

Your Beautiful
Purpose

Discovering and Enjoying What
God Can Do Through You

SUSIE LARSON



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For My Dad
Who taught me how to fight.

For My Mom
Who taught me how to love.

For My Savior
Who taught me how to live.

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Foreword

My chronic illness flares. I can't find my wallet. The kids are too loud—until glass shatters somewhere.

I catch my breath.

In the still, there's this hiss: "Now look what you did."

I don't want to know what just broke.

Because I know I am.

One morning in spring, I am shards on a floor and it's hard to breathe and I can't gather all the pieces and I don't know where peace is and how in the world I am going to piece together a beautiful purpose here when everything just keeps slipping through my fingers to break.

I have no words when a friend knocks on the front door and hands me a journal embossed with one simple word: *PEACE*.

How can she know?

I hold the journal with that one simple, frustratingly elusive word embossed across it—*PEACE*—and my chin drops to my chest and everything trembles and there's no holding on to my own breaking, everything giving away. Purpose. Peace. *Please*.

There are reasons why certain books find their way to your hands.

There are days when you are just desperate, just wild, just about at a breaking point—because until you understand your purpose, you'll overestimate your peace.

I go for walks down through the woods. Sit by the pond, pray, read Scripture. Write in that journal. Run my hands across that one word: Peace. Some days the angst tightened around my chest in a relentless grip as I walked home: *How can I be a more patient mother, a more loving wife, a more earnest disciple? How can I become all God needs me to become—before I can do what God called me to do? How can I abandon the pressures and abide in His promises?*

And how in the world do you move these things from what you know—to what you breathe?

I go away to a cottage for a few days, soak in the Psalms. Peace pools around my toes, wetting me, quenching me . . . and then ebbs away again, lost at sea as waves of worries flood in.

Peace may come fleetingly as a reviving, necessary place—but peace as a place, it’s always like a fog burning off in the heat of the day; peace as a place will always dissipate.

Places come and go. Tickets are expensive and the cost of coffee adds up.

I come home to the noise, to the kids, to my mess, to me . . . and I read it right there in His Word. Lay my hand right across the verse like a finding, like a beginning again, like pure beauty—my treasure: “For he himself is our peace” (Ephesians 2:14).

And there is the crux of it—peace isn’t ultimately a place. Peace is the ultimate Person.

And the Person of Christ has an ultimate purpose in Christ—*just for you.*

“*Listen carefully to what God the Lord is saying, for he speaks peace to his faithful people*” (Psalm 85:8 NLT), for the Lord of peace Himself gives us “*his peace at all times and in every situation*” (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT).

When I read these pages of Susie Larson’s, when I read her stories and her startling wisdom and her fresh insights and of her tender walk with our Savior, I feel like someone has filled up all the pages of my Peace journal—that someone is showing

me—*practically, page by page, purposefully*—how to go deeper with the Person of Christ, the purpose of my life, and the peace of my days.

There are few books that make you feel like you have just found a mentor, just found a sister—just found out how to hold on to everything that keeps slipping through your fingers.

It doesn't matter how chaotic your life is.

It doesn't matter how long you've been waiting, what your hope is, what your impossible prayers are.

It doesn't matter how broken you are.

The Prince of Peace is bent beside you right now—you holding this book, because He knows—and He's picking up all the pieces to your peace.

To make this mosaic of astonishing grace.

To piece you together for His one beautiful Purpose.

So turn the page . . . and breathe.

~Ann Voskamp
Bestselling author of *One Thousand Gifts*



Because we know that this extraordinary day is just ahead, we pray for you all the time—pray that our God will make you fit for what he’s called you to be, pray that he’ll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something. If your life honors the name of Jesus, he will honor you. Grace is behind and through all of this, our God giving himself freely, the Master, Jesus Christ, giving himself freely.

2 Thessalonians 1:11–12 THE MESSAGE

It’s time to begin the journey of your life. May your heart sing as you embrace everything God has planted there.¹

—Bruce Wilkinson

Introduction



Do You Believe You're Called?

God is in the process of educating us for future service and greater blessings. And if we have gained the qualities that make us ready for a throne, nothing will keep us from it once His timing is right.¹

—L. B. Cowman

Beautiful: Magnificent, Stunning, Delightful, Divine, Winsome, Engaging, Appealing

Purpose: Aspiration, Plan, Conviction, Motivation, Resolve, Intention, Aim²

Bless you for picking up *Your Beautiful Purpose*. May God speak deeply to your heart and awaken fresh purpose in your soul as you read on.

In case you're wondering if this book is for you, know that I had three women in mind while working my way through these pages.

The first is the woman with a buried passion, a desire in her heart to be fulfilled. She lights up when she talks about what she'd so love to do someday. But it all seems so far off, so unattainable, that she wonders if she's delusional, or just dreaming.

If that's you, this book is for you. God has a plan and purpose for you that takes time to unfold, requires your cooperation, and goes beyond what your own mind can conceive. I pray you'll join me on this journey as God trains and readies you for your beautiful purpose.

I'm also thinking of the woman who's been so beat down by life, had so many of her heartfelt desires pushed aside, that she's barely alive, hardly passionate. The light's gone out of her eyes, life is mostly a duty, and she's quite sure it'll always be this way. She's afraid to dream because she'd rather not be disappointed.

If that's you, dear one, I wish I could wrap my arms around you. Please hear me when I say, this book is for you too. I prayed for you while writing this book. With all my heart I believe God wants to impart renewed hope and inspired vision to you. He wants to bring *life* back to your life. Join me on this journey and see if God won't breathe something fresh and beautiful into your soul.

Finally, I'm thinking of the woman who is earnest in her walk with Jesus but doesn't resonate with words like *dream* or *calling*. She just wants to be faithful right where she lives. She loves her familiar territory but lives unaware of the *more* God has for her. And what a beautiful soul she is! If that's you, I believe strongly that this book is for you as well. God wants to deepen your impact, stretch your faith, and widen your influence in a way that fits you perfectly. Will you join me on this journey? I pray you will.

The fact that you're standing here today with breath in your lungs testifies that God has a plan and purpose for you on this earth. Jesus wants you to live with bold confidence in His promises and humble dependence on His voice. He plans to transform

you into a woman of purpose and lead you to places you could never otherwise go apart from Him.

What's so beautiful about our call is that God knows full well whom He's getting when He calls us.

In his book *Holy Ambition*, Chip Ingram reflects on the people God loves to use:

God has chosen very regular, ordinary, common people just like you and me to accomplish the biggest events in all of human history. He used a teenage girl to bring His Son into this planet. He used a blue-collar worker to raise Him from childhood and teach Him about a life of integrity and worship. He used common fishermen to lay the foundation for the greatest revolution that has ever touched the world. And God wants to use you and God wants to use me in the same ways.³

God's will for you is your best-case scenario. I marvel at how He lovingly takes our broken pieces, our tangled-up fears, our worst mistakes, and creates a mosaic of beauty that impacts the world.

Consider the desires in your heart. Pay attention to stories that stir up your passions. Dare to believe that He wants to use the gifts He's imparted to you. He's the one who put desires *in you* that He might fulfill His purposes *for you*. He can even use the worst things you've ever done, or the worst things that have ever happened to you, to change the world through you. He desires to transform you into a humble, bold, healed, and confident woman who trusts Jesus with her every breath.

Join me as we awaken to the God-possibilities in our lives. I ask you to read through the chapters prayerfully and thoughtfully. May this be for you a life-transforming, soul-stirring journey. I pray it will be. As you work through the pages of the book you will learn to:

- ~ believe that God desires more for you than to just get by;
- ~ sort through the anxieties and insecurities that hold you back;

- ~ put your fears under your feet and set your jealousies aside;
- ~ dream with God about your beautiful life purpose;
- ~ understand how God is using your current trials to train you for a greater purpose;
- ~ silence the enemy's condemning voice and tune your ear to God's song over your life;
- ~ lay hold of God's promises in a fresh, bold way; and
- ~ walk forward in a new level of holy confidence and humble dependence.

A Life of Promise

So what kind of life did God promise us? Not an easy one. But a powerful, world-changing, redemptive, miraculous life that overcomes hardship, defies the odds, defeats the giants, and conquers fears.

If we take God at His word, He'll take us places and work through us in ways that will cause others *who knew us when*, to step back, shake their heads, and say, "There *has* to be a God in heaven; no way could she have accomplished those things or become that person on her own."

Jesus promised us an abundant life, which in essence involves copious amounts of fruitfulness, lavish amounts of love, abundant supplies of strength and courage, and profuse amounts of generosity. Jesus came to give us *life*. Satan came to steal it from us, to kill our dreams and our passion, and destroy every hint of God-inspired sparkle and verve within us (see John 10:10).

Jesus also promised that during our time on earth, we'd encounter hardship, trials, and tribulations (see John 16:33). We'll be misjudged, mistreated, and misunderstood. Satan will do everything he can to take us out. But here comes another promise: Overwhelming victory is ours in Christ Jesus (see Romans 8:37)!

Search the Scriptures yourself and you'll see verse after verse that speaks to our calling—our purpose—and of God's faithfulness to His promises. Perhaps the most compelling verse for me when it comes to our pre-ordained purpose on earth is Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (NLT).

Do you actually believe that God wants to use you? That He has a beautiful assignment *just for you*? Are you ready to grab hold of God's promises right here, right now, no matter what your circumstances may be telling you? Will you dare to believe that God is working in you today to get you where you need to go tomorrow?

God is for you and loves the idea of using you for His great glory. You have a divine appointment to live an overabundant, more-than-fruitful life. Will you trust Him enough to look up and give Him your yes? I pray you will.

Jesus created you with a very specific purpose in mind. To live the powerful, significant life assigned to you by God, you must—with God at your side—confront the bullies of fear, insecurity, and inferiority. You must be gritty enough to walk by faith, be tenacious enough to grab hold of His promises and never let go, and be humble enough to admit that you need Him every single hour. He beckons you toward a battle, but you stand on the winning side.

Look for Him in your circumstances and you'll find Him there. May you dare to dream with God! You don't need to look to other women and long for their lives and callings. You don't need to be captivated by your fears.

No one and nothing can deter you from your calling—not your obstacles, not the woman you constantly compare yourself to, and not even your past sins and missteps. *Only unbelief* can keep you chained to mediocrity and a less-than life. Will you trust Jesus and begin to move forward in faith?

You have this one life to live. What will you do with what Christ has offered you? Will you spend your energy trying to present well, save face, and pretend you're not insecure? Or will you get real, face down your fears, and embrace the God-confident, significant life you were made for?

Do you know that the devil sees your potential with greater clarity than you do? That's why he works overtime to keep you from seeing who you really are in Christ. Lord willing, this book will teach you how to fight, how to stand, and how to move forward into the purposes God planned for you long ago. You'll learn how to trust God's timing and better discern His voice as you take each promised step on your journey.

May God open your eyes to all He has imparted to you! I dare you to dream with God and walk out His stunning purpose for you.

As a beautifully loved woman of God, you need only to look to Him who leads you joyfully with triumph.

May God bless you as you read
~Susie Larson

How to Use This Book

Please use this book in a way that most suits you. If you grow best in the context of a women's Bible study group, approach this as a six-week study and complete two chapters each week. Do the Study Questions on your own and work through the Discussion Starters during your group time. Your group leader may want to delve deeper into the study questions during the group meeting.

Also available is a *DVD Study Companion*, which includes six thirty-minute segments that cover and expand on the material in this book, two chapters at a time. Together, the book and DVD set allows for study groups to host a six-week study at home or church.

A quick side note: Some of the Discussion Starters probe deeply and may feel too personal to address with others unless you're with your closest confidantes. You decide where you want to go with the Discussion Questions.

You may prefer to work your way through the book during your alone times with God and talk your way through it with a few close girlfriends.

Either way, I encourage you not to take this journey alone. Invite others to stand with you, pray with you, and spur you on as you consider God's beautiful purpose and plan for your life.

I ask you to dig into Scripture with a teachable heart and be fully present with God as you work through the Study Questions at the end of each chapter. Dare to take a few risks as you explore the Discussion Starters at the end of each chapter.

I want this book to feel like an encouraging note from a friend, inspiring you to be all you were meant to be in Christ Jesus. I believe in you. And more important, Christ Jesus loves you and believes you're worth His investment in you. God be with you as you dare to lay hold of His profound promises and His beautiful purpose for you.





Section One

Embrace Your Purpose

Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the
desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:4



Believe

You're Called

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Ephesians 2:10 NLT

God loves people. He is not that interested in our bigness, wealth, popularity, or supremacy. He is interested in our relationship with Him and our relationship with people.¹

—Matthew Barnett

Have you ever noticed how faith steps can bring on a little nausea from time to time? Whether God asks me to share my faith with a stranger or do missionary work halfway around the world, those inner nudges make my stomach flip and my heartbeat quicken. Sometimes I fear I'll get it wrong, fall on my face, or misinterpret God's marching orders.

Even so, there's something else in me, something deeper, that loves to be challenged, loves the idea of stepping out in faith and seeing how God moves when I move with Him. I cherish that inner assurance and peace that often accompany God's call, a whispered voice that reminds me, *I'll miss out if I stay behind. My safest place is with Him, even if I don't know where He is taking me. I have to trust Him here.* Even when my offering isn't all I'd hoped it'd be, God moves on it, multiplies it, and changes me in the process. I marvel at how faithful God has been and how far He's brought me when I consider the person I was when He saved me.

When I was a young girl, my world turned upside down at the hands of a few teenage boys. Fear and insecurity became my new traveling companions. I didn't tell anyone what had happened until years later, long enough for the enemy's lies to get a good stranglehold on my sense of value and calling. My new sense of purpose as a young girl was twofold:

- ~ To succeed at everything I attempted in order to prove to the world I wasn't the lost cause I believed myself to be.
- ~ To control my environment so that I'd never be in a vulnerable situation again.

Jesus rescued my heart and saved my soul in eighth grade, but it would be many more years before I learned of His love in a way that compelled me to take risks, to trust Him, and to let down my guard.

Little by little, one step at a time, Jesus used the inner nudge to show me when to step out and when to step back. For instance, though I'd decided long ago that I would *never* take a mission trip (I'd pay for others to go, but I'd stay home), Jesus had decided long before that in due time, I'd trust Him enough to trample down my "nevers" and follow wherever He led me.

Before I learned—on a gut level—of God’s unfathomable love and faithfulness, my sense of call revolved around my need for safety and control. It was my job to manage my fears and insecurities and somehow love Jesus from the smallness of my world. But eventually Jesus captured my heart and convinced me of His great love for me. And now I believe with all my heart that He is who He says He is. I know that where He guides, He provides. *He restored my soul, for His name’s sake.*

If we trust God with our fears and insecurities, He’ll entrust us with a call that puts those fears to shame. This faith walk is about intimacy with God. As we follow His lead, He’ll lead us to rely on Him in ways big and small.

When God calls us out, whether it’s to engage in a difficult conversation, to travel to a land far away, to reach out to a total stranger, or to attempt to accomplish something that’s far bigger than we are, it can be both terrifying and exhilarating. When Jesus walked on the water in the fourth watch of the night, His disciples sat in the boat, terrified, believing Him to be a ghost (see Matthew 14:25–26).

I like to call these kinds of faith experiences God-opportunities. Oftentimes these ministry moments first appear to us as scary, risky, and inconvenient circumstances. If we cover our eyes and bury our head, we’ll miss an opportunity to be part of an everyday miracle. Jesus calls us to faith and courage because He is faithful and strong. Read what He said to the disciples: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid” (Matthew 14:27).

When a God-opportunity comes our way, He’ll quicken our hearts, stir up our faith, and compel us to look past the fear. In essence, He says to us, “There’s an opportunity here. Trust me. Take heart. And engage your faith. I control the storms and I have called you to this moment to see My glory and grow your faith.”

Peter's response continues to speak to us today: "Lord, if it's you . . . *tell me to come to you on the water*" (Matthew 14:28, emphasis mine). What courage!

I think I have the spiritual gift of suspicion. The first time I read how Peter yelled to Jesus, "*If it's really You, Lord, tell me to step out of this boat and join You walking on top of the water*" (my paraphrase), I thought, *But, Peter, what if this really wasn't Jesus? The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost. What if it really would have been a ghost? What if the ghosts were all chuckling at each other, waiting and watching to see if you'd fall for their trick? It's like you set yourself up to sink! Aren't you afraid it's all a ruse?* And yet Peter knew his Shepherd's voice. And even more profound to me is this: *Peter asked to be called.*

In so many words, Peter said to Jesus, "Call me, Lord. I want to walk with You to unknown places. Wherever You are, I want to be there too. Through danger and storm and by still waters, I'll walk forward if You ask me to. I'll take the necessary risks required of me because I know You are with me."

Dr. Warren Wiersbe brings a profound insight to Peter's request:

In fact, when Matthew wrote Peter's request, "Bid me to come," he used a Greek word that means "the command of a king." Peter knew that Jesus Christ was King over all nature, including the wind and the waves. His word is law and the elements must obey. . . . If Jesus says "Come" then that word is going to accomplish its intended purpose. Since He is the "author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), whatever He starts, He completes. We may fail along the way, but in the end, God will succeed.²

Dr. Wiersbe's insight compels me to make the same humble request to my King every single day: *Bid me come. Call me, Lord. Because I know if You call me, You'll sustain me.* Not only did Peter know his Savior's voice, Peter understood Christ's

authority. Peter knew that if Jesus called him out, Jesus would also hold him up.

What Does It Mean to Be Called?

In technical terms, a calling is a vocation, a line of work. To get a spiritual perspective, let's look at the passage from Ephesians 2:10 again: "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (NLT). God created us for Himself. He made us new in Christ Jesus so that we can do the wonderful things He planned for us. He created us with a purpose that He made provision for before we were born.

He had our lives and purposes on His mind before we even came to be. To use a double negative: You're not here for nothing! You're definitely on planet earth for a significant and important reason. From this point on, I'll refer to your purpose as your kingdom-call.

God assigns a certain sphere of influence and sends people our way to touch and love and influence. He even calls us to *become* a certain kind of person, one we could never be without God. As followers of Christ, we are ever and always *on-call* to represent Him to a lost and dying world.

Traveling around the country as a conference speaker, I meet far too many women who have a lifeless look in their eyes. They've stopped dreaming, or perhaps never dreamed at all. Either their fears have won the fight or their weariness has taken the fight right out of them. But when I push a little and ask a few provoking questions, I see the spark return. I know they have a deep desire to live the life God designed specifically for them. Life is too precious to live simply in reaction to our busy schedules or to our binding fears. We have work to do that will change us, fulfill us, stretch and beautify us. And through us, by the power of the Holy Spirit mightily at work within us, this work will change the world.

You and I have a calling on our lives. Scripture is clear. May God give you a strong sense of your kingdom-call so you can begin making life choices that line up with your divine and appointed purpose and direction.

Two Parts to Your Call

There's another aspect to our calling. And this part of the call is just as important, if not more so than the dream or vision we have for our lives. If we get so focused on our kingdom-call that we miss the daily call, we will be susceptible to selfish ambition, self-centeredness, and a self-important view of our role in God's kingdom work. And if we focus so much on the big-picture calling that we miss the importance of the present moment, we may get a wrong picture of what faithfulness (and even success) looks like.

Maybe you've seen it before. God inspires someone to start a ministry. Suddenly that ministry consumes its founder. She gives away all of her time, margin, and energy to her cause. She expects church leaders, friends, and neighbors all to care about the cause like she does. She feels worn out, frustrated, and a tad self-righteous. Without realizing it, she's forgotten that she only carries a portion of God's burden, while many others carry their portion of His heart for the world. Our lives are meant to intermingle with each other while tending to the tasks God gives us. Our kingdom-call matters, but we'll lose our way if we miss the other part of our call.

So what's more important than the overarching purpose written over our lives? It's the *daily* call to listen to God's voice and do what He says, to walk with *purpose in every step*. Moreover, if we tend to the daily call, if Jesus has our full attention from day to day, moment to moment, He'll get us where we need to go so that we can live out the big-picture, divinely appointed call written over our lives.

Oftentimes, those up-close acts of obedience seem completely unrelated to the overall direction of our kingdom-call. In fact, sometimes those little pit stops will seem to take us completely off track from our call. But Jesus knows what He's doing. The question is, do we love Him enough to trust Him?

Some days we'll be called to stop and help the person on the side of the road. Other days we'll be called to write a note to an old friend and apologize for letting too much time pass between visits. Some days Jesus will ask us to put more money in the offering plate and fewer items in the shopping cart.

There'll be whole seasons of life spent serving in ways that don't seem to match our gifts or passions, seasons where we feel overlooked and completely missed, seasons where the storms of life seem to focus their fury on us. But if God leads us to it, He'll lead us through it. And we can know that He has for us in that time and place, a very distinct purpose. And we must trust Him.

God calls us—above and beyond everything else—to live as ones who are spoken for. He knows where we should go and what we should do. We belong to Jesus, and it's our greatest privilege and responsibility as His followers to listen to His voice and do what He says. He knows how to get us where we need to go. And as I mentioned before, His will for us is our best-case scenario.

Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

Peter managed to bravely step out of the boat and onto the water. Pause for a moment and really let that in. Peter walked with Jesus *on the water!* The other disciples stayed back in the boat. If the boat had windows, I'm sure those guys would have pressed their faces against them and shouted, "Peter, go for it!" or, "No, don't do it! You're too old!" But then again, maybe not. Either way, Peter hoisted up his robe, stepped over the edge of

the boat, splashed his feet in the water, and proceeded to walk. And he didn't sink. At least not at first.

But then the winds picked up. The waves raged and splashed up against his legs. Peter's hair whipped him in the face. He took his eyes off of Jesus. He looked at the waves and started to sink. He cried out and Jesus steadied Peter once again. Still out on the water, still amidst raging winds, right there in the middle of the storm, Jesus asked, "You of little faith . . . why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31).

In his New Testament commentary, Dr. Warren Wiersbe shares, "This word translated *doubt* carries the meaning of 'standing uncertainly at two ways.' Peter started out with great faith but ended up with little faith because he saw two ways instead of one."³

Peter saw two ways instead of one. He saw his way, which threatened total disaster, and he saw Jesus' way, which defied the laws of gravity. How many of us do the same? We see the logical solution, which is no solution at all, but forget that Jesus stands on the water, beckoning us away from our self-made decisions. Jesus' ways are so often counterintuitive. But at some point we have to decide to trust Him.

God Rescues Us From Ourselves

Peter saw two ways instead of one. How many times have I been in that same boat? How about you? In the early years of our marriage, buried under all kinds of medical debt, threatened with the loss of our home, Kevin and I saw two ways instead of one and we stopped tithing regularly. And we started to sink.

We cried out to Jesus and He steadied us. He confronted our fear and small faith. We looked to Him again as the One who promised to supply our needs. We asked forgiveness for our small faith and for our disobedience. We tithed again. We fixed our eyes on Jesus so much so that our double vision faded

away. We now saw only one way. We decided to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and not to lean on our own understanding of this financial storm. We knew that if we acknowledged Him in all of our ways, He promised to make a straight path for us through the storm (see Proverbs 3:5–6).

When our double-mindedness became a single-minded obedience to a loving, living God, we learned beyond a shadow of doubt that our God *will* supply all of our needs according to His supply, not according to our lack (see Philippians 4:19). He called us in that storm to trust Him and do what He said. And He promised to hold us up so the waters would not sweep over us. And that's just what He did.

As we faithfully tithed, we found ourselves participating in God's supernatural supply. Our cereal seemed to last longer. Our juice didn't run out as fast either. And though our bills exceeded our income, we paid them every month. The math didn't work, but then again it's not supposed to. That's why God's economy trumps ours. He takes our little faith-filled offerings and multiplies them. It took us a long time to pay off that medical debt, yet God met our needs in a way we could not do for ourselves.

In due time we wanted to do more than tithe. We sowed more and more seeds into ministries that God called us to support. Our faith grew. Our compassion for God's work grew.

And you know what happened? We saw the enemy's plan for our finances *fall apart* as God established His plan through us. Kevin and I know that part of our calling as a married couple is to be hilarious givers. We're not there yet, but we're on our way. Several years ago we made a goal that in ten years, we wanted to be living on half of our income and giving the other half away to the poor. We're excited at the thought of it.

How do we keep our head above water when the storms rage and the winds blow and threaten to take us under? We keep our eyes on Jesus. We trust Him for His faithfulness and supernatural

influence in our lives. We determine His way is the only way. And we trust that if we follow Him today, He'll get us where we need to be tomorrow.

Rooted, Grounded, and Called

Like a beautiful tree planted in fertile soil, your calling and mine are anchored in God Himself. Like branches that reach far and wide, our lives—anchored in Christ—are meant to touch many, to provide fruit for the hungry, shade for the weary, and stability for the lost. May we send our roots down deep into the Lord's marvelous love, and live lives that remind the world that our powerful and loving God is very much alive today.

But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7–8

Precious Lord,

What an honor and privilege it is to be linked in fellowship with You! I want to live with an ear bent toward heaven. Give me eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to do Your will. Stir up in me a passion for Your assigned purposes for me. Help me to love what You love, hate what You hate, want what You want, do what You would do, and say what You would say. I don't want to throw away one minute of my life. Awaken me with fresh purpose and passion and give me an acute sense of Your voice from day to day. Here I am, Lord. Call me out of the boat so I can walk on water with You! Amen.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Prayerfully read Ephesians 2:10 and spend some time waiting on God. What are some of the purposes He has assigned to you?
2. Read Titus 2:11–14 and make note of the following points:
 - a. The grace of God appeared through Jesus to take us off one path and put us on another. Describe both paths. Have you ever experienced those paths? When?
3. Read 1 John 4:16–19 and answer the following questions:
 - a. How does your life reveal that you “know and rely on the love God has for you”? (Give some specific examples.)
 - b. How will growing now in the knowledge of God’s love for us give us confidence on the day of judgment?
 - c. How has God’s love for you impacted your fears? (And conversely, how have your fears impacted your perception of God?)
4. We are under the Lord’s care and under His charge. He’ll provide for and protect us, but He also calls us. Read Isaiah 43:1–3 and 10–13, and take some time to write about how God promises to come through for you. Also, based on this passage, write down what He’s asking of you today in this moment.
5. Read Proverbs 3:3–10 and list the promises side by side with the call to obedience (e.g., Trust, Lean Not, Acknowledge Him = Straight Paths).
6. As you look again at your list from question number five, which call to obedience most stands out to you (which call to obedience is God most speaking to you about)?
7. Write out a prayer asking God to give you more faith to trust and obey Him in those specific areas.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What do you sense is God's call on your life?
2. In what ways has God worked in past experiences to shape your God-given dreams and desires? Who inspires you to live out your God-given call and why?
3. What obstacles are in your path right now?
4. What do you sense God saying to you in this particular season of life (as it relates to your call)?
5. What are some next steps He's asking you to make?