and to encourage others! It's been such an exciting journey, and I can hardly wait to see what tomorrow brings! Thank you for allowing me to share your love with others, but most of all, Lord Jesus, I thank you for giving me a life that is full to overflowing! I truly could never have imagined life could be so abundant. You are my friend, my Savior, my Lord, and my life! I love you with all my heart and with all my soul! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

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# The Girl

Something was terribly wrong with the girl. She couldn't put her finger on it, but she just felt so empty inside. Each day was becoming a little harder to get through than the day before. On the surface, life should have been grand. The boy was working at a job he loved. He was home at night and on the weekends. The little boys were as cute as buttons. Perfect little angels...blond hair, blue eyes. They were any mother's dream. Yet...the emptiness just wouldn't leave.

One night the pretty lady asked the girl if she was okay. The girl quickly confirmed, yes, she was fine. The lady looked in her eyes and asked again if she was sure. And once again the girl said yes ... but as she drove away that night, she wondered why she was so empty inside, she didn't *feel* fine.

The girl got up the courage the next day to email the pretty lady and tell her she wasn't fine, she was struggling. And she didn't know why. The pretty lady said, "Why don't we meet for prayer?" That was the last thing the girl wanted—to go and talk about or pray about her hurts, but she knew that her little family would not survive if she didn't fix her heart.

So she met with the pretty lady and Jesus came into her heart and healed the hurts that had been festering inside for so very long. The girl couldn't believe the freedom that came into her life that night; the chains were broken, the weights lifted.

And she's never been the same since.

# The Stuff That Gets Stuck Inside

I was talking to my sister on the phone one day and she was telling me about an acquaintance of hers who jumped from the Skyway Bridge in St. Petersburg that afternoon.

Then she asked me, "What would cause someone to do such a thing?"

I did have an answer for her, in fact, it was just one word.

*Hopelessness...*

When a woman loses her hope, well, she loses her desire for life. And this poor woman took that one step farther and actually ended her own life.

As I talked with my sister, trying to comfort her, my thoughts kept returning to my own days of hopelessness.

How many times had I considered taking my own life?

Sometimes it was simply a fleeting thought. Other times a plan was actually conceived, but, for whatever reason, never found completion, thank the Lord.

Drawing from my own experience, the one word that was at the root of such discouragement and depression is *hopelessness*.

*Despondent* is a synonym of *hopelessness* and this description pretty much says it all:

"Despondent always suggests melancholy and depres-

sion; it refers to an emotional state rather than to an intellectual judgment”, Webster’s Dictionary tells us.

It is an emotional reaction, not an intelligent assessment. So the question arises again, how does a person get so emotionally overwhelmed that she is willing to give up everything, including her own life?

I actually have an idea as to how that can happen.

We get lies or false beliefs stuck inside of us that can distort our vision. We don’t see life as it really is, rather we see the world through a veil of deception, and this causes serious problems in all areas of our lives. And the saddest part of this is *we don’t even know we are being deceived*.

My hope in writing this book is to help others realize that it’s natural to have lies stuck inside us; the world is a very cruel place. It loves nothing better than to beat us up, but it’s very important to understand this concept and get to the root of the deception, the sooner the better.

I like to use this illustration in explaining this concept.

Imagine that you were shot with a BB gun when you were a small child, and the BB was lodged in your calf. For whatever reason, you chose to leave that BB in your body. Maybe you were afraid if you told your mother you were playing with a BB gun, the consequences of that would outweigh leaving the BB inside of you, in your mind.

After some time had passed, the wound entrance would heal and no one would really know that you carried a BB around in your leg. But your body would know it; your leg would not function properly, and before long that BB would fester inside of you. Eventually it would cause serious damage to your leg and possibly the rest of your body.

That BB must come out for you to be whole. It will be painful removing the BB, and you will have an open wound

for a time, but one day the leg will be completely healed if the BB is removed.

The same holds true of the lies that get stuck inside us. The lie might be something as innocent as your brother calling you *fat* when you were a child, something that is quite common in sibling relationships. But that lie, that you are fat, might find a home inside you and create a lifelong issue of eating disorders for you.

Or maybe you were molested as a teenager, and the shame and guilt of that travesty follows you throughout your life, destroying any chance of a true, meaningful relationship.

There are so many scenarios that illustrate this point, I could not begin to list them all, but what I can say is this: each one of us has struggled with bad habits, hurts, and hang-ups, and these negative behaviors and emotional states are often the result of some falsehood that we've allowed to control our emotions and thoughts, which then interfered with our healthy mental and spiritual development.

I believe that once we remove the original root lie or issue, we can begin the healing process to become whole—emotionally, spiritually, and even physically. Because our physical body houses our emotions, it would only be natural that once our emotions are based on what is true and are no longer a destructive force, our physical bodies would have the opportunity to be healed as well.

This book isn't filled with scientific jargon. I've never been able to read that stuff, so I most certainly can't write it. But what it *is* filled with is personal experience—why I believe what I believe and the positive results that I've expe-



rienced in my own life by rooting out the lies and letting Jesus heal my hurts once and for all.

This journey towards healing all started one evening by a simple statement on my part, followed by a personal observation.

"I'm fine." ...

*But...if I'm fine, why do I feel so empty inside?*

Have you ever voiced those thoughts? Do you wonder what is wrong with you? You know you're not right inside, but you have no clue what is wrong.

I spent so much of my life saying, "I'm fine," that I actually began to believe it. And why not? My mind was filled with one lie after another to the point that I could not even begin to decipher the truth.

And the really crazy part of it all is I am a normal, (well somewhat normal) wife, mother, friend, Christian.

I am the girl next door, the soccer mom, the Sunday school teacher. I am just like you (maybe a little shorter).

It all started when I realized that I was living a lie. I wasn't fine, but I had no idea why I was so miserable inside.

I knew the Lord, and I was on fire to learn all I could about him, but it seemed like regardless of the head knowledge I was acquiring, I remained tormented inside and felt as though I was living in a vacuum.

One day Bobby finally asked me,

"Joyce, how long are you going to be like this?"

I didn't have to ask him what he was talking about. I simply shrugged and answered, "I don't know."

I was living in a state of anguish. I didn't know why, but I needed to know. I wasn't being a good mother to my boys, a good wife to my husband or a good follower of Jesus.

I began to seriously ponder my life, and I finally realized

part of what was going on. I was still suffering terrible grief over two prior miscarriages, and I had unrelenting shame and guilt built up inside that had been festering for almost twenty years over things in my past.

I had lived a very wild life before I was married. I was drinking and doing drugs at age fifteen. When I went away to college, I started sleeping with guys. I found myself pregnant and alone at age twenty-five. I really didn't know what to do; I just knew I needed to be 'un-pregnant', so I ended up in an abortion clinic one morning, ending my baby's life. I knew in my head that was the wrong thing to do, but I wasn't thinking clearly. Drugs, alcohol, and a constant stream of men in my life had really taken their toll on my emotional and mental state. I made many wrong decisions during this season of my life, but the abortion seemed to be the one thing that I could never forgive myself for.

It constantly ate at my spirit and my mind, although I would never discuss it with anyone. It was my secret sin that ate away a bit more of my soul each and every day.

I realized I needed help and that I wasn't going to be able to pretend this away, and I confessed to a good friend that I was still suffering extreme grief from my past miscarriages, although at that point, I still wasn't ready to share my abortion story with her.

My friend suggested we meet for prayer, and we simply asked God to reveal to me what was holding me back from having true peace and joy in my life.

What was the band-aid on my emotions covering up?

The last thing I really wanted to do was sit down with someone and spill my guts, but I was desperate for help, and when we are desperate, we do uncomfortable things. But because I stepped out of my comfort zone, I was able

to experience God's healing power in my life, true healing not the pretend 'I'm fine' variety that I was so used to portraying.

You see, I had confessed my sins to Jesus when I accepted him as my Savior, and I knew he forgave me. But I was so filled with guilt and shame over my past that I had never forgiven *myself*; I had never allowed God's forgiveness to penetrate my heart, never allowed the healing process to begin.

But that night during prayer time, the disgusting band-aid of self-condemnation that I had let cover me for so long was finally ripped off. I felt as if a great weight was lifted from me! Chains were broken. I was set free!

I went home that night, opened my Bible and came upon a verse that says, "Come near to God and He will come near to you." (James 4:8)

I knew that was true; as I came nearer, God would be there for me.

This was the beginning of my quest for truth within. It's been an interesting journey, though admittedly, a painful one. It hurts to dig out those BBs, and just when I thought they were all out, another one would begin to surface.

But what I've learned through the process is this: We must root out the lies; we must let Jesus heal our hurts, if we are to live happy, healthy lives for him.

Jesus did not die on that cross for us to limp through this life, to be defeated and discouraged and hopeless, to throw ourselves off bridges or overdose on drugs or hide behind the façade of "I'm fine." No, he came so that we might have life and live it to abundance. His Word tells us:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I

have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”  
(John 10:10)

My prayer for you is that as you read through this story, you will examine your own life and start asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the root of your issues, to show you if there are lies distorting your vision or BBs stuck inside you, hindering your healing.

And once those lies are revealed, I pray the Holy Spirit helps you to understand how to replace them with God's truth so that you can live a healthy, whole, productive life for him.

Some of these stories are painful to share. But I've found through my journey that if I share my experiences, I always find others going through similar challenges. And when these people hear that someone else is as messed up or more messed up than they are, well, somehow that just helps.

It helps us to see how the enemy can use innocent statements to distort our thinking and play with our emotions. And how, by placing truth in front of those lies, they immediately vanish.

Someone once asked me how these results could happen so quickly. I know it sounds too good to be true, but think about this scenario:

Suppose you are taking a walk and up ahead you see a snake on the path. Your heart would probably start beating rather quickly. I know I would be shaking. But as you get closer, you realize that the snake is really just a branch that blew off a nearby tree; it cannot harm you. Immediately, the fear of the snake vanishes. Your belief that a snake was lying in your path was based on faulty understanding, and when the truth is revealed, the fear is immediately dispelled.

The same concept applies to the lies inside us—when they are replaced with truth, the veil of deception is lifted, the BBs are removed, and healing can begin.

Yes...there *is* hope for us. And his name is Jesus!



The happiness which brings enduring worth to life is not the superficial happiness that is dependent on circumstances. It is the happiness and contentment that fills the soul even in the midst of the most distressing circumstances and the most bitter environment. It is the kind of happiness that grins when things go wrong and smiles through the tears. The happiness for which our souls ache is one undisturbed by success or failure, one which will root deeply inside us and give inward relaxation, peace, and contentment, no matter what the surface problems may be. That kind of happiness stands in need of no outward stimulus.

—Billy Graham<sup>1</sup>