

# “Loving Jesus journey”



**Actress Melissa Joan Hart, star of the new film *God's Not Dead 2*, shares with *Simple Grace* how God is present in little ways throughout her day, and how He never fails to comfort her when she's afraid, gives her support in times of worry and loves away every doubt**

By Gina Roberts-Grey

**M**elissa Joan Hart may be best known for portraying a teenager with magical powers on the long-running family sitcom *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, but she's all grown up now: The 39-year-old wife and mom of three boys is also a clothing designer, director, author and star of several family-friendly movies. Whether she's competing on *Dancing With the Stars*, acting on her TV show *Melissa & Joey*, starring in her latest movie or simply making dinner for her family, Melissa's life is as busy as it is blessed. But like all of us, she admits it can also leave her

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# is my greatest

Melissa with husband Mark and their sons, Mason, Tucker and Braydon, at an event for their King of Harts clothing line that supports children's charities



feeling fearful and overwhelmed at times. Here, Melissa shares how her love for God is her secret to peaceful balance.

## HE HEARS EVERY PRAYER

Melissa grew up praying at meals and at bedtime, but she says that over the years her prayer life has evolved into a passionate and amazing journey with the Lord. "I'm constantly having conversations in my head with God," she says. "When I talk to myself, I believe I'm also talking to Him!"

Melissa says she experienced the true power of prayer through a young mom named Katherine Wolf, who after surviving a

devastating stroke, started a ministry and blog about how hope heals. "I was so inspired by Katherine's story that I joined a group of moms who were covering her with 24 hours of prayer," Melissa describes. With a new baby of her own, Melissa chose the 2 AM prayer shift...where she says the most amazing things happened between her and God. "It was such an experience to hold my newborn while everyone else slept and pray for a solid hour over a woman I'd never met. It was very special to realize how all of our prayers surrounded her, bathed her. It drew me closer to God...it really changed my life." ►



## ► HE SHOWS US WE'RE LOVED

Melissa says she sees God in her sons' smiles and the love of her family. But one of her strongest reminders of God's love is her late grandmother, Joan, for whom she's named. "She's my guardian angel who left us too early at age 60," Melissa explains. "She was the centerpiece of our family, and there are lessons she taught me as a child that continue to remind me of the love Jesus has for us."

Some of those little reminders that the Holy Spirit is always with her include rays of sun that break through on a cloudy day. "My grandmother would always say that means someone's soul is being lifted to Heaven," Melissa recalls with a smile. "And when there's thunder, she'd say it was the angels bowling...so when I see a sunbeam or hear thunder, I always think of my grandmother in Heaven, and the love I feel strengthens my love for God."

## HE CHASES AWAY FEAR

Melissa says it's in moments of fear that she's the most aware of God's presence, and she calls on the Holy Spirit to help her through them. "There are moments I'll feel scared if I'm home alone," she admits. "I'll say out loud, 'This is a home for



Melissa and Jesse Metcalfe filming a scene in *God's Not Dead 2*, where they must prove in court that Jesus really lived

Jesus and Satan isn't welcome here!' and I feel protected and this deep calm washes over me."

Air travel is another fear-filled time for Melissa. "I am most afraid when I fly. I can't breathe and I get panicked," she reveals. "I pray so hard in those moments, and it's such a powerful reminder that I'm not in control, whether I'm on a plane or on roller skates—only God is. When I put my trust in God, I feel an instant relief and an amazing sense of peace."

## HE TACKLES OUR DOUBTS

Like most of us, Melissa has had moments of doubt and times of trouble, when it's hard to stay on her spiritual track and she finds herself longing for answers. But

instead of doubt straining her relationship with God, she says times of uncertainty have actually strengthened her faith. “I thought that because I doubted, something must be wrong,” Melissa shares. “But then I started attending a women’s Bible study and discovered we all experience doubt.” So now when Melissa feels uncertain, she starts searching for answers and asks God the “why” and “how” questions. “I found that whenever I’ve doubted my faith or God’s presence and then stopped and asked Him for answers, I felt Him in my heart,” she adds. “He always gives me the answers I seek.”

## HIS LOVE SELLS ITSELF

Trying to talk someone else into loving God doesn’t work, Melissa insists. Instead, she lets His love speak for itself. “It’s not my place to tell others how or where to believe or worship,” she says. “My love for God works for me, so I want to show people how much I love Him. For instance, if I found a great hair product that I know everyone would love and it would change their hair, I’d tell them about it, so why wouldn’t I do that with what’s filling my soul? I just want to be an example of someone who has a close relationship with God so others will want to love Him too.” ✨

## Must see: *God’s Not Dead 2*

**In the anticipated sequel to the hit film *God’s Not Dead*, Melissa plays a teacher who is sued for discussing Jesus in class and must fight for her job and defend her faith.**

Although Melissa felt called to do the role, she almost turned it down. “I’d just come off of a year of traveling and I’d promised my family I’d be home for a few months, but then I was asked to do the movie,” Melissa explains. “I knew I’d have spiritual warfare if I took the role, but I thought it would be from the media...but the devil was trying to stop it in other ways!” With the support of her family, Melissa accepted the part and she says it strengthened her faith. “Working with the experts who helped our characters historically prove Jesus existed gave me so much information—it was a key moment in my spiritual journey!”

