

## MEET JEFF & SARAH WALTON

### Authors of *Together Through the Storms*

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Sarah Walton is a stay-at-home mom and co-author of *Hope When It Hurts: Biblical Reflections to Help You Grasp God's Purpose in Your Suffering* (The Good Book Company, 2017). She enjoys writing and speaking about how the gospel speaks into all areas of life and offers hope in the midst of suffering. She blogs at Setapart.net and is a contributing writer at Desiringgod.org, Reviveourhearts.com, and Unlockingthebible.org. In her free time, she enjoys dreaming about what she would do if she had free time.

Jeff Walton is a graduate of Taylor University who worked as a trauma consultant for nine years, assisting doctors in implanting medical devices during trauma surgeries. He made the difficult decision to walk away from that line of work as the on-call hours became too much for their family's circumstances. Since then Jeff has worked in the medical technology industry while navigating seasons of unexpected job loss. He spends his free time leading men's Bible studies and coaching his children's sports teams.

Jeff and Sarah Walton met at Taylor University and have been married for 16 years. They are the co-authors of *Together Through the Storms: Biblical Encouragement for your Marriage When Life Hurts* (May 2020, The Good Book Company). The Walton family lives in Chicago with four children under the age of 12.

#### **Their Story** (told by Jeff)

Less than three years into our marriage, we excitedly welcomed our first child into the world. All was going well until he spiked a fever and was hospitalized with a severe infection at seven weeks old. After five days in the hospital with terrifying, inconclusive reports, we were sent home without answers. We thought it was an isolated incident, but over time it turned into years of life-altering neurological challenges. We helplessly watched as our sweet, smart, funny little boy would turn into someone else, displaying behavior that was extremely difficult to control and navigate. Countless consultations, tests, and evaluations left doctors shaking their heads. We were left with an increased financial burden, a stressful home life, and growing fears for him, and us.

At the same time, Sarah's health was rapidly declining. With each of our four children she bore, she was increasingly unable to function through her own chronic pain and illness. In addition, an ankle injury Sarah sustained in high school has now led to five surgeries and an inability to do much of what she loves anymore. As our son's disorder intensified and Sarah grew sicker, our younger children began to exhibit their own chronic pain. My job as a consultant to orthopedic surgeons often kept me on call and away from home. Our marriage began to suffer under the weight of it all.



In 2015 a group of doctors connected Sarah's many symptoms to Lyme Disease – and confirmed that the illness had been passed onto each one of our children. Despite a conflicted medical community, our children's growing neurological and physical ailments were impossible to deny and increasingly expensive to navigate.

At our lowest point, convinced that we couldn't endure anything else, it became clear I could no longer sustain my on-call job. I left it behind, along with half of our income, and we sold our dream home then downsized to a rental home. A year later, my new company began to struggle and suddenly, I was without a job—leaving us with no income at all.

Our family was in crisis. Most of our time spent together as a couple consisted of doctor appointments, navigating challenges with our son, soothing crying and hurting children, discussing what treatments we could afford, healing from

each of the nine surgeries undergone between the two of us, dealing with Sarah's chronic pain, and stressing about our draining finances. All the while we were too exhausted to address the struggles building within our marriage.

We were both broken and both wondering where God was and why He was allowing such deep and layered suffering. As we endured one loss after another, we found ourselves battling despair, hopelessness, and deep questions of faith that neither of us had ever faced before. We were surviving, but we—and our marriage—were hanging on by a thread.

But we're still here. Still together. And, somehow, stronger for it all.

God held us up, not only to survive but to see the good gifts He had given us along the way. Though it's been harder than we ever imagined, there have also been moments of laughter, sweet memories, and undeserved gifts. Somehow, each moment of each day, God has helped us press on, has held our marriage together when we haven't had the strength to fight for it ourselves, and has taught us to find joy, even within the sorrow. And by his grace, he continues to hold us up each and every day, despite many of our circumstances remaining the same.

We, and our marriage, have been pushed hard—sometimes to the point where we have felt as though we were falling. In fact, many days, we feel like we're falling once again. Our marriage has not been and is not perfect. We're writing in the trenches, not from the mountaintop. But our marriage is also a testimony to the faithfulness, goodness, and sustaining grace of Jesus. He has been and continues to be our help, strength, song, and salvation.

Every marriage begins in the sun; every marriage must pass through the storms. It's where -- and to whom -- we turn for hope that will make all the difference.

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***Together Through the Storms:  
Biblical Encouragements for Your Marriage When Life Hurts***

By Jeff and Sarah Walton

[www.TogetherThroughTheStorms.com](http://www.TogetherThroughTheStorms.com)

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