



12 Faithful Women

PORTRAITS OF STEADFAST ENDURANCE

EDITED BY MELISSA KRUGER & KRISTEN WETHERELL

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12 Faithful Women: Portraits of Steadfast Endurance
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Ever since I was a little girl, my heart has been warmed and my faith fueled by biographies of faithful men and women of God. The portraits of godly women found in this collection will do the same for you. In each challenge and trial these women faced, Christ proved himself to be steadfast and sufficient. The courage and compassion they exhibited in their times are no less needed in ours. May their stories inspire us to reflect his majestic gospel and grace to our world.

NANCY DEMOSS WOLGEMUTH, founder and Bible teacher of *Revive Our Hearts* and author of *Adorned: Living Out the Beauty of the Gospel Together*

If you feel weary or worn, you don't need a change in circumstance; you need the testimony of God's faithfulness in the lives of believers who have persevered. *12 Faithful Women* points us to our faithful God, and in so doing, encourages our hearts to remain steadfast, right where we are.

RUTH CHOU SIMONS, founder of GraceLaced.com and best-selling author of *Beholding and Becoming* and *Foundations*

Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ are adopted into a family—a family that has spanned more than 2,000 years. It falls to each of us to get to know the members of our new family. Through this book,

we can get to know and appreciate the unique contributions of 12 faithful women—12 faithful sisters in Christ.

TIM CHALLIES, blogger at challies.com and author of *Epic: An Around-the-World Journey through Christian History* and *Devoted: Great Men and Their Godly Moms*

Stories! Stories of women who have served Christ faithfully. Stories of saints who have suffered steadfastly. What a gift, these stories. This book helps light up the great and growing cloud of witnesses.

KATHLEEN NIELSON, speaker and author of *Women and God: Hard Questions, Beautiful Truth*

In *12 Faithful Women*, we're given glimpses of steadfastness in the midst of suffering. The various authors profile the lives of 12 women who show us, through their examples of endurance, how we too can be found faithful. If you want encouragement to walk fearlessly with God, pick up this book and let the lives of these godly women point the way.

COURTNEY DOCTOR, author of *From Garden to Glory: A Bible Study on the Bible's Story* and *Steadfast: A Devotional Bible Study on the Book of James*

Contents

Introduction: Steadfast Under Trial <i>Kristen Wetherell</i>	1
Helen Roseveare: Steadfast in Sacrifice <i>Betsy Childs Howard</i>	5
Esther Ahn Kim: Steadfast in Persecution <i>Catherine Parks</i>	19
Sarah Edwards: Steadfast in Service <i>Courtney Reissig</i>	33
Elisabeth Elliot: Steadfast in Loss <i>Abigail Dodds</i>	45
Corrie ten Boom: Steadfast in Darkness <i>Christine Hoover</i>	59
Phillis Wheatley: Steadfast in Revolution <i>K. A. Ellis</i>	75
Susannah Spurgeon: Steadfast in Suffering <i>Kristen Wetherell</i>	91
Wen Wei Chieh: Steadfast in Opposition <i>Irene Sun</i>	107
Catherine de Bourbon: Steadfast in Oppression <i>Rebecca VanDoodewaard</i>	125

Lilias Trotter: Steadfast in Adversity <i>Jen Oshman</i>	141
Hannah More: Steadfast in Controversy <i>Karen Swallow Prior</i>	155
Joni Eareckson Tada: Steadfast in Pain <i>Vaneetha Rendall Risner</i>	169

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Introduction: Steadfast Under Trial

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12

What is the hardest trial you have endured? Did you come out on the other side the same as when you entered it? Probably not. Trials have a way of changing us, for better or worse. They can humble us or harden us. They can make us run to God or away from him. They can cause us to ask profound and important questions about our identity, purpose, and hope (or lack thereof), and about God — who he is and what he might be doing.

A decade ago, I spent a year in New York City that changed me. It brought one hard thing after another — loneliness, job loss, heartbreak, financial stress, chronic pain. I remember thinking, *No more, Lord, please . . .* Yet, Jesus used those trials to exercise and strengthen my faith — not in myself or my own understand-

12 FAITHFUL WOMEN

ing, resolve, or strength, but in him, in his faithful character and steadfast purposes.

My circumstances in that season didn't immediately change for the better (in fact, they got worse in some ways). But my unchangeable God revealed himself to me within them. He awakened me to the reality of my dependence on him as Creator and Sustainer. He exposed my earthly hopes for the unreliable and unfulfilling idols they were and showed me that he is the only Savior worth worshipping. He convicted me that his Word of truth bolsters faith and battles fear. And he reminded me of his faithfulness displayed at the cross, where he proved his steadfast love and provided for my greatest eternal need.

Take a minute to think about your current situation. Maybe your life is smooth sailing, or perhaps the storms have been relentless. Maybe you trust in Jesus as your Savior, maybe you don't. Perhaps your trials have resulted in a closer walk with him, or maybe he seems far away. You might have questions about God's character, and your trials might have tempted you to doubt his goodness and purposes.

Whatever your situation, I hope you'll be both encouraged and also challenged by the stories within these pages. They are portraits of 12 faithful women who steadfastly endured many trials — including physical pain, persecution, infertility, loneliness, and oppression — and who, in their various sufferings, found Christ to be an all-sufficient Lord and Savior, steadfast, faithful, and true. Enter into the stories of Corrie ten Boom, Susannah Spurgeon, Esther Ahn Kim, Phillis Wheatley, Liliias Trotter, and others, and you'll see women who held fast to Jesus. They steadfastly endured not because of their own perfection or strength, but because Christ's strength was made perfect in their weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

At the end of every chapter you'll find a section called "Lessons from the Faithful." There, we will summarize what we can learn from each woman's story. We will also offer some verses to read and pro-

INTRODUCTION

vide several application questions to consider. Use these for personal reflection or to spur on discussion in a small-group setting.

Friend, whether you are walking closely with Christ or struggling to do so, he wants you to know an important truth, and it's what we hope you take away from this book:

Within your trials, knowing Jesus makes all the difference.

Romans 5 tells us why:

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Rom. 5:3–6)

The only way to steadfastly endure trials with hope is by keeping our eyes fixed upon the One who endured suffering and death for us so that we might live forever. We “[look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who *for the joy that was set before him endured the cross*, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2, italics added).

When we trust Christ by faith, receiving him as our Savior and our Lord, we have hope — hope within our trials and hope beyond our trials — because we have *him*. And this hope makes all the difference, as Jesus gives us both present courage and also eternal perspective to steadfastly endure until we “receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12).

Often, God fortifies our faith through the witness of steadfast Christians who've gone before us. The same God who walked with them, walks with us. Thankfully, “He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength” (Isa. 40:28–29).

12 FAITHFUL WOMEN

May we learn from these 12 faithful women what it looks like to trust and follow Jesus so we might do the same.

Kristen Wetherell
Editor

In our trials, knowing Jesus makes all the difference.

Trials have a way of changing us, for better or worse. They can humble us or harden us. They can make us run to God or away from him. Perhaps your trials have resulted in a closer walk with him, or maybe he seems far away. Often, God strengthens our faith through the witness of courageous Christians who've gone before us. Be encouraged and challenged by these 12 portraits of faithful women who steadfastly endured many trials—including physical pain, persecution, infertility, loneliness, and oppression—and who, in their various sufferings, found Christ to be an all-sufficient Lord and Savior, steadfast, faithful, and true.



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RUTH CHOU SIMONS



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Kristen Wetherell is a wife, mother, and writer. She is the author of *Fight Your Fears: Trusting God's Character and Promises When You Are Afraid* and of the award-winning book *Hope When It Hurts: Biblical Reflections to Help You Grasp God's Purpose in Your Suffering*. Kristen is married to Brad, who is a pastor, and they have two children.

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