



COUNTERFEIT
Comforts

**Freedom from the Imposters
That Keep You from True Peace,
Purpose and Passion**

Robia Scott



Chosen

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

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To my husband, James,
who was worth the wait.

And I will pray the Father,
and he shall give you another Comforter,
that he may abide with you for ever.

John 14:16 KJV

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Introduction

I was living the dream—or so it seemed.

At twelve years old, I saw the movie *Flashdance* and from that moment I knew exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life: become a professional dancer. Inspired by the film to look the part, à la Jennifer Beals, I immediately permed my hair, cut up my sweatshirts and decided that leg warmers were the perfect accessory for every outfit. (If you remember the '80s, you know what I am talking about.)

I also began taking jazz, ballet and tap classes after school. Within a few years I was offered a dance scholarship at the prestigious Dupree Dance Academy in Hollywood, California, and at age sixteen I landed my first professional job. I was hired as a dancer in singer Debbie Gibson's music video for the song "Shake Your Love." Later I was signed by Prince (yes, *that* Prince) to star as "Pearl" in all of his music videos for the album *Diamonds and Pearls*. That led to traveling the world as one of his backup dancers.

After my tour with Prince ended, I felt I had reached my peak of success as a dancer, so at 22 years old, I retired from dance. I transitioned into acting and pursued the craft with

the same fervency with which I had studied dance. A year later I began appearing on several popular TV shows.

But something was not right. I had a successful career as a dancer under my belt, and the next one, as an actress, was taking off. I had fame, financial security and everything that was supposed to bring fulfillment, happiness and comfort, but I was definitely not comfortable. I was tormented. I was obsessed with my body image, somewhat the norm for every woman, but being a dancer and actress multiplied the torment exponentially. My thought life revolved around what I ate, how I looked and what I weighed. I had become anxious, worried, fearful, a chain smoker, and though I was making a great living, I was in debt due to excessive spending.

I was a girl who seemed to have it all, and to have it all together. Though I may have appeared confident and in control, I was being controlled by food, controlled by cigarettes, controlled by emotions, and, truthfully, I felt completely out of control. My deepest desire was to find freedom, to be at rest on the inside and feel at ease with myself and with my life.

For a time, I sought spirituality in the New Age movement prevalent in Southern California. I also read self-help books, but nothing I was doing or reading was helping me in the areas in which I found myself struggling. I finally had to be honest with myself and admit that my best thinking and figuring only dug me into a deeper hole. I realized then that, in order to help myself, I needed something or Someone bigger than I.

No problem can be solved by the same level of consciousness that created it.

Albert Einstein

I had always believed in God, but knew there must be more to Him than I was currently experiencing. I was open and looking for answers.

Sometime later, I found myself sitting in a casting office with other actresses waiting to audition for a commercial. One of the women walked across the room to the water fountain. She was African American with short hair, and I noticed the words I AM tattooed on the back of her neck. Coming from the New Age movement, I was familiar with the lingo of positive affirmations. They all begin with “I am.” I am the light, I am love, etc. Out of curiosity I asked her if her tattoo was New Age.

“Oh, no, no, no,” she replied. “I AM is the God of the Bible; when God was asked His name He replied, ‘I AM.’” She pulled a small Bible out of her purse to show me. Then she started talking about Jesus. Instantly the room grew silent and a palpable tension overrode the light and easy atmosphere. The woman next to me shifted in her seat. Two gals sitting across from me shot each other a look, then stood up and walked outside. Funny how you can talk about Buddha, Kabbala and even witchcraft, and no one has a problem with it, but as soon as someone says “Jesus,” people start to squirm. I did not understand everything my new friend said, but she was animated as she spoke, and I liked her. I asked her if she happened to know of a cool church. She did.

I joined her at church that Sunday, and the next, and the one after that. What I was hearing about God started to make sense—not perfectly—but the dots indeed began to connect, and once I had a few more Sundays under my belt, I made the decision to accept Christ. I became a Christian.

Still, I was nervous about what becoming “born-again” would entail. Would I have to sell my belongings and become a missionary in Africa? Would God tone down my personality and morph me into a cookie-cutter born-again version of myself? Could I still wear cute shoes?

One day I came across a story that quelled my fears and put my heart at ease. It was about Michelangelo, the artist

who painted the Sistine Chapel, and who also sculpted the statue of *David*, among many other great works of art. Before Michelangelo began to sculpt, he would stand in front of his “canvas,” a large block of marble, and stare into it. Before even picking up his chisel, he could “see” the finished work inside of that marble. Instead of trying to create the masterpiece, he simply removed the excess marble that was keeping it from being what it already was.

I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.

Michelangelo

That story brought a shift and a release for me. I realized that God works this way, too, and that surrendering my life to Christ did not mean that He would take away my personality, everything I loved and what ultimately made me *me*. Like Michelangelo, God only chips away at the excess: the fears, the addictions, the wrong belief systems, and the mental and emotional torment that hinder us from being the masterpieces He created us to be!

So my journey of faith began. What I had not been able to figure out on my own, God began to reveal. And then, in one moment of prayer, the Lord spoke something to me that changed my life forever. . . .



The Only Way To Is Through

The best way out is always through.

Robert Frost

I do not remember a time in my life when food was not an issue. At seven years old I could tell you the exact number of calories in a peanut butter and jelly sandwich along with every other food that went into my mouth. Becoming a dancer as a teenager only exacerbated the problem. The competition was fierce, and there was an exaggerated emphasis on weight and physical appearance. One particular day, I was eating lunch with my best friend in between ballet classes. We started off with salads, but ended up devouring a couple of huge brownies. Afterward, we decided to throw up. I don't know if we had learned about this practice on TV or heard about other girls doing it, but from that point on

bulimia became another tool I used to control my weight. I did not force myself to vomit every day, but if I overate, the option was always there for me.

Fifteen years later, and two years into my walk as a Christian, my struggle with food had become worse than ever. Bulimia had grabbed ahold of me, and what used to be an occasional outlet now controlled me. My thoughts were consumed with my weight—what I would or would not eat, and how my body looked. Most of my thoughts in a day were centered on food. I was mentally tormented and could not have been further from freedom. Unfortunately, I seemed to get a lot of “nice” advice in church: pray more, read the Bible more. I was praying! I was reading the Bible! Neither was helping.

I did not understand how all my prayer, studying the Word, and church attendance could affect every area in my life—except my tortuous relationship with food. How could this be? Once I became a Christian, wasn’t all the bad stuff supposed to go away or at least start getting better? Some of my darkest days occurred after I became a Christian. It was not supposed to be this way.

The Bible says that all the promises of God are available to me and that I can live in total freedom, and that is exactly what I expected. If I was giving my life and everything I had to God, then I expected God to give everything He had to me. Remaining in bondage in even one area of my life was unacceptable.

“Okay, Lord,” I cried out, “what is the problem? You need to show me what is going on here; I need answers. I cannot continue to live like this. How do I get free?”

Then God answered me. Did that mean I heard an audible voice? No, but all of a sudden I had a sense in my spirit, and a thought came to my mind that I had never considered before:

You have too many counterfeit comforters.

What does that mean, too many counterfeit comforters? I had never heard that phrase before. I pondered it, and the Holy Spirit began putting the pieces together for me. In the Bible, one of the names of the Holy Spirit is Comforter. The Lord showed me that whenever I felt rejected, sad or disappointed, I did not go to the Holy Spirit for comfort, but to Mrs. Fields' cookies or to my good friends Ben and Jerry. (Chocolate fudge brownie ice cream, in particular.) I had developed a habit of running to something—anything—but primarily to food for an emotional release or to numb out so I would not have to feel anything at all. Then I heard this:

You do not have a food issue. You have a feelings issue.

The Lord began to show me how my food issue did not have to do with food at all. I had been trying to deal with my emotions by controlling food with dieting, binging and purging. We all know that does not work, at least not for long. When eating is out of control, the food itself is not the problem. The problem is using food for what it was never intended. Food is meant to nourish the body and fuel us—not to stuff down emotions, release stress or numb us out so we cannot feel anything at all. Food was not created to be our dear friend, our confidant or our companion in a lonely world.

I did not realize it, but I was using food to comfort myself, to take the edge off and to escape. The overeating was merely a symptom and not the problem. The binging was a reaction to something else. Trying to control the eating meant I was not dealing with the root of the problem, which is why dieting did not change me. Willpower worked for a while, but I would fall into the same pattern again and again no matter how hard I resisted. Dieting worked for a time, but the results were never lasting, because it is not about controlling the eating. It is about realizing why the eating is out of control.

Pain is an indicator of a problem. However, the second we feel the slightest discomfort, our knee-jerk reaction is to do anything to relieve us of pain as quickly as possible. In our culture we are obsessed with alleviating a symptom. We are trained by society and advertising to seek a remedy for every ailment and do whatever it takes to ease the pain. We are coerced to believe that it is best not to deal with pain, but to make ourselves feel better at any cost. We have all become expert escape artists. Advertising feeds on convincing us that every product will give us the relief, the satisfaction and the deep fulfillment we are looking for. Just like physical pain indicates a problem in our bodies, emotional pain signals like a bell—ding, ding, ding—that something is going on inside of us. Our goal should not only be to eradicate the pain, but to locate the root of the problem. It is natural for us to want to stop pain, but self-medicating only achieves temporary results, and at some point, the pain will resurface. The way to lasting results is to identify the source and go to work on that.

Why is dealing with our feelings so uncomfortable? Could it be that we were never taught how to deal with our feelings, so therefore the process feels unnatural? We spend years in school learning mass amounts of information, but rarely are we instructed in school, or even at home, for that matter, how to process our feelings—so much math and so few life lessons! The church could step in to fill the gap, but unfortunately, even in most churches, we are not taught how to process our feelings.

As Christians we understand that the result of knowing God should bring us peace and joy. This understanding, however, can increase the pressure on us to appear joy filled, so much that often we fake it. Inside the church people appear to be “fine.” We are met at the front door by plastered-on smiles and bombarded by a cacophony of “praise the Lords.” Ask

someone how he or she is doing, and the conversation goes something like this:

“How are you, sister?”

“I’m blessed, you?”

“Blessed, blessed, blessed.”

“Well, praise the Lord!”

Yikes! We all have a truth meter inside of us; we know when we’re getting the real deal and when we are not. All of us desire true joy, but most of us have no idea how to achieve it. Wholeness does not transpire automatically. Breezing through the church doors does not magically transform us. There are no shortcuts in this process, and there is no side stepping around it. The only way *to* peace, joy and righteousness is *through* a little junk, gunk and funk.

We prefer to avoid the *through* part because, otherwise, we might feel pain; but there is just no going around feelings. Metaphorically speaking, you cannot get airlifted over the trash dump and placed down in the flower bed. The price of peace and authentic joy is a willingness to go through and go deep.