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PREFACE

Dear friend,

I began this study from a deep need to understand something I *could not* understand. Have you ever been in one of those situations? If you have, I pray this book will encourage you and give you some spiritual tools to come out of the dust.

This little collection of words for the weary was because I needed help and good directions to guide me through this unexplainable experience. I believe when we need answers and direction, the best compass is the Word of God. So I went to the Scriptures! Whenever I don't understand something or I don't know the formula for healing, I turn to the Word for answers. Sometimes what I find is challenging for me, but it always points me in the right direction, His direction.

I'll explain more about how I came to the title *Dust Girl* in chapter one. It was one of those moments when you're at a crossroads and you just know God is working, using His people like a compass to point you in a new direction.

I'm writing this as a recovering Ash Heap Girl. I don't know if there is a recovery group with that name, but there should be! Ashes are nothing more than dust.

I have made some discoveries as a Dust Girl:

- 🌿 Physical dust has a way of accumulating on our bodies. Likewise, spiritual dust can accumulate in our hearts.
- 🌿 Physical dust can cover and adhere to a surface. Spiritual dust can do the same, and that's why we have to learn to clean and polish it away through God's promises.
- 🌿 Physical dust, over time, can become heavy and change the way an object may appear. Spiritual dust, if not dealt with properly, can weigh heavily on us and hold us back from doing what God intended.
- 🌿 Physical dust can cause us to move out of our situation. Spiritual dust might prompt a change toward a better tomorrow.

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This book is written for you if you need comfort, healing, and most of all, direction from the Word of God. However, this writing is not the answer to your problems: Jesus is the answer. He is the Great Exchange Artist, giving beauty for something dry and dusty.

My hope and my prayers are to point the way of recovery from past hurts and disappointments. I want to share what I discovered as I searched for answers to bring about healing from difficult experiences.

One thing I found myself doing during this time was asking God the same question: Why? And to my surprise, as I searched the Scriptures, I learned that God's Word is filled with people who experienced the same feelings, emotions, and challenges that I faced. I also learned that others asked God the "why" question too. What I've learned is that the Bible is filled with people who experienced loss, disappointment, betrayal, depression, anxiety, and broken hearts.

Some of the people on its pages felt abandoned by God.

Some of the people got tired and frustrated.

And yes, some even dared to ask God "Why?"

Even though everyone you will read about on these pages knew what to do to overcome, they all were challenged in some way or another. They held onto their strong faith, but there were many roller-coaster rides to get through the dust buildup that had occurred. When we find ourselves in the ash heap, we should know we are in dangerous territory. Our thinking and emotions cannot go unchecked.

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways (Hag. 1:7).

This book is an attempt to say, "Look at what is happening to you."

If you're in a hurtful situation, keep reading.

If your mind is weary and your soul is distressed, I want you to know you're not alone.

God's Word is filled with so many passages that explain something about "the dust." Some of the verses speak of the dust in physical terms, but many others are metaphors to explain the feelings and emotions of God's people.

At the end of each chapter there will be an assignment. We Dust Girls need something to help guide us in the process of healing.

PREFACE

- 🍃 Dust Girls understand truths that will point us in His direction.
- 🍃 Dust Girls are taken to the place where we know that we need Him and Him alone to come out of the ashes.



come on, let's dive in and make the dust fly!
A recovering Ash Heap Girl.

—Debbie Dupuy

CHAPTER

1

HOW I CAME TO BE A DUST GIRL

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

—GENESIS 2:7

I am writing these collections of “dust” because I am a Dust Girl. You are too, but you may not realize it.

You see, my friend, we are made of dust. We came from the dust. But there is one thing that separates us from the animals that God created; He breathed into our nostrils, and we became a living soul. So I like to say, “We are Dust Girls with a soul.”

Not only are we made of dust, but we will return to dust.

All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return (Eccles. 3:20).

Emotionally, we can feel like dust and ashes.

How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed like the moth (Job 4:19).



Down in the Dust

I was going through a very difficult time in my life. A time unlike many other difficulties I had faced. This one came for my soul. I have been through so many struggles from an early age. However, I do not write this as one who cannot see the hand of God or His blessings in my life. Oh, no! Somehow, through life's unsettling circumstances, I had always managed to keep going, to keep smiling, and I never lost my joy.

But this time was different. I experienced something that left me feeling confused and ambushed. It was something unexplainable. Have you ever been in one of those situations? This experience left me feeling broken mentally, emotionally, and physically. But the worst of it was that I became broken spiritually. I lost my joy. I was down in the dust. Can you relate?

Yes, I kept believing.

Yes, I knew the promises of God.

Yes, I believed all of them. But my soul felt ragged and raw. I found it hard to smile, and I suffered many nights questioning who I am and really, if I am God's Girl.

I told myself constantly:

☞ God's Girls know better.

☞ God's Girls do better.

☞ God's Girls keep their joy.

☞ God's Girls realize "this too will pass," so keep smiling.

☞ God's Girls know how to live life more fully.

I knew all of this, but it didn't feel like I knew it. Does that make sense? I could no longer fake it until I made it.

Maybe you've questioned yourself, and just maybe you've had some of these same struggles. If you have, then my prayer is that these words will bring you comfort and relief in your situation.

Let's face it—everyone struggles from time to time, but for some of us, it's hard to break free and find our joy again.



How I Came to Realize I Was a Dust Girl



I had gone to see my friend, who also has been my OB-GYN nurse practitioner for many years.

My blood pressure normally runs in the range of a very fit sixteen-year-old girl. But on that day, my blood pressure told a different story. “Something isn’t right here,” she said.

She asked me why my blood pressure was so elevated. I paused, and then I reluctantly explained all I had been experiencing. I told her how long the situation I had been in had lasted, and I shared that at this point it was affecting more than my mental state. It was attacking my physical condition. She promised to pray for me, and she encouraged me to keep going. She has been a constant encourager to me because she knows I am a Bible teacher. She knows that my soul and spirit can be under attack. And she reminded me of this.

Two weeks passed, and I was at the doctor’s office again, waiting for test results. My friend entered the room, and we talked about many things, as always. Then she asked me how I was doing and if the situation I had been dealing with had changed.

I said, “I am doing okay, I suppose, but my anxiety is off the charts.” Then I started to apologize for feeling this way: “I feel such despair some days, and I should know better. I am a Christian. I know the Lord, and I know how I should be responding, but I just can’t seem to get myself together.” The truth was, I felt so discouraged and embarrassed as His child.

Then she kindly said, “Oh, Debbie, you’re just a Dust Girl—that’s what you are; you’re made of dust.”

I felt a lump in my throat. Tears filled my eyes. A tear ran slowly down my face. Then another. I swallowed hard and said, “You are exactly right! I am a Dust Girl!”

I don’t remember much of our conversation after that. My mind was reeling over her words. My heart felt at that moment such a calming effect, like someone was offering me an explanation, some compassion, and an answer to my circumstances. Because I am human, I am made of dust, and it’s okay to feel deep emotions. God made us this way. It’s perfectly okay to realize that sometimes we just need

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to step back, take a deep breath, and understand a few things about being made of dust:

- 🌿 Dust Girls experience the pain and suffering of this earth.
- 🌿 Dust Girls live between two worlds: the seen and the unseen.
- 🌿 Dust Girls do their fair share of mourning.
- 🌿 Dust Girls realize that sometimes life isn't fair.
- 🌿 Dust Girls recognize that God has made us with emotions and feelings.
- 🌿 Dust Girls understand what it means to be in the ash heap!

Beauty for Ashes

Merriam-Webster defines *ash heap* as “a pile or mound of ashes and other waste—often used figuratively.” I have been in an ash heap. I felt like my life had been a mound of rubble due to circumstances beyond my control.

- 🌿 Have you ever found yourself hurting and cast down because of something out of your control?
- 🌿 Have you ever felt like you were in a mound of rubble and breathing in the ashes?
- 🌿 Have you been totally bewildered at the events or circumstances of your life without any explanation for *why is this happening to me?*

The beautiful part of being made of dust is that we have life breathed into our nostrils by God Himself; we don't have to stay in the dust. His life in us is how we make our way out of the ash heap!

Our Lord's favor is upon us, dear ones, and He came to help us out of the ashes and dust.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the

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day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified (Isa. 61:1–3 NKJV).

Remember that Jesus was given the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue (Luke 4:17–21). He stopped at verse 2, and did not read, “and the day vengeance of our God.” This referred to the second coming which had not been fulfilled at that time.

Read Isaiah 61:1–3 again. How do the terms *mourn, grieve, ashes, and spirit of despair* describe the way Dust Girls feel sometimes?

What is the great exchange in Isaiah 61:1–3 for everything we face? Make a list. What are we given instead of ashes? Mourning? Spirit of despair?

How did Jesus fulfill every exchange for us and why is this important when we find ourselves in the ashes?

Our God will comfort all who mourn, and He will provide for those who grieve. Our God loves to reverse our hurtful circumstances and replace the ash heap with a crown of beauty because of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Instead of all the mourning from the pain, we can come out of the ashes by putting on our garment of praise. Then, rather than feeling that heavy spirit of despair, we become a mighty oak tree of righteousness, planted to display the splendor of the Lord.

My friend, you may not feel like a mighty oak tree right now, but I hope this little collection of words from a brokenhearted Dust Girl

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will encourage you if you're in the ashes. I want you to know that our God has more in store for you than the ash heap!

Join me as we study the lives and words of God's people, who knew how to come out of the ashes and display His splendor. My prayer for you, dear reader, is that your grief, mourning, and despair will turn to joy.

Enlist in the Dust Girls recovery group and adopt this remedy: "Leave it all in the hands that were wounded for you."¹ After all, Isaiah 61 is a prophecy about our Messiah. He came and He fulfilled every word, so there's no reason for you to stay in the ashes. It's time to come out of the ashes and recover!

ASSIGNMENT



Take the first step to recovery. Come to terms with the fact that you are a Dust Girl. Say to yourself, "I am a Dust Girl, life can be tough, but I know who is tougher! I'm coming out of the ash heap!" You will accomplish this only by "leaving it all in the hands that were wounded for you."



¹ Elisabeth Elliot, *Keep a Quiet Heart* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1995), p. 168.



DUSTBUSTERS AND ENABLING QUOTES

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.

—Psalm 40:1–2 NKJV

You are My servant,
I have chosen you and have not cast you
away:
Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right
hand.

—Isaiah 41:9–10 NKJV

Leave everything in God's hands and eventually you'll see God's hands in everything. I have struggled in taking things back, but I've never regretted giving anything to the Lord. My life is in His capable hands.²

Life is not a straight line leading from one blessing to the next and then finally to heaven. Life is a winding and troubled road. Switchback after switchback. And the point of biblical stories like Joseph and Job and Esther and Ruth is to help us feel in our bones (not just know in our heads) that God is for us in all these strange turns. God is not just showing up after the trouble and cleaning it up. He is plotting the course and managing the troubles with far-reaching purposes for our good and for the glory of Jesus Christ.³

—John Piper

2 Paraphrase of quote and comment made by em_jei, July 2020. Accessed June 25, 2024. <https://faithpixel.com/t/those-who-leave-everything-in-gods-hands-will-eventually-see-gods-hands-in-everything/3532>

3 John Piper, *A Sweet and Bitter Providence: Sex, Race, and the Sovereignty of God*, GoodReads.com. Accessed June 25, 2024. https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/25423.John_Piper

CHAPTER 2

UNEXPECTED DUST STORMS

Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on
me, for I am desolate and afflicted.
The troubles of my heart have enlarged;
bring me out of my distresses! Look on my
affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins.

—PSALM 25:16–18 NKJV

One minute everything is perfectly normal, the next an unexpected dust storm arrives. On July 25, 2021, Kanosh, Utah, experienced one of these storms. The blinding dust blew in, and sadly, eight people lost their lives in a twenty-two-car pile-up.¹

Just like the dust storm in Utah, life can be like an unannounced dusty blizzard. One minute you are driving along listening to your favorite playlist, and the next, an unexpected situation blindsides you, leaving you bewildered and stuck in a place you never could have imagined.

I never knew that dust storms existed until I started studying dust. I know that's an odd subject, but stay with me, you'll understand soon enough. One day, as I was researching, I found articles about dust storms and how they occur. I was astounded. What I learned about dust storms not only helped me to explain how I was

1 Scott D. Pierce, "Utah's drought may have contributed to the 22-vehicle crash that killed 8 people," *The Salt Lake Tribune*. July 27, 2021. Accessed June 25, 2024. <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2021/07/27/utahs-drought-may-have/>

