

Love Life

Taking the leap to
unlock a life of
thriving.

an eBook by
Kathryn C. Lang

Love Life

Simple ideas to give us the courage to leap into a life of thriving

An eBook by

Kathryn C. Lang

Love Life

Copyright © 2014 Kathryn C. Lang

Copyright Licensed to Peculiar Productions, www.pecuproductions.com



All rights reserved.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other – except in the case of partial quotes for review purposes - without receiving the PRIOR written permission from the copyright owner.

Cover images have been adapted by Kathryn C. Lang from stock images

Logo image developed by Lewis Screen Printing & Monogramming for the exclusive use of Kathryn C. Lang.

All Scripture references are paraphrased in the words of the author unless otherwise noted.

WHY LIVING – LOVE LIFE

It may not always feel like hope is holding me up, but when I take a moment and look around then I can see that hope was not only holding me up all the time but was also creating a way for me to get through.

We survived the tornados in 2011, and despite the damage that occurred to our house, we came through the other side more focused and more blessed than before. We learned together as a family. We grew together as a family. We made investments in our lives together – as a family. Hope helped us each step of the way.

In March of 2012, my mom died. We each found our own corner to console our hearts, but eventually we made our way back together – as a family. Hope took root and we found a way to praise even in the midst of the storm.

In April of 2012, my father in law suffered serious health issues that included near kidney failure. The look on the doctor's face told me everything I needed to know. I struggled to stand strong because I knew that my family had suffered and might not be ready for another blow.

We came together –as a family –and we prayed. We shared. We cared for my father-in-law (and we still are). One day at a time he got better and he is still with us today.

We are together – and together makes the difference.

Being together is one of the reasons I walk through each day. I share these words with you because I know that together we are stronger. I write the books and present the talks because I know that my efforts not only invest in you but the resulting income invests in my family.

WHY LIVING – LOVE LIFE – ONE

Vision

I think it surprised me the first time I realized that many people have no idea why they are doing what they are doing. Some have just missed their “because,” but others have given up on defining the purpose behind life – they are just surviving.

We are not made to survive this journey. We are designed to thrive in this journey, and learning to walk out “why living” is the first step in making that thrive journey a reality.

“Why Living” happens when I discover a few things:

1. I learn to love my journey.
2. I discover how to live now.
3. I develop the ability to share joy.
4. I grow up a security system.
5. I set out guidelines to keep me in my “why.”

Without purpose – driven by something more than just basic instinct – it all becomes a challenge. Even getting up most days will be difficult because life has become more of a “why bother” situation than a journey flowing out of “why living.”

“Why Living” does not guarantee a smooth journey, but it does help to unlock that hope when the storms show up.

I have been “Why Living” for many years now – and each year I grow up even more understanding and boldness through this journey. “Why Living” gives me the power to say yes and to step out, but it also gives me the strength to say no. “Why Living” gives me focus and determination, but it also helps me recognize my mistakes or miss-steps. More than anything else, “Why Living” has grown me up to a place where I am loving life, even when I may not like all that is going on around me.

- I have a vision of hope driven by my why.
- I speak words of possibility.
- I seek out ways (and the people) that will help me thrive in my why.
- I choose to live out my purposeful passion.
- I release the things, the situations, and the people that create distress or dejection.

I know that each time I invest in my “Why Living” then I can love the journey. I may not like the journey of the moment, but I find a way to smile, to sing, to dance, or to praise – not because of the moment but because of the hope that has become a part of my life and my journey because of my determination for “Why Living.”

I love my life not because it is perfect but because I know why I am here and I know that if I choose to take action in that why then I will reach my destination. That alone is enough to give me hope despite the pain and the struggles and the difficulties that are throw in my path – and sometimes even because of them.

I love my life not because I have reached the pinnacle of my journey but because I know that I will. I have seen the path that determination and persistence will clear – every single time they are put into play – and so I love that I can walk that path.

I love my life because it is my life to walk out and to grow up and to nurture into all it can possibly be.

I think that I have always had a piece of my possibility living in my heart – from the earliest memory. I am only now beginning to understand the more complete image that comes from my “Why Living,” but even having just a piece has made it possible for me to be a little more bold and a little more courageous when it came to stepping out or even for saying no.

I love my life – but just like loving others is a choice, so is loving my life. I have to make the choice that no matter what comes up I will embrace and love this journey because it is mine.

It all starts with the vision:

1. I learn to see beyond the limits.
2. I break through the expectations.
3. I recognize the mirages and the delusions.
4. I invest in learning.
5. I dare to believe.

The key is to understand that this vision is MY vision. It is not about what you say or what you do. It is not about my parents or my grandparents. It is not even about my current situation.

I create the vision and then I pursue the vision. THAT is how I get to a place of loving life.

First I have to see beyond the limits, because there are always limits. My limits may be monetary, or situational, or even educational, but they are just things and things can be overcome if I am determined to overcome them – or sometimes to just ignore them.

I live in a rural community and we chose to move into a location back in the woods. I was limited to what I could do with my online journey because all we could get was dial up internet service. That is what THEY told me.

For a long time, I used the library internet and a local store's internet (with permission from the store) to do my heavy work. I found a way around the limits.

Then I did some research on my own and I discovered there was another way.

For every limit, there is a way, if I am willing to see beyond the limit.

Second, I have to break through the expectations – those that I have placed on myself and those that have been placed on me. I come from a medical family. My grandfather was a general practitioner, my uncle was an orthodontist, and my other uncle is an orthopedic surgeon. Three of my aunts were nurses, two cousins were nurses, my dad was a radiology tech, and now my brother is a radiologist.

You can imagine the THRILL they had when I said I wanted to be an artist.

They expected more from me and it has taken me years to get beyond the expectations that they had set before me.

Third, I have to recognize that much of the issues are mirages and delusions – some of my own making and many of the world's designs. I may not have the money in the bank to do that, but the money is somewhere. I just have to find it. A lack of money is a delusion and not a reality. I may not have the schedule to do it, but I can adjust my schedule (even if a little at a time) to make it happen. A lack of time is a delusion.

Things are rarely as they seem and when I see past the shimmering mirage then I can begin to clearly envision my possibility.

Fourth, I have to invest in my learning. The only way I grow into more than I am is to be feeding my mind more than I have there now. The great news is that I can invest with books, with online courses, or just by attending groups that are available in my area.

Fifth, I have to dare to believe. Belief is the most powerful weapon you will ever possess. Henry Ford was quoted as saying “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t – you are right.” He was saying that what you believe will drive your reality.

Two brothers believed they could fly . . . not only did they fly, but we can all fly now because of that belief.

What you can believe in your heart – to the point that nobody and nothing can take away that belief – well that kind of believe will grow up into a reality for your life.

My journey into loving life begins with a vision of that life. I have to see it, I have to believe it, and then I can live it.

I love my life now, but because things are perfect, or easy, or even smooth, but because I know what is possible. I see my possibility in my heart. I have a vision of my “Why Living” that is so strong nothing can shake it from me.

I love my life because of what I see my life becoming – that is the vision that keeps me going forward in this journey.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LOVING LIFE - VISION

The best part about my journey is that I am not in it alone. Just like I mentioned how we got through the literal storms and the emotional storms as a family, I have someone with me at all times that helps me get through this world journey.

Sometimes it is my physical family that gets me through. Sometimes it is my friends or church family that gets me through. Always my Heavenly Father is there to help me through if I am willing to turn to Him.

God created us to be in relationship with Him. I was crafted and sculpted by the Creator with the SPECIFIC plan of being IN relationship with HIM. Genesis 1:26 says – and this is God speaking – “let us make man after your image.” And since God is love – so you and I are made in the image of love.

I am designed to be love – to look like love, and act like love, and speak like love. And I – we – are designed to be in relationship with love.

Because of HIS design. Not because of what I am doing or what I want to do – but because of HIS design.

Ezekiel 34:11-16 shows God’s desire for relationship with me. God is speaking through Ezekiel (this comes from the NIV translation) “I myself will search for my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them.” He goes on in the Scripture to say “I myself will tend to

my sheep. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. I will shepherd the flock with justice.”

See – God desires, seeks out, PURSUES even – a relationship with me. He will look after me. God will rescue me. God will bring me into a promised land. God will tend me. God will search for me and heal me. God will provide for me.

God desires a relationship with me so much that he is investing heavily in the relationships. GOD is working on the relationship. God is actively making the way.

Until I can wrap my head around this, I will struggle in developing the relationship.

Once I recognize and understand, then I have the key to being bold in my journey to loving my life.

My “Why Living” is fundamentally rooted in my relationships – first with God and then with others. That is why I have to recognize that it is a PURPOSEFUL passion and not just things that make me happy. It is about doing and being for others and doing and being through God.

WHY LIVING – LOVE LIFE – TWO

Words

Belief is a powerful motivation – it can drive a boy with ADD to be the winningest swimmer in history because a mother made him believe he could – or it can drive a boy with ADD to quit on life and take a menial job because he was told he was too stupid to do anything else. The circumstances can be similar, but the belief will make the difference.

I have learned from experience that if I believe something then it will happen – in part because my belief drives me to look for it happening.

But how does that belief get there in the first place? How do I grow up my thoughts so much that they begin to drive my actions and produce a vision of possibility?

In a nut shell – the answer is repetition. If you say it often enough and you continue to repeat that thought then it will become your reality. With the repetition of determined persistence, it goes from being mere words to a full blown belief.

If I want to grow up possibility in my life and for my life then I have to actively invest in possibility thinking, possibility hearing, and possibility speaking – with a bold persistence that creates a way for my possibility to become my reality.

I have been into this possibility mindset for much of my life. I can remember a trip to Florida that ended up with me lying on my car waiting for the mechanic to fix a busted radiator – and I was thinking that it gave me time to sunbath and to read. That’s possibility thinking.

I started being more aware of the words I was speaking to my children as I continued to grow up in this understanding of the power of possibility. I had fallen into a habit of calling my son a “silly goose.” Now I know he is not a goose, and I know that he realizes he is not a goose, so I know my words have no chance of effecting that – but my dismissal of him with that phrase could have had an impact.

When he started acting silly because “he was a silly goose” then I knew it was time to change the words that I was planting in his heart and mind.

I have also become more aware of the words I speak over my own life – in part because I now recognize that my son is watching. If I make a mistake, I had fallen into the habit of calling myself stupid or some other wonderful descriptive term. I am working to break that habit by just saying oops – or footdiggers (which is a word I invented when I was in secondary school – I think when I was passing notes with my best friend, Mandy, that were filled with random thoughts and gibberish that we pretended meant something to confuse those that were reading over our shoulders – but that is definitely a different story about the power of words that maybe I will share one day).

The point is that I am using my words to build up because I not only want to see possibility in my life but in the lives of my sons as well.

I have to be intentional with my words – the ones I speak, the ones I hear, and especially with the ones I share.

I grow up words of possibility for my life when I make specific choices for those words.

1. I meditate on the person I want to be and the person I envision becoming. I repeat the vision over and over for thirty minutes each day until it becomes my natural way of thinking.
2. I need to read and write out my purpose directive that is specific and tangible for my journey and for the goals that I have set – and I need to do this at least once in the morning and once in the evening until it becomes ingrained in my thoughts.
3. I have to make a practice of looking for the possibilities. They may be small or they may be big, but they are always there if I am willing to look.
4. I must invest in sharing my moments of hope. When I share my hope it grows and spreads PLUS it keeps those moments fresh in my mind.

And remember it is the things I think about that I will begin to believe.

5. It is essential that I turn away from the negatives even when those negatives may come in the form of a cool television show (that everyone else is watching), a popular video game (that everyone else is playing), or a news broadcast. Nothing is more important than creating the space for words of possibility by letting go of the negative.

The words that dominate my mind build up the beliefs that dominate my life.

If I want to live bold in possibility then I must actively engage in words of possibility.

Belief is the most powerful thing a mind can possess. Belief made it possible to fly. Belief made it possible to walk on the moon. Belief made it possible for a man to walk on water.

Belief also sank that same man. Peter looked around – WHILE HE WAS WALKING ON WATER – and he believed more in the power and destruction of the waves than the reality of his own walking on water experience.

How often I do that too. I am bold in my journey. I am clipping along at a good pace doing what needs to be done and then I encounter waves and storms and instead of continuing to walk on the water, I begin to sink.

I believe in the waves more than my bold journey.

It is up to me to change that belief. I have to create a vision of my possibility – of my water walking potential – that is so strong and so real that even the waves can't penetrate it.

1. I meditate on the person I know I will be. Meditation tunes out everything else and focuses on that one moment. I have been making a habit of spending thirty minutes a day stretching on the porch and repeating out loud that vision of my potential.

I wrote out my why statement – the why that I am here – and then I envisioned the person I would be when I reached that place of “Why Living” and I wrote that out as well.

My meditation time is about seeing that person (that I want to be) and to keep envisioning that person until that person that I know I am becoming becomes the expectation. That is how I turn words of possibility into the power of belief.

2. I need to repeat my definite purpose. This is a time specific goal that encompasses my why statement and leads me down the path of “Why Living.” It includes where I want to be, what I want to see happen, and what I am willing to do to make that become my reality.

Repeating the words – written and spoken – engrave them onto my thoughts. I begin to think the definite purpose without having to think about it. When my thoughts begin to naturally lean towards my definite purpose then I begin to act in the direction of those thoughts without having to be intentional – it becomes the natural response.

3. I have to look for possibilities if I want to see possibilities. It is the things that I am trying to see that I will see.

I have a friend that can find a four leaf clover in every clover patch she comes across. She started finding them when she was younger and often proclaims how she expects to find a four leaf clover every time she looks.

Her expectations have helped lead her to that reality. Sometimes she finds them right when she looks down, while other times it takes a little bit of searching. The thing is that she keeps searching until she finds her clover and therefore she finds them every single time.

Possibility seeing works the same way. The possibilities are there – in every circumstance or situation that might come up. Sometimes they are there right when I look, but sometimes it takes a little more time and effort to find the possibility. The most important thing is that I don't give up looking.

If I make seeing possibilities the natural way I look at things then I will see possibilities when I look.

4. I must share my moments of hope. Hope will wither away if it is hidden away. It needs to be exposed in order to grow up into all of its potential.

My sons were recently involved in an auto accident as passengers in the car. When people ask about the wreck, I talk about how blessed they all were and how they were being watched over. The first person to stop at the scene was a nurse, who helped them get calm and stabilized until the first responders arrived.

It was a rural road with little traffic, and yet the first car held a nurse who willingly invested in helping.

That is possibility focus – and that is also a HUGE reason to praise. So that is what I share.

When I share my possibility experiences and my hope encounters, then I give them room to grow and flourish. I also keep them fresh in my mind. AND I train my eyes and my heart to be looking for more possibilities and hope in the future.

5. I MUST turn away from the negatives. Nothing does more to defeat the possibilities than the negatives, and the amazing thing is that the negative can be a small thing and will still sink the big thing. Peter was the greatest example ever.

I have an image of Peter walking on water to Jesus and a little wave lapping over his foot catching his attention – and that was all that was necessary. Once his attention was captured and he turned his focus to the waves, he went down.

I know when a show or an activity is a negative influence – sometimes instinctively, sometimes because of the thoughts that go through my mind after encountering it, and sometimes because my kids point it out (although I HATE when it comes to me from that place). Sometimes I want to do it despite the negatives I know it feeds. I need moments like this to push me to walk away – and once I walk away the desire to continue in that negative begins to fade.

Negatives will limit the possibilities – so let them go.

The words that I invest in during my today will be the very beliefs that I have in my tomorrow. If I want to grow up possibilities then I have to be invested in positive words.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LOVING LIFE - WORDS

“Your words have power.” If I heard that once growing up, I heard it a thousand times. My dad was constantly reminding me of the power of words for my life but also for the effect they would have on the others I encountered.

When I started investing in my own learning – about words and about positive thinking – I saw the true power that resides in words. When I had children, I began to see the effects of words in their lives and that really put me on notice.

Because the nursery rhyme says that “words will never hurt,” many of us have grown up with the understanding that we should be able to shake off words. When you understand that words are the very building blocks of ALL life then you can start to grasp the value that ever word spoken has in the life that it encounters.

Hebrews 11 has often been referred to as the faith chapter in the New Testament. It provides a roll call of faith. But the very first name on that faith roll call is God Himself. It says that through faith the world was framed – that means that all creation came from – the word of God.

Words created all that we are and all that we will ever be. They may be small and the enemy and the world may have tried to pass them off as insignificant – but they are powerful tools for creation.

Words can also kill – LITERALLY.

In Mark 11 (and in Matthew 21), Jesus encounters a fig tree. He is hungry and reaches out to get some fruit – only there is no fruit on the tree. Jesus curses the tree. The next day they were walking by that same tree and the disciples noticed the tree has withered and died.

Jesus pronounced a judgement on the tree for not producing fruit – which serve as a HUGE life lesson for us all (since that is how it was intended) but it also is a reminder of the power of the words we speak.

The words I put into my life – and the words that I let out of my mouth – determine my journey. I have to be aware and I have to guard my heart and mind (by protecting my ears and eyes) so that the words I allow in are the words of possibility and hope.

WHY LIVING – LOVING LIFE – THREE

Thrive

I have invested many hours in surviving and it is not all that it is cracked up to be. I stay tired. I stay frustrated. And I seem to stay in a constant state of want (and sometimes a desperate state of need).

It is not a place for living – survival is more of a place of existence. I am here and nothing more.

Until I make the choice to pursue more.

Until I make the determination that enough is NOT enough – that I am done simply surviving. – I will be stuck in survival mode. I have to get to that place FIRST and once I get to that place then I am well on my way to a place of thriving.

I woke up one morning – literally and figuratively. I had wallowed around in what I now know to have been a full blown case of PLOM disease – that is P L O M for Poor Little Ole Me. I looked out the window as the sun coming over the mountain and I made the decision then and there.

Enough was enough.

I am made to thrive. I am made to live out an exceeding, abundant life. If I am designed to live in such a live then it is high time I took a step towards that.

Actually, I have been stepping out into my abundant life. I have been making purposeful choices and those purposeful choices are leading me closer and closer to where I want to be. It won't happen TO me. It can only happen by me.

As long as I continue to take the steps and I continue to make the choices then IT WILL HAPPEN.

I move into thriving one step at a time.

Step One – I have to understand what it means to thrive.

Step Two – I have to stop choosing things that I am going to dread. It is one thing not to like it or to not want to do it, but when dread becomes involved then it is time to move on.

Step Three – I have to find people that make me laugh and then I need to make spending time with them a priority. Infectious laughter will make EVERYTHING a little easier and a little better.

Step Four – I have to take responsibility for what I am doing and for where I am. Things may have happened to me that were beyond my control, but where I am standing right now is my choice.

Step Five – I have to make better choices – ESPECIALLY just after I’ve made some leaps in my journey. It is easiest to become settled just after a success.

My youngest son and I have been spending LOTS of time together this summer. I drive him to his day camps and we are in the car, all alone, for what feels like hours on some days. Did I mention that my youngest son is a talker?

Although all of those words and the random subjects can be exhausting on some days, I am learning a great deal from the encounters. My youngest son has an innocence that lets him see possibilities everywhere.

“What if I . . .”

“We could just . . .”

“I will do . . .”

He told me a few weeks ago about how he wanted to be the youngest farmer ever – and he is making a plan to make it happen. Last night, out of the blue, he asked if I liked his stories. He is a story teller, that is for certain, and I have encouraged him to write them down. Last night he came up with a series idea for kids that would include his love of mysteries and his farm.

My youngest son THRIVES in his life. He enjoys the journey. He makes the most of where he is while he is pursuing what he wants to be. It might be easy to say that he can be that way because he doesn’t have any responsibilities yet, but I think it goes much deeper than that.

I think responsibilities are the superficial reasons many of us use to not step up or to not step out.

My youngest son THRIVES because he believes in the possibilities of tomorrow no matter what comes up today. He has had some hurts and he has had a couple of hiccups – even at his young age – but he keeps looking and he keeps hoping and most importantly he keeps expecting.

For me, that is the true essences of THRIVE. I keep expecting that the desires of my heart will grow up for me and around me. I keep looking for the possibilities no matter how dark the storm. I keep hoping for the breakthrough because I KNOW the breakthrough is just around the corner.

I am pursuing my impossible dreams with the same child-like innocence of my son – with open eyes, open heart, and an open mind.

I went through a dark time several years back where I didn’t want to do anything because nothing was working out anyway. All I wanted to do was hide away in bed – and I did.

Don’t get me wrong. I had tried – EVERYTHING. The more I tried the less that I accomplished. I was running so hard up hill in the sand that I was causing a sand storm behind me, but I wasn’t going anywhere and I was leaving a hot mess behind me.

I think we all go through those times to one extent or another.

That dark time may be one of the reasons that my youngest son is such a ray of sunshine. He helped me break through the clouds. He helped me see past the mistakes I had made and pushed me to focus on the now and the possibilities it held. He helped me laugh and enjoy the moment.

All of my boys do that – they remind me that today will be a very good day as long as I choose to live it that way.

The steps I am taking to move from a place of survival into a thriving life are simple but can still challenge me.

Step one – I have to understand thrive. Thriving is not about skipping, happy-go-lucky, through the fields of life. It is about finding the focus to bloom in that field (no matter what conditions the field might impose). I thrive when I find MY WAY to grow vigorously where I am planted.

George Washington Carver was born into slavery sometime around 1864 (the exact date is not known but it was during the Civil War). He and his mother were kidnapped, and only he was recovered by the couple that had been their slave owners. The couple (who had no children) chose to raise him and his brother - now orphans – as their own. Those conditions might not scream thrive, but thrive he did.

The myth of the man teaches that he was walking along in conversation with God and asked God to tell him everything about everything, but God told him that was more than he could handle. He asked God to tell him all there was about nature. Again God told him that was more than he could handle. “Then tell me all there is to know about a peanut.” He invented over 300 peanut products and also accomplished much more at a time when circumstances could have stopped him in his tracks.

THAT is how I thrive – when I make the purposeful choice to bloom where I am planted (in this moment and in this time) and do so with a hopeful outlook and a positive focus.

Step two – let go of dread. There are days when I don’t want to do something, like make yet another meal for my family (especially when my day has been long and the refrigerator is already filled to overflow from the meals from the last few days). “Don’t want to” is something I have to choose to push past.

Dread is a sign. We were attending a church and each time we had to get ready my stomach would tie up in knots. I would feel pushed down and tired. I would look for any reason to get me out of having to go to church.

I DREADED the experience and after much prayer and an open conversation with my husband, I realized I was not alone. We were invited to a new church the day after that conversation and there are still days I “don’t want to” but I have never felt that same dread about attending since then.

Listen to that voice of dread. It is telling you something important.

Step three – find ways to laugh. There is a reason that they say laughter is healing. It changes your whole outlook. I recently had the opportunity to sit in on a conversation that was almost nothing but laughter. I came away from that experience lighter and more determined than when I went in even though I gained nothing of intellectual significance from the encounter.

You begin to thrive when you find a way to laugh – good, honest, infectious laughter.

Step four – be accountable. My journey is my journey. I can point my finger and try to place the blame on others or on things, but it won't change where I am. Blame gets me nowhere better and sometimes pushes me deeper down into the mess I am already in.

I worked for a boss that did NOT do her job. She had underlings that were supposed to line up and do her bidding – at least that is how it felt. I loved the job, but I hated the circumstances and found myself getting caught up in the griping and complaining of others. It did not move me forward in the company and it probably held me back. In the end I had to leave the position in order to break free – but I still miss the job. It was definitely one of the high lights of my working career.

Step five – make better choices. It turns out that if I want better than I have to choose better. I still wonder what difference I could have made if I had made the choice to be responsible for me in that job that I loved – and that I was well suited to do might I add. I have learned from that encounter and I try to evaluate the situation with an impartial eye and make my choices based on better and not the emotions of the moment.

I am designed to thrive – but I will stay stuck in survival mode until I begin making the choices that will launch me into my thriving life. It is up to me.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LOVING LIFE - THRIVE

I live in a beautiful location – if you want to enjoy the sounds and sights of nature or take a leisurely stroll along the creek. It was not great for working online when I decided to start working online.

I never considered moving. The inspiration of the hummingbird that knocks on my window to announce the feeder is empty, or the deer that greet me when I drive home at dusk, or the otter pups taunting the dogs, those things can't be recreated just anywhere. I knew that I could find a way around the internet issue.

I thrived in our environment with my new career direction even though the environment was not ideal for that choice. I found a way – or it is better to say that I made a way. I made choices that drove me closer because I knew that I had a purpose and I was determined to reach that purpose.

God spoke to Jeremiah in verse 29 and God said that Jeremiah was created on purpose for a purpose and that God had plans to prosper him and to give him (that is Jeremiah) hope and a future. And I know that the promise from God – that declaration over Jeremiah's life (even

though the circumstances in his life did NOT seem to reflect it) that same promise is over my life even though the circumstances may not reflect it.

God also declares a prosperous life – or a life that thrives – over the Nation of Israel in Deuteronomy 30 through the words of Moses when Moses says that God will make the Nation of Israel successful in everything they do – that they will be abundantly prosperous because God takes delight in prospering His children.

I am His children. You are His children. And if God is the same now as He was then and if He is going to be the same tomorrow then that means he takes pleasure in the prosperity of His children. He takes pleasure in bringing me to that place where I am abundantly prosperous – that place where I thrive and not merely survive.

God has so much for me than I could ever imagine, but surviving is not part of that plan. He intends for me to thrive because when I am walking out a thriving life then I am a reflection of Him to a dark and fallen world.

WHY LIVING – LOVING LIFE – FOUR Purposeful Passion

I have been in pursuit of what I am supposed to be and what I am supposed to do for most of my life. My first attempt at my direction occurred when I was only seven. I launched my first business which was a neighborhood lemonade stand. It was not just a normal lemonade stand because the other kids in the neighborhood worked for me and ran drinks to the cars that pulled up to the curb and down to the construction men building the parking deck across the street.

It was a very hot year and a very good location and we did quite well. We made the local paper and somehow news of our endeavor reached well beyond our small town and my story made it on to Paul Harvey's "The Rest of the Story."

I liked running my own business, but small town Alabama in the 70's and 80's limited my prospects – or maybe it was my own imagination that limited them.

I spent many a summer working at job for a paycheck over the next few years. I could do the jobs. I even had some training for the jobs. I was just never thrilled about going to the jobs – except on payday. Payday was always a good day.

I spent a couple of summers working in positions and locations that I enjoyed. They fit with my personality, my skill set, and even with my educational background. I liked going to work most days and payday was just a bonus (an important bonus, but still a bonus).

It has only been in the last few years that I have started to hone in on what the difference was in those experiences. The times when I was enjoying the work were the times when I was working

within my purposeful passion – that place that I loved and did well and that allowed me to help and serve others at the same time.

The more I look for opportunities to work out my purposeful passion the more I can love my life and I pursue the Why Living that allows me to make the most of all that I am and all that I will be.

1. I choose work that infuses me with energy and not just stuff that I can do. I understand that there are times when an income has to be made but ALWAYS be on the watch for those opportunities that align with the energy infusing activities along the way.
2. I pursue opportunities that I enjoy because the first step in loving life is enjoying what I'm doing. I need to find activities and situations that bring me joy.
3. I need to be looking out for others – because the purposeful passion is ALWAYS about more than just me.
4. I must be flexible in my pursuit because sometimes I think I know where I am going and it turns out I'm only close to the right direction and I have to make some shifts to do better or to get to where I want to go.
5. I keep trying. The key to living out a purposeful passion is to be willing to try. Trying NEVER produces failure – it only creates an opportunity to learn and grow – and learning and growing is always a good thing.

“What would you do if you didn't have to worry about money?” It was one of the first questions someone asked me when I started really digging in to passion. I discovered when I asked others this same question most of them thought first of self.

Purposeful passion has a purpose first and foremost. It is about being a blessing and a benefit to others.

When I did my lemonade stand, although it was about making some money, I realized that it would be a benefit to others that needed something cool to drink. When I began building up Growing HOPE, I knew it would present opportunities for making a living to support my family, but I also recognized the hunger for hope and purpose and focus.

I have shifted in bits and pieces along this journey, but once I grasped hold of my purposeful passion – of helping others discover their place by digging down past the dirt and debris to uncover their unique seed and then providing that seed with the room and nourishment it needs to grow and flourish - when I locked on to that the focus allowed me to open up opportunities and change my target without getting confused or frustrated.

You have a purpose and that purpose is connected to your passion – growing up to a place where you are loving life begins by uncovering and stepping out into your purposeful passion.

I am still trying to work out all the details of my own purposeful passion. I sometimes get it right and I sometimes get it close and I sometimes miss it all together. I keep going though and the more that I go the closer that I get.

I have always enjoyed helping others and being an encouragement for others. My stint as a swim coach taught me that. I do NOT like investing in others only to be thwarted by management or rules – and my stint as a ball room dance teacher taught me that.

I started finding ways to encourage and support others through the written word several years back, and those words have allowed me to share words in presentations and speeches as well. It was after several years of word sharing that I planted the seed that becoming Growing HOPE.

It is a learning experience and a constantly changing experience, but I get more entrenched in my purposeful passion the more I go.

1. I look for work that is not just a job but a chance to enjoy my investment. I worked a job that was traditional hours and traditional job definitions. I could do the job and I did the job well. I did not stay in the job for long because – well, let's just call a spade a spade – I am not traditional when it comes to my actions and activities and focus.

I found new work opportunities that focused more on my passion even though it meant non-traditional work hours and sometimes non-traditional pay.

2. I choose activities that infuse me with energy – because I have learned that these are often in the center of my purposeful passion or at least related to that passion.

I was attending a church that wanted to get me involved in ministry, and after some conversations they offered me the chance to minister to others that were seeking to understand their own ministries. I was a ministry advisor, but I saw myself as a purpose discoverer. I took the materials they had and then added some changes in focus to help unlock unique design.

The book, Place in Purpose, was a result of that investment and that research. The church decided to take a different direction, but I know that I gave to others from what I did AND that I also received because of my efforts.

On the flip side, I was recently asked to be a part of an event that – if I stretched my vision then it could fit in my skill set but I would have to do some serious stretching. I had some time in my schedule, but I know from past experience that when I say yes to one thing then I block the ability to say yes to others.

Purposeful passion is focused on the better choices.

3. Living out my purposeful passion requires that purposeful be a key component. It is not just about me – as a matter of fact it is very little about me. I need to be looking for ways that my passions can be a blessing and benefit to others.

My time as a ministry advisor or consultant or whatever term we used was not about me (although I did find a way to put the time to work for me). It was all about being a benefit to others. I am learning that just because there is a benefit for me does not mean that it is not first and foremost about others.

When I become the most important part of the endeavor, it is time to step back and take a new look and possibly at a different direction.

4. I have to be flexible in my journey. Things change. I change. And change means that I have to allow my journey to change. My focus – my determined purpose – needs to be carved in concrete – but how that looks has to be flexible enough to sway in the winds and the storms and to also deal with the changing seasons.

I KNEW I was supposed to be focused on my written words and then I had a chance to speak – and then I had a chance to do radio – and all of a sudden I discovered that I needed to be using the spoken words.

It shook me at first, because I thought I had been missing my purpose all of that time I was doing the writing. As I began to understand that the focus element of encouraging and helping others find their place remained in take it helped me settle into the new direction.

Purposeful Passion is flexible.

5. I am the only one that can keep trying in my journey – and if I want to get there then I HAVE to keep trying.

When I discovered my direction had changed and I got caught up in concern that I had been missing the mark – I almost quit. I beat myself of for having invested all that time and energy and missed it – which means I WASTED all of that time and energy.

I didn't quit. I determined to try again and I had some success in my trying again, but I have also learned from that trying that I need to try in other directions.

When I make the better choices then I begin to walk out my purposeful passion.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LOVING LIFE – PURPOSEFUL PASSION

Making the choices for walking out my purposeful passion has required a lot of rainbow hunting for my journey. I have had to look for new ways and different ways and often ways that have left people around me shaking their head and mumbling “she’s not normal.”

For the record, I know I'm not normal. First, I enjoy my life – dare I say I LOVE my life. I sing in the grocery store. I praise God in public. I laugh – OUT LOUD. That would be more than enough to keep me under the label of “not normal.”

But, I also have the audacity to not only pursue my passion but to encourage others to discover and pursue their passion moves me up to a whole new level of “not normal.”

I am okay with being not normal because I am in VERY good company when it comes to that title.

John the Baptist wore wild clothing and hung out in the desert before he began declaring that folks needed to turn back to God and prepare.

Balaam talked to donkeys.

Moses talked to burning bushes.

David danced around in his underwear.

Jesus broke the rules of man.

Romans 12 offers a great reminder that it is okay to not be normal. In verse 2 (according to the King James translation) it says “be NOT conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and that perfect will of God.”

Paul goes on to remind us in that same chapter that we all are created unique but equal. And that all we do should be done to be a blessing and benefit to others and also to be a reflection of God to the world.

That is purposeful living rolled up in a nut shell – be your unique self and be invested in being a benefit and blessing to others while being a reflection of God to the world.

God designed me on purpose for a purpose. According to Jeremiah – God knew me before I was even formed in the womb and God created me for a purpose. He has plans for my life that include a future and a hope.

In Deuteronomy 7, Moses points out that the Nation of Israel are chosen by God to be His treasured people – and because I am a child of God then that means I am a treasured possession of God’s – and that alone will be enough to make me stand out in this world.

Jesus reminds me that I am to be a reflection of God to the world in Matthew 5. Jesus has just finished going through what has become known as the “Be Attitudes” and he goes on to explain how what I do in this world will either be a reflection of God to the world or a hiding of God from the world.

Jesus says, in verse 14 (according to the King James translation) “You are the light of the world.”

He then goes on to say in verse 16 (again from the King James translation) “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

I have a design that is unique to me and that design was crafted and created for such a time as this to be a light to the world. When I live out my purposeful passion then I AM that city on the hill that cannot be hid.

WHY LIVING – LOVING LIFE – FIVE

Release Distress

The other day I got that phone call – that phone call that every parent dreads the moment the children begin wandering out of the nest. Our older boys had been in a car wreck and we were completely in the dark as to the how and the what. All we knew for certain is that they were being taken by ambulance to the hospital.

I was content to wait until they arrived at the hospital. I knew from my own experiences with the Emergency Room that unless there were major issues then they would likely be released before we could have made the long trip.

My husband didn't care. He wanted to leave as soon as I hung up the phone. I began making arrangements to drive to the hospital. I did my best to find out some more information and finally was redirected to the ambulance service that was transporting them. That was the moment I found out that one of my sons was headed to the local hospital and the other one was being taken to a larger hospital with a better trauma unit.

If the call that informed me they had been in a wreck didn't knock me off guard, the realization that one of them was being transported to a trauma unit did.

For about sixty seconds, I couldn't breathe normally. I made a few calls and touched base with those that I know in the medical field. I secured an EMT friend to go to the local hospital to meet my oldest son and then I began the drive to see about the other son.

Those sixty seconds, I was overwhelmed with distress – that dark place that happens when I begin going through the list of what ifs. I probably would have stayed there, but I began taking the actions that I could take and with each one took, I breathed a little better.

I couldn't fix the situation – no matter how many phone calls I make or how many steps I took – I was just not in apposition to fix it. I did what I could do and once I did what I could do then I accepted my limits. Once I accepted my limits then I was in a position to release the distress that had tried to find its foothold in my moment.

Distress is not a momentary feeling or emotion. It is a prolonged dwelling in the darkness. It is a continued state of pain or calamity. Distress is ongoing.

Distress and I have never had a very good relationship – as a matter of fact there have only been a few times that distress has managed to claw its way into my life. My natural leaning towards possibility thinking helps block the distress, but being aware of distress and knowing its effects has helped guard me as well.

1. Take action – do something. When I do something – especially when I do something for someone else – then I avoid dwelling on what I can't do and also avoid getting tangled in the what ifs.
2. Take a moment – a few deep breaths, a good cry, or even a loud scream can do wonders for clearing the head and regaining focus.
3. Accept the limits – because there will be limits and accepting them makes it possible for me to invest in the things that I can do.
4. Enlist others – ask for help or support where you need it most and where you know you can't do on your own.
5. Choose to deal instead of to dwell – because dwelling on the things that can't be changed or can't be fixed instead of looking for things that can be done is a sure fire method for dragging distress into the moment.

I am not big on dwelling – which is one of the reasons that I don't deal well with distress. I dig in and deal with the moment and the emotions – MOST of the time. There are those moments when I don't have the energy or the fortitude or maybe the desire to dig in and instead I look around after a time and discover that I am covered up in distress.

I am not big on making friends with the negatives. The negatives do very little to move me forward but they will be a big factor in pulling me under distress.

Distress will not go away on its own and it RARELY goes away without a fight. Once distress has its claws into life it holds on for all its worth. I have to be invested to make a difference.

I have had some encounters with distress. There was that time that I crawled into bed and had to fight my way back out. There was that time that I had been stalked, ended up as a witness in court and it drug out for six months (and haunted me even longer).

Despite these encounters with distress – I have not allowed it to hang around for very long once I recognized it had taken root. As soon as I see distress, I go to work to dismiss it.

1. I guard against distress when I take action to do what I can do. When my mom passed away in 2012, I was warned by many – including my own dad – it would eventually hit me and I would break down.

I went right to work. My dad had to go somewhere and while he was gone I went to work clearing out my mom's clothes and the space where she had been sleeping. I knew that I wouldn't remove the reminders of her from the house, but I also knew that putting the house in order would take some stress off of my dad.

Going to work helped me to not focus on the empty place that had suddenly appeared in my heart. Helping my dad allowed me to ease his pain and that eased my pain as well. Doing for others kept hope in my life a hope makes everything easier.

2. I guard against distress and even dismiss distress when I take a moment for myself. I am the one that found my mom. My dad had just walked by her but between that time and the time I walked in the room, she had passed. I walked outside to make the phone calls I needed to make, but before anything I took a moment for myself.

That was the time that I really broke down and cried. After a moment, I closed my eyes and took a deep breathe, and had the strength to move forward.

There are still moments when her loss hits me and the tears do return, but it is brief and followed by the joy that comes from knowing that I will see her again.

3. I guard against distress when I accept the limits. I watched as one bad decision after another bad decision led the government into a place nobody wanted to go. I listened as my friends and families broke down on social media and in gatherings.

I invested some time in research and recognized that even though I didn't agree, there was little that I could do. They were going to do what they wanted to do – and although the choices might have been questionable, they were still legal – and the choices were theirs to make.

I accepted that there were limits to what I could do and the moment I accepted those limits then I was in a position to dismiss distress from being able to take hold in my life. I still wanted things to be different, and I still took actions to change things moving forward, but I let go of fixing what wasn't mind to fix in the first place.

4. I guard against distress when I enlist others to help out – or sometimes to hold me up. When I got that phone call about the boys being in the wreck and especially when I found out that they were going to separate hospitals, I asked for help – immediately and without hesitation – and I asked for specific help from specific people that I felt I could trust to help and to watch out for my children.

When I can trust the experience of the other person then I can find some peace in my limited ability. When I can trust the responses of someone else in one area then I can turn my attention to another area. Having others around me to help me out or to help me up can keep me from falling under the spell of distress.

5. I guard against distress when I make the choice to deal with something instead of dwelling in something. I am not happy with my weight. I have felt the stares others have given me because I

am not where I know I should be. It would be easy – and almost expected - for me to fall under the distress that is caused by clothes that don't fit right and eyes that stare a little too long. I would fall under that distress, if I made the choice to dwell in my condition instead of doing something about it.

I knock distress loose when I take that first step into what I want to be and stop complaining about and dwelling in my problems. I kick distress to the curb when I choose purposeful actions that move me from where I am right now into something better.

Until I stop dwelling and start doing, I will continue to dance with despair.

Distress is a condition – one that is lasting or drawn out. Distress is a state of pain or grief that continues for a prolonged period. Distress will not leave on its own. Distress will not give up and go away. Distress will continue to dig in and make things more difficult and more painful than they need to be.

Until I decide to dismiss distress. Once I make that decision then I am one step closer to loving my life and boldly pursuing “Why Living.”

FOUNDATIONS FOR LOVING LIFE – RELEASE DISTRESS

It takes some effort and more than a little investment to live a life free from distress. Distress can be sneaky about how it slithers into a life, but once it is there it has claws that dig down deep and don't want to let go.

David shares his battles with distress throughout the Psalms. David had some amazing highs – like when he led the army to defeat the enemy and the crowds praised his accomplishments.

David also had some pretty serious lows – like when the king honored him with his accomplishments by trying to plot a way to kill him; or when the king married out David's wife to another man; or when the king was hunting David; or when David's son died at birth.

Each and every time that David began to battle distress, he turned his eyes to heaven. He began to praise God for what God had done in his life, and with each praise David loosened the grip of distress a little until finally he would be free.

Praise – a remembrance of the blessings, the grace, and the mercy that has been poured over my life – that praise will push distress into the corner and will eventually dismiss distress completely.

Paul reminds us in Philippians 4:6 that we are to be careful for nothing – we are to worry about NOTHING – we are to be in distress about NOTHING. When something comes up we are to take it to God in thankful prayer. Thankful prayer only happens when we break loose of the hold of distress and when I dismiss distress in my life and from my then I become free to love my life.

And I am designed to love my life because I was created to be a light on the hill that reflects the glory and magnificence of God to the world.

I am loving life, even when I may not like all that is going on around me.

- I have a vision of hope driven by my why.
- I speak words of possibility.
- I seek out ways (and the people) that will help me thrive in my why.
- I choose to live out my purposeful passion.
- I release the things, the situations, and the people that create distress or dejection.

Loving life is not about doing everything I want to do or getting everything I want to have – but it is about finding a way to do more than survive the journey. Loving life is about thriving no matter what may lie ahead.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Facebook: [theKathrynCLang](#)

Twitter: [@KathrynCLang](#)

YouTube: [TheKathrynCLang](#)

Google Plus: [+KathrynCLang](#)

“Words have power – and I work to share words that ignite hope and possibility in those they encounter.”

Kathryn Lang continues to grow her career as a wordsmith. She shares words in talks, teachings, columns and stories to provide the hearts that hear with some fuel for hope.

Take a moment to visit <http://www.kathrynclang.com> to read more of her writings. You can also contact Kathryn to speak at your next event or conference by emailing her at kathrynlang@kathrynclang.com.

READ MORE FROM KATHRYN C LANG

BOOKS

Study Guide/Non-fiction:

Practical Proverbs with Study Guide
Building Blocks to Writing Success
The Husband Whisperer

Inspirational:

Reflections – Vol 1, Vol 2, Vol 3, Vol 4, Vol 5

Novels:

RUN
WATCH

Tourism Fiction:

Mystery Rock

EBOOKS

A Wife Perfected
Building Blocks to Writing Success
Motivate and Inspire Your Writing
Growing Accountability
STAND
Confessions of a Freelance Writer
Growing Up a Radical Life