

## Living Well in the Shadow of Life

BY REVEREND TONY MARCIANO

# Who Do You Get Dressed For?

This Fall I've been invited to speak to a room full of 180 women. I will be the only man.

My introduction will be as follows: "How many of you got up early and got dressed to look like a million bucks just for me? I know I'm aging, but I still have my hair. That's a miracle because all my uncles went bald." Perhaps one woman will raise her hand. The rest of us will look at her and say, "C'mon; he's not that good looking." I will turn to the crowd and say the following, "How many of you got up early and got dressed to look like a million bucks for all the other women in this room?" Hands will go up sheepishly as the attendees realize that is the truth. Women don't get dressed for men; they get dressed to impress other women. Can I get an "Amen" on that?

We all do that. We work hard to impress other people. When we greet each other and say, "How are you?" the answer is always the same – "I'm doing fine," and smile.

In spite of that smile, I've learned that everyone has a story, a story that includes the challenges of life. Perhaps it involves your marriage, your kids, your job, your in-laws, or whatever situation isn't perfect in your life. It's your story of struggling through the hard times of life. Yes we smile, hoping no one notices our life isn't what we present it to be.

I once read where a fan said to a famous person, "I wish I had your life. I see so many exciting things on Facebook." The actress replied, "Facebook is wrapping paper. I'm only showing the best parts of my life there. Do you want to know the truth of my life? My marriage is rocky, my kids aren't doing well and I'm not happy." The fan went silent.

There are scripture verses from Isaiah that remind us as we live out our "life's story", we don't go it alone.

Isaiah 40:31 *"but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."*

Isaiah 41:10 *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

Isaiah 43:2 *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."*

Each verse builds on the other reminding us as we live our "life's story", we are not alone. God promised He will hold us with his "right hand". I see it as a sign of His strength in our life. Even if we cannot hold onto Him, He holds onto us. The last verse reminds us that we will go through tough times. Sometimes they get tougher and tougher. Yet, even though the

flames of Isaiah 43:2 surround us, we will not burn.

It's ok to get fashionably dressed – even if it is for other women. What others will most remember about you is not the clothes you wore but your willingness to be vulnerable and tell your "life story" and how it resonated with them.

*Rev. Tony Marciano is the Executive Director of the Charlotte Rescue Mission. The Charlotte Rescue Mission provides a free long term Christian recovery program for men and women who are addicted to drugs and alcohol. For more information, visit our website at [www.charlotterescuemission.org](http://www.charlotterescuemission.org).*

