

## Introduction

Hello friend. Welcome to Drawing Near, with Mary Ethel Eckard, author of The Making of a Dragonfly, available on Amazon. You can also visit me on Facebook or on my website, [maryetheleckard.com](http://maryetheleckard.com).

Thank you for inviting me into your world. One of my favorite things to do is to visit with friends, one on one, and share deep truths of what God is teaching and how He is working. When I think of this show, I have the image of sitting with you, face to face, discussing the things of God and sharing life together.

Well, now that I have two episodes behind me and am becoming a little more comfortable with the process, (just a little) I want to share a little of my story with you. Today's program is entitled, "God's Dragonfly". I'll share a little of my testimony. If you've ever heard me speak or read my book, you're familiar with the stories. Sometimes it's good to hear a story from the mouth of a storyteller.

- Who Am I? I'm Mary Ethel Eckard ... You can call me Mary, or Mary Ethel, or Mary Ethel Eckard.
  - My name comes from my grandmothers. One named Mary. One named Ethel. I was the 2<sup>nd</sup> daughter born to my parents and was honored and blessed to be named after both sides of the family.
  - I was born in Flint, Michigan and grew up in York, SC, which is a suburb-ish of Charlotte, NC
  - Marrying my forever husband started a series of moves around the country in support of his career. So I have lived in the states of SC, NC, TX, MD, IL and back to TX where I am now.
  - I have amazing friends in each place I have lived and am blessed that God allowed me to move about and see bits of His world.
  - I have four children – 2 daughters, 2 sons and 8 grandchildren.
  - As you can imagine, I am a lover of my children and grandchildren.
  
- In my faith journey, I asked Jesus into my heart at the age of 8 at FBC in York. I remember being in church, singing "Just as I am", when I felt my heart pounding out of my chest and somehow, with my 8-year-old understanding, I knew it was Jesus knocking on the door of my heart. So I asked Him to come in and lead me through life.
- I grew up in a Christian home, loved by my mom and dad, surrounded by cousins, friends, aunts and uncles, grandparents, church and family. It was a great childhood.
- I lived my Christian faith to the best of my ability based on what I knew from others. I made a lot of mistakes, hurt a lot of people with my words and actions, and sowed many seeds that would later reap a harvest of pain and disappointment. But through it all, my heart's desire was to be God's light in a world of darkness – but again, my understanding of God was what I had learned through others – I call it a secondhand knowledge of a God who desires a firsthand relationship.
- When I reached my mid-thirties, I started questioning everything about life, especially my faith. Was I truly a Christian? If so, where was the abundance I heard about in church. If this was what being a Christian was all about, I wasn't sure I wanted it. I felt empty and dull inside, with only a hint of joy that came from a church service when the music was really moving. Jesus had to offer more than that – after all, He died for my sins so I could experience peace and joy.
- I began questioning God. Are you real? If you are real, I want to know you more. I began asking God to rework me from the inside out and to give me a taste of the abundant life.

- I give more detail into these next two portions of my testimony in my book, *The Making of a Dragonfly*, but to put it briefly, God sent a woman into my life, named Patty, who had a passion for God and would speak of His love and activity in her life. As a matter of fact, Patty invited me to a Bible study so I could learn to hear God's voice directly. Her stories created in me a deep hunger and stirring to know God more, and I began leaning into Him to gain a better understanding of who He is and the role He played in my life – past, present and future.
- Friends, don't ever think that your stories about God and His activity in your life are falling on deaf ears and hitting against a brick wall. Share your personal stories of God's goodness and movement in your life every chance you get and leave the results of who hears and what they do with your stories in God's hands. He promises that the words He sends forth from your mouth will accomplish the purpose for which they are sent.
- I determined if Patty could hear God's promptings and voice, then maybe He would bless me with the same ability. I'll let you in on a secret – we all have the invitation to lean into God so we, too, can hear His voice and promptings. As a matter of fact, scripture says He speaks to us often during the day; when our ears are not tuned to hear Him, we miss out. It's our responsibility to lean in – scripture says when we draw near to God, He draws near to us.
- God, in His goodness, heard my prayer and desire to know Him more. I longed to hear God's voice and promptings, and my ear was tuned in so I wouldn't miss out. God often answers our prayers by sending people into our path – He answered this prayer through an energetic four-year-old boy named Johnston. Johnston was a ball of energy who loved playing with my sons.
- He came over some evenings to play, accompanied by his sister or his babysitter. I later learned Johnston's mom had kidney disease and went to dialysis 3 times a week, 4 hours each time. I made it a point to meet her and to question her about her disease, the hardships associated with dialysis, the struggles of working full time, having a family to care for, and dialysis. As she shared her story, I felt a nudge within my spirit and a knowing that I had a kidney for her.
- It was as if God had placed us in the same town, the same neighborhood, on the same street, so He could give her the gift of health, and He could give me the gift of answered prayer.
- I give more detail about the kidney donation and God's miracle in working it out in my book, so I will keep this story short – but suffice it to say – God used a four-year-old boy to completely redirect my life. For to hear the voice of God and know it was Him is a life changing experience. And obedience to His voice brought an abundance of spiritual blessing I had never known before.
- After the kidney donation, it seemed God went silent. I was devastated and began taking morning prayer walks to reach out to God and see if I could find Him again. I suspected He had used me for a kidney donation and was finished using me in life, but something within told me what I was suspecting was a lie. So morning prayer walks were filled with quite a bit of emotion.
- At this time, my sons were working on an insect collection. As I would walk each morning, I would collect dead bugs for this collection, as directed by the sons. After a few weeks, there was space for one more bug – big enough for a butterfly – or even a dragonfly.
- As I went into my morning walk, still wondering if God had a plan and purpose for my life beyond a kidney donation, I prayed, "Lord, if you are real – if you truly have a plan for my life – will you give me a dragonfly for this collection?"
- On the third day of walking, I continued to pray this prayer, looking desperately for a dead dragonfly. It seemed God had gone silent. But in my path, was a dead dragonfly. Not only had he

given me a dead bug, but He answered the prayer that yes indeed He had a plan and purpose for my life.

- After a few days of pondering the dragonfly, I asked the Lord why He would place a dragonfly on my heart for the insect collection rather than another insect. I began researching the life cycle of a dragonfly and discovered something beautiful.
- Let me read this to you – it's on **page 13 of my book**.
- Now I could see a little further into the future. God had gifted me with the ability to hear His voice, now He was showing me I was to be His light in a darkened world, to pull in His love and shine it out for the world to see and know. I prayed, "I want to be your dragonfly."
- In praying this, I had no idea He would use existing problems in my life to bring about His solution. So, He began the process of transforming my secondhand knowledge of Him into a firsthand knowledge, by teaching me to surrender my life to Him. That surrender came through a tearing down of life, values, relationships, teachings, characteristics, motives, insecurities, and more.
- Again, for the sake of time, I will not go into the whole story. What I will say is this:
- I was married for 25 years to forever husband. Then I wasn't. Overcoming the pain between those 2 statements took years.
- The pain and devastation were not just about the demise of the marriage; I began to realize that buried beneath the rubble were also issues of insecurity, entitlement, discontent, rebelliousness, and fear – fear of failure, of abandonment, of rejection, and the fear of being alone.
- When the marital separation occurred, the tidal wave of emotions swept over me and took me to a low point in life where the only way I could go was up, and the only one who could pull me up was God. So, I reached up, and He became my life and breath and strength to make it, from day to day.
  - In the midst of that pain, God brought healing and wholeness, it was not overnight and it was not within a years time. It was a process of healing and wholeness. He gave me a new understanding of who HE is and HIS role in my life, and He taught me to walk with Him, find my value in Him, and instructed me that I would never, ever, give the reins of my life to another – whether it be family, friend, spouse, employer, or pastor. He said My life belonged to Him and I was to steward my life in such a way that HE was my all in all, and He alone would direct my path.
- In my time of despair, God took me to a sweet place of spiritual quietness, where I worked through the issues with HIM alone. As He brought the issues to my attention, I worked through them – with Him. I'm telling you, It was a season of introspection, prayer, and quiet. With Him. I can't express that often enough – in a season of despair, darkness and grief, He is the answer to all of your pain and questions, to your despair. Why do I say that?
- Because in the past I had used my words to bring everyone into my misery and opinions. Then I listened to their words and opinions to mix with mine, and picked out what I thought based on what others suggested I should think and feel.
- In my pain and desperation to fix myself in the past, I sought my value in the opinions and words of others. Because I didn't understand how my value truly comes from who God says I am, I allowed negative words of others to dictate my value..

- Part of my healing process was in discovering who I truly am – not who others have said I am, not based on what others have said about me, but the true me, hidden, deeply hidden, under mounds of negative words and spoken opinions. Not words and opinions directed by God, but by people. A lot of my brokenness came from who I thought I was based on the opinions of other.
- In my brokenness, as I leaned into Him, He began pulling me out of the wrong opinions, words, and thoughts and filling me with His truth. He pulled me out of the pit of despair, disappointment and depression. How? I took the journey into reading scripture to find out who I am, who He says I am. I wrote the question, What is my significance in the eyes of God?
- In this season, the Lord also taught me to guard my heart because I was vulnerable and broken He impressed on me that He was to be my healer, not anyone else. He told me that I was to keep my words quiet and not share my pain with more than a few trusted friends who would listen but not advise.
- He told me I was to allow HIS words and thoughts only to direct my life and to teach me of my value. And I was not to receive or believe any words flavored with opinion, negativity, or worldly advice. He alone would direct my path. God alone directs our path. He alone has the right to speak into us who we are and our value.
- He can and does send others to do that for Him, but we need to be strong and wise enough to understand when words come to us which ones are directed by God and which ones are sent with the motive of putting and keeping us down.
- Had I not learned to recognize God's voice and promptings at an earlier time, this season of healing would have been more challenging for me. I encourage you, even now, begin to learn into the Lord. Open His scripture and read to understand who you are and what your significance is. Talk to Him as you would a friend and begin developing that personal relationship with Him. It's not scary – as a matter of fact, you will begin to find that abundance you are looking for – and it's an abundance that is available for the taking.
- Most of my internal issues buried beneath the pile of rubble were a lifetime in the making, and took years to identify, accept, surrender, and come to a place of healing. And most of the woundedness came through WORDS spoken to me by others. It's amazing how our words have such impact over people.

I could preach a sermon on words, words, words, on how words build up or destroy. They create life or create death. For those of you who are brokenhearted, hear my heart for you.

- God is the best companion and guide to walk you from broken to wholeness. Lean into Him. Allow HIS words of comfort and revelation to lead you forward. Allow His words to reveal the truth of who you are and to expose lies you have been buried under. Release the lies and replace them with God's truth.
- Your heart is raw and your affections vulnerable – let God alone bring healing, allow God alone to teach you who and how to trust HIM. Put your faith totally in Him and take this journey day by day, step by step, with him because – you know what? He is your biggest fan!

## God's Dragonfly

I almost got my “preach” on, but I’m out of time. So if you’d like to hear more of my story, you can purchase my book on Amazon – in either book or kindle book format. The book is entitled, “The making of a dragonfly, following Christ through the winds of change.”

I am humbled that God invited me to write the book and share my story with you – not to bring glory to myself but to point you toward God, toward His healing, and to point you toward the true you that God has created you to be. Who knows? Perhaps, in time, your hearts cry will also be “Lord, I want to be your dragonfly, reflecting your light and love into a darkened world.”

Be blessed and know you are loved by the God of the universe. He has great plans and a purpose for your life. Lean into Him – and discover firsthand who He truly is.

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May the grace of God cover you each day, may you feel His love, sense His presence and may you know the truth of who you are in Him.

Remember, God’s word – even the spoken testimony – accomplishes the purposes for which it is sent – so send this to someone who needs a word of encouragement today.

Thank you for tuning in to the show. This is Mary Ethel Eckard, signing off.