



CHRISTY NOCKELS

THE  
LIFE  
YOU  
LONG  
FOR

LEARNING *to* LIVE  
*from* A HEART *of* REST

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MULTNOMAH

THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR

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. . .

*For the Fellowship of the Farm Table:  
My Beloved, Nathan, and our treasured children,  
Noah, Elliana, and Annie Rose.  
Resting with you will always be my favorite!*

. . .

*And for anyone who's tuckered out from trying and striving,  
those who feel like you're worth more when you do more  
and build more, and for anyone feeling small because  
you had to lay down what you were building.*

*I get you.*

*May you find true rest and the Life  
that you are longing for.*

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THE  
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FOR



## HIS BANNER OVER ME IS LOVE

IMAGINE IF YOU AND I WERE TO SIT DOWN TOGETHER to get acquainted, and before we begin, someone gives us specific parameters for our conversation, guidelines to help us skip the small talk and go straight to the meaningful and memorable stuff. You and I are challenged to introduce ourselves without alluding to anything we do or have done in terms of a vocation or trade. We are told to focus only on our interior lives and matters of the heart.

To be honest with you from the get-go, there was a time in my life when such a challenge would have left me a bumbling mess! While I would have been elated to nix the small talk, I would've felt stripped bare in having to bypass my exterior world and abandon the crutch of my career, which I have a tendency to lean on when describing who I am. Even now, it might take a few stops and starts for me to find the

right words to reveal the heart of who I am.

How about you? How would you introduce yourself to me? I wonder what pieces of your story you might reveal, insights that describe the making of *you*. Would you be hard pressed for words, maybe even feel small and unseen, if you had to leave out what you do, or would you be relieved in some ways?

What if, after what I'm sure would be a refreshing and revealing introduction, our mediator proposed another prod-ding challenge? What if we were asked to describe to each other the life we truly long for? However, as we describe our wants and dreams, we cannot include any milestones, accolades, or any level of success we'd hope to achieve. How would you describe the life you long for?

Would you say that your soul seems to ache with something you can't quite put your finger on? Maybe you've achieved some milestones in your exterior world but you're left with a surprising, insatiable longing for more. Perhaps you've had to lay down your career for a season and that has caused an unrest in your soul.

I think we'd both agree that life has become more complicated than we ever imagined, as everywhere we look, we are inundated with conflicting messages. Some say we should rest, some say we should run wholeheartedly after our dreams and never look back, and some urge us to find the balance in between. We feel pulled in more directions than we even knew existed, having given the world twenty-four-hour instant access to our psyches and our souls.

Have you become weary amid all these competing pressures? Maybe you started out with a pure devotion to pursue

the dreams you believe God placed in your heart but lately it's begun to look and feel tainted. How often has our devotion turned into busyness and our commitment turned into a craving for recognition? Everywhere we click and scroll, it seems like everyone's out there doing something big. We feel compelled to take on the pressure to keep building big things too. Then there's our longing for connection with the people in our lives. Yet family can feel like juggling endless practical responsibilities while stewarding sacred relationships. Our longing for community often becomes a struggle against lives stuffed too full to get our calendars lined up. Or maybe we've been burned in some of our dearest relationships. Wounds, both given and received, seem an inevitable result of braving the messy middle of pursuing a life of togetherness.

I've experienced all the above—the chronically overscheduled life, an imbalance between family and work, the pressure to build big things, and even the complications of trying to achieve authentic community. I lacked the ability to be present for anything in my life as I felt compelled to plow through what I know now were precious seasons, just to get to the next seemingly urgent thing. As a new mom, while I was head over heels in love with my family, I mostly felt in over my head about how to truly care for them when I considered how much I also cared about the things that I felt God had placed in my heart to share with the world.

Inevitably, I reached what felt like the end of my own ability and capacity, and I became thoroughly tired. *Bone tired*. The kind of tired that robs you and me of the very things we long for in this life—peace, joy, contentment, belonging, and *rest*.

If you and I did get to sit down to explore these dilemmas together, I bet we'd find that we have more in common than we'd imagined. I also bet we'd bump into a bit of mystery as we got to the bottom of the funnel of who we really are. We'd have to acknowledge a certain sanctity to our lives that we sense but can't quite put words around, as well as a longing we're still trying to define. I believe that at some point in our conversation, our Belovedness would inevitably peek through our peripheral shells and the stuff of real life would start spilling out.

*Beloved.* (I'm going to call you this quite often, so you might want to go ahead and try it on and see how it feels.) This is the one big something that I know is true of you: you are God loved, which is essentially what the name Beloved means. I find it beautiful that God both *made* us in His image and *named* us in His image. First John 4:8 says, "God is love," and then all throughout Scripture you and I are called Beloved—or as the Greek says, "loved by God."<sup>1</sup> It's as if we're the response to who He is, and right from the start, He is the fulfillment of our greatest need: *to be loved*.

You've likely seen this name Beloved in Scripture. You might even have worn it on a T-shirt or a necklace. But maybe you've become a bit numb to its true hold on you. What if I told you that living from your Belovedness changes everything? That it could unfold the *true you* as well as give you an unimagined capacity to be about the things of God and the life you've longed for. If I showed you how the true you could emerge from a place of contentment and rest, would you be willing to crawl into this kind of chrysalis and yield to the process?

There is such a place, and I'm grateful beyond words that God called me to it, to be able to experience the catapulting capacity of His rest. It was here that I discovered what He truly requires of me and also what He doesn't. It was here that I was surprised to find what is most valuable to Him as well as some things that I didn't know were priceless to me. I was also blown away to discover that in finding true rest in God, I'd watch Him unfold the life I was longing for in a way that I could never have dreamed or planned.

## MEETING GOD IN THE BROKENNESS

At the end of 2017, I found myself wanting to hold on to every last bit of cozy that celebrating Christmas brings but also ready to kick to the curb all the clutter that I could see piling up in my house. We had gotten quite merry with decking the halls that year, especially because we were celebrating our tour for my first Christmas album. Yet, in the after-Christmas glow, I began to crave the clean slate of remembering Jesus in the form of a fresh year and a new beginning. So I made plans. Like, hit-the-ground-running kind of plans for the new year:

*Word for the year?* Check!

*Game plan to purge my house of clutter?* Check!

*Themes laid out for my podcast for the next six months?* Check!

I was going to get organized, study, create—even start this book—as I *thrived* my way into the new year!

Insert the narrative of that scene from the movie *Father of the Bride Part II* where the main character foreshadows how

his life is getting ready to go topsy-turvy: “All those who think they have it made, take one step forward. Not so fast, George Banks.”

*Not so fast, Christy Nockels.* Only eight days into 2018, I found myself sitting in an ENT’s office while he dropped on me the diagnosis of sudden sensorineural hearing loss. I’d gone in to address what I thought was a possible ear infection, so I didn’t bring my husband to the appointment with me. I remember how the doctor’s mouth moved as he spoke but I was grasping only about every other word, not because of my hearing loss but because I was in disbelief. I did gather that an MRI might be a good idea to rule out the big stuff that could be causing the hearing loss, like a tumor.

I walked out to my car and sat at my steering wheel with my body sweating, my head spinning, and my eyes filling with tears. I called my husband, Nathan, to try to explain the news, and all I could think of was how many questions I didn’t ask the doctor. The MRI, a few days later, produced only more questions as I was told that I’d need to have a neurosurgeon look at a spot on my brain.

So much for all that clear direction on what my year was supposed to look like! Overnight, I had walked straight into one of the biggest health scares of my life. For several weeks, I felt at a total standstill. It was like a part-time job trying to get in to see all the right people and getting all the right people to call me back. I have a whole new compassion for people who are dealing with health issues for themselves or family members. I remember scrolling through Instagram, feeling sidelined while watching everyone else suit up and take the field.

Most afternoons that winter you could find me tucked beneath my bedcovers, watching snow fall outside, while my ears roared with tinnitus. It was borderline maddening, as well as physically and emotionally alarming, to hear this persistent swish and hum in my ears. Yes, this was certainly devastating news for me as a singer. Music is so dear to me that I couldn't even really allow myself to think of what it might mean for the future. Apart from that, though, I realized this was a devastating development for me as a *human*. All kinds of fears surfaced. *Will I always hear this roaring in my ears? Could I lose my hearing completely?* I imagined the loss of so many beautiful sounds that I love: the music of my husband's soothing voice, the harmony that I hear in my children's laughter, and the gentle rush of the wind through the trees that surround our country home.

Yet, as I'll explain in more detail later, God met me here in this big change of plans. I don't know why I didn't see it coming because He's been meeting me like this over and over through the years. For a multitude of reasons that I may never understand, God used the brokenness of my physical ears to compel me to place the ears of my soul against His heart, desperate to truly hear from Him. If I had started that year full speed ahead, with healthy ears, I shudder to think about all that my spiritual ears would have missed out on.

## HIS RELENTLESS LOVE

As the Beloved of God, we can be sure that He is relentless in revealing places in our hearts that He's not done fighting for.

He loves us that much. When I think about all the hurry-up-and-wait and the things-didn't-go-as-planned seasons of my life, I'm suddenly aware of how those seasons have brought more forward movement and fulfillment than anything else I can remember. I have to believe it's because those seasons drew me back into remembrance not only of *who* I am but, most important, of *whose* I am.

Andrew Murray said,

Abiding in Him is not a work that we have to do as the condition for enjoying His salvation, but rather a consenting to let Him do all for us, in us, and through us. It is a work He does for us as the fruit and the power of His redeeming love. Our part is simply to yield, to trust, and to wait for what He has promised to perform.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout my life the Lord has shown up in relentlessly loving ways to draw me in and show me who and whose I am. As I share with you some of those stories and the lessons He's instilled, I pray your eyes will be opened to all the relentlessly loving ways that He is coming after *you*.

I had much to own (and still do) in terms of my Belovedness. I've come face to face with the fact that there is an enemy of my soul working hard to keep me from living from my truest self. In fact, you and I both are in the middle of a battle with this enemy. He is relentless in coming against our very identity as the Beloved.<sup>3</sup>

I can't help but think of a home movie from when I was about three years old, singing my favorite song. I was a '70s baby, so this movie is silent. But because I was doing little



hand motions to the song, I can tell that it was the first worship song I ever learned, which says, “I’m my Beloved’s and He is mine; His banner over me is love.” The most endearing thing about the whole picture is that I have a toy rifle strapped around my chest as I’m singing! It makes me giggle because it’s such evidence that I was the only girl being raised with all brothers and boy cousins. But recently as I watched it again, I couldn’t help but be filled with the truth that worship is a weapon. Worship is simply our response to God, and learning to live as the Beloved is a beautiful response. It’s always our best defense against a soul-killing, identity-stealing enemy. And once we start to live from our own Belovedness, we begin to fight on behalf of others so that they can live and rest in it too!

Beloved, hear me fighting for you when I say God’s banner over you is love! In fact, I believe that He’s calling you to come and rest and *live* underneath that banner even now. You and I actually have a real-life mediator who is here to help us get to the heart of the matter.<sup>4</sup> His name is Jesus. He was the first one to be called Beloved by His Father, and we have been called by His name.

Jesus consistently asked prodding and challenging questions when He walked this earth. In fact, when He met some of His first disciples—as He noticed them following Him one day along the road—He turned and asked, “What do you want?” It sounds a bit abrupt but, at the same time, stunningly bracing in the best way. People who ask these kinds of questions have likely discovered the answers for themselves, and in Jesus’s case, He *is* the answer. I also think He knew that some of life’s best answers are questions. “Where are you staying?”

they asked Him.

He replied, “Come and see.”<sup>5</sup>

Beloved, I believe that this invitation is extended to us. To *you*.

Will you heed His call to come and see? To discover who you really are and what you’re truly longing for?

### FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Without referring to any milestones, vocations, or achievements, how would you describe the life you long for?

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2. In what ways does our culture—even at times Christian culture—give us conflicting messages about the following: rest and achievement?

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building community and not being overscheduled?

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following our dreams and being present in the moment?

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# PART ONE



## *The Calling of the Beloved*

BELOVED, THE HIGHEST CALL ON YOUR LIFE—above any personal passion or pursuit—is to be loved by God and take your place as His child.<sup>1</sup> This means you are to be holy and set apart so that everything you do is done in the name of the Lord Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

This is a *worthy* calling but one that we often don't feel worthy enough to uphold! Because of this, we all have the tendency to labor and strive. Jesus knows this about us, and in His mercy and gentleness, His call to the Beloved rests like a banner over our lives: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."<sup>3</sup>

This call of Jesus is not about a set of rules or

a program to sign up for. He says (and in the original language the “Come” is exclamatory<sup>4</sup>), “Come! Rest in Me.” This is a life-changing invitation, especially since He gives us a clear picture here that there *is* work to be done. However, as the Beloved, we’ve been invited to come and yield ourselves to His “yoke”—where we work from *His* strength, knowing He has already borne the heavy load for those He loves!

## THE FARM-TABLE EPIPHANY

FIFTEEN YEARS HAVE PASSED, BUT IT FEELS LIKE ONLY yesterday that I sat in silence at my farm table, the humble and familiar center of my mundane. The kids were napping. I had just been cleaning their bathroom, swishing the brush around in the toilet bowl, when a strange sensation shot through my heart of hearts. Something I hadn't experienced in a really long time. The only word that comes to mind to describe it is *contentment*. This feeling was so peculiar to me that I needed to sit down at the table for a minute to process it.

To be honest, contentment felt utterly foreign to me in that season of life. My husband, Nathan, and I were spread thin, as we were at the height of our career in songwriting, recording, and touring nationwide as a Christian music duo called Watermark. It was work we loved, with people we loved, but we were constantly torn up inside by how the de-

mands of our career pulled us away from the most important people in our lives—our children. So this soul-settling peace coming over me while cleaning a toilet was kind of a lot to take in.

That said, I'm guessing that experiencing joy and fulfillment right in the middle of one of the most menial tasks of the day would leave an impression on you too, no matter the season. Having a deep sense that you're somehow right where you're supposed to be is always a welcome surprise, but what about an epiphany at your kitchen table, or wherever you're sitting even now, that could reorient your heart?

For whatever reason, I remember that cleaning the kids' bathroom was an extra big job that day. My five-year-old son was well past potty training, but if you're a boy mom, you know the drill. For a while, you aren't just cleaning the toilet bowl but the entire toilet as well as the floor around it and occasionally the shower curtain if it's next to the toilet, as ours was. I don't recall my train of thought that day in the bathroom. Maybe it was my son's failure to hit the bullseye that got me thinking. Whatever the reason, suddenly in my mind's eye was a picture of a bullseye, just like the one that my friend Lauren had described to me several months earlier, not long after we had first met.

I had been leading worship at an event we both attended in Texas. She approached me afterward with a big hug and said, "I know this might sound strange, but while you were leading worship tonight, I kept seeing concentric circles every time I closed my eyes." I looked at her, super puzzled as she continued. "It was like a Target sign. You know, like a bullseye and then two outer rings." She added that Philippians 2

had kept coming to her mind, and she challenged me to ask God about it in the coming days and weeks.

Now that I know Lauren so well, it doesn't even faze me that she received this picture from the Lord on my behalf. She is such a beautiful mix of whimsy and wisdom beyond her years, and I completely trust that she seeks the heart of God. Matthew 7:17 says, "Every good tree bears good fruit,"<sup>1</sup> and well, even this book is some of the sweet fruit that has come from her words of encouragement that night. But at the time, I admit, it seemed kind of out there.

So there I sat at my table, months later, convinced that God was near and inviting me to something through this strange sense of contentment. I reached for my Bible, and it fell open to a sweet and familiar passage: Psalm 37. In fact, Psalm 37:5 was the scripture God used when He first called me to come to Him as a little girl.

Every day, on the way to my childhood bedroom, I passed a set of plaques hanging in the hallway of our home. Each plaque featured the name of a family member, along with the meaning of their name and a scripture underneath. Mine said, "Christy—Follower of Christ." Printed below that was Psalm 37:5 in the King James Version: "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." As a child, I let that little wall plaque *name* me, in a way. I didn't understand what being a follower of Christ really meant, but seeing it printed there next to my name, it felt important, essential even. I memorized the verse and learned to handwrite it and wrote it on everything.

My dad has been a pastor my whole life. One Sunday night while he was preaching, I printed that verse out in my



very best, seven-year-old penmanship and handed it to my mom, who was sitting beside me. I'll never forget how she took that little piece of paper, which I still have to this day, and turned it over to write a message back to me. She wrote, "Yes, if Christy gives her heart to Jesus, He will show her the way to go." I took her word for it that night. That's the beauty of parenting and mentoring. Until children learn to fully take God at His Word on their own, our words can keep pointing to *His*. I'm ever grateful that my mother's words did just that, like the North Star, guiding me home.

I remember looking down the long aisle of pews as my dad beckoned anyone who'd like to put their trust in Christ to come forward. With sweaty palms and my little heart beating wildly, I stepped out and walked down in front of our congregation. I reached for my earthly father's hand as I embraced my heavenly Father's heart for me. I wholeheartedly believe that Jesus whispered my heart awake that night and that I received, right then and there, the first and highest calling on my life: to be a Beloved child of God.

Years later, there at my farm table, God brought to my remembrance my gospel story. The moment that I was reconciled to Him and this Abba cry—a heart bellow set deep within me by the Spirit of God, assuring me of whom I belong to—was first awakened in my heart.<sup>2</sup> He was pointing me back to both the simplicity and the significance and, yes, the power of being His Beloved child. As I read Psalm 37 and came to verse 4 that day, it was like I was reading it for the very first time. I'll admit, the weight of it surprised me a little because it's one of those verses that gets printed on tea towels and coffee cups. You probably could say it by memory even

now: “Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.”<sup>3</sup> To be really honest, for much of my life I had read this passage to sort of mean that if I scratched God’s back, He’d scratch mine. Or, maybe it was something like if I busied myself doing things for God, maybe He’d be proud of me and throw me a bone here and there. Sadly, figuring out how to delight myself in the Lord seemed like a means to an end. If I would give Him what He wanted, maybe He’d return the favor.

Somehow, in the years since I had first heard God name me His Beloved, that first and highest calling had become more of a duty to uphold than a cherished identity. I can’t tell you how grateful I am that God fights for places in our hearts that we’ve either given up on or don’t even know need rescuing. Right there in my kitchen, He was fighting for me as He began to speak to me through His Word opened before me: *Just enjoy Me*. He didn’t speak audibly, but my heart filled with a knowing that it was Him. It had been a long while since I had heard Him speak so clearly and plainly, and the certainty of His presence unraveled me. It had also been a long time since I had truly enjoyed God. I loved Him, no doubt. I worshipped Him and made Him known to the world with my songwriting and artistry. But enjoying Him? I am not even sure I knew how to do it at that point in my life, nor did I feel that I had the space for it.

It was as if the Lord was pressing into my heart in that moment and showing me what was valuable to Him. It felt like He was nudging my spirit awake again. I’m grateful beyond words that God came in and valued Himself on my behalf when I had clearly forgotten how to value Him above all

things. He opened my eyes again to His intrinsic worth and reminded me that He is in fact the treasure of this life and He is worth being enjoyed. Psalm 63:3 says that His “steadfast love is *better* than life.”

## HEART’S DESIRE

The drawbridge of my heart slowly began to lower as He spoke again: *Just enjoy Me and I will give you the desires of your heart.* That word *give* seemed to jump off the page. I could see this twofold meaning for the first time. I didn’t have language for it in the moment, and the best I know how to describe it even now is that God will both set new desires in us and fulfill deep longings that have always been there.

I’ve heard it said that He is both the *instiller* and *fulfiller* of our desires and longings. I only recently discovered that the Hebrew word for “give” in this passage is *nathan*. First of all, I love God’s kindness and attention to detail that He’d set my husband’s name, Nathan, right in the middle of what I consider to be my life’s passage of Scripture! This word *nathan* means “to give, put, set.”<sup>4</sup> So part of what God is saying here is that He will put new desires in us, as in He will show us what our desires are. This isn’t some puppet-on-a-string kind of thing. I believe that this is God teaching us to dream bigger in terms of what we long for, to be open to God-sized things in our lives. I believe He’s also saying that part of the blessing in learning to enjoy Him is that our hearts’ desires will be fulfilled. I would experience both of these things firsthand in that season—that He dreams much bigger dreams for us than

we even know how to dream for ourselves and that He Himself satisfies more than any dream fulfilled ever could.

I read on to the verse that changed my life so long ago: “Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you.”<sup>5</sup> I realized that I hadn’t ever really focused much on the rest of the passage. I was intrigued, as I read on, to learn how He would help me. Verse 6 says, “He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.” As clear as day, He spoke again, pressing these words into my heart: *Do you trust Me with your cause?* My heart, now tender to the touch, wanted to trust Him with my cause, but I also wanted to understand what in the world He was asking of me!

I believe that God’s question to me about my cause that day was also twofold.

The word translated as “innocence” in verse 6 can also be translated as “righteousness” or “rightness.” I see it so clearly now. He was asking, *Do you trust Me with your righteousness?* As in *Are you willing to rest in Jesus as your righteousness, or are you going to keep exhausting yourself trying to come up with your own?* This was a valid question, as God knew that at that point in my life, doing good things for Him was what made me feel most validated and *right* before Him and even others. The Bible likens this sort of self-righteousness to “filthy rags.”<sup>6</sup> God was bringing me face to face with my gospel story again. He wanted me to remember that Jesus alone is my “rightness.” Not only had He come to save me; He had come to restore me to Himself so that I might live from who He is.

The second crucial part of God’s question to me was this: *Do you trust Me with your dreams, with your longings, with your*

*reputation, and with what you feel called to do? Do you trust Me with the life you want and even long for?* The cause He asked me to entrust to Him I believe also represented my own wants and dreams, things I wanted to promote and prosper in and even win at. He met me right where I was—as He meets all of us right where we are today, asking if we are willing to place our gifts, our talents, our passions, and the very cause we hold dear completely in His hands.

As I considered His invitation to trust, this is when the tears showed up. Unknowingly, I had made my reputation and my platform—using my gifts, talents, and passions for God—the center of my whole world. After all, He had given me these gifts. Surely it was my responsibility to manage them and use them to make Him known to the world!

As I sat with these monumental truths, it was as if those concentric circles that Lauren had described were drawn right there on the pages of Scripture in front of me. The Word of God, living and active, was bringing context to this bullseye picture that had come to my mind while cleaning the toilet.

The Lord has brought more clarity and definition to this over the years since, but even then I sensed that the outermost circle represented my cause—my achievements, my dreams and wants, and the endless to-do list that goes along with all that. The circle just inside that represented my relationships—my marriage, my children, my family and friends, my church, and our ministry partners and community. And the bullseye, the calm at the center of it all, represented God's heart, where I found my place as His Beloved.

I saw myself stuck in that outermost ring, racing in circles,

exhausted, determined to prove to God and others my worth and devotion. In this outside-in way of living, I hit the ground running every morning. The to-do list took precedence over my soul needs as I focused tenaciously on doing everything I thought I was supposed to be doing for God and even for myself so life would go as planned. My spirit grieved as I realized that I had assumed I couldn't afford the luxury of spending time with God. I had believed the lie that I had far too many important responsibilities to spend time being still before Him. When I did make time for Him, in exhaustion, my priority was to ask Him to help me with everything that I had spinning: motherhood, home keeping, career building. With a twinge of shame always lingering in my gut, I'd ask His forgiveness for failing to give Him more. Yet I had no more to give because my own strength was gone.

Don't get me wrong. I longed to simply be still. I craved margin and rest and the capacity to put my family first. But I felt trapped in this outer ring, fearful that if I said no to anything, I might miss out on the Next. Big. Thing. Because I would *yes* myself into more than I could handle, I didn't have the capacity to truly see others around me. I was usually in such a frazzled state that I valued community primarily for what it could do for me. For lack of a better word, this is *hustling*, and I've learned that God doesn't always intervene right away when we strive at this kind of pace. Sometimes He gives us what we think we want so that we will finally discover what we truly need. Eventually, though, because He loves us, He will let us feel the weight of trying to call all the shots and do all the things. This was certainly one of those moments in my life.

God's kindness to me that day at my farm table led me to repentance. It was as if He was holding me together while I fell apart right there in my kitchen. I realized I had ditched the first and highest calling on my life as a loved child of God. My heart was broken that singing for God had somehow become more important to me than sitting with Him. I had been busy holding up a cause cloaked in broken strategies, trying to ensure my calling unfolded as I expected. Consumed by a determination to keep up with the world around me, fearful of being left in the dust, I had stopped trusting my Father. I had lost my first love. As my tears poured out onto the pages of Scripture in front of me, God spoke the most life-giving and life-saving words to me: *Just hit the bullseye, and I will take care of all the outer rings of your life. I will hold up your cause and show you My glory.*

## THE LIE OF THE ENEMY—AND THE TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE

I feel pretty vulnerable sharing this part of my story with you. I wish we were sitting together over coffee so I could maybe see you nod your head a few times along the way, signaling that my experience resonates with your own. Even without that connection, though, I feel certain you can relate to my struggle. We are all prone to outside-in living and outer-ring hustling because our tendency to make a way for ourselves goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Our fear of trusting God is universal. Rather than stepping into His invitation to live from His best, we settle for what we can make

happen on our own.

I'm guessing that you, too, long for contentment and rest. But the culture we live in demands that we maintain a certain pace. For many of us, living through a quarantine in the middle of a worldwide pandemic revealed just how much we've leaned into that pace, relied on that pace, and even compromised in the deepest part of our souls because of it. Perhaps, like many others, you've recognized the consequences of those compromises and you don't ever want to go back to the way things were.

Yet even when circumstances all but demand a pause, you and I are told nonstop by this world—and by what we scroll through nonstop—that no one is going to get our dream done for us. We've got to get out there and make it happen! So with clenched teeth, we try to keep up, driven to uphold our family, our dreams, our career, and our reputation. The pressure is often so fierce that we don't even know how to pause and assess where we really are.

To top it all off, the Enemy of our souls is working overtime to keep us from living from our truest selves. Sometimes his deceptive plot comes packaged in the subtlest of lies. One of his most venomous whispers in my own life sounds like this: *It's all up to you*. I wonder if you've heard this one too? This lie is the antithesis of the life that God offers us. And yet we might agree with this lie without even knowing it. Even as we live out what we think is our calling, this lie heaps all the weight and worry of the outcome on our own shoulders. It places all the responsibility on our performance and our own ability to make a way for ourselves in this world. It's eventually destructive as it feeds our tendency toward self-



sufficiency. I realize that you may have been taught from infancy that self-reliance is the key to making it in this life. But as we'll learn later, our own sufficiency has a shelf life. Some of us expire faster than others, but eventually, we are all going to fizzle out at this kind of pace. And the repercussions can be devastating.

Often our Enemy's fiercest strategy against us as the Beloved is keeping us consumed with living *for* God rather than living *from* God. Our Enemy knows full well that when we live *from* God, it lifts the burden and the stress and the striving and restores to us the joy of knowing God and loving Him. This joy is contagious! Living from the bullseye of our Belovedness, we begin to trust God alone with what makes us right before Him and with this cause that we hold so dear. After all, He said if we would commit everything we do to Him, He would help us! If we will find our joy in Him, He will be the one to fulfill our deepest desires. And as we spend time enjoying Him, His Word says that His presence makes us "full of gladness."<sup>7</sup>

Please hear me out. This is not some kind of karma version of following Christ. I'm not suggesting that if we follow God, He will make everything turn out magical for us. Being God's Beloved does not make us immune to walking through deep pain and even tragedy in this life. We still live in a broken world, and Jesus Himself told us that we will have trouble in this life. But in the same breath He said, "Take heart; I have overcome the world."<sup>8</sup> As the Beloved of God, we get to draw near to this Jesus who has already overcome this world we're trying so desperately to survive in!

It takes me back to the overarching theme of Psalm 37:

that we don't have to fret when we see the world's system—as godless as it is—prospering as well as promoting and even winning at what looks like success. God's promise to His people here is that in time, He will make a clear distinction between the world's system and His economy, between those who trust in mere humans and those who choose to trust in the Overcomer of this world!<sup>9</sup>

Learning to trust God with my cause and live from my Belovedness has not happened overnight. Mine was a slow surrender, and still to this day, I have to pause often in a week's time to recenter my heart in God's truth. You'll see in the pages to come that I'm still a work in progress when it comes to trusting that my rightness before God (and others) is in Christ alone. You'll hear about how I've had to learn to lay down my cause for His, surrendering my own wants and desires for the more that He's always had in His heart for me. I still have to choose to trust God before my feet even hit the floor in the mornings, to remember that He sees me, hears me, knows me, and loves me. To ask Him to help me resist the tendency to hustle to the outer ring and instead rest in who He is and who I am in Him so that I can fully blossom in what it looks like to follow Him and show His love to the world around me.

Living like this positions us to approach the outermost rings of our lives with intentionality and purpose. With God holding up our cause, we become available to Him and to others in a way that we never have before.

As I mentioned, God showed me that the next outer ring from the bullseye represented some precious people in my life: my family, my church, my friends, and our ministry part-

ners. You may also remember that Lauren mentioned Philip-  
pians 2 to me, just after she told me about the concentric  
circles she saw in her mind's eye. Part of this passage, which  
we'll look further into later, says, "Do nothing from selfish  
ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more sig-  
nificant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his  
own interests, but also to the interests of others."<sup>10</sup>

God was reordering my life to see that I was never meant  
to go it alone, nor were my own interests ever supposed to be  
king of my life. In fact, He'd show me that walking arm in  
arm with my community into the things He's prepared in  
advance for me is a crucial part of the life that my soul truly  
aches for.<sup>11</sup>

## YOUR PLACE IN HIS HEART

I don't know where all this hits you or where you sit today in  
your journey of truly trusting God and even enjoying Him in  
this life. I do know this: there is a place for you in His heart  
as well as a place for Him in yours. Jesus said in John 14:23,  
"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father  
will love him, and we will come to him and make our *home*  
with him."

Regardless of what you might think, God loves you, Be-  
loved. You know what else? He's not far from you, He's not  
mad at you, and He's made a way for you to come be near  
Him. Even if you feel far from Him, maybe even stuck in the  
outer ring and prone to outside-in living, He has not deserted  
you or given up on you. *He is right there with you*, lovingly

calling you back to the center of who He is.

Psalm 145:18 says, “The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.” Right where you sit, you can call on Him even now, surrendering your life to come and live as His Beloved child. It doesn’t have to be an eloquent prayer. I’ve seen Him work wonders with “God, if You’re real, show me.”

Here in this purest place at the center of His heart, in accepting this beautiful invitation to inside-out living, you will truly rest and find contentment. And Beloved, when you begin to live wholly out from His love, you will see Him show up on your behalf as you never have before.

#### FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways, if any, have you felt your highest calling was “more of a duty to uphold than a cherished identity” (page 00<~?~please insert page number>)? How has this been reflected in your relationship with God?

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2. What is your first reaction to the idea of “enjoying” God? What might that look like for you?

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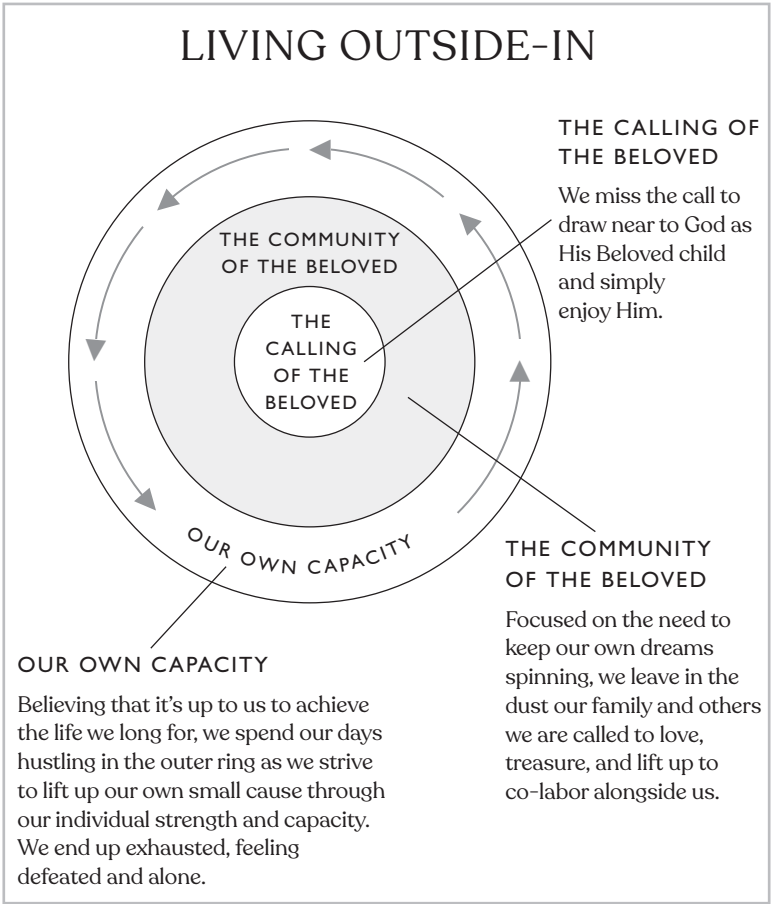
3. In what part of your life right now—such as work, family, ministry—are you most likely to feel it’s all up to you?

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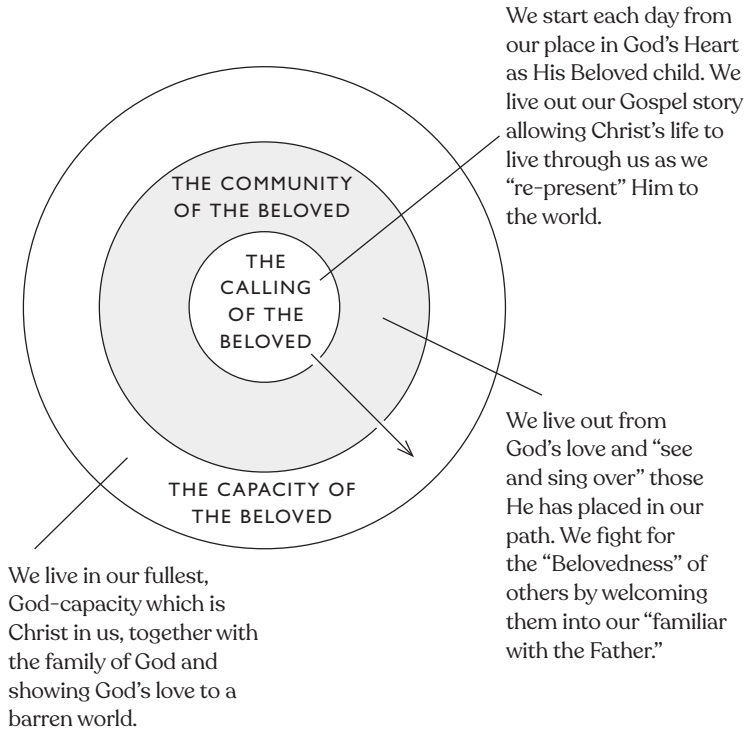
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## LIVING INSIDE-OUT



# 3

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## THE GLORIOUS IN THE MUNDANE

THE WORDS GOD DROPPED INTO MY HEART THAT DAY at the kitchen table—*Just hit the bullseye*—offered a clear and present call to come back to the purest place of living as the Beloved of God. More specifically, it was an invitation to come *home*, spiritually and even physically.

Spiritually, God was beckoning me to draw nearer to Him in the secret place, to experience being His child in a way that I never had before. The call to come home physically started—I kid you not—with swishing the toilet bowl clean that day. I like to think it was God’s way of showing me that contentment could show up in the places I least expected. I believe that He was inviting me to come and practice living from the supernatural. I’m not talking about some kind of weird paranormal stuff. The supernatural life God offers us is one of rest and trust and watching Him come through when

we rest and trust in Him. This call was to come and experience how valuing Him and prioritizing His promises and principles—and my own soul in the process—could produce something unexpectedly life changing.

The contentment that flooded in that day met me with a readied heart. Who knew that a readied heart could look like a frazzled and weary heart? Who knew that God ushering in His dreams for us could look like our own plans being thwarted or even just our desires beginning to unexpectedly shift?

In the year or two leading up to my farm-table epiphany, Nathan and I had been living in the uneasy tension that something had to give. Even though we were intentional about spending our lives on good things, our professional schedules were so full that our personal lives, mainly our family life, was being suffocated. As you know, in the world you and I live in, quitting something feels like an unrealistic luxury. Irresponsible even. We were tied to a recording contract as well as a partnership with a management company and a booking agency. So when we started saying no to a few things here and there out of protection of our little family, we began to feel some pushback. We wrestled, holding both sides of the tension. We felt strongly that God was asking us to reprioritize our lives, but we also knew that all these well-meaning people had businesses to run and jobs to do.

Soon after we took steps to lighten our load, our manager at the time came by our house to deliver the news from the higher-ups that they would be dropping Nathan and me from their roster. Our dream of putting our family first was apparently not a shared dream, and that's okay. I see it much clearer



now than I did then.

But on that day, we sat in our den, trying to wrap our minds around the news, grappling to understand the resistance to our efforts at finding a healthy balance for our family. For a little bit of context, I was neck deep in postpartum *everything* from the birth of our second child, so the news hit a little too close to home. Normally, I might have just listened in silence, but all the mama in me rose up to defend my roost! Just as I started in on our manager to give him a piece of my mind, I caught Nathan's eye. He shot me a look that said, "It's not worth it. Don't go there." I paused, and just about the time I decided to completely disregard Nathan's leading, the baby monitors lit up with the cries of both of our children waking from their naps at the same time. Knowing that this was my second warning to shut my mouth, I quietly exited the room. Looking back, I love how clearly God highlighted what (and whom) I was supposed to fight for in that moment.

As I lifted our cuddly baby girl from her crib and walked into the hallway, I was met by Nathan holding our toddler son in his arms. There we stood, holding everything that truly mattered in our little world. The locking of our eyes said it all as we envisioned the choices before us, choices that would determine the trajectory of our children's lives. One option was to just keep clinging to the world and its ways of getting things done, which we knew would be at the expense of our family. Or we could choose to step into the mystery of trusting that God would make a way for us if we obeyed what He was pressing into our hearts. Both choices seemed daunting. Really, we were just two kids ourselves who needed parenting by our heavenly Father in that moment. Even then,

God was pointing us to the bullseye and what it might look like to crawl up underneath His care and trust Him to provide a way for us in this life.

Nathan asked what I was thinking. I remember saying, “I have an overwhelming sense that God will take care of us no matter what.”

Realizing our guest had left, I asked if anything more had been said after I’d left the room. Nathan said, “No more words were spoken. I just walked him to the door.”

Perplexed that this surreal scenario was playing out, I said, “Wow, that’s awkward. What are *you* thinking?”

In true Nathan form, quiet and collected, he said, “All I could think on the way to the door was . . . *Get off my land and don’t touch my roosters!*” Realizing that he was serious made me love him all the more, but it also got me giggling. Soon our shared laughter broke through the tension. We didn’t have any roosters, of course. This was just all the daddy rising up in Nathan to defend the treasure of his home.

As you can see, the moment at the farm table was this beautiful culmination of God having prepared me to step into the mystery with Him by allowing my heart to become both fatigued and dissatisfied with life as I knew it. Had I chosen to stay out in the peripheral facets of my life and calling, I have no doubt I would have still done good things *for* God. But in answering this call to come home to the purest place of living my life *from* Him, I experienced transformation like I’d never known, from the inside out. A contentment that would eventually lead to contending for kingdom things as I never had before.

God’s invitation to the bullseye marked the start of my

learning how to be surrendered. He was calling me to come and lay everything down: my gifts, my talents, and everything that I was so busy doing for Him. But it actually took me a minute—more like a few months—to realize that He was asking me to *literally* come home, as in lay down my career. He was calling me to come and rest. I know this may ruffle some feathers—trust me, it ruffled mine! God was asking me not only to value Him and this home that He has made for Himself in my heart but also to value my actual home here on earth—my husband and my children. Even though what He asked of me felt enormous in terms of what I was laying down, there was also something simple about the call that kept singing to my heart. It seemed that everywhere I turned in that season, God was using the sights and sounds around me to bid me to come and *be* His child, to enjoy Him and learn to live my life *from* Him. To hit the bullseye every day and to trust Him with all the things that I'd been hustling for.

## NOTHING TO OFFER EXCEPT MYSELF

After praying and seeking counsel from trusted pastors and friends, Nathan and I officially decided to go palms up with our career as recording artists. This meant letting go of Watermark, the music career that had been a vital part of our ministry and even our identities for so long. After enduring who-knows-how-many flights with newborns, sleeping in bunks on buses, strapping car seats into cabs, and me nursing my babies in countless janitor closets, our hearts ached for stability and home. Since we'd traveled on weekends for

much of our career, we longed to be a part of our church on Sundays. I started wanting to do strange things (at least in my world) like bake casseroles and take them to friends who had just had babies. I wanted to push our baby girl's stroller through the neighborhood on a weekend while our son learned to ride his bike. I know, those are all very normal things, and that's exactly what we were longing for.

Maybe you know from experience how hard it is to lay down a career or a ministry or something you've worked so hard to build. If so, you know full well that the choice doesn't come without pain and tears—and a belly full of fear. For us, it meant clearing everything from our calendars and starting over in many ways, which was both terrifying and hopeful at the same time.

I'll admit that at first, this call to come home and own my Belovedness wasn't quite as alluring as writing songs and leading worship. For this reason, I believe God spoke specifically through that toilet-cleaning moment to remind me that He could show up in the most mundane moments of my life and fill them with His presence. I didn't have to be leading on a public stage to experience His glory or to sense His nearness. It could happen anytime, anywhere. Of course, hearing this truth proved much easier than remembering it and truly living it, as I would soon discover.

Nathan had a longing to pursue music production, and my coming home would give him the time and space to walk toward that. His production career would eventually grow into an entirely new branch of creativity and, thankfully, income for our little family.

As for my own transition home, I *so* want to tell you that

it was seamless and smooth and that I immediately settled into my new normal. It was actually quite the opposite. In fact, I got an immersion course in what it means to truly live from my Belovedness, with nothing to bring to God but myself.

The newness of being home 24/7 quickly wore off, and this road girl had no idea how to cook or clean or take care of a home. Soon, the toilet cleanings were just plain ol' toilet cleanings. I began to battle fear that I would not be able to find purpose in the unseen tasks of motherhood and keeping house. Subconsciously, I still saw my worth as being rooted in what I could *do*. My identity and sense of purpose had somehow become woven into the visibility of my platform. Because of this, I bought into the lie that mundane tasks were an inglorious waste of my time.

While I delighted in Nathan's growing production business, it added to my sense of now feeling swallowed by normalcy. We had built out our basement as a space where he could create and produce albums for other artists. But the way I saw it, every morning he got to skip downstairs and do what he loved while I was upstairs dealing with the everyday stuff of life. Every once in a while, I'd hear the sound of other artists singing and songwriting as it echoed up through the air vents into the humdrum of my day. I'd catch myself feeling anxious all over again about everything that I had just laid down. Too many days of feeling hidden away like this left me convinced that I was missing my calling, which was surely found somewhere other than the four walls of my kitchen!

My head stayed in the clouds, constantly dreaming of creative endeavors beyond the borders of my home. All the while, our fridge was full of rotting food that I wouldn't take

the time to get creative with. I was too busy worrying and even sulking about my transition from leading worship in arenas to watching reruns of *Blue's Clues*. I look back on so many rushed-through moments with the kids and days that felt purposeless simply because of my own lack of purpose. I might have physically come home in that season, but spiritually I had reverted to outer-ring living, even from my own living room! But God was so faithful to keep calling my heart back to His.

One day a songwriter who came to work with Nathan asked if I would sing a demo for a song she had written. Excited to do anything pertaining to music, I skipped down the stairs *with* Nathan that morning. And because God dreams bigger dreams than we can ever dream for ourselves (and also has an interesting way of unfolding those dreams), my meeting Teri that morning was about so much more than music. This beautiful lady immediately reminded me of Jesus, and this drew me to her. I was also intrigued by the fact that she was a songwriter, a blogger, and a mother who homeschooled her *nine* children!

A few weeks later, I sat across from Teri in the middle of a coffee shop, with tears in my eyes, and asked how in the world she did it all. I guess I was expecting a pep talk or a step-by-step program on life management. You know, I thought this amazing woman was going to give me the secret 411 on somehow living the balanced life in the middle of my mother lode.

So I was a little taken aback when Teri's eyes welled up with tears as well. I realize now that she was still very much in the thick of it all herself. She looked at me, and her words

(which I believe were the Holy Spirit's words to me) went right through me: "You invite the *glorious* into the mundane." I sat there stunned. It was so not what I expected, and it definitely wasn't what I wanted to hear. I needed the program. You know, the chart with boxes to check that I could hang on my laundry room wall. I needed something to *do* because that's how I felt most productive and purposeful and even loved. Yet here it was again—this invitation to mystery.

## A HEART IN HIS HANDS

If you're sitting there sweating and concluding that to live in the bullseye of your Belovedness, God is going to ask you to lay down all your dreams—including your career—hear this, Beloved: more than anything else God is asking you to lay down; He is after your *heart*. For me, God happened to specifically use the struggle of laying down my career and embracing motherhood to posture my heart in surrender. I imagine that God uses an infinite number of ways to replace our hustle obsession with His grander desires for us as His children.

You might have just embarked upon marriage or a new job or a fresh start in a new town, and as exciting as it all is, maybe it has stirred feelings of inadequacy and unrest or even a sense of being overwhelmed by change. Maybe you are single and the years that you envisioned yourself "thirty, flirty and thriving"<sup>1</sup> have turned out a bit more like you hunkering down for survival in what feels like the wild, wild West. Your tension might be that you're weighted down by loads of pres-

sure in having to work full time just to make it. So this call to come home and rest might feel completely out of reach for you. Or maybe you're on the brink of surrendering something you have felt God asking you to release but you're paralyzed in fear of what it might look like to trust that He's really going to come through for you on the other side.

Again, more than anything you could be doing right now with your life, God is all about whom you are becoming. Even in the midst of your most difficult circumstances and some of the most complicated plotlines of your story, there is always a bigger invitation from Him and a deeper ask. He's calling you to come home to His heart. He might propose that you surrender and lay down some things in your life, but ultimately the question He's really asking is this: "Do I have your whole heart?"

Why would He want your whole heart? Because He knows what can be entrusted to a fully surrendered heart. This is why we're called to prioritize His promises and His principles. When we do, we begin to see that His way works. Second Chronicles 16:9 says, "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless [or whole, as the footnote says] toward him." Imagine that! A heart that is wholly turned toward God is met by God Himself already looking for ways that He can show Himself strong to you! God knows and trusts His own strength, so wouldn't it be like Him to entrust and empower a heart completely yielded to Him?

I've shared with you all this stuff from my past, some of it so embarrassing to admit, not just to air a bunch of dirty laundry. My intent is to show you the condition my heart



was in, even as someone who professed Christ. Even as someone in ministry, deeply devoted to making God known and living for Him.

I wonder if you can relate to trudging and limping through the Christian life? Where we take on the enormous task of living for God all on our own, only to fail in our frailty over and over again. Where we tend to just keep picking ourselves up by our Chelsea boots and going about our hustle, never making the margin to stop and ask whether there's more. Where we struggle to keep up with a world that we weren't even made for, desperately trying to survive at a pace that we were never meant to run in. We strive for fulfillment and pine for contentment. But what if our striving and pining are preventing the supernatural work of God in our lives? *What if our hustling is actually holding us back?*

Beloved, I can promise you this: what God actually requires of you today is a welcomed relief in comparison to all that you are trying to carry on your own. Think about it: if there's a hustle that holds us back, wouldn't it be like God to provide a rest that actually propels us? Isn't it just like Him to give us a surrender that looks more like a superpower? Isn't it just His way to give us the highest calling on our lives of becoming His children?

## OUR HOPE OF GLORY

I look back now with such a sense of gratitude and awe that God would call me home to raise my children. That He would so intentionally cause my heart to turn toward my

little ones as a way of pointing me—every day—to the one thing He truly desires from me: to be His loved child and to live from that humble and trusting posture.

I can't help but think about when Jesus's disciples asked Him, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus called a child to come over, and He placed the child in the middle of everyone and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus essentially laid out the qualifications for being the greatest in the kingdom of God, and it was to become like a *child*? I can't tell you how much I love that my study Bible says this in the notes next to this very passage: "The humility of a child consists of childlike trust, vulnerability, and the inability to advance his or her own cause apart from the help, direction, and resources of a parent."<sup>3</sup> If I could use the loudly crying face emoji here, I would! Do you know how much energy I've wasted in trying to hold up and advance my own cause? Whether it was toiling to ensure that my dreams would be realized or approaching God over and over with the rags of my own self-righteousness, I was trusting in my own resources and looking out for me and only me.

Imagine the deep soul rest that comes to our hearts when we surrender our *all* and behold this Father who already has His eyes on us! The One who placed all these gifts and talents and dreams in us—wouldn't He be the best promoter of our cause that ever existed?

The highest calling on your life, to be the Beloved child of God, simply requires your surrender today. In surrender, you

are saying that you believe that from Him you can do all things and without Him you can do nothing.<sup>4</sup> Trust me, if you choose this one thing—*surrender to God*—the supernatural will show up and surprise you! When you lay down your life, you will truly find it.<sup>5</sup>

The most beautiful part of trusting in God as your provider and your promoter is that, not only do you walk into dreams that He's already prepared in advance for you, but you also begin to experience a satisfaction in His love that none of your previous wants and desires or dreams could ever come close to fulfilling. You become transformed from the inside out. In fact, your cause begins to look like His cause: your surrendered life proclaiming Christ. Paul passed on this commission to us, describing it as "the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory."<sup>6</sup>

Beloved, the first step toward living from God's love is to accept the way that He has already loved you—by receiving the gift of His Son, Jesus. Not just for salvation but as your strength, life, and sufficiency every morning when you look in the mirror, acknowledging that the life of Christ *in* you is how you live *from* the love of God each day. In surrender, we get to partake of living from His glorious life. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

If you're like me and you've heard this scripture countless times, perhaps your heart has grown numb, conditioned to hearing God's Word but not fully grasping the power that is available to us through it. We profess that we believe in Christ

and that we want to live for Him, but let's be honest: it's a whole other thing to be willing to die to ourselves (believing the old self was crucified with Him) so Christ can come and live His life in us and through us. And yet this is the only way that the Christian life is even possible.

Beloved, we were never meant to live the Christian life. Christ has come that He might live it *through* us. Our faith has a resting place, and His name is Jesus! I love how Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, described our life in Christ as “the exchanged life.”<sup>7</sup> These words were inspired by Isaiah 40:31, another scripture you might know well: “They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” The word *renew* in the original language means “pass through, change, substitute.”<sup>8</sup> As we look eagerly to Jesus, He exchanges our fragile human strength for His matchless strength!

Christ in you is your blessed assurance on that final day when He returns, but it is just as much your blessed assurance today in the carpool line or at the checkout counter at the grocery store or in folding that endless pile of laundry. It's your gospel story lived out all day long, breathing in the truth that it's *not* all up to you today.

Bullseye living is a continual surrender to God, with the power of Christ living in you and through you! We will talk about this more later, but it transforms the way that you see God every day, the way that you see yourself, and the way that you see others. It's how I can hug the neck of that manager every time I see him around town now—you know, the one who dropped the dreadful news on us that day, which

was not-so-dreadful news after all but a beautiful invitation. What's also beautiful is that I don't see the hustle in his eyes anymore but far more humility and rest. I hope that he sees the same in me. There sure seems to be an unspoken joy when he hears the updates on how God keeps making a way for us to live out the dream of that family-first agenda. What's more, I occasionally even hear about some of those higher-ups around town and catch wind of how they are loving and leading people well.

It's amazing how when we begin to live as the Beloved of God, we start to see it in others and desire it for them. People become treasured far above the pace, above an industry and a mentality and a culture, and we learn to love each other as loved people do. Even when there isn't a neatly tied bow or a happy ending on a fallout with others, a surrendered heart learns to forgive and keep hope alive for restoration yet to come.

Living loved turns our mundane into a place of glorious encounters with this God who is already on the edge of His seat, looking for a heart that might turn toward Him today. This posture of surrender transfers our trust from mere humans making a way for ourselves to the God of the universe showing Himself strong to us. This sets us up to receive the blessings that He gives those who trust in Him—not earthly treasures or a magical, perfect life but the kind of blessings that make our lives look like “a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.”<sup>9</sup>

*Christ in you, Beloved.* It's the hope that you can cling to today for the life you're longing for. That living from God's

love is not only possible but is what you were created for. *It is the rest that propels you.* The chance to live out in real time what it looks like to trust God with every season and every sunrise.

### FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think it's so tempting to find our identities in what we do rather than in who we are?

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2. Consider this statement: "what God actually requires of you today is a welcomed relief in comparison to all that you are trying to carry on your own" (page 00<~?~please insert page number>). Do you agree or disagree, and why?

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3. What would you identify as the key difference(s) between our living Christian lives and Christ living through us?

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# NOTES

## Chapter 1: His Banner over Me Is Love

1. 1 John 3:1–3; 1 John 4:7–8; Ephesians 5:1–2; HELPS Word-studies, s.v. “27 *agapētos*,” Bible Hub, 2011, <https://biblehub.com/greek/27.htm>.
2. Andrew Murray, *Abiding in Christ* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2003), 25.
3. Ephesians 6:12.
4. Hebrews 9:15.
5. John 1:38–39, NLT.

## Part 1: The Calling of the Beloved

1. 1 John 3:1.
2. 2 Corinthians 7:1; Colossians 3:17.
3. Matthew 11:28–30.
4. *Strong's Lexicon*, s.v. “Come,” Matthew 11:28, Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/parallel/matthew/11-28.htm>.

## Chapter 2: The Farm-Table Epiphany

1. Matthew 7:17, NIV.
2. Romans 8:15.
3. Psalm 37:4, NLT.
4. *Strong's Concordance*, s.v. "nathan," Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5414.htm>.
5. Psalm 37:5, NLT.
6. Isaiah 64:6, NLT.
7. Acts 2:28.
8. John 16:33.
9. Jeremiah 17:5–8.
10. Philippians 2:3–4.
11. Ephesians 2:10.

### Chapter 3: The Glorious in the Mundane

1. Jennifer Garner, *13 Going on 30*, directed by Gary Winick (New York: Sony Pictures Entertainment, 2004), IMDb, [www.imdb.com/title/tt0337563/quotes](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0337563/quotes).
2. Matthew 18:1–4.
3. "18:2–4 Whoever humbles himself like this child," *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 1858.
4. John 15:5.
5. Matthew 10:39.
6. Colossians 1:27.
7. Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 159.
8. *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, s.v. "chalaph," Bible Hub, 2006, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/2498.htm>.
9. Psalm 1:3, NIV.

### Chapter 4: The Already of Our Story

1. HELPS Word-studies, s.v. "1537 *ek*," Bible Hub, 2011, <https://biblehub.com/greek/1537.htm>.
2. Maxie Dunnam, *The Intercessory Life* (Wilmore, KY: Seedbed, 2013), 95.
3. Colossians 3:12, NIV.
4. 2 Corinthians 12:9.
5. Colossians 3, ESV, NIV.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christy Nockels is a worship leader, singer, and songwriter who has a heart to lead others to connect and communicate with God. Christy and her husband, Nathan, toured nationwide as the Christian music duo Watermark, recording five acclaimed albums.

Christy and Nathan were invited by Louie and Shelley Giglio to be a part of the first Passion Conference in Austin, Texas, which led to the couple's songwriting and leading worship for the collegiate movement for the next twenty years. Christy's voice can be heard on songs like "Waiting Here for You," and her songwriting is featured in church anthems such as "Lord, I Need You" and "Healing Is in Your Hands."

Christy now records for the couple's independent label, Keeper's Branch Records, through which they've released fan favorites like *Be Held: Lullabies for the Beloved*. Her popular podcast, *The Glorious in the Mundane*, is intentionally focused to help women in any season of life find the wonder and awe of God in the moments of the here and now.

Christy lives in Franklin, Tennessee, with her husband, Nathan, their three Beloved children, and two dogs who *think* they are Beloved children!