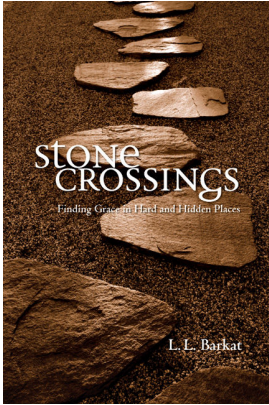


Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



“You are holding an invitation to a table set for two—you and Laura Barkat. At this table, near a river in my mind’s imagination, she will tell you her story of faith. You may not even notice the river, for the storytelling will lift you into a life of faith that will not lead you to gaze at her but to enjoy the same life of faith. The only writer I know quite like Laura is Eugene Peterson. That probably tells you all you need to know.”

—Scot McKnight, author of
The Jesus Creed

How did you first discover your love for writing?

L.L. Barkat: I wish I could say that I really love writing. I love life, experience, thinking. I love God and people. And I happen to be a person of words. My mother still has my first “book,” written at four years of age. “I love God,” it says. And there’s a picture of me and God—don’t ask me how I knew what he looks like! “I love you,” it also says. See, my four-year-old pen told the story that persists today: I don’t love to write so much as I write to love. And that began in childhood.

How has your writing, particularly *Stone Crossings*, shaped you?

L.L. Barkat: *Stone Crossings* has been a healer and a teacher. Through it, love found me and offered me a long-needed respite from the burdens of a dysfunctional life. By dysfunctional I partly mean that my mom has been married three times, my dad five, and as a result I have eighteen siblings—real, steps, halves, etc.! Let me tell you a quick story to express the healing I’ve experienced through writing about all this with a pen of grace. One Sunday morning, when I’d nearly completed *Stone Crossings*, I was standing in church. We were singing “It Is Well with My Soul.” There’s this line that goes, “My sin, not in part but the whole, has been nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.” My throat closed. My eyes filled up. This image came into my mind, of me stooping before Jesus with a big rock on my back, the burden of years of sin—family sin, my sin. And Jesus taking that rock and lifting my chin, urging me to stand and bear grace in exchange. A light burden. I believe it was the experience of writing *Stone Crossings* that was the catalyst for this vision. A vision of me as a grace-bearer. It’s not that I’ve completely changed as a result, but this vision of me as a grace-bearer feels like a turning point. And it’s opened me up to yet another healing journey that is touching more hard and hidden places in my soul.

What did you personally discover through the writing of *Stone Crossings*?

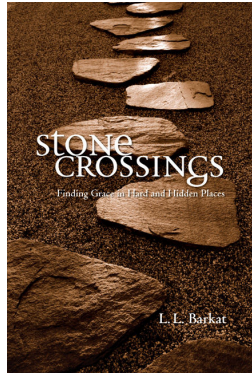
L.L. Barkat: I discovered, in a fresh way, that it doesn’t matter what “cards” life deals me. God’s grace is bigger than the cards.

Which chapter or story impacted you the most as you were writing?

L.L. Barkat: All the chapters impacted me strongly and uniquely. When I’d sit down to write, I’d always pray first, “Tell me what you want to say to me and the world.” And I was always overwhelmed by the ensuing tender communications of truth and grace. But two chapters in particular made me weep during the writing process—“Sugar Face,” which is frank about my

Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



L.L. Barkat is an inspirational speaker and writer for WTW Ministry in New York. She is a former magazine designer, art director, editorial consultant and ad copywriter. Barkat also manages Social Issues Reading Clubs for people who want to be informed about social issues and ways they can benefit the world community. *Stone Crossings* is her first InterVarsity Press book.

early hatred for and disillusionment with my father, and “Olive Press,” which poignantly retells the story of Gethsemane as if Jesus were facing a verdict of stoning under shari’a law. The “Olive Press” chapter reminds me that as much as I’ve been hurt by the brokenness of my family, I’ve also hurt others and Jesus through my own angers. As such, I’m overwhelmed that Jesus’ response to me is not retaliation, but pure love.

What inspired you to write *Stone Crossings*?

L.L. Barkat: One morning, somewhere between a leg lift and a pushup, *Stone Crossings* entered my mind in fledgling form. I realized I wanted to write this book as a love letter of sorts, to my broken family, to other broken families, to people who struggle to understand how to grow in their life of faith despite all the “stuff” that distracts or weighs them down. It would ultimately be a book on spiritual formation, but not the here-are-five-formulas type. Instead, *Stone Crossings* would follow my faith journey from its inception in a troubled childhood to its maturity in my adulthood, entwine it with God’s stories and weave everything together with images of stones.

What do you hope to convey to your readers?

L.L. Barkat We face hard things in life—the wounds of our dysfunctional pasts, failures in our present relationships, doubts that we are growing into the spiritual people we want to be. In the face of these things, we often hide. But grace calls us into the open. “Where have you been, where are you now, where do you want to be?” And there, in the light, we can be freed.

Also visit stonecrossings.blogspot.com.

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