

A Conversation with Lisa Marie McGilberry and Susan McCurry, Founders of Favor Candles

Q. Let's start at the beginning. When did you two start Favor Candles and why?

A. LISA MARIE: As sisters, we worked together in the modeling and entertainment industries. Over the years, we realized we wanted to build a business together that would encourage and inspire other women, as well as sharing scriptures that had helped us through our ups and downs throughout our lives. When we both ended up in the same city, we found the timing to be perfect.

We love candles, and we found a void in the marketplace of candles that inspire, encourage, and share scriptures. This is where the idea came about to create Favor Candles.

Ultimately, it was about coming together to inspire and encourage others.

SUSAN: We wanted to do a ministry and felt like this was a great way to reach people by putting scriptures and inspirational quotes on candles. We realize that when they light their candle, they can read and think about that scripture or quote- really internalize it and what it means as well as the person that might have given it to them.

We lost our mom to breast cancer, and our dad had Alzheimer's. Throughout those times and so many others, we were constantly praying with and for each other. Then, right as we started Favor Candles, Lisa had to have a double mastectomy. That threw us off a little bit. She had two years of surgery, reconstruction, and everything that goes along with all of that. But we were determined—she was especially determined—that we were not going to let that stop us from having a mission and doing business together.

Throughout all of this, we realized that other people need encouragement, too, just as we'd done for each other.

LM: It was huge for us that we had each other after our mother passed away. We always lifted each other up. One of us is pulling the other one up all the time. We remind each other that we're loved and worthy, and we encourage each other. I really don't know what I would have done without Susan when our mother passed away. We want to be that light for other people as well.

S: It's funny that Lisa says that because I feel like I am the one who was so very lost when our mom passed away. I felt like Lisa was the leader at that time, and I was just running around in circles, not knowing what to do. For me, it was unexpected. I expected our mom to get better, but she didn't.

I always looked up to Lisa. I felt like she was the leader in everything, from food and nutrition to health and fashion. I was always following right behind her. But we were both really there for one another. I think all of our years of sisterhood is where Favor Candles came from.

Q: Prior to starting FAVOR, you both traveled the world and lived such interesting lives. Can you tell us a bit about your background?

A: We both started modeling at a young age, and as we got older, we were able to travel to different countries, and it really shaped our lives. As sisters, we were able to lean on each other.

Q. It is so special to hear you two talk about how much you have needed and helped each other. For a lot of people, that would be enough—a gift that they held close. But y'all took it further and really want others to feel supported. Where do you think that desire to reach out to other people comes from?

A. S: That's just innate in me. I always want to help people. I'm always rooting for the underdog.

LM: She also picks up literally every dog and cat she finds on the side of the road.

S: (laughing) That's true. We had really great parents. They instilled great morals and values in us. We saw them do for other people. Lisa is a mom and has two kids, and I know she's always done for other people and for me through the years as well.

For a while, we weren't living in the same place. She was doing her thing, and I was doing mine. Then, I came to visit her, and I met my husband. So I moved to Birmingham, and now we've had all these years to be close. That's not something I take for granted. I know a lot of people don't have that.

LM: Everybody doesn't have a sister, but a lot of people have friends who are like sisters. Our motivation is really just about making sure other people know that they're loved. We've held onto verses during hard times, and realized later those verses helped us through. So we wanted to create the same help for other people.

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Our mother was so young when she passed away—just 49. I have met people who have lost someone early like that, and it left them bitter. I think you can go one of two ways: You can think, *I have got to live my life because it might not be very long*, or you can turn bitter and just ask yourself why this has happened to you. I felt like this was something we needed to help people through.

Scent and memory—or the reminder—go hand in hand.

Q. Pairing quotes with candles is brilliant. We try to memorize scripture or meaningful lines all of the time with things like post-it notes on the bathroom mirror. This is far more aesthetically pleasing, but it's also tied to scent, which, like you've pointed out, is so powerful. Where did the actual idea to combine scent and important texts come from?

A. S: When we started Favor Candles, I had scripture that had helped me, and Lisa had scripture that had helped her. We combed through the bible and also took a lot of time finding powerful quotes as well.

Then, we took a lot of time picking out which scents to pair with which verse or quote. Lisa and I like different scents. I like sweet, fruity scents, and she's completely the opposite. That's part of why we have so many, and it's why we have something for just about everybody.

LM: We knew we wanted to share God's word. We both loved candles, and it hit us that they don't really have anything written on them—just the name of a company that doesn't evoke any feeling. We realized that candles could mean a lot more: Putting something powerful to read on the outside of a candle that smells so good made sense to us.

Q. Where does y'all's inspiration for scents come from? They all seem very natural and earthy.

A. S: We choose the quote or scripture first and then really ask ourselves, *How does this make you feel?* We think about how we want people to feel as they read this scripture or quote. Do we want them to feel happy? Relaxed? Calm? Every scent has a feeling.

LM: Yeah, we sit with each one. You've probably never been to a scent warehouse, so I'll explain: There are about a gazillion scents out there (laughs). So we take our time and just smell, smell, smell.

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We're doing a new candle right now—a "Will You Be My Bridesmaid?" candle. We've named the candle Honor. Now, we are looking for a scent that is both celebratory, and that represents honor—so we are thinking some kind of champagne scent.

The next step will be getting variations of scents in that general family and pouring them all up so that we can burn the candles to see how they smell. Scent is different when it's the throw in the candle—when the candle is cold—and then when the candle burns. You have to make sure the throw and the burn work together.

S: And we both have to agree on it.

LM: (laughs) That's true.

S: Sometimes, one of us will like one, and the other won't, so we don't use that scent. We are pretty confident our customers will like a scent if we both do.

And sometimes, scent doesn't have a lot to do with the candle purchase at all. They'll buy the candle because of what it says, and they want to get that quote for a specific person.

LM: Right, and sometimes, that means someone has to get over what scents they prefer. For example, if they like a certain scripture, but it comes with a scent that isn't their favorite, I always tell them, "The person who you're giving this to isn't going to think, 'Oh, this isn't my favorite scent.' They're going to think, 'Oh my gosh, I love the fact that you gave me a candle that says this.'"

Q. What makes your candles such good gifts?

A. S: Hands down, it's the meaning behind them. On the back of each one of our candles, we print our story that explains we're sisters, and just as we have prayed for each other through all of these different life events, we are praying over you, pouring out favor, love, and abundance over you, your family, and your friends.

When people read that, they realize how much thought was put into the candle—both the making of it and the selection of it by the person who gave it to them.

LM: I think receiving a Favor Candle just makes you feel special. It makes you feel loved—like, truly thought of and cared for. It's not just a pretty candle grabbed off the shelf. The gift giver had to take time to read that message and choose that meaning for you.

Q. What advice do you have for someone who is trying to pick out the perfect Favor Candle as a gift?

A. S: It depends on what kind of gift it is. Sometimes, people walk in, and they'll see their mother's favorite scripture on one of our candles, so that choice is pretty easy. We have candles for just about every occasion, too.

LM: When people can take the time to look at all of the candles we have, they usually end up buying multiples of different kinds. One will be perfect for their mother, and one will be perfect for their sister. We do have a Sister candle, which is one of our top sellers. People buy it for their sisters, but also for their friends who are like sisters, and sorority sisters as well.

My advice? Slow down and read. When we first started, we realized that people don't read! They weren't reading the candle labels!

S: Yes! (laughs)

LM: I would chase those folks down.

S: Oh my gosh, she did. I was like, "Please! Do not tackle them, Lisa!"

LM: I wouldn't let them leave. I would rattle off what was on each candle, and they'd be like, "Wait, really? You have quotes on candles? And scriptures, too?"

So, yes, that's my advice. Slow down and read! And you'll find the perfect words and scripture for so many different people in your life.

Q. What are your favorite scents for summertime? And then what about fall and the holidays?

A. S: If it's just based on scent, for summer, I love our Escape candle, which smells like the beach—and I love the beach. I also love Sea Salt Cactus, which is a great, clean scent.

LM: I love the Olive Blossom, which is the scent for the "May the Lord bless you and keep you" candle and the "To the world, you may be just one person, but to one person you may be the world" candle. That one is good year-round.

For the holidays, I love the Pine-Spruce scent on the "For God so loved the world..." candle.

S: Oh, yeah, I do too.

LM: I was listening to a podcast with the guy who started the Bulletproof Coffee company, and he was listing all these things you can do for your health—like seven different things. The last thing he said was that you could take a walk in a pine forest because it resets your brain, just smelling that pine. Then, he said if you can't talk a walk in a forest, you could buy a pine-scented candle.

I thought, Oh! We have that candle! (laughs)

And it really does work. Try a Pine-Spruce candle. Reset your brain.

S: Oh, Red Currant is another great one we have for the holidays as well. It's on two different candles: One says, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord," and the other says, "True friends are always together in spirit."

LM: Mmm, yes, love that one too.

Q. What is sisterhood to y'all? What does it mean? Why is it powerful?

A. S: I feel like right now in the world, women are embracing the sisterhood. I see it more and more every day. I feel like women are lifting each other up and encouraging one another. There is a sisterhood that you have with your actual sister, but then there are your friends who are like sisters, too.

I think it's just about supporting each other—being there for each other, lifting each other up, encouraging one another. It sounds simple, but I think that's sisterhood.

LM: I think God reaches down into the pit to pull us out all of the time, and I am so grateful for that. There's a Bible verse that says—and I'm paraphrasing—that God strengthens us so that we can pull others up and that the same thing will happen to you, too. We're pulled up, then we have to pull somebody else up.

Susan and I are surrounded by great women. We want to let other women know that they're worthy, and if they can think of it, they can do it. We want to help women who have ideas. Look, if I can do this, you can do it. We're a small company, but it does feel like other women look to us and ask, "How did y'all do that?"

Part of us started Favor Candles so that we could have a platform to tell other women that their ideas are great, too.

S: Absolutely! And helping women specifically is important, but we are interested in helping all people--men, too. We want to encourage them, physically help them, donate to their causes—all of it.

LM: Yes. I have a daughter. She's 19. I want her to know she can do whatever she wants to do in this life, and I'm here to help.

Q. What quotes or scripture are speaking to y'all right now?

A. S: I think both of us keep turning to Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you encouragement and a future."

LM: I feel like that one is everywhere I turn. "True friends are always together in spirit"—that's speaking to me a lot right now. I have friends who I've been Zooming with over the last few months, and I love that no matter how far away we are from each other, we're still right there with each other, walking through different things and supporting each other.

And of course, Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Some days, I have to say that one with every step.

Q. When someone lights a Favor Candle, what do you hope they experience?

A. S: You want an amazing smell—a great burn. We have a cotton wick, so you don't have to worry about lead. And with that smell, there will be a feeling—a feeling of love from whoever sent the candle.

LM: It's just knowing you're loved. You're thought of. You're special.

S: That candle is encouraging you with its message. That's why they're given for so many different reasons: birthdays, weddings, Mother's Day, etc... We've had people give them to loved ones who are in the hospital and battling cancer.

LM: Sometimes, people will send our candles instead of flowers to people who are mourning.

I feel like once people get what makes Favor Candles special, they really get it. Once somebody has touched them, they want to turn around and touch the next person. That's what we're here to do: We've been helped, and we just want to help the next person, too.

About Favor Candles

FAVOR Candles was created by sisters Lisa Marie McGilberry and Susan McCurry, who found themselves praying for FAVOR for each other, friends, family, careers, in sickness, in health, and so much more. FAVOR Candles harness the restorative power of scent and sacred words. The Birmingham, Alabama-based artisan company pairs gorgeously scented, 100% American-Made candles with carefully selected scripture and inspirational quotes, designed to deliver encouragement, comfort, and love each time the wick is lit. FAVOR Candles are available in stores and boutiques throughout the Southeast and online. For more information and to shop, please visit <https://www.favorcandles.com>.

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