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WITH A. J. GREGORY

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Go Create a Life That Counts

Tim Tebow

*with A. J. Gregory*



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To Jesus, the only one through whom we can live mission possible, and to everyone who has ever given and will give whatever they have, a lot or a little, to make other people's lives better—you have truly made your lives count.

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# INTRODUCTION

**BEFORE MARRYING DEMI, ONE OF THE QUESTIONS** I was most often asked was, “Who are you dating?” Lately, though, I’ve heard a lot of questions like, “What is God’s will for my life?” Or sometimes it’s phrased differently, like, “How can I find my calling?” or “What is my purpose?”

I’ve often wondered what those words even mean when we use them like that. I know what Merriam and Webster have decided, but how often have you heard those words dropped as a cliché in conversation? What do they really mean? When people ask these kinds of questions, what kind of answer are they looking for? Are they hoping for a general answer: “to love and serve God and others”? Or a specific answer about career: “You should become a doctor”? Or just an answer about making a difference: “helping the poor or those who are underprivileged”? Or are they looking for something more glamorous, like becoming a best-selling author or winning an Emmy?

Am I asking too many questions when you’re hoping to find some answers?

All these questions about purpose remind me of a comedic conversation in *The Hobbit*. After finishing his breakfast, Bilbo Baggins is standing by his front door, when none other than Gandalf comes waltzing by. Bilbo nods at the old wizard and says, “Good morning.” It’s a typical

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early-day greeting that requires nothing more than a nod and a smile. But Gandalf is too deep for that.

He says to Bilbo, “Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?”<sup>1</sup>

I suppose we each have a little Gandalf in us. We can get hung up on questions or confused by semantics instead of taking action, even just one little step.

Scripture gives us one shared and big-picture purpose: to glorify God. As believers, we honor and serve Him with our lives, our natural gifts, our resources, our bodies, our worship, and our decisions. The list is vast, but the goal is clear. In His last instructions to His disciples, Jesus commanded them to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20). I like to think of this command as marching orders for the church.

**When you live mission possible, you live a life that counts because of what God has done and is doing through you.**

Now, this scriptural charge doesn’t mean that you have to become a missionary or plant yourself on the other side of the world. Nor does it mean that you have to sing worship songs during every waking hour (though if you feel a tug on your heart to do that, go for it!). But it does mean that your big-picture purpose is to bring glory to God wherever you are.

After, and only after, you latch on to that God-given, big-picture purpose, there’s a way to identify what your personal purpose might be.

Within that greater purpose of glorifying God, you find your pur-

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pose in what you do every day. Simply put, purpose is about being mission driven in your ordinary life.

Living a mission-possible life means executing the good works that God has already prepared for you to do. This is what Paul was talking about when he wrote, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). You can live a mission-possible life because of what Jesus did for you on the cross more than two thousand years ago. This kind of life is possible only because of the sacrifice He made and the power given to Him to trample over death. When you live mission possible, you live a life that counts because of what God has done and is doing through you.

We are each on a mission to make a difference: a mission to help the hurting; a mission to reach the last, the lost, and the least. It looks different for everyone. It might take you into the darkness on a rescue mission to those who are being human trafficked. It might keep you home in your own neighborhood, breathing life and spirit into your children or your neighbors. When you are mission driven, you use your ability and God’s empowerment to help, serve, guide, teach, pray, and lead others in innumerable ways as unique as each person’s DNA. Doing that is mission possible because of who equips and walks with you in the process.

Here’s a surprise for you: mission is not really as mysterious as we make it out to be. And it’s more available to you than you ever imagined.

Have you ever been going about your daily life, when suddenly, out of nowhere, your heart is drawn to a need or toward a person who might be struggling? Maybe an image of a cousin who is battling an opioid addiction pops into your head, or you think of the single mom in the neighborhood struggling to balance remote learning with her work schedule, or you remember a social media post about a certain organization that is helping orphans in another country. The world is flooded with hurting people and messed-up situations. And while we cannot fix

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every problem, God can. And through our willingness, we can partner with Him and bring some light to a world that is shadowed with darkness.

So if God opens your eyes to a situation and pricks your heart to get involved, take a step in that direction. And another step after that. Left. Right. Repeat.

I wasn't always driven to help people with special needs. I felt a pull in that direction when I met a little boy in the Philippines with his feet on backward. It was then that my passion grew to help people. That's why, in 2010, I was so excited to create the Tim Tebow Foundation (TTF) with a mission "to bring faith, hope, and love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need."<sup>2</sup> Looking back, I can connect the dots and recognize my parents' strong influence that shaped me and my other siblings to live a mission-possible life.

God has designed you so that you don't have to bumble your way through life. I believe He wants you to find your purpose. There are times we're already walking in our purpose and we might not even know it! Sometimes God makes it clear, and sometimes it might not feel that way. That's why it's called living by faith, not by sight.

By using what He has already given us right where we are, we can make a positive difference in this world. This is my mission, and it's yours too. Being intentional about living mission possible will:

- guide your priorities
- align your responsibilities and decisions with what's right
- fuel your drive and passion
- set your sights on eternity

Living with a mission-impossible mindset is dangerous. Deadly, even. We know things like smoking and living off junk food will never increase our vitality or longevity. But did you know that if you lack

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meaning in your life, you risk an early death? According to *Psychosomatic Medicine: Journal of Biobehavioral Medicine*, researchers reviewed the correlation between purpose in life and mortality by analyzing participants between ages fifty-one and sixty-one. It was found that “people without a strong life purpose were more than twice as likely to die between the study years of 2006 and 2010, compared with those who had one.”<sup>3</sup> I’m not trying to freak you out with this truth or add to your overextended goal list. Not at all. In fact, I want this book to refresh you.

### **Living with a mission-impossible mindset is dangerous.**

If your spirit has faded over the last few months or years, I want to ignite a new spark in your life. I want to show you that wherever you are and in whatever you do, not only can you find meaning but you can accomplish a mission that you have already been called to and equipped for. It’s never too early or too late to start thinking about living a mission-possible life.

One of the greatest lies the devil ever told was that our lives don’t matter: *You’ll never be good enough. You have too much baggage. What about that skeleton in your closet?* Have you ever heard those things whispered in your ear at night when all your friends have gone home and the screens are powered down?

It’s hard to live mission possible when we don’t fully believe that we are made in God’s image, hand-chosen by Him and fully equipped to carry out works of eternal significance. It’s actually impossible. You will never come to believe that your life counts if you think you are here by accident or you’re stuck in a space where you’re just going through the motions.

Lean in a bit. If you have made the decision to trust in Jesus, you’re

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not just an average person who got slightly better. You were someone who was dead to sin who is now alive in Christ. Take a moment and read that again: you were dead, and now you are alive. Wow!

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has brought each of us from:

old to new,  
dead to alive,  
sin to righteousness,  
slave to son or daughter,  
bondage to freedom,  
darkness to light,  
lost to found.

I hope that fires you up as much as it does me. When I reflect on this drastic trade, it makes me feel so alive and empowered that I can't help but feel driven to influence others. I want the same for you.

When you believe that you are valuable and worthy because of who lives inside you, everything changes. You find meaning. You live with purpose. Significance exists within each day. And when you soak in the truth that you were created in the image of God, by love, in love, and for love, you begin to see the world differently. You see people in a new light. Your eyes open to hurt, and your heart bleeds for the hurting. Your priorities shift and you begin to understand that it doesn't matter how successful you are—that significance matters more. And significance is found when you align your soul with what matters to God and move forward each day.

Jesus was made flesh to walk this earth not so He could perform mind-blowing tricks on people. Yes, healing and other mighty miracles were part of the plan. Yet, ultimately, Jesus was on a rescue mission to save our souls. Christianity isn't about being perfect. It's not even about being good or giving one's money away. Christianity is about having a relationship with the God of this universe, through His Son, Jesus. And

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once we are in that relationship, we want to help people—not because we have to, but because we have the privilege of serving the Creator of this universe since we are intimately connected with Him. That’s why we’re here. That’s why we fight for people around the world and honor God when we do it.

### Significance exists within each da .

You can feel bad for orphans who live in shacks without running water halfway around the world. But if it doesn’t move you enough to do something about it, you might be missing what God has called each of us to do. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Care for the widows. Defend the cause of the poor. Speak up for those who can’t speak up for themselves. Help the weak. Rescue those who are oppressed. Be generous. Show mercy. These are all missions! And I didn’t make them up. They are all found in Scripture.

I want to encourage you to be part of a rescue mission for people. Don’t live with the goal of just getting by. Live with a greater significance than achievements, accolades, or an impressive bio. With purpose, your life overflows with meaning. You are alive because you are connected to the source of all creation. God has a plan for you to love and care for people. You honor Him through that mission.

Tom Cruise gets major props for doing most of his stunts in the eight *Mission: Impossible* films. He plays Ethan Hunt, an agent of the Impossible Missions Force who, with his spy team, will save the world. As Ethan Hunt, Cruise engages in stunts that require serious training, defy gravity, and pose the risk of death.

In *Ghost Protocol*, Cruise scales and hangs off the tallest building in the world: a Dubai skyscraper that stands 2,722 feet tall. Oh, and he’s using only a pair of climbing gloves to do it. We find Cruise fiddling with an underwater security system in *Rogue Nation* and having to hold his

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breath for six minutes. The average person can hold his or her breath for one or two minutes. That same movie features Cruise dangling off an Airbus A400M while it takes off, reaches an altitude of about 5,000 feet at 184 miles per hour, and then lands.<sup>4</sup> Cruise was wearing a harness, but still. Then there's the opening scene in *Mission: Impossible 2*—the one where Cruise hangs from a cliff, holding on to the ledge with his bare hands. He was fitted with a safety harness but refused a safety net.

My favorite scene is found in the first *Mission: Impossible*. It's arguably the most memorable in the franchise. Cruise executes a high-wire dive in the CIA building to hack a computer in a pressure-sensitive and secured vault. Most of the stunt is performed by Cruise. It's his core and balance at work while being suspended in one position, perfectly still.

These stunts seem impossible for most of us. I don't know many people who would hang off the edge of a cliff by their hands or who would even want to try, for that matter. *It's dangerous. It's risky. What if a cable snaps or a harness is clipped the wrong way? What if it gets windy? It's physically impossible.* I imagine that's what most of us would say if asked to pilot a helicopter chase or climb a tower almost twice as high as the Empire State Building.

We have similar excuses that keep us from being mission driven. *It's too hard. I don't know where to start. I'm sick/tired/broke/busy.* The good news is that your mission is always possible when God is involved. Jesus may not have been pushed out of a plane at twenty-five thousand feet, but He did something more daring that's not only jaw dropping but life changing: He defeated death. And if you are serving a God who has rattled the doors of hell and trampled over death, you can fulfill whatever He has called you to do.

In this book, I'm going to show you how to become a champion of higher purpose, as mandated in Scripture. You'll learn how to share the hope of Jesus through service and how to move the mission forward each day, even when it feels dull or frightening or unfamiliar. I'll show you how to develop a mission life statement that is biblical and takes

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into account God-given talents, skills, and opportunities. I'll teach you the mindset and commitment required to live a mission-possible life each day. I'll remind you how important it is to prioritize convictions over feelings, and I'll walk with you as you learn how to do it.

And my hope is that when you're done reading this, you begin to live your life with a deeper sense of purpose, meaning, and significance than ever before and make your life count. As your relationship with God deepens, you will become more aware of His promptings, whether the whispers in your heart or the principles that come alive in His Word. You will understand that you are God's masterpiece, created to do good things in your own unique way on your own unique journey. You will become more intentional about living a mission-possible life, using your gifts, resources, and where you are to further the greater purpose of loving and serving God and others and make a lasting mark on this life, knowing you can because He did.

Our time on earth is limited. I want to do things that matter. I'm so honored to be able to play sports, write books, and motivate others. But I'm most passionate about bringing faith, hope, and love to those needing light in their darkest hour through the work we do at my foundation. I base my priorities on what's in my heart, and I try to live out of that passion, trusting that when I fall short or don't have a map for what's next, God has it all under control.

In one of the scenes of the original *Mission: Impossible*, Ethan Hunt sits on a train with his three future accomplices. With breezy confidence, he lays out their mission, a laundry list of one insurmountable task after another. The expressions of his cohorts are priceless. Shock and disbelief flood their faces. When Hunt finishes outlining his elaborate plan, one of them blurts out, "Are you sure we can do this?"<sup>5</sup>

Without missing a beat, Hunt replies, "We're going to do it." Cue *Mission: Impossible* theme song.

We serve a God who is much bigger than an impressive character in a fictional movie. We serve the God of this universe, who holds life itself

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in His hands. He is in this with you. He is beside you. He is rooting for you, and He is fighting for you.

Today you can begin to live your life on a trajectory that sets you up to accomplish feats of eternal purpose. Remember, with Him, all things are possible. Maybe God is whispering in your ear right now, *We're going to do it.*

Let's take that first step, together.

# 1

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## MISSION PROPOSAL, MISSION PURPOSE

*I've always believed the mission is greater than the man.*

—RICK PERRY

THE SIERRA MADRE HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST RAIN forests in the Philippines. Situated on the island of Luzon, this rugged jungle is home to a surviving hunter-gatherer group called the Agta. Several years ago, a group of anthropologists set out to study this Indigenous group of people. The researchers were curious to learn more about how the Agta valued the members of their tribe based on their individual contributions. You'd think the ones who had skills like hunting, gathering, and fishing would top the list, but that wasn't the case. You know who came out on top? Storytellers.<sup>1</sup> The Agta revered the tribe members who spun tales more than those who literally brought home the bacon, the snacks, and the drinks.

While it's clear they hold it in high esteem, the Agta aren't the only ones who appreciate the art of storytelling.

Stories matter. They're important. They flavor what might otherwise be a boring lecture. They keep us entertained while we binge-watch

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shows on Netflix. Stories can engage and inspire and have an effect on a single life or go on to change thousands.

Who doesn't love a good story?

And who doesn't love telling one?

When I began to scheme about how to propose to my then girlfriend, Demi, I knew it had to be a great story. I wanted to offer my future bride an experience that would spark memories of joy throughout her lifetime. I wanted her to sigh in bliss and get butterflies in her stomach whenever she'd recall what I hoped would be one of the best days of her life. I wanted her to be reminded of how much she is loved.

Okay, fine, and maybe, just maybe, there was a smidgen of ego in my motivation. I wanted to be the awesome fiancé who crushed this monumental task. What can I say? I'm a competitive guy, even with myself.

There are a few elements necessary to create an experience that will live on as a great story, particularly an engagement story. I knew that to make it meaningful to Demi, this moment had to include special people, a beautiful location, and the element of surprise. The goal was to have a mission possible, mission proposal for the girl of my dreams.

The ring had to come from Africa, my bride's homeland. Over the past few months of dating, Demi had dropped a few hints about the styles of rings she liked. They were clues, but I knew the finished product was up to me. After I met with several different jewelers, one in particular had some great recommendations. Over the next few months, Tom Hoyt and I had many conversations about finding the perfect ring, but when he started talking about an "internally flawless diamond," which is exactly what it sounds like, well, he had my attention. To make matters even more interesting, the responsibly sourced ring had a story of its own, recorded in a beautifully designed book.

Giving gifts is my love language. Having found a woman who, to me, was the epitome of flawless beauty in so many ways, I knew this was the ring for her. The diamond included an artfully crafted book that described its journey. Discovered in 2014, the gem qualified as "excep-

tional” because it was so rare and valuable. It was kept separate from other diamonds from the moment it was found. A company in New York cut and polished the diamond, and it took five craftsmen to bring this masterpiece to its final form.

The diamond then traveled from New York to Belgium and underwent a twenty-seven-step evaluation process by renowned gemologists and diamond graders. Together they confirmed the diamond was beautiful enough and met the clarity, cut, and color requirements to carry the Forevermark promise. Many diamonds get rejected during this process. Demi’s, however, a diamond of exceptional beauty, passed with flying colors. I love that it had a unique story, like Demi, and they both came from Africa, and I couldn’t wait for those two stories to come together.

I had found something beautiful to give to the love of my life. But creating an element of surprise proved a bit more difficult. Unbeknownst to Demi, I had arranged for my family, both sets of her parents, and her best friends to be present the moment I popped the question. It’s hard enough to coordinate the schedules of two or three buddies to watch college football at my house, let alone twenty-plus loved ones from around the world. It proved a challenge, but with a lot of help from others, it happened. Special people? Check.

The big moment would come on January 9, after a belated and (wink, wink) faux Christmas celebration with my family in Florida. Over the actual holidays, I was helping report on the national championship between Clemson and Alabama for *SEC Nation* and ESPN. Demi and I flew from South Africa, where we had spent the holidays, to the States. At the ESPN party before the big game on January 7, Demi and I met the president of Clemson, Jim Clements, and his wife, Beth. They are some of the sweetest people you’ll ever meet. They have four children—including a daughter named Grace, who has special needs—and host a Night to Shine event in their community. The four of us became fast friends. Fast-forward to the pregame show. Right after filming for SEC

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*Nation*, I looked around and noticed Demi was nowhere to be found. I sent her a text saying I had to be down on the field for the first part of the game but that we could meet up after. Her reply was shocking: “That’s fine! I’m hanging out with Jim and Beth in their box!”

What?? As a good southern boy would say, “Bless her heart.” I mean, Jim and Beth are absolutely wonderful people, but Demi doesn’t understand the finer nuances of American football allegiances! While I don’t necessarily root for Alabama, I do work for *SEC Nation*. By the way, the whole debacle says a lot about my wife. She may not have realized the difference between the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) and the Southeastern Conference (SEC), but even if she had, I know that Demi always looks past what other people might see and appreciates people just for who they are. It’s one of many reasons I fell in love with her. Clemson won that night. I guess she picked the right winner that day—and ultimately the right husband. When I got up to the box later on, I was shocked. You might say Demi was drinking the Clemson Kool-Aid. Her neck was adorned with an orange scarf, and she was holding orange pom-poms. I’m surprised she didn’t have a claw painted on her cheek. Jim and Beth sure do know how to sell their team!

Demi and I arrived in Jacksonville, Florida, my hometown, on January 8. We spent the day celebrating “kid Christmas” first. All the nieces and nephews gathered together at my house and unwrapped their gifts, and then it was time for the adults to unwrap their gifts, one person at a time, one gift at a time. After each gift, we took time to talk about it. You can imagine how long the process took.

In order to create a proposal that was unexpected, I did something that you might think is borderline unfair. As we opened presents with my family that morning, I gave Demi a small velvet box. I knew what she really was hoping to find in that box, even though she’d never say it out loud. When the box clicked open, Demi’s eyes widened and she beheld . . . not an engagement ring. She did her best to hide her disappoint-

ment and tried to be gracious and effusive about her present. My gift was strategic—a slight misdirection. I figured getting her a non-engagement ring would throw her off the scent if she had any expectations of getting a real one.

Once we finished opening gifts, it was time for Mission Proposal, which would happen in the backyard of my parents' farmhouse. The plan was for everyone to meet for dinner at my parents' house nearby. Some of the women were suggesting to Demi that she dress up since Christmas dinner at the Tebows' was a formal thing (not entirely true, by the way—more like jeans and T-shirts or pajamas). Before we left, and while most of the family had already arrived at Mom and Dad's, I had something else planned to further divert Demi from an engagement trail. A friend who worked at a local car dealership had dropped off a decoy truck that Demi thought she and I were going to drive over to my parents' to give my father as his last gift (sorry, Dad!). The day was ripe with sweet surprises but none for my soon-to-be fiancée. I was positive Demi had zero expectations of getting engaged that day.

Funny, on the drive over to my parents' place, one of our favorite songs just happened to come on. It was "The Wedding Song" by Demi's favorite South African artist, Matthew Mole—the very same musician I had flown in that day and had arranged to play live for her right after I'd ask her to marry me. The mood was perfectly set.

So much was happening around me that was intentional and planned according to a particular sequence of events. Friends and family who were helping with the scheduling aspect were discreetly checking their phones to make sure people were wherever they were supposed to be, particularly Demi's family and friends who were flying in from South Africa. A proposal was at stake! If one thing or one person fell out of order, the entire proposal would be ruined. The engagement and post-engagement pictures had to be taken during the last hour before sunset so the lighting could hit just right with the backyard scenery. Photogra-

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phers had camouflaged themselves behind trees and bushes. Microphones had been planted inconspicuously so our loved ones back at the house could be part of the moment and be ready to join us on cue.

Finally, it was time. We pulled into the farm but didn't go inside the packed house. Instead, I asked Demi to follow me to the back of the house, where the pond was. I told her I had something to show her. The sun hung low on the horizon, radiating soft light around the backyard of my childhood home, where my parents still live. Crickets chirped in the background, and a slight breeze beckoned the trees to whisper in rhythm. Beautiful location? Check.

So many fond memories flooded my mind as the pond came into view. Demi knew the pond was special to me. It was where our family buried Otis, the dog I grew up with. And it would be where, ten months later, I would bury Bronco, my next dog. By that pond, I had prayed about where to go to college. And now another event was emerging that would change the course of both of our lives. Demi and I walked to a wooden archway adorned with white flowers canopied over a bench under which I had carved the following to mark the span of our dating relationship:

Timmy & Demi  
4/28/2018-1/9/2019  
Forever . . . My Sweets

I spoke from my heart. I can't tell you everything that was said, because that's just between me and her, but here are the lines that mean the most and I'll remember always: "Demi, I love you so much. I wanted to bring you here, to where I grew up, to a place that I love so much, so I could be with the person I love the most. When I first saw you, you gave me so much hope. When I first heard your voice, you gave me so much belief. When I first met you, I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life

fighting for you, fighting for us.” I slipped down to the ground on one knee. “Will you marry me?”

She said yes.

After shedding a few tears and sharing some laughs, we held each other close as “The Wedding Song” played. It was a cue for the next scene in the story. As tears drenched Demi’s eyes, a figure began to emerge from a stack of hay bales. It was Matthew Mole himself, strumming his guitar and serenading us live. Demi’s face froze in shock. There he was, her favorite artist, playing for her right there in Jacksonville, Florida.

He was also the second cue. Demi and I swayed in rhythm to the melody as I gently rotated our bodies so the back deck of the house was out of her view. “I wish your family could be here right now,” I whispered.

Demi nodded. “Me too,” she said, sadness in her eyes. We danced while the sun continued its descent under the horizon. After a minute or two, I turned her around and she burst into tears. Her parents and their spouses were walking toward us with arms outstretched and not a dry eye. Third cue. During the tearful reunion, three of Demi’s closest friends left the house and joined the tear fest. Fourth cue. Finally, my parents and sisters and brothers made their way toward the wooden archway. As loved ones followed their cues, photographers leaped from behind their secret places and snapped forever memories of the happy occasion. Demi was visibly overwhelmed. She looked radiant, positively happy. And just looking at her shine in that moment was worth every minute of planning and secrecy. The engagement proposal unfolded on schedule and exactly as planned.

I’ll never forget what Demi told my dad when the night came to a close. “Mr. Tebow, I’m sorry you didn’t get a new truck, but you’re getting a new daughter!”

Mission accomplished.

## Step into the Fight

When I look back on the effort, thought, and time I invested in creating a story Demi would be excited to retell a thousand times in the future, I remember my own sense of urgency and intentionality. While the grand gesture—the proposal—mattered, of course, the little gestures along the way were just as important. Every detail had to be ironed out. In the months before I asked Demi to marry me, I had spent time each day doing a task, however small, to ultimately accomplish the mission.

Now, while I don't approach every day with this much intention and focus and detail, there's something to be said about how mission driven I was in proposing to Demi. Focus serves us well. I want it to be infused into the way I live my entire life—including how I love Demi, serve and inspire others, pursue my dreams, and honor God. I want my actions to be fueled by passion, by an insatiable drive to live out the mission I believe God has called me to. It's not to be a football player or baseball player or author or commentator, even though I love doing all of those things and strive to do them well. But I want my life to be so much more than that. I want to live a mission-possible life. I always want to strive to bring faith, hope, and love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need. That's the mission statement of our foundation, and it's also my personal mission statement.

When we choose to trust God with our lives, we have a sense of a higher calling. We recognize that significance matters more than success. We are motivated not by what others think about us but by how God sees us. We make a difference not by what we wear or what we own but by living out each day in a way that brings glory to Him.

We are meant to do so much more than occupy space. We are called to teach, care, love, help, pitch in, bear the burdens of others, and fight for those who can't fight for themselves.

From as early as I can remember, my dad worked so hard to instill in

my siblings and me a mission-driven mindset. Dad was always reminding us kids to make our lives count. Achievements are good things, he'd tell us, but they aren't our priority. He taught us the importance of loving what God loves and loving who God loves, which is (sneak peek!) humanity. This is a big part of each of our missions.

**When we live mission-possible lives, we create a cycle of good, of service, of compassion, and of action that inspires others to continue.**

I'll never forget the day in 2013 when my dad called me from overseas and told me he had just rescued four young girls from traffickers. He was preaching at an underground conference in a remote country where Christians are persecuted. When the conference was over, he heard that there were four girls about to be sold. He took out all the money he had in his wallet, \$1,250, and with that cash, he purchased the freedom of those girls.

I knew that day my life was going to change, because I entered a new fight. I said, "Dad, I don't know exactly what we're going to do, but we're going to do something." Our foundation built the first safe home to take care of those four girls. And then the next four. And the next four. And we're still going.

The day my dad purchased the freedom of those four girls was pivotal. It opened my eyes. I believe that once your eyes are open to something like that, you can never unsee what you've seen. Dad made a split-second decision to step into the fight, and immediately our foundation stepped in with him. We weren't prepared at first. We weren't totally sure of what we were doing and didn't have all the answers to our questions, but that mission-driven moment, when Dad stood up and chose to advocate for girls he didn't know and had never even met, was



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the beginning of a ripple effect still in motion today. This is what happens when we live mission-possible lives: we create a cycle of good, of service, of compassion, and of action that inspires others to continue.

A mission-possible life has less to do with us and more to do with others. Mission living means being motivated by something other than yourself. It's scary. It's also pretty exciting. It can be unpredictable (but in a good way). It will also require submitting your preferences to God, and sometimes that doesn't feel very good or doesn't make you look as favorable as you'd like. That is where trusting God becomes crucial. If you've made the decision to trust Him, He gives you the mission and makes it possible. Trust that He's got better plans for your life than you do.

### **Purpose over Preference**

A man named Jonah learned that the hard way. In the Old Testament, Jonah was a prophet from the nation of Israel. Today he'd be called a foreign missionary. One day, God gave this prophet a mission:

Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it, because their wickedness has come up before Me. (Jonah 1:2)

The inhabitants of the city of Nineveh, the capital of the ancient empire of Assyria, needed a come-to-Jesus awakening. This nation had long been a threat to the Israelites, and they weren't living right. God had given Jonah a simple task: preach.

Talk about a clear mission. There wasn't much up for debate. Now, this mandate wasn't unfamiliar to Jonah. The man wasn't your average Israelite. God had given him assignments before that Jonah had accomplished without putting up a fuss. But this time it was different. God's mission for Jonah was to preach to the Ninevites, but apparently doing

so didn't align with the prophet's preferences. Jonah hated the Ninevites. They were bullies, cruel and mean, and in Jonah's eyes, they deserved to be destroyed, not given a chance to repent. God said, "Preach," but Jonah's decision was to run.

Recognizing the stark contrast between God's mission and his preferences, Jonah ran to a local port, bought a ticket, and set sail with other passengers for the city of Tarshish. I'm not quite sure if God rolled His eyes at that point, but I do know that He sent a powerful storm to get the prophet's attention. The raging wind and the pounding rain whipped the ship without mercy, threatening to break the vessel apart.

The sailors on board threw their cargo into the sea to lighten the load and prayed to their false gods for help. And Jonah? Well, he was curled up in bed, fast asleep in his onesie.

The sailors sensed that Jonah was somehow connected to the turbulent weather. They woke him up and interrogated him like a team of skilled FBI agents. *Who are you? Where are you from? What are you doing here? Whom do you serve?* Realizing the storm wasn't leaving anytime soon, Jonah fessed up and admitted the storm was probably his fault. Then he suggested they toss him overboard. Some of them must have thought that wasn't the worst idea they'd heard, but they hesitated at first. Eventually, they relented to Jonah's wish. And wouldn't you know it, by the time his shivering body hit the water, in an instant, there were clear blue skies.

I don't know how good of a swimmer Jonah was, but he must have been freaking out while treading in waters so deep he couldn't see the bottom. As Jonah gasped for breath, a great fish shimmied close enough to swallow him whole. The prophet stayed in the creature's belly for three whole days. Before Jonah checked out of his aquatic Airbnb, he cried out to God and repented. Then God nudged the fish again and it vomited out Jonah. I know, gross.

Before Jonah had time to take a warm shower, God repeated his mission to him: "Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim to it the

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proclamation which I am going to tell you” (3:2). This time Jonah wised up. It took him three days to preach to the entire city. It was one of the most successful revivals in the Bible. Even the king repented. And instead of destroying the city because of its evil ways, God poured out compassion, love, and forgiveness. You’d think Jonah would be thrilled. I mean, it was like the best kind of Billy Graham crusade. Instead, the prophet’s response was an enigma: “Please LORD, was this not what I said when I was still in my own country? Therefore in anticipation of this I fled to Tarshish, since I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in mercy, and One who relents of disaster. So now, LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life” (4:2–3). So dramatic.

What Jonah was really saying was that in overwhelming the Ninevites with kindness and mercy, God was at the same time destroying his career as a prophet. See, Jonah had already prophesied that God was going to demolish the city, and because God changed His mind, Jonah was going to look bad. The prophet was more concerned about what his fellow Israelites would think of him than about God fulfilling His greatest mission on earth: saving humankind.

**You may not win a popularity contest by being mission driven, but you’ll certainly gain the favor of your Father in heaven.**

Before we roast Jonah for his narcissism, let’s take a look inward. Have you ever been afraid to make a difference for God because it would make you look a certain way? Like weird according to the standard of this world? Have you ever sacrificed something He wanted you to do because it would make you uncomfortable or call into question how others perceived you? I think deep down many of us can relate to Jonah.

You may not win a popularity contest by being mission driven, but you'll certainly gain the favor of your Father in heaven. And isn't that what counts?

I admire my dad's boldness, but it wasn't always that way for me. I remember going out to eat as a family, which wasn't often. We'd always pray before meals, even in public. For most, this means huddling up, bowing your head, and whispering a short and simple pre-dinner prayer. Dad would blast his prayers so loud that the patrons three tables over would hear, "because you alone, O Lord, walk on the wings of the wind" (see Psalm 104:3). I hate to say this, but there were times I'd slink low in my seat and cringe. Dad was never ashamed of making his faith known, because Jesus was always the most important thing to him. He didn't care if it made him look weird or the odd one out. I grew to admire and respect that about him and would get irritated at the people who would make fun of him for it (and there were many). If we want to make our lives count, we have to be a little different, to do things differently. Why would we want to be like everyone else?

The significance your life creates carries more value than what others think about you. Whenever you are forced to make a decision between purpose and preference, choose purpose. It'll win every time.

## **It's Time to Make a Statement**

I mentioned in the introduction that living a mission-possible life requires executing the good works that God has already prepared for you to do.

Let's make this really practical. What does that mean in everyday life? A good start for living mission possible is to come up with a mission statement.

Before you begin, know that the purpose of having a mission state-

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ment is not just to have a mission statement; it's about discerning what God has placed in your heart. A mission statement will serve a purpose when it's put into action.

Grab a journal or open an app and start jotting down your thoughts in response to the following questions:

- What do you want your life to stand for?
- What are you uniquely put on this earth to achieve?
- What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind?
- What gifts, talents, skills, resources, and opportunities has God given you to use to serve Him and others?
- What's important to you?
- What problems do you see that you can contribute to solving?

Start writing your unique answers to these questions. Take your time. Don't worry about spelling or grammar or sounding eloquent or smart. When you're done, you can continue to narrow your focus until you come up with something aligned with your life and who God created you to be. It might be helpful to revisit the statement from time to time as you read this book. Think of it as a work in progress, one that you'll shape and grow as you learn more about what God's mission for your life might look like.

Here are some helpful tips as you begin to craft this statement:

- Focus on what you want, not what you don't want.
- Stay positive and self-affirming.
- Keep it short, simple, and concise—preferably a sentence or two at most.
- It doesn't necessarily have to be a complete sentence.
- Make it sound like you. Don't craft a statement that you think would make your mentor or life coach happy. Be you.

I love the mission statement of Steve Biondo, the president of our foundation: “Wake up. Serve. Repeat.” It’s short, sweet, and effective. Here are a few more examples from corporations that might be helpful as you excavate your thoughts:

- *JetBlue*: To inspire humanity—both in the air and on the ground.
- *LinkedIn*: To connect the world’s professionals to make them more productive and successful.
- *Whole Foods*: Our deepest purpose as an organization is helping support the health, well-being, and healing of both people—customers, Team Members, and business organizations in general—and the planet.

Articulating your mission in this way will help you live a more focused and prioritized life. It will also remind you of what matters most.

## **Live Like You’re Running Out of Time**

A few years ago, I was covering the Heisman ceremony for ESPN in New York City, where Demi, my fiancée at the time, lived. As crammed as our schedules were, I knew it’d be a real miss if I didn’t plan something fun for us to do. At the last minute, I got tickets to see the Broadway show *Hamilton*. Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote this unique retelling of the story of Alexander Hamilton, one of America’s founding fathers. Hamilton helped write the Constitution and was the first secretary of the United States Treasury and the architect of the American financial system. As Lin-Manuel put it, “This is a story about America then, told by America now.”<sup>2</sup>

To say I loved *Hamilton* is an understatement. The songs, the ideas, the acting—can it get any better? I like to think God is constantly draw-

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ing our attention in a particular direction, but if you're like me, you might miss it the first time around. Or the second. But this wasn't my first time seeing the show; it was my third. And I was going to walk out of that theater as the final curtain fell having identified something I hadn't the first two times. And it would respark a mission.

*Hamilton* was a beast when it came to writing. Act 1 of *Hamilton* closes with a song called "Non-stop." When the Revolutionary War was over, Alexander Hamilton partnered up with John Jay and James Madison and between October 1787 and May 1788 wrote what came to be called the Federalist Papers. The total of eighty-five essays were published anonymously and for the purpose of defending the Constitution. John Jay wrote five, James Madison wrote twenty-nine, and Alexander Hamilton wrote fifty-one. The song "Non-stop" captures Hamilton's stubbornness and persistence. When the character Hamilton started singing the part about writing "like you're running out of time," I knew that God wanted me to hear something special.

*How do you write like you're running out of time?  
Write day and night like you're running out of time?  
Every day you fight, like you're running out of time  
Like you're running out of time.<sup>3</sup>*

Those lyrics played in my head for the rest of the show but in a different way. I heard,

*How do you live like you're running out of time?  
Do you fight for people like you're running out of time?  
How do you love Jesus like you're running out of time?  
Do you live like you need Him to survive?*

I am inspired by Hamilton's passion and his fire for pioneering revolutionary legislation and defending the cause of independence. This was

a good cause—an important one, one that was historically necessary. But it's not a greater cause than the cause of Christ. Hamilton was fighting to defend the Constitution of the United States. We, as believers of the Truth, are fighting to shine light in darkness, to snatch people out of hell.

After the musical, my attention turned inward. I truly felt in the bottom of my heart a sense of urgency about how I was living my life, more than I ever had before. Centuries from now, are people going to be talking about my life, my choices, and my work with the same kind of passion? Would they say I cared about people? Would they point to the fact that I lived on purpose? It's not so much that I care about what others think or say about me but that I want my life and legacy to speak volumes about Christ's work for humanity and this dying world. And I want that message to be amplified by my mission-driven life for years to come.

If we truly believe in whose we are and know that people are hurting in a dark place, we must feel a sense of urgency to get to them and share with them faith, hope, and love. Does your life actually show a sense of urgency in what you believe?

If not, what might look different if it did?

## **Look Outside Yourself**

Twenty-three-year-old Jaden Barr has had type 1 diabetes since he was fifteen years old, as well as reoccurring cholesteatoma, which has resulted in hearing loss in both ears. While he admits he has made mistakes and fallen short time and time again, Jaden aspires to live a life that glorifies God and make the most of the time he's been given.

I met Jaden in 2015 through our foundation's W15H program. I spent a few days with this amazing young man. We even had the chance to work out together. Part of my mission was to encourage him, but by



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the end of our time together, he was the one encouraging me! It's funny how God works that way so often.

**“When you look outside yourself,  
that’s where true mission is found.”**

In light of the health challenges Jaden has had to endure, he recognizes what it means to live a mission-possible life:

Without a clear mission, you're aimlessly going through life without intent or purpose. Experiencing firsthand the mission of the Tim Tebow Foundation has continually reminded me that God created me with a purpose: to know Him and to make Him known. It's easy to fall into the temptation of thinking life is about me and my plans, but I'm always reminded that the mission I've been given by God is much bigger and better than any worldly pursuit. By giving God control over my plans and following His instead, it makes the work I do have meaning and significance.

Right on, Jaden. This incredible young man truly has a heart that desires the greater things, what Jesus called “the good part” (Luke 10:42), or as the New Living Translation puts it, the “one thing worth being concerned about.” And what exactly is that one thing? Pursuing God, sitting at His table, being in His presence without worry, fear, anxiety, résumé building, or winning a title. It's not that we never think about those things, but we don't let them dominate our vision. We strive and strain forward in this life with Jesus as our focus, with His will as our goal, and with His rewards as our prize.

Even at his young age, my friend Jaden has the wisdom to point out the dangers of me-centric living. This is tempting for all of us, no matter

how young or old, no matter if you're a parent or a preacher, a student or a teacher, a web creator or a music maker. I love what Jaden once shared with me: "You'll end up empty if you make life or your mission about yourself. I feel most fulfilled and in line with my purpose when I'm looking outside of myself and my own desires and putting that energy into pouring into others. When you look outside yourself, that's where true mission is found."

Both Jaden and my engagement to Demi remind me of the power and passion that comes when you are focusing your energy outside of yourself. I want to live each day more alive and more passionate because of what Jesus has done for me. The past—His death and resurrection—keeps me motivated in the present to change the future. When you determine to live mission possible, rest assured you will not look back one day and wrestle with regret or painfully wonder what you did with your life.

When you get tired or overwhelmed or uncertain, don't forget the moment God changed your life. If you're reading this book right now and you don't know Him, that time can be now. Choose to trust Him in this very moment.

Don't forget the moment He challenged you to join the fight. And remember, you have a specific role to play in bringing faith, hope, and love to a world in need.

## 2

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# GOD POSSIBLE, PURPOSE POSSIBLE

*Looking at them, Jesus said, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”*

—MARK 10:27

A FEW YEARS AGO IN GHANA, AFRICA, A GIRL WAS born with spina bifida (which is a spinal birth defect) and bilateral club-foot. Without choice, she was thrust into a culture where she was not wanted. People with special needs in Ghana, as in many countries, are marginalized and denied basic human rights. Often thought to be cursed or contagious, these children are used perversely in religious ceremonies, abandoned by their own parents, or even killed. But not this baby. She was loved and cared for by her mother. No one in their community understood why, and they were repulsed by what they considered undeserved affection.

When this girl was four, her mother died. Naked and alone, she was ignored by the people who lived in her community. To be clear, they knew she was there, alone and afraid, but they averted their eyes. They treated this orphaned child like a wild dog roaming the streets. In their

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perspective, the girl was better off dead. As each day passed without her being cared for, she grew weak and malnourished. Nearly a month later, she was found naked and deathly ill by a member of the social welfare office who arranged for the sick girl to be placed in a foster home. The people there knew that her life meant more than what others may have thought.

In Michigan that same year, Shannon and Cameron VanKoevering felt a call on their heart. They began to pray about adopting one or two boys, but something unsettled their prayers. They felt that God was telling them to wait. Later, they learned of a little girl in Ghana who needed surgery for spina bifida and bilateral clubfoot. The medical care this girl needed was complex and costly. The pull on this couple's hearts was evident, but they didn't have the money. They were hoping to adopt male siblings. Was this a God-ordained idea? How would it be possible?

Shannon and Cameron will always remember the day they first heard this little girl's name. It was Christabel, which means "beautiful Christian." In those melodic three syllables, this couple noticed a greater truth: Christ is able.

Not knowing how they would pay for the multiple surgeries and aftercare she required, the couple was understandably overwhelmed. Yet, remembering that Christ is able, they began contributing to her medical expenses. Little did they know the impact this precious little girl would have on their lives. Shannon says, "We fell in love with her beautiful smile, and while we felt 100 percent unqualified to parent a child with this type of disability, we jumped into the great unknown and let God take care of the details."

Two and a half years later—after grants, paperwork, a home study, interviews, appointments, and waiting, lots of waiting—the VanKoeverings finally welcomed Christabel to her forever family. Christabel has endured multiple surgeries to correct her feet. Barring a miracle, however, she will never be able to walk without assistance. Though this

beautiful girl continues to struggle with vision problems and cognitive impairment, the VanKoeverings continue to trust God in His plan and with the details. They remain encouraged by the truth they first saw in their daughter: “Christ is able.”

## **More Than You Can Handle**

The year 2020 was overwhelming for most of us. A pandemic interrupted life as we knew it. We navigated a mandatory quarantine. Small businesses shut down, and many never reopened. We reached new levels of isolation and saw an uptick in physical and mental health issues. I think most of us had to wrangle and tame our feelings of uncertainty to function as best as we could. COVID-19 has made many people wish 2020 never happened to begin with. Refund, please!

How has your life been turned upside down? Maybe you took a big hit because of the pandemic, or maybe you did okay during that time. Maybe things are still hard. Maybe you are struggling with unruly everyday stuff. Many people didn't need a global crisis to learn what stress or worry or anxiety feels like. Life has a funny way of forcing us to navigate transitions, challenges, and disruptions all on its own.

The idea of living a mission-possible life can turn your stomach into knots for many reasons. While most of us want to tune in to God's purposes and the needs of others, those needs can overwhelm us. The VanKoeverings knew they wanted to adopt and understood, as well as they could, the challenges many adoptive parents face. When given the opportunity to give a forever home to Christabel, they hesitated, but not because they were selfish people or didn't want to welcome Christabel into their family. They hovered over the idea because the reality of the situation posed legitimate challenges. And yet Christ is able.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote, “Oh, Lord GOD! Behold, You Yourself have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your

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outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You” (Jeremiah 32:17). When Jeremiah wrote those confidence-charged words, he was in prison—not because he had stolen a neighbor’s tractor or embezzled money, but because he spoke the truth. The ancient prophet foretold that the people of Israel would be captured and defeated by the Chaldeans. He also mentioned that the king of Israel would be captured. So, as you might imagine, this prophecy enraged King Zedekiah. With a bruised ego, the king did what he had to do to make himself feel better about the whole situation. He tossed Jeremiah in the courtyard prison, a place of temporary confinement where the prophet was imprisoned but given some freedom. Jeremiah was allowed to continue his prophetic ministry and conduct certain business transactions.

**When we make the decision to trust Him with our lives, we are automatically seated at the table of the humanly impossible.**

As the prophecy begins to unfold and Israel unravels into a war zone, Jeremiah’s cousin visits him in prison. He doesn’t bring cupcakes or an inspirational book or pictures from his family that the prophet can tack to his jail-cell wall. Instead, he proposes a real estate transaction. The cousin asks Jeremiah if he wants to buy his land. I may not be Jeff Bezos, but I can tell you that it already sounds like a ridiculous idea (no offense, Jeremiah’s cousin). Plus, the plot of land he wants to sell is in an area that had already been seized by the Chaldeans. The area was in ruins. On the surface, this was a ludicrous offer. Surely, Jeremiah would not want to buy property in a war zone while he was in jail. But here’s the kicker. Being a prophet, Jeremiah had already been warned by God that the cousin would show up to make such an offer, so when it happened, he wasn’t surprised. He was more like, “Okay, cool, God. As always, You were right. Let’s buy this land!” The prophet gets the money together

and makes the transaction, complete with a notary public and witnesses and signed-and-sealed documents placed in a clay pot.

See, as strange as the query sounded, God knew something. Even though the nation of Israel would be defeated at the hands of their enemy, their land would eventually become their own again. He assures the prophet by saying, “Houses and fields and vineyards will again be purchased in this land” (verse 15). Years later, the dust would settle, and the people of Israel would be free to return home.

Jeremiah is choosing to believe that God’s promises will come to pass. It’s an investment in faith.

At the same time that Jeremiah pens verse 17, proclaiming that nothing is too hard for God, he is struggling a bit with buyer’s remorse. Can you blame the guy? He’s the proud owner of a field that is being trampled by soldiers who spill the blood of Israel. Plus, he’s sitting in prison without an official release date. Trying to manage a property behind bars in the middle of a war has got to be brutal.

After Jeremiah prays for understanding, the God of the impossible repeats His assurance:

Behold, I am going to gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and have them live in safety. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, so that they will fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts, so that they will not turn away from Me. . . . Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them. . . . For I will restore their fortunes. (verses 37–40, 42, 44)

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In other words, “Jeremiah, I got this. I know this ordeal seems hard and maybe even impossible. I know it makes no sense. And while I won’t tell you how or when, I *will* restore what will be taken away. You have My word. Trust Me—I know something you don’t.”

The movie *Elf* tells us that smiling is main character Buddy’s favorite thing. I like to think that one of God’s favorite things is intervening in the impossible.

God has a habit of making His presence known or intervening in impossible missions. It seems as if He’s drawn to predicaments for which no plan B or Z exists. If it can’t be done in the natural, if it can’t be figured out by the efforts of humans alone, if it’s a problem without a solution, it’s the perfect venue for God to do His best work.

The anchor of the gospel rests in the truth that we cannot save ourselves by our pedigrees, good works, or impressive career histories. We receive the free gift of salvation through what Jesus has done for us on the cross. This is one of the reasons the Son of God said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

When we make the decision to trust Him with our lives, we are automatically seated at the table of the humanly impossible. It’s not about what we can do; it’s about what God can do through us.

The VanKoeverings didn’t have the knowledge, background, or finances to adopt a girl with special needs. But God did. He had everything they needed. And in their hearts, they chose to trust and believe that God “is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

**When our willingness collides with God’s power,  
an inconceivable unfolding of purpose erupts.**

Do you think Moses felt confident when God asked him to lead a million weary and frazzled people out of Egypt through a sea and on foot,



all while being chased by a massive army of soldiers? Doubt it. Think about the handful of senior-citizen couples in the Bible who had babies well after being eligible for Medicare. Do you think Abraham and Sarah and Elizabeth and Zechariah just happened to be super-fit keto-nuts with twenty-something-year-old insides? What about Joshua, the leader of Israel who won a battle after God made the sun stand still (see Joshua 10:1–15)? Was that a cosmic phenomenon that happens only once every billion years? Was it something that Joshua expected would happen? Of course not. When our willingness collides with God's power, an inconceivable unfolding of purpose erupts.

## **Get Overwhelmed by God's Spirit**

Are you overwhelmed today? Maybe you're confused as to where to begin your mission. Maybe you feel as though you can barely handle life, let alone a mission-driven one. Take a breath with me. I want to remind you that even if you feel incapable or insufficient, God has everything you need so you can do what He has put on your heart. You are in the right place at the right time.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by what seems impossible, imagine being overwhelmed by the Spirit of God. Shift your focus, even just a little bit. When Jesus rose from the dead and was taken to heaven, He promised His disciples that although He would not be with them in body any longer, He would send the Holy Spirit to strengthen and comfort them. The only way to experience the active power of God in our lives is to be filled with the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 5:18). Let's dive a little deeper here. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

According to Bible commentary by author Max Anders,

Some interpreters equate this command with instances of being filled with the Spirit in the Book of Acts in which miraculous

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things happened: people spoke in tongues; prophecies and visions were given; people were healed. “Be filled” in this verse (*plarao*) is not the same word as the one used in the Book of Acts (*pimplemi*). . . . In this ethical context, it means directed, influenced, and ultimately governed by the Holy Spirit. . . .

This filling, then, is best understood, as a command for the believer to yield himself to the illuminating, convicting, and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. As he works in our hearts through his Word, our lives are brought into conformity with the will of God.<sup>1</sup>

All Christ followers have God’s Spirit living in them, but not all Christ followers live filled or controlled by the Spirit’s power. The Spirit never leaves us, but when we are disobedient, our sinful behavior can limit the active work of God in our lives. On the other hand, when we obey God’s commands/will, we can expect to see the Spirit’s fruit in our lives. This is an ongoing work as we humble ourselves before God.

If you are a believer, He is with you. He is your constant companion. His presence in your life is a nonnegotiable. It’s pretty crazy, isn’t it? The Spirit of God living on the inside of you, filling you with power? That’s what makes God’s plan for your life possible!

Job 33:4 tells us, “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Take a minute right now to meditate on that truth. What does that passage of Scripture mean to you? What kind of hope ignites in your heart? Does it bring some relief?

Settle yourself into that verse. Read it slowly, savoring each syllable:

“The Spirit of God has made me,  
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”

Trade the anxiety, the dread, or the pressure that weighs heavily on your heart for the refreshing truth that God breathes life into you. He doesn’t feed you with fear. He doesn’t drown you in guilt. He won’t force you to do something you can’t do without Him. If He is prompting you

to do something, He will equip, empower, and encourage you and see that mission to completion.

Here's another truth that can alleviate some of the pressure you feel. I've had many conversations with people who feel the mission they are called to is well beyond their abilities. It's too big. One person can't end homelessness. One person can't ensure that every child has adequate nutrition. One person can't make clean water a global reality. This is logical. But mission-possible living doesn't depend on the completion of these large goals. You just do what you can, with what you got, for the glory of God. For example, my dad's mission is to preach the gospel to every person in the Philippines, but my dad can't change someone's heart. That's God's job. That's the role of the Holy Spirit. My dad is committed to doing his part and leaves the rest to God.

## **Take a Step and Let God Do the Rest**

Though we at the foundation had been serving in anti-human-trafficking efforts for seven years, in 2020 I thought about going public with it. I asked the opinions of a few people I trusted. Some thought it was too risky. Others said it didn't fit our brand. One person wondered how it was even possible to shine light on something so dark. It seemed dangerous. I didn't have answers, but I couldn't shake the feeling that God was calling me in that direction. I didn't assume my work would completely end human trafficking. I can't do that in my own strength and power. But I could do my part and engage in a solution in some way and watch God turn what seemed impossible into the possible.

I'd like to share the story of one woman who encouraged me with the knowledge that no matter how dark a situation, light can somehow find a way to shine forth.

Natalie, whose name has been changed to protect her privacy, was sold for sex beginning when she was four or five years old. She and her

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family lived in a small camper in a rural area with no electricity or running water. Her parents were addicted to drugs and would sell their children for sex at night in order to supply their drug habit. Natalie struggled in school and was consistently rejected because she was dirty and unkempt. She actually got in trouble at school for wearing the same dirty clothes every day and shoes without laces. Natalie wonders if her life might have turned out better if teachers had known she needed someone to help her. She was removed from her home by social services on several occasions, but she was always brought back and continued being sold for sex until the end of her high school years.

Natalie graduated from high school and even earned a college scholarship with the help of a caring teacher. But by this time, she suffered from depression, anxiety, PTSD, and dissociation. Although she was intelligent, Natalie could not keep up with the demands of her classes due to the grief, loss, and emotional pain her family continued to inflict upon her. So, two years into her college career, she enlisted in the military in order to get away from her family, whom she knew would continue to drain her of any resources she could pull together. Natalie excelled briefly in the military but soon was put on mental health leave due to severe depression making her unable to fully function. She eventually lost her job, leaving her homeless and living out of her car with just her dog and military gear.

Eventually, she ran out of money and gas, alone and scared. It was there that she was noticed by two older men who showed sympathy to her dilemma. She was promised a room, food, a shower, and that they would put gas in her car and bring it to their house, as well as needed support to get her on her feet. It all sounded too good to be true. They told her she could even bring her dog with her. The two men took her to a modest home in a middle-class neighborhood and moved her into her very own room.

Then they drilled the door shut. They starved her. They didn't give

her any food, nor did they allow her to go to the bathroom or use the shower. She was sold for sex to anyone willing to buy. After months of this existence, Natalie was let out of her room for just a moment or two one day, just to get a sandwich. Her sellers assumed she was too weak to run, but fighting for her life and freedom, she tried to escape. She didn't get far and collapsed in the driveway. Thankfully, a neighbor saw her and called 911. Natalie was admitted to a hospital, where she recovered and was identified by a social worker as a trafficking victim. Natalie was able to find hope and healing with our amazing team of loving counselors and the team at Her Song, a faith-based organization that engages women in healing body, mind, and spirit in a safe community and a place to belong.

Today, Natalie, now thirty years old, supports herself and her dog. She is free. Natalie has finished her associate degree and works at the same hospital that identified her as a trafficking victim. Actually, no, a trafficking survivor. She's still there today, using her nursing skills to help others while she finishes her degree.

I want to fight for girls and boys like Natalie and even to prevent them from ending up in that terrible situation. The road is long and hard, but I'm committed to staying in the fight and allowing God to do what He wants.

**Living a mission-possible life is not about  
growing our self-confidence; it s about  
expanding our God-confidence**

Our mission is not to end all evil. If it were, we would have every right to feel overwhelmed. As long as we exist on this earth, the Enemy will continue to prowl throughout like a roaring lion. We don't have the power to end every pain and hurt in this world. But our mission is to

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honor God as we make a difference wherever and however we can. The outcome, the result, the stories—we don't have control over all those things.

Don't rest your confidence on your ability or the longevity of your passion or your singular branding. Living a mission-possible life is not about growing our self-confidence; it's about expanding our God-confidence.

### **Express Confidence**

When COVID-19 shut down the country, I was supposed to be on a baseball diamond in Port St. Lucie for spring training. I know that seems silly compared to the massive loss of life. Most of us took a hit from the pandemic. Some have lost loved ones; others have lost opportunities. Like many people whose plans got intercepted or dismantled, I was disappointed. I'm not going to lie—it really bummed me out. At the same time, it was a perfect opportunity to trust in God's plan for my life. Over the years, I've learned it's easy to trust when you're winning championships, when everyone loves you, and when you're scoring touchdowns or slugging home runs. But when your reality is less than your ideal, it is harder to believe that God has it all under control. Disappointments chip away at our confidence.

But we can find joy and purpose in even the darkest places. That's not only something the apostle Paul wrote; it's something he lived. Paul wrote the book of Philippians to a group of people he loved—people he considered family. Philippians is a pretty cheery book. Paul didn't have to get on them for quarreling over who should eat what and when and how as he did in the book of Romans. Instead, this letter overflows with peppy encouragement. You know, the kind of Scripture we love to quote and post on social media and coffee cups.

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus” (1:6).

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21).

And we can't forget one of the most well-known scriptures, which you'll find in most middle school locker rooms—in Christian ones, at least. “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (4:13).

Don't you get pumped up just reading those words? I bet if Paul were around today, he'd get flooded with invites to speak at conferences all over the world. The irony is that he was writing these encouraging words from prison. Some scholars say that he was actually holed up in the basement of a prison where the sewage system was. It was dark, it was dirty, and it stank. And as the odor of human waste and rotten food saturated the air, Paul wrote words that strengthened and emboldened the spirit of the church in Philippi.

I love how he launched the fourth chapter: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (verse 4). The word *rejoice* isn't one I use often in my vernacular. I doubt you do either. When's the last time you said to a friend, “What a beautiful day! Let's rejoice together!”? Never, right? While spending time in my NIV study Bible, I came across a footnote that made more sense to me. It substituted “expressing confidence in” for “rejoice in.”<sup>2</sup> Expressing confidence made a lot of sense to me.

While imprisoned and facing the possibility of being killed for his faith at any moment, Paul could have written about how anxious, worried, and afraid he was. Instead, he chose to record an expression of his unshakable confidence in God, which he wanted other believers to share in.

In a time of fear and panic, I want to be someone who expresses confidence in God. I also want this to be true when life doesn't seem seamless. I need to be confident in God when I'm launching a mission that I'm certain I can't fulfill in my own power. I want to express confidence in God when uncertainty holds me in its grip. I want to express confi-

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dence in God when I'm tired because every little thing that can go wrong does. I want to express confidence in God's plan for me when I feel overwhelmed with the details and lose sight of the vision.

I love how *The Message* paraphrases verses 4–5: “Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, *revel* in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!”

This passage of Scripture demands our celebration and speaks of the same type of urgency that I had been reminded of when I watched *Hamilton* for the third time. I'm not guaranteeing your mission-possible journey is going to be easy, but I have a feeling you already know it won't be. You've done some hard things and have seen God's faithfulness in pretty messy and painful seasons.

Don't stop trusting Him when it's dark, dank, and smelly. Don't give up the mission because you don't fully understand it and can't figure out the game plan. When your doubt begins to rumble, remember what God has done in the past. Express your confidence that He has a plan and a purpose for your life. You are not a man or woman who quits; you are a conqueror through the work Jesus did on the cross. Stop focusing on what you can't do, and remember that nothing is too hard for God.

Nothing.





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