



Reba MCENTIRE

Living a Legacy of Hope,
Hard Work, and Faith

by Laura Neutzling

Reba knows the secret to a good life is “to keep things simple and be thankful for the good things the Lord’s given you.”

This faith and gratefulness for God’s gifts has guided Reba in her nearly fifty-year career, where her name has become synonymous with the glory days of country music. “I read in *Jesus Calling* the other day that when you pray, when you give thanks, it’s the thing that goes straight up to heaven, and it’s heard the loudest—the thankfulness.”

Reba recalls how her grandmother, Reba Estelle Smith (her namesake), instilled early on that God was someone Reba needed to know. “Grandma was very spiritual,” the entertainer remembers. “We’d go down there to the pond dam on our farm, and her main mission was to tell us Bible stories and about her love for the Lord. We went to church with her, and she’d pray before going to bed at night.”

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The work is in the waiting.

Another secret the legendary singer ascribes to, which is no secret to anyone who knows her, is a strong work ethic that’s guided the superstar across her success as a touring singer, to becoming a television star and movie actress, and once again as a published author. In her new book *Not That Fancy*, Reba talks about where this work ethic came from—her early days working her family’s cattle ranch with her father and siblings in Chockie, Oklahoma. Those long days working hard on the ranch honed the drive she carried into becoming one of the most listened-to music artists of all time. “Ranching life is not an easy life,” she says. “Us kids spent a lot of time rounding up cattle. It was out there in those hills that I first learned the work is in the waiting.”

Reba would really know the meaning of that working and waiting after her first foray into the music business in the late 1970s, when she released her first radio single. As the McEntires gathered around their old radio to hear her debut song, crackling with static, Reba—then in her early twenties—thought, *Well, now I’ve made it!* But there was more work ahead for the singer: “No fancy tour bus or big royalty check appeared,” she says of that moment. It would take seven more years of

playing rodeos, honky-tonks, and even tractor-pull competitions before she charted with a bonafide hit, 1983’s “Can’t Even Get the Blues.” She was just starting to see that hard work pay off and was finally in a place to headline her own show.

“Thank God for that McEntire determination,” she laughs.

Where that determination would take her ended up being the stuff of dreams; from becoming a member of The Country Music Hall of Fame and The Hollywood Bowl who has more than 50 award wins under her belt, earning honors from the ACM Awards, American Music Awards, People’s Choice Awards, CMA Awards, GRAMMY® Awards and GMA Dove Awards all the way to becoming a 2018 Kennedy Center Honors recipient, in addition to multiple philanthropic and leadership honors. Reba would also go on to have 35 career No. 1 singles and more than 58 million albums sold worldwide.



And still, after all of that success, Reba credits those lessons of hard work and God’s presence in her life for being where she is today. “We think that we have total control,” she says. “We think we can handle all the messes we get ourselves into—we cannot. If you just give it to God, He’ll handle it. He knows how to take care of things and do it a lot better than we can.”

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Over the years, Reba's had to put a lot of things in God's hands—most recently, the loss of her beloved mother, who died at age 96 on March 14, 2020. Jacqueline “Jackie” McEntire was the one who first taught her four children—son Pake and daughters Alice, Reba, and Susie—how to sing harmony. She always had a dream for the siblings to sing, long before her daughter became the “Queen of Country Music.”

Reba recalls how her mother's drive inspired her own determination to make it into the music business. “People always say, ‘Where do you get your ambition?’ And I say, ‘Did you know my parents?’ Mama wasn't competitive, but she was ambitious. She was always trying to get ahead when Daddy went broke in the cattle market. She was down there making six dollars a day at the fish camp, sun up to sun down. Hardworking people show up: you know your lines, you're prepared.”



Reba and her mother, Jackie

Talkin' to God

There are many ways to pray to the Lord. Here are a few you can try if you're feeling stuck about how to talk to Him.

- ★ **Sing a song.** The Bible talks about music an awful lot, and singing has always been part of the way we worship God. I love the praise-and-worship part of church and feel so close to Him when I'm singing.
- ★ **Ask the Holy Spirit to take over.** When you don't have the words, the Holy Spirit does.
- ★ **Recite the Lord's Prayer.** Let that be your starting point.
- ★ **Get out into nature.** Just be still. Listen for God instead of doing all the talking.
- ★ **Read your Bible.** Get into God's Word and see what He tells you.
- ★ **Ask someone else to pray with you.** We all know a few prayer warriors we can ask to help us out if we need it.

**An exclusive excerpt from Reba's brand-new book Not That Fancy*

Jackie didn't just model ambition to her daughter, and as proud as she was that Reba became the singer she hoped her daughter would be, she also made sure Reba and her siblings knew what was really important in life. “We were taught that materialistic things aren't that important—family is,” the singer remembers. “All that other stuff can go away in a heartbeat. But you better hang on to the relationship with your family. Especially your siblings.”

It's something Reba has definitely held onto, as she and her brother and sisters became even closer after their mama's death. In the early days of COVID, they had a chance to reminisce about all the things she taught them, how she inspired them, and how she made them laugh. Reba recalls one of the funnier moments—a time when her mother decided to get baptized well into her golden years. “She was at church, and they were doing the altar call. Mama went down, and the preacher said, ‘Well, Jackie, what can I do for you?’ She said, ‘Well, preacher, I'm turning myself in.’ Then we came in when she got baptized. That was wonderful.”

As Reba looks back on the McEntire family's legacy, those themes of gratefulness and hard work remain a thread woven throughout the fabric of her life, as well as her commitment to stay close to God, inspired by her grandmother so long ago.

“I love to talk to God,” she says. “I don't think I could have gotten



Jackie, Susie, and Reba

through all the changes in my life without the Lord. He's that rock, that fortress you lean on when things go wrong, when things go bad. God is always there when you need Him.”



Adapted for print from the Jesus Calling Podcast. Want to hear Reba share more about her life growing up on the ranch? Scan this code to hear her swap stories with sisters Alice and Susie!



Reba, Pake, Alice, Susie, and Jackie



You can find Reba's brand-new book, *Not That Fancy: Simple Lessons on Living, Loving, Eating, and Dusting Off Your Boots*, at your favorite book retailer today!