

NEVER
SETTLE
FOR LESS



KESHA COX

PRAISE FOR *NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS*

If ever there was a book that shouted of the reality of God's sovereign will and plan for our lives, *Never Settle for Less* does just that. The memoir details with great precision and intimacy the story of Kesha Cox. Born with innumerable odds stacked against her, Kesha's story could have easily had a different outcome, had it not been for what later would become obvious: the call of God upon her life. God had a purpose for Kesha and it becomes evident as she takes us on her journey detailing how He used various people to push her towards fulfilling her destiny. *Never Settle for Less* is a must read for anyone who ever doubted God's sovereign plan for their lives.

Dennis P. McNulty
Pastor, Lighthouse Family Worship Center

Never Settle for Less causes us to bear the weight of responsibility for those we love and respect. Kesha Cox's life truly is a testimony of God's provision and overlying compassion as we take journey with her through some of the toughest times a young woman should never have to endure. Her book is a must-read for women and men alike; who, whether struggling to come into their own, or having detoured from a well-prepared path, find themselves, like Kesha, at rope's end. She offers hope through the sheerest of transparency revealing a heart—her heart—that was once broken, that only God Himself could bring back together again.

Bishop Johnnie Vaughan Jr.
Senior Pastor, Calvary Christian Fellowship Ministries

NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS

**BY
KESHA COX**



Open Door Publications

Never Settle for Less
By Kesha M. Cox

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The events told in this book are the author's memories of events. Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people involved.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my beautiful mother, Katrina Renee Williams. You are the reason I am here today. No words can describe how much I love you and appreciate you for allowing me to be born. You will never be forgotten as long as I live. I love you, Mom.

Katrina Renee Williams, March 3, 1963–January 28, 1979

I also dedicate this book to my beloved grandparents Roscoe and Elizabeth Williams. I learned so much from watching you both live your lives in front of me. I am the woman I am today because of you. Thank you for being a living expression of family, devotion, wisdom, kindness, friendship, and thoughtfulness in my life. Your words of wisdom and love will always surround my heart. Thank you for raising and loving me. I am honored to be your granddaughter.

Elizabeth Williams, April 4, 1922–April 30, 1993

Roscoe Williams Sr., June 24, 1920–September 27, 2008

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FOREWORD

Never Settle for Less is an amazing story of overcoming circumstances beyond your control, bad decisions, and the influence of the wrong people in your life. Kesha Cox has lived it, and by the grace of our Lord and Savior, she has taken the lessons of a long, winding journey, learned well from them, and has come to a resting place victorious.

Hers is a story of how Christ watches out for you, your safety, your family, even when you are on that long-suffering route that eventually leads you to him. The love of grandparents when you are orphaned; the protection of unseen angels when your judgment was flawed; the shelter of the Lord's loving arms when those closest to you put you and your children in harm's way, all are proof of the living God and his promise found in Romans 8:28, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*"

Kesha suffered the process. She kept living life when it was almost unbearable and there was little hope in sight. She found that still small voice within that gave her the strength to carry on, to push through, to overcome what seemed to be the insurmountable. Today, her life is so much different than it was a short time ago. She has a loving husband. Her family is knit together. She is at a place where she can speak of those hopeless moments and give hope and encouragement to others.

Never Settle for Less is inspiring. It brings you through the vivid reality of times, decisions and situations with which we all can identify. It delivers us to the determination that

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neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor anything whatsoever can separate us from the love of God. He, through his marvelous light, restores what has been destroyed by the locusts of life. Kesha's testimony assists us all in concluding we should Never Settle for Less.

Troy Vincent

1. KATRINA

A mother's love can never be broken, even if she is far away. It is a shield that can never be moved, her love for me sings from above, "Baby Girl, I will see you soon."

My father met my mother one afternoon in downtown Trenton. My mother, Katrina, was thirteen years old, and Derrick, my father, wasn't much older.



"Come out! Come out and fight me. I'm going to beat you real good for spitting on me," the girl shouted at the top of her voice.

"That's the funniest thing I ever saw," Derrick laughed to his friends, as they rode their bikes through Trenton Commons one summer afternoon.

The girl was only about five feet, three inches tall, and Derrick particularly noticed her long brown hair and big bright eyes. The woman inside the booth was large in size, and towered over the tiny girl in height, but she seemed terrified by her fierceness. Sweat and tears ran down the girl's face as she raged at the woman, demanding she come out of the telephone booth.

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“That little girl doesn’t look like she could hurt a fly, but she has a voice like a drill sergeant,” Derrick told his friend. “We’d better help this woman from out of this telephone booth or that girl is going to hurt her.”

The friend, rather reasonably, suggested they not get involved, and when Derrick waded into the middle of the situation, his friend quickly departed.

“What can I do to make you stop screaming and banging on that telephone booth so that terrified woman can go home?” Derrick asked.

Angrily, the girl turned toward Derrick and screamed, “Nothing! There’s nothing you can do or say to me that’s going to stop me from beating on this woman. She spit on me, and I’m going to get her real good for it.”

Derrick was more intrigued than ever, and less inclined to leave; he wanted to know more about her. “If I buy you some pizza, would you leave her alone?”

“No!” she shouted, then paused to think. “Okay, but you have to buy me two slices of pizza and an orange soda or I’m going to wait until she comes out of this telephone booth and beat on her.”

Derrick agreed. Katrina, which was the girl’s name, he learned, screamed at the woman once again, kicked the telephone booth, and headed with him to the pizza shop around the corner. As he looked back he saw the terrified woman running down the street, leaving her bags behind. He laughed again saying, “That’s the funniest thing I ever saw.”

From that day on they became the best of friends. They would meet in the park after school and play, laugh, and joke around. They often went to the pizza shop together; in fact, they did almost everything together.

“Katrina is the best thing that ever happened to me. When I’m with her nothing else seems to matter,” Derrick

told his friends.



Katrina was a fighter at heart; she fought for what she believed in. She did not take any nonsense from anyone, not even her sisters or brothers. She was loved by the many people who took the time to know her, but misunderstood by others because she had challenges; she often had seizures due to having meningitis at nine months old.

“Your mother almost died, Kesha, but with the help of many doctors and prayers she survived,” my aunt would tell me. Katrina’s seizures led her to confusion, which caused negative behavior. But to her family, and my father, she was a beautiful person, inside and out.

My mother and father were teenagers, and so inevitably, they fell in love. My mother was just fourteen years old when I was born, and while many people will say that she was a child having a child, my family soon realized it was the best thing that ever happened to her.

“When your mother told me she was pregnant, I was so upset with her,” my grandmother said. “But she insisted she was not going to get rid of her baby, because she knew you were going to be special.” Having a child changed my mother for the better in many ways. She was no longer quick to get angry and fight people. The little things, like kids calling her names and teasing her, seemed to not bother her as much because her concern was taking care of me.

My mother attended the Delaware Valley School for Exceptional Children, which provided children with special education services and care. Many of the other children in the neighborhood picked on her and teased her because they knew she went to that school.

“God knew what He was doing when He brought you into her life—and your father’s, too,” Grandma would say.

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My mother wasn't alone in raising and taking care of me. She had seven sisters, two brothers, my grandparents, and of course, my father. He was a part of my life even though, because they were so young, they had not married. I was indeed in good, reliable hands.

But about a year and a half later, tragedy occurred. My mother drowned at the YWCA pool on Academy Street in Trenton. She was pulled unconscious from the pool, which was being watched by a swimming instructor and two counselors. The newspaper article stated the three gave her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and a life mobile crew also gave first aid before she was rushed to the hospital. After hours of working on her, the doctors informed my grandparents that she only had forty-eight hours to live. A pathologist for the Mercer County Medical Examiner said his autopsy disclosed that cardiorespiratory insufficiency and cerebral damage caused her death: in other words, drowning. She was only fifteen years old.

When my father heard, he remembered something she often told him: "Derrick, I feel like I'm going to die young."

"I always told her not to talk that way, and your grandfather did, too," my father said. "He would say, 'Derrick, don't listen to that crazy talk Katrina is talking. Only God knows when we are going to leave this earth.'"

But my mother still believed it. She knew in her heart, she told my father, that she was going to die young.

My family, and of course my father, were devastated by my mother's death. She died at 7:50 a.m., on Sunday, January 28, 1979, at Helene Fuld Medical Center in Trenton.

Words can't describe how my father felt. He was grieving and confused. "I felt as if every bone in my body was broken and crushed into a million tiny pieces. Part of me was gone with her. And I was terrified at the thought of

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raising a baby on my own,” he told me.

He decided to allow my grandparents to raise me and joined the Marines to make a living for us.

“There was never a doubt in my mind that I was going to raise you as my own when your mother died,” my grandmother always said. “God took your mother away, but He gave me you.”

Grandma had a special gift; she was able to discern certain things that were going to happen in someone’s life. She often knew when someone was pregnant or when someone was going to die. She had had a dream a few years earlier, she told me, and she saw two of her daughters dead but she couldn’t see their faces.

Her youngest daughter, Katrina, was dead, and just two years later tragedy struck again. My mother’s sister, Barbara, died from a blood clot in her lung on April 16, 1981. She was twenty-six years old. My grandparents’ hearts had not healed from the loss of one daughter, how could they stand the pain of burying two daughters two years apart from each other?



Even with my father and grandparents by my side, I often would ask myself how life would have been if my mother was still here. Would she have married my father eventually? Would I have had a sister or brother? Would we have been the best of friends? What would life be like if my mommy was still with me? Those questions went unanswered, and many nights I would sit in the corner of my room crying out for her to come back home and be with me. I would hold a picture of my mother holding me, and for a few hours, as I slept through the night, I was comforted. But when I woke up in the morning and only had the picture of her holding me, and not her physical presence, I felt

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devastated all over again.

The many pictures I had of my mother holding me and kissing me were wonderful and meant so much to me, but I would never know how she truly felt—the warmth of her skin, her kiss, her touch, her voice, her hugs. There was no doubt in my mind that she had loved me, but I wanted to hear her say it. I wanted to hear her voice say those four little words, “Kesha, I love you.”

Over the years, I would often pray and ask God to help me in my struggle to deal with my mother’s passing. There was a part of me that had died with her even though I didn’t remember her. There was a void in my heart that was empty. Yes, I know that God makes no mistakes, but why my mother? One of my biggest sorrows was that one day, when I got married, I would have no one to experience those special moments of helping me prepare for my wedding. Who would be there by my side to watch me give birth to my children? Who would talk to me about becoming a woman? I wanted those mommy and daughter discussions, those nights where I could cry, laugh, and lay my head on her shoulder and just talk about anything.

Grandma always said God never takes something away without replacing it. I didn’t understand those words then but I understand them now. God replaced that which he took away with loving, caring, and supportive grand-parents, a father who adored me, and a family who loved me. God in time filled that empty void that only He could fill in me. My mother will never be forgotten, and she will always hold a special place in my heart. Grandma always said everything that we go through in life is always working out for our good even when it doesn’t look like it.

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Romans 8:28: And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

2. DERRICK

God will fill the voids and heal the hurt all because His love is sufficient for all our needs.

My father was often away while he was in the Marines, but he was still a presence in my life. Whenever he came home to visit me, he would always bring me something special. He never came to see me empty-handed, even though as I got older he knew that the gifts were never as important as his presence. He made my day every time he came around. It was like staring at beautiful fireworks in the sky when he walked through the door. “Hello, Sweetheart,” or “Hello, Dear,” he would say as he hugged and kissed me. He always made sure my grandparents had what they needed to care for me. Many people think that if a man isn’t physically present for his children every day he is a deadbeat dad. But, not my father. He was a loving and caring father who wanted the best for his child.

I will never forget the day my grandmother sat me on her lap and told me that my father wouldn’t be able to come to see me for a long time. She explained that because of something he had done that was not right, he would not be able to come by the house to see me. I burst into tears.

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“Why? Why? Why?” I cried so hard I couldn’t even get that one word out clearly. Why would he not want to see me? Why would he not want to come by to pick me up and take me places? What had I done to make him leave me?

My grandmother held me tight in her arms, rocking me back and forth saying, “Kesha, there are some things we will never understand, but I promise I will make sure you speak with your father any time he calls. I will make sure you visit him every time you can.”

That entire day I clung tightly to my grandmother. Wherever she went in the house, I followed her. I was afraid of letting her out of my sight, fearing she, too, would not return.

My father was everything to me, and I couldn’t imagine life without him. But now he was gone, and it was as if life was repeating itself all over again. My mother was gone, and my father had to serve time in prison. Who was going to walk out of my life next? The pain of losing my parents was unbearable. I would often just sit in a corner of my bedroom crying, praying, and pleading with God to stop removing the people I needed in my life.

I would panic whenever new people came into my life because I was afraid they would also leave. I would put up a wall of defense, so they wouldn’t get close to me and hurt me, or I would cling to them, never wanting them to leave. My grandmother would notice my many emotions and attachment to people, and she would spend more time with me, talking to me and embracing me with her love. Often as we sat in the front yard of our house, my grandmother would say, “There will always be people who come in and out our lives, for many different reasons. You have to enjoy the time and special moments you are allowed to spend with them. There is a season and time for everything.” I didn’t

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understand those words at that time, but I surely do now.

As she shared pictures and special moments of my mother and father, she would say, “Always remember they loved you, and remember there was nothing they wouldn’t do for you.”

My grandparents were major figures in my life, especially my grandmother. They didn’t want anyone to hurt me. They knew how much my father meant to me, so they found ways for me to visit him and talk to him over the phone. He would call every week to see how I was doing, and my eyes lit up every time that phone rang. I shared everything with him about school, my friends, and how much I missed him.

He was a kind, loving, and a gentle man in spite of what he had done.

“Sweetheart, always remember you can talk to me about anything. I will never stop loving you or being there for you,” he told me, and I held those words close to my heart. Although he wasn’t there physically, he never stopped being a father to me. The same love I had felt when he walked through the front door was the same love I felt when he called me over the phone, and that was the best feeling a little girl could ask for.

My grandparents kept him in the loop on every stage of my life. He never skipped a beat when it came to me. He was a part of every discussion about school, discipline, friends, boyfriends, even to the day I graduated from high school. We would pray, laugh, and cry over the phone as if he was sitting next to me. He was always supportive of any decision I made, from the time I was a little girl until I grew into a young adult. I am grateful for the support and close relationship we have to this day.

My father realized he had made a great mistake and was

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willing to face his responsibilities so that he could come back home to be with me. The day that he was released from prison he stepped back into my life.

With time, understanding, and maturity, I learned that God will give you what you need in order to continue on with life. He gave me a father who loved me and two beautiful grandparents who took on the role of mother and father.

Psalm 27:10: Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.