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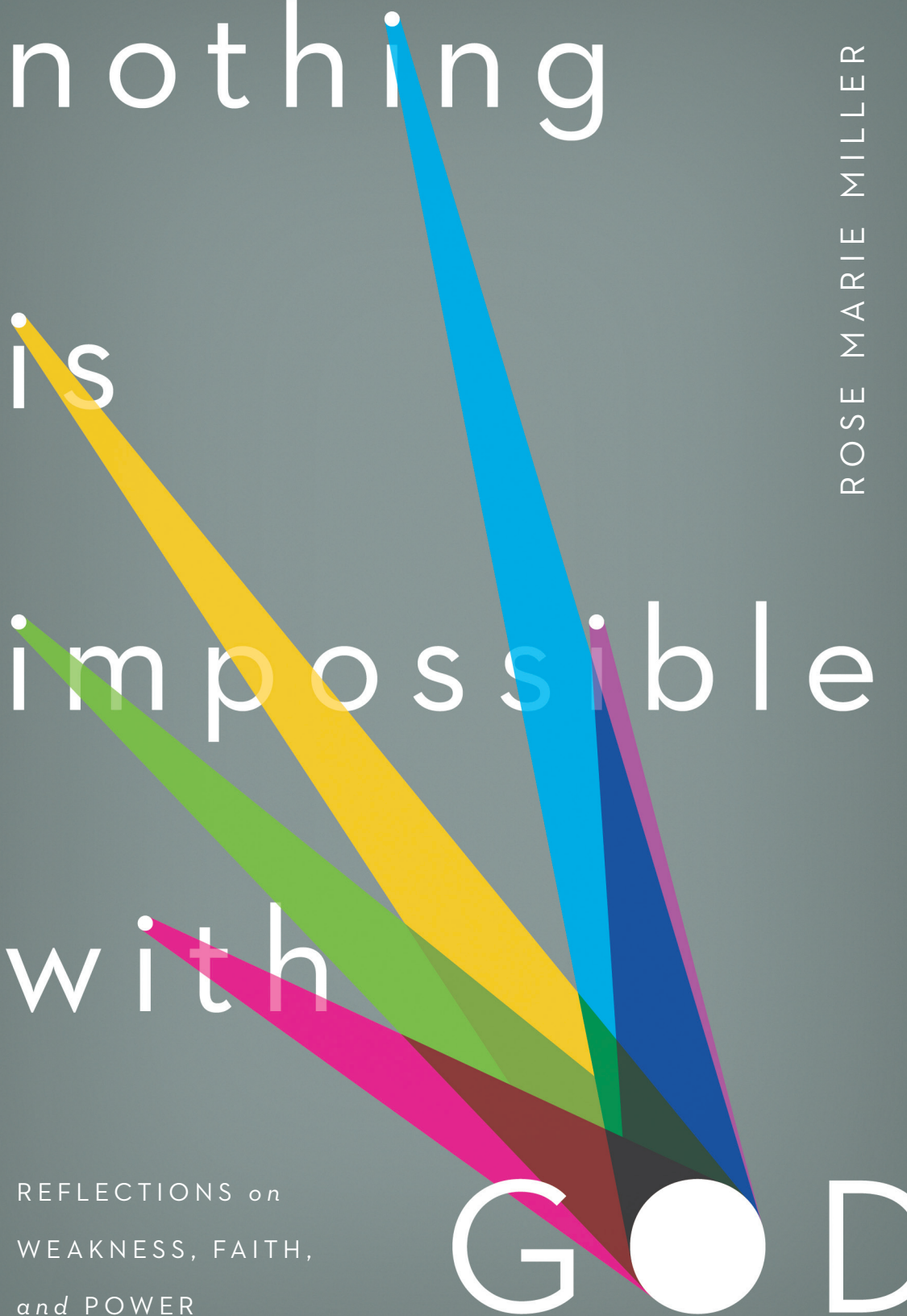
impossible

with

REFLECTIONS *on*  
WEAKNESS, FAITH,  
*and* POWER

G O D

ROSE MARIE MILLER



# Nothing Is Impossible with God

REFLECTIONS ON WEAKNESS,  
FAITH, AND POWER

Rose Marie Miller



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## FOREWORD

**M**y mom has written a great book on her life's journey since Dad's homegoing in 1996. But the best book is the one I get to watch every day—her life. Paul tells the Corinthians, “You show that you are a letter from Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:3). I love to tell people, “How many 87-year-old women work almost full time as missionaries to Hindus in London?” When she is in London—when weddings or births or visa problems aren't pulling her home—she is regularly serving and meeting with Asian woman. She just loves it.

But it gets better. Mom is not just working in London; she communicates regularly with her family of five children, twenty-four grandchildren, and twenty great-grandchildren. Just getting birthday presents for that horde is a full-time job in itself.

And better. She reads voraciously. She introduced me to the genre of British Indian fiction some years ago. I didn't even know what the Man Booker Prize was until Mom said to me, “Paul, you need to read *Brick Lane*; it was just short-listed for the Man Booker Prize.” The what? How many middle-aged sons are kept on the cutting edge of culture by their moms?

And still better. Mom has cultivated about a dozen, maybe even a couple of dozen friendships with women who share their lives with her and she with them. One of those friends, Sandy Elder, said this about Mom, “My friend Shirley and I often say, no matter the age difference—in our case thirty years—she is our peer. What we mean by that is that whatever we confess to her that we are struggling with, she has this amazing way of responding, ‘Oh ladies, believe me, I struggle with the same thing in my heart too, so please pray for me as I pray for you.’ And we know she does. She is also one of the few women I know who has made the Holy Spirit real and accessible through her testimonies and teaching; it is, I suppose, because she really does rely on Christ through the Spirit.”

And for those of you who are familiar with the Sonship course, Mom is constantly rediscovering the gospel. She will battle out of a fog into the clear air of the love of God for her. Her spirits will lift when something from the Word feeds her soul. Another friend, Sandy Smallman, said this about Mom, “I am always challenged and blessed by Rose Marie’s ‘restless’ Christian heart—restless in a good way. She is never willing to simply be a status quo Christian, one who is happy with some blessings here and there. She demands more. She wants more of God, more participation in his ministry, more of his peace and joy. She frequently asks me to pray that she would not depart from a simple and pure devotion to Christ. She says that so often that it has become something like a mantra to me. She often adds that she prays that for me as well.”

Mom has sown a life immersed in the Word, and she is reaping a harvest of faith. All our lives have trajectories; all of us are in a continuing process of reaping and sowing. Old age, though, is heavily weighted toward the reaping side of life. It is the time

in life when, to quote Jesus, “hidden things are revealed.” If I had to summarize Mom’s life I would say, “In the battle of life, she immersed herself in the Word and community, which in turn fed her faith and empowered her love.” Easy to say. Wicked hard to do. She often tells me the back story of what is going on in her life. Mom’s life now is characterized by ongoing forgiveness, surrendering her will, waiting on God, fighting discouragement, and just everyday, ordinary stuff.

Mom’s example has impacted my wife Jill’s assessment of my retirement: Jill informed me that it wasn’t going to happen! It was a no-brainer for Jill. She compared Mom’s life with the lives of Christians who slowed down and drifted into low-level narcissism, and she didn’t want any part of it. The life of a pilgrim is far too attractive. Proverbs captures it best, “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day” (Proverbs 4:18).

So why tell you all this? Someone once said that the secret to reading John Piper’s books was to hear him preaching the book as you read them. Then it would come alive. Well the secret to reading Rose Marie’s book is to see her living what she is saying. So when she encourages you to believe (since this book is all about faith), remember this is a believing woman. When she encourages you to pray, remember this is a praying woman. So enjoy the book. Learn from the book. (It will feed your faith.) Enjoy watching Mom reap. Enjoy the trajectory of her life. Just remember that the real book is working in London with Hindu women.

Paul E. Miller

[www.APrayingLife.com](http://www.APrayingLife.com)



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**F**our years ago, I began thinking about writing a book comprised of talks, meditations, lectures, and reflections on how God has been with me on the journey of life. I asked seven women to pray for this undertaking. Thank you Andi, Diane, Betsy, Carolyn, Sandy, Holly, and Jan. You prayed, bore my burdens, and believed that God had taught me lessons that should be shared.

To my daughter Barbara and son-in-law Angelo, who faithfully cared for my sister so that I could be in London. The burdens were heavy and you bore them with enduring love. Thank you from my heart.

To Sue Lutz, my editor. Who else could take all the material I gave you and shape it into a readable book! Thank you for believing that what God taught—and you helped reshape—would be an encouragement to God's people.

To Jan Powers, my assistant. What would I have done without your careful eye for detail, your expertise on the computer, and your heart for this endeavor even in the last week of your mother's life? You sat by her bedside and still faithfully gave of your time to meet a deadline.



To Bob Osborne, director of World Harvest Mission, and the Sending Center team, who prayed, encouraged, and believed that I could be effective in London at age 86 and even write a book that would encourage others.

To my Indian friends in Southall, who have been my teachers, helping me to make great truths simple, understandable, and applicable. You are a reminder that, in the hardships of life, Jesus is the only answer. You invited me into your life, calling me Mum and Grandmum.

To my beloved family: Roseann, Ruth, Paul, Barbara, and Keren and their spouses, twenty-four grandchildren, seventeen great-grandchildren and counting! I treasure you though I do not see you as much as I would like. You are kingdom builders. I know you pray.

To my “special needs” granddaughter, Kimberly Rose Marie Miller, who prays for me every day. Thank you, Kim. I still need your prayers.

Last but not least, thanks to the hundreds of people who faithfully prayed, encouraged, and gave. You did so from your hearts.

Rose Marie Miller, July 4, 2011

To my sister Barbara. We miss her joy in simple things and her faithful prayers.



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## PROLOGUE

# A Garden Locked Up

Nothing is impossible with God. I had always heard this, but for a long time it didn't seem to be true for me. For much of my life I kept God at a distance, building walls of self-protection and self-reliance. I said I was a Christian but my life said, "I can manage without God." When crises came, the walls went higher.

But there came a day when building walls did not work and I was left with, "I don't believe God exists, or if he does exist, he is a dark cloud over my life—a cloud of fear, guilt, condemnation, and loneliness." Into this dark cloud God spoke, not with an audible voice, but with life-giving words.

God, for whom nothing really is impossible—not even changing a self-righteous, independent, desperately-trying-to-keep-it-all-together pastor's wife—gave me himself.

In the early 1970s, my husband, Jack, a pastor and seminary professor, was asked to teach on discipleship to a group of people who wanted to know how "it" worked. The site for the lecture was an auditorium about an hour's drive from our home. Feeling a sense of duty toward Jack, and since we had a guest staying with us, I went along reluctantly. Normally, the drive through

rural Bucks County was beautiful, so I looked forward to that. But the trip was spoiled for me not only because of my attitude but because the person driving with us did nothing but talk about himself. By the time we arrived, I was seriously annoyed. I was not ready for God to teach me anything.

The building was old, typical for the area, with tiers of white painted cement benches. I decided to sit near the top, away from most of the people. I had already decided that I wouldn't learn anything useful anyway, and I wanted to be alone.

In that moment of discontent, these words quietly and gently came to my mind: "A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a rock garden locked, a spring sealed up" (Song of Solomon 4:12 NASB). My first thought was, "Where did that come from?" Looking in my Bible's concordance I found the verse in the Song of Solomon.

My mind was captured by the thought of a garden locked up. I thought back through my life to all the times I had felt that way—locked up. My parents were immigrants from Germany. Learning to live in a foreign land where everything was different, losing hard-earned money in the Depression, and dealing with the challenges of raising my mentally challenged sister had left my mother bitter. Over time, the burdens overwhelmed her, and in desperation she tried to take her own life. One day when I was about thirteen years old, I was alone in the house with my mother when I smelled gas. I ran into the kitchen and saw her head in the oven. With fear gripping my heart, I turned off the gas, pulled her away from the stove, and opened all the windows. My voice shook with tears as I called my dad at his garage in San Francisco and told him to come home.

From that day on, my dad and I never talked about what had happened, but it was our unspoken pact that we would do whatever we had to do to keep my mother in the home and keep

her from taking her life. The fact that I couldn't talk about what was happening locked up my emotions. I knew something was seriously wrong but did not know how to express my feelings. I decided to write my mother a note, which I left on the kitchen table. Strangely, I do not remember what I wrote. My mother showed it to my father who sternly asked me why I had written it. I lied and said, "I was trying out my pencil. I didn't mean what I wrote." My father was angry and my mother was hurt. It was many years before I again risked expressing my feelings. Soon my mother showed classic signs of schizophrenia. Again, this was not something my dad and I talked about. Not knowing how to deal with the shame of the situation, I insulated myself from my emotions reasoning that what I didn't feel wouldn't hurt me.

These were the memories that flooded my mind as I continued to read from the Song of Solomon that day in Bucks County. "Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, henna with nard plants, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, along with all the finest spices" (Song of Solomon 4:13–14 NASB).

I wondered if Solomon's words described me. Was I a locked garden full of spices and choice fruits? Could I be, in reality, "a garden spring, a well of fresh water" (4:15 NASB)? Everything this garden needed to flourish was provided. Was God giving me a picture of my life? It didn't seem possible.

Only a handful of times have I known for certain that God was speaking into the core of my heart. This was one of them. I sat on that bench, a dissatisfied, self-righteous failure—so many painful emotions locked up inside me. I knew that God was unlocking the gate, so to speak, to show me a whole new picture of myself. Where I saw rotten fruit and weeds, he saw fruit and



spices. Where I saw mud and sludge; he saw a fountain, a well of fresh water, and flowing streams.

Quiet joy began to make its way into my soul. Yes, the winds would blow, but the spices would also flow. “Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden, let its spices flow” (4:16 ESV). From my place of discouragement, I was about to learn that nothing is impossible with God.

For the spices to flow out of the garden, the north wind had to blow. And blow it did in the years that followed, to the point where I often lost sight of the plan and purpose of God. But then the gentle south wind would come, giving me courage to continue after the storms.

The passage ends with, “May my beloved come into his garden and eat its choice fruits!” (4:16 NASB). There would be many times in the years ahead when I would resist God’s advances, but when he would finally come in—as he always would—the fruit would ripen, the spices mature, and the water run clean.

What God began to teach me that day was that he had a heart for me. He knew me in a way I did not know myself. He saw me in a way I did not see myself. There was a lot more beauty and hope in his perspective than in mine.

This book tells how God nurtured me and matured me in the years that followed—how he did the impossible in me. It’s a collection of personal meditations, journal entries, talks, and Bible studies that I have written over the years. Together they illustrate what my Beloved Jesus has done in my heart and life. When God began to unlock the garden of my heart, he invited me to join in his mission to make this broken world an inheritance for his Son. His assignments haven’t been easy, but I love and trust my Gardener and I am filled with joy to partner with him. He truly is the God of the impossible.

Perhaps like me, you know many true things about God but don't really know him or taste the fruit of the garden he has planted in your heart. I invite you to let the Lord unlock your heart too. May the things God has taught me flow into your life and encourage you to let the Consummate Gardener come and do the impossible in you.



# Rediscovering the Gospel



When God met me in the last row of that small auditorium, I did not realize the implications of the “north wind” blowing. I just knew that God understood me. But God knew that I needed the truth of who he is to become the center of my life. He is the God for whom nothing is impossible—I needed to know this. At the time, my life was centered on self: what I could and could not do. I was focused on my own kingdom building. I did not understand that it is all about God and his kingdom. In the years that followed, God dismantled my strength. He patiently tore down walls of approval seeking, blame shifting, demanding peace on my terms, and retreating from conflict. He enlarged my heart to believe and trust in his plan, not only for my life and family, but also for his bigger purpose of displaying his glory among the nations.

In the early 1970s, the Spirit was already working in Jack’s life. He was gripped in a powerful way by his own sin and the power

of the gospel to renew him daily. This led to a decision in 1973 to plant New Life Presbyterian Church. Six years later, it led to a ministry trip to Uganda. We had been invited there by a church leader who had fled the country during Idi Amin's reign and had worshiped at New Life. Once he returned home, he asked us to come to help restore the church and the country.

The Lord blessed the trip in powerful and exciting ways. When we returned to the United States with the good news of what God was doing, many young people wanted to return with us. But Jack realized that a zeal for mission would only go so far. He told those who were eager to go with him, "You will encounter depravity in others and in yourself. The only cure is the power of the gospel. It must grip your heart."

Jack began to teach these individuals what they would need spiritually for such a task. The emphasis was on living as sons and daughters of God, rather than as orphans. As our son, Paul, listened to the talks, he developed them into a series we later called "Sonship." A discipling and mentoring course was born.

What you are about to read are the three talks I typically gave in the Sonship course in its early years. I gave my testimony, talked about forgiveness as a lifestyle, and shared the importance of a clean conscience before God. I include them to introduce you to what I learned during those years, which laid the foundation for everything that has happened since.

No one ever arrives at a place where old sin patterns do not return, but what Sonship emphasizes is that growth in grace is possible when sin is acknowledged, confessed, and by grace, forsaken. As I have discovered, it is a beginning that God uses to send us out into the world with the purpose of exalting him among the nations. I hope these talks will encourage you to let the Consummate Gardener continue his work in your own heart.