



# Drama Free

FINDING  
PEACE WHEN  
EMOTIONS  
OVERWHELM  
YOU

CINDI McMENAMIN



# Drama Free

CINDI McMENAMIN



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
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*To the Only One worth making much ado about...*

*The Shining Star  
of the Greatest Story Ever Told—  
the Lord Jesus Christ*



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# Contents

Can We Really Be Drama Free? . . . . .	11
ACT I: SETTING THE SCENE	
1. All the World's a Stage— Recognizing We Already Have an Audience . . . . .	23
2. Accepting Your Script— Surrendering to God's Greater Story . . . . .	41
3. Redefining Your Role— Becoming the Woman God Designed You to Be . . .	59
4. Casting the Players— Surrounding Yourself with Strong Women . . . . .	79
ACT II: CHANGING THE SCENE	
5. Scene Change—No Longer Overreacting: Developing Strategies for the Unexpected . . . . .	97
6. Scene Change—No Longer Overwhelmed: Finding Your Center. . . . .	113
7. Scene Change—No Longer Overextended: Allowing Yourself an Intermission. . . . .	129
8. Scene Change—No Longer Self-Absorbed: Becoming Sensitive to the Plight of Others . . . . .	145
ACT III: IMPROVING THE SCENE	
9. Closing the Curtain— Putting an End to Drama. . . . .	167

10. A New Opening Act—	
Maintaining a Drama-Free Life . . . . .	183
CAST BIOS—Drama Queens in the Bible	
and What We Can Learn from Them. . . . .	197
BACKSTAGE PASS—Exclusive Resources	
for the Drama-Free Woman. . . . .	205
Daily Checklist to Being Drama Free . . . . .	207
10 Statements to Verbally Diffuse Drama	
in the Moment. . . . .	209
15 Ways to Dial Down the Drama in Your Life . . . .	211
Study Questions for Individuals or Small Groups. . .	213
An Invitation to Write . . . . .	231
Notes . . . . .	233

*The Christian who is truly intimate with Jesus will never draw attention to himself but will only show the evidence of a life where Jesus is completely in control. This is the outcome of allowing Jesus to satisfy every area of life to its depth. The picture resulting from such a life is that of the strong, calm balance that our Lord gives to those who are intimate with Him.*

OSWALD CHAMBERS

*He must become greater and greater,  
and I must become less and less.*

JOHN 3:30 NLT



# Can We Really Be Drama Free?

I'm no stranger to drama.  
I wish that weren't so.

I wish I could tell you that there has *never* been a dramatic day in my life and that I have never, personally, played into drama, contributed to drama, or let drama control my circumstances or responses.

But then I'd be lying to you. And that would be more drama.

The truth is, like you, I know drama. I have lived and breathed it—and even abhorred it—because I live in a world where drama happens. And because I see it in the thousands of women I work among and minister to every year.

It probably doesn't help that I'm a child of a recovering alcoholic, that I'm a "recovering enabler" myself (who just recently figured out what the term *enabler* really means), and that I have been called—on more than one occasion in my life—"dramatic" when all I really want to be is a woman with a gentle, quiet spirit who is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

I'd much rather be called discerning than dramatic. I'd much rather be considered wise than a woman who occasionally wigs out. And my goal, spiritually, as well as practically, is to become more mature, not more of a mess, the older I get.

Daily I receive e-mails from women who have read my books, or stumbled across my website or an article of mine, asking my advice on how they can manage their lives and be more Spirit led. And as I answer those e-mails, I get the inkling that I just might be in that place where I've finally become a woman whose head governs her heart, who is able to instruct others on how to be more practical than emotional. But at night, as I lie in bed talking to the God who knows me inside and out, I face the sobering reality that I am just as emotionally volatile as you, and I daily need His peace when emotions threaten to overwhelm me.

*Oh, how I long to be drama free.*

Can you relate to that desire? Maybe your statement is more definitive: "I don't do drama."

I've heard many women say that lately. I've even said it myself. But what does it mean? Are we really saying, "I'm tired of the drama"? "I don't put up with drama"? "From now on, I'm going to avoid drama"? How about: "I'm going to no longer be around a woman who brings me drama"?

As much as you and I would like to shut the chaos, confusion, and cattiness out of our lives and convince ourselves that we "don't do drama," it has a way of creeping into our lives anyway.

Drama happens because life happens. And it happens because emotions are real. Drama happens when unexpected circumstances hit and we are unprepared to handle them. And drama happens when we come up against family members or people with different personalities who carry with them their own sets of emotional baggage, learned behaviors, expectations, values and beliefs, and an ability to misunderstand, misinterpret, exaggerate, gossip, disappoint, and act selfishly and inconsiderately. Just *being around* other people can elicit drama.

Admit it. You've said (or at least thought), *I'm done with the drama...*

...when your mother calls with complaints that you can't help her with. *Sorry!*

...when your teenager is having a meltdown for no apparent reason. *Whaattt?*

...when your coworker blames you for an incident that was clearly not your fault. *Again?!*

...when you get a call from a family member or friend who isn't attending the gathering because *she* is planning to be there. *Whatever.*

...when you discover the talk in the break room, Bible study, or neighborhood has been about you. *Over it!*

...when the woman you confided in betrayed your trust and repeated your story to someone else. *How could she?*

Or maybe—just maybe—someone else has thought *I'm done with the drama* when thinking of *you*.

As I said earlier, I'd like to think I'm never the cause of drama. But in reality, you and I can be catalysts for drama without even realizing it. Yes, *you* have been the cause of drama if you've ever...

...told your friend about another breakup-worthy situation with your boyfriend, yet you can't bear to part with him.

...verbally vented at the customer service rep for how you were treated in the store.

...given another mom a piece of your mind after hearing how her child treated yours.

...said anything about anyone that you wouldn't have said if they were present.

...refused to attend or be involved with something because of another person you didn't want to be around.

...refused to forgive someone because of something they did to you.

...stormed out of a room or meeting (or lost it, emotionally, and then left the room).

Yep, if you've ever done *any* of the above (like I have), then you know drama too. And I'm sure you hate it as much as I do.

## Sorting Out the Drama

Not all drama is because we bring it on ourselves. We can be near someone who erupts, or the target of a slanderous campaign, or the victim of a passive-aggressive person who is taking out their frustrations on us. Or sometimes we are broadsided with a diagnosis or a disappointment or a chain of events that has us scrambling to keep our sanity.

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Whether our drama is the petty stuff or the painful stuff, how we respond makes all the difference in the world.

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Whether our drama is the petty stuff (like having a bad day or dealing with a website fiasco) or the truly painful stuff that catches us off guard (like a cancer diagnosis, the ending of a friendship, or suddenly losing someone we love), how we respond makes all the difference—or all the drama—in the world.

## Assessing Your Drama Factor

Our upbringing, personality, and baggage from past wounds can trigger dramatic reactions to varying degrees, especially if we

are unaware of our vulnerabilities and capabilities. Right now, you can assess your own drama factor by answering the following. There are no right or wrong answers, so please don't worry about how you'll score. And don't answer based on the person you'd *like* to be. Be as honest as you can with yourself and answer true (T) or false (F) according to how the statement best describes you most of the time. Here we go...

I don't adapt well to change ..... T F

I tend to react emotionally to the unexpected and  
think more clearly a little later ..... T F

I've been known to "fly off the handle" at times ..... T F

I tend to have high expectations of others,  
especially those closest to me ..... T F

I am easily offended ..... T F

I have a hard time forgiving others ..... T F

I sometimes tend to think of myself first,  
instead of others ..... T F

It bothers me when I'm misunderstood  
or misrepresented ..... T F

I tend to be competitive, especially with other women .... T F

I sometimes feel inferior ..... T F

I'll do anything to try to help someone. .... T F

I have a strong need to be treated fairly. .... T F

- It bothers me if someone else gets something  
I clearly deserved . . . . . T F
- I can tend to be a controller . . . . . T F
- I try to avoid confrontation as best I can . . . . . T F
- I sometimes unknowingly turn a conversation  
around so it's about me. . . . . T F
- I've been known to tolerate—and even add to—  
gossip at times . . . . . T F
- I like to be a part of solving problems,  
even if I'm not asked . . . . . T F
- I struggle with jealousy at times . . . . . T F
- I sometimes feel like I need to please everyone . . . . . T F
- I get frustrated when I can't please everyone  
at the same time . . . . . T F
- When I want to know something, I have a strong  
desire to get the answers immediately. . . . . T F
- When I set my mind to something,  
I do not want to be deterred. . . . . T F
- I have family members who try to pull me  
into their problems and issues . . . . . T F
- I have a hard time staying neutral when it comes  
to issues among my extended family . . . . . T F
- I'm the kind of person who speaks her mind  
even when it offends. . . . . T F

I don't mind hurting someone if I'm  
speaking the truth . . . . . T F

I'd rather stay silent than talk about an issue  
that's bothering me. . . . . T F

I care deeply about what others think of me. . . . . T F

I expect my husband/child/parent/boyfriend  
to fill my emotional tank . . . . . T F

I could be classified as a "people pleaser" . . . . . T F

I struggle with an addiction (substance, behavioral,  
disordered eating, etc.) . . . . . T F

Now add up the number of answers you marked true and  
record the number here: \_\_\_\_\_. Add up the number of answers  
you marked false and record the number here: \_\_\_\_\_.

If you marked most of the statements true, you are most likely  
one who experiences a lot of drama—either because of the people  
around you or because of how you respond to life. This book  
will help you move from a drama-filled life to a drama-free life  
through learning how to respond to situations and how to walk  
away from potential flare-ups.

If your answers are pretty balanced between true and false,  
you seem to have a good handle on the catalysts for drama. Keep  
reading. This book will be a good affirmation of some of the  
things you are already doing right, and you'll gain new insights  
for dealing with areas that still suck you into the drama pit.

If you answered mostly false, you probably picked up this  
book as a resource for helping other women become more drama  
free. I'm glad you did. Keep reading. I believe you'll find some  
insights and application steps that will be helpful for you to share  
with others.

Now, if you scored pretty high on the drama scale, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it means you're pretty much like every other breathing woman on this earth—you have emotions and sometimes struggle with how to express them. But you don't have to stay that way. You and I can learn how to respond, rather than react, to what life brings us so that we can dial down the drama, diffuse it, or eliminate it altogether.

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We often can't control our circumstances, but we can always control how we respond to them.

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We often can't control our circumstances, but we can always control how we respond to them. This book is going to show you how.

## Two Kinds, Two Choices

Before we get started, it's helpful to keep in mind that there are two kinds of drama: (1) the drama that life brings (and God allows) and (2) the drama that we create through our response to life.

The drama that life brings is inevitable. Yet how we respond to it determines whether or not it will be fruitful in our lives in conforming us to the image of Christ. Our response to the drama also determines whether God gets the glory or we take the spotlight.

Did you catch that? You and I determine whether the drama in our lives will transform us into more godly people and give glory to God...or shine a spotlight on us and our frailties, insecurities, and emotional instability. Just as God can work all things for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28), so we can take all drama and turn it into a situation that either exalts God or exposes our weaknesses.

Ultimately, we have two choices with every occurrence of drama:

1. We can react emotionally and impulsively and thereby escalate the drama; or
2. We can respond in a reasonable, measured, and godly way and thereby diffuse it and experience peace, joy, and contentment instead.

I know which choice I want to make, don't you?

## Let the Show Begin

In this book you will learn how you can begin to make the right choice in every occurrence of drama. In the first four chapters, we'll look at the metaphoric "stages" we perform on, the "script" God has written for us, the role we play, and the other "players" in our story. Then, in chapters 5–8, we'll look at some "scene changers": guidelines on how we can divert the drama when we're hit with unexpected events, when we're overwhelmed, when we're overextended and tired, and when we come up against someone who is self-absorbed. Then in the last two chapters, we'll look at how we can take what we've learned and close the curtain once and for all on the drama in our lives and start living a new opening act that is drama free.

With help from God's Word, plus some practical guidance, I believe you can be drama free—even when the unthinkable happens. Even when you are clearly a victim. Even when life takes an unexpected turn and you are caught in an otherwise overwhelming whirlwind of circumstances that would make any woman lose it. *Even* then.

So come with me as we learn how to pause long enough to realize what we are dealing with, how to better deal with it, *who*

we are dealing with, and ultimately Who will deal with it. Then we will be able to diffuse any type of drama that comes our way and replace the chaos with an inner calm.

*Inner calm.* Do you like the sound of that? I sure do. Inner calm is a quality I want to possess, so I don't start acting like I'm possessed!

So here we go, my friend. Adopt this new motto with me by proclaiming it aloud, and let's start learning how to live it: *As far as it depends on me, I will be drama free!*



## Act I

# Setting the Scene

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And one man in his time plays many parts.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

You and I have a choice on this stage God has set us upon. We can either play a small, petty, insignificant role that is all about ourselves. Or we can play a larger, more meaningful role that impacts the lives of others and spotlights the Great Writer of our script. It's all a matter of recognizing Whom we are on the stage to please, accepting the script He has written out for us beforehand, and living carefully and intentionally the role He has designated us to play.



## Chapter 1

# All the World's a Stage

Recognizing We Already Have an Audience

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

*This is the assigned moment for [Jesus] to move into the center,  
while I slip off to the sidelines.*

JOHN 3:30 MSG

I'm not proud of this. But I'm going to tell you about it anyway. Several years ago I helped two friends, Scott and Paul, start up a health club about a half hour away from my home. Because I tend to be a take-charge person and I had co-taught a leadership class at my church with Paul, I “unofficially” joined the management team. By “unofficially,” I mean neither Scott nor Paul actually *made* me a manager because of the minimal hours I was able to work each week. But I assumed the managerial role anyway. (I also got the nickname “McMinimal” for being the “self-appointed manager with minimal hours.”) Scott and Paul often

asked my opinion on matters, and the young people we hired began confiding in me and seeking my advice on how to work their way up in the club.

One morning a film crew was in the club to shoot footage for a commercial to run on the local television channel. I wasn't given the details of what we were hoping to convey in the 15 seconds of video footage, but I assumed it would be shots of the personal trainers working with individuals, a row of the shiny new cardio equipment with members enthusiastically working out, and maybe a few seconds of our child-care area, where we had one of the best facilities and programs to offer children while their parents worked out.

As it turned out, the videographers were asked to film a typical day at the club. It wasn't until a few weeks later, when Scott and Paul showed me the commercial that was already airing on local channels, that I saw what "a typical day" was. In one short scene that lasted entirely too long, I flipped my hair around dramatically and quickly walked the length of the front desk area while pointing my finger absurdly in the air as if I was reprimanding someone or chasing them down.

I was horrified at what I saw. It wasn't glamorous. It wasn't even flattering (I've always hated my profile because of the size of my nose!). It was downright embarrassing. Scott and Paul looked at each other, rolled their eyes, and Paul said, "That's a typical day in the club alright...McMinimal pointing her finger and bossing people around."

My jaw dropped open. Is that how my friends and everyone else at the club saw me? *The one who bosses people around?*

They didn't see me as the capable administrator who gave up three days a week of her writing time to help two men start up and run a health club?

They didn't see me as the breath of fresh air to those who came in after a rough day and were greeted by my enthusiasm and warm smile?

They, instead, saw me as "McMinimal—pointing her finger and bossing people around"?

If that was the worst of it, I could laugh off this story and tell it without shame. But after hearing those comments, I sulked the rest of the afternoon and then spent *two days* pouting because I felt my friends didn't see my worth or treat me more respectfully given all the time and effort I had put into their club over the past six months. *Two whole days* of being self-absorbed and overly concerned about how I came across and whether or not I was being valued.

When I returned to work and finally brought up the issue with one of them, he said, "We were joking, Cindi. Get over it!"

And that was the fruit of my two days of pouting—being told it was a joke and I should get over it.

Okay, I did get over it. Eventually. I had no other choice because that's how men typically respond to what they perceive as senseless drama (which I now realize it was). And it was something I learned from.

I not only learned that pouting didn't help my situation any—they didn't retract their words, apologize, or agree to film a new commercial that showed me in a better light—but I also learned another important lesson: All the world is a stage—and we can often make much ado about nothing.

*All the world is a stage.* The place where you work. The home where you live. The store where you shop. The places where you eat. And people are watching (and in some unfortunate cases, even filming), whether you realize it or not.

Whether or not you want an audience, you have it. Whether

or not you want a critique of your actions, it's often there. Whether or not you agree with someone else's review of your behavior or their joke at your expense, it's there, like it or not. And how you and I handle it makes all the difference—or all the drama—in the world.

## The Only Player

If my husband had seen that commercial for the health club, he would've jokingly said to me, "All the world's a stage and *you're* the only player."

I once heard him say that at the shopping mall food court about a woman who was making a loud, ridiculous scene and seemed to be enjoying every minute of it. I can't remember the details of the incident. But I do remember his comment and my immediate thought: *I never want that to be said about me.*

And yet, regretfully, I've registered some performances in my life. Not just the ridiculous-looking one in the health club commercial. No, I'm talking about the performances in which I might not have been aware that others were watching my reactions:

- My favorite Target store, where I sometimes think something is on sale but then find out (after it's rung up by the cashier) that the item was in the wrong place and it costs more than I intended to pay.
- The local Chick-fil-A, where I enjoy lunch at least once a week and can never seem to get my "free treat" to scan correctly from my phone app, causing the customers behind me to wait longer to place their order.
- My Jazzercise class, where I can tend to provide too much input and possibly drive others crazy.
- My home, where my family, unfortunately, sees me at my

worst—especially when I'm on a book deadline, or when I've worked all day and then realized I didn't take adequate time to think about my family's dinner plans.

Truth be told, we all have stages upon which we unintentionally perform for all to see and, many times, we are critiqued for that performance without even realizing it. (And I don't think it's exaggerating to say that sometimes we don't get the best reviews.)

Shortly after viewing my embarrassing performance in that health club commercial, I started thinking about my real-life performance resume. What roles have I played, loudly, not realizing who was watching? What amounts of embarrassment have I caused my daughter when I stepped into a role of complainer at a department store, or late and frazzled driver at her school? What types of silent drama might I have contributed to by speaking careless words about another? What behind-the-scenes drama might I have caused others by being unintentionally high-maintenance? And, most importantly, what chance do I have now, at this point in my life, to change my role, rewrite my script, and start being a woman who is drama free rather than drama filled?

## **The “Stages” of Our Lives**

I found it fascinating to read that 75 percent of women in this country suffer from a fear of public speaking.<sup>1</sup> It's called glossophobia. And it's a real thing. I constantly hear women say:

“I don't want to get up in front of people.”

“I hate being up on stage.”

“Just don't make me give a speech.”

“I hate microphones.”

I can see the fear in women's eyes and the color fade out of

their faces if they think they might have to actually get up on a stage in front of others.

---

All women *live* on a stage. They just aren't aware of it most of the time.

---

And yet 100 percent of women *live* on a stage. They speak unrehearsed lines. They play to audiences. They just aren't aware of it most of the time.

In addition to being on a stage when we're going about life out in the world, we also now have an audience when we are online—in chat rooms and online forums, while posting reviews, and when spouting, posting, or tweeting our political views, personal opinions, and many times inappropriately expressed feelings via social media. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (and the dozen or so other social media channels that are out there) have given us even larger platforms upon which we can perform (and also embarrass ourselves). On those “public stages” we have an opportunity to vent without accountability or to shout out what we feel, regardless of how appropriate or inappropriate it might be.

We can stir up more drama by how we fire off a post in response to someone else's because we didn't take the time to stop, think about it, and ask ourselves, *Do I really want to put myself “out there” like this and call attention to myself or my message? Do I really want to say this hurtful, selfish, or demeaning comment? Or even, Do I really want to say this meaningless, trite, and ridiculous comment?*

Yes, there's an audience for everything we do, whether we prefer it or not. And although the playwright William Shakespeare

penned the words “All the world’s a stage...” I believe the Bible has recognized it for centuries by instructing us to please God—our audience of *one*.

In Matthew 6:5-6 (NASB), Jesus addressed the proud human heart that is prone to playing to an audience even when it comes to praying:

When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners *so that they may be seen by men*. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Jesus not only addressed “performance prayers” but the hypocritical habits of the religious leaders of His day who were acting a certain way in public to cover up who they really were in private. He lambasted them for being one way on the outside (while on stage) and another way on the inside (where no one can see):

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees... don’t practice what they teach... Everything they do is for show” (Matthew 23:1-5 NLT).

Jesus then addressed the elaborate pieces of clothing they wore, the way they loved to be the guests of honor at banquets, and the way they ate it up when people addressed them as if they were above everyone else. He called those religious leaders hypocrites because they were on their best “spiritual” behavior on stage but wicked in their hearts and behind closed doors.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly, Jesus knew how tempting it would be for us to put on a good show for others and present a more spiritual image of ourselves in our culture too—or even just an image that is more positive, polished, prosperous, capable, or qualified than we actually are, when God alone knows our true condition. The apostle Paul instructed followers of Christ to serve, perform for, and impress *God*, not others:

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord *rather than for men*, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve (Colossians 3:23-24 NASB).

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul said: “Do you not know that... you are not your own?” Christ purchased His right to us and therefore He can display us wherever He wants.

The often-quoted influential preacher Oswald Chambers wrote:

There is no such thing as a private life, or a place to hide in this world, for a man or woman who is intimately aware of and shares in the sufferings of Jesus Christ. God divides the private life of His saints and makes it a highway for the world on one hand and for Himself on the other.<sup>3</sup>

Yes, all the world is a stage. What drama are others seeing around you and me? That all depends on what or who it is we fear.

## Whom Do You Fear?

It occurred to me as I was reflecting on my embarrassing performances that we create and experience drama because we fear

people and not God. We care so deeply what others think of us rather than caring about God's opinion. In his book *When People Are Big and God Is Small*, Edward T. Welch says:

The desire for the “praise of men” is one of the ways we exalt people above God...Fear of man (and what he thinks of us) is such a part of our human fabric that we should check for a pulse if someone denies it.<sup>4</sup>

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Fearing *anything other than God* is  
likely to trigger drama.

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The Bible tells us, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10 NASB). I find that verse interesting because I’ve come to realize the opposite of wisdom is drama. When we exercise wisdom, we use discretion and we don’t make a scene. When we display wisdom, we are not putting ourselves on display. If fearing the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom, which negates drama, then fearing *anything other than God* is likely to trigger drama.

Instead of fearing God, we often fear:

- being misunderstood or misread
- being treated unfairly
- being embarrassed (by appearing weak or incapable)
- being rejected
- being in a situation where we are not in control (My daughter has a fear of flying because she fears not being in

control. And let me tell you, she can be drama on the airplane because of it!)

Sometimes we simply fear the worst. That is still a fear of something *other than God*. It is giving more power to what we fear than to God, who can handle those fears. So much for our overwhelming fear of the stage! It isn't the stage itself we fear. We dread what we will *look like* on that stage and what others will think of us as they observe us being unprepared, scatterbrained, shy, silly, foolish, weak, lazy, or in some way inadequate. Drama is the result of fearing *people* more than we fear God, or fearing circumstances that we believe are more powerful than God. Our fear of insignificance, unworthiness, and rejection also plays a part in our drama.

## The Appeal of Drama

My sister-in-law, Sophie, is a wife, mom, and professional choreographer. She has an impressive resume that includes acting, designing and directing dance classes in public and private schools, and running her own dance school, SODE School for the Performing Arts. Sophie offered some interesting insights on why we are attracted to the stage and yet fear it at the same time:

Drama is expression of emotion and passion to communicate a story. There are ways that this is healing, edifying, emotionally moving, thrilling, and entertaining. But when we bring excessive drama into situations to serve ourselves, the results can be detrimental.

Being overdramatic deflects from the reality of the story that needs to be told. For instance, if I step on a nail on the floor, it causes pain. I sit on the couch, massage my wounded foot, but also warn

someone to pick up the nail so someone else doesn't step on it. I come outside my pain to help someone else, rather than staying in the moment of "I'm so in pain" and not looking out for others within the dramatic moment.

I found Sophie's example insightful. It's easy for you and me, when we are in pain, to be so absorbed in our own drama that we forget about others.

"Many dancers and actors are broken," Sophie said. "They spend their lives working on something to not just be told 'good job' but to be told, 'That was *fantastic*. That was *amazing*. That changed my life.' There is often a deep need to feel special and significant."

She said actors and dancers are hoping for the standing ovation, not just the polite applause. They want the starring role, not just the supporting one. They strive to stand out, be a star, and feel they are worthwhile. In short, Sophie says, "They are looking for validation of who they are."

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The root cause of our unhealthy drama  
is our wounded heart.

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Is that why we can tend to be dramatic off the stage too? Because we share a deep need to be noticed, to stand out, to be heard, to feel validated and significant? If so, the root cause of our unhealthy drama is our wounded heart.

## **Have You Been Labeled Dramatic?**

Some of us have a dramatic flair and some of us don't. I was raised in a home where we were not taught how to filter or restrain

our emotions. So everything was big, loud, and expressive. We talked a lot—and quite loudly! My family was also involved in drama, literally, as my mom directed several high-profile church and community theatrical productions and had my siblings and me on the stage from the time we were young children. So you could say “dramatics” are in my blood. Even my daughter—who has been performing in either dance, vocal performance, or school or community theater since she was four years old—proudly proclaimed to her elementary school teachers and friends of mine that she was “born for the stage” (something my friends didn’t let me live down).

But, as dramatic as I can be at times, I’ve never set out to be high-maintenance or the creator or instigator of drama. And I do believe there’s a difference.

Connie (a friend of mine who, unlike me, never learned to express her emotions while growing up) happens to be one of the most easygoing, laid-back women I know. I would think she is as opposite of drama as they come. Yet she lamented to me her surprise when someone called her high-maintenance.

“It crushed my soul,” she said. “And recently my husband said I was dramatic, and I had the same socked-in-the-stomach feeling because I never thought of myself as dramatic. I try to be the opposite.”

The sting Connie felt is because she associated the word *dramatic* with someone who is “high-maintenance” or “attention-seeking.” The dictionary defines *dramatic* as:

- large in degree or scale, and often occurring with surprising suddenness.
- bold, vivid, or strikingly impressive in appearance, color, or effect.
- exciting and intense—characterized, in real life or in art,

by the kind of intense and gripping excitement, startling suddenness, or larger-than-life impressiveness associated with drama and the theater.

Okay, so someone who is dramatic is larger than life. That's not such a bad thing.

Awhile back I bit into a fortune cookie after eating my take-out Chinese food, and the little paper strip that I pulled out of the cookie read: "You have a flair for adding a fanciful dimension to any story." My husband laughed aloud and said: "That's Chinese for saying you're dramatic." I smiled and kept that little fortune cookie strip and taped it to my writing desk. That "flair for adding a fanciful dimension to any story" is what makes my sister-in-law, Sophie, a great storyteller. And it's what my friend, Chris, says makes me an interesting writer. People love stories. They love them to be told with expression and dramatic flair. They love to be caught up in the experience. I tend to think I got that dramatic flair from my Father—my *heavenly* Father.

## God's Dramatic Flair

God is the most dramatic being I know. The Bible is full of stories that showcase His dramatic flair.

God created the world in six days by simply speaking it into place and then created man by taking a handful of dust and breathing into it. Then He took a rib from the man while he was sleeping and "fashioned into a woman the rib he had taken from the man" (Genesis 2:22 NASB). Now *that* was dramatic flair. God could have, after all, just snapped His fingers and made a man and woman appear or spoken them into existence as He did when He created everything else. But no, He chose to get creative—and dramatic—when He made humans. (And we were made in *His* image—His "dramatic" image! Think about it.)

God chose to start a race of people through the offspring of an elderly couple—a 100-year-old man named Abraham and his 90-year-old, barren wife named Sarah. Why not take a childless couple in their early forties? I mean, really? But God wanted there to be no doubt that He was doing something miraculous. No wonder they called that baby Isaac, meaning, “he laughs.” It was dramatic and hilarious (in a beautiful way) all at the same time. Now *that’s* dramatic flair.

In Psalm 18, David described God’s heroic rescue of him in imagery that is synonymous with dragons in the sky and a thunderous lightning show that splits the mountains. The description of how “smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth” (verse 8) and how God “parted the heavens and came down” (verse 9) is the stuff great movies are made of. That dramatic language describes a rather dramatic God.

But there is one common factor in all of God’s dramatic flair—it brought Him glory. It showed how big, strong, powerful, and loving God is.

## The Dramatic Flair of Jesus

Like Father, like Son, Jesus was dramatic too. We sometimes picture Jesus as low-key, even-keeled, and blending into the crowd. Or sitting stoically on a rock, telling a story softly and in monotone. Are you kidding? He was the Son of God. He was not of this world! He was the creator of the universe confined to flesh and bones. That makes Him far from boring or ordinary. He was the most dramatic human being—fully human and fully God—to walk this earth.

Consider some of the ways Jesus, the Son of God, demonstrated dramatic flair as well:

- He told Peter to go to the lake, throw out his fishing line,

and open the mouth of the first fish he caught. There he would find a coin to pay the exact amount of both Jesus' and Peter's taxes (Matthew 17:27). Really? He couldn't just make a coin appear behind Peter's ear like magicians tend to do? Of course He could. But what fun would that be? He wanted it coming from the mouth of a smelly fish. Drama!

- He spit on some dirt, rubbed it in a blind man's eyes, and asked him to walk—dirt in the eyes and all—to a pool and wash it off. When the man obeyed, he regained his sight (John 9:1-11). Only a man with a boyish spirit would want to play in the dirt and perform a miracle with mud!
- He walked out on top of a lake in the middle of a raging storm at night, showing His disciples there was a lot more to fear than merely large waves and some roaring wind (John 6:16-21). (I wonder if He was cracking up inside when they all freaked out and thought He was a ghost!)
- He stripped down to his underwear, got down on the floor, and took on the role of a household servant, washing the dirty, smelly feet of His followers at a dinner in which He was supposed to be the honored guest. He timed this awkward situation at the precise time that His followers had been discussing who among them was the greatest and most spiritual (John 13:1-20). Talk about making a dramatic point!

So tell me, would you call Jesus dramatic? Yet every move He made called attention to His Father in heaven, not Himself. Every miracle He performed, every word He said pointed to the One He came to serve as an example to us of how to follow and

obey God. Jesus didn't think for a second about stealing the spotlight or claiming the glory for Himself. He waited until God glorified Him. I believe Jesus recognized that all the world is a stage and His Father in heaven had the sole right to the starring role.

## What Are You Proclaiming?

Jesus' dramatic flair was always to show the world who God was and what He could do. But what does *our* drama say to others?

As we express or stuff our emotions, as we interact with others, as we present our views or defend our values, we are broadcasting a message. God's message was consistently I AM. Jesus' message was "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). But what is the message you and I portray with our dramatic flair?

John the Baptist was probably more aware of the stage than any other person in the New Testament, apart from Jesus. John was like the traveling evangelist of his day. He had an audience everywhere he went. But at one point in his ministry, his followers saw that his audiences were dwindling as more people were starting to follow Jesus and His disciples. John's followers became concerned and asked him about this. His response? "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30 NASB).

In the New Living Translation, that statement reads: "He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less." In *The Message*,<sup>5</sup> that verse reads: "This is the assigned moment for him [Jesus] to move into the center, while I slip off to the sidelines."

Can you and I say that—from the top of the pinnacle when we're experiencing our most successful day, to the lowest point in our lives when our emotions threaten to get the best of us? *He must increase and I must decrease?*

When we can say that, and mean it, we are prepared for any stage in life.

## *A Point to Process*

All the world is a stage, and we have an audience everywhere we go. Every one of us portrays a message by what we say and do.

## *A Truth to Consider*

*Fear of man will prove to be a snare,  
but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.*

PROVERBS 29:25

## *A Focus for the Week*

Think of a practical way you can remind yourself every day this week that you are on stage and God—and others—are taking note of your performance.

## *A Prayer from the Heart*

*God, You are the most dramatic being ever. Your dramatic flair captured my heart and inspires me to be all I can be—for Your renown, not mine. Help me to remember that on the various stages in life I have an opportunity to let others see You, high and lifted up—or me, at my very worst. Help me to remember that I have an audience everywhere I go, and in everything I say and do, so that You can be glorified in—and on—every stage of my life.*