

Author Rothschild highlights speakers for Covenant conference

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Best-selling author, Bible study teacher and self-professed coffee lover Jennifer Rothschild will bring her Fresh Grounded Faith women's conference to eastern North Carolina in January. Rothschild is the keynote speaker for the Jan. 29-30 event, co-hosted by 10 area churches. Other guests include actress, speaker and author Lisa Whelchel and Christian recording artist Shelley Jennings.

Blind since age 15, Rothschild is the author of seven books, including "Lessons I Learned in the Dark," "Walking by Faith," "Self Talk, Soul Talk" and the recently released "Me, Myself and Lies." A wife and mother of two sons, Rothschild has appeared on "Dr. Phil" and "Good Morning America." She offers biblical advice on how to pursue a healthy and productive life. The Daily Reflector recently talked to Rothschild about her ministry, her recent media attention and her message to women.

Q: So tell me, what is Fresh Grounded Faith?

A: Fresh Grounded Faith is a national event for women, but it's designed to be regionally based, so that means when we come to North Carolina, our goal is to reach women of faith regardless of where they worship... It's a place where women of faith can come together and be inspired and equipped to live out a tenacious faith. My goal is to connect women with each other and to connect women to God.

My point was to make a Fresh Grounded Faith event for women the same kind of experience they would have in their local coffee shop. ... It's like this instant community occurs in a coffee shop. That's the whole goal of Fresh Grounded Faith, for it to be an intimate experience from woman to woman and a woman to her God and for it to have that same kind of casual, welcoming feel that a coffee shop does. ... We have a part where I and my special guest do what I call 'spill the beans.' We just take questions from the audience, girlfriend to girlfriend. Some of the questions are silly and some of the are deep and some are profound and some are life-changing and some are just (like) 'Where'd you buy your shoes?'

Q: What are you going to tell women of Greenville or the women of eastern North Carolina? What's the message?

A: I ask women to give their lives a taste test, make sure their lives are really satisfying and bringing them what they desire. I'm convinced that whatever their questions are, faith is the answer, and whatever they're missing can be found in a faith relationship with Jesus Christ.

I deal with some of life's biggest questions: God, are you there? God, do you even care? And then that tough question: God, is this really fair? Women come away from that message with a deep satisfaction, not because I give them the answers to those questions but because with asking the questions and

exploring in a very honest way the real issues of life, they come out with an encounter with God. And an encounter with God is far more satisfying than answers.

Q: You have gotten quite a lot of media attention lately, “Dr. Phil” and some of the national morning shows. What's the message that's attracting mainstream attention?

A: When you look at the condition of our world, when you look at the economy, when you look at my story of losing my sight, it is unreasonable that I should have hope and that I should have peace and that I should be thriving. We all want to live that unreasonably. We want to be able to defy what seems like it should be the norm, and I think that's a reflection of God's grace in our life. ...We can all have hope that defies our circumstances.

Q: You do have a rather unusual circumstance, and yet that seems to be appealing to a broad spectrum of people. Does it ever surprise you .. that so many women seem to identify with you?

A: You know what I think it is? It's that blindness in my life is different, yet, not unlike any other loss that other people experience. The loss of a marriage through divorce, the loss of a spouse through death, the loss of a dream ... it's loss. Blindness is just, I think, an ongoing, minute-by-minute, day-by-day picture of living with loss, and everybody has to do that on some level. I believe that my story has been attractive to a larger audience because it really, in many ways, is their story. They live in darkness. ... tragedy and confusion. I believe blindness becomes, in many ways, a picture of living within that and learning how to still really be captivated and bolstered by the true light that comes from Christ.