



F R O M D U S T

TO
DESTINY

G R E G F A U L L S , P H . D .

C R E A T E D F O R M O R E

INTRODUCTION

Created for More

You were made for more than mere self gratification. Your God designed life is worthy of more than the materialistic dream for which so many of us settle.



CHAPTER 1

Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

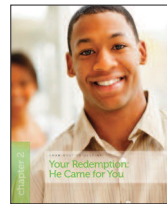
If you want to discover how your life fits into the world. If you really want to awaken to your purpose, your calling, you must first know something about God.



CHAPTER 2

Your Redemption: He Came for You

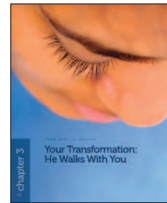
God is in hot pursuit of us. He is the Hound of Heaven seeking to retrieve us from our lost condition and bring us home to him.



CHAPTER 3

Your Transformation: He Walks with You

There is no change more fundamentally dramatic as the change that is wrought in us when we turn from our sin and surrender our lives to Christ.



CHAPTER 4

Your Mission: He Works through You

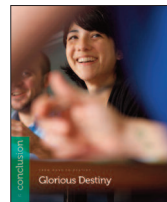
God created us for mission. He formed us from dust but designed us to fulfill a divine destiny to fulfill his will and reflect his glory in the world. Jesus came not only to redeem you and walk with you, but also to work through you.



CONCLUSION

Glorious Destiny

In Christ your life is enraptured in a glorious destiny. Yes, you were created from mere dust. But your life was designed for an eternal destiny.



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FROM DUST TO DESTINY

Created for More

God made you from mere dust, but
He created you for divine destiny.

Created for More

Why is this short book important?

The answer is simple, you were created for more. You were created for something that transcends what most people dare to imagine.

You were made for more than mere self gratification. Your God designed life is worthy of more than the materialistic dream for which so many of us settle. You were created as an expression of God's Majesty and designed for eternal purpose.

This little book will take you back before time began in an exploration of God's original purpose for your life. In these pages you will discover you are more than you realized and that God wants to do more through your life than you imagined. Here you will find the God who made you, loves you, aims to walk with you, and work through you to make a transforming impact on the world.

Who is this book for?

This book is for anyone who wants to discover the life God has for them. You may be a person who has believed in God for a very long time or you might be someone skeptical about the Bible's claims. Either way, this book is for you. It is written to introduce you to the God who wants to enter your life, walk with you through life, and work through you to impact others.

How can this book be used?

This book is ideal for self study or for studying in a group. At the end of the book you will find a "Group Study Guide" that can help you use this material in a small group setting.

So let's begin this journey, discovering how God moves us...from dust to destiny.

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD'S purpose that prevails."

PROVERBS 19:21



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FROM DUST TO DESTINY

Dust made alive, Dust fallen

chapter 1

Dust made alive, Dust fallen

Life is about God!

I know that many will tell you that “it’s all about you.” But it is not. It’s about God. In the story of your life, in the story of history, He is the main character. If you want to discover how your life fits into the world. If you really want to awaken to your purpose, your calling, you must first know something about God.

He made you. He sustains you. He knows the plan for your future and for your eternity. To understand your life you must understand something of the nature and will of God. When you do, you awaken to something miraculous. You discover that God’s intention, provision, and plan for mankind is more meaningful than you first imagined.

God made you from mere dust, but he created you for divine destiny. Your life has been designed to reflect the glory of God. The ultimate fact of your life is not you, but the God who made you. When you accept this truth, you are well on your way to discovering the destiny of your life.

CREATED FOR MORE

Without God we would not be. Our very existence is dependent on the Lord. You cannot separate your life or your world from the activity of God.



The very first words of the Bible tell us...

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

“God created”

Those two words take us back to that pre-historic, primal epoch when God spoke the world into existence. The writer of Genesis speaks here of the world’s first cause. It all begins with the activity of God. Everything begins with God.

There is profound truth in that spiritual fact. Without God we would not be. Our very existence is dependent on the Lord. You cannot separate your life or your world from the activity of God. He created it. No one else made it. He is the One.

The Hebrew verb translated here as “created” is the word “bara.” There is something important to note about this verb in Hebrew. It only takes God as its subject. Man does not “bara.” Only God. Creating, true creating, is an activity for God alone.

Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

The very first words of the Bible testify to the fact that we have a part to play in God's unfolding history.

The writer of Hebrews put it this way, *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”* (Hebrews 11:3)

Theologians and philosophers call this *creatio ex nihilo*, or creating something out of nothing. This is what only God can do. He can speak things that ‘are not’ into existence. Amazing is our God!

God not only creates the heavens and the earth, but he does so...

“In the beginning”

Here is where God forms time. It is not that there was not more before this. It is not to say that eternity had a beginning. Eternity is eternity. Rather, here God brings the definition of time to the scene.



Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

There is great significance to this. God is affirming that the created order, he is about to bring forth, has both meaning and purpose. Time brings definition and meaning to life. Time brings defined movement between point A and point B. One thing leads to another. Each part is significant to the next.

The world God made is not some evolutionary accident without inherent meaning or transcendent significance. It is designed and it is defined. It is moving in a definite direction. It has a beginning, a progression, and a conclusion.

Your life emerges within the context of this divinely meaningful, time defined order. Your life is purposeful. Your life begins for divine reason, progresses with divine purpose, and is meant to lead to a significant conclusion.

You were created by God's choice for God's purpose for this generation. Paul writes, *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."* (Ephesians 1:4-5)

The very first words of the Bible testify to the fact that we have a part to play in God's unfolding history. We are a part of the time God has defined and our life plays a meaningful part on that continuum.

No doubt, that is why the Bible calls us to make the most of our time. Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus, *"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."* (Ephesians 5:15-16) Wow! What wisdom in Paul's words.

We were created in the image of God, to be stewards of his creation.

Satan wants you to think your time is not meaningful to God's plan. He wants to delude you into thinking that your life does not fit into God's great campaign. But it does. You have a role to play, a meaningful role. Scripture calls you to "pay careful attention...to how you" live. Your life is not your own. You are meant to live out your time for God and for the fulfillment of his plan. There is no time to waste. The time to serve the LORD and his purpose is now!

Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

Created with You in Mind

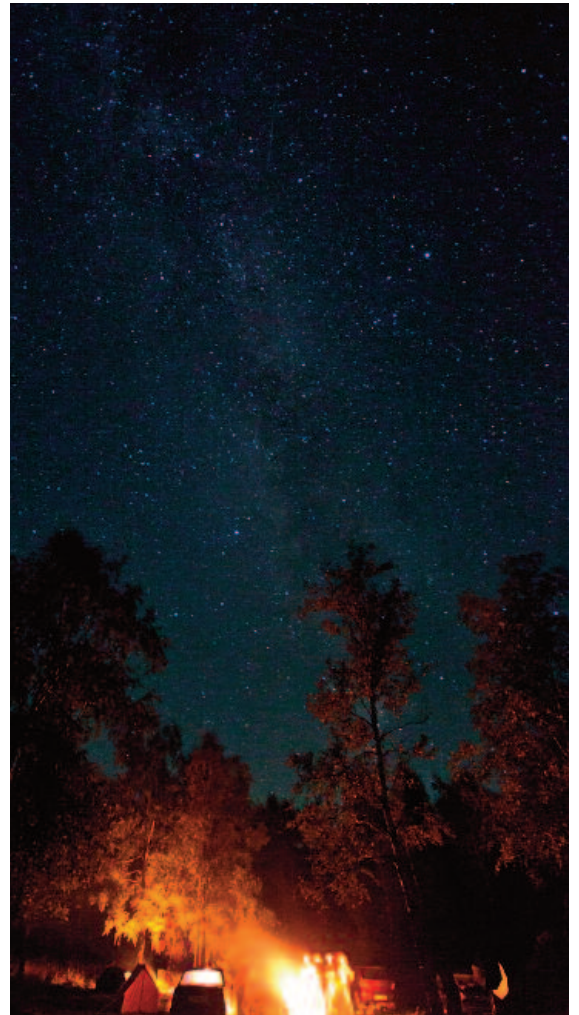
Think about it! The God that created, *ex nihilo*, all things and holds all things together, made this world with you in mind. You are a part of his beautiful plan.

Insights Around the Camp Fire

When I was 17 years old I served as a camp counselor at a Christian camp for boys. On the final night of the week we had the tradition of asking each boy to come to a bonfire carrying one small stick. As a ritual for spiritual reflection we asked each boy to come and throw his stick into the fire and if he wished he could share a word or two with the others about how God had touched his life.

On our way to the bonfire the sky had been overcast. But after several had shared, one 9 year old boy

approached the fire and dropped in his stick. Then, he drew all of our attention up to the sky. The clouds had cleared and in the dark night you could see hundreds of stars lighting up the heavens. It was beautiful.



Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

The boy said, “Look at all those stars and far-away places. God made all that and takes care of it all and still he loves me and wants to be close to me.”

The boy was awestruck and so were we.

That child was no theologian, but he understood what life was about. Life is about God and our life is about finding ourselves in his love and discovering how we fit into his plan. God created us with amazing purpose to live in and reflect his glorious character.

The boy said, “Look at all those stars and far-away places. God made all that and takes care of it all and still he loves me and wants to be close to me.” The boy was awestruck and so were we.

Image Bearers

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” (Genesis 1:26)

We were created in the image, in the likeness, of God. This means something. The word “image,” in the original Hebrew, means “something cut out.” It is like saying, “He is a chip off the old block.”

I bear the resemblance of my dad, so does my brother. We are like him though we are not him. God has created us in his own image. No other creature bears the image of God, only man. We were not created to be God. We were however created to bear the image of God in the world. His character, his ways are to be reflected in our lives, our countenance, our decisions, and our directions in life.

We were created in the Lord's image so that we might relate to him intimately. The very purpose of our lives is to draw close to God and to reflect his character in the world. We were made to know God and to make him known.

When we live out this purpose, our lives fulfill divine calling. But when we rebel against this, our souls experience painful brokenness...

One Sunday, in a sermon, I sought to illustrate this point to my congregation. I brought a large CD player with powerful speakers out on the stage. The device was playing beautiful music. I said, "This player is meant to play music that brings us joy, but what if I wanted to use it for a different purpose?"

What if I wanted to use it as a basketball?"

Then in one swift movement, I attempted to bounce the player on the floor. Smash!! The speakers flew in different directions. Plastic shrapnel traveled chaotically around the platform as the unit broke into dozens of pieces. Most striking was that the music stopped.

We were created in the image of God, to be stewards of his creation. We were made to know God and to reflect his glory. But when we choose to live our lives for a different purpose our souls are shattered and the music our lives were meant to play is silenced.

That we were created in God's image is a fact that brings our lives nobility. But it is not a fact over which we should be proud. Instead, we should be humble. It is only by the will and grace of God that we have been made with such meaning and purpose.

Made from Dust

Scripture says, *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*
(1 Peter 5:5)

It is important to meditate on the thought that we did not create ourselves in God's image. He did. We are dependent on him.

"The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7)

Dust, dirt, earth. We are forever sweeping it off our floors, vacuuming it from our carpets, washing it from our clothes and off our cars. How ironic that the very substance that we are continually plagued with is the very substance of which we are made.

God taking the substance of the earth, made man.

In Genesis 2:7 the words for Adam, the first man, and dust are related. The Hebrew for man is “*Adam*.”

It is humbling, is it not, that without the breath of God we are merely dirt.

It is humbling, is it not, that without the breath of God we are merely dirt. The Bible says that God created the earth (Genesis 1:1) and it was out of this substance that he formed man. Like a master potter forming a beautiful vessel from the clay, so

The Hebrew for dust is “*adamah*.” Man’s very substance is formed from dust.

It seems that my wife and I are continually sweeping dust from our house. Have you ever given thought to what is in house dirt.

Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

Of course it varies from home to home. But it is reasonable to assume that in many homes dust might include textile fibers, pet dander, human and pet hair, bits of leftover food, pollen grains, decaying insect parts, bacteria, and a host of other undesirables.

We should be humbled by the truth that the only thing that separates us from a pile of dust is the will of God and his breath of life. The Bible says, “Man became a living being.” How so? It was the synthesis of dust and the willing breath of God.

Your significance, my significance, is not anchored in our substance, but rather in the one who loved us so much that he chose to breathe into us “the breath of life.” We are

made from dust, mere dust. We are utterly dependant on the God who is our only source of life.

Fallen

Though it may be hard to believe, living in our world today, from the beginning God made man to live forever. It is true. The Bible says...

“And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden...the tree of life.” (Genesis 2:9)

The tree of life represents both God’s sustaining supply of life toward man and man’s absolute dependence upon God for life.

CREATED FOR MORE

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Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

There is no other source of life, only God. And God promised life to man. We are meant to live our lives in his image and commune with him in perfect harmony for eternity.

It is a beautiful thing knowing that God created us to bear his likeness and share in his love forever. But there is more to the story, a darker side. Mankind was and still is faced with a divinely provided choice. There is another tree, rival to the tree of life.

Our purpose in life is to receive God's life giving love and then to return that love. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to "*love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*" (Matthew 22:37) The heart of our purpose is to willingly engage in a love relationship with God.

But love is a choice! If I am created to love, I must be given the option not to love. Sounds crazy right? But it is not. If I am genetically programmed to love you with no possibility of not loving you then I am a mere automaton, a mindless robot. That is not love.

If I am to have the capacity to authentically love God, I must possess the possibility of not loving God. That is exactly what God gave man. He gave humanity the choice to reject him and his ways.

The Bible speaks of another tree planted in the garden, a forbidden tree. Scripture calls it "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" (Genesis 2:9) It goes on to say...

Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen

“The LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17)

good and evil represented a departure from God’s life giving provision. It is a decision not to submit to God, but rather to rebel in a striving to be our own god, to go our own way, and thus to verge from our designed calling.

To eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented a departure from God’s life giving provision. It is a decision not to submit to God, but rather to rebel in a striving to be our own god.

This tree represented the free will we have been granted to receive God’s life or to reject that life in pursuit of a life left to our own devices. To eat from the tree of the knowledge of

Humanity was given a choice and both the Bible and our own observations of this world clearly show that man chose the sinful path.

This choice was made by the first man and first woman in the distant past and we continue to repeat the same sad story in our lives today.

We are now sinners by nature and by choice.

It was in this choice to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that man fell from God's life. The results: shame, separation, judgment, and death. The entire created order was marred by man's sin. Man's relationship with God and his ability to live out the life God designed is compromised.

In Genesis 3, these first humans made this dreadful choice and experienced immediate separation from God. When the LORD pursued them the Bible says, *"they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?""* (Genesis 3:8-9) God was still in pursuit of man, but man, in shame, hid from God.

Man's sin resulted in a curse on his life and environment. He had chosen the rival tree to the tree of life and the consequence was death. There is no life apart from submission to the God who made us. Man had chosen to rebel and lost access to the tree of life. God said, *"He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."* (Genesis 3:22)

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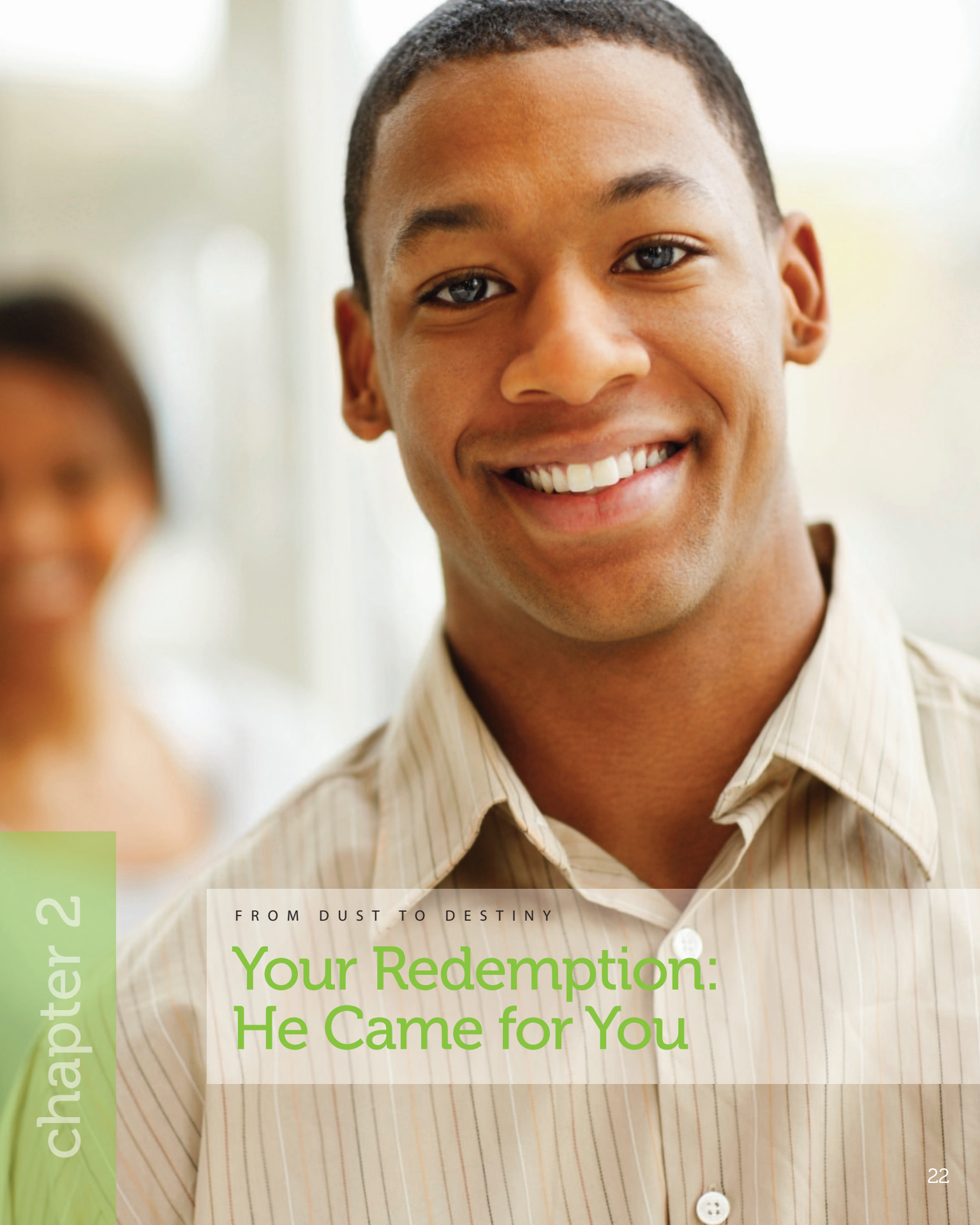
What is needed for us to be restored to God? The answer is we need a Savior who will be our substitute, someone sinless and holy who can pay our penalty.

God is holy and just and must punish sin. If he did not he would not be just. And the despairing truth is that if we justly pay sin's penalty then we suffer death and hell. Forever. That is hopeless. Because of sin we are separated from God with no hope of restoration. Sin must be paid for, but if we pay for it we pay for eternity, never knowing God's life, never resting in his love.

So the question is "What is needed?"
What is needed for us to be restored to

God? The answer is we need a Savior who will be our substitute, someone sinless and holy who can pay our penalty. Someone who can bring us into a holy relationship with God that will last forever. But who can do that? No mere person can. Since the fall of man "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" (Romans 3:23)

Only God can provide what is needed. Only God can come to save us.



chapter 2

FROM DUST TO DESTINY

Your Redemption: He Came for You

Your Redemption: He Came for You

What do you think about most? The majority of us have one or two things we most think about. Once you get to know someone you can often tell what it is for them. Usually it is different things at different times of people's lives. It might be the acquisition of a material possession, or the achievement of a goal, or the hopes of finding true love.

What do you think about most?
The majority of us have one or two
things we most think about. Once
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Usually it is different things at
different times of people's lives.

When I was an 11-year old boy it was fish tanks. You read me correct, fish tanks. I had a hobby, fish collection. I started out with a ten-gallon aquarium in my room with a few guppies. But soon I got so obsessed I mowed some lawns, earned some money, and bought another ten-gallon tank and loaded it with fish. My parents bought me a fish encyclopedia. I knew so much about fish. When I was at school my mind would drift to my fish. When I mowed lawns for money I would

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dream of all the new fish I'd buy. Soon I bought a 29 gallon tank and collected big fish.

In college it was a beautiful girl, Stefanie. I met her at our University Christian Ministry and couldn't get her off my mind. I thought about her when I was in

God loves you so much that he sent his Son Jesus to bring you into a holy relationship with himself, a life that prevails unto eternal life.

A few years later it was bikes. I started cycling and I had a dream of owning a Schwinn Super Le Tour 12-speed. It was expensive. I had to mow a lot of lawns to come up with the money. I thought about it constantly. My mind would continually obsess about earning enough cash to acquire my dream. Eventually I bought the bike.

class, thought about her at lunch, thought about her morning, noon, and night. I asked her out. We hit it off. We saw a future in each other. I thought about her when I was with her and even more when we were apart. I even taped a picture of her on my bedside wall in the dorm, so my last thought would be of her as I drifted to sleep. She was the driving obsession of my mind. And I made her my wife.

Let me ask you an important question. What is the constant driving obsession in the mind of God? What is it that God thinks about above all other things? What is the obsession of the Divine? The answer is found in the mission of Christ. Jesus said, . . . *“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* (Luke 19:10)

Through Christ, God is pursuing a humanity that is lost from the hand of God due to sin so that He might rescue us from separation and death redeeming us back to Himself. God is in hot pursuit of us. He is the Hound of Heaven seeking to retrieve us from our lost condition and bring us home to him.

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Bringing Us Home

Jesus came for you, to save you from your sin, and to bring you home to a relationship with God the Father. He considers you of inexpressible value, worthy of an all out pursuit. In the Bible, Jesus speaks of this divine passion for your soul through a parable about a Shepherd and his sheep.

In his story the Shepherd represents the Lord and the sheep represents you and me. He said, *“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”* (Luke 15:4) Of course he does.

Jesus came for you, to save you from your sin, and to bring you home to a relationship with God the Father. He considers you of inexpressible value, worthy of an all out pursuit.

Your Redemption: He Came for You

It is in the Shepherd's nature to value each in his flock. Even if only one is lost, he goes after it, pursues it until he finds the lamb. I can imagine that shepherd constantly counting his sheep, making sure none are lost, all are with him.

Years ago I was a Youth Minister in a church. As a part of the job I was responsible for planning trips and outings. Sometimes I would take them on retreats or to camp.

Other times we would do things for pure fun, like going to a theme park. Always I would find myself counting them. If I had brought 23 kids, everywhere we would go I was continually counting. One-two-five-ten-19-22, "where is Ben, has anyone seen Ben." My obsession was to keep tabs on those kids. If I brought 23 kids to the event, I was going to bring 23 kids back.

**That is the way
Jesus is with
us. He comes
for us, to bring
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Any other scenario was unacceptable. There were a few times when I lost a kid. I would not stop searching until I found that child.

That is the way Jesus is with us. He comes for us, to bring us spiritually home to God. Rejoicing always follows when he brings us home. Jesus said, *“And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’”*(Luke 15:5-6)

Christ tells us that all of heaven rejoices in the same way when our Shepherd God redeems us back to the flock of his family. He says, there is *“rejoicing in heaven”* (Luke 15:7) over a sinner who repents and is brought home to the grace of God. Nothing brings joy to the heart of God more than when you are redeemed to the relationship with him you were always meant to have.

Jesus Our Redeemer

God really came for us. In the most profound way the Lord entered our humanity, entered our sinful condition to bring us back from spiritual death into his eternal life. He did so by entering into humanity, through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Some in our day think of Jesus as one of history’s premiere spiritual teachers. But he was and is so much more. He is no mere man. He is God.

The Bible teaches that God is One God, who has revealed himself in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Once again he is not three Gods, but One God who has revealed himself in these three personalities.

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He is *God the Father*, loving us, longing for his children to be secure in his family. He is *God the Son*, coming to redeem us from sin and bring us into a holy relationship with God the Father. He is *God the Holy Spirit* descending upon us to fill us with the Spirit of the Lord so God himself could dwell in our hearts.

The Apostle John, in his gospel, refers to Jesus as “*the Word*.” The idea is that Christ was and is the very revelation of God himself to man. Though Jesus was born into flesh some two-thousand years ago, he did not begin to exist then. He is eternal. John writes,...

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1:1-3)

Jesus is not the created. He is the Creator. There is nothing in existence that Jesus was not involved in creating. This makes him like no other who walked in humanity’s flesh. He is unique and above all who have ever breathed the air of this earth.

John goes on to say, “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*” (John 1:14) The pre-existent Son of God, took on human flesh and blood, himself with flesh and entered our humanity, our brokenness, our weakness. His love was so great that he literally came to bridge the sin cut

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literally taking up residence with us. Paul said of him, “*He is the image of the invisible God.*” (Colossians 1:15)

God did not merely speak to us through the clouds. He clothed

chasm between God and man. As God in the flesh, Jesus reveals God to us. When we see Jesus, when we know Jesus, we see and know God the Father.

Your Redemption: He Came for You

Jesus said,...

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” (John 14:9-10)

In his earthly ministry Jesus taught and healed in the power and as the literal expression of the saving work of God. This Jesus came for you, for me. He came to reveal, but more profoundly he came to redeem.

The Cross

Jesus was sinless. He is the only perfect Son of God. We have sinned, fallen from God’s holiness. But not Jesus, he is One with the Father God, without compromise, without corruption. As the sinless Son of God he came to bear our sins and to redeem us from sin’s damning consequences.

If it were not for Christ we would have no hope of an eternal relationship with the Lord. God is Holy. God is Righteous. Holiness and righteousness cannot have fellowship with shameful sinfulness. We have sinned. The Scriptures make clear, *“There is no one righteous, not even one.” (Romans 3:10)* Our guilt drives a wedge between us and God.

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Sin is serious for it condemns our soul. If the Savior does not rescue us from its damning consequences, we are spiritually doomed to live apart from God.

Cleansing you from sin so you might commune forever with Holy God, is why Christ came. He came as the sinless Savior. He died on the cross as a

sacrifice. The Bible says, “*Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*” (1 Peter 3:18) He absorbed the condemning wrath sinful people, like you and me, rightfully deserve. He took our place.

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It is impossible for us to comprehend the pain of Christ's suffering. He suffered more than the destruction of his body. He suffered condemnation for our sin. He was without sin, but he freely bore our sin upon his flesh and soul.

By assuming the punishment for our sin, he made it possible for us to have our sins covered and our relationship with God restored. He being sinless had the power and authority to pay sin's debt for all of us. Jesus died for your sin so that you might have nothing that stands in the way of living an eternal life-giving relationship with the Holy God. He made the way for you to be brought home to the Father.

The Resurrection

Of course, if Jesus merely had said that he would die for the sins of man and then died on the cross, we would have little reason to put our faith in him. Many a man in history has made great claims only to die a tragic death. So what makes Jesus different? How can we know that he really is who he claims to be?

It is impossible for us to comprehend the pain of Christ's suffering. He suffered more than the destruction of his body. He suffered condemnation for our sin.

Your Redemption: He Came for You

He rose from the dead! He died bearing the consequences of our sin, was buried in a tomb, but three days later he bodily rose from death never to return to the grave. Hundreds of witnesses over weeks of time witnessed the Risen Lord. They wrote down what they saw and those testimonies have become our Scriptures. They were even willing to face martyrdom in standing by their statements that they had seen and touched the Risen Savior.

Paul wrote... *“Christ died for our sins...he was raised on the third day...he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time... then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

Jesus rose from the dead displaying that he really did die for sins. Now because he lives we can live in holiness with God as well. He said, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”* (John 11:25-26) For all who would believe, Jesus completely paid for the sin of man and made the way for you to be raised to eternal life in fellowship with the God who created you in his image.

chapter 2

Responding to Jesus

That Jesus came for you is beautiful. But you must respond to his pursuit. He does not force his grace on you. You must receive him. Receiving him comes with a promise. John writes, *“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”* (John 1:12-13)

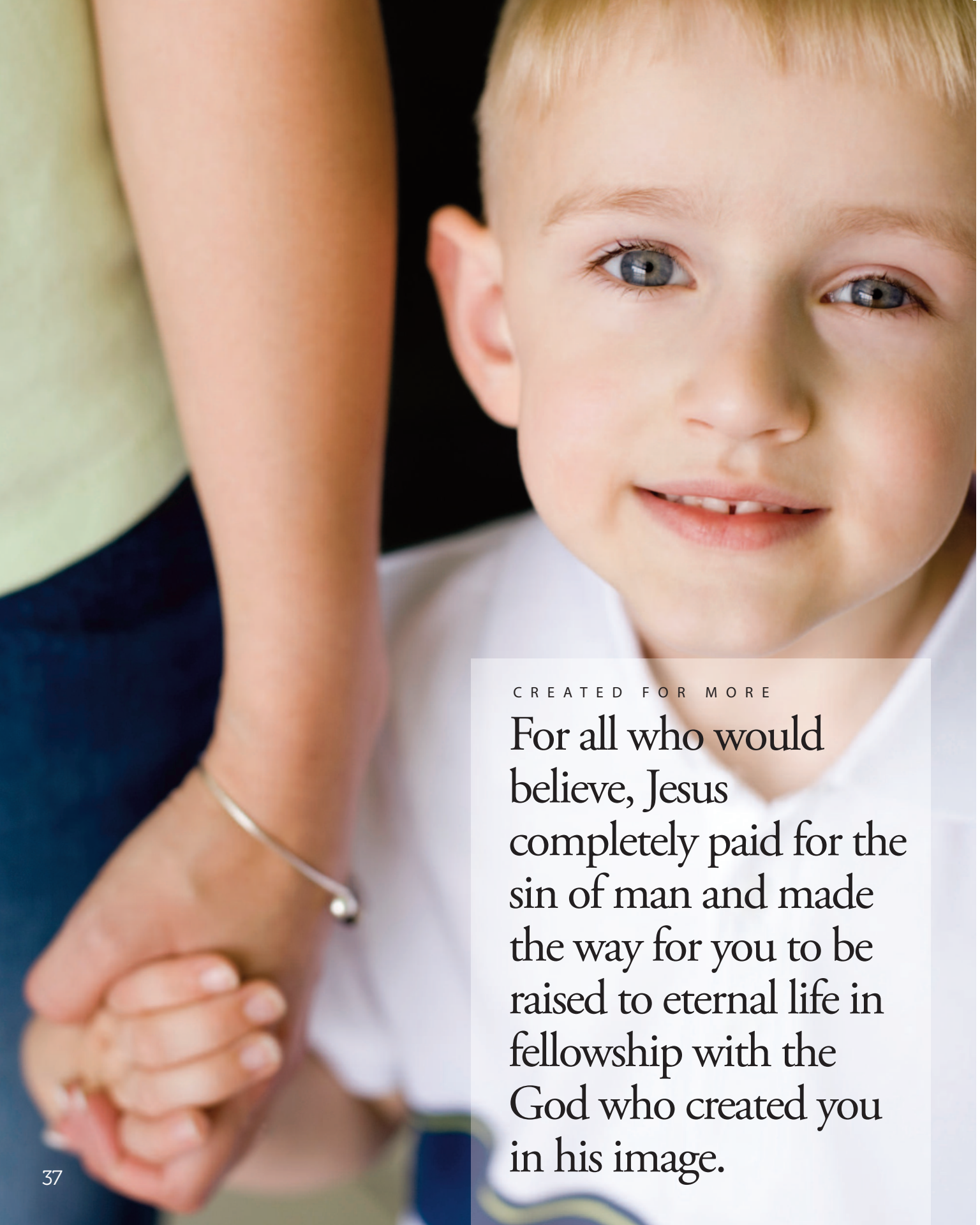
What does it mean to receive Jesus? First of all we must understand what it doesn’t mean.

- *It is not merely an adoption of a new set of rules.*

There is a real misunderstanding among many that Christianity is

simply about a certain code of conduct. It is not. Don’t get me wrong, rules can be good.

When my oldest son was seven, in an attempt to assert authority in his room, he came up with a collection of rules for all who choose to enter his bedroom. He made up these rules himself and posted them on his door. The rules read, “Don’t be naked. Be nice. Don’t mess my room up. No smoking. No peeing. No beer.” Except, perhaps, for the “Be nice” part we had a pretty easy time keeping his rules. I am not knocking rules, God does give us commands for us to obey, but receiving Christ, at its essence, is not merely adopting a list of “do’s” and “don’t.”



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For all who would believe, Jesus completely paid for the sin of man and made the way for you to be raised to eternal life in fellowship with the God who created you in his image.

- It is not merely a church or religious affiliation. Membership and involvement in local church life is important. It should never be neglected. But receiving Christ is not just joining a church. Just because you may have some church affiliation does not necessarily mean you have received Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

So what does it mean? Simple...

- It means to willingly engage in a forever relationship with God through Jesus Christ!

So how do I receive Christ?

I am glad you asked.

First, you must see Jesus for who he is and what he has done for you. You must see him as the Son of God, God in the flesh, the Sinless Savior, the one who died for your sins, and the one who rose from the dead to give you life.

Second, you must admit that you are a sinner in need of his forgiveness made possible on the cross. This is a matter of what we call confession and repentance. You can't have the rift of sin mended until you first admit the rift and your responsibility for it. The Bible says, "*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*" (Acts 3:19)

When I do this I...

Your Redemption: He Came for You

- **First, Confess before God my sin and responsibility.**
Scripture says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins.”* (1 John 1:9)
- **Second, turn away from my life apart from Christ and turn toward a life of following Christ.**
I make a decision to turn God-ward.
- **Third, you must believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sin and that he rose again.**
Paul writes, *“That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.””* (Romans 10:9-11) This isn’t just head knowledge, this “believing” has to do with you personally trusting what Jesus has done for your salvation.
- **Fourth, you must surrender your life to his leadership.**
The Bible speaks of this as confessing *“with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord.”* (Romans 10:9) This means you make a decision to yield your life to him and begin to allow him to be your Master in all of life.

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As you turn from sin, believe in Christ, and yield to the Lord you are entering into an eternal relationship enveloped in the love and forgiveness of God, a love that the Bible says, nothing can separate you from. (Romans 8:39)

When you receive Christ you are “born again” to a new life, the benefits of which are deeply life changing. You receive soul transforming...

- **Forgiveness:**

All the sins that once separated you from God are no more. You are free of guilt and shame before the Lord.

- **Fellowship:**

You now can know a relationship with God that is real and grows daily. We will learn more of this in Chapter 3 of this book.

- **Future:**

In Christ you now enter into your life’s eternal purpose. God has plans for you joyfully to serve him in your life both here and now and also someday in heaven. We learn more about fulfilling your purpose in Chapter 4.

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Worth Everything

What about you? Is there any reason why you would not want to accept the free gift of this glorious Christ into your life? God loves you so much that he sent his Son Jesus to bring you into a holy relationship with himself, a life that prevails unto eternal life. Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

God loves you so much that he sent his Son Jesus to bring you into a holy relationship with himself, a life that prevails unto eternal life.

Think about it! God is calling you to surrender your life to him, but in return he is offering you an eternal life filled with his prevailing presence. He is inviting you to lay down your sinful life apart from him in exchange for a life filled with hope and heaven.

In this very moment Christ stands before you. He has purchased your forgiveness and is inviting you to receive him fully. Right now you can open your life to him. You can do it in your own words or you could speak to him in a prayer just like this...

Your Redemption: He Came for You

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“God, I see now that you made me in your image. You created me to know you and reflect your glory. But like every person before me, I have sinned and fallen from your glorious perfection. I stand guilty in my sin, unable to save myself. But I believe that you sent your Son, Jesus, to die for my sin and that you raised him from the dead to be my Savior. I accept him into my life and surrender my will to you. Thank you for forgiving me and restoring me to my original purpose, living in fellowship with you. In Jesus Name, Amen.”

If you called upon God just now, you just received the one who has been pursuing your soul all your life. Jesus just brought you home to the Father God. And as you will see, *this is only the beginning.*



FROM DUST TO DESTINY

Your Transformation: He Walks With You

Your Transformation: He Walks With You

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“Come, follow me,” Jesus says. (Mark 1:17) The invitation to receive Christ is a call to walk with him. When we do, everything in us is transformed. There is no change more fundamentally dramatic as the change that is wrought in us when we turn from our sin and surrender our lives to Christ.

When we enter a relationship with Jesus, we enter into God’s very family. He is our Father and we become his children. The Apostle John wrote, *“to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.” (John 1:12-13)*

This spiritual transformation is so dramatic that Jesus compares the experience to being “born again.” He says, *“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:6-7)* When you experience the redemption of your soul your very identity before God is changed.

The invitation to receive Christ is a call to walk with him. When we do, everything in us is transformed.

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You were a sinner, a soul whose moral being was at enmity with God. But when you accepted God's grace, your sins were forgiven, and now you have peace with God. You cannot experience a greater change than that. You were an enemy, but now you are a friend of God.

In Jesus you are a *"saint."* I know that may sound crazy to you, but it is how the Bible refers to a true believer in Christ. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus *"to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus."* (*Ephesians 1:1*) The word Paul uses for saint means "holy one," referring to someone who has been set apart for a divine purpose.

You have been set apart for the holy purpose of walking with the Lord, living a life in continual communion with Christ. This life is rich with blessings. Consider that in Christ you are...

Forgiven

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (*Colossians 1:13-14*)

You don't have to live with the crippling inner shame resulting from failures in your past. You are no longer bound to live with a fragile self-esteem. You are free to live in the soul satisfying acceptance and grace that God has extended to you. Sin separated you from God, but with his forgiveness you are brought near.

Favored

When we walk with Christ we walk in unparalleled privilege. The Bible teaches that we become favored sons of God. Paul writes, *“those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry “Abba, Father.””* (Romans 8:14-15)

When we receive Christ, God’s Son, we become sons and daughters by adoption. We call God, “Abba,” which is Aramaic for “Father,” or “Daddy.” We are children of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We are King’s kids. We live in a relationship that affords for us amazing spiritual privilege.

You Have a Future

God gives us a future of divine purpose. Scripture says, *“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* (Ephesians 2:10) You are now his chosen instrument for fulfilling his will in the world.

In Christ you have a divine commission. Your life is his and he wants to work through you to make lasting impact on his world. God has a will for your life. When you walk with Christ, you get up in the morning knowing God is setting out to accomplish something with your life that day.

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We are meant to walk with God and to know him as friend and Lord. This is to be our experience now. In our day to day living we can fellowship with him.



You Have Fellowship

He is God who dwells with you. Nothing is sweeter than loving fellowship with Christ. Jesus comes to “ *dwell in your hearts through faith.*” (*Ephesians 3:17*) The believer has the opportunity to experience a divine love that is impossible to put into words.

We are meant to walk with God and to know him as friend and Lord. This is to be our experience now. In our day to day living we can fellowship with him. He is so near and we are meant to be so very near to him. James said, “*Come near to God and he will come near to you.*” (*James 4:8*)

Originally when God created people, God and man walked together in the Garden. Sin destroyed all of that. But Jesus has taken away our sin and now walking with God is restored for us. It is our calling to enter this life of fellowship with him. He has made it possible.

Your Transformation: He Walks With You

Learning to Walk

As a toddler must learn to walk, so we must learn how to grow in our walk with God. The Lord has made a relationship with him possible, but we must take responsibility for doing our part. A relationship with anyone requires both parties to make an investment. It is the same with a relationship with Christ.

Growing in your love relationship with Jesus involves walking in faith, learning from God's Word, and deepening in communion with him in prayer. This life in Christ is meant to be experienced in the context of the Church as we walk with God together with other people. It is together with others that we serve the Lord and share the message of Christ with a broken world.

The Lord has made a
relationship with him possible,
but we must take responsibility
for doing our part.

Walk in Faith

If you are going to walk in a relationship with Jesus, you must believe in him, in his nature, his power, and his ability to save you from your sin. You must believe his ways are best and express confidence in his word and his abiding presence in your life.

It is impossible to maintain a walk with God if you are unwilling to believe he is there and that he cares for you. Faith in God is foundational to a love relationship with him. The Bible says, *“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6)

Walk in the Word

The Bible is God’s Word and provides us with the guidance we need to both know and follow God. The Scriptures are the primary source for the believer to know who God is and what he calls us to do. God’s Word is indispensable to your walk with Christ.

For example, you do not live in the time that Jesus walked this earth in the flesh. But when you read, study, and apply the teachings of Christ in the Bible it is like you are sitting at the feet of Jesus. In fact, it is no different. Jesus said a disciple or follower of Christ is one who learns to

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obey everything he commanded. (Matthew 28:20) We don't have to live two thousand years ago in ancient Judea to be a disciple of Jesus. We can learn to walk in the same truths Jesus gave his disciples back then and we can experience the same blessings that come from following his commands in our lives right now.

Make the study and application of the Bible central to your life. Plan on regularly, even daily, reading and applying the Scriptures to your life. Read the Bible on our own, study the Bible with others, and sit under solid biblical teachings from godly teachers and pastors.

Jesus spoke of God's Word as spiritual food. He said to one of his leading disciples as he was calling him to teach the Word, "*Feed my sheep.*" (John 21:17) When the devil was tempting Jesus to indulge his carnal hunger he pushed back saying, "*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" (Matthew 4:4) What food is to our physical health, God's Word is to our spiritual development.

Just as you will be planning what and when to eat today, so you should have a plan for consistently feeding on God's Word.

We can learn to walk in the same truths Jesus gave his disciples back then and we can experience the same blessings that come from following his commands in our lives right now.

Here are some ways you can do that...

1. Read the Bible Daily. There are all kinds of ways you can read the Bible. One of the best ways is to read the Bible in books. The Bible consists of 66 individual books that were originally written to a particular audience at a particular time though God still speaks through it in our day. Perhaps you would choose to read one chapter out of a book of the Scriptures each day until you complete the book, then move on to another.

Another great way to read the Bible is to determine you will read the Bible in a year. There are several plans for doing so.

Those plans usually call for reading approximately three chapters of the Bible each day.

One way to read the Bible in a year is to purchase a *The One Year Bible*® which is already divided up with readings for every day of the year. Each day's readings consist of reading a passage from the Old Testament, New Testament, Proverbs, and Psalms.

I also encourage you to visit www.disciplecast.org where I have posted a podcast for each day's readings in the *The One Year Bible*®. This could be a great encouragement to you as you begin learning how to hear from God as you study the Bible.



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Make the study
and application of
the Bible central
to your life.

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2. Join a Bible Study Group.

Learning to follow Jesus is not something meant to be done alone. Joining a group can catapult your spiritual life forward in immeasurable ways. Join a Bible Study at church or start a Bible Study Group with your friends. For a great way to start a new group see the Group Study Guide at the end of this e-book.

3. Sit under Strong Biblical

Preaching. Every believer in Christ should be a part of a strong, Bible believing church led by a Pastor who preaches and teaches God's Word boldly. Do not neglect going to church services and learning under strong biblical preaching.

The most important step in walking in God's Word is applying what God says. James writes, *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”* (James 1:22) Spiritual growth does not come from mere academic knowledge of the Scriptures. It comes from the application of those Scriptures to your life. Some people think that spiritual growth is a result of getting more and more biblical knowledge. This is not true. More knowledge is good, but it only makes a difference if you apply what you know.

**Knowledge of God's Word
+ Obedience = Spiritual
Growth**

Walk in Prayer

The Bible equips us to know who God is and to know his ways, but it is in prayer that we practically and personally engage God with the particulars of our lives. Prayer is our communication with God. The very breath of our spiritual life is found in our praying to the Lord.

Paul writes, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:6-7) It is in prayer that we make our requests, show our gratitude, and trust in his care. It is through prayer that we pour out our pain to God and trust him with our life. It is in prayer that we surrender ourselves to his Lordship and allow him to set the pace of our lives.

A walk with God is a walk in prayer. When two people fall in love, they spend time together. They take walks and talk. They go to dinner, carrying on conversation. They share their hearts, their thoughts, their dreams, and their disappointments, and they grow close.

Prayer is our communication with God. The very breath of our spiritual life is found in our praying to the Lord.

Your Transformation: He Walks With You

Begin today to nurture your prayer life with God. Spend time with him in prayer. Talk to him when you are reading the Scriptures, when you are driving to work or riding to school. Pour out your heart to him and call upon him for your strength.

Walk with Your Church

The Christian life was not meant to be lived out alone. Jesus came to build his church. (Matthew 16:18) By church, he was not referring to a building, but a people. The church is the body of people Christ has redeemed and who are meant to represent Christ in the world. If you have given your life to Christ, then you are a part of the church.

Your life is meant to find its full expression in the context of a local congregation of believers. It is so important that you join, attend, and contribute to the activities and mission of a local church. The Bible says, *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.”* (Hebrews 10:25)

The Christian life was not meant to be lived out alone. Jesus came to build his church. (Matthew 16:18) By church, he was not referring to a building, but a people.

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For your spiritual health you need the fellowship of a church, but you also need this connection for your own spiritual effectiveness. Each of us is called to join in Christ's mission, but none of us are meant to do this solo. We are a part of the family of God, called to spread God's good news throughout the world.

Walk and Share

To walk with Jesus is to be on mission. In Chapter 4 we will study this in more depth, but for now it is important to understand that we are to join Christ in getting the good news of his salvation to those around us. We were never meant to keep this message to ourselves.

Everyone needs Jesus. It is up to us to join with God in taking the message of Jesus to every man, woman, and child. Jesus said, *"you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8) God doesn't call us to be silent witnesses, but to speak up and share the good news with others.

What is amazing is how rich our walk with Christ becomes when we share his message with others. Our faith is stretched, our heart is enlarged, and our prayer life is deepened. It is a great adventure.

Walking with Christ in the Valleys

When you fellowship with Christ, life is blessed. But that doesn't mean your life will always be easy. Difficult days come to all people. You are no exception.

A walk with Christ is glorious, comforting, and soul strengthening.

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But that doesn't mean it is easy or carefree. The difference for the believer is that they can trust God to be with them and to see them through. That makes all the difference.

Life is full of valleys. These could be times of personal pain, relational anguish, financial setback, spiritual trial, lingering loneliness, or crushing loss. In our valleys we can feel lonely, vulnerable, abandoned, and even afraid. But God says he will be your strength in your valley and you need not fear.

The Bible says...

“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:1-4)

The Lord will be our shepherd through difficult times. God will lead us through valleys so we might eventually be led to the higher ground God has chosen for us. It is important for you to know that the valley is on his designated path. It is in the valley that faith is tested and character is forged.

Are you in a valley of disappointment, loss, or bruising trial? Don't see this dark place as a canyon to die in. See it for what God intended, a valley through which he will lead you to higher ground: a richer life, a deeper spirituality, and a more faith filled relationship to him.

Important things to know about valleys...

There is a deep spiritual nourishment only found in the valley

On vacation my family and I often travel to the mountains. We love to go on day hikes through mountain trails. When we do we ascend portions of a mountainside and then we descend into several valleys. We have always noticed that the streams swell the most in the deepest part of the valleys. There is a lesson here. The valleys may be dark and there may be dangers, but it is there that one can find refreshment like nowhere else.

It is in our deepest dark moments that we can find God to be enough. There is a sustaining strength from God that can only be discovered when you have descended into the valley of difficulty. That strength would never be known or valued in the easy times.

There are dangers in the valley

Valleys are not safe places. With towering cliffs and steep canyon walls the valley can be a place where the sun shines little. It can be a dark place where the horizon of hope is out of view. Have you noticed in your valley it is difficult to see the rising sun rays of hope? Sure you have. That is what makes valleys so hard. What we don't realize, when in the valley, is the sun is still rising with rays of hope. We just can't easily see it because we are deep in the valley.

The valley also harbors more offensive dangers.

The shepherd knows that predators can hide in the cliffs and the caves. In the valley sudden storms can come, flood waters can overtake a flock, avalanches can come crashing down.

Your Transformation: He Walks With You

Sounds scary. We know that when we are in the valley we can be vulnerable to the cougar of temptation, the wolves of discouragement, or the flood waters of circumstances. You may even be tempted to escape the shepherd's guiding hand in an attempt to escape the valley of difficulty. But don't do it. Don't run from the Lord.

God is with you in the Valley

The Psalmist writes, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”* (Psalm 23:4) He wants us to trust him in the valley. God knows all of the dangers, all of the discouraging darkness, and all of the eventual challenges.

You may even be tempted to escape the shepherd's guiding hand in an attempt to escape the valley of difficulty. But don't do it. Don't run from the Lord.

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He is there with you to...

Protect

The Psalmist speaks of the shepherd's "rod" and "staff." Such instruments were used for many purposes in the life of a shepherd and his flock. The rod was a symbol of power and authority. With the rod the shepherd would beat off predators. But with that same rod he would discipline a rebellious lamb bent on self destructive wanderings.

God's strength is the same in our lives. He brings his power and authority to bear upon our circumstances to protect us in the valley. He protects us from the evil one. But he also disciplines us as we learn to trust him in those difficult times.

Guide

It is with the staff that the shepherd will nudge the sheep into the proper direction as well as keep them all together with the flock. Through his word and the prompting of his Spirit, God will guide you. Of course he does more than guide you, he goes with you.

Comfort

A walk with Christ is just that, a walk with Christ. Jesus is with you! The Psalmist says he will not fear because "you are with me." You and I are not alone. He is with you. His eternal and unending strength is ever present in your life.

This is what is so transforming about a walk with Christ. He is with us. What an incredible blessing to live in communion with the God who created us from dust and who calls us to join him in a life full of his presence and grand purpose. He has called us to join him in his mission.



FROM DUST TO DESTINY

Your Mission: He Works Through You

Your Mission: He Works Through You

4

chapter

Everyone dreams of making a big splash and causing ripples.

Kids love jumping into the swimming pool to see how big a splash they can produce. They measure their greatness, power, and rank among their peers by whose splash has the greatest reach.

When our family vacations in the mountains my kids love to play in the cold valley streams. Their favorite activity is to toss rocks into the water. They love making big splashes that produce ripples. There is a funny thing about ripples. They keep on going long after the splash is history.

We all want to make a difference that counts with lasting positive effects, for the impact of our lives to send ripples into the lives of others even long after we have gone. One of the greatest fears in the human heart is that our lives will make no difference. You want to leave a legacy, to live a life of destiny, to make a splash that causes ripples.



Your Mission: He Works Through You

Why are we wired like this? The answer is simple. God created us for mission. He formed us from dust but designed us to fulfill a divine destiny to fulfill his will and reflect his glory in the world. Jesus came not only to redeem you and walk with you, but also to work through you.

Jesus came to restore our relationship with God and to send us on a world changing mission. Your life was meant to fulfill a role in his kingdom. His plan is to advance his cause, in part, through you.

He has given you so much: love, forgiveness, hope, a future, a family of fellow believers, the hope of heaven. Jesus said, *“Freely you have received, freely give.”* (Matthew 10:8) Your life is to be a channel through which God blesses you and you extend those blessings to others.

Jesus told his disciples, *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) His mission is to salvage sin torn lives like our own and restore them to their destiny in his kingdom. But he includes us in this mission for he also said, *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”* (John 20:21)

If God has a plan to use your life, the question you must ask is this. How must I posture my life for God to be able to work through me and advance his will?

chapter 4

Jesus comes into your life that he might indwell you and through you touch the lives of others. Jesus came teaching God's Word, healing the sick, restoring the outcast, bringing hope, and through the cross he brought salvation. The world needs all of these things in our generation and through us God chooses to bring these expressions of Jesus to people today.

Paul writes...

*"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."
(Ephesians 2:10)*

Isn't that amazing? The Lord has things planned for you to do. He has a plan for advancing his kingdom in the world and that plan includes you and me.

Through us he can display his kindness. Through us he can lift the downtrodden. Through us he has chosen to spread his Word. Through us he has chosen to proclaim the good news of his salvation to the people around us and to peoples far away.

If God has a plan to use your life, the question you must ask is this. How must I posture my life for God to be able to work through me and advance his will?

First, I must be service inclined

Your first decision is to accept the role of a servant, choosing to serve God and others. Jesus said, *"whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."* (Matthew 20:27)

Advancement in God's kingdom is directly linked to our willingness to serve.

chapter 4

Paul writes, *“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:4)* When you get your primary focus off yourself and onto the Lord’s mission and the needs of others you are in the perfect position to be powerfully used of God.


Second, I must take action

God did not design you for the couch. We were designed to be action inclined. The mission to spread the good news of Jesus is so clear and the needs of a broken world are so evident that there is no room for us to sit on the sidelines waiting for someone else to do something.

We are the ones who must take action. When we see someone hurt or in need or when we see someone who has yet to hear of Jesus, God is calling us to take action. He is prompting us to do something to bring the love of Christ into that situation.

Third, I must join with others

Of course there will be things that God calls you to do on your own. But most of the time God calls you to join with other believers to advance the ministry and mission of Jesus into the world. The church is the body of Christ and each of us are members of that body, but only together do we have the potential of more fully expressing the love and message of God to people.



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We are the ones who must take action. When we see someone hurt or in need or when we see someone who has yet to hear of Jesus, God is calling us to take action.

Your Mission: He Works Through You

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We are gifted in different ways and when we work together God accomplishes so much more through us. That is why it is so important that you involve your life and service through a local church that not only believes the Bible but is also action inclined, always seeking to join together to advance Christ's mission.

For Such a Time as This

I hope that from this book you have become convinced that though your life was formed from the dust of the ground, you are indeed designed for the Lord's divine plan. God created you and placed you in this generation. He strategically placed you in your family, city, school, job, and specific network of friends for a reason. The Lord plans on using you where you are to advance his will. You were created for such a time as this.

When I think of this truth, I think of the biblical account of Esther. God used Esther in a critical time in Israel's history to save her people from a terrible evil. The Israelites were exiled from their homeland and living under Persian rule. The Jews would face an eminent danger, but God had strategically placed Esther in a position where she would be able to save her people.

The king of Persia at that time was Xerxes and his queen was Vashti. Because of Vashti's disobedience in a matter, she was deposed from her royal position and it was determined that a new queen would be chosen from all the virgins of the land. Out of all the beautiful young women, Esther was picked to be queen.

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Esther's parents died when she was young and a cousin named Mordecai raised her as if she was his own. Mordecai knew the deep prejudice against his people in Persia and counseled Esther not to reveal that she was a Jew. He maintained contact with her when she entered the palace and at times advised her on certain matters.

In the course of time a man by the name of Haman devised a plot to annihilate the Jewish people.

He scheduled a day on the calendar for the Jews to be killed throughout the kingdom and for their possessions to be confiscated. Mordecai became aware of this plot and sent message to Esther.

His message urged her to enter the King's presence and *"beg for mercy and plead with him for her people."* (Esther 4:8) Of course the King did not know that she was of Jewish decent, so that would be a surprise. But there is something more important to understand.

A married king and queen of Persia in the 5th century B.C. were not the average married couple of today. It is not like they spent enormous time together. They were not in the habit of waking up each morning, helping each other make the bed, and then sharing a cup of coffee at the kitchen counter. The king had absolute power over the lives of his

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people, including his wife. In fact the wife was only permitted to see the king when the king requested her company, which was not often. So it wasn't like she could just *"plead with him for her people"* as they drifted off to bed that evening.

not requested her presence for the past thirty days.

The risks of taking Mordecai's advice were considerable. But Mordecai was undeterred. He sent back this answer, *"Do not think that because you are in*

He is saying to her that this is her divine moment, this is her mission. God had strategically placed her in a position to help her people.

Esther sent word back to Mordecai explaining that for someone to come in to see the King without him requesting their presence was a crime punishable by death. She said that *"the only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter"* sparing the person's life. (Esther 4:11) Then she goes on to explain that the king had

the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:13-14)

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He is saying to her that this is her divine moment, this is her mission. God had strategically placed her in a position to help her people. No one in the kingdom had the opportunity she had to plead for her people. She had been placed where she was “for such a time as this.”

Esther realized he was right and accepted her call to do something. She knew the risks, but determined to do what God had placed her there to do. She sent word back to Mordecai saying, *“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”* (Esther 4:16)

What courage! Before, she could not imagine standing up for her people. But now she could see that God had placed her in this position “for such a time as this.” That made all the difference.

Esther did go in to see the king and he extended his favor to her. She met with him more than once and eventually pleaded for her people and her people were saved. She had stepped into her divine moment. She had fulfilled her “for such a time as this.”

An exciting way to live is to wake up each morning knowing that God has called you to serve him.

Your Mission: He Works Through You

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Each of us are placed in this generation, in our specific network of relationships for our own “such a times as these.” God has a plan for our lives to fulfill, a mission for us to engage in.

THE QUESTION IS THIS...

How do we prepare ourselves to seize our divine moments for fulfilling God’s mission?

- **Believe in your calling.**

Esther had to come to the place where she could see that she was placed by God in the position in which she found herself. When she could see that she was strategically and uniquely positioned to fulfill God’s will, it gave her courage. We have likewise been placed in our particular family, workplace, school, community, church, or network of friendships to fulfill our own “such a times as these.”

These circles of influence represent our mission field into which we are called to bring the love and message of God. An exciting way to live is to wake up each morning knowing that God has called you to serve him and knowing that he has placed you to uniquely fulfill his will that day.

- **Make a decision.** Was Esther scared? Sure! Did she struggle with whether to act or not? Yes! But did she shackle herself to an inclination toward inaction by way of cowardly indecision? No! She made a decision to seize her divine moment. She took personal responsibility to act upon her circumstances and to pass through her portal of opportunity. She made a decision. Too many miss God’s call on their life because they don’t act for God and in God’s name in the moments and opportunities they have.

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- **Take risks.** I think the most powerful moment of the story is when Esther says, *“I will go to the king...And if I perish, I perish.”* (*Esther 4:16*) Esther discovered that fulfilling God’s will for her life was more important than her personal survival. Engaging in God’s mission is too important not to be willing to face risks. If you are going to join God in his mission in the world, you will have to take risks. You will have to take relational risks, make financial sacrifices, and face some of your own limiting fears. God will push you and stretch you.
- **Immerse yourself in God.** Esther asked the people to fast. What was she asking the people to do? She was asking that they put aside food, humble themselves before God, and seek him in prayer. She did the same. She recognized that only God could empower her for this task and only God could grant her success. When we determine to be on mission with God we must do the same. We must immerse ourselves in the Lord recognizing our utter dependence on him for our ability and success. After all, it is his mission, he works through our lives so it is imperative that we plunge ourselves deeply in our relationship with him.

You will have to take relational risks, make financial sacrifices, and face some of your own limiting fears. God will push you and stretch you.

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It is when we do these things that we assume a posture conducive to being used of God in his service. God wants to use your life to advance his cause. He can do amazing things through the person who believes in their calling, decides to follow that call, takes risks, and depends on the Lord. He can work through you for he has placed you in this world for “such a time as this.”

Look Around You

Look around you and see how many opportunities you have to influence others toward an experience of God’s Kingdom. God’s plan is to use you as an instrument of influence pointing others to a relationship with him. Look at your home, school, workplace, neighborhood and see the people God placed you amongst for whom you could be a shining light.

Jesus said to us before he ascended into heaven after his resurrection, “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” (Acts 1:8) Jesus said we would be his “witnesses.”

What is a witness? A witness is someone who by their own testimony gives evidence to a fact. You and I are Christ’s witnesses. We are to take our lives into the world giving evidence to the fact that the Lord changes lives and changed ours. We are to give witness that the good news of Jesus is true and can bring salvation to all who would believe.

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Jesus said that we would be empowered to engage in this mission by the very Holy Spirit of God. After all, this is not first our mission, but God's mission. He is working through us to accomplish his will.

So God comes into your life, not only to reach you and redeem you, but also then to work through you to reach others. How amazing! When God entered your life, he was not only thinking of you, but also all those to whom he would bring his love and message through your life. He calls you to be a disciple who will in turn make disciples of others.

So how do you witness?

It is really simple. You display the character and kindness of Christ as well as share the message of Christ with those around you. Jesus said that his followers are "*the light of the world.*" (*Matthew 5:14*) When you live out the character of Jesus before others and intentionally share with them the good news of his salvation you are shining the light of God in their lives. You are helping them find God's Way.

All of us know people in our lives who have yet to come to know the Lord in the personal fashion taught in this book. Consider people in your life with whom you could share the message of Christ.

Consider how you can do this...

- Display the character of Jesus. This is simply you growing closer to Christ and more like the Lord over time. It is all about you being transformed through a daily walk with God as spoken of in Chapter 2.
- Intentionally share the Good News. This is where you actually share the message of what Christ has done for us with those who have yet to receive Jesus. All of us know people in our lives who

have yet to come to know the Lord in the personal fashion taught in this book. Consider people in your life with whom you could share the message of Christ.

A great way to begin is to share with them your story of how Christ came into your life and how the message of the good news of salvation changed you. Then it is so important that you share with them the truths found in this book and invite them to place their faith in Christ as well.

Your Mission: He Works Through You

Your adventure starts now!

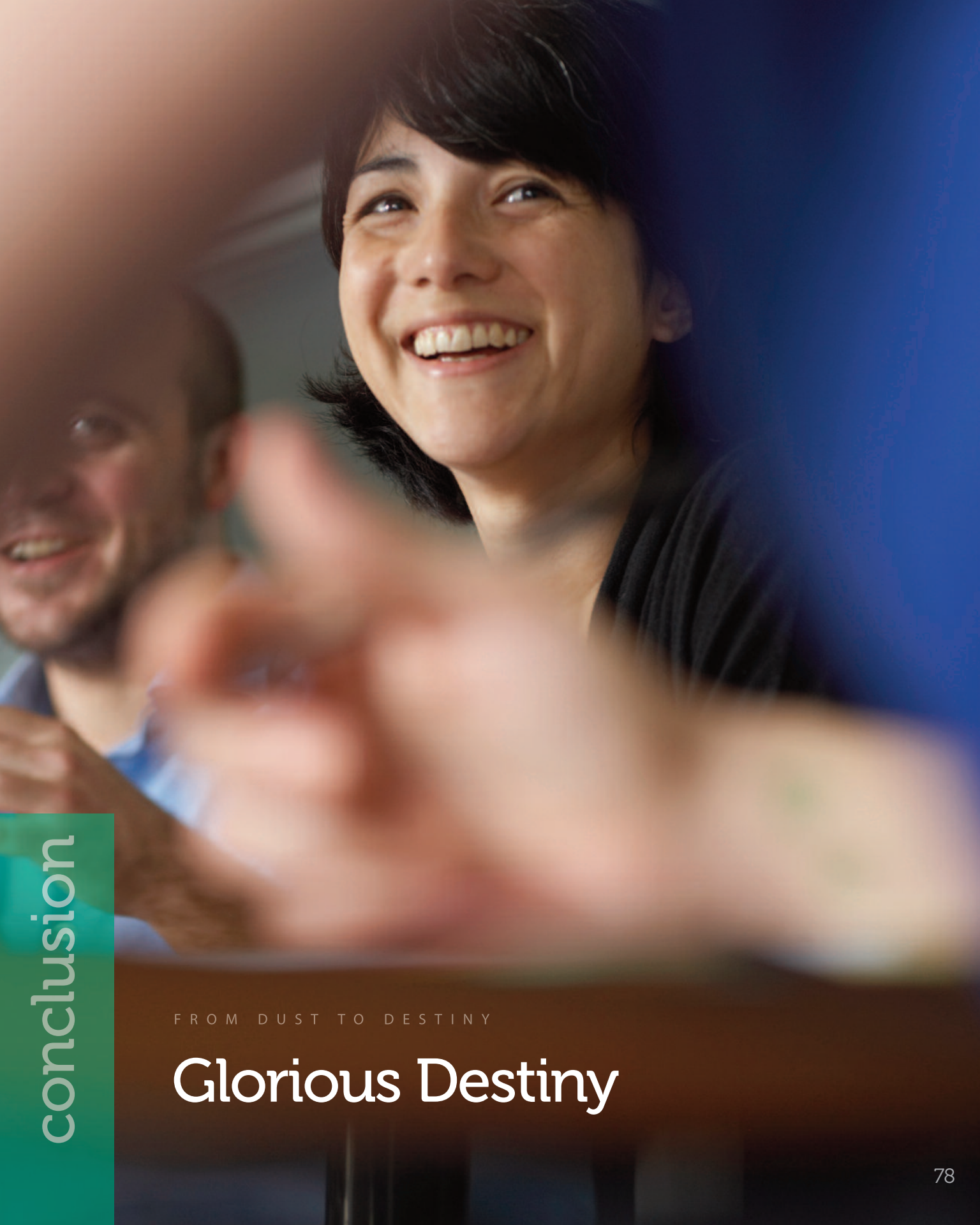
God wants to use your life to spread his Kingdom and he wants to impact the lives of people that he has placed and that he will place you among. Your life is meant for mission, his mission.

This mission might take you out of your comfort zone as God's Spirit prompts you to share his message with that fellow student at school or that co-worker at the office. It may take you halfway around the world to share the message with people who have never heard the name of Jesus.

The mission might lead you to reach out to the poor, the oppressed, the hurting. It might lead you to great sacrifices, but most likely it will also lead you into unprecedented opportunities that lead to amazing spiritual rewards.

Will you surrender your life to God's mission? Will you wake up each day asking God, "How do you want to use me as a witness today?" Will you dare to believe that God is using you to change the world?

If so, the rest of your life will be nothing short of a divinely guided adventure.



conclusion

FROM DUST TO DESTINY

Glorious Destiny

Conclusion: Glorious Destiny

In Christ your life is enraptured in a glorious destiny. Surrendered to God you enjoy his soul saving presence, his life directing purpose, and you anticipate the fulfillment of God's heavenly promise. Yes, you were created from mere dust. But your life was designed for an eternal destiny.

Your soul is meant to be full and overflowing with the glorious presence and powerful love of God. The meaning and mission of your life is inextricably linked to the Lord who cares for you and came to save you from your sinful past that he might give you a significant future. God loves you!

I sincerely hope that this book has helped you on your journey with Christ. The calling of God on my life is to help you and equip you to live a life discovering your divinely designed destiny and experiencing the prevailing life of God. It is my hope that you will allow me to continue to assist you in your walk with Christ.



This is why I invite you to
continue to visit

www.prevailinglife.com. *This site is designed for you.*

Here you will find content that will weekly help you know Christ more intimately, walk with Christ more obediently, and fulfill the mission of Christ more effectively. The ministry of Prevailing Life is here to help you grow as a disciple of Jesus.

**Let's join our lives together as we follow
Christ into our glorious destiny!**



About the Author

Greg Faulls has a passion for helping people like you discover their divine destiny. He is the Senior Pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church of Owensboro, Kentucky where he has served since 1998. In addition to serving as a pastor, Greg teaches as an Assistant Professor of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He is married to his beautiful wife Stefanie and they are the proud parents of four amazing children.

Greg has been in Christian leadership for over twenty-five years and has been pastor of churches in Texas and Kentucky. He holds a Master of Divinity and a Ph.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

His vision of encouraging people worldwide to follow Jesus is birthed out of a personal and life changing experience with Christ. In 1984, after years of believing there was no God, he became gripped with the conviction that there must be a God. He began a period of spiritual seeking which culminated in a conversion of his life to the leadership of Jesus Christ. His journey to faith was aided by a Gideon placed Bible stolen from a hotel room and a local church who lovingly guided him into a personal relationship with the Lord.

Greg has devoted his life to helping people discover their life in Christ, learn to walk with Christ, and engage in the mission of Christ.

About Prevailing Life

Prevailing Life is the teaching ministry of Greg Faulls. It is meant to assist you in discovering your divinely designed destiny through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This ministry introduces you to the person of Jesus, teaches you how to develop a daily relationship with Jesus, and equips you to do great things for Jesus.

The site www.prevailinglife.com is committed to weekly assist you in your relationship with God.



Through blogs, podcasts, and other resources, www.prevailinglife.com provides biblically based content and a responsive community that is vital to your spiritual growth in the Lord.

Dedication

To my wife and children who display for me that God is the center of it all and to the amazing people of Bellevue Church who are living out their destiny in Christ.

Acknowledgements

Carl Ringwall who encouraged me to give birth to the idea of Prevailing Life and who has helped me tackle the many “techie” dimensions of this project.

Randy Halbig who developed the graphic design related to the book. His eye for concept and design gives my words richer dimension and fuller life.

Stefanie, my wife, who helped me proof the copy and whose insights and support always makes my work better.

Contact:



If you found this e-book helpful, please share it with others. You can do this by simply clicking on the appropriate icon below. In addition, please leave a comment on my blog. I truly want to hear from you. I will use the feedback of my readers to improve any future editions.

A young man with a short haircut is smiling warmly, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a light-colored zip-up jacket over a white shirt. His hand is resting on his chin. In the background, other students are blurred, suggesting a classroom or study environment. The lighting is soft and warm, with some bokeh lights in the background.

Dust To Destiny
GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Preparing for Your Group Experience

This e-book was written to assist readers in their relationship with God. It can be read individually. It can also be studied in a group setting. If you desire to use this material in a group, the following study guide is for you. Simply use the following material as you lead your group each week for four weeks.

Four parts to each session...

Review: This is a time for you the leader to remind the group the key concepts they have already read in the chapter. Bullet points are provided.

Share: Here you will find questions and discussion prompts to help you guide a group discussion. Feel free to add questions of your own.

Apply: This is a time for the group to make application of key ideas in the book.

Prayer: Here is where you lead the group to connect with God as you wrap up the weekly session.

How long are the sessions?

These sessions are designed to be only 30 minutes long. Of course, they could go longer. It is up to you the leader how long they should take. Adjust the amount of time to fit the needs of the group. These are designed to be 30 minutes to allow for group social time before and after the group study.

Preparing for Your Group Experience

Preparing as the Leader...

How should you prepare for a Dust to Destiny Group Study? Here are some tips...

- Get a small group of people interested in joining you for the study. Instruct them to go to www.prevailinglife.com to register on the site and to download their free copy of *From Dust to Destiny*.
- Arrange for a time and place to meet.
- Have the group read the chapter to be studied that week prior to the session.
- As the leader you should read through the entire book before the group begins meeting weekly.
- Before each session review the chapter assigned to that week and go over the study guide material.
- Pray for God to work powerfully in your life and in the lives of all the group members.

Who to invite to a group...

Anybody can be invited into such a group. This can be a great experience for someone who is already a follower of Christ and for someone who is considering the claims of Christ. You can use this book in a group experience to strengthen existing believers and/or to share Christ with those who are yet to believe.

“Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen”

Review: (5 minutes)

- Life is not about you, it is about God. If you want to discover your purpose and calling, you must first know something about God.
- Your life has been created in the context of a divinely meaningful, time defined order. This means your life has divine purpose from its beginning.
- God created us in his image. We are formed from the dust of the ground and we are continually dependant on God for our very breath.
- We were created to have a deep and harmonious relationship with God, but we rebelled against him and that rebellion resulted in us being separated from his life and subject to his judgment.

Share: (15 minutes)

- In the introduction to the book Greg Faulls says you “were created for something that transcends what most people dare to imagine.” Is this something that you find easy to believe or difficult? Why? If it were true, how would that change your life?

“Dust Made Alive, Dust Fallen”

WEEK

1

- Think about the fact that we are made from the dust of the earth and that we are dependent on the will and mercy of God for every breath of life we breathe. How does that truth impact your understanding of God in your life?
- The book speaks about man’s sin and relational separation from God. Talk about examples in our lives and world where sin has damaged our lives and most importantly our relationship with God.
- Explain to the group that, though this week the chapter ended on a despairing note, next week we will discuss how God pursues us and offers us life giving redemption from sin and death.

Apply: (5 minutes)

Encourage the group this week to live their lives very aware of their dependence on God for life. Dare them to trust that God has a meaningful purpose he wants to accomplish through them.

Prayer: (5 minutes)

Either lead in a closing prayer or ask someone in the group to pray. Pray thanking God for giving us life and making us in his image. Ask him to continue to reveal to your group the wonderful life in Christ that he has for you.

“Your Redemption: He Came for You”

WEEK

2

Review: (5 minutes)

- You are the driving obsession of God. He is pursuing you, that he might rescue you from sin back to a restored eternal relationship with himself.
- God comes to save us through his Son, Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is the sinless Savior who died on the cross paying for man’s sin and rose from the dead so that we could know God’s forgiveness and redemption.
- For us to experience God’s salvation, we must personally respond to Jesus by believing in what Jesus did for us, admitting we are in need of his forgiveness, turning from our sin, and surrendering our lives to his leadership.
- Responding to Jesus in faith is the most amazing decision you could ever make and opens your life to an eternal experience with God that you could have in no other way.

Share: (15 minutes)

- Greg Faulls talked about a few obsessions he had when he was younger (fish tanks, cycling, his fiancée). What are some obsessions people in your group have pursued in their lives (hobbies, interests, careers, kids, etc...)? The book talks about God’s pursuit of an eternal relationship with us. How does knowing that God pursues you make you feel about God?

“Your Redemption: He Came for You”

WEEK

2

- Jesus died for the sins that we deserved to be condemned for, but he suffered for them in our place so that we could be forgiven and know God’s love. How does receiving God’s forgiveness in your life change the quality of your life and relationships? How does it change your view of your future?
- The book talks about responding to Jesus and what he has done for us on the cross and in the resurrection. The book speaks of believing in what Christ did for you, turning from your sin, and surrendering your life to his leadership. Ask the group if any of them have done this? If so have them share about the experience.

Apply: (5 minutes)

If members of your group have already received Christ as Savior, encourage them to live this week grateful for their relationship with Jesus. If not consider asking them if they would want to turn to Christ right now and begin their journey with the Lord.

Prayer: (5 minutes)

Pray for the group to grow in their gratitude for all Christ has done for them, thank God for anyone in the group who recently accepted Christ as Lord, and pray for others in our lives who do not know Christ.

“Your Transformation: He Walks with You”

WEEK

3

Review: (5 minutes)

- Receiving Christ in your life is a decision to follow Christ in a daily relationship that transforms every area of your life.
- A relationship with Jesus is an amazing life filled with forgiveness, favor, an eternal future, and a fellowship with the God who created you. You are set apart for holy purpose.
- Every believer in Christ must learn to walk with the Lord through the disciplines of faith, Bible Study, prayer, church, and the sharing of your faith with others.
- Every person goes through difficult circumstances and must descend into dark valleys. It is a great comfort to know that the Lord is with you in the midst of those times.

Share: (15 minutes)

- In what ways would your life be different if every aspect of your life was impacted by a daily walk with God? What would be different about how you spent your time, your money, and how you related to others? What things might stay the same?

“Your Transformation: He Walks with You”

- Discuss the various suggestions in the book about how to make studying the Bible a part of your life. Ask the group to share ways they intend to consistently grow in the knowledge and a application of God’s Word.
- The book spoke about Christ walking with us through the valleys of life. Ask the group to share times in their lives when they went through such a valley. How did God help them through that time? If they did not have a relationship with Christ at the time, ask how a relationship with the Lord would have helped them through.

Apply: (5 minutes)

Challenge the group to make a commitment to the various disciplines important to a growing relationship with Christ (Bible, prayer, church involvement, sharing your faith). If there is someone in the group who is not currently involved in a church, invite them to join you the following weekend.

Prayer: (5 minutes)

Encourage each member to voice a brief prayer asking God to continue to draw them closer to him as they learn to walk with him daily.

“Your Mission: He Works thru You”

WEEK

4

Review: (5 minutes)

- We were created to join with God to engage in his mission and make a real difference in the world.
- God’s plan is to use us in his world changing mission. We must be willing to be used and commit to a life of serving God and others.
- We were created for many “for such a time as this” moments. God has many things he wants to use you for in your generation to impact the world for his kingdom.
- The most powerful way you can join God in his mission is to answer the call to be a witness for him. Being a witness for Jesus involves displaying the character of Jesus in your life and intentionally sharing the message of Jesus with others.

Share: (15 minutes)

- Ask the group to identify ways that God may want currently to use them. In what ways would they need to adjust their lives in order to be able to do that which God is calling them to do?
- The book speaks of “taking risks.” What are some things about joining God in his mission that seem risky to us? How might we overcome our anxiety about such things and move forward in doing God’s will?

“Your Mission: He Works thru You”

- Discuss ways that we can authentically witness for Christ to those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Apply: (5 minutes)

Have everyone in the group share the name of someone they know who needs to hear about a relationship with Jesus Christ. Commit as a group to pray for each other as all of you seek to minister in the lives of these persons. Encourage the group members to use this book, *From Dust to Destiny*, to share Christ with these people.

Prayer: (5 minutes)

Lead the group in prayer asking God to use each group member as they join with him in his mission to bring the good news of Jesus to the world.

WEEK

4

You Can Share This E-book with Others!



If you found this e-book helpful, please share it with others. You can do this by simply clicking on the appropriate icon below. In addition, please leave a comment on my blog. I truly want to hear from you. I will use the feedback of my readers to improve any future editions.

F R O M D U S T

TO
DESTINY

G R E G F A U L L S , P H . D .

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INTRODUCTION:
Created for More

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Dust Made Alive,
Dust Fallen

Chapter 2:
Your Redemption:
He Came for You

Chapter 3:
Your Transformation:
He Walks with You

Chapter 4:
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Conclusion:
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