A Simple Alarm Will Change Your World

For my thirty-first birthday, my husband Dan gave me a running watch. What he intended as a gift, I received as criticism wrapped around my wrist. A running watch, really?

*Great. So he thinks I’m fat.* Well, the reality was that after having two children in two years, my pre-pregnancy jeans were a lost cause.

To make matters worse, Dan set the alarm to sound at 3:00 pm the next day so I wouldn’t be “late again” to a doctor’s appointment. Perfect! After seven years of marriage, my husband summed me up as *fat and always late*.

Laying my head on the pillow that night, the voices in my head told me I’d never be thin or beautiful again.

Sure enough, when the alarm went off the next day at 3:00 pm, I was still behind the wheel instead of in the waiting room. As if to rub it in, the alarm went off again the next day. And the next, and the next. I hadn’t a clue which combination of buttons to press to reset it, and the directions were long gone. Even though I wanted to throw it in the trash, a watch on my wrist was the only way to keep track of time in that pre-cell-phone era. Those repetitive beeps became just another annoying interruption in my crazy-busy days.

Eventually, I noticed that no matter where I was when the alarm sounded: the park, the grocery, the street, or at home, negative thoughts would be scrolling through my mind, sometimes consuming me:

• I’d compare my life to hers and feel defeated.

• I’d resentfully mull over his words and grow distant.

• Scenes from my past would replay in my mind, stoking anger and unforgiveness.

Had I sold out to mediocrity? Was life just an endless cycle of diapers, dishes, and laundry, snuffing out what little remained of youthful joy? Independent yet miserable, bright but dimming, optimistic but overwhelmed by criticism,

**I was sound asleep in my faith.**

I knew that unless something changed, I was going to remain miserable and, even worse, pass my destructive attitude on to my kids.

Too broke to hire a counselor, I decided to stop my crazy train of toxic thinking by turning to America’s “spiritual mentor,” Oprah. She gave free advice every afternoon. Back in 2000, she raved about keeping a daily gratitude journal. If gratitude helped Oprah, I figured, maybe it could help me too. So for less than a dollar, I bought a small notebook and placed it in the diaper bag, the one thing I never, ever left behind.

Day after day, when my 3:00 p.m. alarm went off, I’d stop what I was doing, pull out the journal, and write down the date, where we were, and one thing I was thankful for. Within a few days, I began to notice a positive change in my thinking. Even if I’d been thinking negatively at 3:00 p.m., I could easily redirect my thoughts by focusing on thankfulness. These few moments of gratitude were in fact transforming my afternoons from something to be endured into something to be enjoyed. I’d discovered a powerful truth:

**Our minds aren’t capable of being both negative and thankful at the same time.**

Eventually, God began to break into my heart when the alarm sounded, giving me gentle reminders that He was walking beside me. Eventually, my “3 O’Clock Wake Up Call” became an act of daily worship that transformed un-forgiveness into compassion, bitterness into gratitude, and anger into love. I began to ask God into areas of my life that had previously been “off limits,” and joyfully discovered that the more I met Him at 3:00 pm with a thankful heart, the more my desire to know Him grew.

I began jotting down what I called my “3 O’Clock Moments:” where I was and what I was thankful for when the alarm went off, on whatever piece of paper I could find. These often brief notations began to serve as a record of how God’s mighty hand was moving powerfully in my life. Over time, I could see how each day’s seemingly insignificant and unrelated events were really linked together; divine lessons as part of a much bigger picture. I had so much to be thankful for.

I believe we all do.

We are all too busy. Many of us are trapped in cycles of despair, hopelessness, anger, and unforgiveness that are pulling us away from the God we so desperately desire to be close to. What if a simple alarm at 3:00 pm could get people to stop, look up to God, give Him thanks and praise, and live out their faith in Jesus? Well, that would change the world.

Change happens one person at a time, so join me in setting your alarm for 3:00 pm. Ignite your faith and be the spark that sets others aflame!

**Thank you for joining the 3 O’Clock Wake Up Call Movement**