

You're Already Amazing

LIFEGROWTH GUIDE

*Embracing Who You Are,
Becoming All God Created You to Be*

Holley Gerth



a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Holley Gerth, *You're Already Amazing LifeGrowth Guide*
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The Dare



Pssst . . . pull up a chair and I'll tell you a secret. You'd better lean in close for this one.

Ready?

You don't have to *do* more, *be* more, *have* more.

I'm sure there are security alarms going off somewhere. You should probably hide this book when your in-laws come over. And this could be the makings of a Sunday morning scandal.

But it's true.

It's the kind of true that will change your life, set you free, and make you wake up smiling for the first time in a long time. I know because that's what it did for me (and believe me, for this non-morning girl that's nothing short of miraculous). I've seen it happen to a lot of other women too. I've read it in their words through thousands of comments on my blog. I've seen it in their faces on the couch in my counseling office. I've heard it in a new kind of laughter over coffee with friends.

So watch out, sister. If you keep reading, you just might be next.

Even if we've never met, I know this about you: you're a daughter of God, a holy princess, a woman created with strengths you've yet to fully grasp and a story that's still being written by the divine Author himself. And if you really take hold of who you are and what you're called to do, there will be no stopping you. That's because there's no

The Dare

stopping him *in you*—and he’s got bigger plans for your life than you’ve even imagined.

Okay, you’ve been warned.

If you’re feeling brave, I dare you to read on . . .

—Holley Gerth, *You’re Already Amazing*

Introduction



Since I first wrote the words you just read from *You're Already Amazing*, almost one hundred thousand women have accepted my dare to embrace who they are and become all God created them to be. As I connected with many of them as an author, life coach, and speaker, I often heard comments like these:

- I want to do *You're Already Amazing* as a study at my church or with a group of friends, but I'm not sure how.
- I'm interested in life coaching so I can apply the message in deeper ways, but I don't have the time or money.
- I'm rereading the book because it helped me so much, and I wish there were even more to go with it.

This LifeGrowth Guide is a response to all of the above. It builds on the foundation of *You're Already Amazing* by giving you everything you need to do the book as a group study. It also offers brand-new concepts and even more ways to apply the message so you feel like you have your own personal life coach every step of the way. And it includes bonus material and activities you won't find anywhere else.

Every session has these elements:

- links to short videos that will guide you through the material
- essential excerpts and overviews of concepts from *You're Already Amazing*
- questions for groups to discuss or individuals to reflect on
- interactive tools based on my training as a counselor and life coach to help you apply what you're reading
- optional creative activities you can do with a group or on your own
- prompts for personal journaling

After connecting with women all over the world, I know this: you're busy, and you need to be sure your time, energy, and financial resources are spent wisely. That's why I'm committed to making sure this LifeGrowth Guide won't just give you more information—it will lead to true transformation.

You really can know who God created you to be and what he's called you to do, and you really can have a realistic plan for pursuing his purpose for you. I know that's true because I've already seen thousands of women's lives changed in powerful ways.

Now it's your turn.

Choosing How to Use the LifeGrowth Guide

There are several different ways you can use the *You're Already Amazing LifeGrowth Guide*. Start by reviewing the following options and choosing the one that fits you best.

1. **Group study**—You can easily use this LifeGrowth Guide for a study with a group. For example, you might do so with your women's ministry at church, a few friends at your favorite coffee shop, neighbors in your living room at home, or co-workers at

your office. At the back of this book are step-by-step outlines for each session that will make facilitating a group simple. Even if you've never facilitated a group before, you can do this! All you need is a willing heart and a desire to encourage others.

2. **Online study**—Internet groups work especially well if the women in your group live in different places or have busy schedules that make it hard to meet in person. You can easily host a group on a site like Facebook. If you'd like help setting up your group as well as recommendations for how to facilitate it, see the "Creating an Online LifeGrowth Group" resource at HolleyGerth.com/amazing.
3. **One-on-one**—Simply asking a close friend, a family member, or someone you're in a mentoring relationship with to go through the LifeGrowth Guide with you can be very effective and enjoyable.
4. **Individually**—*You're Already Amazing* was originally written as a book for individuals, and the LifeGrowth Guide can serve as a helpful companion if you're simply reading the book on your own.

What You'll Need Before You Start

1. A copy of the book *You're Already Amazing: Embracing Who You Are, Becoming All God Created You to Be* (available in stores or online, including at HolleyGerth.com/amazing).
2. Access to a device with an internet connection so you can watch the videos for each session. (If you're in a group, you'll watch the videos when you meet.) You can watch the videos for free or purchase a DVD of the videos at HolleyGerth.com/amazing.
3. A pen for answering questions, taking notes, and journaling. If you are using the ebook version, you will need a journal or

notebook for writing answers to the questions and completing the exercises.

4. If you'd like to do the optional creative activity at the end of each session, you'll need a few additional supplies along the way. All of them are easy to find and inexpensive (for example, colored paper, markers).

A Prayer Before We Begin

I wish I could be there to pray for and with you in person, so I'm sending these words in my place:

God,

I thank you for the woman who's reading these words right now. Out of all the places and times in history, you have her here and now for a reason.

I believe you've led her to this LifeGrowth Guide for a purpose. You've heard the questions she's whispered in the quiet of her own heart. You've seen the struggles she's faced. You've listened as she asked you for help. You love her and you want the very best for her.

We live in a world that would like to distract us from our true identities and the purpose you have for us. Please let your voice be the one she hears the loudest and clearest as she goes through the pages that follow.

In everything we do in our time together—as we look at our strengths and skills, as we discover your purpose for us, as we take brave new steps—may all of it ultimately lead to us loving you, others, and ourselves more than ever before. That's what matters most.

We know that you are the only one who can create true growth and change. So we agree right now that this is not about us “trying harder” or “doing more.” Instead, it's about a relationship with

you. We place ourselves in your hands and invite you to do the work only you can in us.

We humbly affirm that all we are and all we have is a gift from you. Everything amazing about us is because of you, our beyond-amazing God.

In Jesus's name,

Amen.

P.S.: If you'd like to find out more about having a relationship with God, see the Connecting with God section in the back of this book.

Sharing the Journey

I'd love to connect with you! You can find me in these places and let me know you're doing the *You're Already Amazing LifeGrowth Guide*:

Blog: www.holleygerth.com

Facebook: Holley Gerth (author page)

Twitter: @HolleyGerth

Instagram: holleygerth

Pinterest: Holley Gerth

Hashtag: #alreadyamazing



Session 1

Who God Created Us to Be



Groups

Facilitators: See the outlines in the back of the book for recommendations on how to go through this session with your group.

Members: Read chapters 1 and 2 of *You're Already Amazing* and work through this session (except for watching the videos) on your own before you meet.



Introduction

“I’m so exhausted.”

“I feel like I’ve lost who I really am.”

“It seems like I’m just going through the motions.”

▶ **START THE
SESSION 1
VIDEO**
on your DVD
or online at
[HolleyGerth.com
/amazing.](http://HolleyGerth.com/amazing)

I hear quiet confessions like these everywhere I go. At coffee with friends. After speaking engagements. When I read my email. Here's what I know is true: *women are tired of trying harder.*

We've done our best to love Jesus as well as our family and friends. We've worked hard to be good. We've worn ourselves out doing what everyone else wants. The problem isn't our lack of effort—it's that no matter what we do, nothing seems to change.

But it doesn't have to be that way. We don't have to live exhausted, stressed-out lives. When Jesus promised life to the full, he meant it (see John 10:10). Researcher Marcus Buckingham did a study with thousands of women to find out what made them thrive. To his surprise, he discovered the number one influence on a woman's well-being is how much time she spends in her "sweet spot." In other words, how closely she stays connected to who God truly made her to be.

In my work as a counselor, life coach, author, and speaker, I've found the same to be true. It's not that women set out to destroy themselves. They simply drift. And like a swimmer in the ocean, they look up one day to find they're miles from where they're meant to be.

Being disconnected from who you really are leads to depression, anxiety, relationship difficulties, and a host of other troubles. Sometimes it can even be fatal. And contrary to popular belief, women who understand and are secure in their true identities are *less selfish*, not more. Being free from insecurity allows us to serve and offer the world what only we can.

Discovering who God made us to be is a lifelong process, and every step of the way we'll be tempted to be like someone else. Why? *Because the enemy of our souls wants us to be like anyone but Jesus.* We are closest to and most like Jesus when we are fully being who he created us to be.

What I'm asking you to do is hard. It's much easier to learn a new fact than to look inside your heart. What I'm asking you to do is scary. It's much less frightening to let someone else tell you who you are than to embrace who God made you to be. What I'm asking you to do

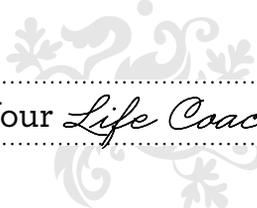
is inconvenient. It's much simpler to wake up every day and let life pull you wherever it wants than to cling to God's will.

But what I'm asking you to do is also essential. You will not thrive, fulfill your God-given purpose, or offer what only you can if you don't know who you are. And I'm confident you can do this. You're a warrior and overcomer. You have more strength than it may seem like right now. And you serve a God bigger than you can see.

It's time to stop being so tired.

It's time to discover our true identities.

It's time for us to really believe we're already amazing.



.....
Your Life Coach
.....

Sarah says over the phone, "I'm really excited about going through *You're Already Amazing* with you! What's the right way to do this?" I smile and respond, "There's no 'perfect' way to answer the questions or go through this material. Release all the pressure you're feeling to Jesus and just embrace the process." I can hear her take a deep breath, and then she laughs and says, "Okay, this is going to be new territory for me!"

If you're used to doing studies where every question has a correct response, this LifeGrowth Guide may stretch you in ways you haven't experienced before. Whenever we try to grow or change, it's normal to encounter internal resistance. You may feel unsure or insecure at certain points, and that's totally okay. Be gentle with yourself, ask for encouragement when you need it, and keep pressing forward a little at a time. It will be worth it!

✧ **Question 1:** If you had coffee with a friend today and she asked how you were *really* doing, what would you say?

*You created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my
mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

Psalm 139:13–14

What I've discovered through connecting with thousands of women is that we're great at encouraging everyone else, but we're hesitant to do the same for ourselves. But God loves us all the same, and it hurts him just as much when you talk negatively to yourself as it would if you were saying those unkind words about someone else. Here's a challenge for you as you work through this LifeGrowth Guide: *don't say anything to or about yourself that you wouldn't say to someone you love.*

Who am I?

It's a question we ask throughout our lives. Oh, maybe we don't use those exact words. But we're looking for the answer from the time we awkwardly enter the middle school cafeteria and hope for a table where we belong. It can drive us to fix our hair a certain way, date that boy, break that rule, join that club, or pursue that degree, and it can ultimately take us to the life we have now. Even as grown women, we still ask it. We just trade the junior high cafeteria for a women's retreat,

With *Jesus*
We're not only *amazing*.

We're *enough*.

We're *beautiful*.

We're *wanted*.

We're *chosen*.

We're *called*.

We've got what it takes . . .

not just to survive but to

change the world.

—HOLLEY GERTH

Print or pass along this word art through the "Share the Love" section of HolleyGerth.com/amazing.

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corporate boardroom, or playgroup. No matter how many years go by, we still ask, “Who am I, *really*?”

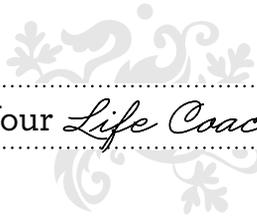
And until we can answer that question, it's impossible to believe we're amazing.

I believe the desire to know who we really are has been placed within us by the heart of heaven itself. God wants us to understand who he created us to be so that we can fulfill the purpose he has for our lives. Sometimes we feel guilty for wishing we knew more about ourselves. After all, we're not supposed to focus on ourselves, right? I often hear women say, “That's selfish.” But it's not the question that matters—it's what we do with the answer.

If you want to understand yourself just so that you can do whatever you'd like for your personal gain, then it's self-centered. If your intent is to love God, others, and yourself more, then knowing who you are is one of the most unselfish things you can do. And I have a feeling that second option is why you're reading this book. Yes? So push that guilt aside and give yourself permission to explore who God made you to be.

—*You're Already Amazing*, chapter 2

❖ **Question 2:** What do you think makes it so hard for women to believe they're already amazing?



.....
Your *Life Coach*
.....

I'm standing at the front of a room with tables full of women, explaining that we're about to go through exercises that will help us figure out our strengths, our skills, and who God made us to be. I notice a worried look in the back corner followed by a hand quietly raised and a question asked: "I want to do this, but I'm afraid it's not humble. What if I'm being prideful?"

I'm often called on for reassurance that pride doesn't have any place in this process. And I can certainly understand that concern, because I struggled with a fear of accidentally "becoming prideful" for many years. It bothered me so much I finally decided to look at Scripture to see what true humility means. Most of the time, the word *humility* is from the Hebrew word *kana*, which implies submission to another's will. In the New Testament, it's a Greek word formed from two others: *tapeinos* (low to the ground) and *phren* (our hearts/minds). Put all of that together, and humility means bowing our hearts to God. Or in other words, submitting to his will. And that means agreeing with what he says and living it out—including *what he says about us*. Our strengths and skills are more than personal characteristics; they're messages that tell us who God made us.

It's never God's intention for us to go through life with our heads hanging down in insecurity and hearts made heavy by fear we're not enough. "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and *he will lift you up*" (James 4:10). We come to God and say, "I bow my heart before you in love. You are God and I am not. All I am, all I have is yours." Then he responds, "Stand tall, my daughter. You are loved. You are of great worth. Do my will." That's what living in true humility looks like, and it's the ultimate goal for the exercises we're about to go through together.

Find Your Strengths

Strength: a personal characteristic that can be used on behalf of God in service to others.

Circle or highlight at least three strengths that apply to you.

◦ Adventurous	◦ Flexible	◦ Positive
◦ Athletic	◦ Forgiving	◦ Protective
◦ Brave	◦ Friendly	◦ Reflective
◦ Calm	◦ Frugal	◦ Reliable
◦ Capable	◦ Funny	◦ Resilient
◦ Caring	◦ Gentle	◦ Resourceful
◦ Cheerful	◦ Gracious	◦ Responsible
◦ Considerate	◦ Hardworking	◦ Sensitive
◦ Courageous	◦ Helpful	◦ Servant-hearted
◦ Creative	◦ Honest	◦ Spontaneous
◦ Dedicated	◦ Hospitable	◦ Supportive
◦ Determined	◦ Imaginative	◦ Talented
◦ Devoted	◦ Intelligent	◦ Thoughtful
◦ Easygoing	◦ Kind	◦ Trustworthy
◦ Efficient	◦ Loving	◦ Warm
◦ Encouraging	◦ Loyal	◦ Wise
◦ Energetic	◦ Mature	◦ <i>Add your own...</i>
◦ Fair	◦ Organized	

Tip: If you're not sure what your strengths are, ask at least one other person for input. You can do this face-to-face or through a written message like, "I'm doing a LifeGrowth Guide to find out more about who God made me to be, and I'd love to have your feedback. What are three strengths you see in me?" Watch for patterns in people's responses, and if the words they use aren't on the list provided, feel free to add them.

If you're not sure something is really a strength for you, you can also put it through the STRENGTH test. Choose a word you circled on the strengths list, then answer yes or no for each question below.

Service—Does it help me serve God and others?

Time—Has it been present throughout much of my life?

Relationships—Do others see this?

Energy—Do I feel energized when I'm living this way?

Natural—Does this come naturally to me most of the time? *Or* do I know God has intentionally developed this in me even though it doesn't?

Glory—Does God ultimately get the glory from it?

Trials—Even in hard times, does it usually come through somehow?

Hear—Does this really feel like a core part of who I am?

If you answered “yes” to most of the questions, then the word you circled is one of your strengths.

✦ **Question 3:** What are your top three strengths and an example of how God uses each one? (Example: Friendly—I'm usually one of the first people to say hi to someone new.)

✦ **Question 4:** We often think of weaknesses as a negative thing. But the research shared in *You're Already Amazing* shows that having weaknesses in certain areas actually helps us to be stronger in others. God also says that his “strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9 NKJV). What's a weakness you wish you didn't have? In what ways

could it actually help you be who God created you to be? (Example: Being weak at details helps make me strong at seeing the big picture.)

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

Find Your Skills

.....

Now that you know your strengths, what should you do with them? Chances are, you're already doing something. Strengths are made to be expressed. We call those expressions *skills*. Our skills are given to us by God, and they matter to him. In fact, the first time the Spirit is mentioned in relation to a person in Scripture, it is in a verse that talks about skills. In describing a craftsman chosen to work on the tabernacle, God says, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts" (Exod. 31:3 NIV 1984).

Skill: a strength expressed in a specific way that builds up others and benefits the kingdom.

Circle or highlight at least three skills that apply to you.

◦ Acting	◦ Decorating	◦ Persevering
◦ Adapting	◦ Empathizing	◦ Persuading
◦ Administering	◦ Encouraging	◦ Planning
◦ Advising	◦ Evaluating	◦ Prioritizing
◦ Analyzing	◦ Expressing	◦ Problem-solving
◦ Appreciating	◦ Growing	◦ Protecting
◦ Assembling	◦ Guiding	◦ Relating
◦ Believing	◦ Helping	◦ Responding
◦ Building	◦ Imagining	◦ Risk taking
◦ Challenging	◦ Influencing	◦ Serving
◦ Cleaning	◦ Initiating	◦ Sharing
◦ Collaborating	◦ Leading	◦ Speaking
◦ Cooking	◦ Listening	◦ Supporting
◦ Communicating	◦ Maintaining	◦ Teaching
◦ Connecting	◦ Managing	◦ Training
◦ Constructing	◦ Motivating	◦ Writing
◦ Coordinating	◦ Negotiating	◦ <i>Add your own...</i>
◦ Counseling	◦ Nurturing	
◦ Creating	◦ Organizing	

Tip: She sets another dish on the counter, then turns to me and says, “I don’t think I have any skills. At least not like you do.” I point to a beautiful table already piled high with tantalizing food and ask, “What’s all this?” She waves a hand through the air dismissively and responds, “This is nothing. It was simple.” I smile then shake my head and say, “It would have taken me weeks to do what you threw together in a couple of hours. Cooking, decorating, and hospitality are three fabulous skills, and you’re welcome to practice them with me anytime you’d like!”

My friend’s two phrases “This is nothing” and “It was simple” are twin clues that skills are hiding somewhere in plain sight. When something seems natural for us, we assume it’s the same for others. But

most likely it's an indication of a unique God-given ability. What are you doing when people compliment you and you can't quite understand why they think it's a big deal? Be sure those are included on your skills chart. If nothing comes to mind right away, that's okay. Just begin watching for those moments and come back to this exercise. Like we talked about with your strengths, you can also ask others for their input.

✧ **Question 5:** What are your top three skills, and what's an example of how God uses each of them? (Example: Decorating—I create spaces where people feel welcome and loved.)
