

# FIND YOUR FIT

**UNLOCK GOD'S UNIQUE DESIGN FOR YOUR  
TALENTS, SPIRITUAL GIFTS, AND PERSONALITY**

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# Contents

Intro: Make Your Parents Read This! 7

**1** How to Find a Life 13

**2** Making Your Life Matter: *Interests* 25

**3** Locating Your Life: *Abilities* 45

**4** Fitting In with God's Work: *Spiritual Gifts* 87

**5** Choosing Your Path: *Values* 119

**6** Finding the Places You Fit: *Personality Type* 137

**7** How Not to Spin in Your Socks 211

Keep Finding Your Fit 227

All about Me 235

# Intro

## *Make Your Parents Read This!*

### **To the Parents of *Find Your Fit* Readers**

In addition to Jane and Kevin's experience coaching adults in career transition and Kevin's background as a pastor to large crowds of students, we're both parents. And Karen has counseled with countless families as their children finish high school. We've navigated the "give them roots and give them wings" process of choosing colleges, discerning majors, and diving into the job market.

We're convinced that all parents want the best for their children. As you walk alongside your teenager, helping them discern the best choices, please keep one thing in mind:

There is an ongoing, unresolvable tension between finding meaningful work and the realities of the marketplace.

Perhaps you've heard teens say something like, "I can't handle a desk job—I need to be part of something fulfilling, something that I'm passionate about." And they're right. Research bears out that workers who use their inborn skills in service to a purpose they believe in are the most productive workers in America. However,

we've heard parents panic when those inborn skills are associated with lower-paying jobs or uncertain career paths. Here are some real-life examples we've encountered:

- ▶ “Our daughter wants to join her friends at an out-of-state college when the one nearest us has a nationally acclaimed business school. Shouldn't she do the practical thing?”
- ▶ “Our son's such a dreamer—he wants to be the next J. J. Abrams. How do we get him to be realistic?”
- ▶ “For three generations everyone in our family has gone to college—and now this child just wants to build houses. Shouldn't we at least make him get a business degree?”

The parental warning to concentrate on marketplace realities may sound loud and clear. Perhaps you're even contemplating tying college funding to “guaranteed” choices such as accountancy, information technology, or medicine.

That's fine, *if* your child's natural design makes those careers suitable. If not, know that many of those who attend *LifeKeys* workshops, the adult version of *Find Your Fit*, are adults who are dissatisfied with their first careers. They overfocused on marketplace realities and wound up miserable, working in environments that don't suit them and that don't match how God gifted them.

## Your Teen through God's Eyes

*Find Your Fit* is designed to help teens see themselves through God's eyes, maybe for the first time in their lives.

Not how they look through the eyes of a media-crazed world that tells them, “It's how you look and shoot hoops that determines what you're worth.”

Not how they look through the eyes of school systems that tell them, “It's how you do on standardized tests that determines what you're worth.”

Not how they look through the eyes of peers who tell them, “It’s whether you’re in the right crowd that determines what you’re worth.”

What teens and young adults discover in *Find Your Fit* about their value and giftedness applies both to what they might do as workers for God’s kingdom and to their own career plans—which for many people are one and the same! Through the five lenses we present, teens can explore their God-given design and understand that they are valuable to God. They’ll identify their

- ▶ interests—and begin to pattern a life of motivation and significance;
- ▶ abilities—and realize that they have *many*, even if theirs aren’t the ones the world celebrates;
- ▶ spiritual gifts—and recognize that God gifts people to work together for purposes bigger than themselves;
- ▶ personality type—and understand their natural preferences for working and communicating;
- ▶ values—and build a structure for making good, godly decisions.

Why so many lenses? Because so many people find it difficult to believe that they’re custom designed for a life of meaning and purpose. We’ve taken people from age fifteen to ninety through *LifeKeys*. At various points in the process, people arrive at self-acceptance. If someone says, “Even if God did give me these abilities, they aren’t worth much,” perhaps as she discovers her personality type she’ll exclaim, “So that’s why I’m different—and I’m still normal!” Only with this kind of self-acceptance are people free to carry out the purposes God intends for them.

Entwined with the process of using our gifts for God’s purposes is making career choices—and *Find Your Fit* applies to both. You can use *Find Your Fit* with your teen to help explore schooling options or the world of work.

There are no guarantees for job success these days. Even more important, we all have different definitions of success. If you truly want to help your teenagers get on the right career road—as well as a lifetime of fulfilling service to God—you can help them discover their giftedness by giving them three of the most generous, loving presents you’ve ever provided.

### **Your First Gift—Find Your Own Fit**

Go through these exercises yourself (or use the adult version, *LifeKeys*). Even if you love your job or volunteer activities, finding your own fit will let you and your teen talk through many issues using the same vocabulary. Look at each other’s abilities. In these last years together before your teen leaves home, make the most of your similarities and use your differences to talk through life choices. Odds are good that you have different personality types. Use that information to discover how differently you approach making decisions or using your strengths.

Above all, if your teen’s career ideas strike you as impractical or misguided, listen in silence until you have time to review your teen’s “All about Me” summary at the end of the book. What within your teen’s unique makeup leads him or her to these ideas? Are there ways the idea truly fits your teen? Maybe it *is* a crazy idea—or maybe the two of you are just very different. *Find Your Fit* provides a structure for working through conflicts using facts instead of opinions and emotions.

### **Your Second Gift—Let Your Teenager Explore**

As much as you probably want your teenager to focus on a career so he or she chooses the right technical training or college—especially anytime you contemplate that tuition price tag—too much focus too soon can block the possibility of ever finding an optimal career choice.

More than half the students who start college this year won't finish in five years. One major reason is midstream changes. Students often start with an unresearched, pragmatic career choice. By their third semester of college, many discover they have neither aptitude nor interest to pursue that choice. One of our friends was already accepted into dental school before he spent a single day observing in a dentist's office. He hated it. There he was, his senior year, without any career goals.

The goal of *Find Your Fit* is as much to *broaden* thinking about possible careers as it is to *point toward* possible fields. Your child probably knows what you do. Help your teenager explore a variety of options, especially those far removed from your own experiences. Keep in mind that your teen's ideas are still forming. At that age, they often have only vague ideas about career options or majors, and they often need to feel that they have your permission to explore them. As he or she completes *Find Your Fit*, list different occupations for firsthand research before choosing a technical school or college. Your teen will probably need your help making those connections and finding relevant information.

### **Your Third Gift—Let Your Teenager Dream**

Some surveys show that more than 25 percent of college students are business majors—yet won't necessarily have enough business skills to land a first job. That explains why a third of all pizza-delivery drivers in some areas have a college degree. As school enrollments and job markets fluctuate, it's often the case that more people are training as doctors and lawyers than there are positions in the medical and legal fields. What "makes sense" and seems "a sure bet on getting a job" just may not work.

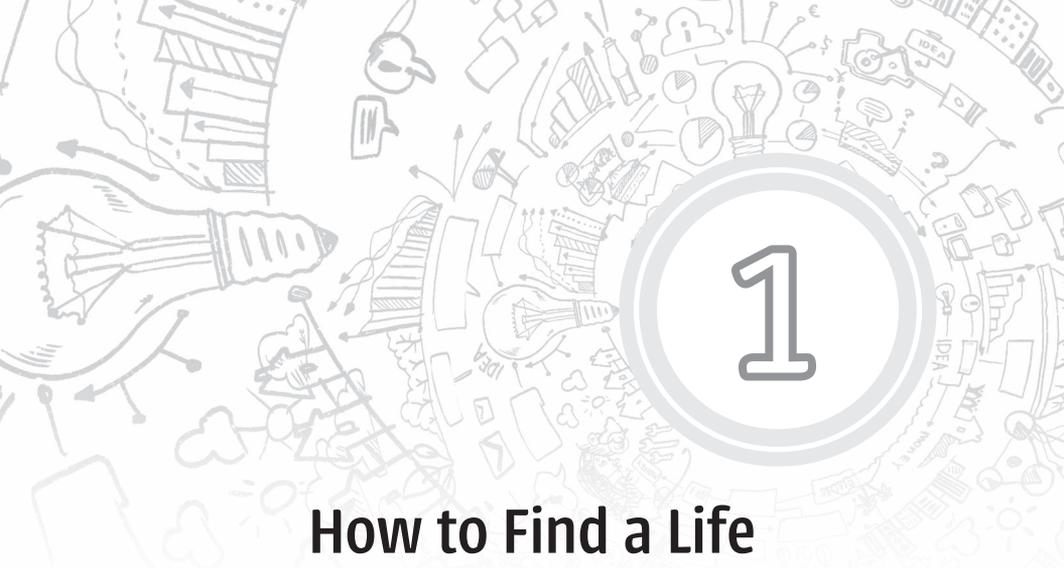
If your teen's career dreams seem just that to you—impossible dreams—help shape a contingency plan. Maybe your son *will* dance with the Joffrey Ballet, but you might encourage him to get a teaching certificate in physical education. Maybe your daughter *will* be an

astronaut, but logging hours toward her commercial pilot's license could be the ticket toward full employment. Help your teen discover an excellent second best they can live with, or another idea that will incorporate some of what they want but in a slightly different direction. The same person who's drawn to being a surgeon might enjoy being a medical laboratory scientist once they know about that option.

Talk about the realistic odds of achieving their ultimate career ambitions, but let your teen decide whether to keep on or change directions. We counsel all too many fifty-year-olds who are still mourning their dream of making their livings as fishing guides or Broadway singers or politicians. In most cases, someone else stomped on their dream. They never had the chance to let it go of their own accord.

Ultimately, one crucial takeaway for your student is to move through a process of informed decision-making. Most teens have never made a truly big decision before, and they often react by freezing up or getting overwhelmed when you try to get them to look at options for colleges, career fields, etc. Sometimes they just need to hear from you that it's okay—that there's a process you'll help them work through. *Find Your Fit* can help jump-start their sense of confidence that they know who they are and what they want, so they can feel empowered to make decisions for themselves.

We hope that *Find Your Fit* will foster meaningful and productive conversations between you and your teenager as well as impart knowledge that helps your teen take the place God designed just for him or her in the work of the kingdom. While we won't guarantee this book will usher in a lifetime of wealth or security, we do believe that working to discover how God made us wisely and values us highly can bring the abundant life Jesus promised.



# 1

## How to Find a Life

**E**veryone knows someone like Sam. “In high school I was the average kid,” he says. Sam could usually outrun his opponents on the soccer field, but he was never the star. He played sax in the school band and taught himself guitar, but he knotted up playing in public. He took plenty of honors courses, but he didn’t get straight As.

“I was the class clown,” he says. “I made other people laugh, and that got their attention off me and onto the funny things I was saying. The problem is, once you start being funny, you have to keep it up.” Even though Sam was involved at school and in church and had some friends, “I always felt like I was on the outside of the inner circle. I didn’t feel like I had a place where I belonged.”

Then there was Chris, a soccer friend. Chris was always the one who invited Sam to the cool parties, and he seemed totally unbothered by what anyone thought of him. “I wanted to be Chris,” Sam says. “I wanted his confidence and that sense of security. He knew who he was and what he had to offer. I was always afraid of not fitting in.”

Glance around your immediate world—your school or friend group. What do you see? That guy who is brilliant at math. Or the

girl who always finishes a test first. The person with an amazing voice, and another who's the president of every group.

Now look in the mirror. What do you see?

## Outside and Inside

Your years in high school and soon after are when most people begin to discover what they're really good at. Ironically, it's also when people worry most about how they rank against everyone else. Battling for a spot in the hierarchy can be exhausting. Some teenagers try hard to rack up achievements to outscore their classmates. Others get discouraged and give up on competing altogether. Almost no one feels like they're winning.

In fact, comparisons are almost always a lose-lose game. The more you compare, the more you feel *less*—less talented, less attractive, less . . . you fill in the blank. Relying on comparisons for how you see yourself isn't helpful. In fact, it can give you the completely wrong idea.

So how do you get the right view of you?

How about this. Instead of looking *outside* at the people you know and the standards you feel you have to live up to, start looking *inside* at the way you're made. And spend some time with the God who made you, who understands you *inside and out*, and no matter what you think, made you on purpose.

*Find Your Fit* is built on the belief that God made you uniquely and values you highly. While people around you might make you feel as if you have to compete or conform, God has better plans for you. In God's plan, it's more than okay to be exactly who you are.

## The Purpose of *Find Your Fit*

Here's the thing. As a teenager or young adult, you're in a time of intense development of your *identity*—your sense of who you are. Along with all your peers, you're attempting to find your thing, your niche, the place you fit. But at some point, almost everybody feels

lost! We wrote *Find Your Fit* to equip you for that path of discovery. We want you to understand how normal it is to be unsure about who you are and what you want to do. We want to give you a few crucial tools to understand how God specifically crafted you to be effective in the world.

All three authors of this book have abundant experience working with people making big life decisions. Jane is an expert coach who helps others make the most of their uniqueness in every part of life, from school to work to their most important relationships. Kevin has invested his life as a youth worker, teaching pastor, and career coach. Karen has counseled thousands of young people trying to figure themselves out so they can make smart career and college decisions. Our mission is to give you the benefit of the experience of countless people who have walked this road ahead of you and to give you new perspective to help you find your way.

You're expected to conform in so many areas of life that it may not be obvious to you how God made you uniquely or how that uniqueness should affect the life you lead. To *find your fit* takes effort. Exploration. Discernment. This book helps you do that work. It gives you tools to discover how God has gifted you in ways you've never thought of—and it tells how you can use those gifts to pursue God's best for your life. It will help you know yourself better and prime your thoughts about careers. It can lead you into areas where you can serve God and people. It will encourage you to try new things and spot special interests. Most of all, it will help you find freedom to be what God made you to be.

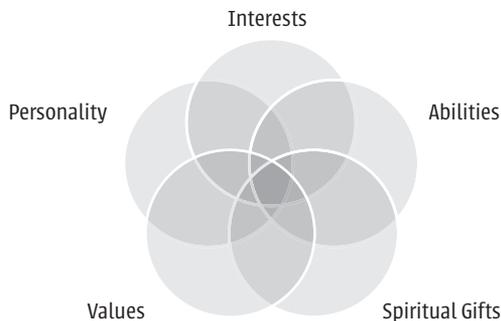
## **Finding Your Sweet Spot**

When we talk with students about their plans, we're constantly reminded of how big a decision it is to choose a path in life—and how little information most students get to help them find their way. It's like stepping out on the hike of a lifetime without the gear you need to enjoy the adventure.

Can we be honest? Most adults aren't really sure how to help you. They're often only familiar with their own story, and many don't know all that much about other options. The good news is that this book is here to fill you in and help you move forward. There are concrete things you can do to figure things out, and the journey starts by looking inside and understanding yourself better.

As you go through this book, we'll guide you step by step to find out all about you. We'll help you look inside at how God made you. You'll discover five crucial aspects of yourself: your interests, your abilities, your spiritual gifts, your values, and your personality. We'll spend a chapter on each of these five areas so you can get new ideas about you and what you want to do.

This book isn't about us *telling* you what to think, but about you *discovering* what's already there. We'll give you a vocabulary for the unique aspects that make you who you are. You'll confirm things you already know about yourself—and find some surprises along the way.



The graphic above, called a Venn diagram, illustrates all five aspects we'll talk about. These noteworthy things about you are all separate, but they also overlap and work together. For example, if you're naturally good at math, you might find that you have a logical personality that values problem-solving. Or maybe you're interested in graphic design and have natural creative abilities that make you effective in communicating a concept.

Everyone has their own unique pattern of who they are, and our goal is to help you notice these various aspects of yourself so you can start seeing how they add up. Wherever they all overlap is a place you want to be—your sweet spot for work, school, or service.

1. **Interests** are the topics, actions, problems, ideas, or trends that attract your attention and draw you in. As you engage with them, they keep you energized and make you want to come back for more. What kinds of things do you do just because you like them? Or just because you want to know more about them?
2. **Abilities** are natural talents you possess. These things come easily to you, whether they're simple or complex, in school or elsewhere. What have you done that you get compliments about? What have you succeeded at that seems to come easy?
3. **Spiritual gifts** are abilities that come to us from God through the work of the Holy Spirit. We don't choose them. God picks them for us and empowers us to impact our world. When has God used you to make a difference in someone's life? What ministry tasks have you seen people do that seem like something you could try?
4. **Values** are the principles and priorities that guide you, especially when you have a decision to make. They're your gut-level rankings of what's important. They influence your choices, and they nudge you toward your best options. What things matter so much to you that you take a stand to defend them? What principles guide you when you make tough choices?
5. **Personality** sums up who you are as a person. These built-in tendencies for doing life include how you get energized, how you take in information, how you make decisions, and how you use your time. What significant traits capture who you are? What's unique about the way you do life?

Every experience you've ever had gives you clues about these things. Think back—what's one thing you tried as a kid but then rejected because it wasn't fun or you weren't good at it? Soccer? Drawing? Piano lessons? Everyone has some of these—things that weren't *your* thing. And you stopped doing them because they didn't fit you, or they didn't fit well with all aspects of you.

As you wind your way through middle school, high school, and college or whatever comes after, the list of things that you have weeded out will continue to get longer, and your focus on what you will pursue will get narrower. That's normal! Over time, all of us get better at seeing what fits us best—the things in our sweet spot. That's what the center of that Venn diagram represents. It's the range of things you could do that incorporate all the best parts of you and put them to use.

Since that's already happening for you, use this opportunity to wrap your head around some new information about yourself. See what you want to weed out and what you want to keep pursuing. (By the way, it's always easier to know what you *don't* want than what you *do*.) The more attention you pay to these things now, the more confident you'll feel as you make decisions for the future.

## **A Major Decision**

By the way, when most people your age think about the future, they think about it like THE FUTURE (cue the flashing lasers, stage fog, and ear-crushing band). It's big and scary and difficult to take in, but simultaneously kind of exciting. Does that sum it up for you?

If you're a student or young adult, chances are you still have decisions to make to answer the pressing question of "What am I going to do with my life?" Decision-making is both nerve-racking and exhilarating. In the midst of all that, how can you work toward smart decisions? And how do you know you're doing what God wants you to do?

Here's one general principle to follow: When in doubt, get more information. (That's what Karen's dad always said, and it works!) A big part of feeling unsure about your future is not knowing enough about your options. For every crucial decision of life, you need to look around and gather information about your possible choices—for example, the majors, colleges, or career fields you're considering. The world won't just hand you this info. You need to get it for yourself.

Never underestimate the power of a little research. It could make a small difference—like between being a geneticist or a genetic counselor. Or it could make a much bigger difference—like between being a nurse or a teacher. One student Karen worked with planned to be an engineer until his research turned up the idea of industrial design. It was a significantly better fit for his creative mind, and that tweak changed not only his major but his whole list of colleges to apply to.

In our experience, the best decisions come from looking *inside* at who you are and what you prefer—as well as what's *outside*, considering and learning more about the options out there for you. For people who want to include God in their decision-making, there's one more element that carries a lot of weight: God's will. Or should we say GOD'S WILL, because it's such a big deal!

## What Does God Have to Do with It?

There's a lot that could be said on this topic, but a few important principles will do for now.

1. **God gives you some clear boundaries.** The Bible makes some dos and don'ts plenty clear. Like the walls of a bumper-car rink, these clear commands set obvious boundaries of wrong and right—like “Don't lie,” “Don't kill,” “Don't steal.” Or, as Jesus said, “Love God completely” and “Love others as much as you love yourself.” Decision-making within God's will means staying within the walls, making choices that are obvious yeses.

2. **God gives you some freedom to choose.** While God gives us clear direction on moral choices, you also have huge amounts of freedom to choose on other things. Within that bumper-car rink, you have room to zoom around. No Bible verse lists your name and tells you that your life will be best spent as a geologist or by teaching third-grade Sunday school. No Scripture tells you if, where, or when to attend college or what job to take when you finish. Even so, God hasn't left you to spin circles in the bumper-car rink of life.
3. **God built you for a purpose.** We believe that one of the best ways to steer within God's boundaries is clueing in to what God wants you to do by looking at *how you are made*. Look at the rest of God's creation: Eagles soar. Dolphins leap. Cheetahs run. They do what they were meant to do, and they don't try to be anything else. God made you with a unique combination of gifts to fulfill a unique role in the universe. There's peace in that, and we want that peace for you. Paying attention to how God made you guides you into what to do and how to do it.

## What Does God Have to Say about It?

If your first job is to learn and stay inside the clear boundaries God announced in the Bible, we believe your second job is to learn to function in creation as you. But there's more to the story about how you and God, together, work out this thing called life. Let's nail down three foundational truths about how God interacts with you.

1. First, remember that God made you and has known you every second of your life, including what will happen every second that hasn't happened yet! Psalm 139:15–16 tells us,

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your

eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

And, responding to that truth, in verse 14 the psalmist says,

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful. I know that full well.

This passage is one of the most familiar among Christians for a good reason. It reminds us that no matter what we think of ourselves, God knows us intimately and made us on purpose. And even beyond that, we're made well! God's work in us is wonderful, which originally meant "full of wonder." Speaking as career counselors, we can tell you that it fills us with wonder when we see someone starting to grasp that being who they are is *valuable*, that they are needed in the world *just as they are*.

2. On top of that, another essential biblical truth is that God cares about what you're doing in the world, and even has some specific tasks for you to carry out. Ephesians 2:10 (AMP) says something profound:

For we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us].

The Amplified version of the Bible really unpacks all the meaning of the original Greek that this verse was written in. Read it over a few times until the full truth of it sinks in. Not only did God make you on purpose, but God has gone before you to lay out "good works"—which basically means good things worth doing—for you

to accomplish. Does that get you a little more excited about what's coming up in your life? Hope so.

3. The final piece of biblical truth to make sure you hear as we begin is this, from John 15:16:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

Just for fun, let's see the Amplified version of this verse, too:

You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed and placed and purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain and be lasting, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name [as My representative] He may give to you.

God has appointed you to go and bear fruit—to be a servant of God who is equipped with both inborn abilities as well as spiritual gifts, making you doubly empowered to do things in this world. God has had bold deeds in mind for you since before the beginning of time and will help you with them. And that work can be fruitful—that is, effective and successful and meaningful! How does that sound to you?

With that profound knowledge of God's love and purpose for you, we encourage you to use this opportunity to climb out of your current day-to-day mindset and begin exploring how God made you and what some of your gifts and "fruit" could be. Don't feel this like a big weight of pressure—we know you might be tempted to—but instead feel it like a tremendous gift. This will happen by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit working inside you. You don't have to figure it all out yourself.

Remember, when God gives you a gift, it's unlike any other. God wired you, knows you inside and out. God is in charge of the

universe but isn't an autocrat. The Bible makes this promise to those willing to follow God:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

When God shows you what to do, it's the absolute best for you.

### **So What's the Catch?**

The tools are here. We're giving you a variety of ways to understand yourself, the purposes for your life, and the gifts God chose for you from a stockpile of ultimate wisdom and ultimate love. So what would keep you from finding your fit? *You*. Here's why:

- ▶ You might feel *rushed*: “Who has time for that?” You may feel pushed to just make a decision—to pick a path that everyone says is a sure bet for success. But you have a lifetime of choices ahead of you. Don't join the millions of people punching a clock who didn't take the time to find the right thing, short-changing their own development and their happiness.
- ▶ You might feel *spiritual*: “God says I'm supposed to ‘lose myself’—I just want to focus on Jesus.” Look at this process as a way to figure out what you and you alone have to offer to Jesus. For example, Kevin admits to not exploring all of his options as a high schooler because of a warped view that full-time vocational ministry was the only worthy choice for a follower of Jesus. He still found where he functions best, but that doesn't always happen. Part of focusing on Jesus is listening to *all* that God says about you.
- ▶ You might feel *insecure*: “I don't have any special gifts. What if I don't like what I find?” Maybe you play the bassoon better

than anyone else in your school—because no one else plays it. It's an unusual talent, but don't knock it. It got one friend of ours a full-ride scholarship to a top university, followed by a full-time job in a symphony. If you feel like what you have isn't anything great, you may not be fully appreciating it yet!

- ▶ You might feel *scared*: "I'm not sure I'm any good at anything." If you want to be yourself, you first have to know yourself. Amy Van Dyken—the first U.S. woman to win four gold medals at one Olympics—was a wretched swimmer early in high school. But she persevered. She eventually combined her natural talent, coaches' directions, and a desire to go for gold. Have the courage to identify what you're good at and go for it.
- ▶ You might feel *smug*: "I don't need to think about this. I've already got it figured out." You may think you already have your life planned out. But chances are good you made those plans without knowing all of what this book will reveal. You can ignore how you're wired. But don't be surprised if someday you've become just another person who did the first thing that occurred to them and had to change direction later.

The catch in *Find Your Fit* is that *you* have to do the work, though we do promise you'll have fun doing it. After all, you're the only person who lives inside your skin twenty-four hours a day. You're the only one with years of experience being you.

So if you're ready, plunge ahead. Take the exercises seriously. Try hard to hear God's heart of love for you in what we say. And go ahead and unwrap God's gifts to you.