


100 Days to Finding the
Hope and Joy You Want

THE SUN SHINE MIND



TANYA RAD &
RAQUELLE STEVENS

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

The Sunshine Mind

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

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My name is Tanya, and I'm a modern woman. I march to the beat of my own drum. I am annoyingly optimistic. I give people the benefit of the doubt. I sing out loud when I go on runs (yes, I'm *that* person). I watch rom-coms on the daily. I'm a hopeful romantic. And my relationships are everything to me. The top questions I am always asked are, "How are you always so happy?" and "How do you stay so positive?" The truth is, I'm not always, but that can be our little secret. I try to keep it real, and I exude happiness and positivity by choice and am able to maintain both because I am deeply rooted in my faith.

In my twenties I experienced a major heartbreak and felt enormous rejection. Little did I know I was being redirected to an even greater calling and destiny than the one I had imagined for myself. When I was laid off from my first job in radio, I doubted my abilities and felt terribly lost and hopeless. But a force much bigger than my own was pushing me out of a situation I now realize I would never have left on my own. I didn't know then that I was meant to be in a bigger city, with a bigger platform. It's experiences like these that remind me there's always a plan, even when you can't see it. I've seen God work in beautiful ways in my life, and it's always changed me for the better, from the inside out.

My faith wasn't always this way. I was raised in the Serbian Orthodox Church. Being part of that church was more of a Sunday formality than an internal experience or connection. I didn't truly find my faith until my early twenties. I hate to admit this, but that major heartbreak is what brought me to my knees and ultimately landed me in a Bible study.

I'm a bleeding heart. I wear my soul on my sleeve. All I ever wanted in life was to get married and have babies. So when the one relationship I'd put all those expectations on came crashing down, I was left sleepless, hopeless, confused, weak, and majorly codependent on others. I didn't know who Tanya was, what she wanted in life, or even what she did for fun. I was a shell of a woman, and as hard as it is to admit, it took me feeling this low to become the strong, independent, self-sufficient, modern woman I am today.

As I mentioned, this breakup left me on the floor. I was a cliché of a woman scorned. I went to too many parties. I was intimate with too many guys. I watched all the sad movies and ate way too much ice cream. Spoiler alert: None of it helped—not even a little. One day at work, I was crying in the hallway (which was a daily ritual for me at that point) when a friend of mine, Jason Kennedy, who was hosting for E! News at the time, saw me. He didn't know what was going on or why I was crying, but he came over to say he was sorry for whatever I was going through and asked if I'd like to come to his Bible study that night.

My mind raced. Bible study? He offered me Bible study? Not a good-looking single friend to set me up with but . . . Bible study? At that point I had tried everything else, so I figured why not give this a try? Plus, I was out of ice cream. So that night I went to Bible study. I sat in the middle row, far to the left, and was moved to tears. It was as if the pastor knew exactly what to say to make me feel less alone. For the first time in months, I finally felt like myself again.

One of the friends I met that night—Raquelle Stevens, the coauthor of this book—is like my sister now. She was happy, self-assured, secure, and deeply rooted, which I so desperately wanted to be. She was—and is—sunshine in human form. Little did I know that night, she would be a rock in my life, helping me navigate personalities, egos, contracts—you name it. The entertainment industry is not for the faint of heart, and Raquelle has talked me through every single argument, squabble, or moment of self-doubt I've had in my career while also helping me continue to shine my light.

I hope *The Sunshine Mind* is a lifesaver for you. I hope it brings you steadiness. I pray it restores hope in your heart in the places where you may have lost it. I pray that this book—and the sunshine mindset—creates a beautiful community of people who want to live life through hope-colored glasses.

Enjoy!

Tanya

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I remember meeting Tanya Rad at her first night of Bible study like it was yesterday. Even though I had grown up in church, the Bible study Jason Kennedy had started was a special place for me. I had recently moved to LA from Chicago, and I was lonely. Shortly after moving, I had prayed, “God, if LA is where I’m meant to be, I pray that I would make the best friends I’ve ever made in my life and that you would make this clear to me, or I’m moving back to Chicago.” I gave myself a one-year timeline, and a few months after I said that prayer, I walked into Bible study and met Tanya. I instantly knew she was one of those friends I had prayed for.

After we met, we made plans for lunch, and it was then that she opened up about the challenges she was having at work—people saying she was too positive, too nice, and that she would never make it in this industry because people never get to the top being that way. My advice to her was to keep being herself because that’s exactly why God had given her that position—to spread her light and positivity, to be different in an industry that can sometimes be toxic.

Through our friendship, our shared spirituality, and going to Bible study, no matter how hard life got, Tanya always stayed true to who she was, and that is something I admire and respect. Now, after almost nine years of friendship, I have seen her year after year continually choose the high road, and I am so proud of the woman she has become. The light she gives out on television, the radio, her podcast, and social media is truly remarkable. I believe God has honored her efforts to stay true to herself because that’s exactly who he created her to be, and I’m so grateful to be her friend.

When Tanya approached me about writing this book together, I thought of how beautiful it is that our faith journeys has led both of us here. As we were coming up with a title for this book, something that resonated with both of us was the word *sunshine*. With both of us being eternal optimists, people often assume life is easy for us—that we wake up happy every morning—but that couldn't be further from the truth. Like everyone else, we face challenges and hard times, which affect us deeply.

I truly love God, love life, and love people. My greatest desire has always been, and always will be, to spread God's love to people and, in return, to see people live free. Most of all, I want to help you shine to your fullest potential.

I am truly honored that you've picked up *The Sunshine Mind*, and it's my hope and prayer that you will find freedom, love, and light in the best thing I have ever known and will ever know—a relationship with God.

Raquel

INTRODUCTION

We're so glad you're here with us to learn about and share in our mindset, the Sunshine Mind. We see this mindset as a daily practice. It's not a formula or a quick fix, but rather the way you go about your life each day, one day at a time. We all know life can throw us a mean curveball. Facing challenges is part of the human experience. As you read through this devotional, we hope your faith is strengthened each day and you are able to navigate life's obstacles with positivity, grace, and light. Because living life with a sunshine mindset means exuding light, positivity, and promise. *The Sunshine Mind* will restore your hope, give you practical ways to deal with the stresses that come with this digital age, and help you shine from the inside out.

We knew this book was necessary because we listened to you, whether it was those of you who messaged us on social media or walked right up to us while we were out and about, asking for better ways to conquer anxiety, overcome stress, or become stronger than the pressures of trying to live up to the world's expectations. We read and took to heart the brave comments left on our pages about needing strength to cope with the disappointments of life and wanting to discover real peace and joy. You—our listeners, followers, and friends—were the inspiration for this project. Our hope is that you feel encouraged and inspired. Let us, two girls who have been there and done that, be your gentle reminder to listen to God, pursue your passions, and spread God's love and positivity to the people around you. Remember, they're lucky to be in your presence, as are we.



Day 1

TRUST GOD'S PLANS

*"I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to
give you hope and a future."*

—JEREMIAH 29:11

Tanya

It was my senior year of college, and I was living my best life in a house with seven of my best friends and sorority sisters. (Go, Theta!) I was working my dream job as a morning show producer at a local radio station while participating in a senior honors program I'd worked hard to get into. My daily existence was the epitome of work hard, play hard—waking up before the sun to produce my awesome morning show, taking classes during the afternoon, and dashing from day to date in the evening. Life was fast and fun at twenty-one! But I'll never forget the day the fun rug was pulled out from under my feet. It started like any normal workday, except there was a weird energy in the building. Something felt off. And boy, was it! It was on that day, two weeks before my college graduation, that I was let go from my coveted position at the morning show.

I took being let go very personally. What had I done wrong? How could this have happened? Even after I was assured that this was a companywide decision and most part-time positions had been eliminated, I still didn't believe it. It *must* have been something I'd done. My mind spun as a dark cloud of self-doubt came over me. I told myself I hadn't been good enough to keep my first real job. If I had been better, this wouldn't have happened. This, of course, was before I'd found my relationship with Jesus. Yet years before I even knew who God was, here he was pushing me out of a space that was too small for me. You see,

what I didn't realize at the time was that God had bigger plans for my career. He wanted me to have a greater opportunity and a bigger platform. My postcollege plan had been to stay in Tucson, Arizona, where I was comfortable, and not push myself further. So God said, "Let me help you out here, Tanya. I'm going to gently push you out of this position so you can find your own voice and a greater calling right where I want you." This calling was in Los Angeles, at a top radio market with one of the biggest shows in the country. What I didn't realize at the time of being let go—after which I'd spend many hours, days, and nights self-analyzing, second-guessing, moping, and crying—was that this setback was actually a step *forward*—a blessing from God, who was telling me, "I have bigger plans for you. Trust me."

Tanya speaking . . . I know it can be difficult in the moment (trust me, I've dealt with a lot of rejection in my life, both personally and professionally), but think of rejection as redirection from God. When a door closes, God is calling you in a different direction. The road to success will be bumpy at times, but with God as your safety belt, the destination will be worth it.

In moments of rejection, I find it helpful to write myself letters. I write a letter to my future self when I experience this rejection professionally. And I write a letter to my future husband when the rejection deals with matters of the heart. I write about the hurt and disappointment I feel in that exact moment but end the letter with a message of hope, knowing that God sees the bigger picture and will fulfill the desires of my heart because he placed them there.

Plus, the letters are something fun to look at January 1 of every year to see the progress I've made (and the love letters to the person you haven't even met yet could be a nice little treat to give to your future spouse one day!)

THE SUNSHINE MIND WAY TO . . . TRUST GOD'S PLANS

SHOWCASE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS. Frame and display your diploma, certification, or any other accomplishment you worked hard for. Don't let an award collect dust in a dark closet. Put that baby on a prominent shelf!

JOURNAL. Putting thoughts on paper can give you some aha moments.

TALK TO FRIENDS WHO SHARE YOUR FAITH. When you connect with people who come from the same place spiritually, you're able to meet each other on a deeper, more meaningful level.

PRAY EVERY DAY. Keep the faith by remaining consistent in your relationship with God.

LISTEN TO GOD. Follow the breadcrumbs set out for you.