

**Q&A with Denise J. Hughes,
General Editor of the *CSB (in)courage Devotional Bible***

“Declare his glory among the nations, his wondrous works among all peoples.”
Psalm 96:3 (CSB)

(in)courage is focused on the power of authentic friendship and honest storytelling. Why are these such commodities these days?

We live in a world where social media feeds serve as highlight reels, and Instagram likes and Facebook comments can be someone’s most common forms of connecting. At (in)courage, we offer women a place for deeper connection where they are welcomed just the way they are. Through honest storytelling, we move beyond the gloss of filtered photos and into the beautiful mess of real life. It’s through admitting our “unfine” moments and sharing our brokenness that we build bridges of authentic friendship and live out God’s call to be united in the body of Christ.

How has the (in)courage online community found its niche among the thousands of other websites available for women?

More than anything, (in)courage is about relationships—with God and each other. We believe in the idea of a great big table where there is a seat saved for everyone. We pull up cozy chairs with a willingness to “go first” as we talk about our strength and struggles, our joys and fears, our victories and deep wounds and yet-to-be-answered prayers. As we go first—not with pat Sunday School answers but with our own authentic wrestling and encouragement—thousands of women receive the gift of “me too.” Women are longing to know that they’re not alone, that God sees them, and that there is a community willing to journey together. That’s what they find at (in)courage.

How is the *(in)courage Devotional Bible* an outgrowth of the mission of the online community?

As an online community, we want to link arms as sisters in Christ, encouraging and pointing one another to Jesus. The *(in)courage Devotional Bible* is a beautiful extension of this, with authentic stories from real women featured alongside the Scripture in which they are rooted. We cannot live out our calling as God’s daughters apart from God’s Word and community. (in)courage builds a bridge for women to engage with both.

There are over 100 contributors to this project. What diverse kinds of women make up this collection?

The writers are from different races and ethnicities—all in different seasons of life. The youngest contributor is a college student, and the oldest contributor is in her seventies. It is very important to me that we include the voices of as many women from diverse ages, races, and backgrounds as possible. Logistically, that makes for a more complex process, but it is worth the extra effort because it reflects God’s multi-faceted wisdom.

How is the glory of God revealed through our diversity?

In Ephesians 3, Paul explained his ministry to the Gentiles; basically, his ministry was to anyone who wasn’t a Jew (because that was Peter’s primary ministry). God’s heart, from the beginning, was to include people from all races and ethnicities in His kingdom. In Ephesians 3:10, Paul says, “This is so that God’s multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church...”

The Greek word for “multi-faceted” is “polupoikilos,” which means “many varied” or “variegated.” Have you ever seen variegated yarn? It has multiple colors. In other words, inherent in God’s multi-faceted wisdom is a desire for multiple colors in His kingdom!

There are 10 distinct themes throughout the devotions and reading plans in the *(in)courage Devotional Bible*. How did you choose which ones to include?

Since 2009, we've published over 4,000 stories from over 3,000 women. So I went through the archives of our published articles, reviewing the categories and tags we used on each blog post. I made a special note of the categories and tags that appeared most often because they represent the kinds of stories—and the kinds of themes—that women are already talking about. In the end, the ten themes highlighted in *The (in)courage Devotional Bible* represent the themes which resonate most with women after almost ten years of storytelling on our website.

You've authored several books and are currently pursuing a Master's of Divinity degree. How is the wording of the CSB Bible translation important to you?

The more time I spend reading the CSB, the more I really love it. The CSB translation strikes a beautiful balance between holding fast to the integrity of the original languages while also being readable and accessible. It's great for both daily devotional reading and in-depth Bible study.

As a mom, you've dealt with postpartum depression, isolation, and loneliness. What particular messages of hope and encouragement do you believe women need most?

First and foremost, the message we want women to hear is: "You're not alone. We've been there. Many of us are still there. And there's hope. Because of Jesus, there's always hope." This is why the (in)courage community exists—to be a place where women can bring their whole selves, including the broken and lonely parts, and be real with other women. That's where connection happens, as women pull up a chair and share their own stories.

Why is difficult to find places to share our authentic stories, to share what's really going on? How can churches become better at this?

Fear and shame are often culprits that restrict communities to surface-level connection. Fear and shame whisper, "What if I'm the only one who feels this way? What if I'm judged or misunderstood? What if I reveal what's really going on and I'm labeled or rejected?"

Our Pinterest culture elevates the perception that everyone else has it all together and we should too! We must be intentional in breaking down those false beliefs. Churches need to shout from the rooftops, "Nobody has it all together! That's why we need Jesus Christ! Every single one of us!"

At (in)courage we seek to keep the spotlight squarely fixed on Jesus. He is the hero of the story so we don't have to be. He goes before us and behind us and hems us in; we just get to be a community who walks with Him.

What is the biblical foundation of (in)courage? How are you translating that into a vibrant community and meaningful resources?

In this season, our (in)courage focus verse is Colossians 2:2, "I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery—Christ." (CSB) And as always, we seek to honor the original mission of (in)courage, embodied in our name: The (in) represents being in Christ; from this comes true courage, connection to Jesus, and authentic community.

The online landscape is often marked by division, but our desire is to pursue unity in the body of Christ. We share our unique stories—joys and struggles equally fleshed out—in order to point others to the eternal hope of Jesus Christ. We seek to create spaces online and in real life to connect with, listen to, equip, encourage, empower, and serve God's daughters.

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